

File ref: FTAA-2511-1140 / 26-BRF-00460

4 May 2026

Jake Bartrom
North Western Mussels Limited (the applicant)
Email: s 9(2)(a)

c/- Rebecca Clarkson
Aquaculture Direct Limited (the agent)
Email: s 9(2)(a)

Dear Jake

Section 28 – Notice of Decisions on the referral application for the Waikato West Coast Mussel Spat Nursery project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

This notice of decisions is for a referral application received from North Western Mussels Limited for the Waikato West Coast Mussel Spat Nursery project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act).

Project details

The project is to establish and operate, using conventional longline methods, a new approximately 700-hectare mussel spat nursery farm at four sites in the coastal marine area of the Waikato west coast for the purpose of spat catching and seed holding and transfer of Greenshell mussels.

The project area covers four sites, approximately 3km offshore from the coastline near Whāingaroa/Raglan, on the west coast of the Waikato Region. A map illustrating the approximate project area is attached in Appendix 2 of this letter.

The project seeks resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) as described in section 42(4)(a) of the Act, which may include prohibited activities. The applicant also intends to seek an aquaculture decision under section 80 of the Act with the substantive application.

Statutory framework for referral applications

The purpose of the Act is to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits.

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Fast-track referrals are administered on behalf of the Minister for Infrastructure by the Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362 | Wellington 6143, New Zealand | NZBN: 9429041908853

The project can only be accepted if the Minister is satisfied the criteria in section 22 are met, which includes being satisfied the project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits and referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost effective way than under normal processes, and is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process.

Under section 21(3) of the Act, the Minister must decline a referral application if:

- the Minister is satisfied that the project does not meet the criteria in section 22
- the Minister is satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity
- the Minister considers they do not have adequate information to inform the decision.

Additionally, the Minister has the discretion to decline a referral application for any other reason, even if the project meets the criteria outlined in section 22 of the Act.

Decision on referral application

The Minister for Infrastructure (the Minister) has decided to accept the referral application under section 21(1)(c) and refer the whole project to the fast-track approvals process under section 26(2)(a). The Minister is satisfied that the project meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act, for the reasons detailed below.

Reasons for accepting referral application

The Minister is satisfied the project:

- a. is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits; and
- b. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process –
 - i. would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes; and
 - ii. is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process.

Specifically, the Minister is satisfied the project meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act as:

- a. the project is a **development project** that would have **significant regional and national benefits** [s22(1)(a)] because it:
 - i. is identified as a priority project in a central government, local government, or sector plan or strategy (for example, in a general policy statement or spatial strategy), or a central government infrastructure priority list [s22(2)(a)(i)] as securing mussel spat supply is a key objective in both the Government's Aquaculture Development Plan and the Waikato Regional Aquaculture Strategy and we consider that the project is a direct response to meeting these objectives
 - ii. will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)] as the estimated delivery of a 35,500 tonne increase in Greenshell mussel production from the project is estimated to have significant economic benefits: contributing \$81.5 million in gross domestic product (GDP) to the Waikato region, a further \$14 million in GDP from infrastructure

investment, additional export revenue of 185 million, create 320 jobs in the Waikato Region and create 28 jobs in the Whāingaroa/Raglan community

- iii. will support primary industries, including aquaculture [s22(2)(a)(v)] as the project will support the aquaculture industry in the Waikato Region and nationally, in particular through its contribution to addressing the issue of mussel spat supply/survival
- iv. will support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events [s22(2)(a)(viii)] as the project will deliver locally sourced mussel spat that will strengthen industry resilience in the instance where out-of-region spat cannot be viably sourced due to the occurrence of natural hazards
- b. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes [s22(1)(b)(i)] because:
 - i. the project involves a prohibited activity under the Operative Waikato Regional Coastal Plan, which would preclude it from progressing through the standard RMA consenting pathway until appeals are resolved on the Proposed Waikato Regional Coastal Plan or the applicant's private plan change application is progressed – prohibited activities may be considered through the fast-track approvals process
 - ii. the applicant has a private plan change and resource consent application which is currently ready for notification, however this is anticipated to take years to resolve at hearing and may be subject to Environment Court appeals. The fast-track approvals process will provide a more timely and cost-effective way for the project to progress, and appeals under the Act are only to the High Court and are limited to points of law
 - iii. the Act precludes public and limited notification
- c. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)] because the project is neither novel in the New Zealand context nor beyond the scope of what a panel would typically assess under the RMA.

The Minister is satisfied there is no reason they must decline the project under section 21(3) of the Act. The Minister is also satisfied there is no reason to decline the project under section 21(4) or (5) of the Act.

Specified matters for accepted referral application

1. North Western Mussels Limited who lodged the referral application are specified as the person authorised to lodge a substantive application for the project under section 27(2).
2. In relation to a substantive application for the project:
 - a. a deadline for lodging the application applies under section 27(3)(b)(i), the application must be lodged by two years from the date of issue of this letter
 - b. the persons or groups from whom a panel must invite comments from in addition to any specified in section 53 – s27(3)(b)(iii): the Minister for Trade and Investment.

Other matters

Under section 28 of the Act, the Ministry for the Environment must also give written notice of decisions made by the Minister on an accepted referral application to the parties specified in Appendix 1 of this letter.

If you have any queries about this notice of decisions, please email referral@fasttrack.govt.nz and include the name of the lead contact – Whitney Nelson. If you have any queries about the substantive process, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz, or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 225 537).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S Frame', is centered on the page.

Stephanie Frame

Manager – Fast-track Operations

Appendix 1: Section 28 – Notice of Minister’s decision on accepted referral application

Appendix 2: Approximate project area

Appendix 1: Section 28 – Notice of Minister’s decision on accepted referral application

Section 28(1)(a) – The applicant	North Western Mussels Limited
Section 28(1)(ii) – Anyone invited to comment on the application	
<i>Relevant local authorities</i>	Waikato Regional Council
<i>Relevant portfolio Ministers</i>	Minister for the Environment Minister for Oceans and Fisheries Minister of Conservation Minister for Economic Growth Minister for Regional Development
<i>Relevant administering agencies</i>	Ministry for the Environment Department of Conservation
<i>The Māori groups under s17(d)</i>	Te Whakakitenga o Waikato Incorporated MAC-01-04-012 / CIV-2017-404-575 Te Ruunanga o Ngaati Mahuta ki te Hauaaauru, CMT PCR MAC-01-04-001 / CIV-2017-419-080 Kawhia Tangata, Aotea Whenua, Whaingaroa Moana CMT MAC-01-04-014 / CIV-2017-419-084 Ngaa marae o te takutai moana o Waikato-Tainui, CMT PCR MAC-01-04-011 / CIV-2017-419-083 Tainui hapu o Tanui Waka, CMT PCR MAC-01-03-005 Ngāti Māhanga MAC-01-04-010 Ngāti Whakamarurangi/Tainui ie Ngāti Koata, Ngāti Motemote, Ngāti Tahinga Te Ohu Kaimaoana Aotea Harbour and Adjacent Waters Mataitai Reserve - Fisheries Notice 2008 (No. F433) Ngāti Tahinga
<i>Any other persons</i>	Deputy Director General of Fisheries New Zealand Chief Executive of Aquaculture New Zealand
Section 28(2) – Other parties for an accepted referral application	
<i>The Panel Convener</i>	Including all the information received by the Minister as required by section 28(4).
<i>Any iwi authorities or Treaty settlement entities (other than those that must be notified as identified above) that the Minister considers have an interest in the matter</i>	No additional iwi authorities or Treaty settlement entities have been identified beyond those listed above.
<i>Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)</i>	Including all the information received by the Minister as required by section 28(4).
<i>If a proposed approval would require an aquaculture decision under section 80, the relevant chief executive</i>	The Director-General of Ministry for Primary Industries as the relevant chief executive.
<i>Relevant administering agencies</i>	As identified above.

Appendix 2: Approximate project area

