

14 January 2025

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[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 27 November 2024, in which you asked:

'I understand that the Parakiwai Track is closed to prevent Kauri dieback entering the forest, however I was wondering if this is an indefinite closure or whether the track is being upgraded so it can be opened again in the future. So I have four questions:

- 1. Under what circumstances would the track fully re-open?*
- 2. What monitoring, by DoC, is being done to ensure the Oceana Gold employees are complying with Kauri dieback prevention protocols while they are active in the area?*
- 3. Why is it that Oceana Gold employees are being trusted to comply, but members of the public are not?*
- 4. Is it likely that the Wentworth Valley track will end up closed as well, for the same reason?'*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

- 1. Under what circumstances would the track fully re-open?*

The Wharekirauponga track is currently very muddy and risk of introducing or spreading kauri dieback is high. We have submitted to our internal processes for funding to upgrade the Wharekirauponga track to a standard that reduces the risk to kauri. The upgrade would involve extensive boardwalks, geo webbing, and re-metalling of the track surface within the numerous kauri hygiene zones. If this bid is approved, the work would likely be scheduled during the following two years, before it could be considered for reopening.

- 2. What monitoring, by DoC, is being done to ensure the Oceana Gold employees are complying with Kauri dieback prevention protocols while they are active in the area?*

Oceana Gold (New Zealand) Limited must adhere to kauri hygiene conditions outlined within their Access Arrangement, as well as a Kauri Dieback Management Plan and the conditions outlined in their Authority to Remain. These documents are

provided and accompany our response as Attachment 1 (items 1 & 2). For further information please refer to the documents table.

The Department monitors Oceana Gold's kauri conditions through site visits and written compliance evidence provided to DOC.

3. *Why is it that Oceana Gold employees are being trusted to comply but members of the public are not?*

Oceana Gold are authorised to use the closed Wharekirauponga track under an Authority to Remain only for environmental monitoring purposes as required under their existing resource consents and DOC permissions, and for emergency use.

To access the Wharekirauponga track for environmental monitoring purposes, Oceana Gold staff are required to follow all kauri hygiene conditions within the Access Arrangement and Kauri Dieback Management Plan (KDMP), as well as conditions under their Authority to Remain. This document (the KDMP) is provided and accompanies our response as Attachment 1 (item 3). For further information please refer to the documents table.

We adopted this approach as there is mutual benefit for DOC by ensuring environmental monitoring continues and the conditions required in the Authority to Remain ensure the risk to kauri is managed appropriately and allow Oceana Gold's use of the Wharekirauponga track to be actively monitored by the DOC.

4. *Is it likely that the Wentworth Valley track will end up closed as well, for the same reason?*

The Wentworth track is of very high standard. It is dry, has good drainage and metalled surface, has kauri dieback mitigation in place and has an automated boot cleaning station at the start which can accommodate higher numbers of people. There are very few (if any) muddy sections and visitors can expect to keep their shoes clean and dry. The risk to kauri is minor when compared with the Wharekirauponga track. At this stage we have no intention of closing the Wentworth Falls track.

Documents attached:

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	20 November 2024	Authority to Remain - OGL	Released in full
2	2 December 2016	EP 40598 Oceana Gold (New Zealand)) Limited Access arrangement	Released in part
3	26 September 2023	Wharekirauponga_KDMP_2023	Released in part

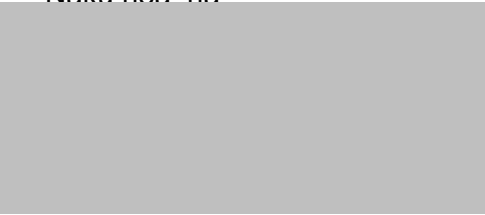
I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed above, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the Official Information Act, as applicable:

- sensitive information to prevent an offence under 6(c) – so as not to prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences
- personal contact details of officials, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.
- sensitive information, under section 9(2)(c) – to avoid prejudice to measures protecting the health or safety of members of the public.

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

If you would like to discuss this response with us, please contact Jaime White, Hauraki Community Ranger by email to jawhite@doc.govt.nz.

Nāku noa nā



Tinaka Mearns
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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai