

OCEANAGOLD (NEW ZEALAND)
LIMITED

WAIHI NORTH PROJECT

Ecology – Effects Management

Evidence of **Dr Graham Ussher**
Regarding Technical Assessment of
Ecology Effects and Proposed
Conditions

6 February 2025

INTRODUCTION

My name is Graham Thomas Ussher.

My role in relation to the Waihi North Project (“**WNP**”) has been to provide expert advice in relation to ecology. I write the following two technical reports, which are provided within *Part H – Supporting Technical Assessments* of the application:

1. RMA Ecology Ltd. January 2025. OGNLZ Wharekirauponga mine: potential adverse effects on native frogs. Report prepared for OceanaGold (NZ) Ltd. 30 pages plus Appendices.
2. RMA Ecology Ltd. January 2025. OGNLZ Wharekirauponga mine: Overall summary of ecology matters. Report prepared for OceanaGold (NZ) Ltd. 36 pages.

This evidence has been prepared to accompany the application by Oceana Gold (New Zealand) Limited (“**OGNZL**”) for approvals required for the WNP under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (“**FTAA**”). It has been prepared on the understanding that the process for determining applications under the FTAA does not require a hearing to be held, and accordingly the purpose of this evidence is to confirm that, relative to my area of expertise the reports listed above addressing potential adverse effects on native frogs, and the summary of ecology matters, provide an appropriate description of the relevant environment, the proposed activities comprising the effects of the WNP on that environment, and the way those effects are proposed to be managed.

My findings are set out in full in the reports that are listed above, and which are included within *Part H – Supporting Technical Assessments* of the application.

While this application is not being considered by the Environment Court, I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court of New Zealand Practice Note 2023 and that I have complied with it when preparing this evidence. Other than when I state I am relying on the advice of another person, this evidence is within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

I am a Restoration Ecologist and Director of RMA Ecology Limited, a company specialising in ecological effects assessment and management.

I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Science (Zoology; 1993), Master of Science (Conservation Ecology; 1995) and Doctor of Philosophy (Conservation Management; 2000) from the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

I have over 30 years' experience in environmental research and consulting with a particular focus on land-based ecology and methods for providing improvements to indigenous biodiversity.

I have previously been employed as:

- > A lecturer in Environmental Science at the University of Auckland (2000-2003).
- > Regional ecologist for the (former) Auckland Regional Council (2003 – 2007), with a focus on projects that managed species and ecosystems, and the restoration of Auckland coastal parklands.
- > A Principal Ecologist at Tonkin & Taylor Ltd, Environmental and Engineering Consultants, Auckland (2007 – 2016) where I was a senior-level ecologist and helped lead the Ecology team. Over my period of employment at Tonkin & Taylor Ltd I managed, undertook fieldwork, reported on or reviewed in excess of 120 projects involving ecological effects assessments, management and ecological mitigation/restoration in New Zealand spanning small to large scale effects, and covering all aspects of land use.

I founded RMA Ecology Ltd in 2016. In my role as Director, I have undertaken approximately 360 projects since 2016 that have involved site assessment, impact evaluation, effects management design (including offsetting), management plan preparation, and construction management, including lizard, fish and plant salvage, stream reconstruction, and ecological monitoring and reporting.

My project experience spans land development, infrastructure, power generation, resource extraction, water management, and roading sectors. My involvement in projects ranges from pre-purchase due diligence, preliminary/concept development design, precinct and private plan change assessments, resource consent applications, and construction supervision, implementation, monitoring, and reporting. Most of my project involvement has been in rural and greenfield sites where ecological values have been diverse, degraded and require specific interpretation in regard to national, regional or district policies around biodiversity classification, and interpretation of scale, significance and management of potential adverse effects.

In providing this evidence in relation to ecology, I have considered the following matters as relevant to that topic:

- (a) The project description provided by OGNZL as set out in Section 2 of the Substantive Application prepared by Mitchell Daysh Limited;
- (b) The description of the existing environment, the effects of the WNP on that environment and their significance, and the proposals to manage those effects all as set out in the assessment of environmental effects accompanying the application;

- (c) The technical assessments prepared by ecologists leading the terrestrial and aquatic values assessments, and the data analysis of the WUP project, namely Boffa Mikell, Bioresarches, NIWA, and Lloyd's Ecological Consulting Ltd; and
- (d) The non-ecological technical reports that have been prepared for the WNP project. These are listed in full in the references listed in the drawstring summary of ecology matters and frog risk assessment reports that I have prepared, and include reports prepared by:
 - a. OGNZL – project description
 - b. Williamson Water and Land Advisory Ltd (WWLA) – summary of effects on groundwater and surface water, wetland hydrological assessment.
 - c. Beca – air discharge effects assessment.
 - d. Ozvent Consulting – tunnel ventilation studies
 - e. John Helig – vibration analysis (various memos and reports)
 - f. Tonkin & Taylor Ltd - air quality assessment
 - g. Marshall Day Acoustics - noise effects assessment

CONFIRMATION OF CONTENTS OF REPORT AND PROPOSED CONDITIONS

I confirm that in my opinion the reports that I have prepared regarding effects on native frogs and overall ecology effects contain an accurate and appropriate description of the environment, the actual and potential effects of the WNP, and the recommended actions to manage those effects within my area of expertise.

I confirm that in my opinion the contents of the above listed reports may be relied on in making a decision on the approvals sought for the WNP, and confirm that provided effects within my area of expertise are managed as proposed in the application those effects will not be unacceptable and will be managed to a standard that I consider meets good practice.

I confirm that I have reviewed the conditions that OGNZL proposes for the various approvals being sought as they relate to my area of expertise. I confirm that in my opinion those proposed conditions are appropriate.

Dr Graham Ussher

Dated this 6th day of February 2025