

Conservation House
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doc.govt.nz
Ref: OIAD-5943

29 January 2026

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 10 December 2025, in which you asked for:

1. *Any publicly available documentation about AI systems used in your organisation, including where this information can be found (e.g., on your website, annual reports, ethics or transparency pages, etc.).*
2. *A list of all AI systems currently used in your organisation.*
3. *For any AI systems currently in use that are not publicly described, please provide basic information about each system, including its purpose, the problem it addresses, its inputs and outputs, the team or business unit responsible for its use. (If details need to be withheld, please release what you can and cite the relevant withholding grounds.)*
4. *For all current AI systems, please provide: any results, reports, summaries, or documentation from trials, pilots, or evaluations conducted before, during and after deployment. Any information on how regularly AI systems are reviewed or re-evaluated during operational use*
5. *If available, please provide any information (public or not yet public) indicating the scale of AI use within your organisation.*

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

Support for Public Service uptake of Artificial Intelligence

Public service agencies are encouraged to take up the opportunities offered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) when used in ways considered safe, transparent and responsible, and which effectively balance risks with potential benefits. Please refer to [Approach to work on Artificial Intelligence](#) (25 July 2024) for more information.

The Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO) has developed a [Public Service AI Framework](#) to support agencies to grow their maturity in the effective and safe use and governance of AI. The GCDO is progressively developing its support for agencies, including a not yet released Public Service AI Assurance Regime.

AI has been introduced within DOC to enhance user support and enable staff to focus on core conservation and nature-related work. DOC manages significant volumes of data across multiple systems, which can make information retrieval challenging.

In 2024, we launched the **Shared Services Project**, designed to provide a centralised platform for all user support needs. This includes requesting IT assistance, accessing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and guidance on completing tasks. The integration of AI has streamlined information discovery, helping ensure a consistent approach across the organisation.

To govern the responsible use of AI, DOC has implemented a range of policies focused on privacy protection, fairness, and maintaining human oversight in decision-making. AI tools are used strictly as guidance, and all outputs are verified to mitigate the risk of errors.

We also take proactive measures to safeguard sensitive and private data by ensuring such information is never entered into AI systems.

DOC, like other agencies, is developing its maturity to safely use and govern AI. However, some AI use at DOC became well established prior to the release of the GCDO framework.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *Any publicly available documentation about AI systems used in your organisation, including where this information can be found (e.g., on your website, annual reports, ethics or transparency pages, etc.).*

The following information represents the publicly available material relating to the Department of Conservation's (DOC) use of artificial intelligence (AI). DOC's use of AI is consistent with broader public service expectations and guidance issued by the Government Chief Digital Office (GCDO), while also being tailored to the department's specific operational requirements and complex data environment. As a result, DOC has not publicly released detailed technical documentation about the AI systems it uses.

DOC has, issued one media release in 2024 specifically addressing its use of AI: [New AI predator detection tools available: Media release 11 July 2024](#). This release relates to the use of DOC AI CAM and PredaCAM devices to assist with predator detection. Please note that the information in this media release was accurate at the time of publication.

In addition, there is a range of other publicly available information on DOC's website that references the use of AI tools. This includes media releases and material published as part of the [Long-term Insights Briefing: Planning for our future](#). Searching DOC's website for references to AI may also provide broader context on how the department is exploring and applying these technologies.

2. *A list of all AI systems currently used in your organisation.*

DOC does not hold a consolidated list of all software used across the organisation that contains AI-integrated features. Software products frequently update to include new AI capabilities, and these functions are embedded across numerous platforms in ways that are not centrally tracked. As such, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act, as the information is not held by the Department.

The following use cases, represent some of the ways in which DOC uses AI technologies::

- **Machine vision and image recognition** – for detecting animals and filtering camera footage. DOC commonly uses the open-source AI model Megadetector, which is locally hosted on specific DOC computers, and Spyfish Aotearoa, which is a collaborative project with Wildlife.ai.
- **Audio classification** – for identifying native species calls. DOC commonly uses the open-source AviaNZ, and open-source Kaytoo, which is locally hosted on DOC computers. **Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)** – for interpreting

complex statutory documents. This is a bespoke solution, hosted on DOC's Amazon Web Services, using Neo4j and OpenAI and only looks at documents already in the public domain.

- **Generative AI** – for searching, drafting, summarising, and ideation tasks. Microsoft Copilot and Microsoft Teams Premium are commonly used, along with AI within our enterprise workflow solution, ServiceNow.

3. *For any AI systems currently in use that are not publicly described, please provide basic information about each system, including its purpose, the problem it addresses, its inputs and outputs, the team or business unit responsible for its use. (If details need to be withheld, please release what you can and cite the relevant withholding grounds.)*

Please refer to the table provided in **Attachment 1** for a breakdown of information concerning each system in use.

4. *For all current AI systems, please provide: any results, reports, summaries, or documentation from trials, pilots, or evaluations conducted before, during and after deployment. Any information on how regularly AI systems are reviewed or re-evaluated during operational use*

DOC is still relatively early on in its usage of AI. At this point, we have not undertaken any formal work in this area. Consequently, any feedback on the impact of technology investments on productivity has been anecdotal rather than evidence based. As such, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

5. *If available, please provide any information (public or not yet public) indicating the scale of AI use within your organisation.*

Artificial Intelligence is transforming our conservation efforts. We use AI extensively to process and analyse vast and complex datasets, including information gathered from drones, satellites, and acoustic sensors, enabling faster and more accurate insights to support environmental monitoring and decision-making.

More recently, we have adopted generative AI to further enhance these capabilities. Generative AI supports staff by enabling rapid searches across Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), operational guidance, and business processes, as well as summarising key information and answering natural-language questions. This significantly reduces time spent on administrative tasks, allowing staff to focus more on core conservation and field-based work while improving consistency and accessibility of organisational knowledge.

DOC has an AI policy that sets guidelines for responsible use, including protecting privacy, ensuring fairness, keeping humans in the loop for critical decisions, and verifying AI outputs. All employees are required to confirm that they will not input personal or sensitive data into AI systems, including information such as remuneration, medical details, or other identifiable data.

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.

[REDACTED]

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Richard Kay', written in a cursive style.

Richard Kay
Chief Information Officer
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

ATTACHMENT 1

Project Name	Description	Vendor/ Delivery Partner	Business Unit	Funding Source	Current Status	In-house or Procured Externally
Shared Services Improvements Project (DOC Connect)	<p>Note: <i>The only AI feature of the new system was the enablement of staff to ask questions and get answers using AI from policies, SOP and user guides loaded in the system Shared Services project designed to provide a one stop shop for support and assistance for all DOC users.</i></p> <p>Phase 1 focused on priority business services in legacy system Assyst that were consistently used and of high business value. Processes were reviewed and redesigned to work better for those fulfilling requests and easier for those making requests. This phase was to implement meaningful and measurable service improvements rather than just a "lift and shift". Phase 2 will build on the improvements made in phase 1 and continue to enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of our internal services. This includes lower priority processes and further enhancements in DOC Connect to improve workflows.</p>	Datacom Deloitte	Information Systems and Services	Sourced through capital intentions	Active	Mostly In-house with some Vendor assistance
Desktop AI image classification	Developing New Zealand based image classification models to significantly increase the processing efficiency of trail camera imagery. This improves the capability of trail cameras as a detection tool for target pests.	Ecoassist/ AddaxAI	National Eradication Team	International Visitor Levy (IVL)	NZ Invasives V1 (complete) Alita incorporation to AddaxAI platform (complete) NZ Invasives V2(Active)	Largely external but data curated in-house

Project Name	Description	Vendor/ Delivery Partner	Business Unit	Funding Source	Current Status	In-house or Procured Externally
Edge processing and remote notification for camera trapping	Exploring the use of edge processing to utilise hardware at site in the field capable of classifying camera trap data and remotely notifying managers of species interactions in near-real time.	Conservation X Labs	National Eradication Team		Complete	Largely external but data curated in-house
Image Processing Platform	The research, development and commercialisation of an AI-Enabled Image Processing Platform for still images and video captured using RGB, Infra-red or thermal devices. It is designed to reduce the time spent on image classification and improve AI identification of pests.	Cacophony Project Charitable Trust	Landscape Threats area	Tools to Market Programme.	Complete	Procured Externally
Bilbo	An NZ-specific AI-enabled image classifier that automatically annotates Tracking tunnel card images	WekaResearch	Landscape Threats area	National Predator Control Programme budget.	Active	In house
Alita	A NZ-specific AI-enabled image classifier that automatically annotates camera trap images with the presumed species in the image.	WekaResearch	Landscape Threats area	National Predator Control Programme budget.	Complete	In house
Co-Pilot implementation	Provide Co Pilot licences to assist with managing workloads.	Microsoft/ Datacom	Information Systems and Services	Operating	Complete	Procured Externally
AI search capability	AI-Powered Helpdesk Agent Discovery Statutory Documents AI Search	Maker Tech	Information Systems and Services	Sourced through Project Funding	Complete	Procured Externally