17 June 2025

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-39647

[redacted]
By email: [redacted]

Tēnā koe [redacted]

Request for information 2025-166

I refer to your request for information dated 22 May 2025, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 22 May 2025. You have requested the following:

Thank you for your recent email reply it was appreciated but still leaves me unresolved.

"ground-based pest control methods are not practical due to the scale, terrain, and inaccessibility of the area." "ground-based control is carried out through an extensive bait station and trap network in the Wainuiomata Mainland Island." do these two coments not suggest ground control is possible over the larger area if tendered to professional contractors?

Why cherry pick such sentence without further supporting context? " Environmental Risk Management Authority's 2007 reassessment of 1080. While it identified some risks, the reassessment concluded that the benefits to native ecosystems outweigh those risks when the poison is applied responsibly." I actually do not recall this comment from that 2007 report. Within the 2007 report the excetutives summary actually suggested along the lines of "due no current economic alternative to aerial 1080 its use may continue but research and developments should be actively explored." Jan Wrights report 2011 suggested something more similar to that you have stated. Jan Wright had also been introduced to an alternative, automated baitstations, that provides a step change in both landscape implementation economic's and ecological achievement.

When I observed your graph the highs and lows for each treatment have similar 6 points between. Though I am more concerned by the eradic nature of the operation zone from 2013 / 14 onwards. I ask if the two observed treatment zones were aside each other (within km's or

each other) and were they of similar landscape scale? Had the "control" area ever been aerial 1080 managed?

Please advise the years when aerial 1080 was applied in relation to the graph supplied. Also please advise if the toxin used within the fore mentioned baitstations was a chain poison (2nd generation)

I observed the bird monitor data, was that formed from a single species or multiple species. Do you have comparing graphs that display individual monitored bird species along a similar timeline?

I note your team have provided a thoughtful management plan. It displays an extensive effort with the reporting and management of the area. One statement suggested rats returned to pre control densities within 12 months then further within the document it suggests 18 mths.

Within the trapped and baitstation area do the pest numbers also increase due reinvasion or internal breeding success?

The ecological report identifies crayfish as being present but fails to further discuss them, I wonder if any crayfish monitoring concludes existence of juveniles, that existing poplutations continue to successfully breed replacements in the implementation zone where aerial 1080 has been used? Within the areas I work within Puketi Forest crayfish appear absent now, 33 years after the last aerial 1080. Crayfish are suspected to live less than 30 years.

I note warrior traps are being used. We also worked alongside DOC monthly serviced warrior kill traps and dispalyed a 425% increased capture per weekly visit and 625% capture increase per monthly return using EM100 with cyanide in 2016.

How many hectares is the Mainland Island complete with its buffer?

Lastly it was noted 5% RTC was 22% WTI. I ask why when monitored by DOC 5% RTC equals 35% wax tag

Lastly I was of the understand that any person "knowing killing native species" requires an exemption from the Minister of Conservation to remain within legally permitted parameters.

To suggest aerial 1080 doesn't require such exemption is incorrect as even DOC / Ospri operations appear to require an exemption signed off.

I was encouraged that your operations team showed an interest in enviroMate100 technology in 2019 but fully realise EM100 is a specialist tool designed for use by professionally trained "output" pest control contractors with CSL. This enabling the most from the technology targeting possums rats and other pest species through strategy.

Greater Wellington's response follows:

Ground-based control verses aerial control

Ground-based pest control across the entire Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area (WCA) is not financially feasible for Greater Wellington. In large, rugged, and partially remote areas like this, ground control is estimated to cost four to five times more than aerial methods. Additionally, ground-based approaches are less effective at eliminating pests, often leaving pockets of possums and requiring more frequent interventions.

Despite these challenges, we are committed to implementing ground control within the 1,200-hectare mainland island, alongside aerial operations. This approach helps maintain very low pest levels to protect the area's significant biodiversity values. The presence of a 4WD-accessible road around three-quarters of the boundary, along with tens of kilometres of marked routes, makes ground control in this specific area more practical and cost-effective than in the rest of the WCA.

Use of aerial 1080

As noted in our previous responses (LGOIMA requests 2025-082 and 2025-125), aerial 1080 operations do not require a permit under the Wildlife Act 1953. We have been provided confirmation of this from the Department of Conservation.

Possum and rat monitoring

The correlation between Residual Trap Catch (RTC) and Wax Tag Index (WTI) is not well established due to limited research in this area. However, based on data provided by OSPRI, we estimate that a 5% RTC corresponds approximately to a 22% WTI.

It is noted that the KNE operational plan for the WCA references two different timeframes for the return of peak rat populations following aerial 1080 operations. One is based on research conducted in the Tararua Range, while the other is derived from local monitoring within the WCA. We acknowledge that relying on a single, consistent data source would have improved clarity and coherence in the plan.

Wainuiomata mainland island and non-treatment areas

The Wainuiomata mainland island and the adjacent non-treatment area are located in close proximity, with the shortest distance between their respective bird monitoring station networks being approximately 1.5 kilometres. Both areas are similar in size, topography, and forest composition, and have previously been included in aerial 1080 operations. The mainland island and its associated buffer zone cover approximately 2,735 hectares.

Toxins used in bait stations within the mainland island include diphacinone, brodifacoum, and cholecalciferol. Of these, brodifacoum is classified as a second-generation anticoagulant.

Trapping data from the mainland island indicates that in the absence of ongoing control possum populations would increase due to reinvasion. Most captures occur along the western boundary, adjacent to private land, suggesting this is the primary reinvasion pathway.

Further details on pest control and monitoring at the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Key Native Ecosystem site are available at: https://www.gw.govt.nz/annual-monitoring-reports/kne-small-mammal-monitoring/kne-small-mammal-monitoring/ .

Bird monitoring data

The bird monitoring data presented in the graph provided in our previous response (LGOIMA request 2025-215) was compiled from survey data of nine native bird species. Graphs illustrating this data for each species are included in Attachment 1.

These species were selected because they occur in sufficient abundance to allow for the detection of population trends. As a result, species such as the long-tailed and shining cuckoos, falcon, kākā, kākāriki, kingfisher and morepork are not included in the graphs due to their lower detectability.

Aerial 1080 operations were conducted in the WCA during the data collection period, specifically in 2005, 2012, 2018, and 2019. The 2018 operation was limited to the mainland island and buffer zone and was carried out in response to a mast event that led to elevated rat numbers.

While some species showed declines following certain aerial operations, the data does not indicate any consistent negative trends across the monitored species. If such effects were present and detectable, they would likely have been reflected in the data.

Freshwater crayfish monitoring

Our freshwater monitoring staff routinely observe freshwater crayfish of various sizes - from very small to large - within the WCA, and they are frequently captured in macroinvertebrate

samples. Data from formal monitoring, conducted by both our team and external consultants, is entered into the NIWA Freshwater Fish Database, including records for freshwater crayfish. However, the database does not require the recording of size or length, and these details are typically not included. As a result, it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about population structure or trends from the available data.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where appropriate. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā

Lian Butcher
Kaiwhakahaere Matua Taiao | Group Manager Environment