

Fast-Track Pre-Lodgement Notification Response

Purpose - This document provides a response from DOC following notification in writing by an application pre-lodgement.

Project Details

Project name:	Pouarua Water Storage Scheme
Engagement type:	Pre-lodgement engagement Referral Application
Response sought from DOC	Summary response within 20 working days – by 5 May
Applicant/agent:	Wi Pere Trust
Proposal overview:	This project is for the construction and operation of a dam and reservoir on the Pouarua Stream in Gisborne.
Location:	Tangihanga Station, Gisborne
Date pre-lodgement request received:	2 April 2026
Documents provided by the applicant	Proof of Concept Scoping Report Notification letter DOC Notification form Meeting and associated emails – 17 April 2026
Summary of pre-lodgement engagement: The applicant sought a response from DOC within 20 working days. A meeting was held between DOC and the applicant on 17 April 2026. DOC requested additional information on the application which the applicant provided in part on 22 April 2026. This is a brief response given the information provided and the timeframe requested by the applicant.	
Fast track project lead DOC:	Emma Fahey – Permissions Advisor - Fast Track (National Office)
DOC Permissions/ Approvals Identified by applicant in pre-lodgement request as potentially required:	• Complex freshwater fisheries activity (Freshwater Fisheries Regulations) • Authority under Wildlife Act 1953

DOC Commentary on Fast Track approvals and permissions identified:	Wildlife Act Permissions DOC has not been provided with any ecological surveys related to this proposal. It is likely that authorisation under the Wildlife Act 1953 to capture, handle and relocate lizards will be required (and for incidental harm). Surveys will need to be undertaken to confirm the presence or absence of any protected wildlife to determine if additional approvals are required. DOC discussed the potential species that may be present on the site in a meeting with the applicant's terrestrial ecologist on 17 April 2026. The following species were discussed: Lizard species identified within 15km of site: • Copper skink (At Risk – declining) • Barking gecko (At Risk - declining) • Northern grass skink (Not Threatened) • Raukawa gecko (Not Threatened) Bats have been recorded within 25km of site. Long-tailed bat (Threatened – Nationally Critical). Further survey work will be needed to determine presence or absence of bats. Avifauna potentially present near the site, especially within river and riparian wetland: ▪ Pied shag (At Risk – recovering) ▪ Black shag (At Risk - relict) ▪ Little black shag (At Risk – naturally uncommon) ▪ New Zealand dabchick (Threatened – nationally increasing) ▪ Grey duck (Threatened – nationally vulnerable) ▪ Bittern (Threatened – nationally critical) ▪ North Island weka (At Risk - relict) There are no records of the North Island weka being present on the site, but it is suspected to be present. The potential dam has a large footprint so there may be need to capture weka if they are found to be present. A wildlife approval will be needed if this is the case. Of particular concern for avifauna is the proposal for ramping of the dam once operational. The effects of ramping on breeding birdlife if water levels rise by 5m as proposed could be significant, especially in shallower areas. The application for wildlife approval needs to include all the information listed in Schedule 7, Clause 2 (FTTA). Guidance for applying for a wildlife approval under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 can be viewed here: Guidance for applying for a wildlife approval <u>guidance-for-applying-for-a-wildlife-approval.pdf</u> DOC considers that adverse effects on conservation values, including indigenous biodiversity, that arise as a result must be appropriately
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	managed. This is of particular importance where the species affected are Threatened or At-Risk and where those effects may be cumulative. Freshwater Fisheries Regulations There is limited fish survey information available in the area, but DOC suspects present on site could be: • Longfin eel (At Risk – declining) • Inanga (Threatened – nationally vulnerable) Wetlands are present at the proposed site, and it is likely a complex freshwater fisheries approval will be needed for the dam and potentially other aspects of the project. There is potential that the dam would significantly impact fish passage and water quality downstream of the site. Additional information would help to clarify this risk. DOC also notes that there is a regional whitebait fishery nearby. The updated Fish Passage Guidelines (Version 2.0) set out best-practice approaches and design standards for providing fish passage: https://niwa.co.nz/freshwater/fish-passage-home/new-zealand-fish-passage-guidelines.
Treaty partners:	In the time available, DOC has not carried out a process to identify Treaty partners with interests relevant to this site. DOC encourages the applicant to engage directly with relevant Māori groups as required by section 29 of the Act.
Treaty Settlement implications/considerations:	DOC is aware of the following Treaty settlement obligations that may be relevant to this site • Rongowhakaata Claims Settlement Act 2012 • Ngai Tāmanuhiri Claims Settlement Act 2012
Potential Resource Management Act (RMA) considerations and effects:	Potential issues to consider: No ecological surveys have been provided to DOC at this time. If the project is referred, additional information about the values of the site and any impacts of the proposal to habitat and indigenous vegetation will need to be provided as part of the substantive application. It is recommended that any historical ecological surveys are updated to ensure they reflect the current conditions of the site. DOC notes that a range of native fish species have been identified in lowland waterways near the site. Surveys should be undertaken to confirm the presence or absence of these species within the project footprint.
DOC Statutory Planning Document considerations in relation to site (e.g. CGP/CMS/CMP):	The relevant statutory documents for this application include: Conservation General Policy: Policies and plans East Coast Conservation Management Strategy

	Consideration should be given to: • Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects, including culminative effects, • conserving any threatened and at-risk species to ensure their persistence, • protecting and restoring relevant indigenous ecosystems; and • maintaining habitat connectivity and water quality of waterways.
Any specific information requests to applicant(s)/agent for pre-app engagement at this point:	Further engagement is recommended prior to lodging a substantive application if the project progresses as this would allow DOC to give more focused feedback on the application. DOC has requested additional information on: • Freshwater related information, for example species lists, impacts of the dam on fish passage, hydrological changes, and sediment movements. • Any terrestrial or freshwater offsetting proposed in relation to the project. A full ecological assessment, including assessment of the actual and potential effects on vegetation, freshwater, and fauna including fish passage, avifauna, lizards, and bats should be conducted.
Additional Notes:	While DOC will assist applicants as much as we can when they engage pre-lodgement notification, it is the applicants' responsibility to comply with the FTAA and to ensure they have applied for all permissions they need. Note that a panel will invite the statutory bodies listed in clause 4 of Schedule 7 to comment on the application (NZCA, conservation boards, Fish and Game Council, and Game Animal Council). We encourage applicants to engage with these bodies in advance of filing a substantive application. We would also point the applicant to the following guide when preparing a referral application for lodgement: Referral-application-form-guidance-effective-31-March-2026.pdf