

Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review

Lease name: LONG GULLY

Lease number: PO 055

Public Submissions - Part 3

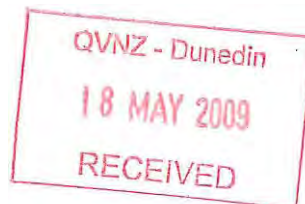
These submissions were received as a result of the public advertising of the Preliminary Proposal for Tenure Review.

October 09

Central Otago-Lakes Branch
Forest & Bird Society
4 Stonebrook Drive
Wanaka

Wednesday 13th May 2009

Commissioner of Crown Lands
c/- Quotable Value Ltd
PO Box 215
DUNEDIN



**FOREST
& BIRD**

Royal Forest and Bird
Protection Society
of New Zealand Inc

Dear Sir

Submission on Tenure Review Proposal for Long Gully Pastoral Lease, Po 55

This submission is written on behalf of the Central Otago-Lakes Branch of the Forest and Bird Protection Society which has approximately 170 members throughout Central Otago. We welcome this opportunity to submit on the proposed tenure review of Long Gully pastoral lease, following on from our earlier submissions in 2003.

We have examined the proposal document and background reports from the Department of Conservation. We have viewed the property numerous times on our travels through the Upper Clutha/Tarras area. We re-inspected the property recently to enable us to make an informed submission and aerial photos were taken of the property in early April to further assist us.

We have submitted on the neighbouring Sandy Point and Glenfoyle properties and we appreciate this opportunity to be able to contribute further with respect to the last pastoral lease property to undergo tenure review in this part of the Grandview Range, in conjunction with Deep Creek which we are submitting on concurrently.

We have been involved with tenure review for a number of years and have seen and submitted on many proposals. In the course of this work we have visited pastoral leases in most parts of Central Otago and the Lakes district, as well as in northern Southland and in the Waitaki valley and Mackenzie Basin. We are very familiar with the range of values present in these high country landscapes and are very aware of the management issues associated with protecting and enhancing them; and in accessing them.

Generally we see this proposal as delivering some good conservation outcomes and we support the proposals. We are pleased that outcomes we suggested in our previous submission are reflected in this proposal but following further consideration and our recent inspection we have further points to make. We would be pleased if you would accept our submissions, which we make with reference to the objects of the CPL Act 1998.

We take this opportunity to thank the lessee for allowing access to the property to see its values for ourselves and be able to assess the merits of the proposal.

Our Points of Submission

Long Gully

(i) Proposed CC (Landscape)

The head of this gully rises to nearly 1200m asl and there is snow tussock cover extending down to below 900m, due to a cooler southerly aspect. We also observed a lot of regenerating and remnant shrubland throughout the gully, mainly patches of kanuka and 'grey' scrub (matagouri, coprosma, olearia, broom, etc) (see *Photo 1*). We recognise that fertiliser application would have encouraged some of the growth but much of it will reflect a natural return of woody cover with cessation of burning and perhaps more conservative grazing as well as limits on rabbit numbers. We are very aware of the high values now being placed on remnant low altitude grasslands and shrublands, even modified ones, as ecosystems almost absent from our range of protected areas. We understand that they are very important for a rich insect and bird fauna and are highly characteristic of Central Otago's pre-European and even pre-human condition. At the same time they are highly vulnerable to loss through land development. There is a high imperative to protect and provide conditions for recovery of woody cover over what has previously been regarded as 'ordinary' farmland with 'scrub'.

Overall the gully has a natural character although clearly modified by pastoral practices and scarred by tracking. We note that the landscape survey did not identify any of Long Gully as having significant landscape values. This is because emphasis was placed on visibility from public roads, rather than the inherent aesthetic values of the natural landscape (which in our view are high over the upper head basin, as part of the range crest landscape).

We consider it important to retain a natural tall tussock appearance to this the end-most part of the Grandview Range, a skyline area visible from the Cromwell and Upper Clutha basins (see *Photo 2*).

Recreational users of the proposed access tracks will also pass through and appreciate this area and it contributes to the experience of the summit landscape – an experience of considerable value in our view. The range crest is also an area where people would be very likely to want to explore at will.

We are pleased that there has been some recognition of its landscape value (and by association, ecological values) by way of the proposed landscape covenant over the land above 900m altitude.

We are concerned however that allowing continued grazing over the higher part of the valley will lead to the eventual demise of the snow tussock. Fertiliser is not economic to apply over this higher country as the returns through pasture growth and production are too low. Fertiliser if it is applied can also promote the dominance of exotic species which would contribute to the decline of snow tussock. This is likely to especially occur at the lower margins. The presence of snow tussock below approximately 1000m is increasingly rare and we would not like to see the area of snow tussock in Long Gully shrink.

Given the range of values the area has it would not be appropriate for its natural character to weaken. This would not meet the objective of promoting ecologically sustainable management or protecting its significant inherent values.

The proposed covenant does not allow for free public access over the range crest which is likely to be desired, and exercised in reality.

The retention of the upper head basin as conservation land would also compliment the CA2 area, if it was continuous with it.

We submit that the gully head should be retained as conservation land with free public access, and that grazing cease. The area we would like to see retained is shown on Fig 1 attached. A grazing licence could be issued subject to strict limits on stocking, robust monitoring conditions and ability to require cessation or changes to grazing.

Should the final outcome be the proposed covenant, as a second best option, We submit that the area covered by the covenant is that we have outlined on our Fig. 1. There will need to be conditions restricting the number and timing of stocking so that the stress on the snow tussock is minimal and able to be recovered from, and there will need to be robust monitoring provisions with ability to require amendment to or cessation of all grazing.

(ii) Proposed Freehold

We are concerned at the absence of protection for the native shrublands within Long Gully. Under the current District Plan, freehold properties out of tenure review are exempt from vegetation clearance rules. All the woody cover outside of the proposed covenant area could be removed by spraying and/or heavy grazing. This is not acceptable given the values of shrublands now being recognised.

We would like to see a covenant placed over Long Gully for the purpose of protecting a network of woody cover based on the gullies and steeper rocky areas mainly. We do not expect all shrubland to be retained but at least a healthy self-sustaining framework. Necessary conditions would prevent any kind of clearance and would allow only conservative sheep grazing (unless fencing was undertaken). Goats, deer and cattle would need to be excluded as they can prevent shrubland recovery, and cause senility by eating seedlings and thus eventual decline.

Planting of exotic species would be prohibited unless by express approval of the Minister of Conservation. Pest plants would be required to be controlled including removal of wilding trees. Monitoring would be required to ensure the woody cover is recovering. This would be at the owner's expense.

Alternatively a condition of freeholding might be the preparation of a Shrubland Management Plan for the property which is submitted to the DOC for approval, as well as being sent out to parties who submitted on the Preliminary Proposal for review and comment (to DOC). The Plan would be prepared by a recognised expert. It would describe the existing vegetation in detail, identify potential for recovery, and set out objectives, bench marks and a robust monitoring programme. It would contain a power for the DOC to require alteration or cessation of grazing if bench marks are not being attained.

It is important that as part of the agreement to allow freehold ownership that there is legitimate opportunity for parties to the tenure review process to review performance if they wish and to be advised of any proposed changes to the Plan. The freehold owner is after all responsible for the well being of a public asset.

We submit that the existing shrublands in Long Gully and their recovery potential need protection, by way of covenant or approved management plan.

Clutha Faces

(i) CA1 and CA2

We fully support the retention of the northern gully system in its entirety as conservation land, protecting altitudinal sequence and a diversity of native shrubland species and associated fauna. This area will be able to be appreciated by many from

the more distant viewpoints of the highways and river corridor as well as at close range from the track up to the summit.

We do not see any sense however in the narrow piece of freehold land between CA2 and CA1 on the map entailing unnecessary extra fencing; and promoting an unnatural pattern of landcover near the ridge summit, a visually sensitive area. The two areas should be joined, with a farm access easement granted over the 4WD track.

We submit that CA1 and CA2 be joined.

(ii) Clutha Faces – Proposed Freehold

As with Long Gully, there are extensive native shrublands regenerating over these faces, which also have particularly high visual significance overlooking two state highways and a major river corridor (see *Photo 3*). The native shrublands contribute significantly to the natural character and have a major role to play in defining the 'place' of this part of the Upper Clutha. Total clearance of the cover is currently permissible under the District Plan. This would detract seriously from the landscape values as well as being unacceptable from an ecosystem perspective given that only a very small percentage of these communities are currently protected. Other activities such as tracking, fence lines and tree planting could have adverse effects on the values. A covenant for landscape protection purposes is recommended including a Shrubland Management Plan as detailed for Llong Gully.

Our submission is that the faces can be freehold but with a landscape covenant over the majority of the area and the shrubland is to be substantially protected especially kanuka and broom and mixed coprosma-matagouri-olearia shrubland. We have outlined two ways to achieve this as above.

(iii) Scientific Reserve R1

We support the retention of virtually the complete area of these flats in Crown ownership and management. This is applauded, given the intense pressures for irrigated pasture and vineyard development which has occurred on either side.

FH3

A "no subdivision and development" covenant should be placed over a strip 200m wide along the western edge of FH3, to prevent residential development occurring along the river. In this open terraced landscape this would unacceptably compromise the natural character of the river and should be avoided. The covenant would be similar in purpose to the no-development covenants being agreed to for lake landscapes such as on Braemar. We believe that protection of natural character of the rivers especially the major ones, is just as important as for our lakes.

Access Issues

We are pleased with the various access ways being proposed in this and the Deep Creek tenure reviews, when added to Sandy Point and Glenfoyle. A highly valuable network of walking, cycling, and horse riding opportunities will evolve on the Grandview Range. The provision of access along the top of the range in anticipation of connecting through to Lindis Peak one day is proactive. We support all the proposals as they stand but have recommendations to make which will improve the outcomes.

Clutha River Flats (FH3, R1)

FH3 - Public access around the west edge of the terrace needs to be provided for, as it was on Sandy Point. The edge of the terrace overlooking the river is the only practical route, as below the terrace drops straight into the river in a steep eroding gravel scarp. The legal road appears to cross the scarp; and the Aurora Energy easement and freehold area appear to extend to the very edge of the scarp at least in some places on FH3.

The route above the river is also the most rewarding and desirable route offering elevated views of the river. This would be in keeping with the objectives of the Clutha Mata Au Parkway project.

R1 – scientific reserves may include restrictions on public access. Whilst this is a post-tenure review matter, we seek assurance that there will be enduring public access between SH8a and the Clutha River. Access should also be designated to discourage wander at will by bikers, horse riders etc over the flats which could adversely affect the flora. Access along the belt of trees on the northern boundary; and via the 4WD track some 1.5km to the south, where the river curves closest to the road, would be good access. As with FH3, access around the western edge of the terrace is also required along the full length of R1.

Access Point 'g' on SH8a

The location of 'g' is on a slight crest of the highway with limited visibility of traffic and there is nowhere to park. A bank edges the road. The route up to the 4WD track appears to follow a stream course and may involve crossing at least seasonally wet areas. It does not seem to us to be the best place to access Long Gully.

We suggest an access point further north, in the vicinity of the River Road junction. This is a long flat stretch of road with good visibility; there is room to pull off; and the access on to the property is flat, through an existing gate. In fact, it appears that the road reserve is partly comprised of the paddock, which means there may be room to create a small car park here. The paddock can then be crossed to its upper edge and a quick walk up the dry relict terrace riser gets one to the 4WD track. Our recommendation is shown in Fig. 2 attached.

Access to CA1 and CA2

It appears there is 'green' proposed freehold between the proposed conservation areas and the 4WD which is to be public access. There would be a reasonable expectation of being able to leave the track at most points and walk into the conservation areas to explore them. However it appears that this would involve crossing private land (notwithstanding our submission that CA1 and CA2 be joined). We would like to see the easement width extend to the fence lines – or the conservation area extend to the edge of the track – to legitimize the public access that will most likely occur.

Route to 'p' on Deep Creek Boundary under O No 2

In the event of the head of Long Gully being freeholded, we note the orange dashed line marking the proposed public easement does not correspond with the actual track, which we understand was constructed after this report was prepared. Point 'p' does not align with the location on the boundary where the track passes through. The orange dashed line also needs to actually touch the boundary with Sandy Point at the saddle west of O No 2 to meet the existing access coming up the gully.

4WD Access

There is currently no provision at all for 4WD access on the Grandview Range, that has come out of tenure review. The road up to the translators and the track up on to the range crest are in good condition. By foot or bike – or horse – it is a long way through farmland to get to the range crest and an uphill walk, not easy for the more elderly, less able or for families with young children. In this case there are no remoteness qualities that would be compromised; and the panoramic views from the range deserve to be enjoyed by all.

We request that consideration be given to permitting 4WD access to the range crest. Winter restrictions could be imposed.

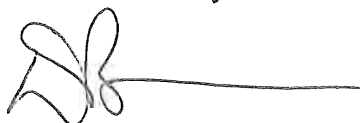
Summary of Submissions on Access Provisions:

- Secure public access by foot and bike around the western edge of the river flats FH3 and R1
- Provide two public access routes across R1 between the river and SH 8a
- Move access point 'g' further north along SH8a and investigate whether road reserve would permit a small carpark be built
- Provide for legal access between route f-g and the adjacent conservation areas CA1 and CA2
- Ensure route f-p actually follows the 4WD track and links with Deep Creek and Sandy Point at the right places; provide for legal access to hill 1046m asl and O No 2 from f-p
- Consider allowing 4WD access along route a-f-p

Our recommendations are shown in Figs 1 and 2.

We appreciate this opportunity to make these submissions on the preliminary proposal for this property and we look forward with interest to the final outcome,

Yours faithfully



Denise Bruns
Secretary
for Central Otago-Lakes Branch of Forest and Bird

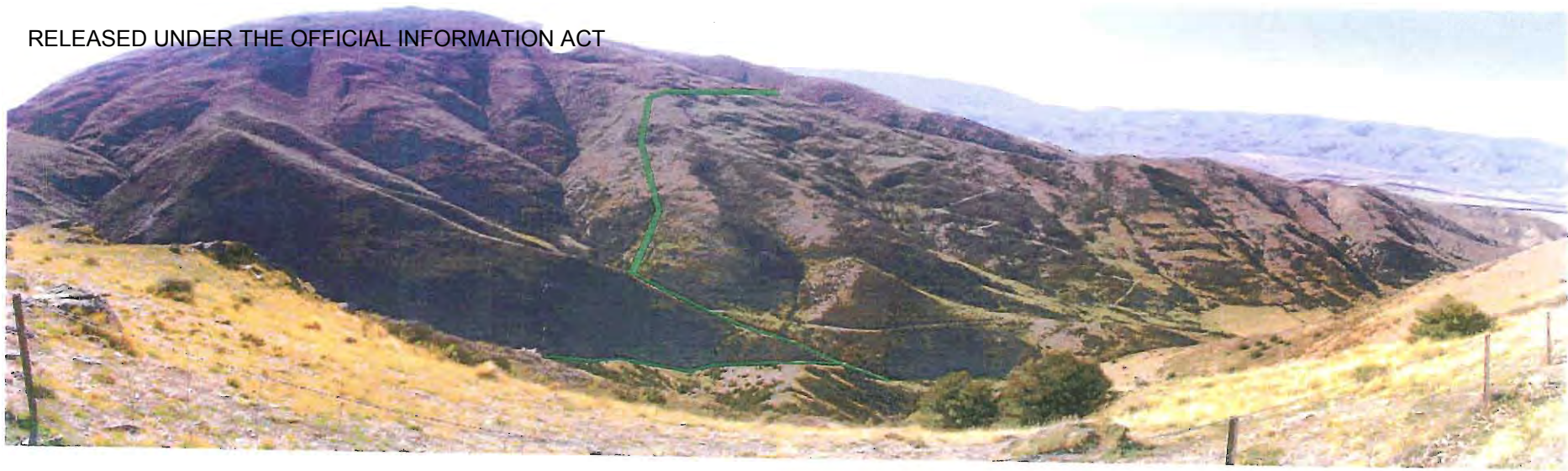


Photo 1. Long Gully – top image looking east from track near translator masts shows tall tussock on the shady side of the spur in the mid ground; and extensive shrubland areas down the valley true left. The green line is the recommended boundary with conservation land. The bottom image is a view looking south down the valley from the 4WD track near point 'p', with extensive shrubland visible including recovering grey shrublands and patches of kanuka.

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Photo 2.

View of head of Long Gully on far left of snowy range crest, as seen from SH8. The retention of a natural tussock covered range crest is important for its visual values.

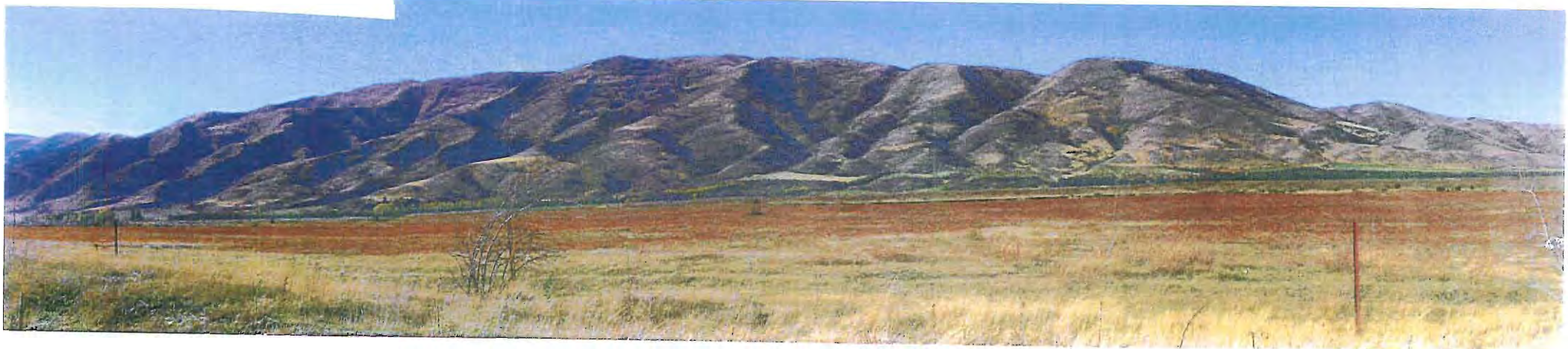


Photo 3. Clutha Faces - View of the Long Gully Clutha faces from SH6 Luggate-Cromwell. The relative naturalness of the faces is important and the widespread shrublands make an important contribution to their character and natural appearance.

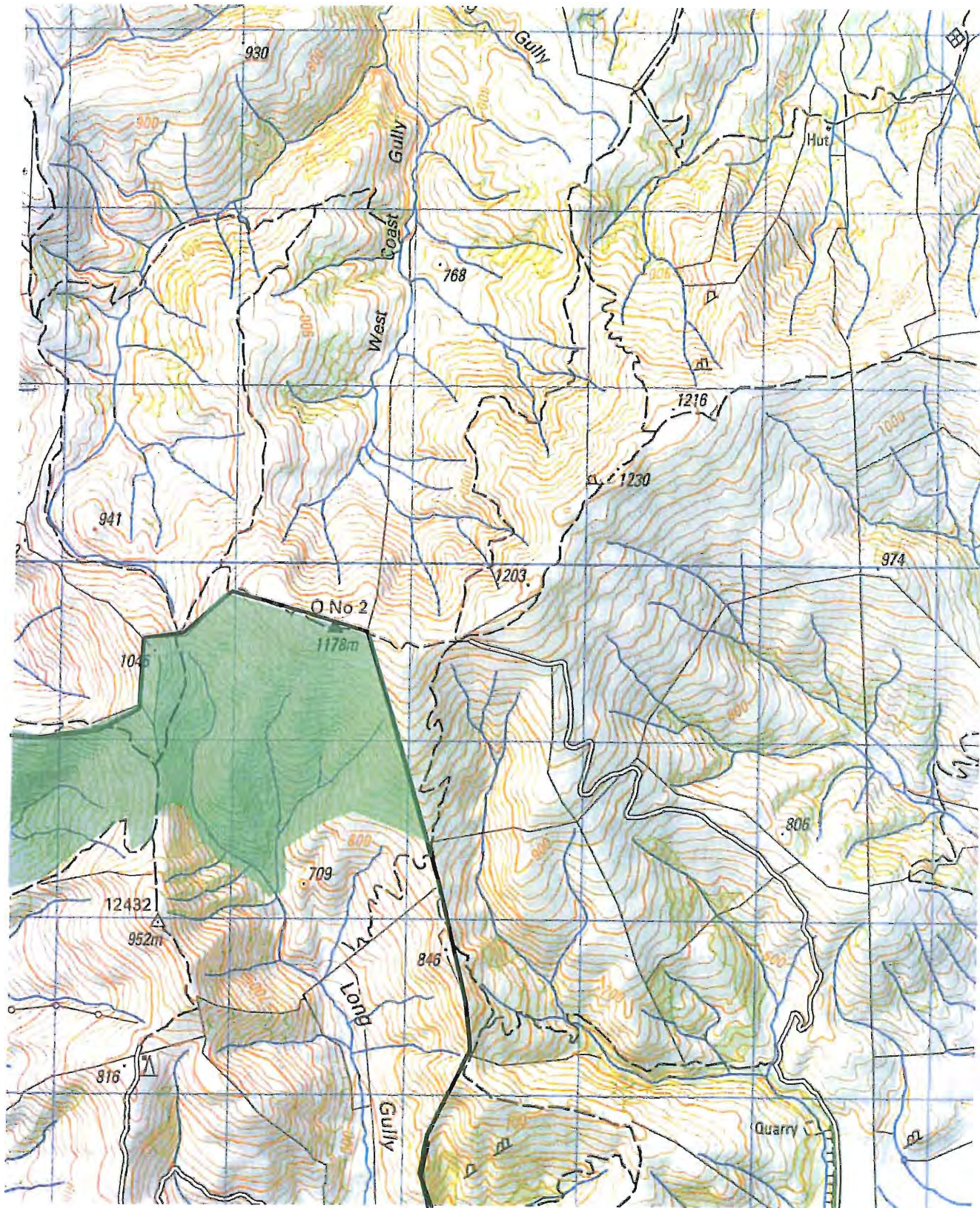


Fig. 1 Recommended Conservation Area on Long Gully Pastoral Lease
submission of Central Otago-Lakes Branch Forest and Bird
May 2009

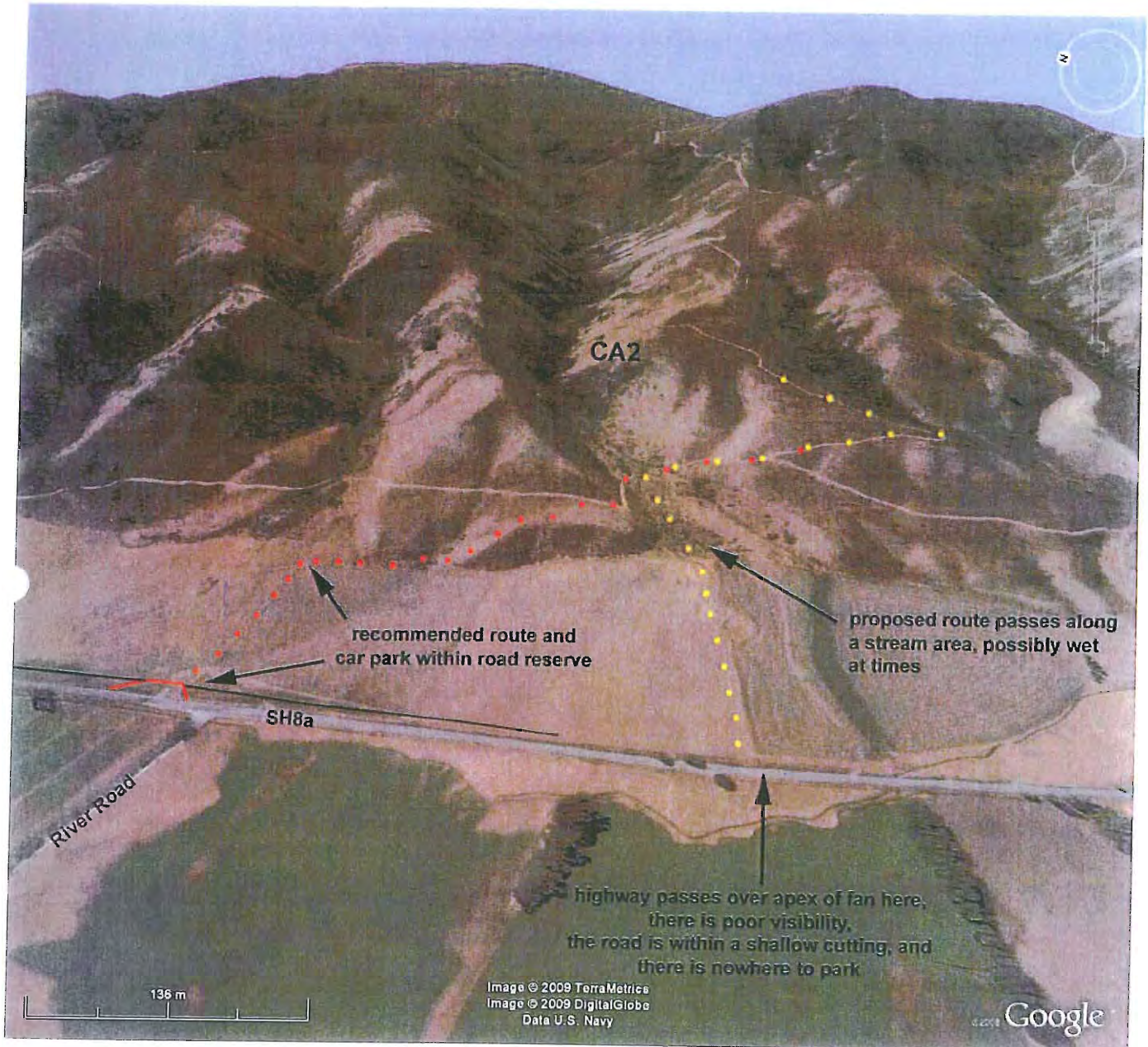


Fig. 2
Recommended Location
of 'g' on SH8A

Submission of Central Otago-Lakes Branch
Forest and Bird
May 2009