

## **Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review**

**Lease name : REES VALLEY**

**Lease number : PO 311**

### **Conservation Resources Report - Part 4**

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.

They are released under the Official information Act 1982.

**March**

**05**

## **4.5 Forest and Bird Society (Upper Clutha Branch) – early tenure review report.**

- 4 MAY 2004

RECEIVED

**Upper Clutha Branch**

PO Box 38  
LAKE HAWEA

Sec Ph 03 443 8669

April 29<sup>th</sup> April 2004

Mr T Perrett  
Manager Tenure Review Programme  
Department of Conservation  
PO Box 5244  
DUNEDIN

Dear Tony

**Rees Valley, PL 311** – early tenure review report

This property was drawn to our attention during the NGO meeting held in Alexandra on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2003.

The lessee has applied for a review of tenure, therefore the property has to be looked at in accordance with Part 2 of the CPL Act 1998. In addition, consideration must now be given to the recently reviewed objectives of the Act, and the new added complimentary objectives, as per the current Government Cabinet Policy Committee on August 6<sup>th</sup> 2003 (POL Min(03)19/7)

We would be pleased if you would give due consideration and take into account the several points our branch of Forest and Bird wishes to make on the various issues involved on Rees Valley before your department makes it's Conservation Resources Report to the Commissioner of Crown Lands.

We made an on site inspection of the property during January 2004 with the kind permission of Mrs Iris Scott.

**1. General:**

- This is a large property (almost 19,000ha) situated at the head of lake Wakatipu. It takes in all the western slopes of the of the Richardson mountains from the Rees Saddle at the top end down to the Twelve Mile Creek, or Oxburn, at the bottom.
- The eastern boundary of the property, which is not fenced, is the top of the Richardson Mountains starting at Cleft Peak in the north, then goes south to Mt Ferguson, to Mt Aurum and to Stair Peak, which are all over 2000ms; the valley floor where it leaves the lower gorge just upstream from the Oxburn is about 400ms.

*Robbie  
please copy  
to Rob +  
make heading*

CONS	
A.M.	
C.R.M.	
B.S.M.	
T.S.M.	
H.R.A.	
H.C.T.R.M.	<i>JP</i>
K.A.M.	
OTHER	

**FOREST  
& BIRD**

ROYAL FOREST AND  
BIRD PROTECTION  
SOCIETY OF  
NEW ZEALAND INC

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- The south eastern corner of the lease contains the head waters of the Floodburn and Savage Burn which flow into the Shotover.
- There is a large area of bush, mainly mountain beech and other associated trees, extending from McDougalls creek north to Muddy creek. This reaches an altitude of about 8-900ms. Whereas the bushline elsewhere in the valley is 11-1200ms. Other plants seen in this area of bush are totara, coprosma, broadleaf and pseudopanax.
- There is just over 300ha freehold country attached to the lease.
- There is a recreational concession attached to the lease to operate a commercial skifield, guided heliskiing and guided educational trips. The skifield is based in Invincible Creek.
- The vegetation on the eastern faces from the Oxburn north to 25 Mile spur, at about the mouth of Hunter Creek, from the valley floor to about 1200ms, has been subject to fire at some time in the past. The vegetation today - apart from the tussock and exotic grasses - consists in the main of patches or tongues of mountain beech, coprosma, manuka, cabbage trees, matagouri, cassinnia, mountain toa toa, mountain flax, dracophyllum and in places where stock or fire have not been able to reach Olearia avicennifolia, lancewood and aciphylla.
- Under the Land Use Classification classes there is only 1.3% of the run classed as class V or better, 14.5% Class VI, 32.2% Class VI and 52% Class VIII. These classifications will have a bearing on the land designations of this review.

**Inherent conservation values present:**

- The whole Rees Valley property has significant inherent landscape values. While the western side might be more spectacular with Mt Earnslaw and the Forbes Mountains dominating the skyline, the Rees Valley station side, which has many spurs running down to the valley floor of a less steep nature, has to be there to compliment the whole.
- While the valley floor from Muddy Creek to Hunter Creek is open and has been modified from tussock to exotic grasslands, its open and uncluttered appearance still makes it an attractive landscape.
- There are high recreational values, mainly for tramping on the Dart Rees circuit. It is the landscape values which make it attractive for the walkers, trampers and fishermen.
- The public access values whereby the public are permitted without restriction freedom access the whole length of the Rees River. (See provisions made in the lease issued in 1966)
- Relatively unmodified tussock grasslands above about 1000ms
- Relatively unmodified alpine areas, cushion and herb fields.
- Significant bird population including Kea, Falcon, Rock Wren and Paradise Duck
- Apart from one or two sections the actual riverbed between Muddy Creek and Hunter stream the river is mostly stable and remains between grassy reasonable well vegetated banks.
- The wild and scenic atmosphere of the lower gorge. It could be described as a Blue Duck river.

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- The Conservation Management Strategy for Otago speaks highly of the water quality of the Rees river due to there being very little sediment in the water as compared with the Dart river.
- The Rees river offers very good fishing to the angler.

**Matters to be considered and taken into account:**

- (1) If the valley floor from Muddy Creek up to the mouth of Hunter Creek were to be developed by oversowing and topdressing this would no doubt require a considerable amount of fencing to make it worth while. This would inevitably have the effect of altering the landscape. It would also endanger the riparian strip by concentrating stock along the strip.
- (2) With a smaller area of land available after the tenure review process is completed and perhaps a need to keep the stock numbers up, there will be a desire to improve the pastures by the application of fertiliser. The areas that would offer the best response to this treatment, other than the valley floor, would be those areas from the valley floor up to about 8-900ms. If this were done and the areas stocked more heavily to recoup the cost, this would show up on the landscape by it being much greener at certain times of the year and there being less woody shrubs evident; the woody plants would inevitably disappear from the scene if fully developed. This would harm the bird habitat due to the reduction in the variety of cover available to them whereas if it were to be de-stocked the, woody plants would eventually take over.
- (3) While there is a legal road running up the eastern side of the river we would doubt if the present formation is on it. At the mouth of the gorge it could be assumed that in fact the road is in the riverbed. As the river is continually eroding the banks in that vicinity provision will have to be made to create a legal road reserve on the terrace above.
- (4) In and around the oxburn there are some noxious plants: blackberry, Himalayan honeysuckle, broom, and sycamore.

**Recommendations:**

- (1) That the land above approximately 1000ms be returned to full Crown ownership and control, including Invincible Creek. A concession could be granted to the present holders for as long as they may occupy the property for the continuation of the skifield and other associated outdoor tourist enterprises based in Invincible Creek.
- (2) That the legal road be altered to a safer position on the terrace above the river where it is subject to erosion.
- (3) That the area of bush from between McDougalls Creek and Muddy Creek be reserved and an easement granted for the passage of stock and any other managerial requirements.

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- (4) That there be a landscape covenant placed on any freehold title issued to prevent any undue earthworks or structures, also the undertaking of forestry.
- (5) Careful consideration must be given to the designation given to that area of land lying between the valley floor and up to about the 1000ms contour. This will be a deciding factor in the outcome to this tenure review. We believe the inherent conservation values contained in this area warrant it being returned to full Crown ownership and control.
- (6) That the Conservation Management Strategy for Otago be heeded:

***Objectives for Dart / Rees (Outside of the Mt Aspiring National Park)***

**To protect the high landscape and indigenous biological values of the area and to improve access to valued recreational opportunities through integrated management of braided riverbeds, the beech forests and the high mountains, and the adjoining national Park.**

***Implementation;***

**"Opportunities arising out of tenure reviews of pastoral land"**

**Conclusion:**

This report was arrived at by consultation with other NGOs, various documents available to us and by personal knowledge of the property gained over some years.

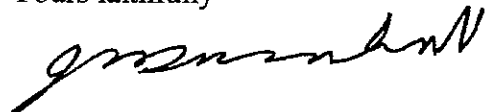
A recent visit to the valley up as far as the confluence with the Hunter Stream was also made.

We thank you for the opportunity to have this input as part of the consultation process specified in the CPL Act 1998; we believe it will be of benefit to you in arriving at a preliminary proposal for Rees Valley.

Attached are photographs to illustrate our several points of interest.

We look forward to seeing the preliminary proposal.

Yours faithfully



John L Turnbull  
For Upper Clutha Branch Forest and Bird.

Attached – Photographs.

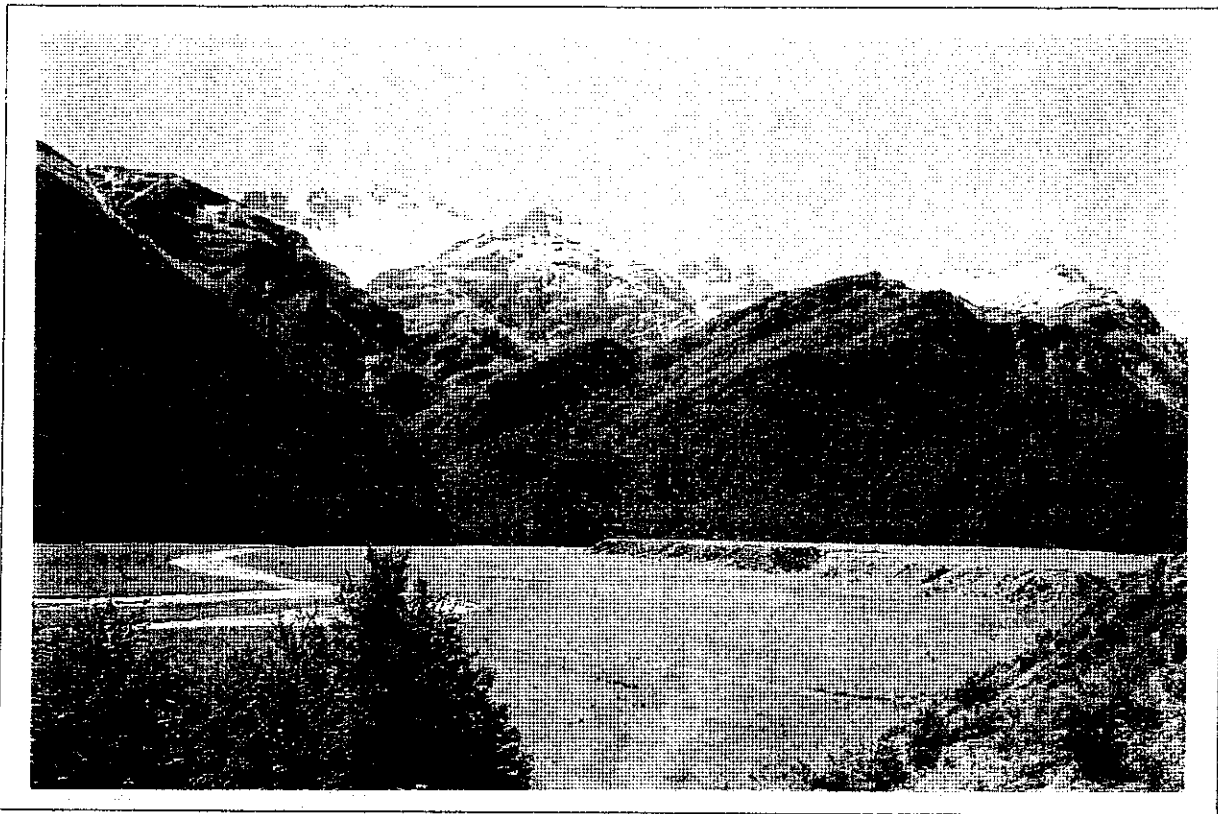


Photo 1. View of upper flats taken from the hillside just north of 25 mile hut. This shows the outstanding landscape of the valley

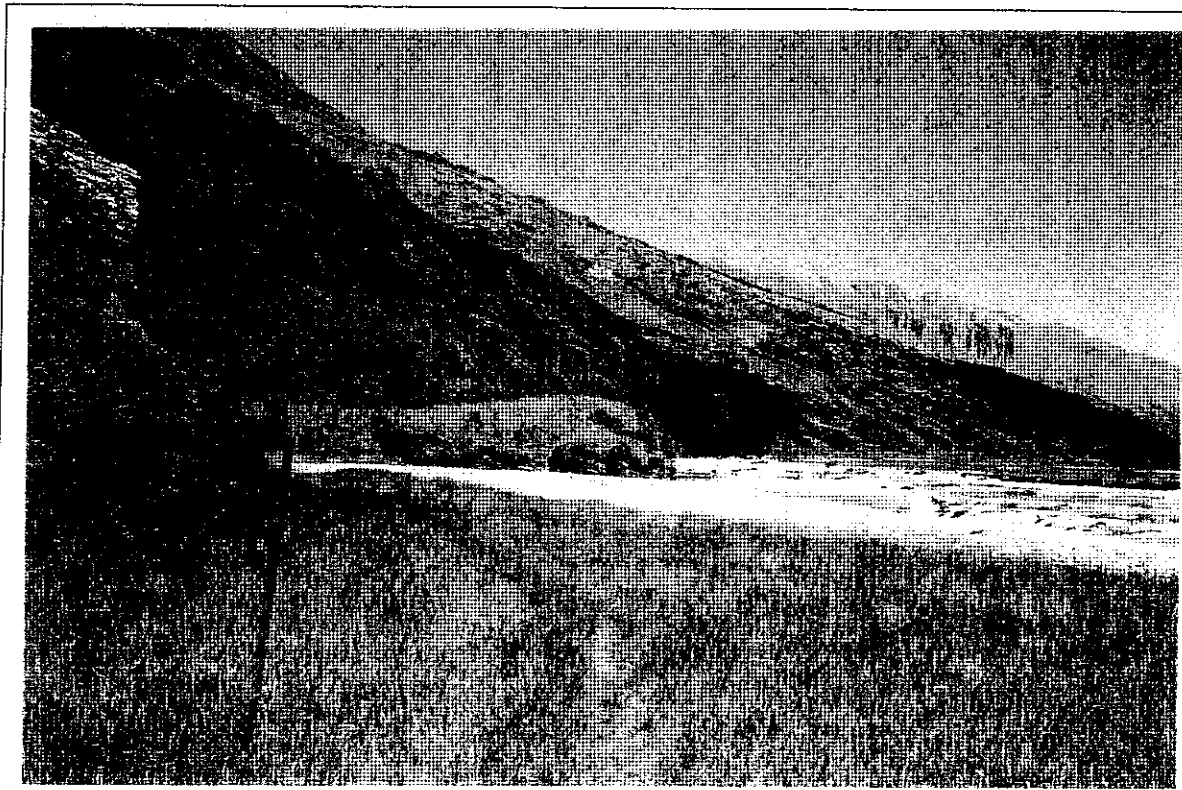


Photo 2. This photo was taken from the valley floor just abreast the 25 mile hut. It illustrates the nature of the hillside containing patches of bush and other woody shrubs.



Photo 3. View of river bed where there has been some erosion due to heavy rain. This photo taken about half way between Muddy and 25 Mile Creek. It also shows the large patch of bush south of Muddy Creek that should be reserved.



Photo 4. This taken from just north of Muddy Creek. It shows the general nature of the valley floor and the outstanding landscape values. Also on the right side it shows the nature of the woody vegetation on the slopes on the east side of the valley..





Photo 5. View of eastern hillside taken from about McDougalls Creek. This shows the woody nature of the cover on the lower slopes of the country that could be developed by fertilising and oversowing. If heavily stocked these slopes would eventually be covered with exotic grasses..

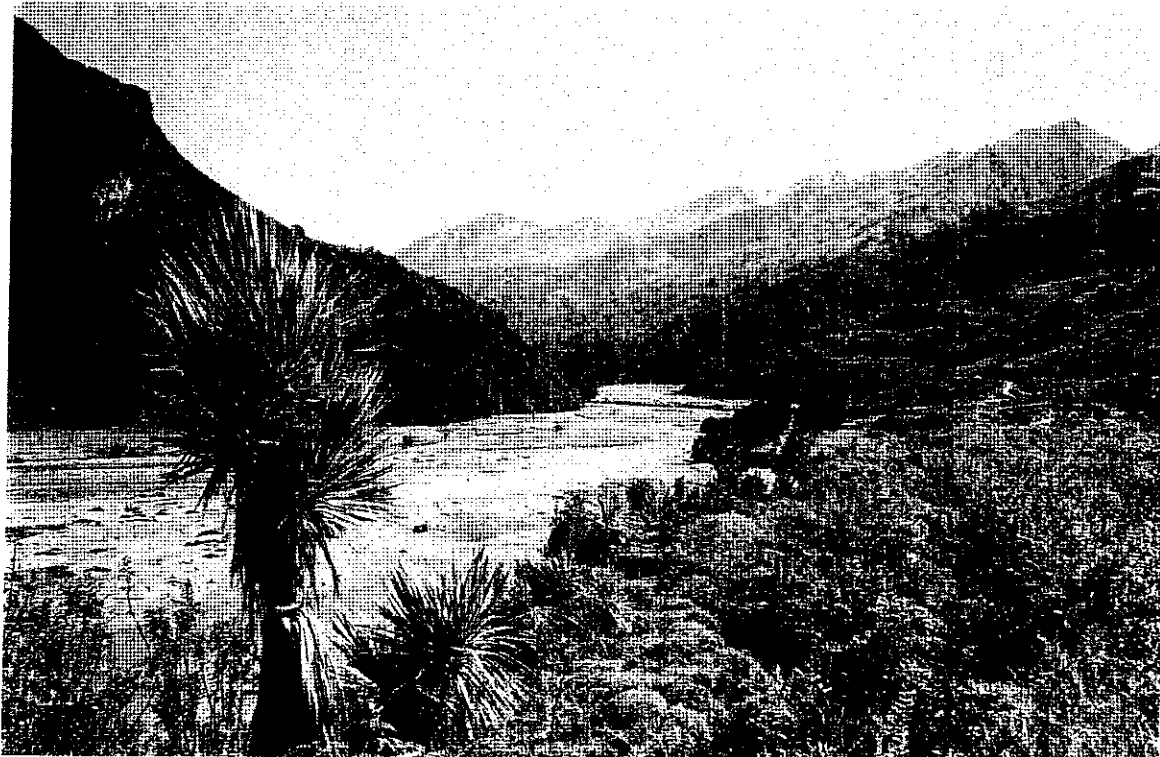


Photo 6. View from just north of the site of the original Rees river bridge. Again shows nature of cover on hill slopes; slopes that could be developed after the removal of the woody vegetation. Also shows the bush area between McDougalls and Muddy Creek that should be reserved.