

Supporting evidence for C8.0 Scenic Protection Area application over the Loyetea Peak — Leven Canyon Area

Prepared by Highland Conservation Pty Ltd and D R Chalmers & R Greiner for the Tasmanian Planning Commissions (Central Coast Council LPS hearing 22 January 2020)

This document provides supporting evidence for the Tasmanian Planning Commission to recognise the Loyetea Peak—Leven Canyon Area’s scenic values and the need for protection through the application of the C8.0 Scenic Protection Code over the area identified in Appendix 1. The necessary accompanying Table C8.1 has been provided in Appendix 2, and photographic support in Appendix 3, and further visual assessment using *Forest Landscape Management (2006)* ‘auxiliary categories of visual objectives’ in Appendix 4.

Recognition of the Scenic Value of the Loyetea Peak—Leven Canyon Area

The Loyetea Peak—Leven Canyon Area epitomizes the scenic quality of the *North-West Hills and Plains* landscape, as described in the *State of the Environment Report Tasmania 2003*. The area contains a forest landscape, which is of high aesthetic importance and distinctiveness due to its geological features and its natural and undisturbed appearance. The Area’s high scenic quality is fundamentally underpinned by features that match the scenic quality criteria outlined in the *Forest Landscape Management Handbook (2006, p. 167)*, including:

- great relative topographical relief and ruggedness
- great variety of landscape and diversity of vegetation
- great naturalness and absence of man-made changes in the landscape
- unusual natural landscape features such as rock outcrops (Loyetea Peak), gorges and ravines (Leven Canyon).
- * unmodified fast-flowing rivers deeply incised into the landscape (Leven River).

This drama of the scenery is further enhanced by Black Bluff, a mountain ridge which rises to 1336 m above sea level, forming the visual backdrop to the south where it forms the upper catchment of the Leven River.

The *Leven Canyon Interpretation Plan 2007-2010* articulates the economic significance of the area’s scenic value by “Communicating the Call of the Canyon” as a way of

describing the attractiveness of the area for tourists. The plan recognizes the Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Area is:

“a wild, dramatic and natural oasis among local farmland and settlement and that this is the point of difference, or unique selling point, and what sets it apart from other attractions in the minds of potential visitors”

The Council’s *Central Coasts Interpretation Plan 2017* developed a Coast to Canyon Tourism Place Marketing Brand – ‘Coast to Canyon, Great Natured Place’, which leverages off the scenic value of the Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Area.

The unspoiled scenic beauty of the wider Leven Canyon area—including Loyetee Peak—is listed as a strength for the visitor economy in the *Central Coast Council Destination Action Plan 2018*, which aligns with the *Tasmanian Visitor Economy Strategy 2015-2020*. A Central Coast Visitor survey, referred to in the Destination Action Plan, identified that the most common purpose tourists visit the municipality is to...

....“see wilderness and natural scenery”.

The Action Plan provides specific mention of the Leven Canyon and the Gunns Plains caves, the entrance of which has commanding views towards Loyetee Peak, and are areas where tourists are drawn to by scenic beauty.

The *Central Coast Council Destination Action Plan 2018* also takes findings from the *Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Master Plan 2018*, which highlights that the:

“Leven Valley currently plays a vital role in the ‘Caves to Canyon’ tourism precinct/cluster and a significant role in contributing to Central Coast’s visitor economy. The Leven Canyon is important for tourism operators in the Gunns Plains, Nietta and Preston localities. The destination is integral in attracting tourists to the Central Coast that has flow-on effects for other businesses in the broader area and region.”

The *Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Master Plan 2018* scope applies a ‘whole of place thinking’ and, as such, recognises the scenic importance of the ‘Loyetee Peak—Leven CanyonArea’.

In summary, the tremendous scenic value of this area has been identified (as mentioned above) in the:

- 1) *Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Master Plan 2018*,
- 2) *Central Coast Council Destination Action Plan 2018*,
- 3) *Central Coasts Interpretation Plan 2017*, and the
- 4) *Leven Canyon Interpretation Plan 2007-2010*.

Appendix 3 includes photos from a number of locations that provides supporting evidence of the areas scenic value and superb skylines.

The Coast-to-Canyon tourist association collects visitor statistics which demonstrate that the majority of the cruise-ship tourists who disembark at Burnie take a scenic coach tour of Gunns Plains and/or Leven Canyon. This would surely imply that the scenic attributes of the Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Area form a key attribute of 'Brand Tasmania'.

LPS planning need for C8.0 Scenic Protection Code application to the Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Area

The *Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Master Plan 2018* notes that the Central Coast Council needs a proactive planning framework to guide strategic decision making, sustainable development and use of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley (includes Loyetee Peak) area. Strategies and initiatives were mapped by a Working Group as part of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Review (the Review). The Review findings align with the councils support in Section 35F of the Local Planning Provision report, calling for the Scenic Protection Code overlay to be applied across the 'Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Area. This also aligns with *the Cradle Coast Regional Landuse Strategy 2010-2030*.

3.Support for Economic Activity

3.3.5 Sustainable Tourism

- (b) protect attributes which attract and enhance tourism experience in the vicinity of designated tourist trails, identified points of interest and high value environmental, cultural and scenic sites

The land tenure of the requested Loyetee Peak – Leven Canyon Scenic Protection Area is Regional Reserve “Leven Canyon Regional Reserve” (under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*) and adjoining areas of Crownland ‘Future Production Forest (under the Forest (RFI) Act)’. The proposed zoning of these tenure areas are 23.0 Environmental Management Zone and 20.0 Rural Zone, respective. The current tenure and zoning provides little protection of scenic values, which became apparent when earlier in 2019 a private developer proposed to build a high-voltage overhead power transmission line right across this area, a plan which has since been abandoned. Scenic value planning protection in the future can only be assured through application of the Scenic Protection Area Code to this area. Appropriate planning mechanisms for the scenic protection of this area, strongly aligns with the Council’s Master Plan. The *Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Master Plan 2018* states that:

“The Central Coast Council needs a proactive planning framework to guide strategic decision making, sustainable development and use of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley area”.

In relation to Scenic value protection, the appropriate planning framework requires application of the C8.0 Scenic Protection Code to the Loyetee Peak—Leven CanyonArea.

Consultation supports the need for scenic protection of the Loyetee Peak – Leven Canyon Area

Considerable consultation has occurred through the creation of the many plans mentioned above, which identified the significant scenic value of the Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Area. These consultations processes have brought together council, consultants, community, natural resource management agencies (notably Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service), and local businesses. Risk to the scenic value of this area from inappropriate development had recently seen > 130 community members at a workshop expressing concern for the area scenic protection. Further support is evident in the numerous representations to the Central Coast Council LPS calling for the application of the C8.0 Scenic Protection Code to the Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Area. As mentioned above, the Central Coast Visitor survey referred to in *Central Coast Council Destination Action Plan 2018*, identified that the most common purpose tourists visit the municipality is to “see wilderness and natural scenery”, with specific mention of the Leven Canyon and the Gunns Plains Caves, the entrance of which has a commanding views towards Loyetee Peak.

APPENDIX 1 Extent of the requested Scenic Protection Area

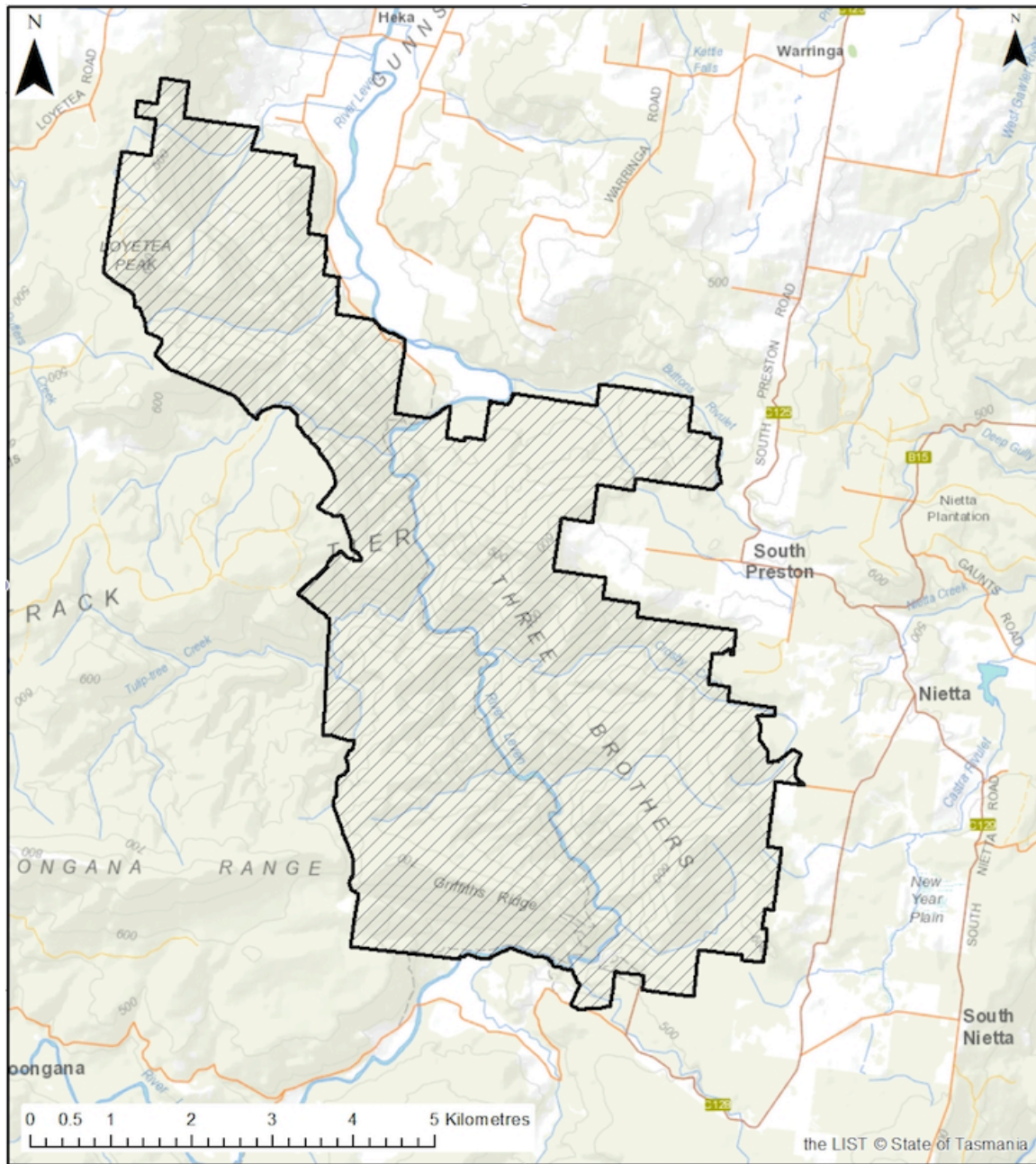


Figure 1. Initially requested Scenic Protection Area extent (in original submission by Highland Conservation Pty Ltd from August 2019)

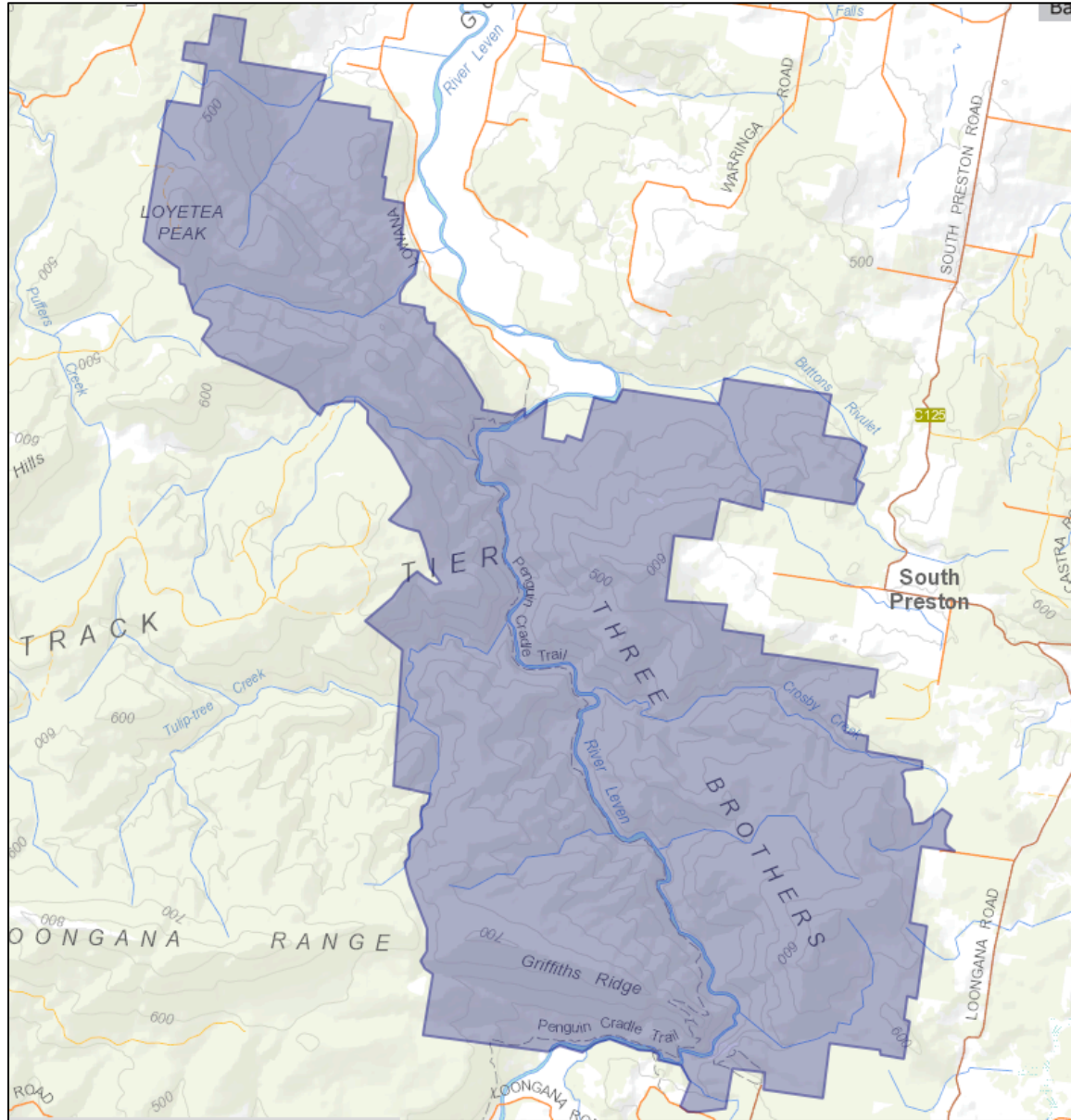


Figure 2. Amended requested Scenic Protection Area extent. This excludes a small area of Permanent Timber Production Zone Land near the Leven River, to the east of Loyetee Peak, which had been previously included.

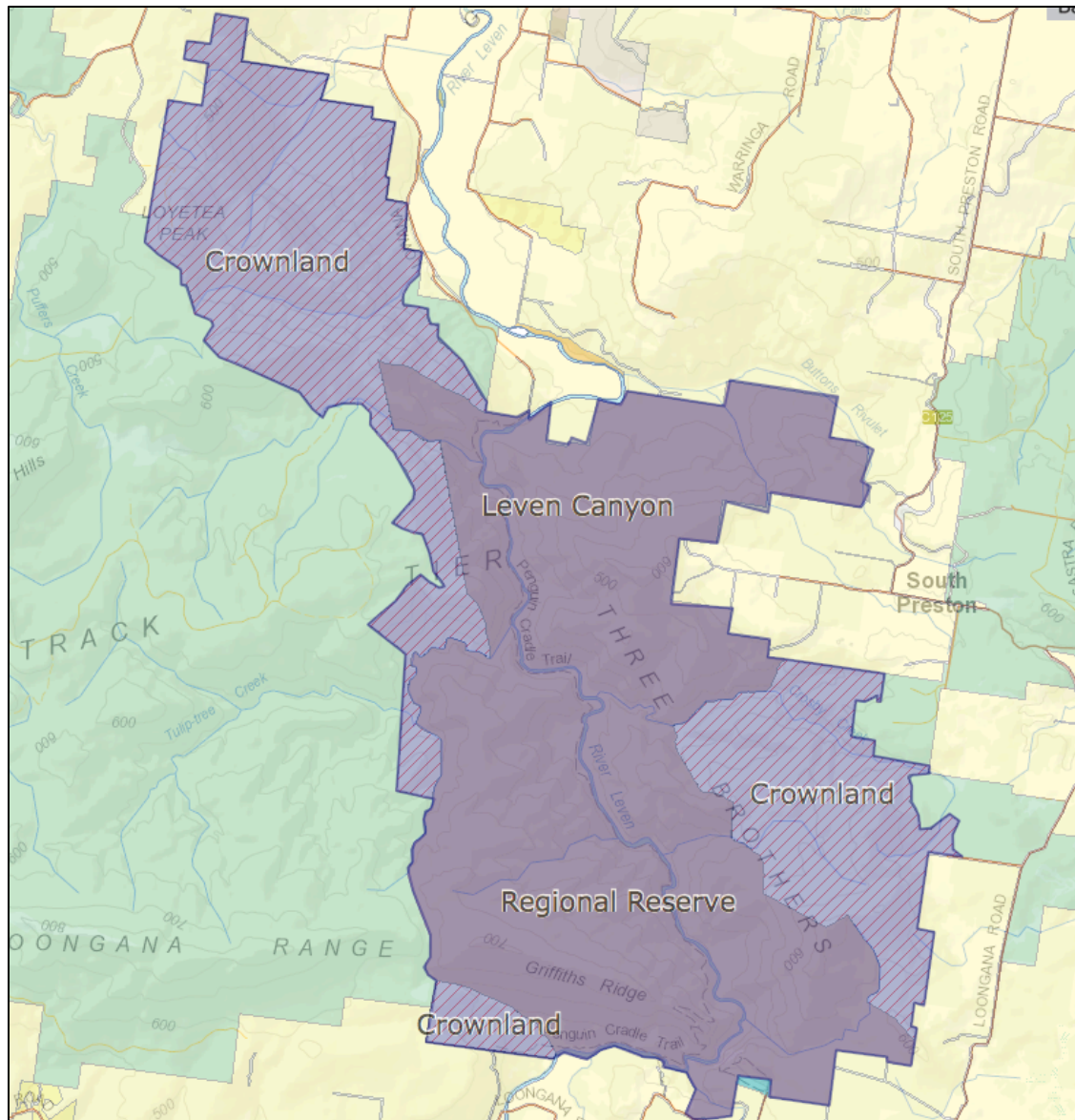


Figure 3. Shown in purple overlay is the amended requested Scenic Protection Area extent with different shading illustrating current land tenures (Crownland and Regional Reserve)

APPENDIX 2 Proposed Table C8.1 Scenic Protection Area

C8.1 Scenic Protection Area

Reference Number	Scenic Protection Area Name	Description	Scenic Value	Management Objectives
To be determined	Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon	Leven Canyon Regional Reserve and adjoining crown land listed as 'Future Potential Production Forest'	<p>(a) Is an intact native vegetation area that is not timber plantation, containing a deep river canyon and adjoining peaks with forested slopes and skyline, which provide a natural outlook from Gunns Plains, Nietta, South Preston, Loongana, Black Bluff, the Penguin to Cradle walking track, and various scenic lookouts including Loyetee Peak and the Cruickshanks Leven Canyon viewing platform, and various road scenic pullouts; and</p> <p>(b) Is a wild, dramatic and natural oasis among farmland, production forests and settlements, which is the point of difference and unique selling point that sets it apart from other areas in the minds of locals and visitors, and is an attraction that plays a vital role to the Central Coast's tourist-based economy.</p>	<p>(a) Ensure that any vegetation clearance is not visible from areas from Gunns Plains, Nietta, South Preston, Loongana, Black Bluff and views that provide current and future visitor experiences, and</p> <p>(b) Buildings, infrastructure and works are located and designed to blend with the landscape and not be obtrusive.</p>

Justification for Table C8.1 wording

Scenic Protection Area Name. The proposed name ‘Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Area’ best captures the iconic features within the requested scenic area.

Description. The area description is clearly defined by tenure as the Leven Canyon Regional Reserve and all adjoining crown land listed as ‘Future Potential Production Forest’.

Scenic Value.

The scenic values have been captured in two parts and are based upon values identified from numerous reports and consultation processes in:

- 1) *Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Master Plan 2018*,
- 2) *Central Coast Council Destination Action Plan 2018*,
- 3) *Central Coasts Interpretation Plan 2017*, and the
- 4) *Leven Canyon Interpretation Plan 2007-2010*.

Point (a) clearly identifies the value of the intact native vegetation in the area and a number of vantage points important for the visitor-based economy. Point (b) clarifies the scenic value importance to the visitor economy and is wording largely obtained from the *Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Master Plan 2018*

Management Objectives.

Two management objectives have been provided. Point (a) clearly articulates the need to prevent native vegetation clearance and loss of scenic values from a number of vantage points important for the tourist-based regional economy. Point (b) allows for sensitive development and has been drafted from wording used in the draft Meander LPS Scenic Protection Area table C8.1 (page 74 of 78), with the exception that ‘development’ has been exchanged here for ‘buildings, infrastructure and works’

APPENDIX 3 Images Supporting Scenic Value of the area



Figure 4. Leven Canyon Regional Reserve and Crown Land, on high ground to the right (view north of Lower Leven Canon Lookout at Loongana) – the canyon and large area of intact native vegetation are of high scenic value from the visitors' lookout.



Figure 5. Leven Canyon Regional Reserve and Crown Land, in background on right (view west of Cruikshanks lookout at Loongana) – the canyon feature is of high scenic value from the visitors' lookout.



Figure 6. Northern Leven Canyon Regional Reserve and Crown Land in foreground (view east of Loyetee Peak lookout toward Nietta and Mount Roland) – the large area of intact native vegetation and forested slopes are of high scenic value from this visitors lookout.



Figure 7. Northern Leven Canyon Regional Reserve and Loyetee Peak (Crown Land) forested areas to right (view from George Woodhouse Lookout on South Riana Road where all tourist coaches stop) – the large area of intact native vegetation and forested slopes are of high scenic value from this visitors' lookout and elsewhere in Gunns Plains.



Figure 8. Loyetee Peak (Crown Land) intact forested hills (view from Gunns Plains Caves car park) – the skyline, large area of intact native vegetation and forested slopes are of high scenic value from this visitors' lookout and elsewhere in Gunns Plains, Preston and South Preston.

Figure 9. Leven Canyon Regional Reserve (view from South Preston) – the large area of intact native vegetation in the mid-ground forested slopes of Loongana Range are of



high scenic value from this private land with ecotourism potential. Snow-covered Black Bluff offers dramatic visual backdrop.

APPENDIX 4 Assessment of Scenic Value – applying approaches from ‘A Manual for Forest Landscape Management (Chapter 2) 2006’

The Forest Practice Authority, Tasmania, in 2006 republished guidelines for a ‘Visual Management System’ as they relate to forestry impacted areas. The guidelines are largely based upon principles in with in *The Forest Landscape Visual Management System*, Bulletin No. 9, Nov. 1983, published by the Forestry Commission of Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Planning Commission recommended Mary-Anne Edwards (Central Coast Council) look at this ‘*Forest Landscape Management (Chapter 2)*’ as a source of supporting evidence for determining areas of high scenic importance. Mary-Anne shared this recommendation with us.

Query applicability of Visual Management System Landscape Management Objectives

We question the applicability of the Landscape Management Objectives that form the heart of the Visual Management System (*Forest Landscape Management (Chapter 2)* page 42). The objectives have been designed to enable forestry activities within areas having the highest levels of visual sensitivity (i.e. inevident alteration, high visual concern, Zone A – as described on page 42, which still enables the creation of clear-felled forestry coupes in these areas). This is in clear conflict with the *C8.0 Scenic Protection Code*, which has ‘C8.6 Development Standards for Building and Works’ and an A1 Acceptable Solution that only enables <500m² destruction of vegetation, which is too small to be utilized as a clear felled forestry coupes. Further more, the *Forest Landscape Management* Landscape Management Objectives are not compatible with protected lands or non-forestry areas. This creates a conflict between the applicability of the Visual Management System objectives, which enables clear felled forestry coupe creation within zones of highest visual concern, and the Regional Reserve tenure over much of the requested Scenic Protection Area precludes the clear felling of vegetation for forestry. Due to this conflict in land use, we have not applied the ‘visual management system’ objectives.

Applying *Forest Landscape Management* ‘auxiliary categories of visual objectives’

We recognize that *Forest Landscape Management (Chapter 2)*, page 42, includes ‘auxiliary categories of visual objectives’ that are NOT derived from the Visual Management System. Applicable auxiliary category objectives, in the case of the Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Area, include ‘Reserves (RES)’ and ‘Special or Sensitive (SP)’ The objectives of both categories align with the *C8.0 Scenic Protection Code* objectives, in that no forestry clear felling can occur. The Reserves (RES) category covers those areas ‘set aside specifically for the protection of flora and fauna and the provision of recreation opportunities (page 45)’, and could be applied in general to all of the Leven Canyon Regional Reserve, streamside reserves, and other areas excluded from forestry activities. The ‘Special or Sensitive (SP)’ category are areas ‘determined as having **critical visual concern** (page 45)’ and ‘it encompasses viewing areas from key tourism features and from principles towns...’ and ‘... it is suited for landscape seen within 25 km of prime wilderness destinations’ (such as the Loyetee Peak and Leven

Canyon) and the ‘management activities within view fields from these locations are not to be visually evident to the discerning observer.’

Landscape Priority Zone Mapping

The landscaping priority mapping principles for the auxillary category objectives ‘Reserves (RES)’ and ‘Special or Sensitive (SP)’ have been applied to the requested Loyetee Peak—Leven Canyon Scenic Protection Area in Figures 10 and 11, respectively, and all relevant spatial data was obtained from theLIST website.

The mapping of the areas within the category of Reserves (RES) include those areas covered by the (i) Leven Canyon Regional Reserve, (ii) streamside reserves apply forest practice code logging buffers, (iii) 10Ha undisturbed zone around known eagle nests, (iv) protection of karst and (v) protection of threatened vegetation areas (protected under the Nature Conservation Act)

The mapping of the areas within the category of ‘Special or Sensitive (SP)’ was undertaken from key tourism features (roads, tracks, lookouts, landscape features and towns (some listed in the Figure 11 caption) and the visual line of site from these features using the 10m contour mapping and hill shade mapping on theLIST website.

The combination of the areas in the Reserves (RES) & Special or Sensitive (SP) assessment has identified an alignment with those areas of critical visual landscape value requested for scenic protection in Figure 2 and 3.

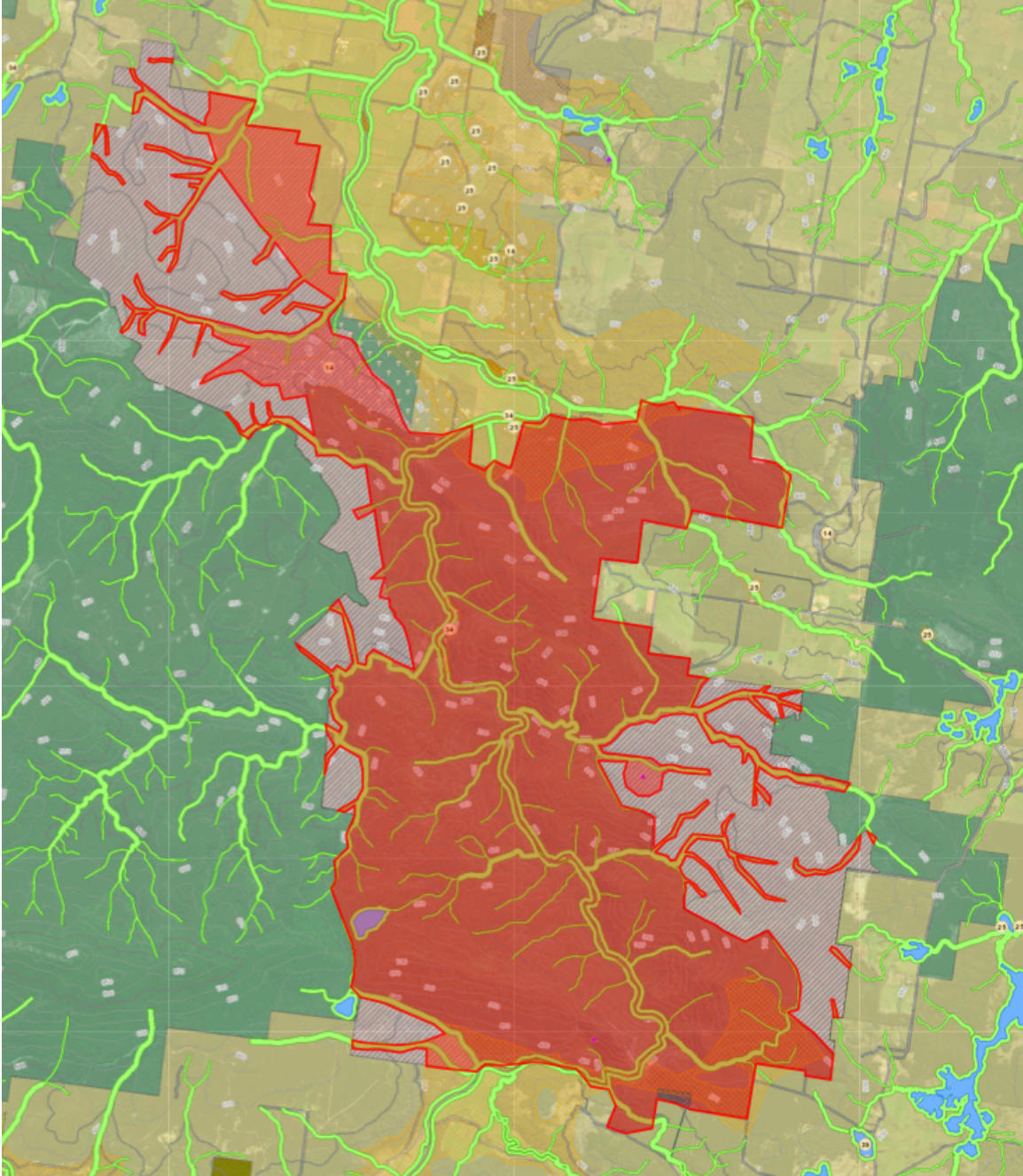


Figure 10. Critically important visual areas (in Red) based on 'Reserve (RES)' area assessment when applying this category from '*A Manual for Forest Landscape Management (Chapter 2) 2006*'. These areas include (but are not limited to) the: (i) Leven Canyon Regional Reserve, (ii) streamside reserves based on forest practice code logging buffers, (iii) 10Ha undisturbed zone around known eagle nests, (iv) protection of karst and (v) protection of threatened vegetation areas (protected under the Nature Conservation Act).

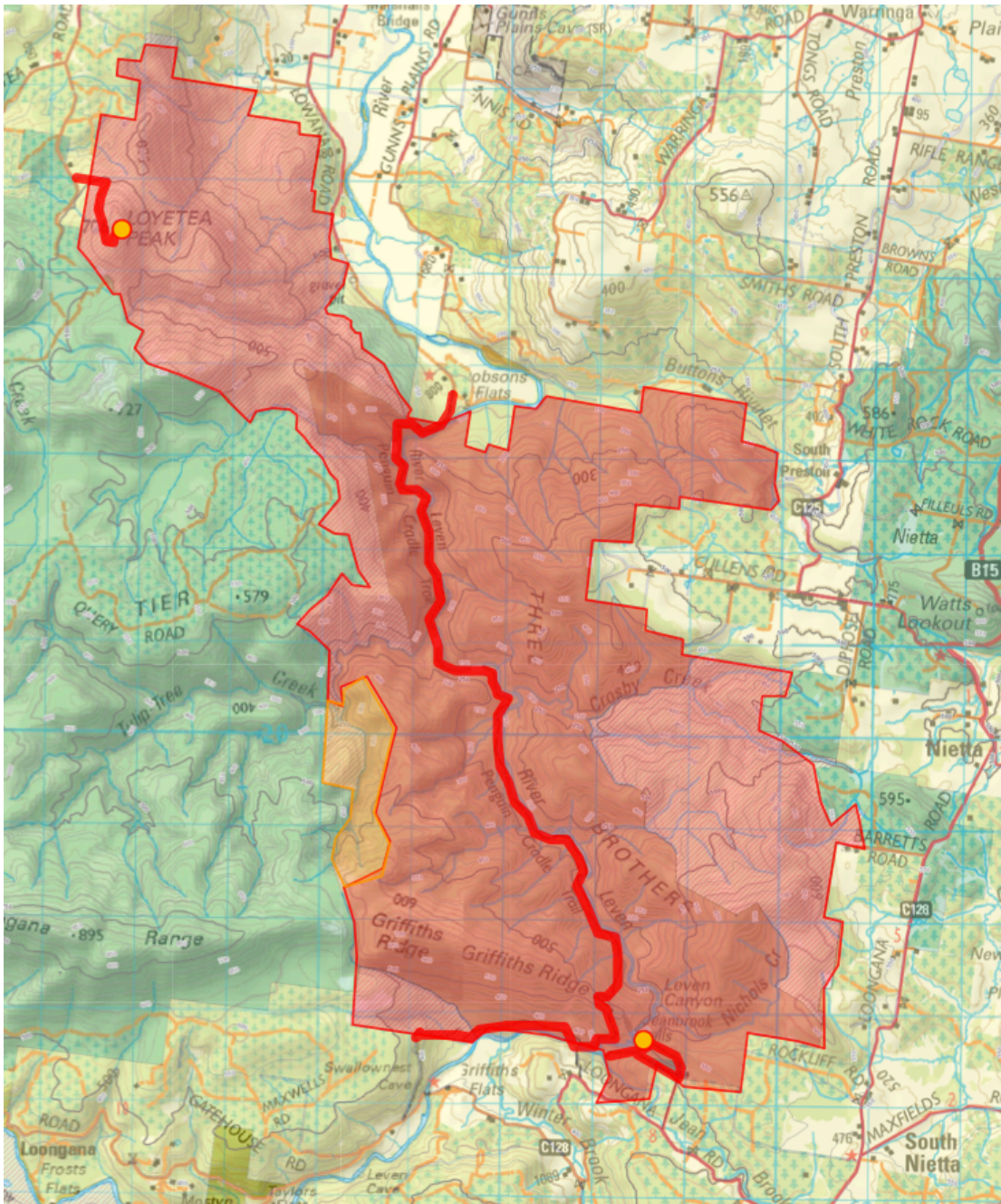


Figure 11. Critically important visual areas (in Red Polygon) based on ‘Special or Sensitive (SP)’ area assessment when applying this category from ‘*A Manual for Forest Landscape Management (Chapter 2) 2006*’. These areas include views from tracks (thick Red Line) to (i) Loyteya Peak lookout (Fig. 6), (ii) Leven Canyon lookout (Fig.4&5), (iii) Penguin to Cradle track, & (iv) to Swallow nest cave. The critically important visual area includes views from scenic drives and destinations including Gunns Plains Caves (Fig. 8), George Woodhouse lookout (Fig.7). and townships of Gunns Plains, Nietta & Preston. Orange polygon = area of high importance for visual amenity, potentially not as critical as other areas.