

## **Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review**

**Lease name : HOME HILLS**

**Lease number : PO 383**

### **Conservation Resources Report - Part 2**

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.

Note: Plans which form part of the Conservation Resources Report are published separately.

These documents are all released under the Official information Act 1982.

**April**

**06**

FEDERATED MOUNTAIN CLUBS SUBMISSION



**HIGH COUNTRY  
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**PASTORAL LEASE TENURE REVIEWS**

**Preliminary Report on  
Recreational and Related Significant Inherent Values**

**HOME HILLS**

**February 2002**

**Compiled for Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ (Inc.)  
By Dr Michael J S Floate, High Country Consultancy**

**RECREATIONAL AND RELATED SIGNIFICANT INHERENT  
VALUES ON HOME HILLS**

**A Preliminary Report to FMC based on field inspection  
and other research to assist in the Tenure Review Process**

**February 2002**

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Fig. 1 Home Hills pastoral lease stretches over part of the Home Hills (foreground), the Upper Manuherikia flats (middle distance), and the lower slopes of the Hawkdun Range (far right). The Mt Ida Water Race which runs for 120km from the Upper Manuherikia to Naseby, passes through the property on the lower slopes of the Hawkdun Range. Above this is the Oteake Conservation Area.

Fig. 2 The lower boundary of Home Hills is the Manuherikia River (left), and the property includes Fiddlers Flat and a large part of the Home Hills massif which rises to its highest point at Trig F on the skyline at the right. The Trig provides a great vantage point from which can be seen the Ida Valley, Rough Ridges, Blackstone Hill and both the Upper and Lower reaches of the Manuherikia Valley.

Fig. 3 Most of the land on the flats and lower slopes has been classified LUC Class VI with climatic limitations typical of high, cold inland valleys and basins. Sunny faces are characterised by depleted tussock grassland with some Hieracium invasion, but silver tussock is more vigorous on the shady faces. This country appears to have few significant inherent values and could become freehold.

Fig. 4 The landscape in the Upper Manuherikia has important scenic values and could be described as typical 'Graham Sydney Country'. This view is from the Mt Ida Water Race, looking down Ten Chain Creek at the northern end of the property. This expansive landscape should be protected from the adverse effects of inappropriate developments such as afforestation. Trig F is on the skyline (left).

Fig. 5 Fishing in the Falls Dam and the Manuherikia has been a traditional recreational activity. There are several fisherman's huts at the head of the dam with access from The Home Hills Runs Road and the private road along the eastern shore of the dam. This road is closed by 2 locked gates but it would be advantageous to have public access with the runholders consent.

Fig. 6 There is a 4WD track along the Mt Ida Water Race which would provide a better alternative to the mountain bike ride down the Home Hills Runs dusty gravel road. 4WD use of the water race track, with the runholders consent, might be negotiated during tenure review. In this view up Ten Chain Creek, the crest of the Hawkdun Range can just be seen through a gap in the cloud.

Fig. 7 Public access to the Oteake Conservation Area above the Mt Ida Water Race and above the Home Hills boundary is an important issue in this tenure review. Although there is access further north near Shepherds Hut Creek, access between Hut Creek and Gate Creek where there is a legal road, should be confirmed. This may involve formally recognising the actual formation as the legal road.

Fig. 8 The track to Trig F on the Home Hills offers a good day-trip opportunity for walkers and mountain bike enthusiasts, which would be greatly enhanced by providing an alternative route down to the dam via one of the spurs shown in this view. This would make an excellent round-trip, with wide views up the Manuherikia Valley and across to the St Bathans Range.

Fig. 9 There is a narrow strip of the Home Hills pastoral lease which lies above the Mt Ida Water Race and boundaries with the Oteake Conservation Area. The boundary is located about 100m up the tussock face to the left of Hut Creek, and crosses the creek in the middle distance in this view. In the text, a case is made for the addition of this strip of land to the Conservation Area.

Fig. 10 There are several scrubby gullies which come down from the Home Hills to Falls Dam and which significantly add to the biodiversity of the area, and to the visual interest of recreational visitors. This example, in an un-named gully about 1 km from the northern end of the dam, contains Olearia and Coprosma species as well as Matagouri, and could be protected with a Conservation Covenant.

## INTRODUCTION

This Report has been prepared following the Early Warning Meeting in October 2001 at which the properties entering the tenure review process in 2001 were introduced. Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ (FMC) were unable to attend that meeting so this report is offered as a contribution to the statutory consultation process undertaken by the Department of Conservation (DOC).

The Report focuses on those features of the property which are known to be important for public recreational interests. It should be noted that while much of this interest focuses on access, the natural and historical values and landscapes of the areas concerned have a fundamental impact on the recreational value of the property and greatly influence the quality of recreational experience enjoyed. It is for this reason that reference is also made to the natural, historical and landscape values in this Report.

Mason (1988) has described the general area of the Hawkdun and Ida Ranges as follows:- *"The steep western escarpment rises between 900 and 1,050m above the Moniototo Plain and the upper Manuherikia Valley. This even-crested face is the most prominent feature of the range and it dominates the upper Manuherikia Valley. The eastern slope dips gently into a large and deeply incised upland peneplain drained by the Otematata and Otamatapaio Rivers. Part of this is locally known as the 'Hawkdun Plateau'.*

Home Hills lies at the foot of the scarp slope of Hawkdun Range and extends over some 3,000ha on the Manuherikia River flats and lower slopes of the range, as well as a large part of the Home Hills massif (Fig. 1). At its northern end, the property includes a stretch of some 9 km of the Mt Ida Water Race where it runs along the face of the range, and in and out of the valleys of Ten Chain Creek, Hut Creek and Gate Creek. The leasehold property extends from about 550m on the valley floor to about 900m just above the water race. The property includes the western flanks of the Home Hills, up to and including Trig F at almost 1,000m (Fig. 2). This part of the property overlooks Falls Dam and adjoins the whole length of its eastern shore.

## METHODS OF SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT

A site visit and field inspection was carried out in February 2002. This report is based on the field inspection and in part, on information gathered from other sources. The other sources include studies of topographical and Land Use Capability (LUC) maps, consultation with recreational user groups and a knowledge of the landscapes acquired from other tramping trips in the general Hawkdun Range area. A study of "Outdoor Recreation in Otago" was undertaken by Mason (1988) and published by FMC. Reference is made to this Recreation Plan for Otago in the recreation section below. The Conservation Management Strategy for Otago has also been used as a source of reference.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF HOME HILLS

Home Hills is a relatively small pastoral lease of almost 3,000ha situated in the upper Manuherikia valley and extending onto the lower slopes of the Hawkdun Range up to about 900m, just above the Mt Ida Water Race (Fig. 1). Above this level it is bordered by part of the Oteake Conservation Area. This conservation area has been created out of earlier tenure reviews and extends for some 4,000ha along the steep faces of the Hawkdun Range and onto the 'Hawkdun Plateau'.

There is a public road, Home Hills Runs Road, which runs to the east of the Home Hills and through the lower part of the property, from Hills Creek on State Highway 85 to a bridge over the Manuherikia River some 7km north of the Home Hills northern boundary. At the bridge it meets the Hawkdun Runs Road on the other side of the Manuherikia River. The road along the shore of Falls Dam from the dam to the fisherman's huts at the head of the dam, is presently a private road which is locked at both ends. There is however, legal public access over a good gravel road, Fiddlers Flat

Road, to the southern end of Falls Dam (Fig. 2). The homestead is situated near the junction of Fiddlers Flat Road and the St Bathans Loop Road.

Most of the land on the Manuherikia valley floor and lower slopes (Figs. 1 and 2) has been classified LUC Class VI, with climatic limitations typical of cold inland valleys and basins. Little pasture improvement has been carried out and there is some Hieracium invasion especially on the drier sunny faces (Fig. 3). This land does not have significant inherent value although some tussock is still present (mainly silver tussock), especially on shady faces. The flats and lower slopes would be best described as depleted short tussock grassland (Fig. 3).

The property boundary at about 900m on lower slopes of the Hawkdun Range, just above the Mt Ida Water Race, roughly corresponds with the boundary between land of LUC Classes VI and VII. Similarly, much of the Home Hills massif consists of Class VI on the lower slopes and Class VII on the higher ground. Although much of the property would not support ecologically sustainable pastoral use without inputs, it is possible that with appropriate development and maintenance it might be capable of being managed in a way that is ecologically sustainable (CPLA 1998 S.24), and therefore suitable for freeholding.

The landscape in the upper Manuherika does have important scenic values and could be described as typical "Graham Sydney Country" (Fig. 4). It has significant recreation and scenic landscape value which will be discussed in the next section.

### RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND POTENTIAL

The recreational significance of the property lies in its position towards the headwaters of the Manuherikia River, adjacent to, and above the Falls Dam, and straddling a section of the Mt Ida Water Race. This race also has significant historic value as a source of power for gold mining, and latterly as an important supply of irrigation water. The race runs for 120km from its intake in the upper gorge of the Manuherikia River to the gold workings in Naseby.

The most popular recreational activity in this area would be fishing in the Manuherikia River and the Falls Dam, where there are several fisherman's huts at the top end of the dam (Fig. 5). Mason (1988) has reported that tramping, hunting, winter climbing and cross country skiing are other recreational activities carried out on the Hawkduns. Tramping destinations include Mt Ida and the Mt Buster diggings.

Although Mason did not refer to mountain bike riding, this has become much more popular in the 14 years since his account was written. A mountain bike round-trip in the upper Manuherikia would be feasible with an attractive alternative route (instead of the gravel road) on the eastern side along the Mt Ida Water Race (Fig. 6). Biking this route would be preferable to tramping, although, like the Otago Central Rail Trail it could be walked in sections.

Mason reported that cross country skiing was developing as the main winter use of the Hawkduns. Mason explains that the general area of the 'Hawkdun Plateau' provides some of the greatest scope for cross country traverses in Otago, including traverses to the Kakanui Range and Lindis Pass with favourable snow cover.

For this reason one of the important considerations in this tenure review is access to the Hawkdun Range. There is a large block of conservation land along the face (the Hawkdun or Oteake Conservation Area), but this is confined to the land above the water race. Access to the lower boundary of the Conservation Area is provided at Shepherds Hut Creek, some 5km north of the Home Hills northern boundary. Alternative, or complementary access to the Oteake Conservation area would be desirable further south. It is understood that there is a legal road which starts on the valley floor on the true right of Gate Creek and crosses it just above the water race (Fig. 7). This route leads

on to the crest of the range at the head of the Hut Creek catchment. This provides good access to the range crest. The alignment of this formation should be checked against the alignment of the legal road and where there is any discrepancy, the actual formation should be formally recognised as the legal road through tenure review.

The Home Hills massif is an impressive outlying area of high ground standing well to the west of the main range, and separated from it by Johnstones Creek. The massif rises to almost 1,000m and commands extensive views over the Maniototo, including the Ida Valley, the Rough Ridges, Blackstone Hill and both the upper and lower Manuherikia valleys and Falls Dam. There is a farm track leading from the yards at Fiddlers Flat, to the highest point of the Home Hills at Trig F. Because of the extensive vistas which open out with increasing height up this track, it would make a very good day-walking trip (Fig. 1). It is about 5km in each direction and the climb is well rewarded by a superb all-round panorama from the top. It appears that there is another track which connects with the one just described, roughly following a fenceline over spot height 880m and down to a small inlet near the southern end of Falls Dam. This would make an excellent round trip (Fig. 8).

Apart from fishing and access across the property for cross country skiing in winter, there is not much recreational use made of Home Hills at present. However, there is certainly potential for greater use on foot, on mountain bike, and possibly also for horse trekking.

FMC believes that the recreational significance of this property (and other leases in the tenure review process) should be assessed not only on its present usage but also on its potential. This is because current usage is much less than its potential for a number of reasons. Partly because of the current land tenure under pastoral lease, and access to some parts of the Hawkduns has not been easy in the past, the recreational use of Home Hills is less than it might have been if these impediments did not exist. There is significant potential for greater use and it is the full range of possibilities which should be considered during this tenure review.

Public access on foot and mountain bike, and possibly also horse are the main priorities for recreation in this tenure review.

### **SIGNIFICANT INHERENT VALUES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR RECREATION**

This report focuses on those features of Home Hills which are known to be, or could become important for public recreational interests. It should be noted that while much of this interest focuses on access, the natural and historic values and landscapes of the areas concerned, and views to be had from vantage points all have a fundamental impact on the recreational value of the back country and greatly influence the quality of recreational experience enjoyed. It is for this reason that reference is also made to both natural and landscape values of this property.

As noted in the general description of Home Hills, most of the land on the Manuherikia valley floor and lower slopes has been classified LUC Class VI, with climatic limitations typical of cold inland valleys and basins. Little pasture improvement has been carried out and there is some Hieracium invasion especially on the drier sunny faces (Fig. 3). This land does not appear to have significant inherent value although some tussock is still present (mainly silver tussock), and it is understood that endangered skinks may also be present. Much of the Home Hills massif also consists of LUC Class VI on the lower slopes (Fig. 3), and Class VII on the higher ground. Although much of the property could not support ecologically sustainable pastoral use without inputs, it is possible that with appropriate development and maintenance it might be capable of being managed in a way that is ecologically sustainable (CPLA 1998 S.24), and therefore suitable for freeholding. Before pasture improvement is carried out however, the area should be checked for invertebrate and botanical biodiversity.



That part of Home Hills which lies above the Mt Ida Water Races consists of a narrow strip of land averaging only 200 – 300m wide and extending up to about 900m (Fig. 9). Access to this area for grazing stock is limited to the few points where the race can be crossed, as for example at creek crossings and where the race is flumed through concrete piping. On this land, there are significant inherent values in the form of shrublands and vigorous tussock, especially in the more shady and moist places which receive little attention from grazing stock. As well as the ubiquitous matagouri, the shrublands consist of several different species of *Olearia* and *Coprosma* which significantly add to the biodiversity of the area (Fig. 9).

Because of this important biodiversity, the apparent lack of grazing pressure, and the vegetative variety it presents to those recreational users following the water race, it is recommended that all the Home Hills leasehold land above the race be considered for return to full Crown ownership and control. It should be noted that this is a relatively small land area which probably does not contribute much to the productive value of the property.

It is understood that the water race itself is on Crown land which is not part of the Home Hills pastoral lease. If the area above the race was returned to full Crown ownership, both the race and the land above it could be added to the Oteake Conservation Area (Fig. 9). Otherwise, the historic water race itself should be protected as an Historic Reserve.

The landscape of the whole upper Manuherikia Valley is important as a wonderful example of 'Graham Sydney Country' (Fig. 4). As such it should be protected from the adverse effects of inappropriate developments. Afforestation with exotic conifers would be an inappropriate use as it would have a major adverse impact on the wide and natural vistas of the upper reaches of the valley. FMC is not convinced that the Central Otago District Plan will afford adequate protection. This is because district plans are subject to change at 10 year intervals and may not be rigorous enough to protect scenic values even in the short term. Instead, FMC recommends a binding landscape protection covenant be negotiated and registered on the new freehold title as part of the tenure review process.

There are some areas of shrubland in gullies near Falls Dam, and in the Manuherikia gorge below the dam which add significantly to the scenic value and biodiversity of the area. They are particularly noticeable as most of the valley is devoid of woody vegetation. The best representative areas of such shrublands, such as an un-named, steep-sided gully about 1km below the head of the dam (Fig. 10), should be considered for protection under a Conservation Covenant.

### AREAS TO BE PROTECTED

There appears to be only a small area on Home Hills which has sufficiently significant inherent values to warrant return to full Crown ownership and protection as a conservation area. However, because of the possible occurrence of endangered invertebrates and small plants, the biodiversity of the remaining area needs to be checked carefully before any pasture improvement is undertaken.

The narrow strip of land between the Mt Ida Water Race at about 750m and the boundary of the Hawkdun (or Oteake) Conservation Area at about 900m should be returned to full Crown ownership and protected as a Conservation Area (Fig. 9). This should be added to the Oteake Conservation Area above it on the face of the Hawkdun Range. This area is only about 200 – 300m wide but contains an important diversity of shrubs in sheltered gullies and vigorous tussock on shady slopes (Fig. 9). Because of difficulty of access by grazing stock, the area appears to be little used by grazing animals. Stock could be easily excluded with only a little new fencing being required.

There are also some gullies which open out at the edge of Falls Dam which also contain significant shrubland communities (Fig. 10). It is suggested that the steep sided, heavily shrub-covered, but un-named gully which is about 1km north of the dam outlet, should be protected by the creation of some

appropriate protective mechanism, such as a Conservation Covenant. Similar protection might be considered for similar communities in the deep and narrow Manuherikia gorge below the dam.

### ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

The following access provisions will be required:-

Public use of the road beside the shoreline of the Falls Dam should be available with the runholders consent. This is particularly important for those fisherfolk with huts at the top end of the dam.

The public use of the access-way along the Mt Ida Water Race should be provided for by establishing an easement for foot, mountain bike and possibly horse use through tenure review. As FMC recognises that 4WD use of some tracks is a valid recreational activity, consideration could be given in this tenure review to 4WD use of the access-way along the race by 4WD recreational users, with the runholder's consent.

The farm track, from the yards on Fiddlers Flat to Trig F at the top of the Home Hills, would make an excellent day-walking trip. This should be provided for by way of a formal easement for foot and mountain bike use through tenure review. Because of the desirability of providing a round trip, consideration should be given to the establishment of an easement over an alternative route over spot height 880m, linking to the road along the Falls Dam shoreline at the inlet about 1km north of the outlet.

It is also understood that the legal alignment of public roads on the property may not coincide with the actual formation on the ground. Despite this legal technical problem, the Council at present does maintain these gravel roads (Fiddlers Flat Road and Home Hills Runs Road). It seems highly desirable at the time of tenure review to tidy up this legal discrepancy. FMC does not accept that administrative delays are a sufficient reason to not confirm the actual road formations as the legal alignment. This should be completed during tenure review.

### CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR OTAGO

The St Bathans – Hawkdun – Ida Ranges area has been recognised as one of 41 Special Places in Otago which have been identified in the Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) for Otago. The objective for the St Bathans – Hawkdun – Ida Ranges Special Place is:- *“To protect on an extensive scale, the high altitude landscape, nature conservation and historic resources of the area, principally by acquiring adjoining lands of high natural, historic and recreational value, through pastoral lease or occupation licence reviews, to link existing areas administered by the Department thus providing for more recreational opportunities, better protection of values and efficient integrated management of those values.”*

It should be further noted that the CMS states that *“Pastoral lease and occupation licence reviews on adjacent properties will provide opportunities to negotiate the acquisition of areas of similar or complementary natural and historic values and significant recreational opportunities. Overall management of these new areas, together with existing conservation areas, will confer net conservation and management benefits.”*

Furthermore: *“integration of management of large contiguous areas administered by the Department will centre on the concept of a conservation park. The park will be named **“Oteake Conservation Park”**.”*

The stated priority for the St Bathans – Hawkdun – Ida Ranges Special Place is:- *“Pastoral lease and pastoral occupation licence tenure review negotiations will be the priority method for implementation of the objective.”*

The objective and supplementary statements accord closely with the recommendations made in the present Report, and if implemented in this tenure review would add to the conservation and recreation value of the existing Oteake Conservation Area on the face of the Hawkdun Range. It would also assist in the establishment of the Oteake Conservation Park.

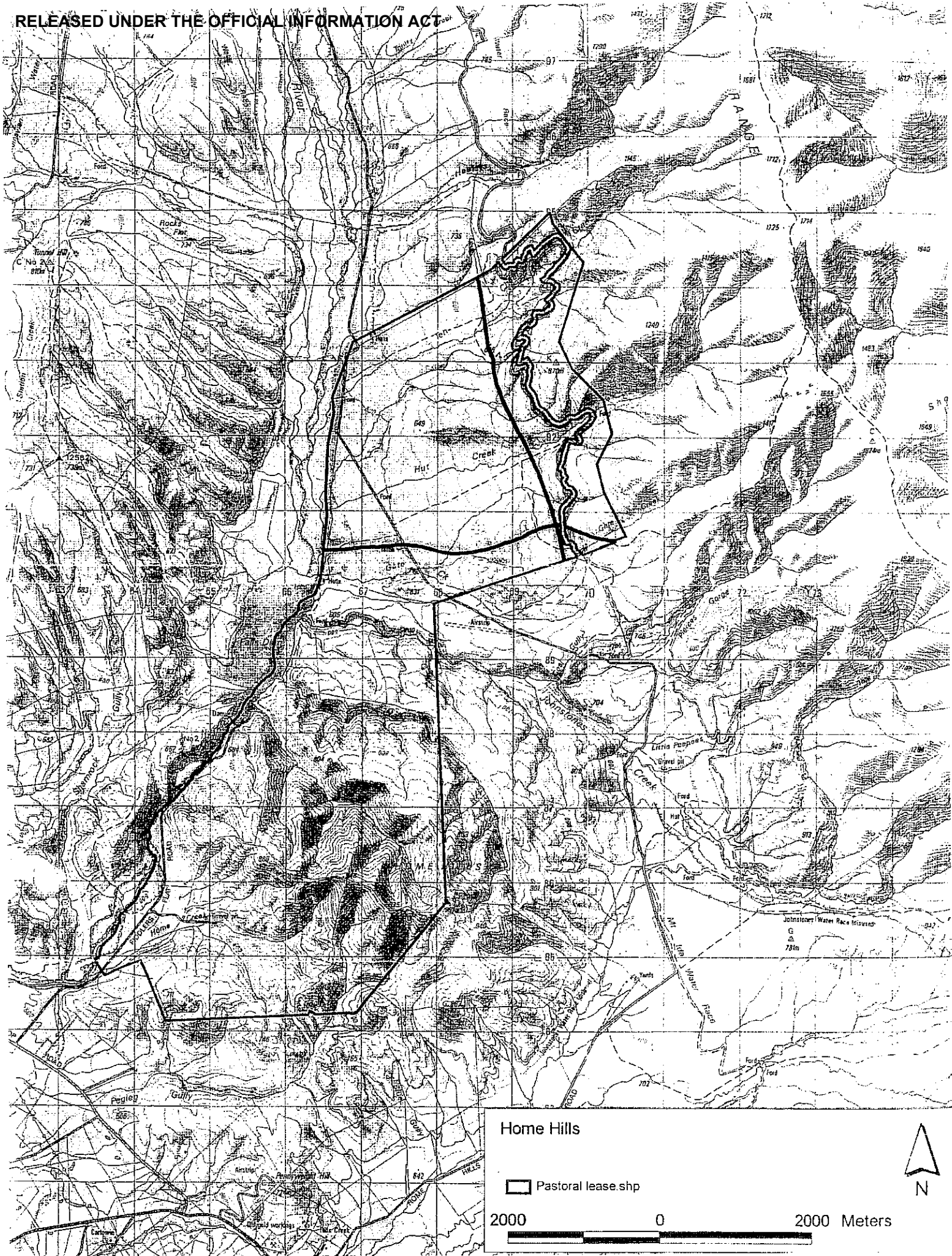
### **CONCLUSIONS**

The tenure review of Home Hills is important as it provides an opportunity to enhance the recreational opportunities and use of the Manuherikia Valley and Hawkdun Range, and opportunities generally available in the area.. In the main this will be achieved by providing assured public access but also by ensuring that outstanding natural landscapes are protected. It is also an opportunity to improve the quality of recreational experience on those lands by recognising and protecting the significant landscape values described above.

It could provide a very significant advance in the intention stated by DOC in its CMS for Otago, to protect nature conservation and historic resources of the area, and to establish the Oteake Conservation Park

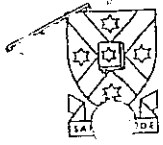
### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

FMC is grateful for assistance from authorities in making the assessment possible. The site inspection was carried out in February 2002 and FMC is grateful to the runholder for co-operation and granting permission for access, and to Opus staff for making the appropriate arrangements.



Map showing the preferred allocation of public conservation land and freehold land (green and red outlines respectively) and important recreational access routes (Yellow)

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COPY 6

**TENURE REVIEWS; COMMENTS ON PARTICULAR RUNS.**

**Note:** These comments are made on the basis of some 40 year's involvement with the tussock grasslands of the Central Otago region, particularly their ecology and its application to the sustainable management and conservation of the grasslands. Comments are made on six runs as follows:

1. KYEBURN;  

1997

Although not inspected recently, from my earlier knowledge, I recommend that the entire upper block be transferred to the Crown in relation to the generally high conservation values present and the Land Capability Classification of this block (mostly CI VIIe and CIVIII). The lower block, adjacent to the Kyeburn Diggings Road could be freeholded.

122
2. THE DASHER;  

The "Area Recommended for Protection" centred on Mt Difficulty, in the "Dansey PNA Survey" of J. Comrie (with which I was involved as a co-supervisor), should be protected, together with the head catchment of the Kauru River, between Trig Island, Siberia Hill and Cayenne Spur, and the area to the west of Cayenne Spur (see attached map).

1999
3. BEN LEDI.  

Maerewhenua Spur above Trig E (1399 m), with a north-south boundary (the upper part of which was identified as an RAP in the Dansey PNA Survey, should be protected for the high conservation values present here (see attached map). Walking access at least, should be secured up the Maerewhenua Spur from the Dansey Pass Road.

1341
4. MT STALKER. *no map supplied*  

The upper catchments on either side (north and south) of Mt Stalker should be transferred to the Crown for conservation purposes (see attached map). The covenanted area of red tussock grassland in the vicinity of Bog Hut is already a valuable conservation area.

1383
5. HOME HILLS.  

The northern catchment of this property, Ten Chain Creek, has a valuable area of mixed narrow-leaved snow tussock and red tussock grassland, with some hybrids, which extends down the outwash fan below the "contour" fence, about half way to the Hawkdun Runs Road. This area has a representative range of tall tussock grassland species: some 22 were identified, including five exotics. There are small seepage areas with pure red tussock grassland within the larger area. The upper valley floor, below the water race, is mostly shrubland dominated by matagouri but with occasional bushes of small-leaved Olearias (both *O. lineata* and *O. odorata* were identified here), which adds considerable conservation value to the area. While the lower part of this outwash fan is considerably degraded, with mouse ear hawkweed, *Hieracium pilosella* prominent, I believe it has

the potential to recover in the absence of further stock grazing. I therefore recommend that the entire catchment, down to the lower boundary fence, across the Hawkdun Runs Road, be transferred to the Crown for conservation purposes. This would also include the 4W drive track up to the water race which would provide public access to the water race and the upper slopes of the Hawkdun Range beyond (see attached map).

Another small (about 30 ha) area of mixed red tussock-snow tussock grassland on the south aspect slope to the north of Hut Creek, on the same outwash fan (see map), could perhaps be covenanted, with a no-burning condition, given the general rarity of this cover type in the area to-day and its predicted earlier dominance on these outwash fans.

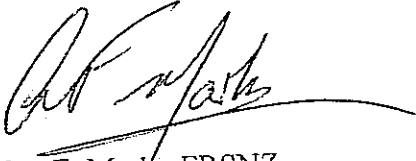
LITTLE VALLEY.

P354

Access to this run was not possible (I was told this by the lessee a few years ago), but from my prior knowledge of this property (I supervised the Manorburn PNA Survey of Mr Brent Fagan), my recommendation is that the area of about 1970 ha, previously identified for a "Designation" by the Minister of Conservation, under the Resource Management Act, be transferred to the Crown for conservation purposes.

I trust you will find these comments and recommendations useful in your important exercise.

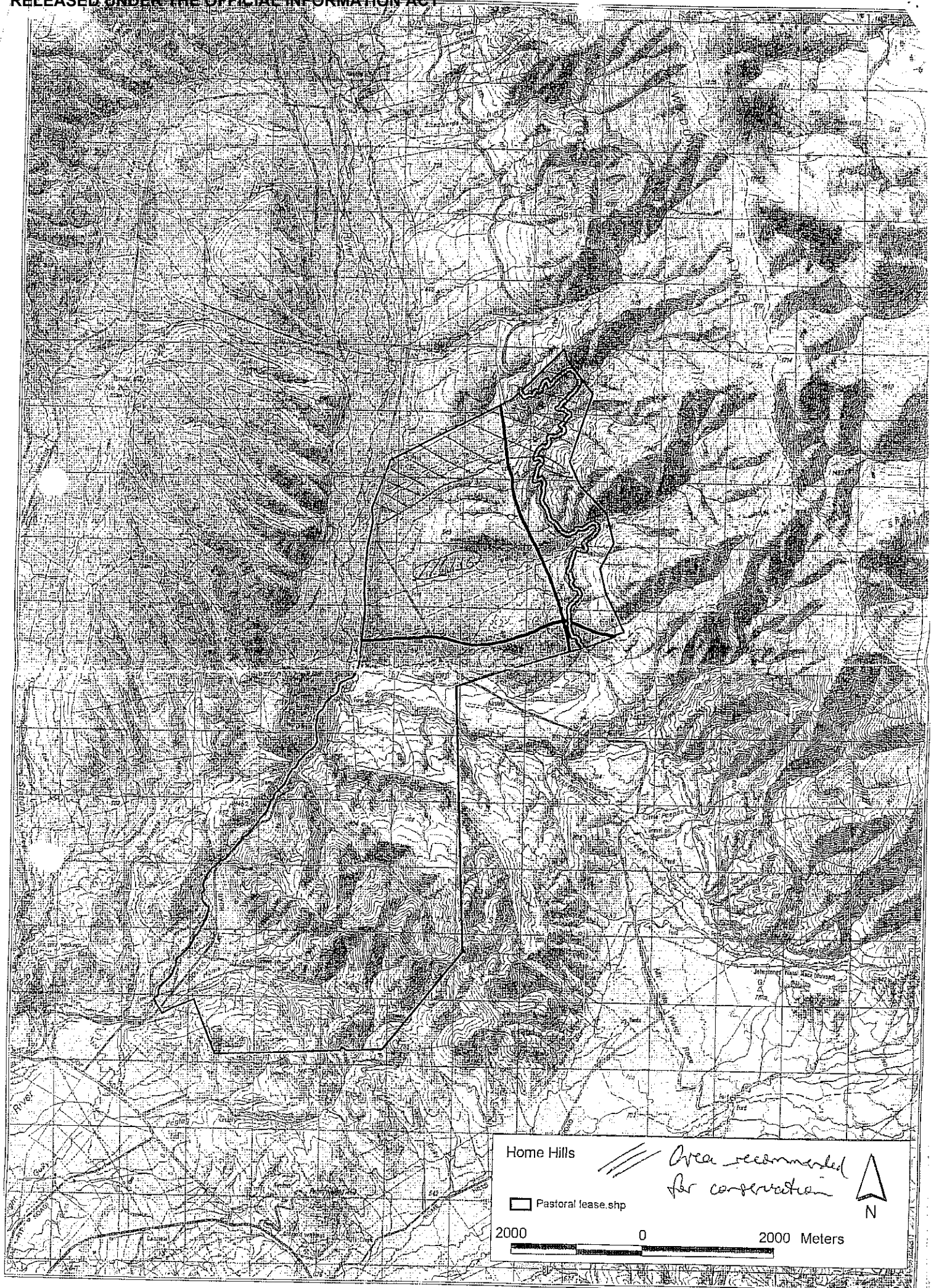
Yours sincerely,



Alan F. Mark FRSNZ  
Professor Emeritus


✓ Cc Tony Perrett,  
Department of Conservation





Home Hills

*Area recommended for conservation*

 Pastoral lease.shp

2000 0 2000 Meters



1:250,000 Scale of Map 0292