

Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review

Lease name: Awakino

Lease number: Oo 098

Preliminary Proposal - Part 1

A Preliminary Proposal is advertised for public submissions as per Section 43 of the Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998.

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

October

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REVIEW OF OTHER CROWN LAND

**Oo098
AWAKINO STATION LIMITED**

SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL

October 2008

**SUMMARY OF THE PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL
REVIEW OF OTHER CROWN LAND
AWAKINO STATION LIMITED OCCUPATION LICENCE
UNDER PART 3 OF THE CROWN PASTORAL LAND ACT 1998**

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1. *Details of land under consideration:*

Pastoral lease:

File Ref: 12429 (Oo098)
Licence Name: Awakino
Licensee: Awakino Station Limited
Location: Kurow
Legal Description: Section 31 Block VIII Kurow Survey District
Area: 800 hectares (*more or less*)
Local Authorities: Waitaki District Council



2. Summary of designations

The Commissioner of Crown Lands has devised a preliminary proposal over the unrenewable occupation licence known as "Awakino". The proposal designates the 800 hectares of land as land to be retained in full Crown ownership and control as a conservation area.

3. Objects of a Part 3 review

Section 86(1) Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 (CPL Act) provides that the Commissioner of Crown Lands (CCL) must undertake reviews of all land for the time being held under an unrenewable occupation licence, and may undertake reviews of any unused Crown land. Such reviews are known as 'Part 3 reviews' because they are undertaken under the provisions of Part 3 of the CPL Act.

After conducting a review, the CCL must devise a preliminary proposal to designate the land (section 86(4) CPL Act). The land must be designated in accordance with the provisions outlined in section 86(5). Once a preliminary proposal has been notified (in accordance with s. 88 CPL Act), the CCL may adopt a substantive proposal that is the same as or a modified version of a preliminary proposal (section 89(1)).

When undertaking a 'Part 3 review' the CCL must take into account the objects of Part 3. The objects are set out in section 83 of the CPL Act as follows;

- 83** **Objects of Part 3 – the objects of this Part are –**
- (a) *Promote the management of Crown land in a way that is ecologically sustainable; and*
 - (b) *to enable the protection of significant inherent values of Crown land; and*
 - (c) *subject to paragraphs (a) and (b), to make easier –*
 - (i) *The securing of public access to and enjoyment of Crown land; and*
 - (ii) *the freehold disposal of Crown land capable of economic use.*

4. Description of resource (including significant inherent values)

4.1 Landform/Landscape

The Awakino POL takes in part of the headwaters of the Kurow and East Branch Awakino Rivers. The landform is complex with an assortment of natural features that include the deeply etched side slopes that overlook the East Branch, the low saddle that forms the watershed between the East Branch and the Kurow River, while the balance of the unit consists of a series of steep short valleys that penetrate into the St Marys Range and are clad in large patches of scree and stone pavements.

The vegetative cover is influenced by slope stability and aspect. On the sunnier dry faces overlooking the East Branch the primary vegetative cover is spasmodic tall tussock which gradually improves both in density and condition in change of aspect towards the darker faces. Over much of the more "tender" land the vegetative cover is a mosaic of grey lichen, *Raoulia*, tufts of both fescue and blue tussock and a scattering on snow tussock.

Surrounding the Tin Hut, a mixture of various conifers have been planted for utility reasons, unfortunately these pines have started to cone with wildings now being relatively well established by the prevailing wind.

Landscape values

This area contains a diversity of natural features and processes that are associated with the St Mary's Range. The dynamic processes that have helped to forge the shape of this country are highly legible with scree chutes, patches of scree and patterned ground being conspicuous. The low saddle that forms the watershed between the two local rivers is a distinctive landform and a key focal point.

4.2 Geology

Schistose rocks and low metamorphic grade compromise most of the basement in which the St Mary's Range is cut. Non-foliated greywackes lie to the north west of Mt Bitterness. In addition to ancient shearing and faulting, a well developed block faulting episode postdates the widespread Cretaceous-Tertiary penetration of much of Otago, producing thick fault pugs which are liable to severe gully erosion.

Apart from the physically unstable fault pugs, the hard basement rocks are unlikely to erode at rates fast enough to cause concern. However, most of the long mountain slopes are mantled, particularly at lower levels, with thick colluvial deposits which are liable to catastrophic failure in particularly severe storm events.

4.3 Soils

Alpine soils on the steep mountain slopes and bluffs over 1650m altitude are lithosols, which in the recent past have only supported the sparsest vegetation. Mechanical breakdown of rock is often rapid, with daily freeze and thaw playing an important role.

Soils are predominantly hygrous high country yellow brown earths of low fertility. At higher altitudes there is a high susceptibility to wind and sheet erosion. The former Waitaki Catchment Commission mapped the steepland soils as being Dunstan Steepland soils and the easier downs as Kurow soils.

4.4 Land Resource Inventory

54	ha	Class VI	Land suited to pastoral use with only limited limitations
404	ha	Class VII	Land with severe limitations to pastoral use
<u>342</u>	ha	Class VIII	Land generally unsuited to pastoral use.
800	ha		

4.5 Climate

Mean annual precipitation ranges from some 600 mm at lower levels to an estimated 1200 mm along the range summit. Snow lies above 1350 metres for six months of the year, with regular winter falls on lower areas. Cold temperatures occur year round, and very strong winds from the north-west and south occur frequently.

4.6 Vegetation

4.6.1 Original vegetation

It is anticipated that the prehuman vegetation of the intermontane basins of South Canterbury were dominated by grassland and scrub with low stature forest on the range slopes. The low altitude grasslands were dominated by *Poa*, *Festuca*, *Elymus*, and *Rytidosperma* species. *Coprosma* and *Myrsine* scrub species and mountain totara (*Podocarpus hallii*) were the main forest species. It is likely that *Plagianthus regius*, *Hoheria angustifolia* and kowhai (*Sophora microphylla*) were also present especially on fertile soils

and along river and stream courses. Snow tussock would generally have occupied higher altitude sites.

It is likely that the hill slopes of the licence would have supported short tussock grassland (dominated by silver tussock (*Poa cita*) and fescue tussock (*Festuca novae-zelandiae*) and shrubland, with snow tussock at higher altitudes. Low stature forest including kowhai and totara is likely to have existed on stream banks and protected valleys.

4.6.2 *Current vegetation*

The steep slopes of the POL have a homogeneous cover of snow tussock apart from intermittent long screes which often extend from ridge to valley floor. Common intertussock species include fescue tussock, snowberry, golden spaniard, tauhinu, *Geum lieospermum* and *Rytidosperma pumila*. On the dry exposed spurs the vegetation is more open with some cushion plants covering the rocky substrate. They include *Dracophyllum muscoides*, *Celmisia sessiliflora*, and *Kelleria dieffenbachii*. Blue tussock, *Luzula pumila*, *Leucopogon fraseri*, woolly moss (*Racomitrium lanuginosum*) and lichens are also common on exposed sites.

A solitary tree was sighted from some distance away in a steep gorge of the Kurow River. It appeared to be a totara but time did not allow verification of this.

A grove of cone producing *Pinus contorta* surrounds the Tin Hut in the East Branch of the Awakino River and wilding trees are establishing on nearby snow tussock slopes. Around the hut browntop, sweet vernal and *Lotus pedunculatus* are common. There is an occasional patch of mouse ear hawkweed on the track but apart from the hut paddock the whole of the POL is free of any major exotic weeds.

4.7 Fauna

4.7.1 *Birds*

A total of thirteen bird species (listed below) have been recorded in the area comprising 1 endemic species, 4 native species and 8 introduced species.

Endemic species

Paradise shelduck	<i>Tadorna variegata</i>
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Native species

Australasian harrier	<i>Circus approximans</i>
Black backed gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
Pipit	<i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>
Pied oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus finschi</i>

Introduced species

Hedge sparrow	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>
Yellow hammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Welcome swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica neoxena</i>

Other bird species likely to be present include: Banded dotterel, Grey warbler, NZ Falcon, spur winged plover, Silvereye, Song thrush, Californian quail, Goldfinch and Greenfinch.

4.7.2 Invertebrates

The licence has several invertebrate communities established in small streams, open tussock grasslands, shrublands and sub-alpine environments.

Remnant shrublands are scattered throughout the pastoral lease. Two species of darkling beetles are found on the property, one species under stones and the other on pine trees near the hut in the East Branch of the Awakino River.

Several large mountain toatoa (*Phyllocladus spp*) are found throughout this area. Toatoa are essential for boring and ground living invertebrate communities to live in this area.

The grasslands on the property support a diverse grasshopper/kawhitiwhiti fauna. Four species of grasshoppers are found throughout the grasslands, they are *Phaulacridium otagoense*, *Phaulacridium marginale*, *Paprides dugdali* and *Sigauss australis*. The grasshopper *Phaulacridium* is commonly found on all areas that are hot and dry and below 900 metres. This grasshopper is endemic to Central Otago and Mackenzie Country. The grasshopper *Paprides dugdali* was recorded in the southern part of the adjacent pastoral lease. This new site extends the known range of this species a further 44 km north from the previous site at Round Hill, Shag River. Three species of copper butterflies (*Lycaena spp*) commonly fly over both shrubland and grassland areas. Several diurnal (day time) moths were seen flying over grassland.

4.7.3 Reptiles

Skinks/mokomoko and geckos were commonly seen within the area.

4.7.4 Freshwater fish

Canterbury galaxiid and upland bully are found in the streams. Rainbow and brown trout can also move up into the lower reaches of streams on the property.

4.7.5 Problem animals

Introduced animals noted on the licence have included red deer, possums and pigs.

4.8 Historic

We have obtained limited information on the pre European history of the area. The Waitaki Valley was however a major route for Maori on their inland journeys and a significant food gathering area. It is almost certain that the East Branch Awakino River would have been a route through to the upper Otematata River and possible through to Central Otago. Both river systems would have provided food resources.

Pastoral occupation commenced in about 1856 when John McLean took up the lease of Kurow Station. The station comprised some 47,000 acres (19,000 hectares) and was sold to Douglas and Alderson in 1863 for £15,000 and was quoted as carrying 10,000 sheep. In the 1870's the flock increased to close to 25,000 sheep. In 1881 the lease was divided into five blocks. A H Chapman became manager of the property for the New Zealand and Australian Land Company who then held four of the blocks.

The five leases were resumed by the Crown in 1888 and leased as Small Grazing Runs. A H Chapman selected Run 2 of 23 and his wife Run 5 of 23. The initial lease for Run 2 of 23 was replaced by a further lease for 21 years from 21 September 1909 and again for 21 years from 1 March 1931. These leases were succeeded by a renewable lease with right of freehold in 1952. The land now under review was surrendered from this renewable lease in 1988 paving the way for the balance of the lease to be freeholded.

The Chapman family held the land until 1988 when it was transferred to Brays City Markets Limited (subsequently renamed Awakino Station Limited).

4.9 Recreational Opportunitites

4.9.1 *Legal access*

The Awakino Road provides legal access to the eastern edge of the adjoining pastoral lease. A legal road continues up the East Branch Awakino River providing legal access through this portion of the pastoral lease. The legal road does not give access to the Pastoral Occupation Licence.

4.9.2 *Activities*

There is some hunting carried out in this area while the 4WD track up the East Branch Awakino River and over to the Otematata River is popular as it can be linked with through trips onto Rugged Ridges, Kyeburn and Mt Ida. This route is also an attractive walking opportunity and can be linked with the licence area. Access is on arrangement with the various holders on the route.

4.10 Economic Use

The Awakino property has been grazed for some 150 years. Latterly the subject area has formed part of the combined grazing operations of Awakino Station Limited which includes the Awakino freehold and the adjacent Sunny Peaks pastoral lease. The current grazing licence allows for the grazing of no more than 1700 wethers from December to April each year. This equates to approximately 400su on an annual basis. From discussions with the holders these numbers are not exceeded and in many years lower numbers are in fact carried however the grazing is an integral part of the overall Awakino pastoral operation.

4.11 Other values

The occupation licence is bounded by the Awakino freehold lands to the north east, Sunny Peaks pastoral lease to the north, conservation lands to the north west and south and land proposed for conservation to the west. This places the licence in the context of an enclave into associated conservation land and in deed is not separated from the land to the west. A review of the subject area must be considered in this context.

APPENDIX 1:

Proposed designations plan.