

Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review

Lease name: MIDDLE HILL

Lease number: PM 022

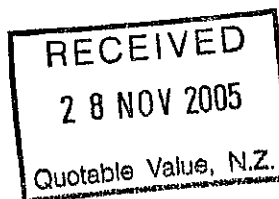
Fish & Game Report

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.

April

07



23 November 2005

QV Valuation
PO Box 13 443
CHRISTCHURCH

Attention: Barry Dench / Seb Croft

Dear Barry / Seb

TENURE REVIEW MIDDLE HILL

Fish and Game has undertaken a site inspection of the Middle Hill property as part of the tenure review process. The Fish and Game values associated with the Middle Hill property are presented in the enclosed report. Please feel free to discuss any aspects of this report with myself.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "V. Lynn".

Vaughan Lynn

Field Officer
Nelson Marlborough Fish and Game
Private Bag 1007 Blenheim
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Fish and Game Values

of

Middle Hill Station

Vaughan Lynn

**Fish and Game New Zealand, Nelson Marlborough Region. Prepared
under the provisions of the Crown Pastoral Lands Act (1998), Part 2,
Tenure Review.
October 2005**

Fish and Game Nelson Marlborough Sports Fish and Game Bird Management 1

Middle Hill Fish and Game Values

Part 1 Introduction

Fish and Game Manager Neil Deans and Field Officer Vaughan Lynn along with Fish and Game Chairman Barry Cleghorn visited the property on 12 - 13 September 2005 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 Middle Hill Station the vast majority of the area is steep with a series of small streams descending to the Lower Clarence River which bounds the property to the East. A relatively small area of irrigated flats beside the Clarence River carries a major proportion of the stock, being sheep and deer, at most times.

Vehicle access is from the Waipapa Road off State Highway One. A 4WD access track traverses roughly through the middle of the property almost up to the western boundary between Wharekiri and Miller Streams.

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. Trout fishing in the Middle Hill area is somewhat dependent upon suitable flow and water clarity conditions. Anglers mainly gain access via the Clarence Valley Road or by drifting down the river from further upstream in watercraft and fishing may not be the only or the primary activity undertaken. Trout and anglers are not usually abundant, but the angler is rewarded with peace and quite, naïve fish and the chance of the occasional trophy sized fish. The 1994/96 and 2001/02 National Angler surveys listed the Clarence River as having approximately 840 and 620 angler days per season respectively.

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 Middle Hill vicinity, the occasional salmon may be taken.

It would be worthwhile providing for vehicular access to and walking access along the Clarence River for bonafide anglers. The present deer fences have been erected in a way which enables walking access along the river bank away from stock. Access could either

be from Waipapa Road somewhere across the flats in the south eastern corner of the property or vehicular access to the Lower Wharekiri Stream and thence foot access downstream to the Mainstem Clarence. The preferred access option would be along the existing vehicle track (which may follow the legal road depicted on the tenure review map supplied?) to the Lower Wharekiri Stream.

2.2 Fisheries values of Middle Hill

Wharekiri and Miller streams were examined as habitat for sports fish; in particular to determine if these tributaries were likely as trout spawning or nursery streams. The steep gradient, the large volume of sediment carried by the streams, their 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 these streams being suitable trout spawning streams.

The unnamed Spring Creek which crosses Waipapa Road at approximate Map Reference: P30 815 949 was also examined for sports fish habitat value. This spring creek lacked holding water for adult trout and the bed was smothered in fine sediments making it unsuitable for spawning.

In summary there is unlikely to be any suitable trout spawning waters in the streams flowing through Middle Hill. The only sportsfish values and angling opportunities are in the adjacent Clarence River.

2.3 Game Birds

2.3 a Waterfowl

Middle Hill largely lacks any wetlands of value for waterfowl and only the Clarence River Valley provides significant habitat for waterfowl. The lower flat areas of the property are frequented by low numbers of Paradise Shelduck and at times some numbers of Canada Geese.

2.3 b Upland Game

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

Chukar were also present, as noted by sign, but in low numbers. There is sufficient suitable habitat which could support greater numbers. In recent years the overall numbers of Chukar have been insufficient to sustain the opening of a hunting season, so are unavailable to hunters.

2.4 Hunting Opportunities on Middle Hill

The most realistic game bird hunting opportunities are for Californian Quail and Canada Geese. The most effective hunting for Canada Geese could be and have been undertaken in conjunction with the Molesworth Goose 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. 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. Vehicular access, across some of the area sought for freehold, for anglers to the Clarence River is requested.

Summary

Middle Hill Station was visited for two days in September 2005 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. Hunttable populations of Californian Quail exist at lower altitudes and hunttable populations of Canada geese exist on the flats adjacent to the Clarence River. Tenure review of the pastoral lease should make little difference neither to the sports fish and game bird populations, nor to hunting opportunities. Fishing opportunities could be enhanced by ensuring legal and practical angler access to the adjacent Clarence River.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Rick and Judy King for allowing use of the Middle Hill Cottage during our visit and the discussions on Fish and Game issues on the property.