



8 April 2025

Our Ref: 2562-21

Environment Southland
Alexandra Smith

VIA EMAIL: Alexandra.Smith@es.govt.nz

Dear Alex,

RESPONSE TO FURTHER INFORMATION REQUEST APP-20242608 – WAIKAKA GOLD MINES LIMITED

This letter is in response to an email dated 11 November 2024 in which further information was requested (RFI) in relation to application APP-20242608 to establish and operate a gold mine at 972 Waikaka Road, Chatton North, Southland. To assist Council in undertaking their assessment, we provide the following documents in support of this submission:

- **Attachment [A] Ross Dungey Consulting Limited Report dated March 2025**
- **Attachment [B] WGML Plans WK0596 and WK0594**
- **Attachment [C] Environmental Associates Ltd Letter 27 January 2025**
- **Attachment [D] RJ Hall and Associates Letter dated 17 February 2025**

We respond to the various questions raised by topic in the below sections.

1 - 11. Freshwater Ecology

Please refer to the report from Ross Dungey Consulting Limited, dated March 2025 (**Attachment [A]**).

Wetlands

Specifically in regard to the question on wetlands, we have undertaken extensive additional research to determine if the ponds on site are wetlands or not. Key to the planning definitions

appears to be whether the ponds are natural or artificially formed. Mr Dungey is of the opinion that the ponds are remnant dredge ponds from previous dredge mining activities on the site.

The following plans prepared by WGML are provided as **Attachment [B]**:

- WK0596 overlays the mine path with ponds numbered to correspond with Mr Dungey's report. Ponds within areas 2, 6, and 7 (as numbered by Mr Dungey) fall within the mine footprint area. Pond area 8 is on the boundary of the 30m mine buffer, which is addressed below to take a conservative approach.
- WK0594 provides the former dredge mining permit boundaries and extent of known activity. It is apparent that all of the ponds fall within area previously dredged.

The Resource Management Act defines a wetland as "*permanently or intermittently wet areas, shallow water, and land water margins that support a natural ecosystem of plants and animals that are adapted to wet conditions*". On the basis of Mr Dungey's assessment we conclude that the ponds in areas 2, 6, 7 and 8 would likely meet the definition of a wetland under the Resource Management Act.

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (amended October 2024) (**NPS-FM**) defines a natural inland wetland as:

"a wetland (as defined in the Act) that is not: ...(c) a wetland that has developed in or around a deliberately constructed water body, since the construction of the water body..."

The ponds appear to be deliberately constructed as remnants from dredge mining. On this basis the ponds are not considered to meet the definition of a natural inland wetland under the NPS-FM.

The relevant definition in the Regional Water Plan for Southland (**RWPS**) is:

A naturally occurring wetland includes:

- (a) wetlands which are part of river, stream and lake beds;*
- (b) natural ponds, swamps, marshes, fens, bogs, seeps, brackish areas, mountain wetlands, and other naturally wet areas that support an indigenous ecosystem of plants and animals specifically adapted to living in wet conditions, and provide a habitat for wildlife;*
- (c) coastal wetlands above mean high water springs;*

but excludes:

- (d) wet pasture or where water temporarily ponds after rain or pasture containing patches of rushes (*juncus* species)*
- (e) oxidation ponds;*
- (f) artificial wetlands used for wastewater or stormwater treatment;*
- (g) artificial farm dams and detention dams;*



- (h) artificial watercourses such as farm drainage canals;*
- (i) reservoirs for firefighting, domestic or community water supply;*
- (j) temporarily ponded rainfall.*

Dredge ponds are not explicitly provided for in the definition above, however we consider they align more with farm dams, and are not a natural pond, hence are not a *naturally occurring wetland* under the RWPS.

The Proposed Southland Water & Land Plan (**PSLWP**) definition of natural wetland:

Includes permanently or intermittently wet areas, shallow water, and land water margins that support a natural ecosystem of plants and animals that are adapted to wet conditions, but excludes:

- a) wet pasture, damp gully heads, or where water temporarily ponds after rain or pasture containing patches of rushes;*
- b) effluent ponds;*
- c) artificial storage facilities and detention dams;*
- d) artificial watercourses such as conveyance and drainage canals;*
- e) reservoirs for firefighting, domestic or community water supply; and*
- f) engineered soil conservation structures.*

As above, dredge ponds are not specifically provided for, but noting the man-made formation of the dredge ponds we consider that they would be more aligned with farm dams or artificial watercourses and would not be included in the PSLWRP definition of a natural wetland.

In summary, the RMA does not differentiate between natural and artificial wetlands, and hence the dredge ponds are most likely a 'wetland' under the RMA. However, the dredge ponds fall within the exclusions relating to artificial water bodies under the NPS-FM, RWPS and PSLWP, hence there are no rules under the regional plans or the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater that are relevant to this proposal.

11. Erosion and Sediment Control Plan

We propose to provide an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (**ESCP**) prior to the commencement of work near to surface water bodies and propose that this requirement is included in the consent conditions. Given the nature of the project we consider that appropriate erosion and sediment management is entirely feasible on the site and that suitable conditions to ensure that effects on the environment are acceptable are able to be applied.

Attachment [I] to the AEE included proposed conditions 69 and 70 relating to the requirement for a site-specific ESCP, and we further note proposed conditions 46-49 relate to treatment facilities and discharge standards. We consider that these conditions can be adapted to provide for appropriate erosion and sediment control outcomes.



12. Baseline water chemistry (question 12)

Please refer to the Environmental Associates Ltd Letter 27 January 2025 (**Attachment [C]**).

13. Contaminated land (question 13)

The area in question falls within the extent of the proposed mine pit. While the PSI considered agricultural land uses, the report confirms that specific soil sampling of that location has not been undertaken. To that end we propose conditions that provide for sampling and appropriate management of soils prior to the commencement of earthworks in that area. Suggested drafting of such a condition follows:

Prior to the commencement of earthworks within the area bounded by the following map coordinates:

North - 169.0000894°E 45.9488537°S
East - 169.0013425°E 45.9495540°S
West - 168.9991484°E 45.9493565°S
South - 169.0001806°E 45.9501748°S

The Consent Holder must submit a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) and Site Management Plan (SMP) prepared by a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Practitioner (SQEP). An SMP is not required if the SQEP advises that, based on the results of the DSI, soil contamination does not exceed the applicable standard.

The area identified by the above grid coordinates is shown in **Figure 1** below.

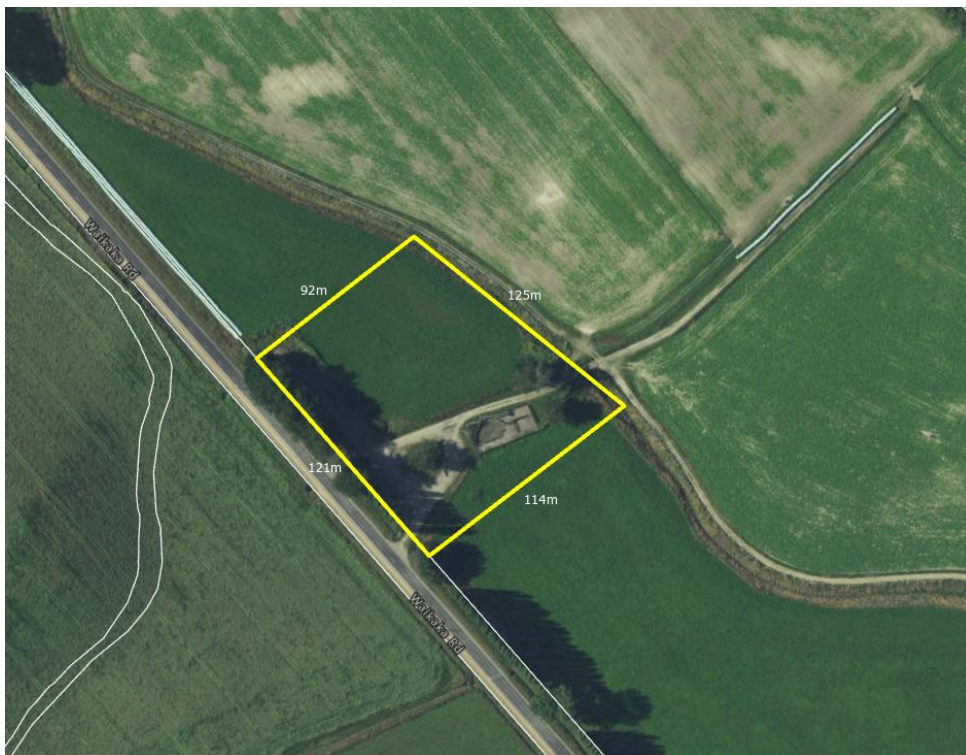


Figure 1 Area bounded by grid coordinates identified in response to questions 13.

14 - 27. Groundwater and AMD

Please refer to the Environmental Associates Ltd Letter 27 January 2025 (**Attachment [C]**).

28. River Engineering

Please refer to RJ Hall and Associates Letter dated 17 February 2025 (**Attachment [D]**).

29. Consent Term

In forming a consent term of 20 years, we have provided for:

- 1 year for obtaining additional non-RMA permissions (including access arrangements to Crown land).
- 1 year of site establishment activities
- An expected mining period of 8 years.
- A lag of around 1.5 years between the commencement of mining and the backfill being suitable for rehabilitation to farmland. For example, land mined in 'year 8' would be suitable for rehabilitation to pasture in 'year 9.5'. Note that pasture rehabilitation would occur at the appropriate season and so this lag could be longer depending on the timing of backfilling.
- Minimum of 3 years of rehabilitation and monitoring following the completion of mining.
- 20% contingency; we consider this to be common and sensible practise for projects of this scale and considering the range of uncertainties.

Accounting for the above, the duration adds up to 17.4 years. We have rounded up to 20 years to provide additional contingency and acknowledging that any difference in effect between 17.4 and 20 years is likely to be insignificant.

We trust this additional information will afford you further clarity with respect to the proposal. Please contact the undersigned on anita@townplanning.co.nz or 021 568 335 should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Town Planning Group



Anita Collie
Director