

15 June 2026

Conservation House  
18-32 Manners Street  
Te Aro, Wellington, 6011  
doc.govt.nz  
Ref: OIAD-8169

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 15 May 2026, in which you asked for:

*“Provide an explanation for the lack of consultation with affected residents in the Blue Mountains area.  
Clarify the decision-making process that authorised this drop.  
Outline what steps will be taken to ensure meaningful engagement with communities before any future operations.  
Confirm when the outstanding OIA information will be provided.”*

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

The Blue Mountains forest has rare and special native plants and animals. The forest is home to native birds such as kākāriki, rifleman/titipounamu, New Zealand falcon/kārearea, and a nationally important population of mohua/yellowhead. Mohua are now only found in a handful of South Island forests. They have dramatically declined across New Zealand because of introduced predators.

I am sharing with you the most recent Blue Mountains mohua monitoring report, from November 2025. You will see that mohua numbers improved following the last Blue Mountains aerial 1080 predator control operation in 2019, but have steadily declined since then, apart from a localised improvement in 2024, due to field trial using experimental 1080 sausage baits. The 1080 sausage bait field trial was completed over a fraction of the Blue Mountains site in 2024. This produced promising stoat control results, and a localised improvement in mohua numbers, however this new tool does not yet have Animal Control and Veterinary Medicines registration, so is not available for widespread use in 2026 or 2027.

Mohua numbers have now reduced to the lowest levels ever recorded in the Blue Mountains. Mohua are particularly vulnerable to predation. The safest and most effective method to control introduced predators over large areas is to use biodegradable bait pellets containing 1080. Consequently, the Department of Conservation has undertaken a possum and stoat control operation in the Blue Mountains over May and June 2026.

The operation was originally planned to occur in early 2026, to control rats as well as possums and stoats. However, rat numbers remained low over summer, so rat control was not needed, only possum and stoat control was required. The period of greatest vulnerability from stoats occurs in late autumn and early winter, consequently DOC delayed the Blue Mountains operation until May 2026, to avoid unnecessary disruption to hunters and other members of the public over summer and autumn.

DOC has consulted with hapū, iwi and key stakeholders including landowners adjacent to the treatment area. This involved discussing the operational plan, listening to any concerns and considering ways to mitigate them. Adjoining landowners and other stakeholders have been notified and there has been a public notice in the local newspaper/s. There was also warning signs placed at entrances to the treatment area immediately prior to the operation. After the operation, we will monitor the numbers of possums and stoats using cameras, and rats using tracking tunnels. We will also monitor mohua numbers to measure how successful we were at reducing predation. After the operation, DOC will contact iwi, hapū, and stakeholders about the results of the operation. We also aim to share insights about the outcomes for native species over time.

Please see the attached fact sheet explaining operational details and a map of the treatment area. Key points in the fact sheet are:

- The non-toxic baits are about 3cm long, cylinder shaped and brown in colour. They weigh about 6 grams. The pellets are deployed at 1.5kg/ha.
- The non-toxic pellets will be applied in the same areas as the toxic bait will be. A helicopter will distribute the pellets according to predetermined flight paths controlled by GPS.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *Provide an explanation for the lack of consultation with affected residents in the Blue Mountains area.*

The Department of Conservation has identified and approached key-stakeholders to consult on the operation. Consultation has included:

- Kaitiaki Rōpū ki Murihiku, comprising Te Rūnaka o Awarua, Waihōpai Rūnaka, and Hokonui Rūnanga. Engagement with Te Ao Marama Inc has been facilitated through the Kaitiaki Rōpū.
- The New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA), Otago Deerstalkers branch, and the Blue Mountains Hunting Liaison Group have been consulted, and a decision was made regarding the use of deer repellent across the operational area.
- Adjoining landowners were consulted regarding potential effects. Water supply intake locations and management plans were confirmed with those who have water supplies.

Impact on farming operations and risk to dogs have been discussed with non-sowing buffers on unfenced boundaries agreed to mitigate risk.

- The Clutha District Council was consulted about the Tapanui water supply catchment. The operation has been carried out previously, and the water supply is to be managed in line with public health permission conditions.

*2. Clarify the decision-making process that authorised this drop.*

Please refer the below documents that I have attached with this response letter. These documents outline DOC's decision-making process.

- DOC Permission Application for Blue Mountains NPCP 2025.
- Invercargill Blue Mountains DOC Permission Approval Letter Performance Std 145 Aerial 2025-2027.
- Invercargill Blue Mountains DOC Permission Approval Amendment Letter Aerial 1080 2026.
- Blue Mountains DOC Permission Approval Amendment Letter 2 Aerial 1080, 2026.
- Blue Mountains VTA Permission 2025-067-SOU.

*3. Outline what steps will be taken to ensure meaningful engagement with communities before any future operations.*

I appreciate that you disagree with DOC's consultation approach, however current legal and best practice standards were met for the 2026 Blue Mountains aerial 1080 predator control operation. I have summed up DOC's consultation standards for aerial 1080 operations below. For more detail, please refer to the attached Animal Pest Operational Planning Standard Operating Procedure.

➤ The objectives of consultation are:

- To seek community and mana whenua views on the effects of the preferred control method and the proposed treatment boundary. DOC is open to discussing any concerns people have about the operation and how modifications to the operational plan may address these concerns.
- Obtain landowner and occupier consents if necessary.

➤ Consultation:

Compulsory target audiences for consultation are:

- Iwi and/or hapū for aerial 1080 operations
- All occupiers and (as far as practicable) owners of land included in and adjacent to the proposed treatment area
- All grazing licence holders

All other target audiences for consultation are discretionary. However, local communities and affected stakeholders must be at least notified of the operation.

➤ Standards

- Appropriate consultation takes place with mana whenua, landowners and occupiers before the operation proceeds.
- The operational plan is consistent with all landowner and occupier consent conditions.
- The communication plan records all landowner and occupier consent conditions and any other agreements made.
- A consultation fact sheet covering the following information about the proposed operation is given to all target audiences, or the information is communicated to them in other ways:
  - a. Location and size of proposed treatment area
  - b. Why control is needed at that site (covering values, pest problem, and intended conservation outcome)
  - c. Past monitoring information demonstrating the benefits of pest control (if available for that site/species)
  - d. Details of the proposed control method
  - e. Purpose of the consultation and any parameters that are fixed, including seeking to understand how the target audience considers the proposed operation could affect them, the indigenous flora and fauna and other natural resources, their ability to protect and manage and use those resources, and how it could impact their wellbeing
  - f. Opportunities for consultation
  - g. Likely timeframe of the proposed operation
  - h. Details of the permissions required and the consultation/notification process
  - i. Key facts about the method
  - j. Risks and mitigation
  - k. Contact details of the person responsible for the operation
  - l. A map of the proposed treatment area that clearly shows the boundaries.

A record is kept of all phone calls and visits in the communication plan, including those for any parties with whom direct contact could not be made.

The outcomes of consultation and obtaining landowner consents, including any risks and threats identified, are recorded in the communication plan.

*4. Confirm when the outstanding OIA information will be provided*

Please note that your OIAD- 6189 has been answered on 28 April 2026.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed in this response letter, subject to information being withheld under the following sections of the Official Information Act:

- section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons

- section 9(2)(g)(ii) – to protect Ministers, officials, or employees from improper pressure or harassment

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 attached documents may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Ben Reddiex  
Director Biodiversity National Programmes  
Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

| Item | Document description                                                                            | Decision         |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1    | Mohua monitoring in the Blue Mountains (Southland) November 2025                                | Released in Part |
| 2    | NPCP Notification Factsheet Blue Mountains                                                      | Released in Part |
| 3    | DOC Permission Application for Blue Mountains NPCP 2025                                         | Released in Part |
| 4    | Invercargill Blue Mountains DOC Permission Approval Letter Performance Std 145 Aerial 2025-2027 | Released in Part |
| 5    | Invercargill Blue Mountains DOC Permission Approval Amendment Letter_1080_Aerial_2026           | Released in Part |
| 6    | Blue Mountains DOC Permission Approval Amendment Letter 2_1080_Aerial_2026                      | Released in Part |
| 7    | Blue Mountains VTA Permission 2025-067-SOU                                                      | Released in Part |
| 8    | Animal Pest Operational Planning Standard Operating Procedure                                   | Released in Part |