

## **Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review**

**Lease name: MESOPOTAMIA**

**Lease number: PT 057**

### **Public Submissions - Part 4**

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

**February 06**

17



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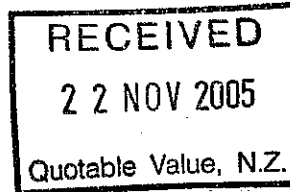
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The Commissioner of Crown Lands  
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CHRISTCHURCH



Attention: Barry Dench  
Tenure Review Team Leader

Dear Barry

### MESOPOTAMIA PASTORAL LEASE

#### SUBMISSION ON PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL FOR TENURE REVIEW

Thank you for advising Environment Canterbury of the release of the Preliminary Proposal for tenure review of Mesopotamia Pastoral Lease. We appreciate the opportunity to review the proposal and make a submission in relation to the future management of this land.

Environment Canterbury has statutory responsibilities under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) for the sustainable management of natural and physical resources of the region, including soil conservation, water quality and quantity and ecosystems, and for maintenance of biodiversity. In addition, Environment Canterbury also has statutory responsibilities under the Biosecurity Act 1993 for the management or eradication of animal and plant pests in accordance with regional pest management strategies. These responsibilities are entirely compatible with achievement of the objectives of Tenure Review, specifically to "promote the ecologically sustainable management of High Country land" and protecting land with "significant inherent values" by retaining it in Crown ownership.

The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement 1998 (CRPS) provides an overview of the resource management issues of the region, and sets out how natural and physical resources are to be managed in an integrated way to promote sustainable management. Key to the management of soils is the maintenance or restoration of a vegetative cover over non-arable land that is sufficient to prevent land degradation or the onset of erosion (Ch7 Objective 1). Sustainable management of water resources requires safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of water, including associated aquatic ecosystems and significant habitats of indigenous fauna and vegetation (Ch9 Objective 3). Policy 11 in Chapter 9 promotes land use practices which maintain or enhance water quality. Large landscapes are a feature of the Canterbury high country and the CRPS recognises the importance of protecting both the interconnectedness of landscape components and the vast, open nature of these landscapes.

Environment Canterbury has recently notified its Proposed Natural Resources Regional Plan (NRRP) to address the resource management issues identified in the CRPS and to provide more specific standards and methods, including rules, to achieve the objectives. The NRRP recognises the close relationship between land and water ecosystems by promoting the integrated management of soil and water resources across the region. In particular, the provisions of the plan emphasise the links between land use practices and the management of water quality.

**Our Ref:** PL5C-103; AG5T-119  
**Your Ref:**  
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The Soil Conservation chapter (Ch8), Objective SCN1 seeks to: "...maintain soil quality and an intact and resilient vegetation cover sufficient to minimise the risk of induced erosion, safeguard the life-supporting capacity of the soil, and prevent, as far as practicable, the movement of soil into water bodies." The objective contains specific guidelines for intact and resilient vegetation cover. Policy SCN1 provides options to restore such a cover where it has become depleted.

Policy WQL5 of the Water Quality chapter includes a range of regulatory and non-regulatory methods to manage the riparian margins of rivers to maintain or improve water quality.

The Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy (1998) and Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy Biodiversity Pests (2002) identify a number of species of plants and animals for control or management as pest species.

In line with these statutory responsibilities and documents, and Section 24 of the Crown Pastoral Lands Act (1998), Environment Canterbury technical and planning staff have reviewed the Preliminary Proposal for Mesopotamia Pastoral Lease to assess the impacts, if any, of this proposal on the sustainable management of the land, including pest management, indigenous biodiversity protection, recognition and protection of significant landscapes, soil conservation and the integrity of the water bodies. Our comments and recommendations are listed below.

### General comments

The Mesopotamia Pastoral Lease, lying between the Rangitata River and the summit of the Two Thumbs Range, encompasses an extensive and spectacular, glaciated high country landscape which has retained a diversity of natural habitats and their fauna. The authors of the Conservation Resources Report (CRR) are to be congratulated for producing a very clear, thorough, well-researched and readable summary of Mesopotamia's many and varied significant inherent values.

The lease land is also highly valued for its recreational values and this needs to be given greater emphasis to address the CPLA objective to secure public access and enjoyment of high country land. This lease forms part of the landscape viewed from the Rangitata Gorge Road and includes areas popular for tramping, climbing and hunting. Its importance for recreational activities is increased by its proximity to adjacent conservation areas along the Two Thumb Range, and its frontage along the Rangitata riverbed. The freeholding of lower altitude areas of land is likely to create issues for public access to Crown land that should be clearly acknowledged and addressed through tenure review.

The Rangitata River is both subject to a Conservation Order and a Statutory Acknowledgement, recognising the diversity of inherent values for the river and its surrounding environment. The high ecological and cultural values of the river are dependent on the inherently low nutrient status of its waters, and of the contributing feeder streams. Several of these streams traverse the Mesopotamia lease and their future management will be a key issue for the tenure review process.

On 9 February 2005, the Cabinet Policy Committee noted that of the ten high country objectives for the management of Crown-owned land in the South Island high country, the objectives for promoting ecologically sustainable management and protecting significant inherent values of reviewable land "**are of primary importance**". Objectives to enable freeholding of land capable of economic use and to secure public access can occur if they are consistent with the primary objectives. Tenure review was noted as a key tool for achieving these objectives.

One of the issues for tenure review is the likelihood of changing, or intensifying, land uses that may result from the freeholding of land, and the effects of these changes on the quality of water in water bodies that flow from this land. Land use over that part of the Mesopotamia lease proposed for freeholding includes the grazing of sheep, cattle and deer. Any intensification of these land uses, which is likely to be accompanied by the use of fertilizer and/or irrigation, has the potential to affect the water quality and the instream habitat of the streams flowing across the property, and consequently the downstream water quality of the Rangitata River.

Regional councils and land owners have a responsibility under the RMA to maintain the quality and quantity of water in water bodies and to protect important natural, cultural, landscape and amenity values associated with these water bodies. These responsibilities are also fundamentally important to the primary objectives of the CPLA for the long-term "ecologically sustainable management" of the land, which must include both the management of land and water within the lease, and the management of any downstream effects of land use on land or water beyond the lease. These considerations should underpin the process of tenure review and guide the establishment of designations and conditions for Crown and freehold land.

The focus for the following discussion will be the ability of the Preliminary Proposal to provide for the integrated and long-term, ecologically sustainable management of land and water resources of the Mesopotamia lease and to protect the range of significant inherent values identified for the land.

## Soil Conservation

The following discussion of issues relating to the management of soil conservation values has been based on soil and vegetation information sourced from satellite imagery, Land Use Capability (LUC) mapping and the property maps prepared for the Soil and Water Conservation Plan programmes undertaken as part of a Land Improvement Agreement (LIA) over the lease.

On the basis of land use capability, the Preliminary Proposal has included the majority of land with limited potential for production, or with high erosion risk, within the land to be retained by the Crown. This is seen as a good outcome for soil conservation and the proposal is to be commended. This has been helped where the former Catchment Board run plan fence lines have been used as boundaries between freehold and Crown land recognising land use capability limitations of much of the steeper and higher slopes. A discussion of the terms of the Land Improvement Agreement, however, highlights concerns for some of the boundary lines chosen and for the proposed concessions over the land to be retained by the Crown.

### Land Improvement Agreement (LIA)

Environment Canterbury has a legal interest in the Preliminary Proposal through Land Improvement Agreement No 794106 registered on the lease title. The lease was registered by the former South Canterbury Catchment Board on 23 April 1970 and carries on in perpetuity.

The main objective of the agreement was to remove permanently all sheep grazing from the extensive area of eroded Class VII and VIII lands on the Sinclair, Brabazon, Black Mountain and Rocky Ridge faces, but allow some cattle grazing on low lying areas on a negotiated basis. Alternative grazing was established on the better Class IV and VI land on Butler Downs and around the homestead with subsidies for fencing, oversowing and topdressing and windbreak planting. Much of the improved grazing area on Butler Downs was subsequently subdivided and sold in the early nineties.

The proposed areas to be retained in Crown ownership have included all of the land retired from sheep grazing. This is a very good outcome for soil conservation values and is supported by Environment Canterbury. The use of the LIA retirement fence line between Bush Stream and Felt Stream is also supported as a practical and realistic boundary.

Parts of the boundary chosen between Crown and freehold land in the northern portion of the property do raise some concerns, however, both from a practical point of view, and from a soil conservation point of view. The boundary fence line running along the upper boundary of CC3 between Black Birch and Alma Streams traverses some very steep and high altitude country and includes within the freeholded land some faces that are highly vulnerable to erosion and have limited capacity to sustain an intact vegetation cover under grazing pressure. It is questionable how practical a fence line this will be, cutting across these steep faces where it is likely to be prone to snow and rock damage. A more manageable boundary should be established lower down on this block to follow the LUC boundary separating Class VII land from the less erosion-prone Class VI land.

The appropriateness of a grazing concession for both sheep and cattle on CA1 land is questioned in terms of its long-term ecological sustainability. Although the grazing concession restricts grazing to the lower Class VI slopes, there is no fence line required to be established to prevent stock from straying onto the upper, highly erosion-prone Class VII and VIII land in CA2 – land retired from sheep grazing under the LIA to protect these soils from erosion. It was recognised in the establishment of the LIA that topography alone is not an effective barrier for sheep to prevent their movement into the higher altitude land. In the light of the limited productive capacity of this land, **it is recommended that grazing of this area be excluded altogether in the interests of soil conservation concerns and also to enable the protection of the significant inherent values as identified in the CRR.** On a soil conservation basis alone, if grazing is to be allowed then the area should be fenced. No grazing should be allowed on Class VIII land north of The Growler.

The high terrace area between Butlers Downs and Moonlight Creek forms the front face to the landscape viewed along the Rangitata River from the Forest Creek boundary. The land is steep, of low natural fertility and with limited potential for improvement. Because of its prominence in the landscape it would be preferable to retain this land in Crown ownership so that any future land use is carried out in a way that maintains the significant inherent values for the land.

### **Recommendations**

- *Extend the lower boundary of CA2 between Black Birch and Alma Streams to include the remainder of the Class VII high erosion risk soils above the 1000m contour.*
- *Review the grazing concession for CA1 to either exclude grazing, or to fence the upper boundary between CA1 and CA2.*

### **Indigenous vegetation, habitat and wetlands values**

Tenure review provides a valuable opportunity to help achieve two key objectives of the Reserves Act 1977 and the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (2001). These are, respectively, "preservation of representative samples of all classes of natural ecosystems and landscapes" and to "maintain and restore a full range of remaining natural habitats and ecosystems to a healthy functioning state." A Complementary Objective of the tenure review process is to ensure that conservation outcomes are consistent with the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy.

The Land Environments of New Zealand landscape classification system (Leathwick et al. 2003) provides a framework for securing protection and/or restoration of examples of the full range of terrestrial vegetation and habitats. Land environments, and potential natural vegetation cover (in the absence of human modification) are classified at four different national scales: Level I (20 land environments nationally), Level II (100 land environments nationally), Level III (200 nationally) and Level IV (500 nationally). Each is nested within higher levels. The 500 Level IV environments provide the most detailed information on the diversity of New Zealand's terrestrial environments and is the best nationally comprehensive estimate of the 'full range' of ecosystems, habitats and biodiversity.

Analysis of Land Environments in conjunction with spatial data depicting indigenous vegetation cover (from Land Cover Data Base) and current legal protection has recently been carried out by Landcare Research (Walker et al. 2005), for the Department of Conservation. This analysis offers a useful method of identifying the most threatened environments, and therefore determining what should be priorities for protection of indigenous biodiversity, as part of tenure review. In reporting this work, the authors recommended that threat classification analysis be carried out using Level IV Land Environments, as these provide a more accurate, efficient and plausible assessment at regional and local scales.

Examples of eleven Level IV Land Environments are present on Mesopotamia pastoral lease (Leathwick et al. 2003):

- P1.2b, P1.2c, P1.2d – mountains east of the Southern Alps (from Marlborough to Otago)
- E1.4c, E1.4d – steep inland dry foothills (from Marlborough to mid-Canterbury)
- E4.1b, E4.2a, E4.2b – easy rolling dry foothills (Canterbury inland valleys)
- K1.1a – upland well drained recent soils (along upper headwaters of main east S.I. rivers)
- K4.1c – upland poorly drained recent soils (intermontane basins, mid- to south Canterbury)
- J2.2a – well drained recent soils (inland mid Canterbury)

These Land Environments are listed, in altitudinal sequence (highest to lowest) as they occur on Mesopotamia pastoral lease, in the table below. The table shows the threat category for each land environment, based on the percentage of indigenous vegetation remaining in each land environment nationally, and the proportion of each environment that is already protected in existing reserves or conservation covenants (from Walker et al. 2005). Presence/absence of examples of each land environment in conservation areas, conservation covenants, freehold described in the Mesopotamia Preliminary Proposal are indicated (as well as existing freehold).

Lvl IV LENZ	Threat Category	Present proposed CAs	Present proposed CCs	Present proposed freehold	Present existing freehold
P1.2c	Not threatened	Yes	No	No	No
P1.2b	Not threatened	Yes	No	No	No
P1.2d	Not threatened	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
E1.4c	Not threatened	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
E4.2a	Not threatened	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
K1.1a	Not threatened	Yes	No	No	No
E1.4d	Critically Underprotected	Yes	No	Yes	No
E4.2b	At Risk	No	Yes (but v. small % of total present)	Yes	Yes
E4.1b	At Risk	No	No	Yes	Yes
J2.2a	At Risk	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
K4.1c	At Risk	Yes (but small % of total present)	No	Yes	Yes

The six highest altitude land environments present on Mesopotamia lease (P1.2c, P1.2b, P1.2d, E1.4c, E4.2a and K1.1a) have, at a national and regional level, retained most of their indigenous cover, are already fairly well represented in the existing network of protected areas, and are therefore not considered to be threatened. The dry foothill land environment E1.4d has, throughout its overall range, lost more indigenous cover and is less well represented in protected areas. Its threat category was assessed as 'Critically Underprotected'. Loss of indigenous cover has been greatest in the lower rolling foothill and recent soil environments; that are also underprotected in existing reserves. These four (E4.2b, E4.1b, J2.2a and K4.1c) are the most highly threatened environments on Mesopotamia pastoral lease and, at a national and regional level, are all assessed to be 'At Risk'.

The proposed conservation areas contain examples of seven of the 11 land environments present on Mesopotamia pastoral lease, including two threatened environments (E4.1d and K4.1c). The proposed conservation covenants have examples of five land environments, also including another two threatened environments (E4.2b and J2.2a).

The conservation areas and covenants detailed in the preliminary proposal together include most areas of ecological value identified and described in the Conservation Resources Report (CRR), and appear to contain nearly all the property's significant inherent values, with respect to indigenous terrestrial vegetation and wetland habitats. It is particularly encouraging to see recognition of, and protection proposed for, significant low-altitude/valley floor native forest, shrubland and wetland habitats in CC1, CC2 and CA4, that also include examples of the most highly threatened land environments present on the pastoral lease. Environment Canterbury endorses the creation of these conservation areas and covenants as part of the Mesopotamia Station tenure review. However in view of the threatened nature of some of these habitats, and the important contributing value of these areas to the wider landscape, it is recommended that the long-term sustainability of these environments would be better served by protecting the remaining areas of habitat with sufficient buffering to protect them from the impacts of adjacent land use.

One threatened dry foothill land environment, E4.1b, is not represented in proposed conservation areas and covenants, while only relatively small examples of 'At Risk' environment E4.2b are proposed for protection. It is accepted that most of these areas on the pastoral lease (and adjoining existing freehold) have already been extensively modified and, particularly south of Bush Stream, are largely in exotic vegetation. For this reason, however, any remnant native vegetation/habitats on these (and other) threatened land environments should be considered to have significant inherent value;

above those native vegetation/habitats of more 'natural', generally higher-altitude, environments that are not considered to be threatened.

### **Recommendations**

- *Extend CC1/CA3 to connect and include the marginal strip of Scour Stream with its mix of beech forest remnants, matagouri shrubland and short tussock grassland (identified as ecologically significant in the CRR). This would protect a larger example of remnant native vegetation on 'At Risk' dry foothill land environment E4.2b*
- *Create another conservation area or covenant to protect the mosaic of native mossfield, Raoulia herbfield, matagouri and porcupine scrub shrubland described on the south side of Bush Stream fan (east of Rangitata Gorge Road) on page 8 of the CRR. Example of 'At Risk' recent soil environment J2.2a.*
- *Extend CA2 or CC2 to protect and restore areas of depleted tussock, extensive matagouri shrubland, Schoenus wetland and red tussock grassland at the western portion of Brabazon Downs, as described on page 8 of the CRR. This would include another example of 'At Risk' dry foothill environment E4.2b.*
- *Covenant conditions and CA concession conditions (e.g. for grazing and guided hunting) must ensure Conservation Areas are managed to maintain the values for which they have been protected. These should include the obligation to undertake a monitoring programme and Ministerial right of review to adjust stock numbers and general covenant/concessions if necessary.*

### **Surface water and ground water resources**

Management of the land surrounding rivers and wetlands will play a key role in the long-term protection of water quality and instream values, as well as influencing the quality of rivers downstream from the pastoral lease. Mesopotamia lease borders the Rangitata River and is traversed by a number of key tributaries, the major ones being Bush, Scour, Black Birch and Alma Streams. Forest Creek flows along the southern boundary of the lease.

A conservation order was recently placed over the Rangitata River to recognise and protect important riverbed ecosystems, habitat and instream values, including the recognition, on an international level, of the Rangitata as an important salmon and trout fishery. It also has status as a Statutory Acknowledgement Area under the Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 for important natural and cultural values of the river system. Several of the streams flowing across the Mesopotamia lease contain significant spawning habitat for trout and salmon, vital to the preservation of the fishery - the Fish and Game Report identifies Black Mountain Stream, Brabazon Fan Stream and Deep Stream as all containing important spawning habitat. Many of the values associated with the Rangitata River and its tributaries are dependent on the inherently low nutrient status of the river, particularly in the upper part of the catchment where the Mesopotamia lease is located. Future land use will therefore have a major influence on the long-term quality of the tributary streams and the Rangitata River itself downstream from the lease.

The Preliminary Proposal, however, contains little information on the relationships between land management and the long-term ecological sustainability of the aquatic ecosystems. Marginal strips are present along most of the main tributaries however these, on their own, provide little protection to the stream from adjacent land use. Where stock, and cattle in particular, can freely access waterways the high water quality of these water bodies will be at risk from bank erosion and water pollution. Under the Preliminary Proposal it is clear that, without any required physical barriers to access, stock will have free access to the considerable length of Rangitata riverbed along the proposed freehold frontage as well as to the tributary streams where they adjoin the freeholded land.

One of the issues for tenure review is the likelihood of changing, or intensifying land uses that is likely to result over the freehold land in response to the overall loss of land area, and the effects of these changes on the quality of water in water bodies that flow from this land. Land use over the land proposed for freeholding includes grazing of sheep, cattle and deer. Any intensification of these land uses, particularly if accompanied by the use of fertilizer and/or irrigation, has the potential to affect the water quality and the instream habitat of the streams flowing across the property, and consequently the downstream water quality of the Rangitata River.

Chapter 4 of the Proposed Canterbury Natural Resources Regional Plan seeks to maintain water quality in a natural state, where rivers and their tributaries are largely unaffected by human activities

(Objective WQL 1). The plan also promotes the retention, maintenance and planting of riparian vegetation to minimise bank erosion and to reduce runoff of sediment, nutrients and animal faecal matter (Policy WQL 5).

The Conservation Resources Report (CRR) describes the riparian margins of the Bush, Scour, Black Birch, Alma tributary streams as in good condition and containing significant indigenous habitat and fauna values. Yet there is no requirement for fencing along these streams where they run through, or adjacent to, freehold land. In the circumstances of this proposal, such an outcome is clearly undesirable.

Deep Stream receives no mention in the CRR, yet it is a key trout and salmon spawning habitat for the Rangitata River and an important and highly valued trout fishery and waterfowl habitat in its own right. Past management of this area has included draining and development of the surrounding wetlands which has reduced the extent and quality of some of the wetland habitat associated with this waterway. The Preliminary Proposal shows some of the waterway excluded from the lease and a small "example" of the remaining wetland area retained as conservation land CA4. However this is unlikely to be ecologically sustainable if the stream and wetlands are not adequately buffered from any adjacent landuse. It would be preferable that the remaining branches of Deep Stream, including the spring sources of the stream, are fenced out of the freehold land as proposed by the Fish and Game report, and managed for their significant inherent values. This protection would also need to be extended across onto the neighbouring property to protect the lower reaches of Deep Stream down to its confluence with the Rangitata River

The impact of intensive agricultural land use activities on water quality and ecosystems is well documented, most recently in the report "Growing for Good" by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. Documents such as "*Managing Waterways on Farms: A guide to sustainable water and riparian management in rural New Zealand*" (MfE, 2001), "*Reducing the Impacts of Agricultural Runoff on Water Quality*" (MfE, 1997), and numerous Regional Council and industry guides, codes of practice, policies and plans provide a range of policy and practical advice. Tributary streams, because of their size and limited assimilative capacity, are particularly susceptible to degradation. Grazing of riparian margins, for example, reduces vegetation stature and trampling of soils and banks results in an increase in sedimentation. One of the most effective ways of maintaining water quality is to restrict stock access to water bodies, avoid disturbance of the soil adjacent to water bodies, and to maintain well vegetated riparian margins to trap pollutants in runoff from adjacent land.

Given that section 24 of the CPLA seeks to both promote the management of reviewable land in a way that is ecologically sustainable (s.24(a)), and to enable the protection of the significant inherent values of reviewable land (s.24(b)), Environment Canterbury recommends that protective mechanisms are put in place to protect the inherent values of the tributary water bodies on all land proposed for freeholding. Similar protective measures should be applied to all waterways on Crown land where grazing concessions are proposed, and along the riparian margin of the Rangitata River.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *To require the fencing of all marginal strips along the Scour, Bush, Black Birch and Alma Streams where these streams flow adjacent to, or within the land proposed to be freeholded.*
- *To prevent stock access onto the Rangitata riverbed and the alluvial fans of the lower Bush, Black Birch and Alma Streams*
- *To extend the conservation area CA4 to include the remaining branches, wetland buffers and spring sources of Deep Stream.*
- *To ensure that any concession for grazing over conservation land requires the exclusion of stock access to water bodies.*

#### **Public access**

Tenure review offers an opportunity to resolve public access issues on areas freeholded through the process, and to put in place access ways that meet the needs of the public while minimising interference with farming operations.

The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement recognises the need to promote and enhance public access to and along the region's water bodies, while recognising that restrictions are necessary in particular circumstances. (Chapter 10, Policy 7). The provision of practical public access would ensure that interference with the rights and activities of adjacent land owners are kept to a minimum.



The Preliminary Proposal sets aside large areas of land to be retained by the Crown along the upper faces of the Sinclair, Two Thumb and Black Mountain Ranges but provides little opportunity for the public to gain access to these areas. The valleys of the Bush, Black Birch and Alma Streams are very steeply incised and rugged providing difficult access routes. The Scour Stream has a gentler valley but no marginal strip has been set aside to allow for public access over freehold land. A DoC easement along the Scour for management purposes should be redesignated to allow public access. The CRR acknowledges this issue on page 32 where it notes the difficult nature of current legal access routes, but fails to address this shortfall by recommending more practical access routes. Without adequate provision for practical access - that is easements of sufficient width, grade, length and location - the Preliminary Proposal falls well short of meeting the objective of the CPLA to "secure public access to and enjoyment of (High Country) land".

Further, because of the highly mobile nature of the Rangitata riverbed and the lower reaches of the tributary streams in this area, any provisions for access need to provide long-term security of access. This is a particularly important area for tramping, climbing and hunting, so it is somewhat surprising and disappointing that the Preliminary Proposal provides so little acknowledgement of the recreational values of the area and the difficulties of the current access routes.

There is no clear reasoning given for excluding public recreational hunting from the CA3 area along the Sinclair Range. The assumption is that this may interfere with the hunting concession being offered to the former lessee over this area of land. However this, in itself, would seem an inadequate basis to disallow the public from participating in a recreational activity on public conservation land. It would also appear to be inconsistent with the Himalayan Thar Control Plan (Department of Conservation, 1993) pages 39-41, which recognises the Rakaia/Rangitata catchments as one of two areas that have "the greatest recreational hunting popularity" for thar hunting in New Zealand. In relation to management agreements for recreational and guided hunting the plan states that "In line with Departmental aims of keeping land available to as many hunters as possible the Department will ensure that conservation estate is accessible to recreational hunters.", and further that guiding concessions on conservation areas can incorporate sole concession rights "but not to the exclusion of recreational hunters generally...".

Large numbers of thar have been seen along this range and Environment Canterbury recommends that numbers are closely monitored by DoC and the concessionaire under the proposed concession with the right to review the terms of the concession and the opportunities for public hunting within a shorter timeframe than the proposed 30 years term of the concession. Monitoring should be designed to enable a comprehensive review of the concession and its ability to maintain thar numbers within the limits set by the Thar Management Plan.

Environment Canterbury recommends that the needs for public access to the Conservation Areas for recreation in the Preliminary Proposal should be addressed more comprehensively and recognised through the provision of practical and secure access routes.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *That a more comprehensive assessment of public access and public recreational values for land within the Mesopotamia lease is undertaken and that the objective of providing practical and secure access to Crown Land and to and along waterways be afforded priority.*
- *That the conditions of the concessions for tourism activities on the conservation area CA3 be revised to provide for:*
  - *A requirement for the concessionaire to monitor thar numbers and to assess the impacts of each concession activity on conservation values and on the management of any populations of pest animal species.*
  - *3-5 yearly reviews of the concession for tourism activities with the right for the Grantor to review the terms of the concession to address any evidence of adverse impacts on the significant conservation values identified.*

#### **Pest Plants**

Section 2.4.4 of the CRR (Page 22) describes the range of "Problem Plants" and recommends actions to manage threats to biodiversity from plant spread. The Preliminary Proposal does not appear to include any mechanisms to give effect to these recommendations. A number of plants are not recorded as pest plants in the Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy (2005), but where control or eradication can be readily achieved there is merit in undertaking work that will reduce or

remove the threat of spread (and the subsequently much higher cost of management/eradication) of these problem plants. **It is recommended that some strategy or requirement for control of these problem plants should be incorporated into the tenure review agreement to manage this issue, where practicable.**

## Recommendations

Environment Canterbury acknowledges and supports the areas proposed to be protected by retaining in Crown control, as contributing to soil conservation management and the protection of the significant inherent natural values of the area.

It is gratifying to see that some of the Land Improvement Agreement boundaries, based on land capability factors, have been used as a basis for establishing boundaries between Crown and freehold land. Where these factors have not been used to underpin boundaries, Environment Canterbury has made recommendations for more practical and sustainable boundaries, particularly where it is preferable that fences are established.

The following recommendations for amendments to the areas for protection and conditions for management have been identified as necessary to provide for the ecologically sustainable management of the Mesopotamia land into the future:

1) That the concession agreement for conservation area CA1 is reviewed in terms of its impact on soil conservation values and the protection of significant inherent natural values

- *Review the grazing concession for CA1 to either exclude sheep grazing, or to fence the upper boundary between CA1 and CA2.*

2) That the following changes are made to the boundaries of conservation area CA2:

- *Extend the lower boundary of CA2 between Black Birch and Alma Streams to include the remainder of the Class VII high erosion risk soils above the 1000m contour.*
- *Extend CA2 or CC2 to protect and restore areas of depleted tussock, extensive matagouri shrubland, Schoenus wetland and red tussock grassland at the western portion of Brabazon Downs, as described on page 8 of the CRR. Includes another example of 'At Risk' dry foothill environment E4.2b.*

3) That the following considerations are made in relation to the concession applying to conservation area CA3:

- *Covenant conditions and CA concession conditions (e.g. for grazing and guided hunting) must ensure these areas can maintain the values for which they have been protected. These should include a monitoring programme and Ministerial right to adjust stock numbers and general covenant/concession conditions if necessary.*
- *That a more comprehensive assessment of public access and public recreational values for land within the Mesopotamia lease is undertaken and that the objective of providing practical and secure access to Crown Land and to and along waterways be afforded priority.*
- *That the conditions of the concessions for tourism activities on the conservation area CA3 be revised to provide for:*
  - *A requirement for the concessionaire to monitor their numbers and to assess the impacts of each concession activity on conservation values and on the management of any populations of pest animal species.*
  - *3-5 yearly reviews of the concession for tourism activities with the right for the Grantor to review the terms of the concession to address any evidence of adverse impacts on the significant conservation values identified.*

4) That the following changes are made to conservation area CA4 to provide for the ecologically sustainable management of the Deep Stream catchment and its associated significant recreational values:

- *To extend the conservation area CA4 to include the remaining branches, wetland buffers and spring sources of Deep Stream as proposed in the Fish & Game report.*

5) Create another conservation area or covenant to protect the mosaic of native mossfield, Raoulia herbfield, matagouri and porcupine scrub shrubland described on the south side of Bush Stream fan (east of Rangitata Gorge Road) on page 8 of the CRR. (Example of 'At Risk' recent soil environment J2.2a.)

6) Extend the boundaries of CC1 to include the marginal strip of Scour Stream from the legal road to the boundary of conservation area CA3 as proposed in the Conservation Resources Report. This would protect a larger example of remnant native vegetation on 'At Risk' dry foothill land environment E4.2b with its mix of beech forest remnants, matagouri shrubland and short tussock grassland (identified as ecologically significant in the CRR). Require the fencing of the marginal strip to remove stock access from the stream and streamside vegetation.

7) Include as part of the tenure review process, consideration of the requirements for maintaining the quality of water in water bodies and the protection of instream habitat values where those water bodies are identified as having significant inherent natural values. For the Mesopotamia lease these considerations should include:

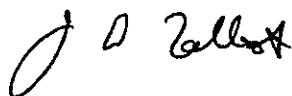
- *To require the fencing of all marginal strips along the Scour, Bush, Black Birch and Alma Streams where these streams flow adjacent to, or within the land proposed to be freeholded.*
- *To prevent stock access onto the Rangitata riverbed and the alluvial fans of the lower Bush, Black Birch and Alma Streams*
- *To ensure that any concession for grazing over conservation land requires the exclusion of stock access to water bodies.*

8) That a more comprehensive assessment of public access needs and public recreational values for land within the Mesopotamia lease is undertaken with the objective to provide practical and secure access to Crown Land as well as to and along waterways.

Any amendments proposed to the boundaries for freehold and Crown land designations have been shown on the accompanying maps.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Preliminary Proposal.

Yours sincerely



John D Talbot

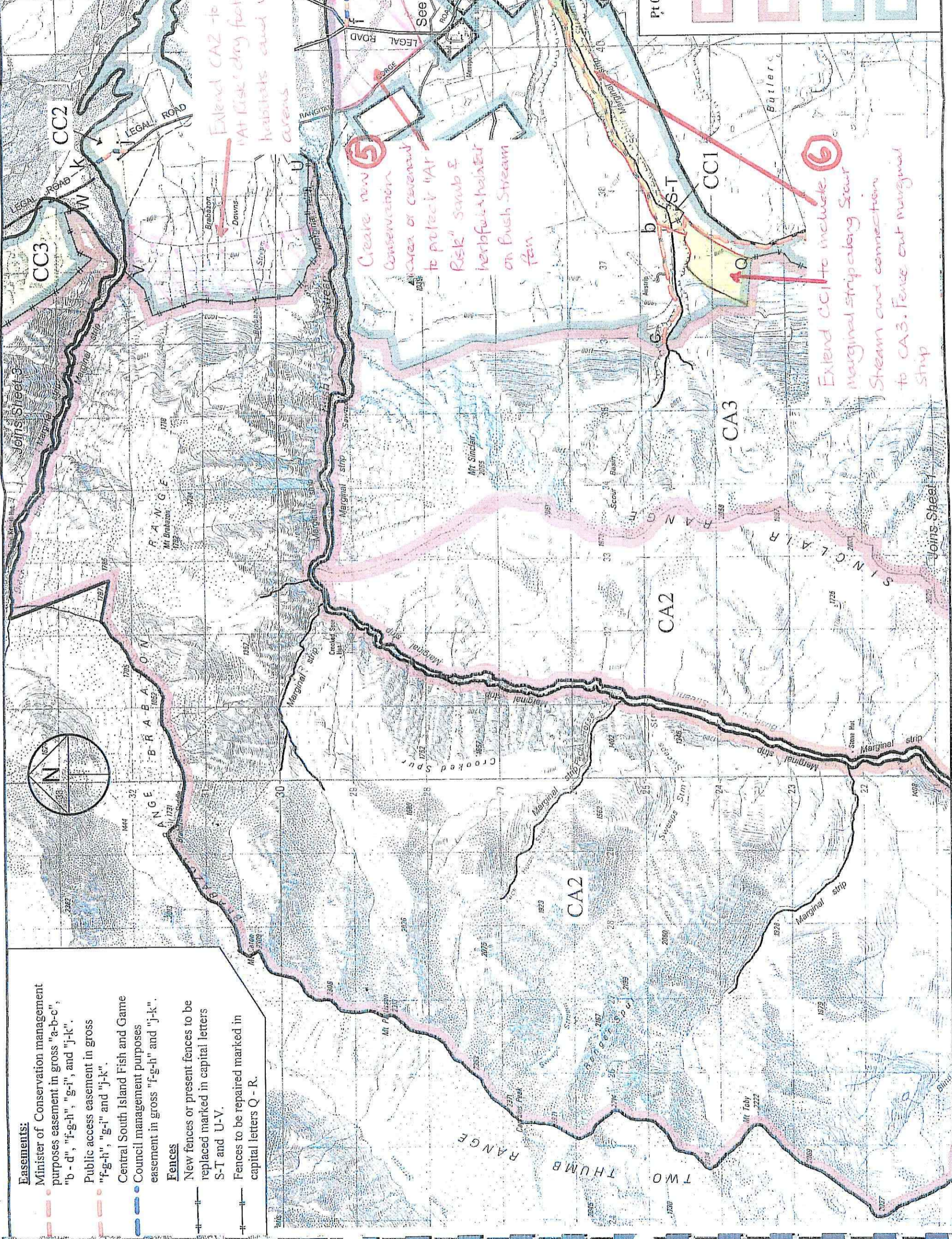
**DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND PLANNING**

Attachments:

Maps 1-3 – showing recommendations for changes to proposed Designations Plan.

Any fee simple title arising from freehold designation of Crown owned land will be issued subject to marginal strips along streams, rivers and lakes (that meet the criteria set out in Section 24 Conservation Act 1987) if the creation of marginal strips has not already been triggered by the issue or renewal of a lease.

UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT  
 Plans are indicative only for purposes only in be given until the survey / positions is researched / rescanned



- Easements:**
- Minister of Conservation management purposes easement in gross "a-b-c", "b-d", "f-g-h", "g-i", and "j-k".
  - Public access easement in gross "f-g-h", "g-i" and "j-k".
  - Central South Island Fish and Game Council management purposes easement in gross "f-g-h" and "j-k".
- Fences**
- New fences or present fences to be replaced marked in capital letters S-T and U-V.
  - Fences to be repaired marked in capital letters Q - R.

- PROPOSED DESIGNATIONS**
- Pastoral lease land to be restored to full Crown ownership and control, as conservation area "CA4".
  - Pastoral lease land to be restored to Crown control as conservation area subject to a tourism activities concession "CA2" and "CA3".
  - Pastoral lease land to be disposed of by freehold disposal to Mesopotamia Station Limited.
  - Pastoral lease land to be disposed of by freehold disposal to Mesopotamia Station Limited, subject to a conservation covenant CC1, CC2 & CC3.

Extend CA2 to protect CA1 at risk dry foothills habitats and wetlands

Extend CA1 to protect CA1 at risk dry foothills habitats and wetlands

Extend CA1 to include remaining bar of Deep Stream wetlands and Spring source area

Create new CA5 conservation area or covenant to protect CA1 Risk scrub & herbfield habitat on Bush Stream fen

Extend CC1 to include marginal strip along Scar Stream and connection to CA3. Fence out marginal strip

Version	1	2	3	4	5
Canterbury Land District					
Topographic Map 260 - I35,I36,I35,J36					
Date					25/07/05

# Mesopotamia

Scale 1:50000



Excludes all legal roads and Marginal strips (if any)

Certified a true copy of the original status check plan.