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Media Release



EDS commends the protection of new land in the Te Manahuna / Mackenzie Country

Today the Minister of Conservation and of Land Information, Hon Eugenie Sage, announced the legal protection of 11,800ha of new conservation land on the floor of Te Manahuna / Mackenzie Basin, as part of the Tu Te Rakiwhanoa Drylands initiative.

The new protected land includes 1,792ha of Ōhau Downs station purchased by the Nature Heritage Fund, 4,332ha of Simons Pass Station acquired through tenure review and the transfer of freehold land, 1,631ha of Twin Peaks Station acquired through tenure review and 4,100ha of the Tasman riverbed which has been transferred to the Department of Conservation by Land Information NZ.

“I am delighted to see positive progress in protecting the unique landscapes of Te Manahuna/Mackenzie Basin,” said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart.

“EDS has long been concerned at the loss of landscape and natural values through incremental land use change on the Basin floor, especially through large-scale dairy conversions such as on Simons Pass Station.

“The Mackenzie Basin is the only place in the country where it is still possible to see the entire intact glacial sequence from existing glaciers in the Southern Alps, through to moraines, outwash terraces and plains. It’s home to an incredibly wide array of indigenous species and is a very special place.

“Our investigation into landscape protection in the Basin, which was released in June this year, recommended the establishment of a Mackenzie Drylands Protected Area to provide a core of highly protected land within the Basin and it’s great to see this finally happening,” said Raewyn Peart.

“EDS would have preferred to see the whole pastoral lease on Simons Pass Station returned to the Crown,” said EDS Chief Executive Gary Taylor.

“But given the complex circumstances and litigious history of the property, the tenure review outcome is reasonable. It has come a long way from the Preliminary Proposal released in 2016 and we acknowledge that the leaseholder, Murray Valentine has made a number of concessions. The 3,3132ha being restored to Crown control is an increase of 1,900ha from the 1,265ha proposed in 2016.

“It’s also good to see the obligations on Simons Pass Station to promote the restoration and recovery of the Drylands Recovery Area (1,237ha), including the requirement to contribute \$100,000 annually for pest and weed control, will remain even once the land passes into Crown ownership.

“The 2,346ha of land that has reverted to freehold is largely degraded and has already been granted consents for irrigation. However, there are some areas which cannot yet be developed and require further consents. These areas are subject to an appeal which was heard in the High Court last month.

“It has been great to see the agencies working together and joining up their efforts with mana whenua to achieve this positive outcome. We congratulate Minister Sage who has used her 2 portfolios to good effect.

“We consider this is an excellent start to protecting this iconic area. What we need to do now, is plug the remaining gaps in the regulatory framework, and provide support mechanisms for landowners, to ensure that all land in the Basin is managed in a way that protects the area’s outstanding landscapes,” Mr Taylor concluded.