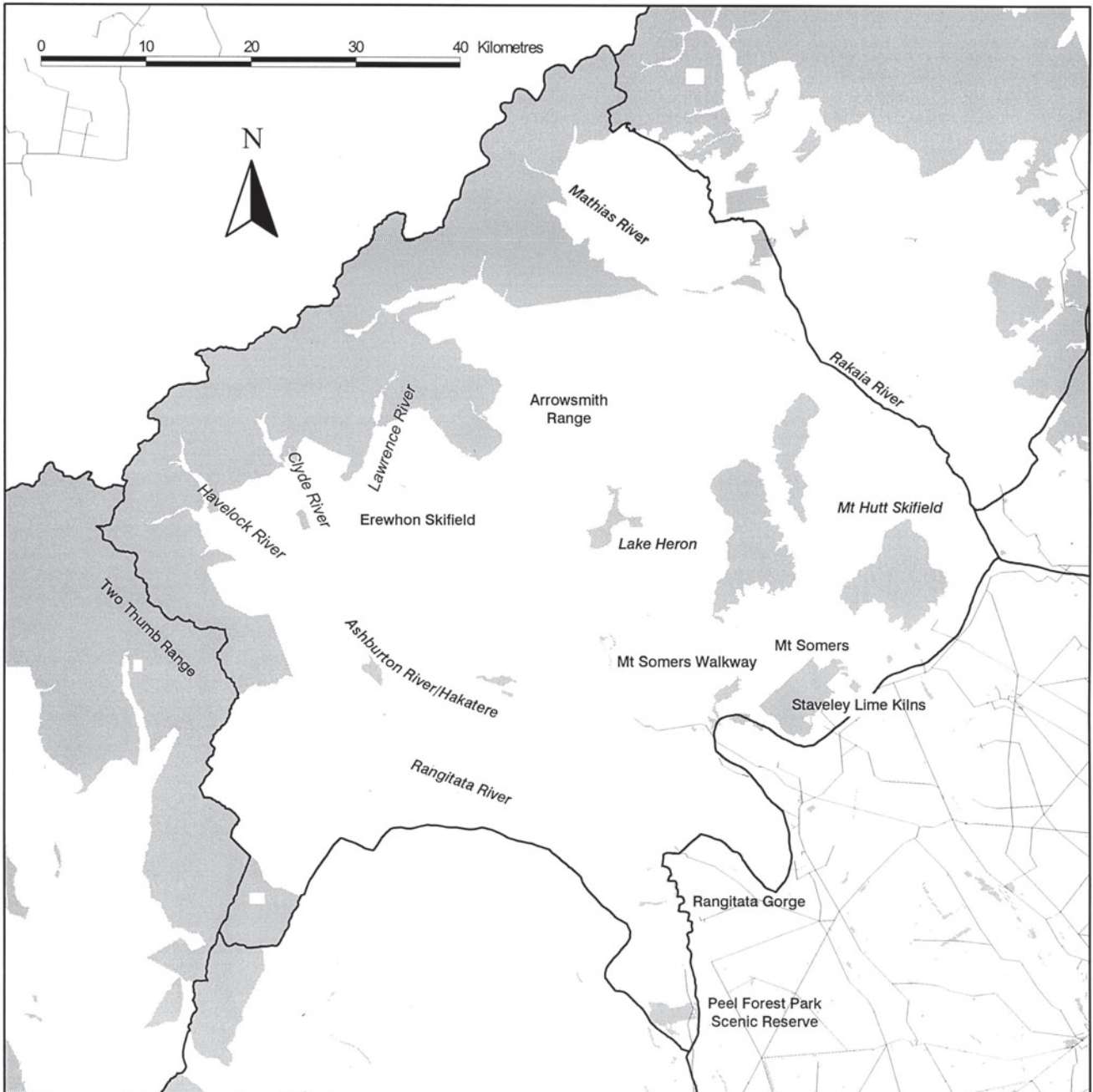


Map 9 Rangitata



- CMS Place Unit Boundaries
- Main roads
- Land managed by the Department

4.8 Rangitata

Introduction

The Rangitata unit comprises a system of basins and ranges, the product of glacial action and subsequent fluvial erosion. It is bounded in the north by the Rakaia River and in the south by the Two Thumb Range and the waters of the Rangitata Catchment. The western and eastern boundaries are the main divide and the Canterbury plains.

Features and Issues

People Partnership

The area is of particular interest to Ngāi Tahu because it has been the source of seasonal food and natural material, and it provided access routes around the high country and to the West Coast (over Browning Pass/Noti Raureka). The unit forms part of the takiwā/area of Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua.

The alpine areas, high country (including inland mountain ranges and intermontane basins) and foothills are a focus of recreation and conservation interest. Conservation programmes are run by the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, the Central South Island Fish and Game Council and the local Conservation Corps.

The area has no major urban settlements, and is dominated by individual pastoral runs. A seasonal influx of people undertake recreational activities, particularly within the Ashburton Lakes area. Local runholders have recently begun to form landcare groups to address land management issues within the area.

Heritage Conservation

The unit conveys a sense of naturalness and wilderness. The overall character is one of space, remoteness and grandeur in an alpine setting of snow and ice, glacier and lakes, interspersed with remnants of upland forest, tussock grassland and several major wetlands.

The effects of past glaciation are clearly evident with lakes and kettleholes, glacial moraines and terraces, and cirque basins at higher elevations all being common. More recent fluvial action has so modified the landscape that braided river beds, river terraces and alluvial fans characterise the margins of basins and valley floors. The braided rivers of the Rakaia, South Ashburton/Hakatere, and Rangitata link the mountains and the coast, and provide a distinctive habitat for wading birds, indigenous plants, and invertebrates. The Mount Somers area is of special significance because of its volcanic geology and associated distinctive values.

A large intermontane basin contains what is known as the Ashburton lakes - a collection of lakes, kettleholes and wetlands. This complex supports a variety of waterfowl, including the threatened southern crested grebe/kāmana, New Zealand scaup/pāpango, smaller aquatic invertebrates, and indigenous and introduced fish. The indigenous plant communities surrounding the wetlands are extensive and diverse. They include red tussock, bog rush, sedges, rushes, and short turf-lands along some lake shores and at Spider Lakes.

The northern part of this basin, the Lake Heron and Cameron River catchments, are subject to the Rakaia National Water Conservation Order.

Forests comprise some interesting components, both locally and nationally, because of their rarity and distinctiveness. Associations and species more typical of the West Coast occur in the upper catchments of the Rakaia and Rangitata, including tōtara, cedar/pāhautea, mountain toatoa, both miro and matai, rātā, *Dacrydium biforme*, mountain neinei and *Olearia ilicifolia*/hakeke and *O. colensoi*.

The mountain habitats are also home to a range of bird species occupying niches from mountain torrent to forest, and to the alpine herbfields. Species include blue duck/kowhiowhio, kea and New Zealand falcon/kārearea. Lizards/ngārara and skinks/mokomoko are also present but the terrestrial invertebrate fauna is less well known and recorded. One notable occurrence is the presence of an undescribed species of weta *Deinacrida*, near Mount Somers.

(See also 4.10.4 regarding a conservation park proposal for the Two Thumb Range.)

Human History

Cabbage trees/ti kouka, fern root/aruhe, weka and waterfowl (particularly from the inland lakes) were traditional food sources in this area. There is an account of the discovery of Brownings Pass/Noti Raureka in about 1700 by Raureka, a woman of the Ngāti Wairangi tribe who led a group of Ngāi Tahu to begin the trade in pouamu.

European pastoral settlement in the 1850s is notable for famous runs in the Rakaia, Rangitata and Ashburton/Hakatere catchments. Samuel Butler's four-year association with the area, and his subsequent

books based on the landscape of the upper Rangitata, such as *Erewhon* (Butler, 1987), helped to develop a mystique about the South Island high country.

Peel Forest was extensively utilised for timber and, with a growing awareness of the need for forest conservation, particularly podocarp forest, Peel Forest Station gifted part of Peel Forest Park to the Crown. Sawpit remnants still exist in the park.

Mount Somers is the only part of Canterbury to have successfully produced commercial amounts of minerals, eg. coal, limestone and silica sand. The Mount Somers coal mine has the distinction of being the oldest continuously worked mine in the country. The Buxton lime kilns are the best-preserved example of a limeworks in Canterbury.

Recreation and Use

The number of reserves in the unit and their closeness to reasonably significant urban areas has resulted in a number of camp-sites and picnic areas serving as roadside facilities. A major camping-ground at Peel Forest services about 12,000 visitors per year.

The Mount Somers grouping of reserves and conservation areas (e.g. Alford Forest, Sharplin Falls) is well used during summer months, mostly by people from Canterbury. The Ashburton lakes have nationally significant wildlife values, and are also popular for fly fishing, water-skiing, wind-surfing and boating.

Mount Hutt ski field, which is of international standard, attracts many visitors from Canterbury, other parts of New Zealand and overseas. The Erewhon Club ski field has operated in the area.

The Arrowsmith Range and upper Rangitata-Rakaia rivers provide wilderness and remote-experience climbing, hunting, heli-skiing and tramping opportunities. The Rangitata Gorge is a popular grade 5 rafting opportunity and is guided commercially.

Areas Managed by the Department

The following areas managed by the Department are described in more detail in Volume 2, Schedule 2.

Name	Unit
Alford Forest, Mount Somers Block	K36024
Alford Forest, Woolshed Creek Block	K36012
Alford Scenic Reserve	K36007
Clyde Forest	I35004
Dr Sinclair's Gravesite, upper Rangitata	J36006
Havelock Forest	I35003
Lake Camp Recreation Reserve	J36017
Lake Heron Nature Reserve and Wildlife Refuge	J35006
Lawrence Forest	J35004
Māori Lakes Nature Reserve	J36002
Mesopotamia Conservation Area	I36006
Mount Hutt Forest	K35045
North Mathias to Rolleston Range Conservation Area	J40012
Part Run 77 Retirement Area	I37001
Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve	J37006
Pudding Hill Scenic Reserve	K36001
Rakaia Forest	J35002
Rangitata - Rakaia Conservation Area	J35001
Raules Gully Scenic Reserve	J36012
Sharplin Falls Scenic Reserve	K36026
Upper Rangitata Riverbed Conservation Area	J36004

Key Priorities

4.8.1 Ecosystems and Species

Issues

The unit consists of seven ecological districts, four of which have been formally surveyed under the PNA programme (see 5.5.4 Survey and Monitoring). Two unsurveyed ecological districts contain significant areas managed by the Department. Orari ecological district remains to be surveyed.

Surveys carried out under the PNA programme have identified a considerable number of recommended areas for protection (RAPs) covering lakes, wetlands, braided rivers, and short and tall tussock grasslands that represent the best examples of natural diversity of this area.

Many of these areas are not formally protected and are, in some cases, at risk from competing pastoral farming activities such as drainage, burning and grazing.

Tenure review of pastoral leases and endowment lands (see 5.2.3 Land Ecosystems) is an active process in this unit, providing opportunities for natural values protection.

The upper Rangitata and Ashburton/Hakatere riverbeds, Ashburton lakes, the volcanic ecosystems of Mount Somers, and alpine ecosystems of the unit provide rich and diverse habitats for species in the area. The upper Rangitata and Ashburton/Hakatere riverbeds were rated as outstanding wildlife habitat by the former Wildlife Service.

Objectives

- To identify the significant indigenous vegetation and threatened plant and animal species of the Rangitata unit.
- To use a range of effective methods to protect the indigenous biodiversity of the Rangitata unit.
- To protect and enhance the viability of priority threatened species' populations and their habitat(s) in the Rangitata unit.

Implementation

The Conservancy will:

1. Survey the Ōrari ecological district, in accordance with priorities set in 5.5.4 (Survey and Monitoring).
2. Undertake research, surveys, or both to clarify the distribution, status, habitat preferences and threats of the following species:
 - Reptiles
 - scree skink
 - striped skink
 - Invertebrates
 - Mount Somers bluff weta
 - Mount Cook weta
 - alpine scree weta
 - Bats
 - long-tailed bat/pekapeka
 - Birds
 - black-fronted tern/tarapirohe
 - banded dotterel/pohowera
 - rock wren
 - New Zealand falcon/kārearea
 - kea
 - southern crested grebe/kāmana
 - wrybill/ngutupare
 - Fish
 - short-jawed kōkopu
 - Plants
 - *Ischnocarpus novae-zelandiae*
3. Advocate for the protection of indigenous biodiversity including the habitat of threatened species and

the healthy functioning of ecosystems.

4. Advocate effective means to avoid adverse effects to the habitat of threatened species within Canterbury Regional Council and District Council plans for the following species:
 - Mount Somers bluff weta
 - black-fronted tern
 - banded dotterel
 - southern crested grebe
5. Manipulate southern crested grebe habitat to enhance the species' population.
6. Use publications, interpretative material, the media and personal contacts to outline management issues associated with the kea.
7. Advocate for effective methods to avoid adverse effects to the habitat of the long-tailed bat.
8. Seek the protection of indigenous biodiversity through the tenure review process.

4.8.2 Mount Somers

Issue

The Mount Somers area is remarkable for its high natural values. These include volcanic landforms, rare plant species, Mount Somers bluff weta, alpine cushion bogs and the popular Mount Somers Walkway. Since the late 1980s, progress has been made in integrating management of this area with the assistance of local residents. Department-managed lands within this area include the Alford Forest blocks and Sharplin Falls scenic reserve.

See also Volume 2, Map Sheet 7 Rangitata, and Schedule 2.

Objectives

- To identify, protect and manage the natural and historic resources and recreational values of the Mount Somers area.
- To encourage community participation in the management of natural and historic resources and recreational values of the area.

Implementation

The Conservancy will:

1. Monitor and control the adverse effects of plant pest species, especially the noxious plant Spanish heath at Staveley.
2. Undertake a reconnaissance survey for the Mount Somers bluff weta at Mount Somers.
3. Monitor and protect *Ipbigenia novae-zelandiae*.
4. Encourage scientific studies to gain understanding of the ecosystems, processes and species in the area.
5. Work with the Mount Somers Walkway Society to maintain and upgrade the walkway and associated facilities.
6. Facilitate boundary and status change to meet conservation and recreation objectives for the area.
(See also 4.8.5 Staveley Lime Kilns)

4.8.3 High Country Lakes, Rivers and Wetlands

Issue

The Heron basin, Ashburton lakes (Ō Tū Wharekai) and upper Rangitata are recognised as 'outstanding landscapes' (Boffa Miskell Limited and Lucas Associates, 1993). They clearly demonstrate their formative geological processes, clarity of landform (different from more southern basins), wetlands, tussock grasslands and other biological features.

The Ashburton lakes, the adjoining upper Ashburton/Hakatere and Rangitata riverbeds, and associated wetlands provide a very significant ecosystem and habitat feature in the unit. The lakes and riverbed-based wetlands lack integrated protection mechanisms against developments that degrade water and habitat quality in the area. Boating and wind-surfing noise and speed, and fishing disturbance may be adversely affecting wildlife on the lake edges. Agricultural intensification has also adversely affected natural values in the area.

The wetlands are nationally recognised as a priority area for recognition through such mechanisms as a Water Conservation Order (WCO). The current reserve status for some lakes does not reflect appropriate management; for example, the status of Lake Heron and Māori Lakes as nature reserves legally requires permit-only access.

Objectives

- To advocate integrated management of the Ashburton lakes area to protect and enhance natural and historic resources; and to provide for compatible recreation opportunities.
- To promote appropriate land tenure, reserve status and RMA protection to protect natural character values and provide for appropriate recreation.

Implementation

The Conservancy will:

1. Seek, through appropriate methods such as tenure review and district plans, to protect, maintain and enhance the area's heritage landscape and heritage landscape values.
2. Investigate feasibility of a water conservation order for the Hakatere ecological district wetlands. The scope of the WCO will be subject to public consultation and will have regard to the provisions of any relevant regional plan.
3. Advocate for Canterbury Regional Council plans to provide effective lake bed, riparian, discharge, water level, quality, and flow rules to protect and enhance the natural values of the Ashburton lakes.
4. Advocate for the Ashburton district plan to provide effective land use, subdivision, water surface (watercraft noise and speed), and esplanade and riparian rules to protect and enhance the natural values of the Ashburton lakes.
5. Liaise with landholders to avoid or reduce the adverse effects of pastoral intensification and grazing on the Ashburton lakes and to promote riparian protection in the area.
6. Establish an adequate sign system in the area to inform visitors of their responsibilities.
7. Liaise with Ashburton District Council, landholders and recreational groups in the Ashburton lakes to provide for and manage recreation opportunities, assess the impacts of recreational activities on bird populations, and avoid or mitigate unnecessary recreational adverse effects on wildlife values.
8. Monitor and control predators where necessary, particularly feral cats and wild mustelids that pose a threat to several threatened bird species.
9. Survey habitats of alpine and long-jawed *Galaxiids* for baseline resource information such as the extent of habitat, distribution and densities.
10. Support a programme of willow and other plant pest clearance around Lake Heron generally, in the Cameron Flat wetlands and other significant wetlands.
11. Classify land managed by the Department to best resolve protection and recreation objectives.
12. Encourage relevant authorities to either stop legal road to create reserves or bring Crown land strips under the management provisions of the Reserves or Conservation Acts, to provide legal protection for the lake-edge natural values. Consideration of stock watering needs will be required in this process.
13. Encourage the provision of legal foot access to and along lake edges where this does not already exist.

4.8.4 Thar and Other Wild Animals

Issue

Introduced ungulate animals, including domestic stock, adversely effect alpine plant communities through localised destruction of vegetation and preferential browsing of palatable plants. Thar exist in localised high concentrations within the Rangitata and Waitaki units. The Minister of Conservation approved a Himalayan thar management policy in 1991. The Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993 implements the policy, under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977. The plan proposes a ceiling population of approximately 10,000 across the thar range, and specifies trigger densities when departmental control operations will be required. Some species provide a recognised recreational/commercial resource. Wild animal densities need to be controlled at levels that minimise their adverse effects on alpine plant communities. A thar liaison group has been established with representatives from recreational hunters, conservation groups and Ngāi Tahu to help implement the control plan.

Objective

- To reduce the impact of wild animals, particularly thar, on indigenous plant communities by managing them at specified density levels.

Implementation

The Conservancy will:

1. Implement the Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993.
2. Intervene in thar control when thar numbers exceed the plan's intervention densities.
3. Monitor the effectiveness of hunting on deer and chamois populations and their adverse effects on indigenous plant communities.
4. Encourage research into the relationship between herbivores, vegetation condition and animal control.
5. Consult with the Thar Liaison Group and other interested organisations.

4.8.5 Staveley Lime Kilns

Issue

The historic Staveley lime kilns have recently been acquired by the Department. Proposed management to stabilise the kilns is based on a conservation plan prepared by a conservation architect (Cochran, 1991).

Objective

- To preserve the Staveley lime kilns as an example of historic relics of Canterbury's industrial past.

Implementation

The Conservancy will:

1. Implement the management requirements in the conservation plan for each kiln, to remove vegetation and stabilise stonework.
2. Fence the structures to restrict stock access.

4.8.6 Upper Rangitata/Rakaia

Issue

The remote mountain areas of the upper catchments have been identified by previous Government agencies and federated mountain clubs as having high potential for gazettal and management as a wilderness area. This would restrict aircraft access (see Map 10).

Having regard to the spectrum of recreational opportunities in Canterbury, and the size of lands managed by the Conservancy, this proposal is of considerable merit. Hunters may still be able to gain aerial access to hunt wild animals as part of the Wild Animal Recovery Scheme (WARS).

The large continuous area between the Aoraki/Mount Cook and Arthur's Pass national parks lacks a protected status to recognise its natural and recreational significance. As part of a wilderness investigation, a conservation park proposal will be considered.

Objectives

- To investigate wilderness status and, if agreed to by the Minister of Conservation, gazette a Wilderness Area for the upper catchments of the Havelock, Lawrence, Clyde and Rakaia rivers to protect their wilderness values.
- To investigate conservation park status for land managed by the Conservancy in the Upper Rangitata and Rakaia and, if agreed to by the Minister, gazette a conservation park.

Implementation

The Conservancy will:

1. Investigate wilderness status for the Adams Area, in conjunction with West Coast Conservancy, by undertaking the following (in order):
 - prepare a discussion document outlining the wilderness area options for land managed by the Department in the Adams Area
 - invite public submissions and provide for an oral hearing on the discussion document in accordance with sections 18 and 49 of the Conservation Act
 - forward the recommendation and summary of submissions to the Minister

- implement gazette action as required, following decisions made by the Minister
2. Investigate conservation park status for the Upper Rangitata and Rakaia, in conjunction with West Coast Conservancy, by undertaking the following (in order):
 - prepare a discussion document, outlining the protected area options for land managed by the Department between Aoraki/Mount Cook and Arthur's Pass national parks
 - invite public submissions and provide for an oral hearing on the discussion document in accordance with section 49 of the Conservation Act
 - forward the recommendation and summary of submissions to the Minister
 - implement gazette action as required, following decisions made by the Minister.
 3. Over time, remove all the Department facilities from the upper catchments of the Havelock, Clyde, Lawrence and Rakaia rivers, within the proposed wilderness area.
 4. Allow no further private or public huts in these upper catchments.
 5. Restrict aircraft landings in the proposed wilderness area to the following activities only:
 - emergency uses
 - departmental management
 - wild animal control access between April and August
 - approved scientific research
 6. Manage departmental lands downstream from the proposed wilderness area as a buffer zone according to the Wilderness Policy 1983. Areas may be added from the tenure review process.

4.8.7 Peel Forest

Issues

Peel Forest is an important focus for departmental management. The Peel Forest Park, which has scenic reserve status, is an outstanding area of relatively unmodified mountain and lowland podocarp forest. Associated with it is a well-developed track system and a camping-ground. Commercial camp-ground management is not a core departmental function and the Conservancy has leased out the Peel Forest Camp-ground. Ecological monitoring of the reserve is an ongoing activity of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.

Objectives

- To protect and enhance the natural values and landscape of Peel Forest Park.
- To provide opportunities for the public to benefit from and use the park.

Implementation

The Conservancy will:

1. Control plant and animal pests in the scenic reserve to maintain and enhance its scenic values.
2. Undertake annual control of *Clematis vitalba* (old man's beard).
3. Maintain a network of public facilities in Peel Forest, including tracks, huts and bridges.
4. Lease or contract out the management of Peel Forest Camp-ground.
5. Consider additions to the scenic reserve of suitable adjacent land.
6. Advocate to and liaise with the Timaru District Council and the local community to protect the natural landscape character around Peel Forest.
7. Encourage ongoing monitoring by interested groups and individuals.

4.8.8 Mount Hutt

Issues

Mount Hutt ski field is the largest commercial ski field on land managed by the Department in Canterbury. It contains sizeable capital developments and facilities and has high visitor numbers. The access road and field require an annual maintenance programme that is approved by the Department. The operation of the ski field is a balance between providing recreational benefits and protecting natural and historic resources on the mountain. The Department manages the Mount Hutt Conservation Area (which contains the ski field) and the Pudding Hill Scenic Reserve. The adjacent Awa Awa Reserve is managed by the Ashburton District Council.

Objective

- To protect the natural and historic resources of Mount Hutt while allowing year-round recreational use.

Implementation

The Conservancy will:

1. Monitor the concession for Mount Hutt ski field ensuring the conditions that are established protect the natural and historic resources of the conservation area.
2. Require that public safety on the mountain is maintained.
3. Inspect and approve annual work programmes of the ski field operators.
4. Work with Mount Hutt ski field operators to provide conservation interpretation on the ski-field.
5. Foster year-round recreational useage of the land managed by the Department and the maintenance of the associated facilities (such as access tracks, picnic areas).

Less Achievable Tasks

Tasks the Conservancy may not be able to undertake or complete include:

- extensive lupin, gorse, willow and broom control on the Rangitata riverbed
- maintenance of low-priority departmental tracks and huts
- extensive interpretation at Mount Hutt

Table 10: Key Priorities for Rangitata Unit

Name	Issue	Method	Results Sought	See Activity Section
4.8.1 Ecosystems and Species	Much of the unit is ecologically surveyed and many areas warrant protection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reservation 2. Covenant 3. RMA advocacy 4. Landholder liaison 5. Weed/pest control 6. Fencing 7. Tenure review 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A range of significant ecosystems/ habitats and species identified and adequately protected 2. Self-sustaining species populations 	5.1.4 Communication and Liaison 5.2.3 Land Ecosystems 5.2.4 Freshwater Ecosystems 5.2.6 Indigenous Species 5.2.8 Animal Pests and Wild Animals 5.2.9 Plant Pests and Exotic Plants
4.8.2 Mount Somers	Conservation of the geological, historical, botanical, wildlife, and recreational values of the Mount Somers area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ecological survey 2. Weed/pest control 3. Fencing 4. Landholder liaison 5. Community walkway support 	Integrated protection and enjoyment of the natural feature of Mount Somers	5.2.3 Land Ecosystems 5.2.6 Indigenous Species 5.2.8 Animal Pests and Wild Animals 5.2.9 Plant Pests and Exotic Plants 5.3.3 Recreation Facilities
4.8.3 High Country Lakes, Rivers and Wetlands	Protecting and enhancing the nature conservation and recreational values of the lakes, wetlands and rivers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signs and interpretation 2. Weed/pest control 3. RMA advocacy 4. WCO 5. Enforcement 6. reservation 7. Tenure Review 	The natural values and character of the high country lakes, rivers and wetlands are protected and enhanced	5.2.4 Freshwater Ecosystems 5.2.8 Animal Pests and Wild Animals 5.2.9 Plant Pests and Exotic Plants
4.8.4 Thar and other wild animal management	Impact of wild animals, particularly thar, on native vegetation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recreational hunting 2. Commerical helicopter hunting 3. Monitoring thar numbers and vegetation conditions 	Wild animal densities maintained at levels that do not have significant effects on native vegetation	5.2.8 Animal Pests and Wild Animals
4.8.5 Staveley Lime Kilns	The kilns are deteriorating	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation plan 2. Stabilisation work 	Kilns stabilised in accordance with prescriptions in Conservation Plan	5.2.7 Historic Resources
4.8.6 Upper Rangitata/ Rakaia Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintaining the wilderness values of the area 2. Protected status 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gazette wilderness area. 2. Investigate proposed conservation parks 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that aircraft access and facility development is restricted. 2. Gazettal of a wilderness area 3. Conservation parks 	5.3.2 Recreation Opportunities 5.5.2 Statutory Land Management
4.8.7 Peel Forest	Significant indigenous forest remnant and recreation area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weed control. 2. Lease or contract out camp-ground management 3. Maintaining public recreation facilities 4. Additions to the park 5. RMA advocacy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect and extend the park 2. Recreational use 3. Community involvement 	5.2.9 Plant Pests and Exotic Plants 5.3.3 Recreation Facilities 5.5.2 Statutory Land Management
4.8.8 Mount Hutt	Ski field management, recreation and interpretation facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor concession conditions 2. Maintain tracks and other facilities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protection of natural values 2. Concessionaire attention to public safety and enjoyment 3. Public access 	5.3.3 Recreation Facilities 5.3.6 Interpretation 5.4.2.8 Ski Areas