



## **Introduction – The Mahu Whenua Covenants**

The Mahu Whenua Covenants are four Open Space Covenants registered under section 22 of the Queen Elizabeth the Second National Trust Act 1977. The covenants cover approximately 53,000 hectares of Coronet Peak, Glencoe, Motatapu and Mount Soho Stations, including the area surrounding Coronet Peak Ski Field.

The area covered by the Mahu Whenua Covenants has been identified as an Outstanding Natural Landscape, having a high degree of openness and naturalness. A lack of human modification on the land is a significant contributor to this significance.

## **Open Space Values**

The ‘overriding objectives’ of the four Mahu Whenua Covenants include, “Protecting the Covenant Area...so that... [it] is not materially adversely affected by human modification and remains free from the effects of... other activities detrimental to the natural state of the Covenant Area.”

Additionally, the ‘Open Space Values’ of the covenants are set out at length in schedules attached to each deed (a copy of the deed for the covenant over Coronet Peak Station is **attached**). Included are the recreational values of the Covenant Area, alongside biodiversity and visual landscape values.

The biodiversity values protected by the Mahu Whenua Covenants include a range of indigenous flora and fauna, including several rare and threatened species within uncommon ecosystem types. A range of native vegetation types including shrublands, tussocklands and bush remnants within the covenants is already showing a marked recovery after removal from farming activities. Native vegetation cover plays a vital role in protecting fragile soils in the area and in enhancing water yield and quality.

The visual landscape values of the covenant include the extent to which the area is undeveloped and unmodified, and stresses the iconic nature of the landscape in that natural form.

The recreational values preserved by the Mahu Whenua Covenants are primarily low impact activities, such as hiking, mountain biking, and heli-skiing. The covenant deeds recognise that recreation within the covenanted areas forms a vital part of the social and economic fabric of the local community.

As those recreational activities are all low impact, they can take place alongside the preservation of the important ecological values protected by the Mahu Whenua Covenants.

## **Skiing and Mahu Whenua Covenants**

When the Mahu Whenua Covenants were first surveyed, the Soho Basin (Glencoe Station) was excluded from the covenant due to historic commitments to allow investigations to be undertaken in relation to ski field expansion into this area.

However, the ‘Back Bowls’ and ‘Dirty Four’ areas, which have historically used for skiing in conjunction with Coronet Peak Ski Field, are located on Coronet Peak Station (Crown Pastoral lease CFR OTA2/1228), so are located within the boundaries of the Coronet Peak Station Covenant.

At present, ski activities within the covenanted area are ‘off-piste’. As we understand it there are no supporting or ancillary activities taking place within the covenant. Additionally, the trails are

challenging and difficult to access, meaning limited numbers of people utilise them. This ensures that present ski activities have only a negligible impact on the Open Space Values of the covenant area.

The National Trust is not opposed to a continuation of the present ski activity taking place on the covenanted area. Current ski activities are consistent with the recreational Open Space Values preserved by the covenant, and the impact of those activities on the indigenous vegetation and visual landscape values of the covenant area is very minor. In terms of impact, skiing of this nature could be likened to walking access.

However, as we understand it, the current use of the areas proposed for rezoning has been carried out without a recreation permit from LINZ (the landlord of the Crown Pastoral Lease), or consent from the Lessee. The Lessee has indicated to NZ Ski Limited that they are interested in reaching an agreement to resolve this issue.

### **Extension of the Ski Area Sub-Zone**

The National Trust is concerned with the activities which, if the area in question becomes rezoned to a Ski Area Sub-Zone, would become exempt from some of the normal controls imposed on land in the Rural General Zone.

Within the area in proposed for re-zoning, many of the activities which are now 'Non-Complying', or which would require notified resource consent, would become Controlled or Discretionary. These activities would be completely contrary to the purposes and objectives of the covenants, and would severely threaten the health of the fragile protected ecosystems.

Earthworks, trail formation, lift installation, reservoir construction, terrain modification, and lodge construction would all have a substantially detrimental impact on the Open Space Values protected by the Mahu Whenua Covenants. Realistically, any ski activities above and beyond off-piste skiing would be contrary to the purposes and objectives of the Mahu Whenua Covenants.

Our strong preference would be for the area in question to remain under its current zoning, meaning that high impact ski activities, which would be contrary to the covenants, would require resource consent.

Under the current zoning, and with local authority consent and the permission of the National Trust where required, low-impact activities such as construction of a small ski patrol hut and essential signage would still be possible in the area. Avalanche control activities would also be acceptable to the National Trust. Rezoning the area in question is not necessary to accommodate for traditional use of adjoining terrain by Coronet Peak Ski Area.