



Whare Kaupapa Atawhai/
Conservation
Conservation House
18 Manners Street
Te Aro, Wellington, 6011
doc.govt.nz

30 June 2025

Ref: OIAD-5290

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 29 May 2025, in which you asked:

- 1. Has the government received / reviewed the full cost and benefit analysis of the planned DOC aerial poisoning in Rakiura / Stewart Island?*
- 2. Has the government reviewed the spending in terms of time and resources, to date on Predator-Free Rakiura and analysed all the costs involved and whether they are justified given the acute shortages in many sectors? Please can we have full and analysed data on spending in terms of time /resources and money to date for the past 5 years and forecasts for the next 5 years?*
- 3. we ask how much must DOC spend before the end of June on aerial poisoning of Rakiura or risk losing this part of their budget?*
- 4. We wish to understand if their steamrolling of an ill thought out plan to aerial poison Rakiura is based on spending money rather than the impacts of the environment?*
- 5. Has the government considered the cost to the economy from losses to the commercial fishing industry - when the public become aware that no independent tests have been carried out on our fisheries after any 1080 drops anywhere in NZ and that no studies have been carried out on human health from consuming poisoning fish, meat, milk, honey.?*
- 6. Has the government considered the cost to the economy from losses to our tourism industry - when visitors realise that the water in streams is undrinkable and the NZ conservation estate is heavily poisoned and not safe? Our understanding is that under the National Park's Act - DOC are mandated to ensure public safety or is this a fallacy?*
- 7. After decades of poisoning environments across New Zealand's conservation estate and spending countless millions - why does DOC still need to carry out trials? It is clear that DOC do not understand the ecosystems they are managing and are wasting public resources whilst other sectors are struggling.*

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



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

- 1. Has the government received / reviewed the full cost and benefit analysis of the planned DOC aerial poisoning in Rakiura / Stewart Island?*

While the Minister of Conservation is kept informed about DOC's work at regular intervals, it is not usual practice to provide detailed cost benefit analysis on projects of this scale. The Minister of Conservation has set clear expectations for the Department, and planning and delivery of operational activity is one of DOC's core responsibilities. Predator suppression operations are a good example of this work – with over 60 operations planned and delivered nationwide over the last year.

In this case, the Minister of Conservation approved specific funding for the Pukunui Predator Control Operation via the International Visitor Levy.

- 2. Has the government reviewed the spending in terms of time and resources, to date on Predator-Free Rakiura and analysed all the costs involved and whether they are justified given the acute shortages in many sectors? Please can we have full and analysed data on spending in terms of time /resources and money to date for the past 5 years and forecasts for the next 5 years?*

For clarity, I am providing separate information for Predator Free Rakiura (PFR) - a project to completely remove predators from Rakiura, and the 2025 Pukunui Predator Control Operation – an aerial 1080 predator control operation that aims to protect pukunui by suppressing predators.

Predator Free Rakiura costs

Te Puka Rakiura Trust (TPRT) was established by the Predator Free Rakiura Leadership Group to investigate the feasibility of removing three species of rats, possums, feral cats and hedgehogs. DOC committed to funding this work for up to five years.

The following table shows funding received by TPRT each year. Currently there is no future funding forecasted to be granted to TPRT. The Agreement between DOC and TPRT is expected to end 30 June 2026.

Year	From	Amount
1	2021/22	\$1,000,000
2	2022/23	\$1,300,000
3	2023/24	\$1,200,000
4	2024/25	\$0
5	2025/26	\$0

Part of TPRT's work was to develop a conceptual implementation plan. A key input to this plan was determining what is currently feasible, and which organisations have the capability and capacity to design and deliver the work. The plan recommended partnering with Zero Invasive Predators (ZIP) to investigate the possibility of completing the eradication of predators from Rakiura.

DOC endorsed this recommendation and agreed to fund ZIP to carry out two years of research, development and implementation work to resolve the feasibility of an Island-wide predator eradication on Rakiura, including a better understanding of future costings.

Upon completion of the Agreement term, a review of the feasibility will be conducted. This will determine what future investment is required along with confirming intentions to proceed, pause or stop the Island-wide eradication on Rakiura. For this reason, no budget forecast has yet been set beyond 2025/26.

The following table shows the funding allocated to ZIP for the Predator Free Rakiura feasibility study. The one million remaining for the 2024/25 financial year will be paid at year end.

Project	FY 24/25	FY 25/26	Total
PFR Feasibility	\$3m (\$2m paid to date)	\$4m	\$7m

Pukunui Predator Control Operation costs

The following table outlines funding allocated to the Pukunui aerial 1080 predator suppression operation, which is being completed in partnership with ZIP. There is currently no future forecast for this project beyond the 2025/26 financial year as the operation will be completed within this time period.

Project	FY 24/25	FY 25/26	Total
Pukunui Operation	\$1.5m (\$1m paid to date)	\$2.4m	\$3.9m

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4. *We wish to understand if their steamrolling of an ill thought out plan to aerial poison Rakiura is based on spending money rather that the impacts of the environment?*

The timelines associated with both the Pukunui Predator Control Operation and the '1080 to Zero' trial are not dictated by the financial year end. Careful consideration has been given to the phasing of spending, with a relatively small amount planned for 2024/25. The project is not at risk of losing funding nor were any decisions based on a need to spend money within set timeframes.

The operation is focussed on providing maximum benefit to pukunui prior to the breeding season. Most pukunui breeding attempts occur from September. Removing three species of rat, possums and feral cats in advance of the breeding season is the primary driver for planning and associated spend.

5. *Has the government considered the cost to the economy from losses to the commercial fishing industry - when the public become aware that no independent tests have been carried out on our fisheries after any 1080 drops anywhere in NZ and that no studies have been carried out on human health from consuming poisoning fish, meat, milk, honey.?*
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I acknowledge that you have concerns about the use of aerial 1080 on Rakiura. However, as per the information we have previously provided to you, decades of monitoring and research show that 1080 is a safe and effective tool for controlling introduced predators and protecting threatened species. We are confident that the operation will not negatively impact the economy.

7. *After decades of poisoning environments across New Zealand's conservation estate and spending countless millions - why does DOC still need to carry out trials? It is clear that DOC do not understand the ecosystems they are managing and are wasting public resources whilst other sectors are struggling.*

The trial you are referring to is the smaller '1080 to Zero' work being planned as part of testing the feasibility of the Predator Free Rakiura project. This is trialling eradication (complete removal) as opposed to the rest of the Pukunui Predator Control Operation which is using well established suppression techniques. As we have previously advised, this technique has been developed by ZIP as part of their work to make large areas of South Westland predator free. While we know this is effective at eradicating rats and possums on the West Coast, the effectiveness of 1080 to eradicate a broad range of predators in the Rakiura context needs further investigating. Results from the 7,000 hectare trial will provide critical information to inform a decision on the next steps toward Predator Free Rakiura.

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) may be published on DOC's website.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ben Reddiex".

Ben Reddiex
Director National Programmes
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai