

14 July 2026

Whare Kaupapa Atawhai | Conservation House

18 Manners Street, Wellington 6011

PO Box 10420, Wellington 6140

info@doc.govt.nz

Ref: OIAD-9290

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 15 June 2026, in which you asked for:

“Under the Official Information and Meetings Act please provide me with the following (via documents attached to an email):

For the Mathias-Wilberforce area that is scheduled to be aerially poisoned this September, your most recent information and any reports, plans and meeting minutes, from 2020 onwards regarding:

- a) monitoring of numbers of possums, rats, stoats and any other introduced mammals*
- b) monitoring of native plants, including evidence of a negative impact of possums*
- c) monitoring of native animals”*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982. Your questions and our responses are listed below:

- a) monitoring of numbers of possums, rats, stoats and any other introduced mammals*

DOC monitors possums in the Mathias–Wilberforce area, as possums are the target pest species for the aerial pest control programme (using 1080). Please see Item 1 for “*Monitoring results of the Wilberforce possum control programmes- September 2018*”. This report provides possum monitoring results from 2002 to 2018 and includes both pre-operational and post-operational results from the most recent possum control operation undertaken in 2018.

The 2018 aerial 1080 operation reduced possum activity to 0% post-operational wax tag tracking, while the adjacent ground-based control operation recorded 21% possum activity from post-operational wax tag tracking.

DOC does not currently hold any more recent possum monitoring results for the Mathias–Wilberforce area. However, pre-operational and post-operational possum monitoring is planned as part of the 2026 aerial 1080 operation to assess the effectiveness of the treatment. These results will be available for release once monitoring has been completed and the results have been finalised.

b) monitoring of native plants, including evidence of a negative impact of possums

DOC monitors Hall's tōtara (*Podocarpus laetus*) and kaikawaka/mountain cedar (*Libocedrus bidwillii*) within the Mathias–Wilberforce area, as these species are highly susceptible to possum browsing and are the dominant components of the rare forest type being protected at this site. Monitoring is undertaken using aerial photography of the forest canopy, assessment of the proportion of live and dead canopy foliage for the two target species, and ground-truthing to verify the accuracy of the aerial observations.

Forest canopy monitoring using this methodology commenced in 2025 to establish the current condition of the forest. The monitoring found that approximately 50% of the Hall's tōtara and kaikawaka/mountain cedar trees assessed are now dead. These results indicate that possum control is urgently required to help prevent further decline of this vulnerable forest ecosystem.

Please see Item 2 Wilberforce Valley canopy health monitoring - Images. This provides photographs with examples of the imagery and data collected as part of the Mathias–Wilberforce Forest canopy monitoring programme.

c) monitoring of native animals

DOC does not currently have any native animal monitoring projects focussed on the Mathias-Wilberforce area, as pest management is limited to forest health protection through possum control. I must therefore refuse this part of your request under section 18 (e) of the OIA as the information requested does not exist

Official information within the scope of your request

I have decided to release Item 1 listed in the attached document schedule, subject to information being withheld due to being out of scope and/or being under one or more of the following sections of the OIA, as applicable:

- section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.
- section 9(2)(g)(ii) – to protect Ministers, officials, or employees from improper pressure or harassment.

Item 2 is released in full.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the OIA and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and attached documents may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Ben Reddiex
Director Biodiversity National Programmes
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Item	Document description	Decision
1	Monitoring results of the Wilberforce possum control programmes- September 2018	Released in part
2	Wilberforce Valley canopy health monitoring- Images	Released in full