

Report on Field Inspection of Concession

Licensee:	John Cowan – Area B – Roaring Billy Upstream to Clarke Bluff, Haast Valley
Land Status:	Conservation Area Cook River to Haast River 736 Ha (Mt Aspiring NP borders part)
Concession Activity:	Grazing of up to 60 cattle (beef cows) – 12 months per year Grazing of up to 50 calves – up to 6 months per year
Inspection Date:	3 July 2018
Staff present:	Rachel Norton

Background:

This licence expired 31 December 2017 and John Cowan was invited to submit a new application which was publicly notified. Concerns were raised that cattle were grazing off the licensed area and intruding into Mt Aspiring NP. The purpose of this grazing inspection was to investigate whether John Cowan was adhering to the conditions of his concession. Four areas were inspected - Roaring Billy Falls walk towards the cableway, Gout Creek, Pivot Creek and Sunny Flat – see attached map. The true right of the river was not inspected in this visit.

Historic sites, Maori sites, Cultural values:

There are no known historic sites in the license area or sites of high cultural value.

Inspection sites

Roaring Billy Falls track and Cableway:

The track is in good condition with evidence of cattle passing through the forest margins, but no effects noticed on the track itself. Understory of forest is in good condition. There are minimal grazing flats here and the river runs close to the edge of the forest. Fence was well maintained, there were no cows visible in this portion of the licence. Recreation staff advise no concerns with cattle damage on Roaring Billy track

Gout Creek

Again, the valley and forest understory appear in good condition. Three small flats nearby show evidence of cattle grazing, although not recent. Gout Creek has sustained some damage from recent floods and there is a machinery access track running from the highway down towards the river, presumably to help distribute excess river debris. River silt and debris presumably from these flood events have also been pushed up across the river bed and into the forest margins. The creek was running clear at time of inspection. Evidence of this area being more of an access route than grazing area. Fence is in good condition. No cattle visible in this portion of the licence.

Pivot Creek

Blackberry bushes and tutu are evident in large clumps throughout the forest margin and river flats. Low levels of pugging were observed along stock access tracks that traversed forest patches. Grassy flats had only very localised areas of pugging, and ponds and wetland areas show little affects. There was evidence of where the river flowed hard against the bank (as in Roaring Billy and Gout Creek) where more damage to soils was observed. In February this year a landslip in the upper Pivot Creek area blocked the State Highway. This is evident where excess river debris has, like Gout Creek, flowed over flats and into forest margins. This also may be the cause of some riverbed damage. No cattle were visible in this portion of the licence. Grazing flats show normal evidence of winter grazing.

Sunny Flat

A 4 W drive access track in good condition leads you from the State Highway 6 down to a set of cattle yards, holding paddock and a large area of grazing flats. Fences are supplied by an electric fence unit at the access gate and road side fences and fences alongside grazing flats are all in good condition. There appears to be a type of holding paddock fenced off next to the cattle yards. This is typical of farming practice. Normal winter grazing conditions are evident, native carexes have been chewed and although there is some pugging, particularly around the stock yards I did not consider it to be severe given the recent weaning muster. The stock yards are in excellent condition, however appear to have been recently extended and/or new timber rails and deer fencing erected. This has not been authorised. Some excess flood debris from neighbouring Solitude Creek has been dumped alongside the cattle yard access road, this may be to upgrade the track entrance into Sunny Flat. There are 2 drains that have been dug from the east side of the cattle yards to the small creek running down to the river, potentially to help drain excess water from the yards – this has not been authorised. Waterways were all running clear, there is some river bank damage particularly in cattle traffic routes, but once again this may be because of all cattle being held here during the weaning muster.

The remains of an old hut and scattered building materials are still present.

9 cattle were observed grazing on this flat. Due to time restraints I did not walk the entire flat, see attached map for GPS coordinates.

Other comments:

The 3-wire road side fence that runs along the entire length of the licence is in good condition. It does infringe on National Park, however to follow the river bed would be impractical and the fence does serve a purpose keeping stock constrained within the licence and avoiding them wandering onto the State Highway and becoming a risk to road users. The fence did suffer some damage in post cyclone events however has been repaired to a good standard. There are several access points alongside the State Highway for members of the public to access the Haast river and where there isn't a gate, the fence can easily be climbed over.

Past monitoring reports indicate that grazing is having no adverse on the fisheries. Birds such as paradise ducks, tomtits, kereru and fantails were present during this inspection. The grazing regime is having no known effects on pests in the area – the licensee appears to work well with the Department in controlled pesticide operations and evidence of possum and deer browsing were minimal. Pasture weeds were present throughout – thistle, lotus, foxglove, blackberry. At Clarke Bluff I noticed there were approximately 20 more cattle grazing across the river on the flat commonly called 'no man's land' (flats between Cuttance

Creek and MacFarlane river) see map attached. This area appears to be the natural boundary for these cattle and I have not observed or been notified of cattle grazing outside of the licenced area.

Given that the licence has the option of grazing up to 60 cattle for 12 months of the year, I consider the effects on conservation values minimal. Aside from the unauthorised works at Sunny Flat the licensee appears to be abiding by Concession conditions.

Follow up recommendations:

Contact John Cowan and check whether earthworks or repairs to stock yards were authorised

Signed by



16/7/2018

Mark Davies

Director, Operations

Western South Island Region

Rachel Norton

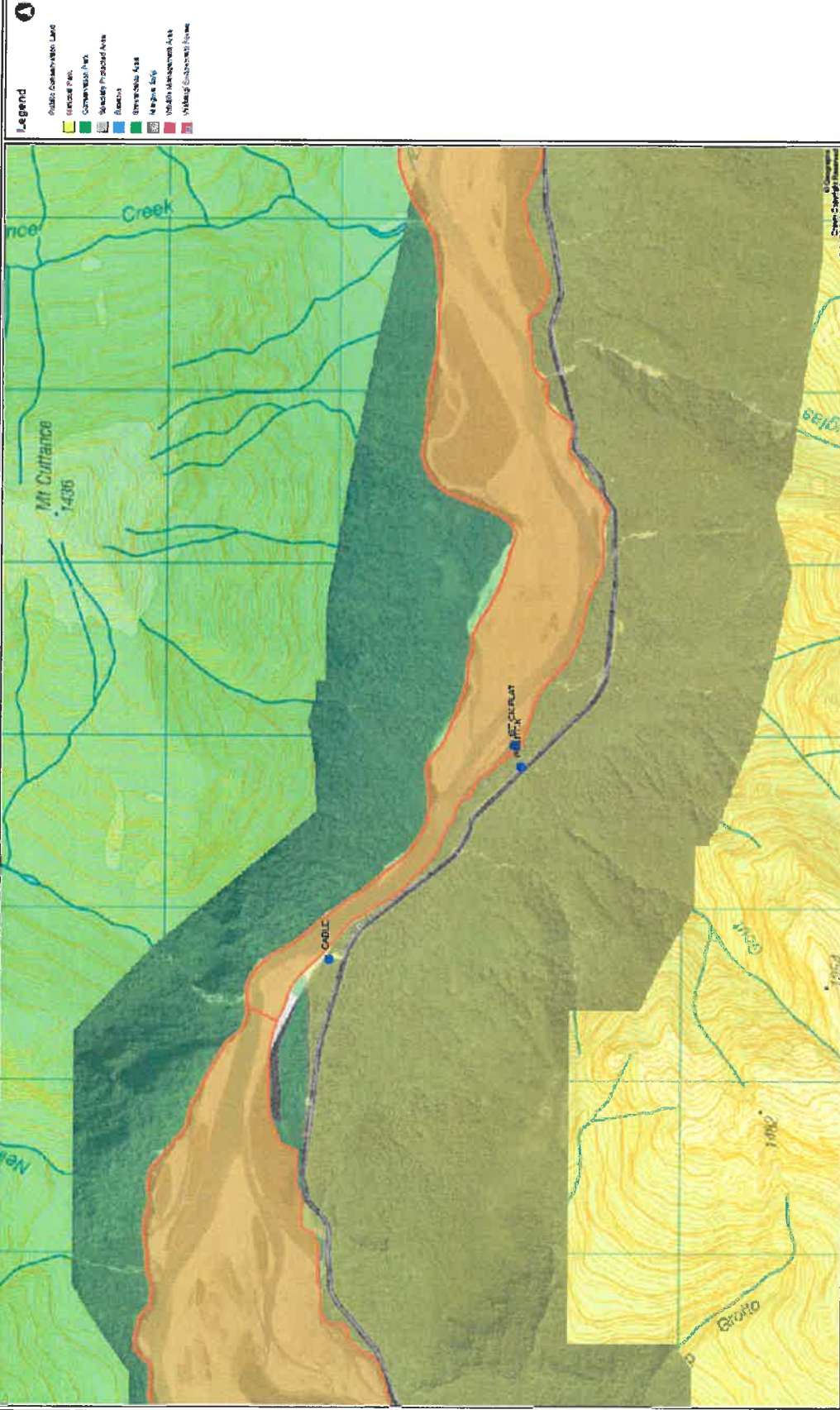
Senior Ranger/Supervisor Community

South Westland

Encl: 2 maps showing monitoring sites Roaring Billy to Gout Creek and Pivot Creek to Sunny Flat - orange layer is grazing licence

Gout Creek

1:40000 Scale
18 July 2018



- Legend**
- Public Community Land
 - Wetland
 - Contaminated Area
 - Sensitive Protected Area
 - Forest
 - Streamside Area
 - Riparian Area
 - Urban Management Area
 - Mining (Subsided) Areas



This map is a user-generated web-based map. It is not intended for use in any legal proceedings. Data errors and omissions are the responsibility of the user. This map is not to be used for navigation.

Scale: 1:40000
0.5 Kilometers

Roaring Blinn to Gout Creek

