

9(2)(a)

20-D-01512

Dear 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 30 July 2020 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

At our meeting with you we discussed MfE providing us with a report on the state of the waters within the catchment, the amount of nitrate being discharged over and above the one plan and national standards, and how the exemption of the Lake Horowhenua catchment would be implemented.

We also discussed the application by Horizons Regional Council for funding for freshwater clean up projects within the Lake Horowhenua catchment, this was something we were unaware of and had not been consulted by Horizons. I would be very grateful if you could provide me with a copy of the application submitted by Horizons RC, or direct me to where I could get a copy if you are unable to do this.

One last thing, am I able to access information relating to submissions made to the proposed NPS-FM particularly those relating to the Horowhenua district.

The Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) has provided information in scope of your request below.

1. Ministry process used to select initial 'Quick start' projects from the "Green Projects" list

Assessment Process

1. Over the period of April and May 2020, regional councils generated a list of 284 projects, with a total estimated funding requirement of approximately \$2 billion, in response to a request from Associate Minister Sage's "Green Package".
2. The projects were jointly assessed by six experts from the Ministry, two experts from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), and one expert from Department of Conservation using a weighted assessment criteria that prioritised environmental benefits, job creation, and iwi/community partnerships.

3. A short list of 48 projects was identified, which were the top 25 highest scoring proposals overall, top 5 proposals per assessor, and top proposal per region and removing duplicates. Further due diligence on these projects was carried out with regional councils and an independent contractor to gain greater certainty on:

- a. community and iwi support, including approach to engagement and partnership arrangements
- b. number of jobs created in first three months and year
- c. capacity of the organisation to get underway quickly
- d. achievability of co-funding levels
- e. scalability
- f. feedback on local priorities.

2. Horizons Regional Councils – Lake Horowhenua wetlands application

Please refer to Appendix 1.

3. Trips to Horowhenua

On 10 June, and again on 24 June, officials from MfE and MPI travelled to Levin to meet with representatives of various iwi and hapū with interests in the Horowhenua area. The possibility of Government investment as a contribution to improving the health of waterways was raised at those meetings, but only in very general terms and no commitments were made.

On 7 July the Minister for the Environment, Hon David Parker, travelled to Levin and met with iwi/hapū. At a summit attended by representatives of¹ Muaupoko Tribal Authority, Tamarangi hapū, Horizons, Horowhenua District Council, local growers and Horticulture New Zealand, the proposed wetland investment was discussed; with the Government having confirmed its commitment to making funds available two days earlier. Jon Royguard of Horizons briefed the Summit on the proposal and the options being developed in terms of design and location. Hon David Parker made it clear that ongoing funding from the Government depended on the project being supported by reductions in loads, including from growers and farmers, across the catchment, and the involvement of relevant iwi/hapū.

4. Project approval

The project was reviewed by the Jobs for Nature Reference Group on 25 June 2020, and approved by Sustainable Land Use Ministers on 3 July 2020. Funding for the project was announced on 5 July 2020. All approved projects can be found at:

<https://www.mfe.govt.nz/funding/jobs-for-nature/funding-for-improving-freshwater>

5. Project planning phase (Stage 2)

The project is currently in the project planning phase (Stage 2). The project has some conditions of funding identified during the assessment process. One of these is that Horowhenua District Council and Iwi groups involved in this project must provide a support letter before the deed is finalised.

¹ Note Te Runanga o Raukawa was invited but was not represented at the Summit.

The Ministry for the Environment will work with Horizons Regional Council to ensure these requirements are included in the deed of funding.

Once the conditions of the deed are met, the project will move into a deed of funding. The target date for deed of funding being finalised is 15 September 2020.

6. Report on the state of the waters within the catchment

Please refer to attached report produced by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). MPI will publish a supporting report within two weeks that provides more detail about how this modelling was done. That report is being peer reviewed now. As soon as it is ready, officials will ensure you get a copy of it. In addition, further work will be undertaken to better understand the state of waterbodies across the catchment and what is driving the degradation of those waterbodies. This work will form a key part of a collaborative work programme aimed at making real improvements in the health of waterbodies across the catchment.

7. Submissions made to the proposed NPS-FM

The summary of submissions on national direction for our essential freshwater can be found here:

<https://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media/Fresh%20water/action-for-healthy-waterways-summary-of-submissions.pdf>

You can also find a spreadsheet summary and the full submissions from most organisation, councils, sector representatives and iwi. Submissions from "individuals" and other classifications have not been published, given privacy concerns and the volume of content that would need to be assessed as containing private information. The spreadsheet and submissions can be found here: <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/consultation/action-for-healthy-waterways>

Please note that due to the public interest in our work the Ministry for the Environment publishes responses to requests for official information on our [OIA responses page](#) shortly after the response has been sent. If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Executive Relations team: ministerials@mfe.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Lorena Stephen
Director Sustainable Land Use Delivery

Appendix 1 – Horizons Regional Council – Lake Horowhenua wetlands application

Council	Horizons Regional Council
Project (Simple name)	Lake Horowhenua wetlands
Description (Describe content and intent of project)	<p>Lake Horowhenua, a taonga for local iwi/hapū, is in a degraded state below many national bottom lines for water quality and has shown some declines in water quality since the turn of this century. The Lake Horowhenua Accord is a collaborative effort that has invested with Crown support in the restoration of Lake Horowhenua through a range of projects.</p> <p>Existing investments such as a major sediment trap and lake weed harvesting are modelled to provide significant water quality benefits however more will be needed to address water quality in the lake, particularly to manage nutrient inputs. The Arawhata sub catchment of the lake has high nitrogen concentrations (worse than the national bottom line and was at one stage the second highest median nitrogen concentration of any monitored stream in the country) and is the significant source of the flow, nutrient and sediment to the lake.</p> <p>The catchment has a large proportion of highly productive soils that are used for horticultural purposes and the future of horticultural businesses on these soils is at risk if water quality interventions are not made. This project proposes a wetland complex as a major water quality intervention and a linked programme of catchment works to the drainage scheme that include additional water quality interventions (sediment traps, wetlands etc.) The main target for the wetland complex is reduced nitrogen concentrations. The project has been developed over time by an alliance involving a range of stakeholders including councils, horticulture growers, iwi and environmental groups. Horizons has commissioned work on the network of water quality interventions and the wetland complex design.</p>
Key outputs (eg, traps set, km of fencing, number of plants, number of fish passages, number of workshops, etc)	<p>Year 1 - within 3 to 6 months employment of project manager.</p> <p>Year 1 - decision on the land that the wetland complex will be built, finalisation of design and consent requirements confirmed, consent application lodged. Property purchase/ legal arrangement in place.</p> <p>Year 1 - completion of plan for the broader catchment (other water quality interventions)</p> <p>Year 2 - consent granted.</p> <p>Year 2 - 5 construction of sediment treatment devices, drainage upgrades.</p> <p>Year 2-5 - construction of wetland module cells for wetland and planting of wetland species and maintenance of species planted in previous years. Monitoring of effectiveness for sediment and nitrogen.</p>
Owner (Asset owner and proposer)	Horizons Regional Council
Theme	Wetland

Total cost over life of project (maximum length of project is 5 years) (eg, \$1,000,000)	\$12,500,000
Crown Contribution	\$11,200,000
Co-funding Total amount of co- funding confirmed over life of the project (Please note if co- funding is in cash or in-kind; eg, Cash \$500,000; In-kind \$250,000)	<p>\$1,300,000 made up of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horticulture grower contribution of \$1,150,000 subject to some or all of the wetland treatment capacity being able to be used as an offset to farm leaching. Cash contribution toward land purchase if the proposed dairy farm is purchased, may be a land value contribution if existing horticultural is used as the site for the wetland. • \$150,000 of in-kind contribution from Horizons (subject to Council approval). • Please note Horizons is currently investing in the order of \$150,000 to \$200,000 in science to investigate wetland design options and the configuration of the broader catchment works to inform long term plan discussions. There is a drainage scheme budget which is signalled to increase via the LTP.
Cost Year 1 Total cost over year one (eg, \$1,000,000)	\$5,200,000
Cost Year 2 Total cost over year two (eg, \$1,000,000)	\$2,500,000
Cost Year 3 Total cost over year three (eg, \$1,000,000)	\$2,500,000
Cost Year 4 Total cost over year four (eg, \$1,000,000)	\$2,000,000
Cost Year 5 Total cost over year five (eg, \$1,000,000)	\$300,000

Potential Start Date (When could this project start)	1/07/2020
Constraints requiring Govt assistance (Any legislative, consenting or other barriers that would need to be overcome to make this project shovel-ready)	Resource consents are required. Our assessment is that these are for land disturbance – discretionary activity. A further check on consenting requirements will be required as the design is finalised. Land purchase or legal arrangement around land use will be required.
Employment Totals Number of FTE's created over the life of the project. (E.g. 1 Project Manager over 5 years is 5 FTE; however number of FTEs only, no text)	45
Environmental Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in nitrogen levels allowing progression towards water quality targets and enhancements of water quality especially with Lake Horowhenua and the Arawhata Stream being in Band D for TN and Nitrate under the NPSFM. • Improvement of other water quality parameters (including sediment & phosphorus instream) • Improvement of water quality in Lake Horowhenua. Improvement in native fish populations. • Reversion of land back to a natural wetland where one previously existed. • Improvements in habitat for wetland bird and plant species. • Reduces nitrogen leaching within the catchment with conversion of an existing dairy farm land or horticultural farmland into a wetland. • A further environmental mitigation to add to the other water quality interventions in the catchment towards improving water quality outcomes. Other interventions include the existing sediment trap, planned lake weed harvesting and investigation into stormwater treatment and management (including consenting processes). • There is an existing intensive monitoring programme within the catchment to provide information on outcomes and further monitoring of the effectiveness of the intervention will be built into the project.

Social & Economic Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of local people for: 1) construction, 2) planting, and 3) on-going maintenance. • Improvement of cultural values. • Improvement of water quality leading to greater community use of an important natural resource on Levin's front door. • On-going employment of maintenance of the wetland. Flood attenuation in the catchment. • A local community conservation area that restores ecological and cultural values of Muaūpoko iwi and the wider community. • Muaūpoko are tangata whenua and owners of Punahau. The wetland project provides a tangible way to improve relationships of Muaūpoko and other iwi with lands and waterways. • Improved drainage management in the catchment leading to less overflows of the drainage network onto cultivated land moving sediment into the water ways and damaging crops. • Further mitigation of the impacts of land use on water quality providing an increased ability for horticulture growers to continue to produce food crops on elite and versatile soils and maintain an important part of New Zealand's fresh vegetable supply.
Community Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horticulture is a significant employer in the Horowhenua area. However, this land use contributes to the degraded lake water quality. • The construction of the proposed wetland will help towards community wellbeing by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Continuing employment in the Horowhenua region; ◦ Improving the health of Lake Horowhenua and people that have ties to it; and ◦ the Lake becomes a source of mana and pride. • Some in the local community are very vocal about wanting to see the return of wetlands in the area. The close proximity to the road and town will make this a source of pride for the local community. • Alignment with Councils current Freshwater projects.
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Horowhenua Accord • Lake Horowhenua Trust • Muaūpoko Tribal Authority • Horowhenua District Council • Levin Horticulture growers • CRIs • Arawhata Wetland Alliance Collaborative Group • Raukawa iwi

Capacity and Capability

What is the capability and/or capacity of the agency and its partners to quickly employ staff, and have the project well underway in the first year of funding? What Governance structure will be put in place to ensure this project is successful?

Horizons Regional Council has experience in delivering on Government Funded projects, including those requiring consents in the Horowhenua Catchment (including the sediment trap in the Arawhata catchment). The team has experience scientists, engineers and practitioners to support project management and link with suppliers such as planners, lawyers, engineers, scientists for design, consenting and construction. Horizons River Management team manage the existing drainage network. Horizons staff have worked with the horticulture growers, iwi/hapū and others in the catchment through the Lake Accord and prior to that.

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