Ministry for the Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

4 September 2025

OIAD-1722

9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 13 August 2025 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) of the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry):

> *Kia ora: RMA Reform Minister Chris Bishop told Newsroom yesterday the role of water conservation orders in the replacement RMA system would be confirmed through the bill process, introduced by the end of the year. WCOs are compared to national park protections, so they are very much in the public interest. With respect, can MfE and DOC please release the following information: A list of all non-government individuals, groups, and organisations it has met with (from July 1, 2024 to today's date) to discuss water conservation orders, as the primary topic. Please provide the dates, venue (including online), and the time spent with each. If MfE and DOC weren't the only agencies involved in such meetings please notify me immediately so I can ask the same questions of those other agencies. That is what I'd call the baseline information of my request. Separately, because I realise this part will be treated differently, I'd like to request (over the same period) all associated documentation (eg, briefing documents, presentations, reports, written feedback, etc) exchanged between MfE, DOC and these parties. What I'm asking for is substantive information, not administrative exchanges or correspondence. Please also release all advice provided to ministers about WCOs over the same period, please.*

I have identified five documents in scope of your request, as listed in the document schedule below.

Documents 1-3 were prepared to support ministerial decisions on the case ENV-2023-CHC-000138. I am therefore withholding these documents under section 9(2)(h) of the Act, to maintain legal professional privilege.

I am withholding the remaining two documents under sections 9(2)(h) and 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act, to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.

In terms of section 9(1) of the Act, I am satisfied that, in the circumstances, the withholding of information in this request is not outweighed by other considerations that render it desirable to make the information available in the public interest.

I am refusing the part of your request for "*A list of all non-government individuals, groups, and organisations it has met with (from July 1, 2024 to today's date) to discuss water conservation orders, as the primary topic"* under section 18(e) of the Act, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist; the Ministry has not met with any individuals, groups or organisations to discuss water conservation orders within the requested time period.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decisions relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Please note that due to the public interest in our work, the Ministry publishes responses to requests for official information shortly after the response has been sent on our website at: https://environment.govt.nz/about-us/official-information-act-requests/. If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Ministerial Services team at: ministerials@mfe.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā



Sara Clarke
General Manager – System Enablement and Oversight
Ministry for the Environment | Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Document schedule

#	Date	Code	Title	Decision	Grounds	Link/Notes
1	8 Oct 2024	BRF-5387	Briefing: Rakaia Water Conservation Order Declarations - Affidavit evidence	Withheld in full	9(2)(h)	
2	7 Nov 2024	BRF-5528	Aide Memoire: Rakaia Water Conservation Order Declarations - Legal submissions	Withheld in full	9(2)(h)	
3	7 Nov 2024	BRF-5528 Appendix	Appendix 1: Declarations	Withheld in full	9(2)(h)	
4	2 July 2025	N/A - email	[Title withheld]	Withheld in full (including title)	9(2)(h)	
5	31 July 2025	BRF-6467	[Title withheld]	Withheld in full (including title)	9(2)(f)(iv)	