



Hon Tama Potaka
Minister of Conservation
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

By email: t.potaka@ministers.govt.nz

13 January 2026

Dear Minister,

I note that you recently declined your department's recommendation that KAW_17 Mount Rochfort¹ be accorded conservation park status as part of the reclassification of West Coast stewardship lands. I have a particular interest in the fate of this area given the unique landform and ecological characteristics of the Denniston plateau.

I am hoping that you have declined to accord conservation park status because you consider that the land in question merits reclassification using a higher conservation status. I would certainly commend such a course of action. From the conservation values report prepared by the Department, the ecological and scientific value of the plateau is highly significant. My own enquiries confirm that. Its classification should reflect its very special status. It certainly shouldn't remain as unclassified stewardship land.

I appreciate that every time you are asked to shift land from stewardship to some other protected status, you are being asked to add to the size of an estate that DOC already struggles to find the resources to protect. Finding those resources is an unenviable task and I am supportive of your efforts to unlock new sources of revenue for your department. But in this case, the natural values of this land strongly suggest it should be classified in a way that accords it permanent protection.

I hope I can look forward to reviewing a fresh proposal for robust conservation reclassification in that light. I would like to meet with you to discuss the future of the Denniston plateau.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Simon Upton

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
Te Kaitiaki Taiao a Te Whare Pāremata

¹ And associated land parcels, to the extent that they contribute to the Denniston plateau landform, e.g. KAW_8-11.