

Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review

**Lease name : CLOUDY RANGE
Lease number : PM 015**

Fish & Game report

As part of the process of tenure review Fish & Game councils may provide advice on significant inherent values within the pastoral lease, and the information may be incorporated in the conservation resources report. The advice is part of the information gathered and assessed for the development of a preliminary consultation document.

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

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**Fish and Game Values
of
Cloudy Range Station**

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the Crown Pastoral Lands Act (1998), Part 2, Tenure Review.
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Cloudy Range. Fish and Game Values

Part 1 Introduction

Fish and Game Manager Neil Deans and Field Officer Vaughan Lynn along with Fish and Game Councilor David Oberdries visited the property on 12 - 14 January 2004 to assess any particular sports fish or game bird interest to assist the Crown reporting. This report summarizes that visit and makes recommendations on the basis of what was found.

1.1 Property Description

On Cloudy Range Station the vast majority of the area is steep and the upper parts mountainous, with a series of small streams descending to the middle Clarence River which bounds the property to the west. A series of small streams also descend to the upper Conway River, which bounds the property to the east.

Vehicle access is from the Inland Kaikoura Road and a 4WD access track traverses roughly through the middle of the property out to the Clarence River and Cloudy Hut.

Part 2 Fish and Game Issues

2.1 Sports Fish

The adjacent Clarence River is a regionally significant brown trout fishery. Most fishing occurs in the upper river above the Acheron confluence, accessed from Hanmer, where the water usually runs clear. The area's remoteness and a lack of access have limited fishing in the Cloudy Range area. It is also somewhat dependent upon suitable flow and water clarity conditions. Most anglers gain access by raft, kayak, horseback, or 4WD so fishing may not be the only or the primary activity undertaken. Even when in the area, much of the river remains inaccessible to the angler except by watercraft due to its gorgy nature. Trout are not usually abundant, but the angler is rewarded by the remote wilderness qualities, peace and quiet, naive fish and the chance of the occasional trophy sized fish.

Salmon also run through the Clarence to spawn in the upper river or the Acheron and its tributaries. Most salmon fishing is undertaken at the river's mouth although some are caught in the lower Acheron or upper Clarence below the Styx confluence. In the Cloudy Range vicinity, the occasional salmon may be taken.

The adjacent Conway River is a brown trout fishery of local importance. Most fishing occurs well downstream in the middle to lower reaches where there is a greater volume of water and a lower gradient. The section of the Conway River that bounds Cloudy Range is of minimal angling value.

2.2 Fisheries values of the Cloudy Range

Tinline Creek was examined as habitat for sports fish; in particular to determine if any of the tributaries were likely as trout spawning or nursery streams. The steep gradient, the huge volume of sediment carried by the stream, its flashy nature, the unsuitable size of these sediments for spawning (being either too coarse or too fine), the lack of suitable holding water for adult fish mitigate against this stream being suitable trout spawning stream. This also applies to Winterburn Creek and the other unnamed tributaries that flow into the Clarence River. Some juvenile trout were discovered in the lower reach of Tinline Creek and have been detected in the lower reaches of the other unnamed creeks in the past. However, the value of these creeks in terms of juvenile trout habitat is minimal.

The Towy River and Robson Stream, which flow into the Conway River, are also of unstable nature and have minimal if any sports fishery value.

In summary there is unlikely to be any suitable trout spawning waters in the streams flowing through Cloudy Range.

2.3 Game Birds

2.3 a Waterfowl

Cloudy Range largely lacks any wetlands of value for waterfowl and only the Clarence River Valley provides significant habitat for waterfowl. Across the Clarence River on the Molesworth Station opposite from Cloudy Hut is an old river oxbow/wetland area, which is frequented by large numbers of Canada Geese at times. It would be useful to have access through Cloudy Range to this area and the flats on the Cloudy Range side, downstream of the Cloudy Hut, for goose hunting, particularly on the Fish and Game autumn (usually first weekend in March) and spring (Labour Weekend) organized goose shoots.

2.3 b Upland Game

Much of the lower altitude parts of the property provide suitable habitat for Californian quail, particularly in the Clarence catchment, which were present in moderate numbers. A number of coveys or family groups were observed in various locations on Cloudy Range during this inspection varying in size from around 6 to over 20 birds.

Chukar were also present but in low numbers although there is considerable suitable habitat to support greater numbers. Currently Chukar are not on the game bird licence and are unavailable to hunters.

2.4 Hunting Opportunities

Remoteness limits the hunting opportunities in the middle Clarence Valley, especially since the road to the Clarence River via Cloudy Range Station is effectively impassable from May until September due to frost or snow.

In the foreseeable future this situation is likely to continue. The only realistic game bird hunting opportunities are for Canada geese with its season being open over the summer period. The most effective hunting for these could be undertaken in conjunction with the spring and autumn Molesworth hunts and/or by well equipped hunters familiar with decoying and calling birds to their traditional feeding and loafing areas. Any such hunting would need the approval of the landowner, which might be forthcoming if the timing were suitable.

Part 3 Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Game birds are likely to continue to use some of the areas sought for freeholding, particularly Canada geese and Californian quail. Hunting opportunities are likely to remain limited in the immediate future due to the property's inaccessibility during the hunting season, with the exception of Canada geese. Goose hunting opportunities are likely to remain with any change of land status; it is likely to be in the landholder's interest to work with hunters to keep goose numbers to acceptable levels if they increase.
2. Fish and Game should be able to gain vehicle access across the property via the present 4WD road line through Cloudy Range for management purposes.

Summary

Cloudy Range Station was visited for three days in January 2004 to ascertain its fish and game values as part of a pastoral lease tenure review. Trout and salmon fisheries were noted in the adjacent Clarence River but not its tributaries, nor were the tributaries likely to support trout spawning or juvenile trout habitat of habitat. The Conway River tributaries were also unlikely to provide trout habitat. Potentially huntable populations of Canada geese exist on the flats adjacent to the Clarence River, with quail numbers being in sufficient numbers but inaccessible during the hunting season. Tenure review of the pastoral lease should make little difference neither to the sports fish and game bird populations, nor to fishing and hunting opportunities.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Tim Rivers and John May for allowing use of the Cloudy Hut during our visit.