

PROPOSED DESIGNATIONS REPORT:
TENURE REVIEW OF MT OXFORD CROWN LAND

(FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the proposals described below be submitted to the CCL's agent, during the consultation process on the preliminary proposal for this tenure review, as representing the views developed under designated authority from the Director General of Conservation.
[Note that additional proposals, developed after the initial report is written, may also be put forward at the consultation stage.]
- 1.2 Note that statutory consents will be required before the CCL can include (in the preliminary proposal for this tenure review) the designations set out in paragraph 2.2.1 below.
- 1.3 Note that any disposition of land by the Crown will be subject to the relevant provisions of Part IVA of the Conservation Act 1987.

2. PROPOSALS AND JUSTIFICATION

2.1 Land to be Restored to or Retained in Full Crown Ownership and Control

2.1.1 Existing Status: Crown Land

Authority: s.86 (5)(a) CPLA

Proposal: That an area of approximately 1400 hectares is designated as a Conservation Area for the purpose of protecting the natural resources and that this area be managed by the Department of Conservation.

Description: This area includes the entire catchments of Keats and Oxford Streams and most of the land in ex-LG 565 except for the narrow strip of land below the 4WD track. Also included is all the northern side of Big Ben Stream.

Justification: The land is characterised by areas that have the following significant inherent values:

1. Areas which sustain the special natural quality and integrity of the High Country landscape, especially the indigenous component:
 - The parts of the property visible from the Lees Valley Road provide an impressive scenic corridor, while the side valleys have high inherent value, making a positive

contribution to the original character of the front rangelands of North Canterbury.

2. Areas which sustain the most culturally valued attributes (e.g. scenic, aesthetic, recreational and historic) and their context within a natural High Country landscape.
 - The country fronting the Ashley River is a semi-natural and scenic setting to be enjoyed in a passive sense from the viewpoints along the Lees Valley Road, or as a backdrop for water-based activities such as white-water kayaking. A feature of this area is the sequence of vistas into the side valleys visible from the road.
 - The property also provides the potential to expand the local tramping network. Trips are possible over the spurs and valleys of the property from Lees Valley over Mt Oxford to Coopers Creek or linking with the Wharfdale track.
3. Habitats of threatened species
 - *Coprosma obconica* was recorded in the shrublands at the head of Big Ben Stream. This species is listed as vulnerable (de Lange et al, 1999).
 - *Coprosma intertexta* was also recorded in shrublands at the head of Big Ben Stream. This species is described as naturally uncommon (de Lange et al, 1999).
4. Areas of high natural value assessed using Protected Natural Areas Programme criteria for identifying significant natural areas.
 - Joining this area to the adjacent Oxford Conservation Area will result in an integrated protected area that will help fully represent the Oxford Ecological District's original character.
 - The beech forests are representative of the original vegetation that once clothed the North Canterbury foothills in this area.
 - The beech forest and regenerating shrublands contribute to the distinctive character of the front rangelands of Canterbury.
 - Although the grasslands and shrublands have been induced by past farming activities, the valleys (in particular Keats and Oxford Valleys) are mainly dominated by native vegetation and still have a largely natural appearance. Apart from patches of gorse in the Big Ben catchment and exotic grasses in the short tussock grassland there are minimal exotic intrusions. There are no oversown species and hawkweeds are virtually non-existent.
 - The grey scrub communities are under-represented in the Conservation Estate. There is an urgent need to protect examples of this vegetation type.

5. Areas which make a special contribution to the overall quality, natural functioning and integrity of an ecosystem by providing linkages and buffers.
 - The property forms a valuable linkage between Oxford and Mt Thomas Conservation Areas (only separated by a narrow strip of land adjoining the Lees Valley Road).
 - The rapid colonisation of short tussock grassland by scrub, with eventual return to beech forest, is an illustration of the strength of regeneration and natural processes in this area. Very high inherent values can be attributed to this successional pattern.
 - The ecological health of the beech forest remnants will be enhanced if protected by the buffer/edge zone provided by the regenerating shrublands.
 - In the mid 1980's a North Canterbury Catchment Board Run Plan recommended the Keats Stream catchment be fenced and retired from grazing. Much of the steeper slopes on the property are prone to erosion due to shallow soils and unstable substrate. Retention of soil through the maintenance of its protective vegetative cover must be regarded as a significant inherent value in this area. Therefore, it is important the vegetation is protected from damage caused through grazing and burning.

6. Setting of high natural value for outdoor recreational opportunities in the High Country.
 - Mt Oxford and Oxford Hill on the boundary of the Crown Land already receive high recreational use. There are good opportunities to extend the tracks on Mt Oxford to link with the Ashley River. There is also an opportunity to provide good mountain biking trips in this area.

Management and boundary issues:

- The area should be included in the adjoining Oxford Conservation Area.
- There is an adequate fence down the boundary spur of Big Ben Stream. A new fence will be required at the north-eastern boundary of the proposed freehold in Big Ben Stream (approximately 500 metres) and fencing at the head of the Big Ben Stream catchment will need to be completed and upgraded (approximately 1200 metres). A fence (approximately 200 metres) will be needed from near Big Ben Saddle into the stream on the ex-LG block. It is not proposed to fence the boundaries immediately adjacent to Big Ben Stream and the stream in the ex-LG block.

2.2. Land Being Disposed of Subject to a Protective Mechanism

2.2.1 Big Ben Track (marked a-b on attached plan)

Existing Status: Pastoral Lease

Authority: s.88 (a) and s.40(2)(b) and (c) CPLA

Proposal: That an area of approximately 6 hectares (6km x 10m) be designated as land that may be disposed of subject to the creation of an easement for the purpose of public and conservation management access. Public access would be as-of-right, 365 days/year, foot, mountain bike and horse access. Management access would include vehicle access.

Description: This is a mainly well-formed vehicle track that continues on from the track that gives access to the crown land from the end of Sladdens Bush Road. The track passes through the ex-LG land to Big Ben Saddle and then traverses around the southern boundary of the Crown Land block before dropping down towards Big Ben Stream and the Ashley River. Soon after the track drops down it is blocked at present by slips and gorse.

Justification: This access route provides the opportunity to link with tracks over Mt Oxford and Ashley and Big Ben Saddles to provide access along the southern ridge of the Big Ben Stream catchment and, possibly, down to the Ashley River.

Management and Boundary Issues:

- The continuation of the track through the proposed Conservation Area to the Ashley River will need a bit of work to clear gorse and regenerating manuka/kanuka.
- The track will need to be signposted but will not need any fencing.

Type of Protective Mechanism: Easement under s.7(2) Conservation Act

3. Exemption or variation of a marginal strip width

Marginal strips may need to be laid off on Big Ben Stream and on the stream in the ex-LG block. When the CCL gives notice under Part IVA of the Conservation Act of any disposition of land, these matters will be further investigated.

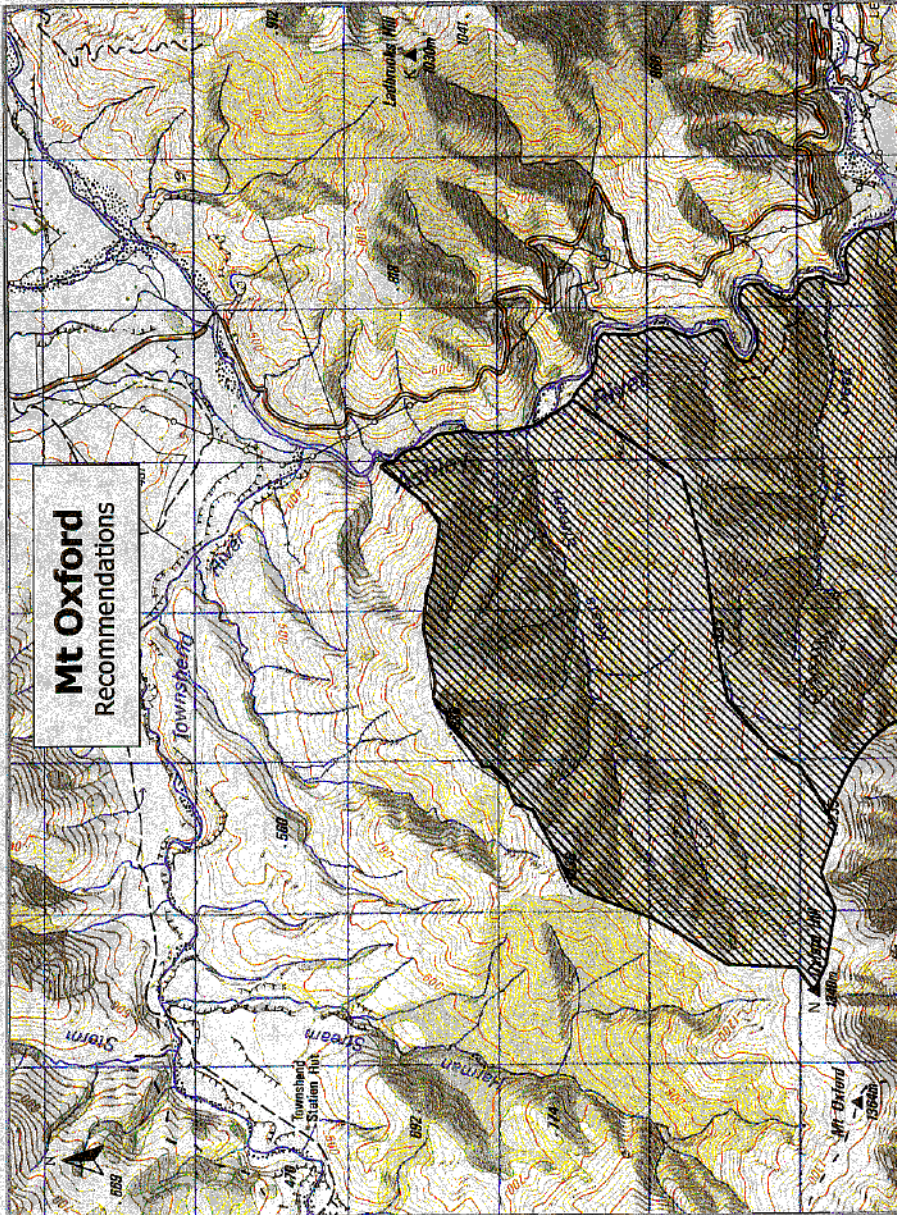
4. Other Matters

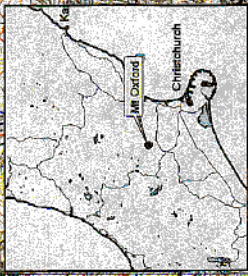
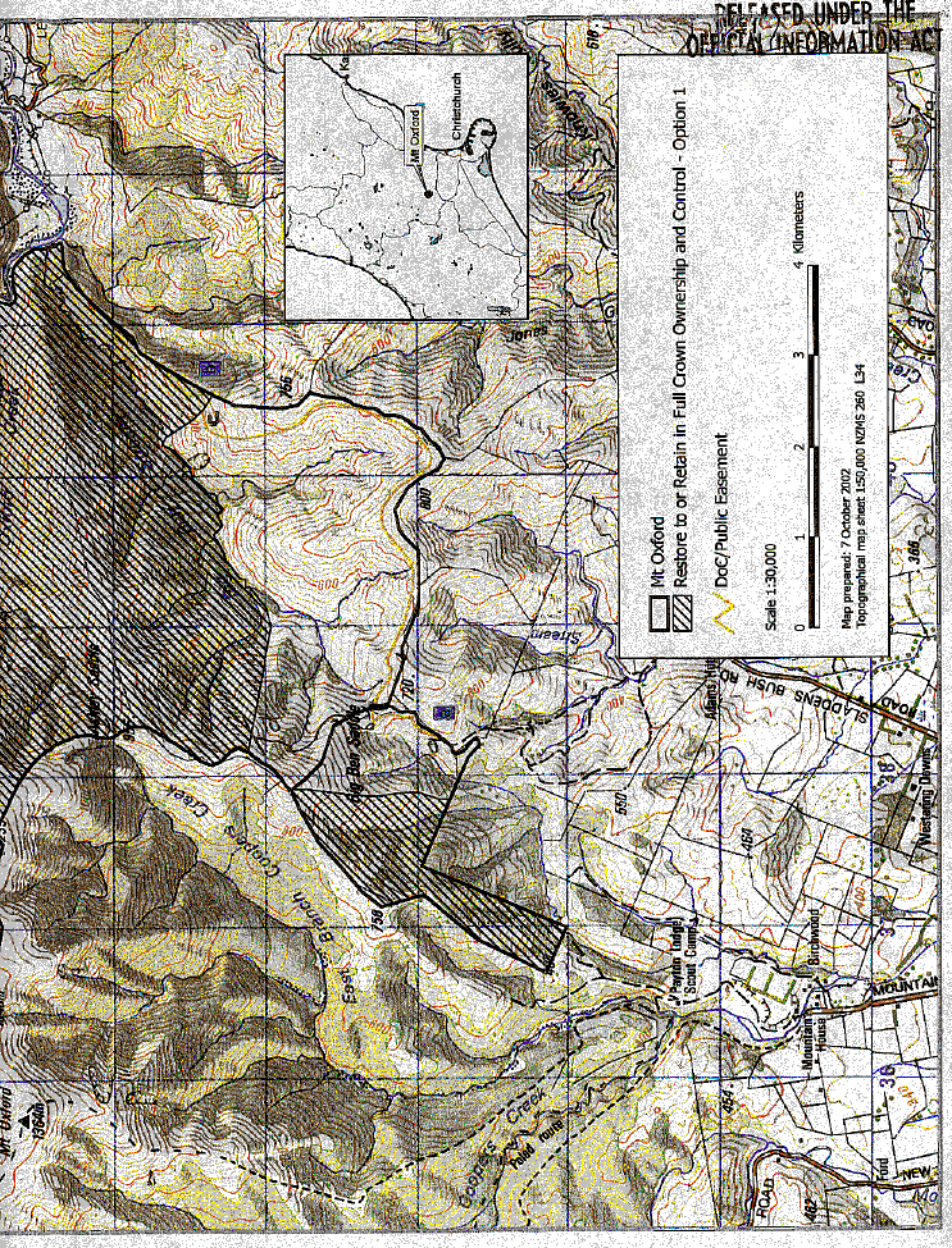
All matters raised by the NGOs have been covered by these recommendations. The access road from Sladdens Bush Road does not follow the legal road in its entirety. Access up the formed road is essential for any holder of proposed freehold on the Crown Land block and for the Department of Conservation for management of the proposed Conservation Areas. Walking, mountain biking and horse riding access for the public is also very desirable.

5. Attachments

5.1 Recommendations Map (attached)

Mt Oxford Recommendations





Mt Oxford
Restore to or Retain in Full Crown Ownership and Control - Option 1



DoC/Public Easement

Scale 1:30,000

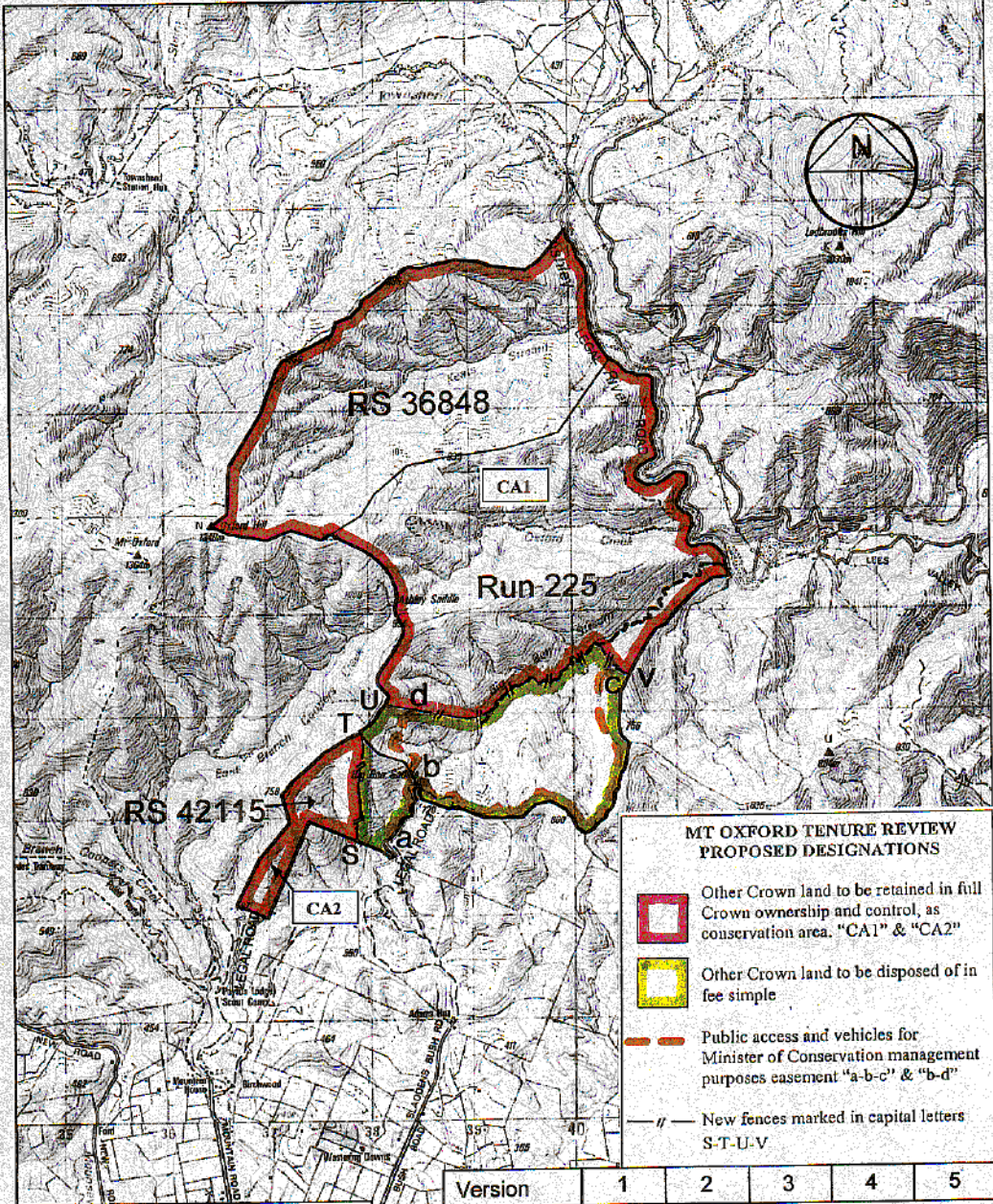


Map prepared: 7 October 2002
Topographical map sheet: 1:50,000 NZMS 260 L34





Mt Oxford
1362m

Branch Creek
Goochies Creek
Payton Large Scout Camp
Mountain House
Burroughs
Sladdens Bush Road
Winstoning Drive

NEW ZEALAND
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**MT OXFORD TENURE REVIEW
PROPOSED DESIGNATIONS**

-  Other Crown land to be retained in full Crown ownership and control, as conservation area. "CA1" & "CA2"
-  Other Crown land to be disposed of in fee simple
-  Public access and vehicles for Minister of Conservation management purposes easement "a-b-c" & "b-d"
-  New fences marked in capital letters S-T-U-V

Marginal Strip Subject to Sec 24(9)
Conservation Act 1987 -----

Version	1	2	3	4	5
Canterbury Land District					Sheet 1 of 1
Topographic Map 260 - L34					Date 08/07/02

