

NZAC submission on Western South Island stewardship land reclassification

August 2022



TO: Stewardship Land Reclassification Project
C/- Department of Conservation
Private Bag 4715, Christchurch Mail Centre
Christchurch 8140

By email: stewardshiplandreclassification@doc.govt.nz

Attention: Anna Cameron

Name of submitter: New Zealand Alpine Club

We wish to be heard in support of this submission

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Overall response

1. The New Zealand Alpine Club submits supporting the Federated Mountain Clubs' (FMC) submission unreservedly. The FMC submission is well researched and based in recreation and conservation values. In submitting, NZAC wishes to highlight areas of the FMC submission of particular relevance and importance to NZAC.
2. We also support the recommendations made in the Aotearoa Climbing Access Trust (ACAT) submission. We also highlight here areas and issues in the ACAT submission of particular importance to NZAC members.
3. The New Zealand Alpine Club Inc ('NZAC' or 'the Club') is a national recreational organisation which has been promoting climbing, community and enjoyment of the outdoors for 131 years. It has a proud tradition of training, education, advocacy and protection of New Zealand's mountains and crags to allow recreationalists to keep enjoying these magnificent resources.

The NZAC is a founding member of the UIAA, the international climbing and mountaineering organisation. It is the largest member club of the FMC. It is a founding partner and has an MOU with ACAT to work together on access issues affecting climbers.

The Club has over 4000 members, spread across New Zealand and Australia and organised into 12 sections. The Canterbury Westland Section is the Club's largest, at over 1000 members, though members from across the country enjoy the places addressed in this submission.

The West Coast provides an historically important and contemporarily challenging environment for climbers to hone their craft. The long, often difficult, approaches into some of the most remote landscapes in the country are a rite of passage for many, and certainly add to the challenge and fond memories of trips undertaken. Stewardship land accounts for many of these special areas that our members frequent, and we are therefore heavily invested in the landscapes and their protection for future generations.

Climbers not only undertake recreation in these areas but are also invested in restoring landscape through planting projects, trapping and predator control, as well as maintaining recreation through hut and track maintenance. The knowledge and connection that climbers have to the area is immense.

4. We applaud the Minister and Department for starting the large task of reclassifying stewardship land – it is long overdue. However, we do have concerns around the process used to arrive at this point, the volume of parcels under review, along with considerable time pressure for providing feedback via submissions, although we appreciate the extension that was given. For a largely volunteer-driven organisation such as the NZAC, who nevertheless has a keen interest in the area, this has proven difficult. We also have concerns as to how this work may fit with the larger review of conservation law currently being undertaken, and whether more appropriate land classifications may arise from this work. These points are well covered in the FMC submission 'Overarching matters' and we support their findings and recommendations.
5. We strongly support the main recommendations from FMC that where there is general agreement from conservation and recreation stakeholder submissions and the panel recommendations that the reclassification proceed. Where there is conflict between the conservation and recreation stakeholder submissions and the panel recommendations, we support the recommendation that the process be paused and reviewed.
6. The Mana Whenua panel has not recommended any national park additions. To us this was surprising, as we thought that Mana Whenua would want the highest level of protection for much of this pristine landscape. It signals a specific problem that they have with this classification and/or its management. For this reason, perhaps this work needs to be paused until the wider conservation law reform has been completed and suitable classifications developed, which confer appropriate protection while maintaining mana.
7. The Club has an interest in fixed protection for climbing, and the development of climbing areas. These have long existed in national parks, sometimes with community agreements in place for their management (such as in Paparoa National Park). With the recommendations we make we assume that the management of these special climbing areas will continue to be managed using community agreements co-developed with the Department of Conservation and local iwi. The Aotearoa Climbing Access Trust (ACAT) submission contains excellent information and recommendations on this which we support.

Individual parcels of land

8. PAP_03 Doctor Bay
PAP_05 Four Mile River

The Club **does not oppose** reclassification as a scenic reserve as long as rock climbing access is maintained, and ideally enhanced.

We **recommend** reclassification as recreation reserve to recognise the area's high value for climbing as per the submission by ACAT. The Doctor Bay area includes the Charleston Crags which provide excellent climbing opportunities for local and visiting climbers on good quality rock. The South of Deep Creek Crags are similar sea crags.

9. PAP_14 Punakaiki Coast Road (South)

The Club **does not oppose** reclassification to Paproa National Park as long as rock climbing access is maintained, and ideally, enhanced.

We **recommend** reclassification as recreation reserve to recognise the area's high value for climbing as per the submission by ACAT.

10. Proposed Tarahanga e Toru Historic Reserve
MAW_09, MAW_53, HOK_01, HOK_03, HOK_19

The Club **supports** the panel recommendation of historic reserve only for specific sites of historic importance in the Taramakau river as outlined in the FMC submission.

The Club **does not support** the recommendation of historic reserve for the remainder of the area. This is an area of outstanding natural, cultural and recreational value that deserves a very high level of protection, but a protection which also preserves open access, recreation opportunities and excludes the possibility of commercial development. We do not think that historic reserve meets these criteria.

We recognise the importance and mana of the area for Tangata Whenua. Given the Mana Whenua panel do not support national park status, we think the best action is to pause reclassification of the area until a classification can be found that confers the protections and open access of a national park, while maintaining the mana for Tangata Whenua.

11. HOK_52 Waitaha Forest
HOK_19 Wanganui / Otira catchments (part)

We **do not support** the Panel recommendation of Conservation Park.

We **support** the FMC submission that the Waitaha forest and Wanganui / Otira catchments (part) be added to the Westland National Park. The upper reaches of these two areas border national park and wilderness designated areas. They are special places for exploring and mountaineering and contain some of the most difficult tramping routes in the country, including access to Ivory Lake. The landscapes are pristine and deserving of the highest possible protection.

12. TWP_05 – Waitangi Forest, Ōkārito Forks, Ferguson Creek, Waitangitāhuna and TWP_36 Cook River / Weheka to Haast River

We **do not support** the Panel recommendation of Conservation Park.

We **strongly support** the addition of these parcels of land to the Westland Tai Poutini National Park as per the FMC recommendation. Sitting adjacent to the national park, the natural values are no different and the areas provide examples of sublime natural wilderness. The lowland areas may require more detailed mapping to exclude modified areas from the national park. We also support the proposal in the FMC submission to examine the upper catchments of these areas for suitability of addition to the Adams Wilderness Area.