

## **Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review**

**Lease name: MT GLADSTONE**

**Lease number: OM 016**

### **Preliminary Proposal**

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.

**November 08**

# **REVIEW OF OTHER CROWN LAND**

**Om 016  
MT GLADSTONE**

**November 2008**

**SUMMARY OF THE PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL**  
**REVIEW OF OTHER CROWN LAND**  
**UNDER PART 3 OF THE CROWN PASTORAL LAND ACT 1998**  
**MT GLADSTONE OCCUPATION LICENCE**

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**INDEX:**

1. Details of land under consideration.
2. Summary of designations
3. Objects of a Part 3 Review
4. Description of resource
5. Description of proposed designations.

***Appendices:***

- Appendix 1: Proposed designations plan.

**1. Details of land under consideration:**

***Pastoral occupation licence:***

*File Ref:* 12635 (Om016)  
*Licence Name:* Mt Gladstone  
*Licensee:* Mt Gladstone Run Limited  
*Location:* Upper Awatere Valley, Marlborough  
*Legal Description:* Part Run 210 Block VIII Upcot and Blocks I, II, V, VI, IX and X Tapuaenuku Survey Districts  
*Area:* 3804.0449 hectares (more or less)  
*Computer Interests Register:* 131769  
*Local Authorities:* Marlborough District Council



## 2. Summary of designations:

The Commissioner of Crown Lands has devised a preliminary proposal over the unrenovable occupation licence known as "Mt Gladstone". The proposal designates approximately 2850 hectares of land as land to be retained in full Crown ownership and control as scenic reserve and approximately 954 hectares of land as land to be disposed of in fee simple.

## 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 unrenovable 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 the licence area

### 4.1 Landform/landscape

Land held under the Mt Gladstone occupation licence is primarily steep to very steep slopes and summits on the western flank of the Inland Kaikoura Range. The licence area is dominated by the high summit of Mt Gladstone (2371 m), with Mitre Peak, Mt Alarm and Tapuae o Uenuku providing a back drop to the south/south east. The area includes two long broken rocky ridges that extend north from Mt Gladstone and Mitre Peak, which are separated by Trail Stream. The north western faces of the ridge north from Mt Gladstone are dissected by numerous generally deeply incised drainage channels. Higher-altitude parts of the area are dominated by steep rocky slopes, bluffs and extensive areas of rock pavement or scree.

The licence area drains to the Awatere River, with the primary tributaries being the Winterton River and its tributaries in the south and the Hodder River and its tributaries (including Trail Stream) in the north. On the western slopes of Mt Gladstone upper tributaries of Stony, Otterson, Station and Limestone streams are located, and these streams drain directly to the Awatere River. Rivers and streams on the property are typically steep, rocky and incised, and they carry high bed-loads of debris when in flood. There are few areas of gently-flowing water in the streams and rivers.

A large part of the licence area contributes to the recognizable and distinctive landscape character of the Inland Kaikoura Range. It forms part of a dramatic tectonic landscape that contains the highest peaks in the country outside the Southern Alps. Notable features are the long scree faces and debris chutes that extend from the highest peaks down to about 1000 m altitude, the diverse range of geomorphic features including a range of disjointed and fractured landforms, and the down-cutting of streams into steep rocky gorges. The scenic and aesthetic values of the property principally derive from the scale of the landscape, and its

texture, colour and level of diversity. These combine to create a memorable landscape, significant parts of which are clearly visible from the Awatere Valley.

#### **4.2 Geology**

Basement rocks of the area are Lower Cretaceous graded bedded greywacke and argillite of the Torlesse Group rocks. The Red Hills area comprises alkaline mafic-ultramafic rocks, and higher-altitude parts of the property are intruded by numerous dolerite dykes, and are part of the Tapuaenuku Igneous Complex, a complex multiphase intrusion. The property lies between the large and active Awatere and Clarence faults, and is tectonically active, with relatively high rates of uplift and natural erosion. Many slopes are over-steep, and rocks are rapidly weathered by frost-shattering at higher altitudes.

#### **4.3 Vegetation**

The licence area is within the Tapuae o Uenuku Ecological District. This ecological district is characterised by geologically active mountains with a climate of extremes and vegetation much disturbed by human activity, especially fire and pastoral farming.

The licence area can be divided into two broad vegetation zones: the Front Country and the Back Country. All of the property is steep, rugged and rocky country. The Front Country is that below about 1500 m, mostly with a northerly aspect, and comprises approximately 31% of the licence area. Included in the front country is the lower part of the unnamed catchment (known locally as 'Surprise Creek') north of Trail Stream. The Front Country has been more actively farmed than the Back Country, because it is lower and more accessible (but still very rugged in places). As a result its vegetation is more modified and contains more exotic plants. The Back Country is mountainous, and comprises approximately 69% of the licence area. It is made up of two prominent ridge systems, the Red Hills and that containing Mt Gladstone (2371 m), with the valley of Trail Stream between them and the valley of the Hodder River to the east of Red Hills. The land is extremely steep, and is composed largely of exposed rock and scree. It is geologically complex, being crushed, uplifted and intruded by numerous igneous dykes. Only in portions of the valley floors could the contour of the land be described as gentle.

The plant communities for each of these two zones, can be described as follows;

##### Front Country

The Front Country comprises the northwest portion of the property, land below 1500 m and land with a generally northerly aspect. The vegetation cover is mainly a mosaic of extensive rough pasture, short tussock grassland and shrubland, broken by rock outcrops, gullies and scree. The pasture is made up mostly of exotic grasses (browntop being a major component) and mouse-ear hawkweed, with scattered native grasses (conspicuously fescue tussock and lesser amounts of silver tussock). King devil hawkweed [Note: more likely to be *Hieracium caespitosum*] is common on shadier slopes and herbs such as sheep's sorrel are prevalent, especially where sheep congregate. Bare ground is often colonised by mat daisies (particularly *Raoulia australis*).

Shrubs of matagouri and tauhinu are ubiquitous, varying in density from a light scattering to dense shrubland. The densest and tallest shrubland occurs in gullies and on the stable lateral erosion debris of the main streams. Other shrubs frequently present are *Coprosma propinqua*, *Olearia odorata*, porcupine shrub and sweet brier. Dense shrubland also contains various scramblers such as scrub pohuehue, leafless clematis, bush lawyer and native jasmine. Bracken occurs in places. On dry rock outcrops and scarps are shrubs specialised for such sites. Most common are Marlborough rock daisy, NZ lilac, *Brachyglottis monroi* and prostrate kowhai. Also present are mountain flax and various "hot rock" ferns (*Cheilanthes sieberi*, *Asplenium trichomanes*, *Pellaea calidrupium* and *Polystichum richardii*). On shaded and damp rock are assemblages of grasses, ferns, mosses, shrubs such as tutu (*Coriaria* spp.) and *Hebe traversii* and herbs such as *Gingidia montana*. On the unstable material in stream beds are mat daisies, localised occurrences of *Muehlenbeckia ephedroides* and various other small transient plants.

In some places there are remnants of taller vegetation providing examples of the pre-human patterns of forest and shrubland. In a gorged section of lower Gladstone Stream, upstream of a substantial waterfall, is a forest-shrubland community with a large population of fierce lancewood (scores of plants of many age classes). Also present are kohuhu, weeping matipo, common broom, akiraho, *Coprosma linariifolia* and what appear to be dead kowhai trees, mingled with the typical shrubs, scramblers and rock plants listed

above. Just downstream of the waterfall is a population of pink broom (probably *Carmichaelia carmichaeliae*) growing on a rock scarp.

Similar sites in each of the branches of Otterson Stream contain large old trees of broadleaf and pockets of mountain ribbonwood and pink broom, along with much akiraho, kohuhu and *Coprosma linariifolia*. Also present are korokio, *Helichrysum lanceolatum* and various ground ferns characteristic of forest. In lower Trail Stream and on the true left (west) side of the Hodder River downstream are scattered trees of broadleaf, mountain ribbonwood, mountain totara, lancewood, kanuka and cabbage tree. Pink broom is common on both sides of this stretch of the Hodder River. Coral shrub occurs sporadically on riparian rock scarps.

#### Back Country

This ruggedly mountainous area forms the majority of the property. In the high alpine zone, dominated by rock and scree and subject to climatic extremes, vegetation is sparse. It consists of compact plants in which daisy family genera (*Raoulia*, *Haastia*, *Helichrysum* and *Celmisia*) are well represented. Most distinctive and conspicuous are vegetable sheep (*Haastia pulvinaris* and *Raoulia bryoides*). Also present are lichens, mosses, small *Hebe* and *Coprosma* species, snow totara and scree specialists such as penwiper, *Lignocarpa diversifolia* and *Lobelia roughii*. Tussock grassland dominated by mid-ribbed snow tussock and also featuring golden speargrass, is uncommon but occurs in the Hodder and Trail valleys about and above the tree line. Shrubs associated with tussock grassland include tauhinu, inaka (*Dracophyllum longifolium* and *D. uniflorum*), snow totara and small-leaved *Coprosma* species.

In the valleys of the Hodder River, Trail Stream and Totara Stream, between about 1000 and 1300 m in altitude, are forest remnants. They form clumps, patches and scatterings of trees. Mountain totara is dominant, with a range of age classes from ancient gnarled trees to saplings. Broadleaf and mountain ribbonwood are common, and mountain toatoa occurs infrequently. At the lower levels of this zone are akiraho, kohuhu, lancewood and (rarely) kowhai. Hill slopes in the vicinity, where forest once would have been, have rough grassland-shrubland of browntop, silver tussock, matagouri, tauhinu and *Coprosma propinqua*. Mountain flax is common in places.

Rock outcrops and gorges contain much pink broom and characteristic Marlborough rock plants, including Marlborough rock daisy, *Brachyglottis monroi*, NZ lilac, leafless clematis, common broom, coral shrub and *Helichrysum parvifolium*. Also present in all three valleys on steep rock is the distinctive locally-endemic *Ewartiothamnus sinclairii*. On the unstable fan and stream debris grow small transient plants including four species of mat daisy, *Helichrysum depressum*, several *Epilobium* species, silver tussock, creeping pohuehue and various colonising shrubs.

#### **4.4 Fauna**

##### Birds

The following bird species have been recorded in the licence area; South Island rifleman, bellbird, brown creeper, grey warbler and silvereye in forest and shrubland on bluffs and in gorges, Australasian harrier in lowland areas and New Zealand pipit in alpine areas. Kea, NZ falcon, Southern black-backed gulls and welcome swallow have also been noted within the area.

##### Lizards

The common skink, Marlborough mini gecko and Southern Alps gecko have all been recorded within the licence area

##### Fish

Only one fish species, koaro, was recorded in a recent survey. The limited occurrence of fish generally in the licence area is not unexpected, and is likely to be related to the unstable nature of the riverbeds and the frequency of large floods.

##### Invertebrates

There is little existing information about invertebrate species on the licence area. Two giant weta species, the bluff weta *Deinacrida elegans* and scree weta *D. connectens* have apparently been recorded from the

property. Speargrass weevil feeding sign, probably from the 'Wellington' speargrass weevil, (*Lyperobius huttoni*), has also been reported from the Hodder River gorge below Hodder Huts.

Species found included caterpillars beaten from *Olearia odorata* in riparian vegetation, two Noctuids (subfamily Hadeninae): *Meterana exquisita* and an unidentified species (possibly *Graphania* or *Meterana*), and a Geometrid (*Pasiphila* sp.). The Lepidoptera catch in Otterson Stream displays a wide diversity of species, indicating that riparian and residual woody vegetation in the area is likely to harbour a significant invertebrate fauna.

#### **4.5 Recreational opportunities**

Existing public recreational use of the licence area is centred on the Hodder Valley at the eastern boundary of the area. It is within a day's travel from the main centres of Christchurch, Wellington, Nelson and Blenheim. The Hodder Valley provides the main tramping route for the ascent of the peaks of the Inland Kaikoura Range, notably Tapuae o Uenuku (the highest summit at 2885 metres, and the highest peak in New Zealand outside the Southern Alps), Mt Alarm and Mitre Peak. Access to the area was historically via the Shin or Hodder Rivers, but walking access is now available with permission via a vehicle track on Mt Gladstone freehold land, to the Shin River junction.

The first hut in the upper Hodder area was installed by the Tararua Tramping Club in the early 1970's. The present Hodder Huts are maintained by the Marlborough Tramping Club to facilitate tramping and climbing in this area. The Pitts family maintain hut bookings on behalf of the Tramping Club, and report that between 450 to 700 people use the huts each year. The area provides opportunities for tramping, climbing, hunting, scenery appreciation, nature study and photography, though there appears to be little existing public recreational use of areas outside the Hodder and Trail valleys.

#### **4.6 Other values**

The area is large, compact in shape and contiguous with extensive mountainlands that include the large Tapuae o Uenuku Scenic Reserve. Natural ecological processes in the area are therefore generally well buffered and complement those on adjacent land, as the ecological processes on adjacent land are complemented by and help buffer the processes in the licence area.

#### **4.7 Economic use**

The licence area is presently run as one unit with the Mt Gladstone freehold to the north west, and has been grazed since 1852. Grazing is seen as being the most likely possible economic use for the generally lower altitude portions of the area, although there may be some other limited possibilities e.g. commercial recreation.

The present holder grazes 1650 merino wethers on an extensive unfenced area that includes the licence area and some freehold land, and estimates that on an adjusted 12 month basis some 650 wethers are grazed on the licence area. For a short period over summer the majority of the wether flock might be grazed on parts of the area, and at other times there might be no wethers on the area.

The most recent Land Use Capability assessment which included the licence area (Lynn, 1996) indicates that some 37% of the licence area may be suitable for grazing (Classes 6 and 7), but limited by erodibility (subclass e). Conversely some 63% of the area is not considered suitable for grazing. The present level of grazing is considered to be both economic and sustainable on some 30-35% of the licence area.

## **5. Description of proposed designations:**

### **5.1 An area of approximately 2850 ha (shown edged pink on the plan attached in Appendix I) to be retained in full Crown ownership and control as scenic reserve (Section 86(5)(a)(ii) CPL Act).**

This area contains most of the significant inherent values identified for the licence area. It comprises the 'Back Country' areas described above and the upper catchments of the Otterson, Limestone, Gladstone, Totara Streams. It includes the entire Trail Stream catchment and the upper part of the Hodder River above



the confluence with Trail Stream (including the Hodder Huts). These areas contain a range of significant inherent values including flora and fauna, landscape and recreational values.

**5.2      *An area of approximately 954 ha (shown edged green on the plan attached in Appendix I) to be designated as land to be disposed of in fee simple under the Land Act (Section 86(5)(b)(ii) CPL Act)***

These areas contain most of the modified lower faces of the licence area including the unnamed stream to the north of Trail Stream and the lower parts of Limestone Stream, Otterson Stream, unnamed stream north of Gladstone Stream and the lower western faces of the licence area between Gladstone Stream and Totara Stream. These areas are generally modified and are considered to be capable of economic use that appears to be ecologically sustainable at the present time.

**APPENDIX 1:**

Proposed designations plan.