

# 21.22.19 Mount Alpha ONL

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## General Description of the Area

The Mount Alpha PA comprises the northern and eastern slopes of Roys Peak (1,578m) and Mount Alpha (1,630m), a north-south oriented mountain range that extends from Damper Bay in the north to Cardrona Valley Road in the south. On the eastern side the PA includes the 'lumpy' glaciated land between Waterfall Creek and Damper Bay, and the upper Alpha fan immediately south of Wānaka township.

There are four sub areas within the PA:

- The mountain slopes;
- The Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area (from the toe of the mountains to the edge of Wānaka (Lake Wānaka));
- The upper Alpha fan; and
- The glacial outwash/alluvial terrace at the southern end of the PA.

## Physical Attributes and Values

Geology and Geomorphology • Topography and Landforms • Hydrology • Vegetation • Ecology • Settlement • Development and Land Use • Archaeology and Heritage • Mana whenua

## Important landforms and land types:

1. Mount Alpha range, a north-south oriented mountain range rising from the Cardrona Valley to a height of 1,630m at Mount Alpha and 1,578m at Roys Peak before descending to Damper Bay. Forming part of the Harris Mountains, it comprises steep uplifted schist that is visibly scoured on the eastern faces by previous glaciations, resulting in characteristic horizontal striations and areas of exposed bedrock. Waterfall, Stoney and Centre creeks have carved deep valleys into the eastern mountainside, draining basins on the higher slopes. On the southern side, the range is dissected by stream gullies flowing to the Ōrau (Cardrona River).
2. The upper Alpha fan, a prominent and distinctive wedge-shaped fan that has been truncated by river erosion (possibly as part of a Wānaka glacial event about 15,000-18,000 years ago). It is a composite alluvial fan system made up of numerous coalescing smaller fans from Centre and Stoney creeks and the other small water courses that drain the mountain slopes.
3. The series of small roches moutonnées wrapping around the base of Roys Peak on the lake edge and reducing in scale and drama from Damper Bay to Wānaka township. The tallest (415m) and most distinctive is Ironside Hill. The schist outcrops rise steeply from the lake, with prominent bluffs on the Damper Bay headlands.
4. An area of remnant Quaternary outwash/alluvial terrace in the southern part of the PA, with steep escarpments leading down to the Cardrona Valley.

## Important hydrological features:

5. Waterfall Creek is the main water course on the eastern mountain faces, flowing from a wide basin catchment below the peak of Mount Alpha, through deeply eroded gorges and bluffs and across lower ice-eroded flats to the lake. The waterfall the creek is named for is visible from Wānaka – Mount Aspiring Road and is a local landmark.

6. Timber Creek drains the southern faces of the Alpha Range but most of its tributaries are outside the PA.
7. Centre and Stoney Creeks originate above the Alpha fan. While ephemeral in nature, they carry significant debris from the mountain slopes during high rainfall events and contribute to ongoing aggradation on the Alpha fan.
8. Small wetlands in the Damper Bay to Waterfall Creek area, where the elevated rocky outcrops on the lake edge block the drainage of surface water.

### **Important ecological features and vegetation types:**

9. Particularly noteworthy vegetation types include:
  - a. Snow tussock grasslands, cushionfields and herbfields above 1,100m;
  - b. Remnant mountain and silver beech and indigenous shrublands in the gorged sections of Waterfall Creek;
  - c. Regenerating kānuka shrubland along the lake edge landforms and on the lower mountain slopes near Wānaka;
  - d. Areas of indigenous restoration planting along the Millennium Trail and on some adjoining private properties;
  - e. Wetland vegetation (sedgelands, rushlands and reedland) in small wetlands in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area, between Wānaka - Mt Aspiring Road and Lake Wānaka.
10. Other characteristic vegetation types are:
  - a. Improved or semi-improved pasture below 1,100m, with varying densities of bracken, matagouri, sweet briar and scattered kānuka, and occasional shelter trees and wilding pines;
  - b. Irrigated pasture or cropping on the southern outwash terrace;
  - c. Small scale forestry plantations and shelter belts on the escarpment faces around the southern outwash terrace, on some toe slopes of the mountain and in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay valley; ongoing management of wilding spread on the lower slopes.
  - d. Deciduous exotic trees associated with rural living development and stock shelter in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area.
11. Beech forest remnants in Waterfall Creek, broadleaved shrublands and the rugged terrain provide suitable habitat for New Zealand falcon, South Island tomtit, bellbird, grey warbler, fantail and silvereye. The tussock grasslands and rocky areas in the sub-alpine and alpine zones provide suitable habitat for skinks and geckos, including Mount Roy gecko recorded in 1999, New Zealand falcon, New Zealand pipit and a range of invertebrate species.
12. Plant pest species include wilding conifers, sweet briar and lupin.
13. Animal pest species include ferrets, stoats, weasels, hares, rabbits, possums, mice and rats.

### **Land use patterns and features:**

14. Predominant land use is extensive pastoral farming (Hillend Station to the south, Alpha Burn to the north and Hawthenden Farm on the Alpha fan). Roys Peak and the southern slopes of the range are part of the conservation estate. A wedge of conservation land also covers the upper basin catchment of Waterfall Creek and extends down the ridge on the true left of Waterfall Creek, with a connection to Wānaka – Mount Aspiring Road.

15. Apart from pastoral management, human modification on the mountain range is limited to farm and recreational tracks, fencing, airstrips, water tanks and farm buildings. Telecommunication infrastructure on Roys Peak and on the ridge at Hillend and a large, sealed visitor carpark at the start of the Roys Peak track. Improved irrigated pasture and seasonal cropping on the upper Alpha fan and on the southern moraine plateau.
16. Low density rural living and small farming/viticulture on lots of between 20 and 100 ha (with a few smaller 4-8 ha lots) in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area. There are 9 small undeveloped rural living lots around the southern moraine plateau on Hillend Station. Dwellings are largely set back from public roads and from the Millennium Trail and well integrated by landform and/or vegetation so that they are generally reasonably difficult to see from these public places. A few dwellings are clearly visible from Wānaka – Mount Aspiring Road, and some are visible along the lake edge from the surface of Lake Wānaka.

### **Important archaeological and heritage features and their locations:**

17. Associated with the early pastoral use of Mount Alpha and surrounding land as part of the Wanaka Station, including historic homesteads at Hillend and Hawthenden.
18. Scaife Plaque (QLDC ref. 511) on Mount Roy adjacent to the Roys Peak track, commemorating the grave site of Wallis Alan Scaife (who owned Glendhu Station in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century).

### **Mana whenua features and their locations:**

19. The entire area is ancestral land to Kāi Tahu whānui and, as such, all landscape is significant, given that whakapapa, whenua and wai are all intertwined in te ao Māori.
20. The ONL overlaps parts of mapped wāhi tūpuna 7, 11 and 34: Area surrounding Te Poutu Te Raki (Matukituki River delta, Glendhu Bay and Surrounds), Ōrau (Cardrona River) and Wānaka (Lake Wānaka).
21. Lake Wānaka is highly significant to Kāi Tahu and is a Statutory Acknowledgement under the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998.
22. The ONL includes the entirety of the Lake Wānaka (Ruby Island Road) nohoanga, a contemporary nohoaka (camping site to support traditional mahinga kai activities) provided as redress under the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlements Act 1998.

### **Associative Attributes and Values**

Mana whenua creation and origin traditions • Mana whenua associations and experience • Mana whenua metaphysical aspects such as mauri and wairua • Historic values • Shared and recognised values • Recreation and scenic values •

### **Mana whenua associations and experience:**

23. The whakapapa connections to whenua and wai generate a kaitiaki duty to uphold the mauri of all important landscape areas.
24. The mapped area covers a vast area with kaika mahika kai which were once part of the extensive mahika kai network in the area. Tuna, kāuru, weka, kākāpō and aruhe were gathered throughout the area.
25. Lake Wānaka is one of the lakes referred to in the tradition of “Ngā Puna Wai Karikari o Rakaihautu” which tells how the principal lakes of Te Wai Pounamu were dug by the rangatira (chief) Rakaihautu. Through these pūrakau (stories), this area holds a deep spiritual significance both traditionally and for Kāi Tahu today.

26. The Ōrau is a traditional ara tawhito (travel route) linking Whakatipu-wai-Māori with Lakes Wānaka and Hāwea. It also provided access to the natural bridge on the Kawarau River.
27. The mana whenua values associated with the Mount Alpha ONL include, but may not be limited to, kāika, mahika kai, ara tawhito, nohoaka, urupā and wāhi taoka.

### **Important historic attributes and values:**

23. Significance as part of an early pastoral landscape, which later became part of the large Wanaka Station landholding. History maintained in the ongoing pastoral land use and in the naming of landscape features such as Roys Peak (presumably named after the early runholder, John Roy), Damper Bay and Ironside Hill. Damper Bay was named after 'damper' cooked there by an early settler, 'Dublin' Jack Shepherd. Slaughterhouse Creek near the unformed Lake Road was named after a nearby slaughterhouse that supplied Wānaka with fresh meat in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Important shared and recognised attributes and values:**

24. Internationally recognised destination for recreation and for the spectacular panoramic views from Roys Peak.
25. Very highly valued as part of the setting, scenic quality and sense of place of Wānaka township.

### **Important recreation attributes and values:**

26. Internationally recognised walking track to Roys Peak, which is incredibly popular in the summer months and includes a large carpark and toilets located on the Wānaka Mt Aspiring Road; connecting tramping route along the Mount Alpha ridge to the Cardrona Valley (Spotts Creek Track).
27. Walking, running and mountain biking on the Millennium Trail (part of Te Araroa) around the lake foreshore from Wānaka township to Glendhu Bay, with beaches at Ironside Hill and Damper Bay for picnicking.
28. Backcountry tramping and hunting.
29. Popular road biking routes along Wānaka - Mt Aspiring Road.

## **Perceptual (Sensory) Attributes and Values**

Legibility and Expressiveness • Views to the area • Views from the area • Naturalness • Memorability • Transient values • Remoteness / Wildness • Aesthetic qualities and values

### **Legibility and expressiveness attributes and values:**

30. Legibility of mountain uplift, glacial scarification and fluvial erosion along the eastern face of the range; series of striking ice-eroded landforms along lake edge; distinctive 'wedge' form of the upper Alpha fan; southern ridge of the mountain range that defines the entry to the Cardrona Valley. Formative processes of the PA are legible and highly expressive.

### **Particularly important views to and from the area:**

31. Dramatic and highly valued panoramic views (very popular as 'selfies' and postcard images) from Roys Peak over Lake Wānaka and the Motatapu and Mātakitaki (Matukituki) valleys.
32. Views from Wānaka township, where the distinctive eastern mountain faces and the upper Alpha fan are visually dominant. They form an important part of the scenic quality of the area, because of the massive scale, rugged peaks, coherent appearance and strong contrast with the lake waters and flats. Ironside Hill is an important landmark along the western lakeshore, as together with the Damper Bay headlands it forms the visual boundary of Roys Bay to the west.

33. Engaging and attractive close range views of the Wānaka lake margin, lake escarpments and roches moutonnées from the Millennium Trail (part of Te Araroa). While attention is often focused on the spectacular panorama of lake and its surrounding mountain ranges, the rocky bluffs, beaches and vegetation-covered escarpments alongside the trail contribute strongly to the character and appeal of the views. Little built development is visible from the trail and there is progression towards higher perceived naturalness and a greater sense of remoteness as people travel from Ruby Island Road to Damper Bay.
34. Highly attractive views from Wānaka - Mount Aspiring Road to the close and dominating mountain slopes, with their natural patterns of bracken and shrubland regeneration and exposed schist outcrops and ridges, and across the farmland of the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay valley to the series of hummocky ice-eroded landforms and the more distant lake and mountains. The remaining openness and legibility of the series of roches moutonnées along the lake edge contributes to the high quality of these views.
35. Spectacular views from popular trails on the slopes and summit of Mount Iron to the entire eastern extent of the Mount Alpha/Mount Roy range, including the distinctive wedge-shaped form of the upper Alpha fan, and to the distinctive ice-eroded landforms along the lake edge. The changing effects of light and shade on these landforms and the natural patterns of regenerating indigenous vegetation add to their aesthetic appeal.

#### **Naturalness attributes and values:**

36. High level of perceived naturalness, despite management of vegetation for pastoral farming. Very few built structures and only limited evidence of landform modification on the mountain slopes and Alpha fan. Presence of alpine tussocklands and areas of remnant or regenerating woodland and shrubland. Moderate level of naturalness in the Waterfall Bay to Damper Bay area. Natural elements of pasture, vegetation and wetlands remain dominant, but the presence of farming/viticultural land uses and rural living modifies perceptions of naturalness, particularly from Wānaka – Mount Aspiring Road. Users of the Millennium Trail perceive a higher level of naturalness, as their experience is dominated by the lake, relatively unmodified beaches and landforms, and indigenous regeneration around the trail.

#### **Memorability attributes and values:**

37. The visual dominance of the mountain range and the landmark qualities of the ice-eroded schist outcrops along the lake edge, contrasting with the lake surface, are significant and valued components of people's remembered images of Wānaka.

#### **Transient attributes and values:**

38. Changing snow levels, light and shadow patterns on the open rugged slopes and roches moutonnées, and the changing colours of pasture areas, which are green in some seasons and tawny brown in others.

#### **Remoteness and wildness attributes and values:**

39. Due to its proximity to urban Wānaka and the farming or rural living land uses in the valley, the majority of the PA does not have a strong sense of remoteness. However, people using the Spotts Creek route over Mount Alpha to the Cardrona Valley experience a high level of remoteness and wildness.

#### **Aesthetic attributes and values:**

40. The experience of the attributes outlined above by a large local and visitor audience in Wānaka township, on public roads and on the Millennium and Roys Peak tracks.
41. More specifically, this includes:
  - a. The spectacular and dominating eastern faces of the range and their contrast with the lower ice-eroded shelf and lake waters.
  - b. The openness of the landforms and their resulting high level of expressiveness.

- c. The distinctive more gently sloping and smoother form of the upper Alpha fan.
- d. The striking series of unmodified schist outcrops along the lakeshore, enclosing Roys Bay.
- e. The very high national and international profile of the Roys Peak track and the spectacular panoramic views available from the summit.
- f. At a finer scale, the following aspects contribute to the aesthetic appeal:
  - i. the tussocklands and mosaic of indigenous vegetation on the mountain slopes, creek gullies and schist outcrops;
  - ii. the play of light and shadow on the open topography of the mountain slopes and schist/moraine landforms;
  - iii. the low-density rural character of the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area, with domestication largely screened from public places by topography or vegetation.

## Summary of Landscape Values

Physical • Associative • Perceptual (Sensory)

Rating scale: seven-point scale ranging from **Very Low** to **Very High**.

very low	low	low-mod	moderate	mod-high	high	very high
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The physical, associative and perceptual attributes and values described above for PA ONL Mount Alpha come together and can be summarised as follows:

- (a) **High physical values** as a consequence of the largely unmodified mountainous landform, alluvial fans and roches moutonnées, the presence of indigenous tussocklands and regenerating shrublands, and the mana whenua features associated with the area.
- (b) **Very high associative values** relating to mana whenua associations, including kāika, mahika kai, ara tawhito, nohoaka, urupā and wāhi taoka, the ability to access and experience the landscape and the very strong shared and recognised values as part of the sense of place and aesthetic quality experienced by residents of and visitors to Wānaka.
- (c) **Very high perceptual values** relating to:
  - i. The expressiveness values as a result of the open character and legible uplift, glacial and fluvial formative processes;
  - ii. The high aesthetic and memorability values due to the proximity to urban Wānaka, the dominant scale, highly attractive character and visual coherence of the PA, and its contrast with urban areas and the lake waters.
  - iii. An impression of high naturalness arising from the legible and unmodified landform and the limited extent of built structures.

## Landscape Capacity

The landscape capacity of the PA ONL Mount Alpha for a range of activities is set out below.

- i. **Commercial recreational activities** – **some** landscape capacity for small scale activities that do not require built infrastructure on the mountain slopes and upper Alpha fan. **Limited** landscape capacity for infrastructure associated with commercial recreation in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area and on the southern moraine plateau that is: co-located with existing consented facilities; designed to be of a sympathetic scale, appearance and character; integrate appreciable landscape restoration and enhancement; enhance public access (where appropriate); and protects the area’s ONL values.
- ii. **Visitor accommodation and tourism related activities** – **no** landscape capacity on the mountain range or upper Alpha fan for visitor accommodation. **Very limited** landscape capacity in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area and on the southern moraine plateau for visitor accommodation activities that are co-located with existing consented activities, designed to be of a sympathetic scale, appearance and character; integrate appreciable landscape restoration and enhancement; enhance public access (where appropriate); have a low key ‘rural’ character; and protect the area’s ONL values. **No** landscape capacity for tourism related activities.
- iii. **Urban expansions** – no landscape capacity.
- iv. **Intensive agriculture** – **some** landscape capacity in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area and on the southern moraine plateau. **Limited** landscape capacity on the upper Alpha Fan. **No** landscape capacity on the mountain slopes.
- v. **Earthworks** – **limited** landscape capacity for earthworks that protect naturalness and expressiveness attributes and values and are sympathetically designed to integrate with existing natural landform patterns. **Limited** capacity for trails that are of a low-key rural character, sympathetic to the landform patterns and protect the area’s ONL values.
- vi. **Farm buildings** – **limited** landscape capacity for modestly scaled buildings on lower mountain slopes, plateaus and flats that reinforce existing rural character.
- vii. **Mineral extraction** – **very limited** landscape capacity for small farm-scale extraction in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area and southern moraine plateau that protects the area’s ONL values.
- viii. **Transport infrastructure** – **very limited** landscape capacity for modestly scaled and low key ‘rural’ roading and public parking in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area that is positioned to optimise the integrating benefits of landform and vegetation patterns and protects the area’s ONL values.
- ix. **Utilities and regionally significant infrastructure** – **limited** landscape capacity for infrastructure that is co-located with existing facilities, buried or located such that it is screened from external view. In the case of utilities such as overhead lines or cell phone towers which cannot be screened, these should be designed and located so that they are not visually prominent.
- x. **Renewable energy generation** – **no** landscape capacity for commercial scale renewable energy generation. **Limited** landscape capacity for discreetly located and small-scale renewable energy generation in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area and on the southern moraine plateau.
- xi. **Production forestry** – **limited** landscape capacity for small scale production forestry on toe slopes, plateaus and flats that is consistent with the area’s ONL values.
- xii. **Rural living** – **no** landscape capacity on the mountain slopes and upper Alpha fan. **Very limited** capacity for rural living development in the Waterfall Creek to Damper Bay area and on the southern moraine plateau that is: contained by landform and/or existing vegetation – with the location, scale and design of any proposal ensuring that it is generally not discernible from external viewpoints. Developments should be of a modest scale; have a low key ‘rural’ character; integrate landscape restoration and enhancement; enhance public access (where appropriate); and protect the area’s ONL values.

