

17 November 2025

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 13 October 2025, in which you asked for:

1. *Any reports, research papers, assessments, briefings, or internal memoranda produced or commissioned by DOC since 1 January 2022 that address tsunami hazards, tsunami preparedness, or risk mitigation measures in Milford Sound / Piopiotahi or its surrounding coastal areas.*
2. *Any correspondence (including emails, meeting notes, or minutes) between DOC and other government agencies, local authorities, or scientific institutions regarding tsunami risk or hazard planning for Milford Sound / Piopiotahi, within the same timeframe.*
3. *Any risk management or emergency response plans that have been updated or developed in light of tsunami risk assessments for the area.*

On 17 October 2025 you clarified (or refined) your request to state:

Following a discussion with Andy Roberts, I want to refine (or replace if that's easiest) the above request to the following.

- *Any reports, research papers, assessments, briefings, or internal memoranda produced or commissioned by DOC since 1 January 2022 that address communicating the risk of tsunami hazards in Milford Sound / Piopiotahi or its surrounding coastal areas to visitors.*

As discussed, this is for a feature article that is exploring the nuances of explaining high impact/low likelihood events like a Milford Sound tsunami to visitors, so I'm primarily interested in information relevant to that.

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

Effective communication of risks arising from low frequency/high consequence hazards is a challenging area of risk management. The scientific understanding of the cascading chain of hazards in this scenario is still emerging and requires more investigation to determine appropriate mitigations.

Investigations into risks from earthquake/tsunami and other natural hazards to Milford Sound Piopiotahi have been a focus for organisations involved in management of Milford Sound since research on this subject was undertaken by Canterbury University around 2012-13. The amount of investigation by researchers has increased over time, with significant work done over recent years. The tsunami hazard at Milford Sound is complex, and while events could occur at any time, focus has been on modelling associated with a large event triggered by a massive earthquake on the Alpine Fault, which will be a catastrophic situation across the South Island when it next occurs. Much of the recent research was initiated from groups working on Alpine Fault earthquake issues.

There are multiple organisations involved in this work:

- Emergency Management Southland (EMS) has overall responsibility for emergency planning, preparedness, communication and response, and is comprised of representatives from Southland local government agencies.
- National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has national level responsibility for emergency management, and the size and scale of the Alpine Fault hazard is an event that is within NEMA's area of interests.
- Department of Conservation (DOC) – involved through its role in managing Fiordland National Park and responsibilities to support the agencies that lead emergency preparedness and response. DOC has a role to inform visitors and concessionaires of natural hazards. In an emergency DOC would be working in support of Emergency Management as part of response activities.
- Southland District Council and Southland Regional Council both have roles in supporting EMS.
- MBIE (tourism branch) – roles in setting policy regarding international tourism

DOC web page link is provided for the current information re tsunami risk:

[Milford Road/Milford Sound area: Fiordland National Park](#)

DOC is continuing to work with the lead agencies to better understand the risks, possible mitigations and shape risk communication.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

- 1. Any reports, research papers, assessments, briefings, or internal memoranda produced or commissioned by DOC since 1 January 2022 that address communicating the risk of tsunami hazards in Milford Sound / Piopiotahi or its surrounding coastal areas to visitors. - As discussed, this is for a feature article that is exploring the nuances of explaining high-impact/low likelihood events like a Milford Sound tsunami to visitors, so I'm primarily interested in information relevant to that.*

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	4 August 2025	Milford Sound Piopiotahi Risk Assessment Proposal V6	Released in part
2	14 April 2025	Landslide-induced tsunami risk communication advice for visitors and workers in Milford Sound / Piopiotahi.	Released in full.
3	15 May 2025	E-mail 'Milford tsunami'	Released in part

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed above, subject to information being withheld under the following section of the OIA, as applicable:

- personal information, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people,
- confidential information, under section 9(2)(j) – to enable the Crown to negotiate without disadvantage or prejudice.

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 OIA.

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



Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Wilson'.

Catherine Wilson
Director Heritage and Visitors
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai