

MIN-4495 - Ō2NL snail and lizard protection

17 May 2024

Responding to a request for some information on work to protect snails and lizards as part of the Ōtaki to North of Levin (Ō2NL) highway.

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) response:

- As part of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) process, ecological surveys have been undertaken that have identified the presence of a threatened snail species (*Powelliphanta traversi traversi*), an At-Risk skink species (ornate skink – *Oligosoma ornatum*), and a non-threatened skink species (northern grass skink - *Oligosoma polychroma*). The snail and ornate skink have high ecological value and are protected under the Wildlife Act. Accordingly, prior to construction of the Ō2NL new highway project, NZTA is required to search, salvage and relocate these animals from within the construction area (including non-threatened lizard species).
- Fauna management plans are currently being prepared, including lizard and snail management plans. These plans will include areas suitable for species relocation and will provide comprehensive guidance as to how each species should be salvaged and handled. The requirements of the search, salvage and relocation work are subject to a Wildlife Act 1953 permits process that will be administered by the Department of Conservation. These applications are programmed to be lodged in July / August 2024.
- The current site work underway is the surveying of a potential area where these species could be safely relocated, as per the RMA consent conditions proposed to the Environment Court. The approach being investigated seeks efficiencies through enabling us to manage terrestrial ecological mitigation for both lizards and snails as well as aspects of cultural mitigation (required by the RMA) at the same location. Combining these requirements together enables us to deliver overall value for money for the project.
- Once Wildlife Act permits have been granted and the Environment Court RMA decision has been received, it will be possible to confirm the approach and the costs associated with the work. We expect to have more clarity on the approach and costs associated around the end of 2024. Based on initial consenting-phase investigations the cost for the work is estimated at between \$700,000 and \$1.1 million. As these estimates are developed further options will continue to be explored and efficiencies sought prior to final confirmation.

Noted by Minister