

fyi-request-31104-
d497f47f@requests.fyi.org.nz

25 July 2025

Whare Kaupapa
Atawhai/Conservation
House - 18 Manners
Street, Box 10420,
Wellington 6140
doc.govt.nz

Ref: OIAD-5275

Tēnā koe

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 Matakana 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.

DOC's role in the Fast-track process

Some of the approvals and permissions DOC administers are included in the Fast-track process. As such DOC is responsible for providing reports, advice, and other information to support expert panels/the Minister considering applications that could have impacts on conservation. DOC also has the opportunity to comment on applications seeking Resource Consents that do not include a DOC administered approval but may have broader conservation considerations.

For projects that need conservation approvals, applicants must consult with us prior to lodging referral applications and substantive applications in the case of listed projects. DOC works through pre-lodgement consultation with applicants to further understand the approvals they are seeking in the Fast-track process, with a view to provide feedback on a proposal and work through any issues and opportunities collaboratively prior to an application being submitted.

Tranche 1: fast-track

In the interests of time, we are providing the following information to you as tranche 1. Tranche 1 relates mostly to the fast-track aspect of your request. Unless otherwise noted, this response covers the period 31 October 2024 up to and including the date of your request – 26 May 2025.

Table 1

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	31 Oct 2024- 26 May 2025	Pre lodgement documents and correspondence with applicant	Released in part
2	31 Oct 2024- 26 May 2025	Internal correspondence*	Released in part
3	9 June 2025**	Pre-lodgement context document	Released in part

* Some information has been temporarily redacted as it relates to tranche 2.

** An earlier version of this document was replaced with a more up to date version during the collation process.

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 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,
- free and frank expression under section 9(2)(g)(i) – to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs.

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.

In addition, some information in scope of your request is already publicly available. Please see <https://environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/acts/fast-track-approvals/fast-track-projects/bendigo-ophir-gold-project/>.

Tranche 2: other processes

There is remaining material in scope of your request held by DOC's Central Otago regional office. We have collated and made a decision to release much of this information to you however we need further time to prepare the documents for release. We expect to release this information to you by 15 August 2025 at the latest.

For your information, some information will be withheld under section 9 of the OIA. There are no countervailing public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding. Some information will be summarised as allowed under section 16(1)(e) of the OIA. 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 OIA.

Responding to your 4 July 2025 email

I would also like to take this opportunity to respond to your follow up enquiries (seeking that more information be made public about the proposed Bendigo-Ophir Fast-track project), particularly your 4 July 2025 email responding to our 1 July 2025 extension letter.

Proactively releasing reports and correspondence related to Fast-track projects is not feasible for a number of reasons. DOC is engaged in pre-lodgement consultation with potential Fast-track applicants on various projects and is responding to many requests for analysis/comment from the lead Fast-track agency, the Environmental Protection Authority/Ministry for the Environment. Attempting to proactively release the huge volume of information captured through our Fast-track work would be a substantial administrative task and involve a prohibitive amount of collation and engagement with other stakeholders; more than is required to respond to individual requests made under the OIA.

You note that submitting OIA requests is not ideal from your point of view because of the time delays involved. However, the OIA is a tool available to you in this case.

DOC recognises then that you will likely want to continue making OIA requests on this topic. Going forward, you might like to consider if you can refine your requests further, for example by excluding internal DOC emails. This would help shorten the time needed to respond to your requests.

Regardless of how you receive the information from DOC (through an OIA request, or proactively), it is important to note that DOC does not necessarily have the full picture for potential Fast-track projects. The information provided to DOC in pre-lodgement consultation only captures what a potential applicant shares with DOC at a given point in time. This may not be reflective of all the details of the application that will be lodged, and DOC does not have control of an applicant's timeframes for consultation.

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

We will write to you again with tranche 2, no later than 15 August 2025.

Nāku noa, nā



Siobhan Quayle
Director Regulatory Systems Performance
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai