

23 September 2025

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-42130

By email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

### **Request for information 2025-312**

I refer to your request for information dated 12 September 2025, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 12 September 2025. You have requested the following:

*“My questions follow:*

*What legislation permits WRC to remove healthy trees. Please give the reference numbers ?*

- *In relation to the above question, a private citizen would be prosecuted by what WRC has done. Please your exemption?*
- *How far does WRC jurisdiction extend from the centerline the river’s edge?*
- *Have WRC consulted with the public?*
- *What approvals have you received from KCDC?*
- *There is a crude gravel access track from the cycle track near Edgewater Park to the river. Is this to remain?*
- *Is WRC working on some ideology that the only good trees are indigenous trees?*
- *How does the removal of these trees provide “river erosion control” as stated on your website?*
- *What is the cost of this project and the duration of it?”*

## **Greater Wellington's response:**

It is good to hear you are a regular user of the Waikanae trails and river space. I have provided answers and explanations to your questions below about the recent removal of poplar trees at Edgewater Park.

1. *"What legislation permits WRC to remove healthy trees. Please give the reference numbers?"*

Approval under the Resource Management Act is not required for a landowner to remove non-protected trees on their land. Greater Wellington owns the land that the trees were on, and the trees removed were not protected. There is no rule in other legislation, the regional plan, or the district plan that controls this activity.

2. *"In relation to the above question, a private citizen would be prosecuted by what WRC has done. Please your exemption?"*

Greater Wellington does not have an exemption from the law. The law does not prevent landowners removing non-protected trees on their land. The land the trees were on is owned by Greater Wellington.

3. *"How far does WRC jurisdiction extend from the centerline the river's edge?"*

There is no fixed distance from the river that Greater Wellington manages. Along the Waikanae River corridor Greater Wellington manages the land that we own, land that has been vested to us to manage, and assets that we own (which may or may not be on land we manage).

4. *"Have WRC consulted with the public?"*

Not specifically regarding the removal of trees at Edgewater Park. However, Greater Wellington has a close relationship with the community group 'The Friends of the Waikanae River'. This group is Greater Wellington's principal channel of consultation with the Waikanae community for Floodplain Management Plan related matters. Greater Wellington and The Friends of the Waikanae River have discussed the many poplar trees that are in the river corridor and what we are going to do about them from a safety and native restoration perspective.

The Friends of the Waikanae River encourages and supports Greater Wellington in removing poplars from along the river. On occasion The Friends of the Waikanae River identify specific groups of poplars or other trees that they see as needing to be removed; however, the general agreement is that all poplars will be removed from Greater

Wellington land in the river corridor. No specific time frame is in place for this, but we have made a commitment to remove some poplars every year.

5. *“What approvals have you received from KCDC?”*

Greater Wellington did not receive any approvals from the Kapiti Coast District Council to remove the poplar trees at Edgewater Park. Greater Wellington owns the land the trees were on. Landowners do not need approvals to remove non-protected trees on land they own.

6. *“There is a crude gravel access track from the cycle track near Edgewater Park to the river. Is this to remain?”*

Removing this access (located in the middle of Edgewater Park, perpendicular to the river) is not something Greater Wellington had considered. We have no plans to remove or to make any amendments to this track currently.

7. *“Is WRC working on some ideology that the only good trees are indigenous trees?”*

Greater Wellington’s Waikanae River Environmental Strategy 2014, in the objectives section, describes that: *‘The landscape qualities that are sought for this area are: A large proportion of indigenous vegetation....’* The Environmental Strategy caveats that willows and other exotic plants may be needed for erosion control purposed but outlines that *‘the overarching goal of restoration should still be to restore the indigenous values that have prevailed in the ecosystem’s historical ecology’*. The Environmental Strategy goes on to identify *‘Further opportunities to support the restoration of the Waikanae River Corridor include:....removing willows and other exotic tree species where they are being succeeded by indigenous vegetation and not needed to provide front-line riverbank defences’*.

For the Parikawau/Edgewater Park Reach of the river, the Environmental Strategy has recommended actions including: *‘gradually remove the poplars and willows as the main tall trees and replace them with natives’*. We are gradually removing all poplars (and other exotic trees) along the river corridor that do not provide a flood protection or erosion control benefit.

As reflected the Waikanae River Environmental Strategy, Greater Wellington does not subscribe to the ideology that the only good trees are indigenous trees. In the foreseeable future we do not expect to reach a point where 100% of vegetation along the Waikanae River corridor is native. We widely use exotic trees (mostly willows) to provide erosion protection along the banks of the Waikanae River (and other rivers). The poplar

trees that we removed at Edgewater Park were not providing any erosion protection benefit.

8. *“How does the removal of these trees provide “river erosion control” as stated on your website?”*

The poplar trees that we removed at Edgewater Park were not providing any erosion control function. The removal of these trees also does not provide any erosion control function.

9. *“What is the cost of this project and the duration of it?”*

The felling, mulching, and removal of the poplar trees at Edgewater Park, carried out over 2 weeks in July 2025, cost \$33,185.51. This is the arborist's fee and internal time to organise and manage the arborist.

In addition, 2,000 natives were planned in the location of the removed poplars at Edgewater Park on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September. Greater Wellington supplied the plants and the planting work was carried out by Greater Wellington and Kapiti Coast district Council staff and volunteers from the local community, including over 90 schoolchildren.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where appropriate. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



**Lian Butcher**

Kaiwhakahaere Matua Taiao | Group Manager Environment