

11 October 2022

Ryan

fyi-request-20181-1688805f@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 12 September 2022 in which you asked for information concerning the Habitat Tuatēawa Possum and Rat Control Operation.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *A copy of Habitat Tuatēawa Inc. application DOC-7108959 and assessment report DOC7110276*
 - We have decided to release the requested documents in part, as listed in Table 1 (items 1 and 2).
2. *Please provide a complete list of each and every known indigenous species which are referred to as acceptable to be killed as part of the HABITAT TUATEAWA INC. September-22 operation. Please name simply the species that may be killed and what number or % of known population deaths of each species are authorised to be killed for the greater protection of indigenous species, furthermore, please also simply state the named species which are said to benefit and the evidential documentation held proving the positive effects of poison upon the species, As per statement received in permission id DOC-7110274; “Notwithstanding that the permission holder must comply with these requirements, it is acknowledged that indigenous animals may be killed so this permission authorises such deaths for the greater protection of indigenous species. Nick Kelly - DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION Whitianga Operations Manager”.*
 - The information you seek regarding “species that may be killed” and percentage of authorised species mortality does not exist. This part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act.

Conservation benefits associated with such operations are well documented. For more information, please refer to the following publicly available resources:

- [Taonga of an island nation: Saving New Zealand's birds \(pce.parliament.nz\)](https://pce.parliament.nz)

3. *Please supply evidence of any and all auditing of immediate, secondary and unintentional and intentional poisoning data collected thru compulsory carcass monitoring by HABITAT TUATEAWA INC. for years 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019,*



2020 and 2021 as is required since at least 2020 and as stipulated under the 2022 consent along with information as it becomes available for the current operation. 'Permission ID - DOC-7110274 DOC Performance Standards #137; Diphacinone Caution Period - The estimated caution period for this operation is 5 months after bait removal and is subject to compulsory carcass monitoring. The estimated caution period cannot be reduced to less than 2 months and must be extended if the endpoints of the monitoring have not been met at the end of the period.'

- In terms of compulsory carcass monitoring, this has been a requirement for operations undertaken by the community group for years 2015, 2016, 2017, 2020, 2021 and 2022. This information is a part of the permission and results are held by Habitat Tuatēawa.

Operations undertaken by Habitat Tuatēawa in 2018 and 2019 did not require compulsory carcass monitoring.

Carcass monitoring is not used to determine lethality (of toxin) or effectiveness of these operations. It is used to inform the caution period for warning signs to be uplifted based on carcass decomposition.

Carcass monitoring is a requirement for the current operation issued under Permission ID - DOC-7110274 and an audit will be undertaken in line with the performance standards outlined in this permission once the operation is completed.

4. *Please supply evidence required to be held by Habitat Tuatēawa Inc as a condition of their consent, that: pigs were not present in the poison area and that stations used to house Diphacinone baits in the forest park have been placed where possums and pigs have been excluded and that bait stations have not in fact been placed in trees with easy access for depositing and removing poison and that pigs may also be able to access and destroy the stations and also supply evidence that the baits are not able to be removed and spread from the bait stations by ship rats, such baits being specifically designed with a central hole so they can be affixed to a solid object to avoid removal and storing the baits by rats, such baits have further been specifically coated with a preservative so they do not break down as readily when out of the stations, as required, within the Permission Document for pesticide use #137 Diphacinone D-Block Extreme; Performance Standard Compulsory for all operations (1) Only use at sites where either possums are at very low abundance or being controlled simultaneously; or excluded from bait stations. (6) Do not use where pigs are present/reduce pig numbers prior to operation; or (7) Place bait out of reach of pigs to prevent primary poisoning and reduce possum numbers or exclude possums from bait stations) to help reduce the risk of secondary poisoning of pigs.(8) Bait station design must prevent access to baits by inquisitive birds (e.g. kea, weka and kaka).*



- This aspect of your request is refused under 18(e) as the information does not exist. We can however confirm that the group utilise Philproof Possum bait stations. These are industry standard stations and are commonly used by both DOC and Councils. These are designed to exclude birds and other non-target species.

The bait stations have been elevated to a height of more than one metre which will reduce the probability of feral pigs taking the baits, additionally the group has limited the time baits are in bait stations further reducing the risk of interference or threat to non-target species.

We have been informed by Habitat Tuatēawa that they have been heavily engaged with local pig hunters prior to the operation and have encouraged active hunting to reduce pig numbers where feasible.

This is consistent with section 7 of the Performance Standards within Habitat Tuatēawa's permission and no pre-operation pig monitoring was required as a part of this permission.

5. *Please supply the total number of land tenures within the 178ha (approx) for which the organisation holds written consent and permission to poison as per the 2020 and 2021 operations which included land other than PCL and how many of the total tenures are incorporation members and or paid participants of Habitat Tuatēawa INC. and what remaining portion of the 178ha. (approx) does the incorporation hold independent consent from to enable lawfully access and poison to be laid upon private land as per Schedule 1 of the Community Agreement page 4 SCOPE OF THE AGREEMENT where stated: 'It is important to note this management agreement only authorises the work undertaken on PCL and does not give the organisation authorisation to operation on other land tenures. This should be obtained independently. The information of these other tenures is included in this agreement only for the purposes of understanding the entire operation that the organisation undertakes.'*

- We only hold permissions for work to be undertaken on Public Conservation Land. In relation to your request, this would be the 44ha which comprises land referred to as the Kennedy Bay Block, part of the Coromandel Forest Park.

We do not hold land tenure information in relation to operations on Tuatēawa private land. This aspect of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information requested is not held by us.

We recommend utilising the publicly available information you seek on The Thames Coromandel District Council SMART Maps Portal Property map. This can be accessed at: [Thames-Coromandel District Council - SMART Maps Portal \(tcdc.govt.nz\)](https://tcdc.govt.nz)



6. *Please supply referenced documents in section E of Schedule 1 as they relate to private and public land activities. WTZC-GRP-CAT Habitat Tuatēawa Pest Control - DOC-606067, 6.2 WTZC-GRPHS Habitat Tuatēawa Safety Manual v2 DOC3245297.*
 - We have decided to release requested documents in part, as listed in Table 1 (items 3 and 4).

7. *Please supply all documentation and evidence of consultation and consent given by local Whānau and Hapu required to be undertaken to ascertain acceptance and consent for the 2020, 2021 and 2022 operations to use toxic baits within the Tuatēawa area.*
 - There is no communication plan information for 2020 & 2021 however we have provided documentation in part for the current 2022 operation, as listed in Table 1 (item 5). We can confirm that Tangata Whenua engagement was undertaken in advance of the operation. Treaty partners consulted include: Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Whanaunga, Raukātāuri a Huarere and Ngāti Tamaterā.

8. *Please provide all such reporting documentation held as requirement of the community agreement Schedule 1 Section J: 'J.3(a); In each year during the term of the Agreement, the Organisation will keep a record of the number of volunteers and workday equivalents (8 hours including travel) involved in undertaking the Activity and will share the data collected with the DOC.- The Organisation will also provide the following information requested by DoC: GPS locations of traps, Trap Catch Data, Data collected regarding pest plant infestation or eradication, Operation Plans for baiting programme, Contributions by volunteers (workday equivalents), Group Strategic Plan'*
 - Data collection for community trap lines is not held by DOC and has been migrated to online systems (TRAPNZ) administered by the community group. This information has yet to be collected by us, as such I am unable to provide this information under section 18(g) of the Act.

9. *Please supply a full and detailed account of any and all instances of poisoning or harm to people their property and or their livestock and or pets since incorporation date as outlined in Schedule 2, 6.9, to include but not limited to the poisoning of 'Jed', as well as record of any and all notices of objections, of complaint, of No trespass notices issued and or cease and desist notices given to any incorporation members in the scope of their work and affiliation with Habitat Tuatēawa Inc. and include such actions as taken to record and remedy any and all such issues.*
 - We have not received any information concerning poisoning or harm to property because of any operations undertaken by Habitat Tuatēawa.

We have no knowledge of 'Jed' or any information concerning poisoning or harm to 'Jed'. The information you seek does not exist and this aspect of your request is subsequently refused under section 18(e) of the Act.

Table 1 – Schedule of documents

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	21 July 2022	Habitat Tuatēawa AEE Application - 2022 DOC-7108959	Released in part
2	10 August 2022	Application assessment report- Habitat Tuatēawa DOC7110276	Released in part
3	03 September 2019	WTZC-GRP-CAT Habitat Tuatēawa Pest Control DOC 6060676	Released in part
4	14 December 2017	WTZC-GRPHS Habitat Tuatēawa Safety Manual v2 DOC 3245297	Released in part
5	10 August 2022	Habitat Tuatēawa Communication Plan 2022 DOC 7174626	Released in Part

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 Official Information Act, as applicable:

- personal contact details of officials, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people,
- personal contact details of staff, under section 9(2)(g)(ii) – to protect employees from improper pressure or harassment.
- entity names, under section 9(2)(g)(ii) – to protect members of an organisation from improper pressure or harassment

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests which 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 Official Information Act.

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



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

If you wish to discuss this with the Department, please contact Nick Kelly, Operations Manager on 027 540 6165 or by email nkelly@doc.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Ratana'.

Darryn Ratana
Director Operations Hauraki Waikato Taranaki (Acting)
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai