

Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review

Lease name : Alphaburn

Lease number : Po 380

Conservation resources report

As part of the process of tenure review, advice on significant inherent values within the pastoral lease is provided by Department of Conservation officials in the form of a conservation resources report. This report is the result of outdoor survey and inspection. It is a key piece of information for the development of a preliminary consultation document.

The report attached is released under the Official Information Act 1982.

Copied March 2003

ALPHA BURN STATION CONSERVATION RESOURCES REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report covers Alpha Burn Station (4519 ha) which is leased by D and V McRae of Wanaka. This property is situated 12 km from Wanaka in Glendhu Bay. Alpha Burn Station covers the land on either side of the Mount Aspiring Road from Damper Bay to Glendhu Bay, as well as the hill slopes of Roys Peak. The remaining portion of the property includes flats and terraces adjacent to the Motatapu road and the steep hill slopes of the Mount Alpha Range. Alpha Burn adjoins Spotts Creek and Hillend Stations which are further advanced in the tenure change process.

ECOLOGICAL VALUES

Alpha Burn Station lies within the Wanaka Ecological District as part of the broader Lakes Ecological Region. No comprehensive Protected Natural Areas Programme survey has been carried out in the ecological district. However a variety of specialists have visited this and adjoining properties and have been able to assess its conservation values.

Alpha Burn is contiguous with Spotts Creek and Hillend Stations and has similar vegetation patterns. Below the 1100 m contour of Roys Peak and the broad faces above the homestead, the majority of the land has changed from tussock grassland to largely improved or semi-improved pasture grasses. These areas have all been OSTD at various stages. A bracken belt still exists to 700 m along some of the steeper front faces. The flats and terraces around the homestead and Fern Burn are now developed farmland, with some 200 ha having been cultivated.

Below the 1100 m contour the main areas of conservation interest are the lakeside vegetation around Damper Bay, Scalfes Lagoon near Glendhu Bay, and beech forest remnants in the catchments of the Alpha Burn and eastern catchments of the Fern Burn. A small patch of beech forest also exists in a small gully above the homestead.

The beech forest at the entrance to the Fern Burn is the most significant of the beech remnants. This beech forest extends for approximately 1500 m up-stream and covers the valley bottom as well as continuing for a considerable distance up the hill slopes. This forest is a mixture of predominantly silver beech *Nothofagus menziesii*, mountain beech *N. solandri* var. *cliffortioides* and some red beech *N. fusca*. The understorey is typical of these remnants, being largely non-existent apart from a few fern species and the occasional *Coprosma* spp. The bush margin is a mix of kamuka *Kunzea ericoides*, *Coprosma rugosa*, *C. parviflora*, *C. propinqua*, *C. lucida*, koromiko, *Hebe salicifolia*, *Olearia odorata*, *O. bullata* and young horoeka *Pseudopanax crassifolius*. Above this the shrubby community gives way to briar, bracken and fescue tussock grassland. The escarpment of the lower Fern Burn is fenced for the majority of its length and is highly variable with pockets of manuka, *Leptospermum scoparium*, bracken, kohukū *Pittosporum tenuifolium* and tall rank pasture grass.

Above the beech forest the shrubland persists alongside the creek margins in the main Fern Burn as well as its tributaries. This shrubland community also contains ribbonwood *Hoheria lyallii*, with patches of *Dracophyllum uniflorum* and *D. longifolium*. Above the creek bed the slopes are a mixture of fescue tussock grassland, brown top, sweet vernal with scattered narrow-leaved snow tussock *Chionochoa rigida* which slowly increases in density and vigour with altitude or is more vigorous on the shady slopes. Hawkweed *Hieracium lepidulum* persists on the lower slopes and around the forest margins. Beech forest persists in tributaries of the Fern Burn and some patches extend to 900 m which was probably the natural tree line in the region.

Above 1100 m, *C. rigida* increases and blue tussock becomes a component of the grassland, along with *Celmisia viscosa*, *C. lyallii*, *Pinus* spp, *Leucopogon fraseri* and *Aciphylla* ...

This zone is predominantly natural except for the occasional knob where stock camp and a range of exotic species persist.

The vegetation around Damper Bay is mainly manuka which extends as a grove around the eastern part of the bay out on to the point. Briar and matagouri are also a component of this vegetation. West of Damper Bay is a small lagoon locally known as Scaifes Lagoon. This lagoon of raupo *Typha orientalis* and open water is one of the few remaining wetlands in the area. Although modified around the margins, protection would allow the remaining wetland communities to recover as well as provide useful wildlife habitat. A steep escarpment surrounding the lake to the north contains shrubland communities in amongst the bracken that could in time become a forested backdrop to the lake.

Fauna

No distinctive or rare fauna is known from the area. The bush remnants host grey warblers, bellbirds and fantails, the shrubland finches and silvereyes, and the open tops skylarks, pipits and the NZ falcon.

Plant Pests

Alpha Burn Station has the usual assemblage of weeds that are a problem from a farming perspective. Briar and bracken occur at the lower altitudes to about 900 m on the undeveloped land. Hawkweed is present at the lower altitudes but not as extensive mats.

Landscape

This landscape report for Alpha Burn Station comprises a broad description of landscape character and a description of visual and scenic values.

Landscape Character

The property is broken into three landscape types for the purpose of description:

- 1 lakeside between Mount Aspiring road and the lake;
- 2 steep mountain slopes; and
- 3 Fernburn escarpment, adjacent downland and flats.

1 Lakeside

The area below Mount Aspiring road is "lumpy", ice-worn topography dispersed with low-lying alluvial flats, typical of many areas around the lake. The vegetation cover is pasture grasses, short tussock, scattered manuka, briar and matagouri. Remnant lakeshore vegetation and a large patch of manuka at Damper Bay are significant landscape features.

Scaifes Lagoon is also an important feature and wetland, and retains shrubland and communities on the surrounding escarpment.

Remnant manuka is important to the landscape character within the lakeside landscape type.

2 Steep Mountain Slopes

North and west slopes rising up to Roys Peak and Mount Alpha. The faces are steep glaciated slopes with scattered rocky bluffs and extensive bracken up to about 700 m grading into snow tussock and blue tussock higher up. Beech forest occurs in tributaries of the Fernburn. Some wilding pines occur at the base of slopes and is likely to increase unless checked.

3 Fernburn Escarpment, Adjacent Downlands and Flats

The Fernburn escarpment and adjoining terraces are a dominant landform feature behind Glendhu Bay. The escarpment supports strong regeneration of mainly manuka and bracken but also other shrubland.

the lowland flats are extensively developed with shelterbelts and cultivated land. Intermediate land (referred to here as downlands) between the flats and mountain slopes is rolling landform OSTD but retaining a native component of short tussock and bracken.

An extensive area of beech forest occurs at the head of the Fernburn and is actively regenerating.

Visual and Scenic Values

The whole of Alpha Burn Station contains very high visual and scenic values and is within an area that is renowned for outstanding scenic values.

The lake faces of Roys Peak are an important landmark and backdrop view to Wanaka and the surrounding area.

Below Mount Aspiring road the characteristic lumpy topography and remnant manuka form important foreground views to Lake Wanaka and surrounding mountains. The indigenous vegetation contained within the Fernburn tributaries and escarpment forms a strong landscape pattern and serves to visually link the mountainlands with the lake.

Much of Alpha Burn Station is highly visible from the lake and public roads and vulnerable to insensitive alteration such as tracking and structures.

RECREATION

Legal Access

This property has only the legal formed public Mount Aspiring and Motatapu Road passing through it, or along its boundary. The Wanaka foreshore has a 20 m recreation reserve vested in Queenstown Lakes District Council running from Damper Bay to Glendhu Bay. No marginal strips exist on the Fern Burn or Alpha Burn currently.

Existing/Proposed Recreational Use

Roys Peak is the main focus of current recreational use on the property and attracts over 11,000 people per year over an unofficial walkway. This access route, if formalised, will link with proposed formal access that is expected to be implemented on the adjoining Hillend and Spotts Creek Stations that are currently in the tenure review process. Currently this track is closed from 1 October to 10 November because the lessee does not wish the general public to disturb stock during the lambing period.

The Wanaka foreshore also attracts some public use but places such as Damper Bay are landlocked and are only accessible by boat.

It is desirable that this tenure review exercise formalise existing public access. The Roys Peak access should be formalised under an easement that ideally allows for all year round public access. This access route would link up with the Mount Alpha access out of Spotts Creek via the adjoining properties.

For many years there has been discussion on a proposed walking track from the Wanaka township around the Lake Wanaka foreshore to Glendhu Bay. This track has been developed to the Alpha Burn pastoral lease boundary. This tenure review exercise should enable the track to continue from its present end point to Glendhu Bay via Damper Bay. While the foreshore east of Damper Bay is steep and rugged, a suitable track could be constructed over the headland to Damper Bay. From here, the track could lie wholly within the existing recreation reserve. Access from the Mount Aspiring Road to Damper Bay is also desirable.

The foreshore of Glendhu Bay outside of the existing camp ground is a very popular spot and often crowded. It would be highly desirable to extend the existing recreation reserve where the road touches the lakeshore at the Mount Aspiring viewpoint, so that a larger public reserve is available for picnicking and boating and this area would also provide an entry/exit point for the lakeshore walk.

Through probable tenure exchange deals on this and adjoining properties, some 4500 ha could become conservation land. While access will be available from key access points elsewhere, it is desirable to provide walking access into this area from an alternative direction. The Fern Burn is an obvious and attractive route. The Fern Burn crosses the Motatapu Road and could provide an easy access point. This route in the confines of the Fern Burn should not be disruptive to stock and could provide direct access to the beech forest in the Fern Burn. From here any proposed track could climb up on a terrace and link up with an old, disused farm track running up the valley. From the end of this track, the side creeks or ridges could be used to enable public access into the proposed conservation land. This access route may in time become a popular short day walk as the beech forest is a focal point and the bluffs and rock formations in the area are spectacular.

Public access from the Mount Aspiring Road to the wetland area of Scaifes Lagoon should be possible under this proposal. Foot access is also considered desirable to link the Roys Peak Track with the existing Wanaka foreshore track. This would allow walkers from Wanaka to walk via the existing track rather than use the Mount Aspiring Road, as many tend to do currently. While a direct route through from the Roys Peak Track is desirable it may not be achievable in the short term. It is therefore desirable to keep the option open so that at least a route can be established even if it is not implemented immediately.

HISTORIC

Maori Occupation

The area around Glendhu and Alpha Burn Pastoral Leases was occupied by the people based in the lower Waitaki during the early and late historic period. Early in the 18th century the Waitaha had occupied the area, but left after a battle with the Ngai Tahu. This battle took place at the traditional settlement of Parakarehu, which was based in the vicinity of Glendhu Bay.

This area was abandoned in 1836 after Te Puoho raiding party swept through the area. Prior to this period it is thought that some 20 people may have occupied the settlements around Wanaka and Hawea. When the first Europeans moved in the area there were no Maori occupying the area.

Evidence of Maori occupation of Alpha Burn is scarce and the only known find was a patu or club which was found at Damper Bay many years ago.

European History

The first Europeans arrived in the area in 1853 and 1859. The land was occupied by John Roy who created the large Wanaka Run, which included the Alpha Burn and Glendhu Station. Falling wool prices and a rabbit plague led to the Lake Wanaka Run being subdivided into smaller runs in the 1880s. In 1897 Glendhu Station was formed and farmed by Henry Barker and later by W A Scaife & Sons in 1908, in conjunction with West Wanaka.

In 1928 Glendhu was separated from West Wanaka, and in more recent times, Glendhu was subdivided into two, creating the Alpha Burn Pastoral Lease.

No physical remains of historic sites of European origin are known to occur on this run.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Fencing

New fencing will be required to protect some conservation features. This will be mainly around the smaller areas. The surrounds of Scaifes Lagoon would require fencing for protection and the roadside fence could be removed. A short fence would be required to effectively manage the 5 ha in Glendhu Bay area - this could allow for the establishment of public recreation facilities. This fence would also protect a small stream outlet draining from Scaifes Lagoon into Lake Wanaka. It would also be desirable to lane fence public access into Damper Bay.

Existing fences could be utilised around the Damper Bay area and the headland. Fences exist on either side of the Fern Burn along the edge of the escarpment and these could be utilised to provide protection for this area. Further up the valley new fencing would be required to protect the beech forest on the true left bank of the Fern Burn. This fence could be erected on or near the existing track up the valley. Some minor fencing adjustments along the faces above the homestead blocks may be necessary to ensure that only land of conservation value is incorporated into the DOC estate.

Recreation

The access points would need to be identified by signs, stiles and markers. Extension of the lakeside track will require planning and development, but could become a major recreational asset in the future. Damper Bay currently has a bach located within the area of proposed conservation interest. The future of this will need to be considered as part of this process. The easement from the Mount Aspiring road to Damper Bay would be initially developed as a non-vehicular easement, but in the future this may change to vehicular access as future demands change. Damper Bay itself will require toilets along with a roadside car park. The latter may also need to be developed as part of the 5 ha in Glendhu Bay and at the start of Roys Peak Track. The wetland area around Scaifes Lagoon has possibilities for picnicking, interpretation and track development that could be implemented as the need arises. The recreational potential on Alpha Burn will complement the other proposals on the adjoining properties and provide a variety of recreational opportunities close to a local township that are not often available.

Landscape Protection

A landscape covenant over any proposed freehold land viewed from Mount Aspiring Road to the Wanaka foreshore will assist in ensuring development is in sympathy with the landscape character. It will in effect ensure that farming can continue into the future, but subdivision for lifestyle units, tourist development or afforestation should be ruled out. Landscape protection over the Wanaka faces below Roys Peak is highly desirable and restrictions should ensure that any new works are handled sensitively.



Dampier Bay and proposed lakeside walking track.



Wetland Gindhu Bay and escarpment above lake - proposed reserve area.



Lower Fern Burn.



Upper Fern Burn catchment.



Forest remnants above Motatapu River with road to Diamond Lake visible on right hand side.



Typical forest remnant above Matukitahi River — area to be protected by proposed landscape covenant.

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Alpha Sun Creek from Mt Alpha.



Mt Alpharoy's Peak ridge.



Wetland - Glendhu Bay.

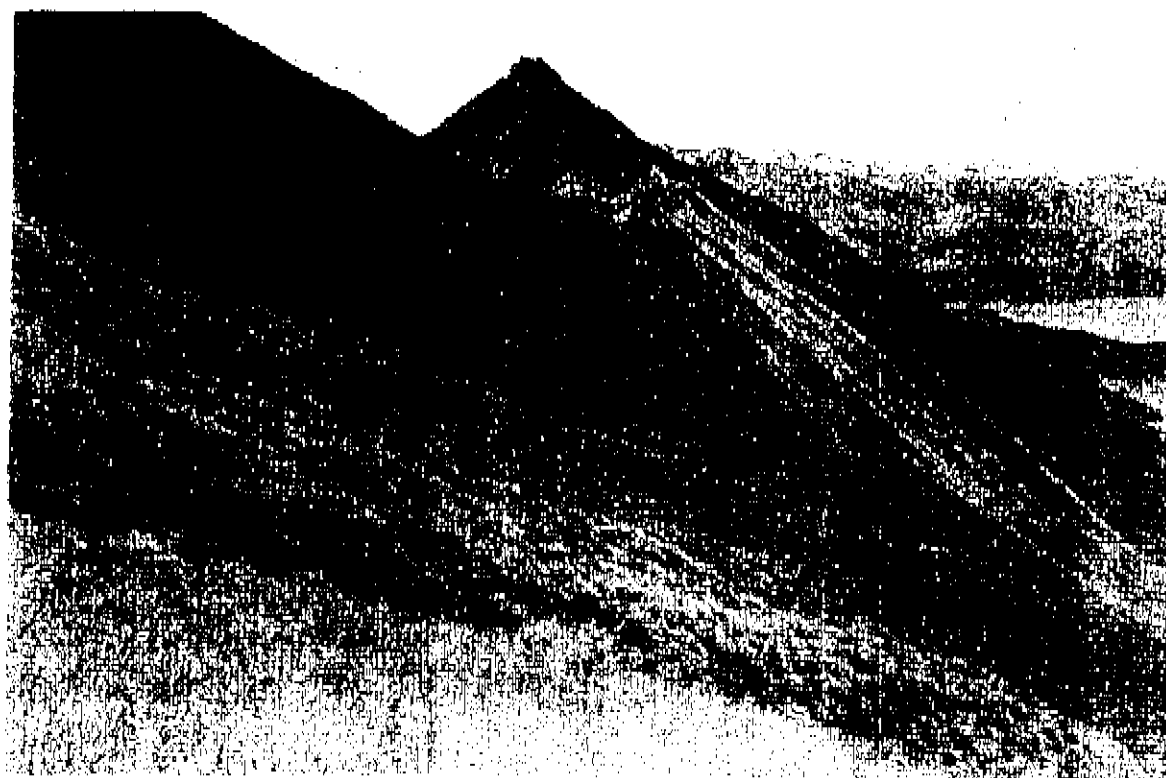


Alpha Burn Flats start of Motatapu Valley.

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Roys Peak walking track and lower altitude fence of proposed conservation land.

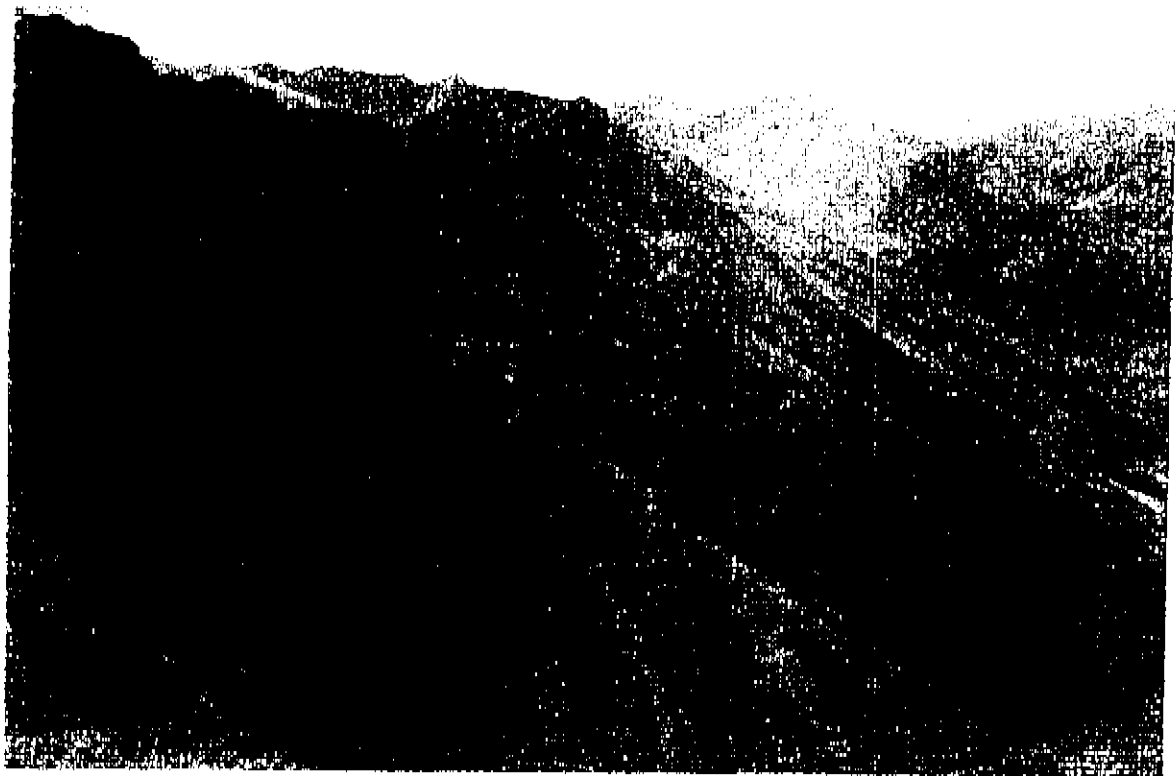


Main ridge north of Roys Peak spot height 1196 m.

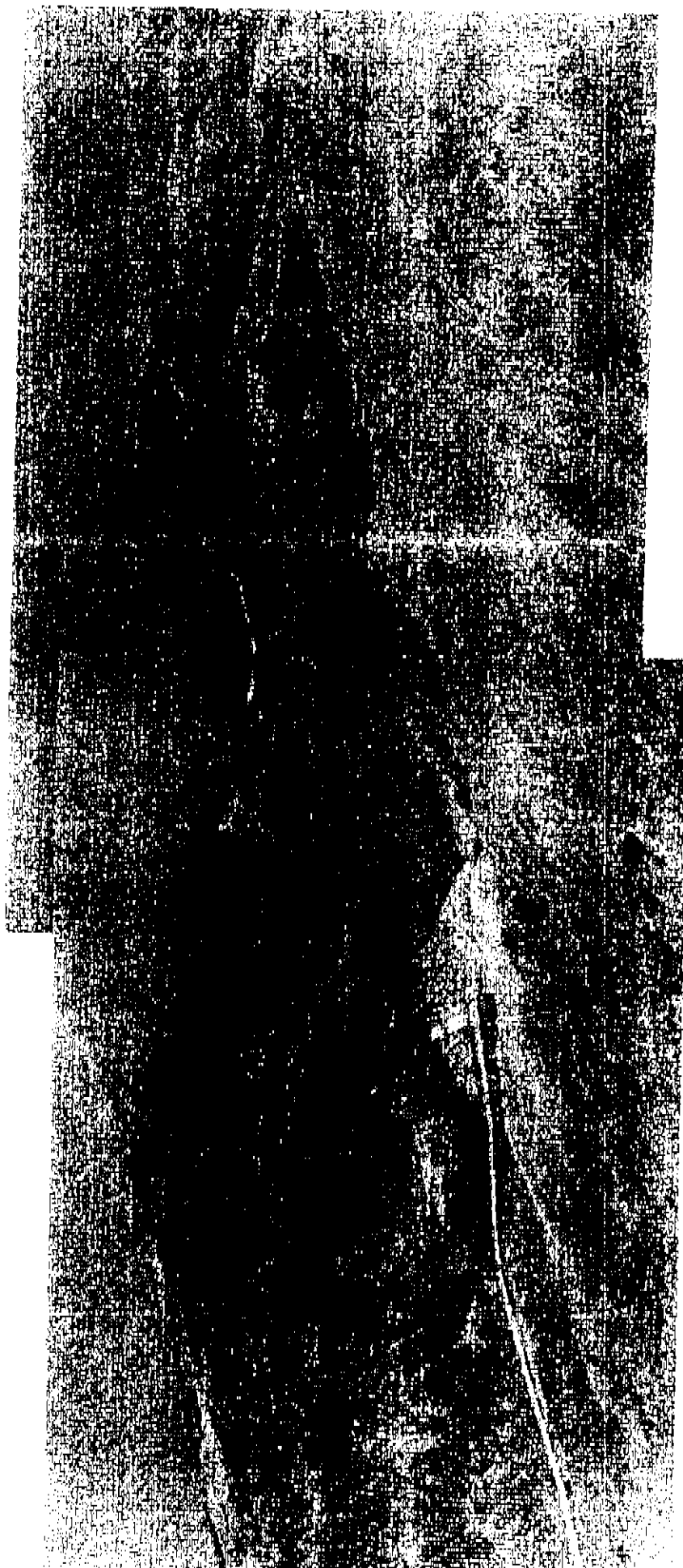
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Alpha Burn face of Roys Peak and Wanaka foreshore and Dampier Bay in foreground.



Alpha Burn northern faces above homestead.



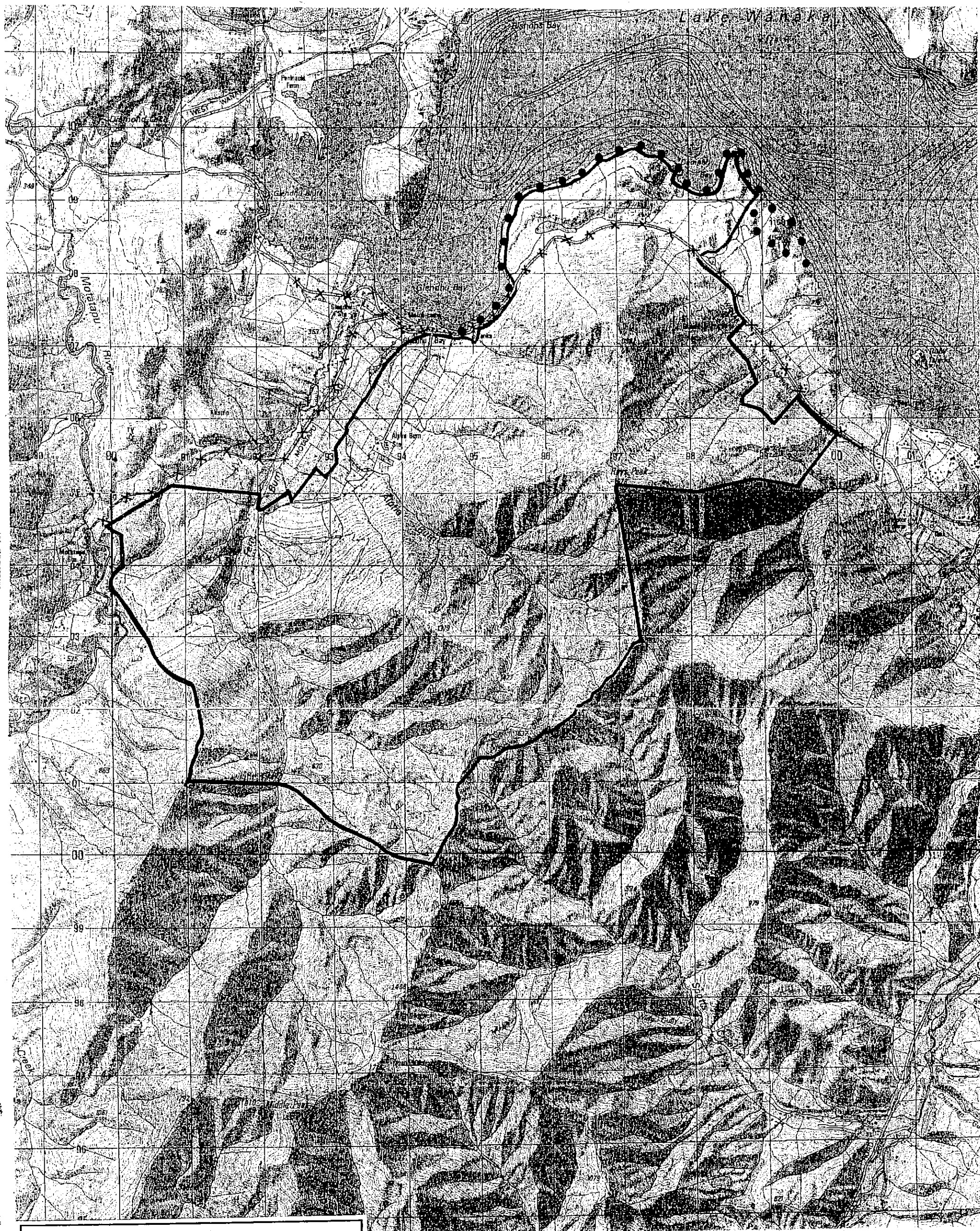
Dampier Bay - proposed recreation reserve and public access point.

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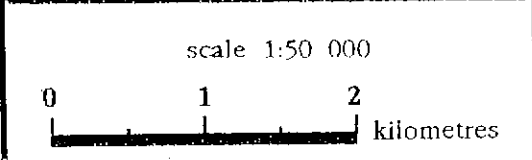
PART 5
ATTACHMENTS

- 5.1 Additional Information**
- 5.2 Illustrative Maps**
 - 5.2.1 Topo/Cadastral
 - 5.2.2 Values
 - 5.2.3 Boundaries (for official use only)

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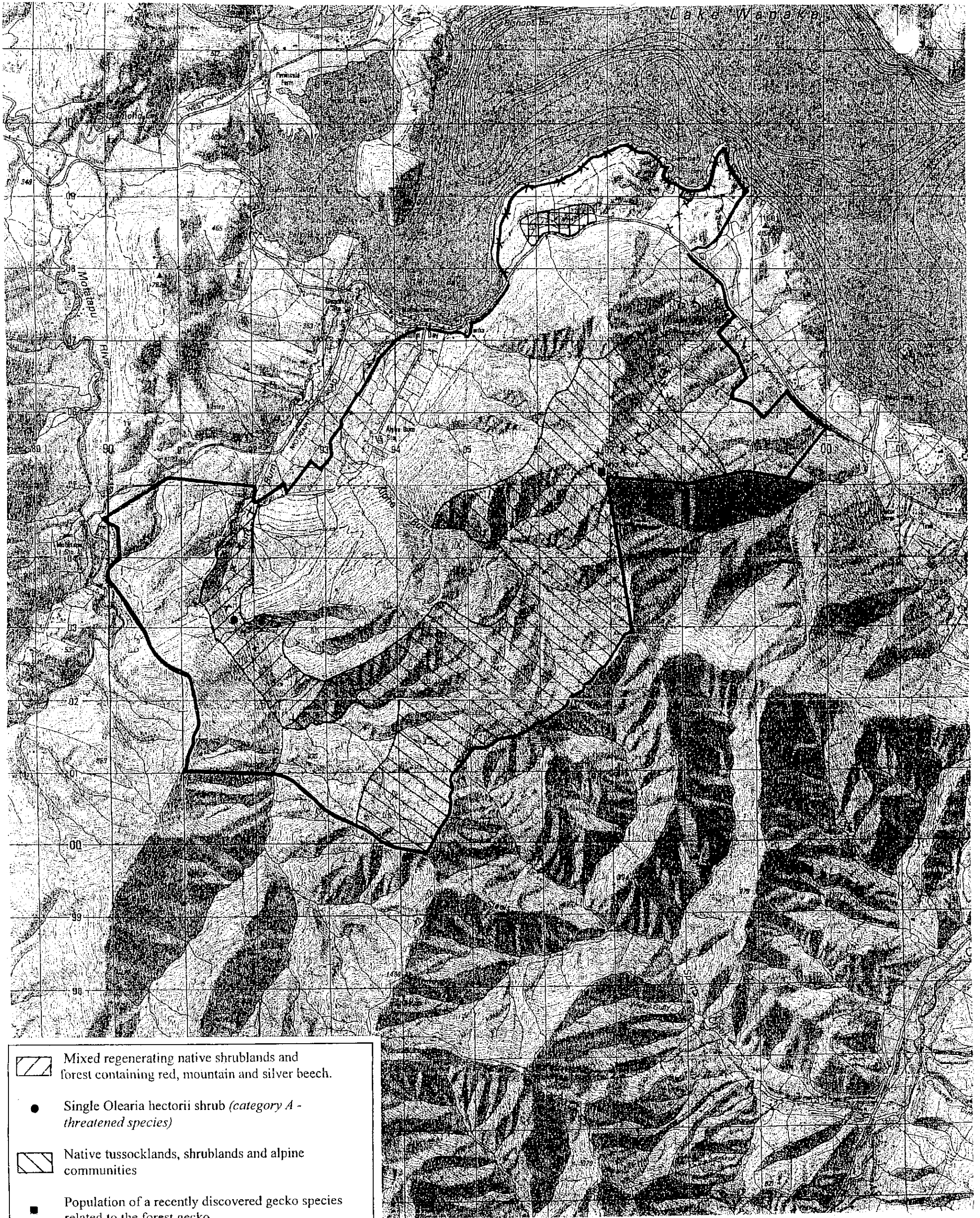
- Pastoral Lease Boundary
- x x Legal Road
- ● Damper Bay/Lakeside Recreation Reserve










ALPHA BURN
PASTORAL LEASE
Topo/Cadastral Info. Map 5.2.1

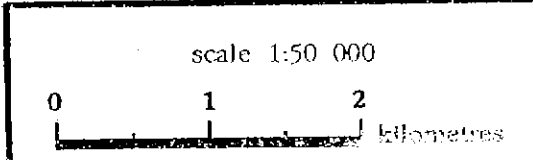


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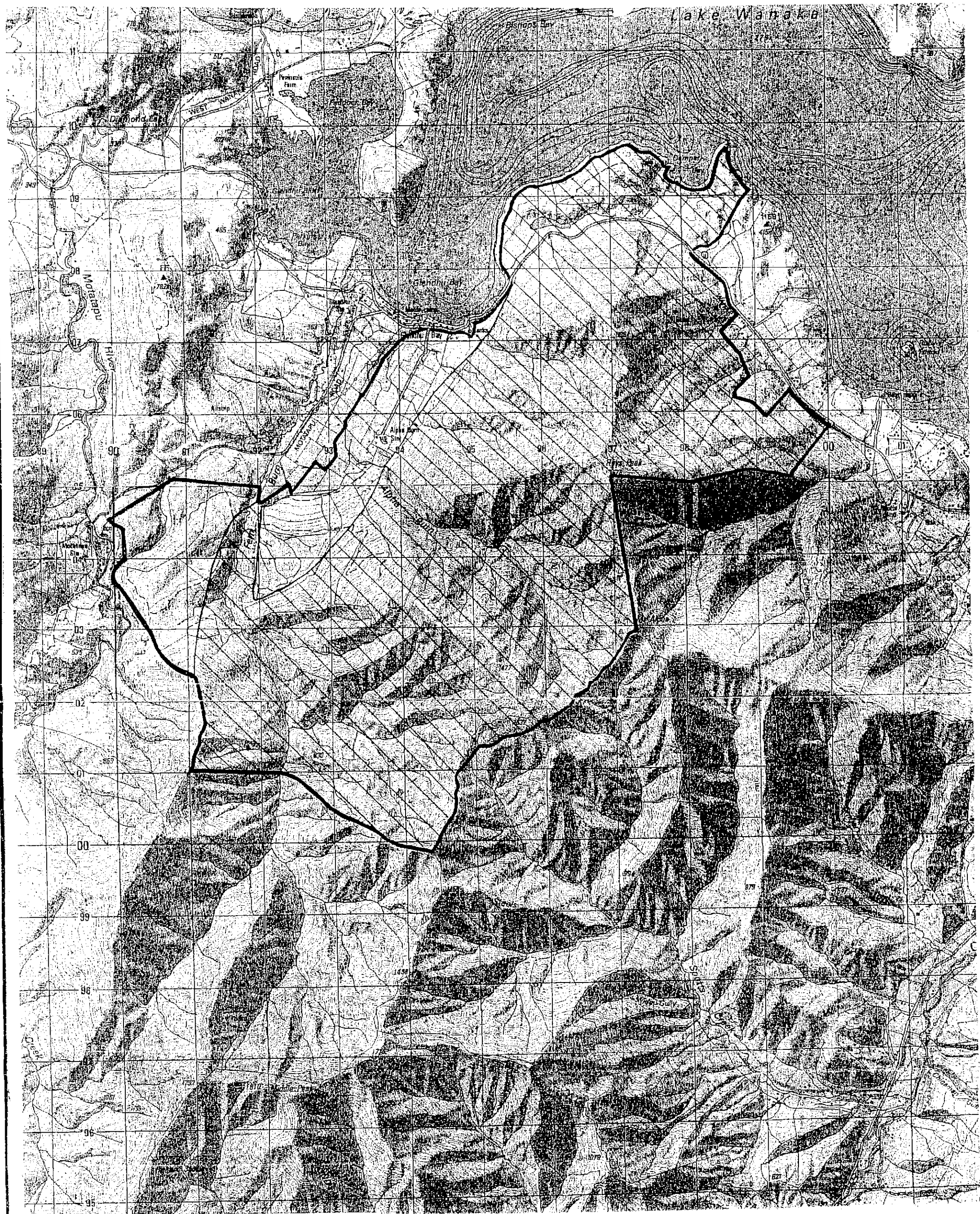
-  Mixed regenerating native shrublands and forest containing red, mountain and silver beech.
-  Single *Olearia hectorii* shrub (*category A - threatened species*)
-  Native tussocklands, shrublands and alpine communities
-  Population of a recently discovered gecko species related to the forest gecko
-  Lakeside manuka shrubland remnant
-  Wetland and native shrubland
-  Route of recreational value

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ALPHA BURN
PASTORAL LEASE
Biological & Recreation Values Map 5.2.2(a)





— Pastoral Lease Boundary
 ▨ Area of high landscape value

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scale 1:50 000
 0 1 2 kilometres

ALPHA BURN
 PASTORAL LEASE
 Landscape Values Map 5.2.2(b)

