

fyi-request-31104-
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14 August 2025

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doc.govt.nz

OIAD-5275 & 5384/9

Tēnā koe

OIAD-5275 Response 2 and OIAD-5384 partial response

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 26 May 2025, and clarified on 5 June 2025, in which you asked for:

- 1. I would like all correspondence, reports, documents, meeting minutes, file notes, etc, you have on record regarding the proposal to develop a series of open cast goldmines in the Bendigo Ophir - Dunstan Mountains area by Matakanui Gold / Santana Minerals. Regardless of whether they are associated with fast track consenting or any other process.*
- 2. From October 31, 2024 until present day.*

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

On 1 July 2025 we extended the timeframe to respond to your request to 25 July 2025 due to both the large quantity of information to search through and the consultation necessary.

Siobhan Quayle, Director Regulatory Systems Performance, provided you with a tranche 1 response to your request on 25 July 2025. The following information forms tranche 2 and relates mostly to information held by DOC's Central Otago regional office.

I have also taken the opportunity to incorporate all the material held by DOC's Central Otago regional office in scope of your later OIA request, logged as OIAD-5384, for the timeframe 27 May – 27 June 2025.

Therefore, unless otherwise noted, this response **covers the period 31 October 2024 to 27 June 2025 for material held by the regional office**. I understand that Siobhan is writing to you separately with the remaining, fast-track-specific, material in scope of OIAD-5384.

While not directly related to a "proposal to develop a series of open cast goldmines" per your request, in the interests of transparency I have decided to summarise the most recent (2025) applications for exploration works at Bendigo Station.

As noted in Siobhan's letter of 25 July, some information is summarised as allowed under section 16 of the OIA. I have decided to provide summaries for two reasons. The first is to not impair the Department's efficient administration. The second is because summarising the information at a high-level hopefully meets your needs, while not providing the fine detail that is commercially sensitive to Santana Minerals and/or has been provided by them under an obligation of confidence. I believe this approach to be preferable to withholding or declining whole documents in full.

Therefore, I have decided to release the relevant information subject to information being summarised and some information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the OIA, as applicable:

- personal information, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people,
- commercially sensitive information, under section 9(2)(b)(ii) – to protect the commercial position of the person who supplied the information, or who is the subject of the information,
- information provided in confidence, under section 9(2)(ba)(i) – to protect information where release would prejudice the ongoing supply of similar information.

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.

Table 1

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
4	31 Oct 2024- July 2025*	Summary of correspondence with Santana Minerals/Matakanui Gold	Released in part – some detail of the applications withheld
5	31 Oct 2024- 26 May 2025	Summary of internal DOC emails	Released in part – some detail of the application and one person's name withheld
6	27 May 2025 – 27 June 2025	Summary of internal DOC emails	Released in part – some detail of the application omitted

* Summary is up to date as at end of July 2025, and therefore also is in scope of your most recent OIA, OIAD-5481.

Other items not listed in Table 1

Otago Conservation Board

Santana Minerals presented to the Otago Conservation Board in October 2024. The minutes from this meeting have been noted to you in the past and are publicly available via www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/statutory-and-advisory-bodies/conservation-boards/otago/. Santana Minerals contacted the Board again on 6 May 2025 requesting to provide another update, but this was declined.

As you know, Sustainable Tarras presented to the Board on 20 February 2025. The minutes are publicly available via the above weblink.

You also invited the Board members to a public meeting held on 17 June in Dunedin, and 19 June in Wanaka:

<https://sustainabletarras.com/2025/06/08/ours-not-mine-public-meetings-june-2025/>

Minister of Conservation

In February 2025 Santana Minerals invited the Minister of Conservation to visit the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project but this was declined.

An update on Santana Minerals' exploration on Bendigo Station was provided to the Minister of Conservation was provided by way of a weekly status report item. The Minister's weekly report is provided to him on an FYI and "no surprises" basis. An item titled *Southern South Island: Proposed Mining Exploration on Bendigo Station, Central Otago* appeared in the report for the week starting 3 March 2025. In addition, an item titled *Bendigo-Ophir mining project (Legally privileged)* appeared in the report for the week starting 16 June 2025.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decisions by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the OIA.

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

Nāku noa, nā



Aaron Fleming
Regional Operations Director, Southern South Island
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai