KAW_19 – Newton River and part Lyell Range Radiant Range (14164.7335 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area – Newton River	6459.9012	2807808	1
(Pt) Conservation Area – Lyell Range-Radiant Range	7704.8323	2807731	(4 of) 48

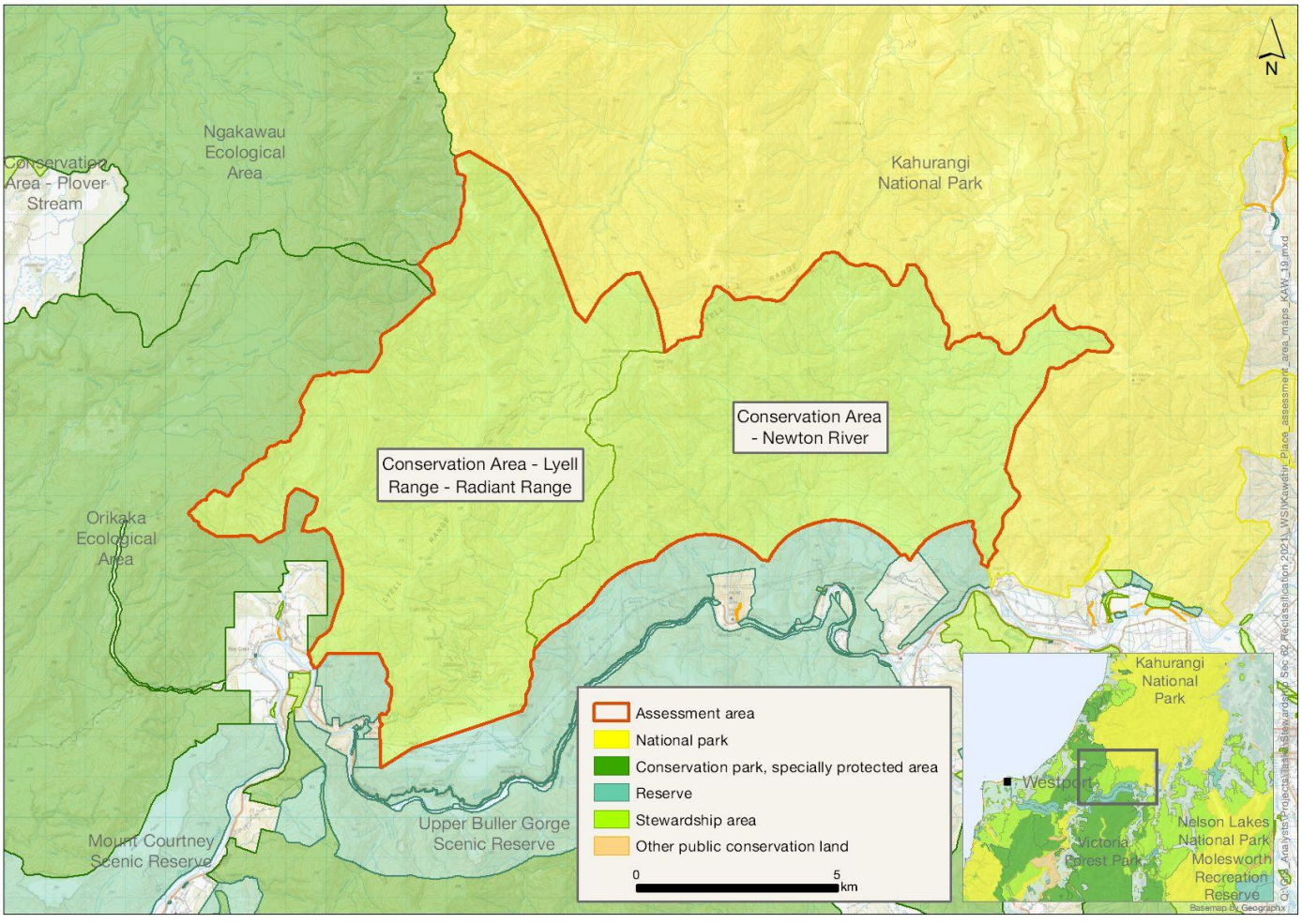
Location

North of Buller River, between Mackley and Matiri rivers and including the Lyell Range.

Brief Description

A large assessment area dominated by steep forested terrain and a diversity of substrates. Composed of steep inland mountains with granite tops either side of the Lyell Range and flat-topped mountains in the east. It adjoins the Mokihinui addition to Kahurangi National Park and includes part of Old Ghost Road, a very popular mountain bike and tramping track, which together with the Lyell Walkway provides access to heritage and archaeological sites associated with the Māori and European history of gold mining. Old Ghost Road is managed by a local trust, and guided mountain biking, helicopter landings and sporting events happen there.

Map



Ngāi Tahu Values and Interests

Mo tātou, a, mo ka uri, a muri ake nei – for us and our children after us

From the preliminary desk top assessments, there do not appear to be any site specific Ngāi Tahu values identified. However, there is a deep connection between Ngāi Tahu and all of the whenua in the Ngāi Tahu takiwā, and the absence of site specific values in the preliminary analysis does not detract from that connection, nor does it confirm that site specific values are not present. Further, a section 4 Conservation Act and Te Tiriti principles perspective is required as well, and it may be that areas of land are significant to Ngāi Tahu from that broader perspective. To avoid doubt, nothing in the proposed classification affects, limits or derogates from the rangatiratanga of Ngāi Tahu over its takiwā, including in relation to freshwater; and/or any other rights or interests Ngāi Tahu may have.

A Māori goldfield was in the vicinity of the conservation area.

Ecological Values

Representativeness

Mostly within the northern part of the Reefton Ecological District but extending into Ngakawau, Wangapeka and Matiri ecological districts. Composed of steep inland mountains with granite tops either side of the Lyell Range and flat-topped mountains in the east. It includes several active and inactive fault lines; the White Creek fault moved in 1929 and uplifted the block to the east by 4.5 m (Kelly 1989). The underlying geology is diverse.

The vegetation consists of tussock grasslands and shrublands, montane beech forest, and lower altitude mixed beech (tawhai, *Fuscopora* and *Lophozonia*)/podocarp (*Podocarpaceae* and *Phyllocladaceae*) forest. Red beech (*Fuscospora fusca*) and silver beech (*Lophozonia menziesii*) are common with southern rātā (*Metrosideros umbellata*), Westland *Quintinia* trees and kamāhi (*Weinmannia racemosa*). Other associations include mountain beech (*Fuscospora cliffortioides*), tōtara (*Podocarpus laetus*) and some hard beech (*Fuscospora truncata*) on mid altitude slopes. Rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) occurs throughout in lower and mid slopes but is scarce on granite above 300 m. Yellow silver pine (*Lepidothamnus intermedius*), silver pine (manoao, *Manoao colensoi*) and mountain beech (*Fuscospora cliffortioides*) occur on less well draining soils and more gentle slopes in the east with manuka (*Leptospermum scopariu*), umbrella fern (*Sticherus cunninghamii*) and pākihi (Kelly 1989).

A suite of threatened, at-risk and common bird species typical of the Reefton Ecological District is present, including bellbird (korimako, *Anthornis melanura*), riflemen (tītiti pounamu, *Acanthisitta chloris*), grey warbler (riroriro, *Gerygone igata*), kākā (*Nestor meridionalis*) and kākāriki (yellow-crowned parakeet, *Cyanoramphus auriceps*).

The area is highly natural and the change in vegetation, geology and climate from the west to the east of the area is typical of the Reefton Ecological District. There is a high level of naturalness of freshwater ecosystems in the headwaters of the Buller River.

Diversity and pattern

Granites, limestone, mudstone and recent river deposits underlie the vegetation. This diversity of substrate is expressed in the multiple level 3 land environments (Leathwick et al.) identified across the assessment area. The area covers valley floor to alpine ridge (200–1433 m above sea level) across three ecological districts and two ecological regions and contains high native forest bird diversity (Morse, 1981). The geological activity creates a mosaic of slip scars and other forms of natural disturbance that create regeneration patterns of seral species. This is also likely to create habitats for a variety of lizard species. The many freshwater streams also provide for high light and moisture saturated environments that support abundant bryophyte communities and

vascular plant species that require light and disturbance. Kōura (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*), longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), torrentfish (piripiripōhatu, *Cheimarrichthys fosteri*), bluegill bully (*Gobiomorphus hubbsi*) and shortjaw kōkopu (*Galaxias postvectis*) have been recorded in stretches directly downstream from the land parcel and are likely to be present.

Rarity and distinctiveness

The area includes example of the Naturally Uncommon Ecosystem of cliffs of quartzose rocks (Williams et al. 2007). It is highly likely that the forests support populations of red mistletoe (pikirangi, *Peraxilla tetrapetala*) and scarlet mistletoe (pirita, *Peraxilla colensoi*) (At Risk: Declining), as they are recorded in close proximity. The herb *Aciphylla trifoliolata* (At Risk: Naturally Uncommon) is found above the treeline.

Threatened and at-risk avifauna include great spotted kiwi (roroa, *Apteryx maxima*), fernbird (mātātā, *Bowdleria punctata*), whio (Blue Duck, *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos*), South Island robin (toutouwai, *Petroica australis australis*) and kārearea (New Zealand falcon, *Falco novaeseelandiae*). South Island robins reach their highest density in the Reefton Ecological District (McEwan 1987).

The threatened long-tailed bat (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) (Nationally Critical) has been recorded adjacent to the area and is highly likely to use habitat in this parcel. West Coast Green Gecko (*Naultinus tuberculatus*) (Nationally Vulnerable) has been recorded nearby and is likely to be within the parcel. A population of the water scavenger beetle *Horelophus walkeri Orchymont* (Nationally Endangered) lives in the splash zone of small creeks in the assessment area. Also present are longfin eel, torrentfish and bluegill bully (all At Risk: Declining) and shortjaw kōkopu (Nationally Vulnerable).

Ecological context

The assesment area is very large and reasonably compact; 14160 ha in total and 4 km wide at the narrowest point. It is adjacent to other public conservation lands on all sides: Upper Buller Gorge Scenic Reserve, Orikaka Ecological Area, Ngakawau Ecological Area and Kahurangi National Park. It is congruent with part of a wetland Ecosystem Management Unit (Upper Buller Pakihi) and the Species Management Unit for a threatened invertebrate lies entirely within its boundaries. It is adjacent to the Orikaka and Ngakawau ecosystem management units. It contains part of a West Coast Regional Council Schedule 2 Wetland; Dublin Terrace Pakihi. It contributes to the high habitat value of the adjoining natural areas.

Recreation Values

Setting

These are extensive areas in a Backcountry-remote zone. The area includes The Old Ghost Road, a very popular 80 km, multi day Grade 4 Advanced Mountain Biking and Tramping Track that follows the historic Lyell Pack Track and traverses Kahurangi National Park to end near Seddonville. Huts are located at Lyell Saddle. A shorter walk, The Lyell Walkway, provides access to the Lyell Cemetery and Croesus stamper battery. A gold fossicking area is located in Lyell Creek. The area adjoins Kahurangi National Park to the north, the Ngakawau and Orikaka ecological areas to the west and the Buller Gorge Scenic Reserve to the south.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

Over 11,000 people mountain bike and tramp The Old Ghost Road each year. Guided mountain biking, helicopter landings and sporting events occur on The Old Ghost Road. People undertake the shorter walks from the adjoining Lyell campground.

Mokihinui Lyell Backcountry Trust manages and maintains the Old Ghost Road. A community fund helps the Trust to run a trapping programme which has been operating for the last five years.

Access

The area is accessed via SH 6 through the Buller Gorge and Lyell campground.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

In the early 1860s a party of four Māori discovered gold in the Lyell Creek, leading to the first small rush in the area, and by 1864 it is reported that around 200 miners were working the field. Mining at this point was mainly alluvial, with work focussed on the creek and river flats. Early transport to the area was by canoe, a trip that was reported as being dangerous in parts in the Upper Buller Gorge. This led to early reports on the need for a road through the gorge and resulted in the cutting of tracks through some sections. The first formal survey of the area that was to become Lyell township was carried out in the late 1860s and was associated with mining leases of the area. By the early 1870s, alluvial mining in the creek had all but ceased, and work was started on mining the rich quartz reefs in the hills behind the small town, with the largest mine in the area, the United Alpine, commencing operations in 1874.

Further up the Lyell valley several other small townships associated with the mines sprang up around Irishman's Creek and further inland – Zalatown and Gibbstown – but the main township in the area remained Lyell, with its pubs, banks, stores and brewery. Lyell was connected to these inland workings by a dray track constructed in the 1880s.

The Alpine mine, started by the Swiss Antonio Zala, was one of the most successful in the region, paying significant dividends to shareholders for a number of years during 1880s, while operating as the United Alpine. The success of the Alpine drew numerous others to the area, including the Croesus Quartz Mining Company, and numerous mines established around Eight Mile Creek. There were at least 10 of these mines, most of which only operated for a couple of years in the early 1870s, although there was further activity in the Eight Mile in the mid-1880s – no doubt driven by the success of the Alpine.

By the early twentieth century Lyell township was in steady decline and after the closure of the New Alpine Mine in 1912 many residents moved away.

Sites recorded

38 recorded archaeological sites:

L29/12 Lyell Cemetery	L29/2 Croesus Battery	L29/40 Alpine Machine Track
L29/91 alluvial gold workings	L29/44 Alpine Quartz Mine	L29/92 corrugated iron hut amongst alluvial tailings
L29/3 Alpine Battery	L29/81 Zalatown settlement	L29/41 Gibbstown–Lyell Creek track
L29/55-63 hut sites	L29/75 prospecting pits	L29/78 United Italy quartz mine
L29/74 hut site	L29/76 quartz mining	L29/79 Break O'Day/Tyrconnell quartz mine
L29/65-66 hut site	L29/68-72 hut sites	L29/77 Maloney's/United Italy quartz mine
L29/53 foot track	L29/52 tramway/bridle road	L29/80 Tyrconnell quartz mining
L29/64 Eight Mile Hut	L29/73 hut site and foot track	L29/67 hut site and foot track
L29/45 Victory Battery	L29/54 tramway	

Three actively conserved heritage places: Croesus Battery (Equipment ID: 100062067), Lyell Cemetery (Equipment ID: 100044481), Lyell Walkway (Equipment ID: 100045930)

Heritage values

The Lyell goldfield is notable for its boom and bust nature. The nature of the gold in ore-rich veins led to short term high returns while the leaders lasted resulting in major investment in infrastructure while times were good but major debts for company owners as soon as the mines failed. The Alpine was an exception to this as the mine tapped into the reef from which the leaders ran.

Modifying factors

The Lyell goldfield was one of a number of quartz fields around Reefton, although Lyell was by far the most remote – and the most distant from Reefton. More so than any of its contemporary fields, Lyell's success was built around that of one mine: the Alpine. The success of this mine drew numerous others to the area. Most of these mines did not follow in the long term success of the Alpine, resulting in a truly boom and bust nature within the goldfield, more than in the other quartz fields around Reefton which seemed to have had more steady results.

Although the individual sites and features are largely typical of gold mining sites on the West Coast, they make up a reasonably intact and comprehensive archaeological landscape comprising not only the mine workings but also the associated mining settlements and transport network that connected them.

Permissions summary

None recorded.

Map (aerial photo)