

Adaptive Land Management Regime for Rocky Point Compensation Sites

1. Introduction

Rocky Point Services Limited propose to covenant two areas of land on Bendigo Station that in conjunction with an active land management regime represent a biodiversity compensation measure. This proposal serves to address the assessed residual adverse effects of the proposed Rocky Point subdivision development on cushionfield plant communities.

The location of the two areas to be covenanted are highlighted in orange on Figure 1 and collectively cover an area of c. 23.5 ha.

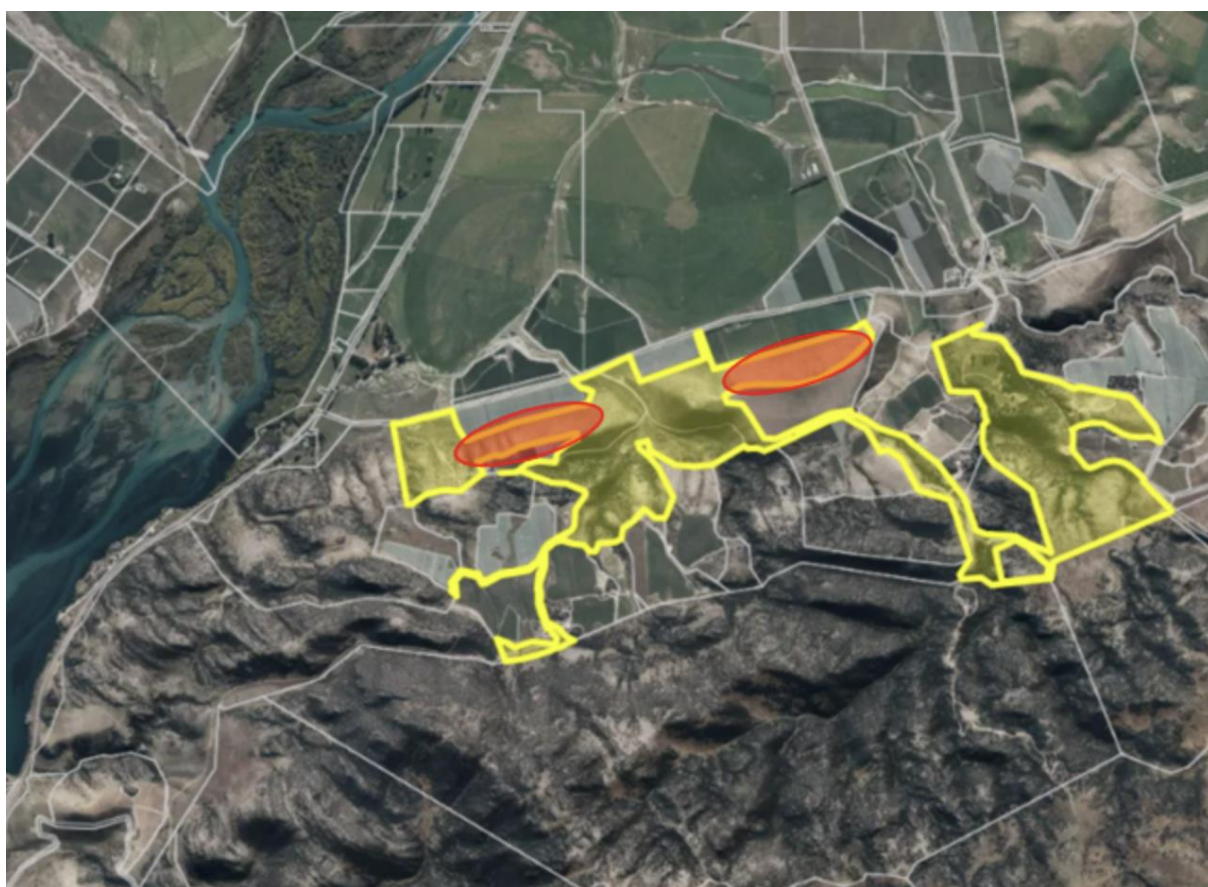


Figure 1: Location Plan.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the land management regime proposed for the compensation areas is to enhance the ecological values of the resident cushionfield plant communities. Specifically these measures will allow for natural regeneration of the cushion plants in the absence of competition from exotic weeds and improve habitat quality for indigenous flora, lizards and invertebrates dependent on the cushionfields.

3. Woody Plant Control

At the outset kanuka and other woody indigenous plants, sweet briar and other exotic woody weeds such as buddleia will be removed using a scrub cutter to ensure both areas are exposed to full sunlight conditions favoured by cushionfields. A herbicide will be applied to the stumps to prevent any re-growth. All felled vegetation will be removed from the areas to avoid any shading or covering of cushion plants.

On going control of exotic forbs (herbaceous plants other than grasses) will be implemented on an annual basis during early to mid spring to further reduce competition to the cushionfields. This will be achieved using a wand to ensure targeted application of a herbicide will proven performance in eliminating problem exotic plants such as hemlock, stonecrop, Californian thistle and scarlet pimpernel.

Further weed control measures will be informed by annual monitoring (Section 6).

4. Rabbit Control

A rabbit control programme will be instigated to maintain rabbit numbers at the McLean scale of infestation of 3 or less as required by the Otago Regional Council (refer Appendix 1). Maintaining rabbit numbers at this scale ensures that borrowing activity is kept at a low level in order to minimise damage to the cushionfields.

5. Grazing

Grazing by sheep will be continued at the same stocking rate (**/ha.) as occurs at present to provide sufficient browse pressure to control grass growth and competition to the cushionfields.

6. Monitoring

6.1. Walk over inspections

Walk over inspections will be undertaken initially as a baseline prior to implementing the management measures and then on an annual basis to assess:

- The percentage of cushion plant cover¹; and
- Woody and non-woody weed incursions;

Monitoring of rabbits will take place on separate occasions on a three-monthly basis, using the Modified McLean Scale of rabbit infestation.

6.2. Photo points

Fixed photo points will be established within both areas.

The photo points will consist of marker posts labelled with a number and arrows to indicate camera directions to ensure the same views can be taken each time.

The photographs will be taken during the annual walk over inspections.

The photographs will be used to assess cushion plant coverage and any weed incursions that will inform the degree of ongoing weed control.

6.3. Annual Reporting

An annual report will be prepared using the walk over records and photographs compiled during each monitoring inspection.

¹ Subjective assessment.

The reports will include a comparative assessment of the cushionfield cover from the previous year.

The report shall be provided to the Council as per condition of consent.

7. Unforeseen Circumstances

If climate change/unforeseen ecological changes make enhancement of cushionfield impractical in the longer term, transition of the vegetation to other ecologically important indigenous plant communities will be considered in conjunction with the Council.

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Appendix 1: Modified McLean Scale of Rabbit Infestation

Scale (Maximum Allowable Limit)	Rabbit Infestation
1	No sign seen. No rabbits seen.
2	Very infrequent sign present. Unlikely to see rabbits.
3	Sign infrequent with faecal pellet heaps more than 10 metres apart. Odd rabbits may be seen.
4	Sign frequent with some faecal pellet heaps more than 5 metres but less than 10 metres apart. Groups of rabbits may be seen.
5	Sign very frequent with faecal pellet heaps less than 5 metres apart in pockets. Rabbits spreading.
6	Sign very frequent with faecal pellet heaps often less than 5 metres apart over the whole area. Rabbits may be seen over the whole area.
7	Sign very frequent with 2–3 faecal pellet heaps often less than 5 metres apart over the whole area. Rabbits may be seen in large numbers over the whole area.
8	Sign very frequent with 3 or more faecal pellet heaps often less than 5 metres apart over the whole area. Rabbits likely to be seen in large numbers over the whole area.