

Hon Penny Simmonds

Minister for the Environment
Minister for Vocational Education
Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment



31 October 2025

PSME-OI-25-051/OIAM-878

Dr Russel Norman
Executive Director
Greenpeace Aotearoa
russel.norman@greenpeace.org

Dear Russel

Thank you for your email of 2 October 2025 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

I was following up your statements in this story -

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/574719/environment-minister-accused-of-using-position-to-influence-council-s-legal-process> Can you please tell me under the OIA:

- 1. How many regional councils have you written to since you've been a Minister, regarding the granting of resource consents to particular businesses. Please provide copies of all these letters or emails.*
- 2. What correspondence have you received in response to these letters or email? Please provide copies of all these letters or emails.*
- 3. Do you now accept that Horizons Regional Council was correct in its handling of the particular consent applications referenced in the RNZ story linked above? If so why? If not why not?*

I have identified nine items in scope of parts one and two of your request, as listed in the attached document schedule. I am releasing these nine items to you in full. Furthermore, I have identified and included an additional four items. These are emails/letters that were recently sent to all regional and unitary councils. These were not considered to be in-scope of your original request as they do not relate to "particular businesses", however they may be of interest as they relate to "granting of resource consents" more generally. A copy of this letter can be found here: [Letter to Regional Council Chairs and Chief Executives](#). Please note an identical letter was sent to Unitary Council Chairs and Chief Executives.

Note that your request has been interpreted as how many regional councils that I have written to "regarding the granting of resource consents to particular businesses". Please be advised that I write to regional councils on a wide range of matters that were not considered as in-scope of this request.

Regarding the third part of your request, following receipt of the letter from farmers in the Santoft area, the Minister of Agriculture, Hon Todd McClay, the Associate Minister for the Environment, Hon Andrew Hoggard, and I met with the farmers to better understand their concerns and the steps they have taken towards progressing their applications for replacement consents.

I wrote to the Council to seek their views, as well as to understand what could be done to achieve a timely solution for the affected farmers, particularly given the Government's commitment to helping the primary sector grow New Zealand's economy.

While appropriately addressing environmental matters, I am confident that the Council and the farmers will be able to work together to achieve a resolution that supports the continued viability of farming in the region.

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 contact my office if you have any queries about this response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Simmonds', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Penny Simmonds
Minister for the Environment

Document schedule

#	Date	Title	Decision	Grounds
1	01/09/2025	Email communication – PS-COR491 Letter from Minister Simmonds	Released in full	N/A
2	01/09/2025	PS-COR1491 Letter to Horizons Regional Council	Released in full	N/A
3	01/09/2025	Email communication – RE PS-COR491 Letter from Minister Simmonds	Released in full	N/A
4	01/09/2025	20250901 Hon Penny Simmonds PS-COR491	Released in full	N/A
5	04/09/2025	20250904_Minister_Simmonds	Released in full	N/A
5.1	September 2023	GW_2023_Rangitikei Groundwater Management Zone Allocation Limit	Released in full	N/A
5.2	September 2024	GW_2024_Santoft Groundwater Model and Rangitikei Groundwater Management Zone Allocation Limit Technical Review	Released in full	N/A
5.3	N/A	Draft Condition Schedule (5 year term)	Released in full	N/A
5.4	N/A	Draft Condition Schedule (15 year term)	Released in full	N/A
6	30/09/2025	Email communication - Letter from Ministers regarding consenting requirements (Regional Councils)	Released in full	N/A
6.1	30/09/2025	Email attachment: CB-COR2156 – Letter to all Regional Councils	Released in full	N/A
7	30/09/2025	Email communication - Letter from Ministers regarding consenting requirements (Unitary Councils)	Released in full	N/A
7.1	30/09/2025	Email attachment: CB-COR2156 – Letter to all Unitary Councils	Released in full	N/A