**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Forest & Bird article about proposed mine misinformed says TiGa**

An article on a proposed mineral sands mine at Barrytown in the spring 2023 issue of Forest & Bird magazine is misinformed and unbalanced says mining operator TiGa Minerals & Metals.

TiGa managing Director Robert Brand says he is disappointed the article ignores the considerable steps included in TiGa’s latest resource consent application designed specifically to mitigate any negative impacts on the tāiko (Westland petrel), and environment, landscape and community values generally.

“We voluntarily provided our new application to Forest & Bird long before this article was published,” Brand says. “Instead, the article seems to be based on the original consent application that was declined.

“Since then, TiGa has done a huge amount of research and engaged a whole raft of independent consultants to ensure our proposed operation will **not** have a measurable impact on the tāiko.’’

Brand says Forest & Bird focuses on the risk to tāiko fledglings from light pollution that can cause the young birds to become disorientated and crash-land on their fledgling flight and unable to get back into the air.

“We completely understand this risk and have planned for it,” Brand says.

“TiGa has gone way further than any existing business within the flight path zone of these birds. For instance, we have volunteered to restrict our ore truck movements past the petrel colony, near Punakaiki, to daylight hours only.

“Additionally, our mining operation will adhere to the Australian *National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife*, which Forest & Bird itself has cited as the desired standard for New Zealand. We also note that while Punakaki streetlights are turned off at night during the fledgling period for tāiko, there are no such restrictions on the light emitting from businesses operating there, which are closer to the colony than our proposed mine will be.”

Brand says information received by TiGa from the Department of Conservation shows the majority of tāiko groundings are reported in Greymouth where, similarly, there are no night lighting restrictions during the petrel fledging season.

“So, it’s a bit rich for Forest & Bird to come after us while being silent on much more serious impacts occurring elsewhere in the community and where no mitigation occurs.”

DOC information also shows the biggest threats by far to the survival of the Westland petrel are conditions at sea and commercial fishing bycatch, followed by predation by ground-based introduced predators, Brand says.

TiGa’s technical enquiries have revealed poor understanding of the full extent of grounding on tāiko, with relatively little research having occurred and none of it recent. To address this shortcoming, Brand says the company has offered to fully fund independent, post-graduate research to better understand and mitigate land-based threats to tāiko.

In terms of wider environmental issues, Brand says, TiGa’s proposal will have, at most, minor effects.

“We will install substantial mitigation measures to reduce impact on the environment in terms of landscape and visual appearance, noise, traffic, indigenous flora and fauna, and water bodies. We believe there will actually be a net gain for the environment from our plans to create a new wetland and enhance planting along the existing wetland boundary, plus voluntary pest control measures and native vegetation planting on the roadside screening bunds.”

Brand notes that in the currently proposed 64ha site, mining will occur on only five hectares of land at a time with continuous rehabilitation as the site progresses.

“At no stage will there be a 64ha open cast pit, which is another piece of misinformation being perpetuated by mine opponents. Screening will be built before mining commences so the only visual impact tourists will see is a change from viewing humped-and-hollowed dairy pasture to one of a bund planted with native vegetation.

“We are also disappointed,” Brand says, “that in spite of publicly released information to the contrary, the F&B article repeats assertions that we propose a huge 50-year mining operation the length of the Barrytown Flats.

“While TiGa has mining exploration permits across much of the Barrytown Flats, the realities of the location mean that we propose to mine only four discreet sites over an approximately 13-year period. These comprise less than 15% of TiGa’s total mining exploration area. All of these sites will be on private land. None involve conservation land.

“Our current consent application is for only for one of these sites. Any future sites will each require a whole new round of consent applications, where Forest & Bird and anyone else will be able to have a say. To claim, therefore, that the current application will ‘open the floodgates’ is active disinformation.”

As to the impact on traffic, Brand reminds people that the West Coast’s coastal highway is not merely a tourism route, it is a state highway already carrying a large volume of domestic and commercial traffic essential to the economic and supply activities of the region. He says the additional traffic generated over the comparatively short life of the current proposal (approximately five years), is not unreasonable for a state highway.

“Our ore trucks will be considerably smaller than, say, the milk tankers that already ply up and down this stretch of road. We will be employing local drivers as much as is possible; people who will know the road well. They will be instructed to be courteous and pull over whenever safe to do so to let traffic by. In this sense, our ore trucks will have less impact than a campervan driven by a tourist new to the area.

“The impact of workers commuting to and from the mine will also be minimal, Brand says. “Our plans include the provision of a workers’ bus that will cater for the majority of staff travel. Our information is also that the district and the region will welcome the jobs we propose to create and the economic activity they will generate.”

**ENDS**

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