



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Environment Committee
Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Taiao

54th Parliament
July 2025

Petition of Kevin Moran on behalf of Save Our Springs: Don't fast track Te Waikoropupū

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Catherine Wedd, Chairperson

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Petition of Kevin Moran on behalf of Save Our Springs

Recommendation

The Environment Committee has considered the petition of Kevin Moran on behalf of Save Our Springs—Don't fast track Te Waikoropupū—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request to protect Te Waikoropupū Springs

The petition was presented to the House on 31 July 2024. It requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Government not to list Sams Creek Mine in Schedule 2 of the Fast-Track Approvals Bill, in recognition of the significant risk to Te Waikoropupū Springs; and to amend the Fast Track Approvals Bill so that activities that are contrary to any of the 16 Water Conservation Orders are specifically excluded from the Bill; and note that 24,446 people have signed an online petition in support of this.

Evidence received

We received written evidence from the petitioner, Kevin Moran on behalf of Save Our Springs, the Ministry for the Environment, Tasman District Council, and Ngāti Tama ki te Waipounamu Trust. We also held a hearing with Kevin Moran.

About the Fast-track Approvals Bill

The Fast-track Approvals Bill was introduced to Parliament on 7 March 2024. At the time this petition was referred to the Environment Committee, we were considering the Fast-track Approvals Bill. The evidence we received therefore relates to the bill as introduced. We reported on the bill to the House on 18 October 2024 and recommended, by majority, various amendments to the bill.¹ The bill, with final amendments incorporated, was enacted on 23 December 2024.²

In this report we refer to the Fast-track Approvals Bill as it was when it was introduced to Parliament. In some instances, we also discuss the version of the bill as amended by our committee; Fast-track Approvals Bill 31–2. Our concluding remarks briefly comment on the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.

Comments from the petitioner

The petitioner, Kevin Moran on behalf of Save Our Springs, is concerned that potential mining at Sam's Creek could negatively affect Te Waikoropupū Springs. Save Our Springs is

¹ [Read our report on the Fast-track Approvals Bill on the Parliament website.](#)

² [Read the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 on the New Zealand Legislation website.](#)

a campaign that was started to protect Te Waikoropupū Springs which is said to contain some of the clearest waters in the world. The petitioner is concerned that the Fast-track Approvals Bill could override the protections granted through the Water Conservation Order of October 2023.

The petitioner submitted that further up the same catchment, Australian mining company Siren Gold is proposing to mine gold from an ore body that also contains an unusually high amount of arsenic. We were told that any accident or failure at the mine or its waste heaps would risk poisoning the aquifer. The submission emphasised that the ecology of the aquifer is unique and cannot be replaced if it is destroyed.

The petitioner noted that under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), a resource consent must not be granted if it would be contrary to the prohibitions and restrictions in a water conservation order. He submitted that this provides confidence that any potential effects on the springs would be duly assessed and considered, and that the consent would be declined if the protection of the springs could not be ensured. The petitioner agrees that Siren Gold has the right to apply for a consent, but the process should be carried out under the RMA, with the Tasman District Council as the consenting authority. He said that otherwise the project represents “a danger and a threat”.

Water conservation order

In October 2023, a water conservation order (WCO) was gazetted in the New Zealand Parliament regarding Te Waikoropupū Springs.³ The order—Te Puna Waioara o Te Waikoropupū Springs and Wharepapa Arthur Marble Aquifer Water Conservation Order 2023—is to protect the outstanding values and character of Te Waikoropupū Springs, and the Wharepapa Arthur Marble Aquifer. The WCO requires a minimum flow at Te Waikoropupū Springs. It also sets out water quality limits at the springs for nitrate and dissolve-reactive phosphorus, water clarity, and dissolved oxygen. Tasman District Council may not grant any resource consent that is contrary to those requirements.

Ngāti Tama ki te Waipounamu Trust said that the WCO was issued after “many years” of advocacy and litigation. It submitted that any new activity or proposed development contrary to the protections set out in the WCO would significantly undermine the rule of law and certainty in New Zealand’s legal system and processes.

In his submission, the petitioner requested that the Fast-track Approvals Bill be amended to exclude activities that are contrary to any of the 16 existing WCOs.⁴ In our hearing, we noted the Labour Party’s amendment paper which proposed making an activity ineligible under the bill if it is inconsistent with a WCO made under Part 9 of the RMA.⁵ The petitioner agreed that the proposed amendment would appropriately address his request. The amendment paper was not incorporated into the final version of the bill.

³ A water conservation order recognises and protects the outstanding values of particular water bodies which meet strict criteria. An application for a WCO is considered by a special tribunal, and often by the Environment Court following an appeal, and a recommendation is then made to either create a WCO or reject the application.

⁴ Water conservation orders, Ministry for the Environment.

⁵ Amendment Paper No 141.

Sam's Creek mining prospects

Sam's Creek is in the Tasman district of New Zealand, in the Upper Tākaka catchment. It is within the Wharepapa Arthur Marble Aquifer Recharge Area. The creek forms part of a surface water catchment that contributes to flows in the Tākaka River, which in turn contributes water to Waikoropupū Springs. Tasman District Council provided its written submission to us in October 2024. At that time, Siren Gold was carrying out limited prospecting and was drilling geotechnical bores to assess the details of the gold-bearing structure. We were told that Siren Gold has not provided any details to Tasman District Council on what mining might be proposed. The council therefore did not comment on any potential environmental effects.

Some of us raised that the fast-track process would still require provision of technical assessments about the effects on water bodies.

Comments from the Ministry for the Environment

The Ministry for the Environment submitted that the Sams Creek Mining Project is not part of the 139 projects that Cabinet agreed to list in the bill. However, it noted that this does not prevent the project from seeking to use the fast-track process in the future.

The ministry highlighted some parts of the Fast-track Approvals Bill 31–2 that might provide safeguards against the mine being determined for fast-track approval. Under clause 22A(4), the Minister may decline an application for referral to an expert panel for any reason, whether or not the project meets the criteria in clause 22B of the bill.

While the bill does not specifically exclude projects that are contrary to WCOs, any such order remains relevant to the consideration and determination of a project under the fast-track process. WCOs are also relevant to the expert panel's decision, as the panel must consider the provisions of the RMA which enforce WCOs (while still giving greatest weight to the purpose of the bill).

As part of our consideration of the petition, the ministry advised that it is not possible to provide certainty about the types of projects that may or may not be approved under the fast-track regime. Each application would be assessed on its facts. The expert panels may decline a project if it considers that the adverse effects outweigh the purpose of the Act and if conditions cannot be applied to adequately mitigate those effects.

Our response to the petition

We thank the petitioner for his advocacy to protect Te Waikoropupū Springs.

We note that part of the petitioner's request is met, as Siren Gold is not an authorised person under Schedule 2 of the Fast-track Approvals Act. The petitioner's second request—for WCOs to be excluded from the fast-track legislation—has not been addressed. The majority of us did not recommend any changes to the bill to ensure that WCOs are exempt from the fast-track approvals process.

The majority of us consider that the Act includes appropriate safeguards to ensure that the process to obtain a fast-track approval is well considered, including matters pertaining to

WCOs. We are confident that the amendments we recommended to require an expert panel to be the final substantive decision-maker on projects give confidence that decision-making is independent, objective, and well informed.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was signed by one person on the Parliament website and 24,446 people on an alternative online petition. It was presented to the House by Lan Pham on 31 July 2024 and referred to us on 13 September 2024. We met between 16 September 2024 and 31 July 2025 to consider it. We received written submissions from the petitioner, the Ministry for the Environment, Tasman District Council, and Ngāti Tama ki te Waipounamu Trust and heard oral evidence from the petitioner.

Committee members

Catherine Wedd (member from 29 January and Chairperson from 30 January 2025)
Hon Scott Simpson (member and Chairperson until 29 January 2025)
Glen Bennett (until 12 March 2025)
Hon Rachel Brooking
Mike Butterick (until 29 January 2025)
Dr Hamish Campbell (until 29 January 2025)
Simon Court
Hon Marama Davidson
Ryan Hamilton (from 29 January 2025)
Grant McCallum (from 29 January 2025)
Katie Nimon
Lan Pham
Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan (from 12 March 2025)

Hon Melissa Lee also participated in our consideration.

Related resources

The documents received as evidence in relation to this petition are available on the Parliament website.

A recording of our hearing can be accessed online on the Parliament website. (*Hearing starts at 36:58*).