

12 March 2025

DOC Coastal Office  
265 Princes Street  
Dunedin Central, 9016  
Ref: OIAD-4908

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (Department), received on 12 February 2025, in which you asked:

*Could you please send me some information about wildlife management reserves. What are they? How and why are they created etc.*

*Also, I am specifically wanting to know more detail regarding two Reserves: the Shepherds Hut and Stony Creek Wildlife Management Reserve, and the Canadian Flats wildlife management reserve. Could you please let me know any inf[o]r[m]ation available regarding the specific management of these two areas, and if there are any specific requirements of the land owners nearby etc.*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You recently confirmed a few details, including that your request is connected to a work project, with a particular interest for "land owners nearby" to include "Cross Brothers Limited, who manage Rocklands Station".

Your questions (broken into parts) and our responses are set out below.

Part One:

*Could you please send me some information about wildlife management reserves. What are they? How and why are they created etc.*

**Wildlife Management Reserves**

The Wildlife Act 1953 (Wildlife Act) enables wildlife sanctuaries, wildlife refuges, and wildlife management reserves to be established. These can be on public conservation land, other Crown land, private land, or estuaries, with the consent of the relevant Minister or landowner. Those established around New Zealand are located on islands, lakes, inlets, creeks, lagoons and river mouths.

Section 14A of the Wildlife Act is the section specific to wildlife management reserves. Areas can be designated for the purpose of conservation and management of wildlife and made subject to specific conditions in order to protect wildlife and their associated habitats.

Section 14B of the Wildlife Act requires the Department to manage all wildlife management reserves. Management by the Department must be in accordance with any statements of general policy approved by the Minister of Conservation (Minister) under section 14C of the Wildlife Act, and any conservation management strategy and/or any conservation management plan in effect for the time being for the area related to the wildlife management reserve(s).

A range of classifications of reserve can be created under the Reserves Act 1977 (Reserve Act). This includes wildlife management reserves, per section 22(2) of the Reserves Act:

*For the avoidance of doubt, and without limiting the purposes for which a government purpose reserve may be classified, it is hereby declared that a reserve may be classified as a government purpose reserve for wildlife management or for other specified wildlife purposes.*

#### Part Two:

*Also, I am specifically wanting to know more detail regarding two Reserves: the Shepherds Hut and Stony Creek Wildlife Management Reserve, and the Canadian Flats wildlife management reserve. Could you please let me know any information available regarding the specific management of these two areas, and if there are any specific requirements of the land owners nearby etc.*

The land making up the two wildlife management reserves, other public conservation land in the area and some (farming) stations was originally part of two Crown pastoral leases (of approximately 33,241 hectares, collectively known as 'Rockland Station') that were subject to tenure review in the mid-1990s. The tenure review process led the land being allocated into 'two' parts – public conservation land and farmland. The latter portion of land was disposed of by way of freehold title to the then current lessees. If you require further detail regarding this process, we recommend you make a request to Land Information New Zealand (see [Crown pastoral land management | Crown property Guidance](#)).

#### **Shepherds Hut and Stony Creek Wildlife Management Reserve**

This Reserve is managed under section 22 of the Reserves Act.

Its designation was gazetted on 3 October 2002. In particular, its purpose is to give legal protection to the population of nationally endangered non-migratory fish species - Eldon's Galaxias (*Galaxias eldoni*). This because the Shepherds Hut Creek and Stony Creek are not considered large enough to generate sufficient protection as a marginal strip.

In terms of management activities connected to Shepherds Hut and Stony Creek, we note:

- A portion of this Reserve was fenced to prohibit motorised vehicles from crossing the river to protect the fishes present.
- Stony Creek is also a long-term science monitoring site, and multiple fish surveys of the area have been completed since 1990.

### **Canadian Flats Wildlife Management Reserve**

This 108 hectare Reserve is managed under section 22 of the Reserves Act.

Its designation was gazetted on 23 September 2002. The tenure review process mentioned above, completed in 1997, noted the value of the Reserve in being part of the Taieri Scroll Plain and red tussock wetlands.

In terms of management activities at Canadian Flats, we note the Department is actively involved as a funder and contributor of the Ngā Awa project (<https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/freshwater-restoration/nga-awa/>). This project takes a whole catchment approach, and Ngā Awa works in partnership with others to restore the biodiversity of twelve rivers, including the Taieri River, from mountains to sea.

One of the twenty-one specified monitoring sites for Ngā Awa in the Taieri catchment is located at Canadian Flats.

The specific management activities associated with this project include the following:

- Monitoring activities
  - Freshwater biodiversity monitoring using methods of e-DNA water sampling and electric fishing.
  - Monitoring water quality (such as pH, turbidity, nutrients including phosphates, nitrates, etc).
  - Habitat quality (river substrates, riverbank stability, etc) are monitored annually.
- Bird surveys - Australasian Bittern
  - The Department leads monitoring of Australasian Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*, Nationally Critical) using acoustic recording devices (ARD) provided by Ngā Awa.
  - A comprehensive monitoring programme for the Bitterns is planned for summer 2025/26.
- Willow control
  - Ngā Awa are currently funding a multi-year programme to eradicate cracked willow (*Salix x fragilis*) within Canadian Flats.

The management activities information outlined above provides an indication of key active projects and programmes related to the two noted Wildlife Management Reserves.

Additional information may be held within archived material held by the Department, which can be provided if requested.

### **Specific requirements for neighbouring landowners**

Much of the adjoining land is public conservation land, such as the Te Papanui Conservation Park, and/or connected to water supply. Special provisions and protections apply depending on the type of land and can affect access and use.

The wider area associated with Shepherds Hut and Stony Creek Wildlife Management Reserve is also classed as a Regionally Significant Wetland by the Otago Regional Council Water Plan, as it is higher than 800 metres above sea level and this places conditions on activities.

There are also a few (farming) stations, including the one you recently noted. Some are privately owned, while others include Crown Pastoral lease land. Any special conditions specific to privately owned land and registered against the titles to that land will need to be obtained by getting searches of the titles. This is not something we have access to or hold.

We recommend you investigate the Land Information New Zealand website as there are details around the conditions applicable to Crown Pastoral lease land and what activities require consents (which can include applying sprays or fertiliser). Included below is a link to a useful webpage in this regard - [Location of Crown pastoral land | Toitū Te Whenua - Land Information New Zealand](#)

Another feature in the area, related to land, may be grazing or other types of concession granted by the Department. Now that we have an idea of your particular focus, we can check what concessions may apply in the area of interest.

We will let you know whether or not any more specific information is identified that may be of interest or relevance to your work project in the next two weeks. You will then be able to let us know what material (if any) you would like us to proceed with and we can complete the searches and undertake the necessary consultation before releasing it to you, subject to withholding as may be appropriate under the OIA.

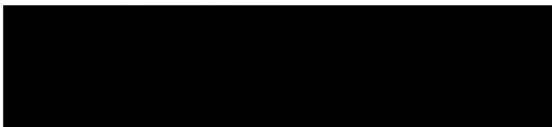
We note there are also more general obligations impacting most neighbouring landowners, including:

- obligations under the Fencing Act 1978, such as:
  - to maintain fencing and gates.
  - to prevent stock wandering into all public conservation land, including wildlife management reserves.
- obligations under Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS), such as:
  - to undertake weed and/or pest control, as required.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.



Nāku noa, nā



Aaron Fleming  
Regional Operations Director, Southern South Island  
Department of Conservation | *Te Papa Atawhai*