

AUSTRALIA

Tasmanian Wilderness

II.1 Introduction

Year of Inscription 1982, 1989

Organisation Responsible for the Report

- Environment Australia
Tasmanian Dept. of Tourism, Parks, Heritage & the Arts (Parks & Wildlife Service)
GPO Box 44, Hobart, Tasmania 7001
Australia

II.2 Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria N i, ii, iii, iv C iii, iv, vi

Statement of Significance

- Proposed as follows:
The WH area “comprises most of the last great temperate wilderness in Australia, and is one of only a few such regions in the world. It extends over 1.38 million hectares, covering around 20% of the land area of the whole island of Tasmania.”
Rocks from virtually every geological period are represented, and the area has some of the deepest & longest caves in Australia.
A variety of plant species descended from the super-continent of Gondwana are recognised by IUCN as an International Centre for Plant Diversity.
The wilderness is also a stronghold for a high proportion of endemic species (i.e. orange-bellied parrot, burrowing crayfish) and ancient relict groups, such as the world’s largest marsupial carnivores, the Tasmanian devil, spotted-tailed & eastern quoll.
More than 40 sites, including Kutikina Cave & other rock art sites, have “exceptional cultural, emotional and spiritual value” to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, and reveal remarkable human adaptation to the severity of the climate during the last Ice Age.
- An indicative table of WH attributes is attached.

Status of Site Boundaries

- As a result of several new species discovered, the authorities are undertaking a project to update the natural features of the WH area. “It is anticipated that this will result in a minor expansion of the area (approx. 20,000 additional hectares)”.



© Department of Environment and Heritage

II.3 Statement of Authenticity/Integrity

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- “The condition of the natural and cultural heritage of the Tasmanian Wilderness WH area (TW WHA) has generally remained stable since listing of the area.”
- At the time of the 1989 extension of the property, the IUCN technical evaluation “noted the very positive impact on the integrity of the property resulting from the cancellation of the Gordon-below-Franklin hydro-electric scheme”.
- Scientific discoveries post-WH inscription include: (i) new marine communities such as a new species of skate & sea pen; (ii) the oldest documented vascular plant clone in the world (43,000 years old); and (iii) several new terrestrial species including the moss froglet, mountain skink, fern ally & a new lichen.

II.4 Management

Administrative and Management Arrangements

- The primary piece of legislation is the ‘National Parks & Wildlife Act’ (1970) which covers 90% of the land within the WH area. The act states that “no statutory powers can be exercised within a state reserve, unless authorised by a management plan.”
- The first WH area management plan ran from 1992 to 1999, followed by the current 10-year plan. ‘Site plans’ also exist for 7 specific areas.
- The WH area is managed by joint Commonwealth & State arrangements: a Standing Committee of officials & a 15-member Consultative Committee of scientific, Aboriginal, industry & recreational interests provide advice to a 4-member Inter-Ministerial Council.
- 10 referrals have been made to the ‘Australian Heritage Commission Act’ (1975) since 1996, and 7 referrals to the EPBC Act (1999), concerning visitor facilities, wood processing & small-dam irrigation.
- The ‘Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act’ (1984) protects Aboriginal sites from desecration, whilst the Aboriginal Land Council administers the Kutikina Cave (15ha) and other “parcels of land” since December 1995.

- Other pieces of legislation such as the Crown Lands Act (1976), Electricity Supply Industry Act (1995), and Aboriginal Lands Act (1995), are applied to small parts of the WH area & adjacent lands.

Present State of Conservation

- Recent improvements include: (i) closure & rehabilitation of a major quarry at Marble Hill; (ii) an increase in the population of the endangered Pedder galaxies fish; (iii) greater abundance of the pencil pine moth & blind cave beetle; and (iv) an increase in the breeding range of the New Zealand fur seal.
- Detrimental changes include: (i) “viewfield impacts” of hydro-electric developments present at the time of inscription; (ii) destabilisation of the river bed from the Gordon power scheme; (iii) “pronounced sheet erosion” linked to previous grazing & firing land-uses; (iv) continued decline of the orange-bellied parrot; (v) introduced root rot disease (*phytophthora cinnamomi*); and (vi) feral animals & weeds.

Staffing and Training Needs

- Between 1992-1999, staff increased from 86 to 112 permanent employees of the PWS. 58% are based in the field centres, and 41% in the Hobart Office.
- About 25 residents including rangers, volunteers & selected artists inhabit the WH property.
- In recent years, there has been an increase in the



Map of the Tasmanian Wilderness showing WH Area (in green for land and darker blue for water)

utilisation of volunteers from Tasmania & overseas as trainees, student placements & community workers.

Financial Situation

- WH area funding “remained stable between 1993 and 2002 at approx. AUS\$ 8.4 million (US\$ 4.5 million) per year”, comprising AUS\$ 5 & AUS\$ 3.4 million from the Federal & Tasmanian State Governments.
- * International Assistance from WHF: none.

Access to IT

- No information supplied.



View of the landscape of the Tasmanian wilderness

Visitor Management

- Visitors to Cradle Mountain numbered about 200,700 in 1999-2000 compared with 104,000 to Lake St. Clair (an increase of 35% since 1992).
- Major visitor centres & educational panels have been provided at or near all the major entrances at Cradle Mountain, Lake St. Clair, Strahan, Geeveston, Mt. Field & Hastings.
- All tourist developments must “be assessed through a rigorous process that includes environmental impact assessments and public consultation”.
- If a tourist re-development project at Pumphouse Point proceeds, 100 overnight visitors & 20 additional hotel staff will be located inside the WH area.

II.5 Factors Affecting the Property

Threats and Risks

- Weeds (i.e. sea spurge, broom, blackberries),
- Feral & introduced animals (i.e. foxes, red deer, redfin perch, North Pacific seastars & bumblebees),
- Logging in surrounding areas,
- Impacts of the proposed ‘Basslink’ project,
- Smouldering peat fires & ‘landscape-level’ fires from “old-growth” buttongrass,
- Plant diseases spread by “infected mud”,

- 4WD bikes & streambank erosion from vessel wakes,
- Noise from scenic flights, helicopters & powerboats,
- Loss of Aboriginal sites from wind & wave coastal erosion (linked to potential sea-level rise).

Counteractive Plans

- A state-wide programme has eradicated feral goats from the TWWHA. Other programmes have reduced the distribution of starlings & rabbits.
- A “range of measures” have been designed to mitigate the impacts of the regulation of river flows by hydro-power generation.
- “Fire issues are currently being dealt with via a major cross-discipline study on the impact of burning” on the WH property. The results will be used to “optimise burning for ecological diversity”.
- Introduced “washdown stations for walkers”, vehicles & helicopters to prevent the spread of root rot.

II.6 Monitoring

Monitoring Arrangements

- “The TW WHA has a monitoring system built into the management plan”, requiring detailed baseline data reports every 5 years. The first such ‘State of the Tasmanian Wilderness’ is due “in the near future”.
- A ‘Commonwealth-State Regional Forest Agreement process’ was completed by the Australian Heritage Commission and included 15 additional reserves covering 15,867 ha in the WH Area.
- A 3 volume ‘Walking Track Management Strategy’ (1994) deals with the sustainability of walking trails.

Monitoring Indicators

- Surveys by phone have shown that the percentage of Tasmanians who considered WH listing ‘a good thing’ increased from 63% in 1993 to 76% in 1999.
- The ANZECC ‘Benchmarking & Best Practice Programme’ (1996) has set up national data standards to count ‘person visits’ to protected areas.

II.7 Conclusions and Recommended Actions

Conclusions and Proposed Actions

- “Funding for management of the [wilderness] area increased dramatically following the recognition of the area as a WH site in 1982”.
- “Nature-based tourism to Tasmania is increasingly being recognised as an integral component of the State’s future economic well-being. Tasmania’s

natural & cultural heritage is the most important attraction for visitors to the State.”

- Tourism developments are expected to increase visitor levels, but there is also a need “for comprehensive management so as to address any potential impacts.”

* State of Conservation Reports

1987 SC-CONF.005/INF.1 Following an IUCN report on logging outside the WHA, the Australian government initiated a committee to examine the extension of the site boundaries.

1994 WHC-CONF.001/3b WHC was advised of significant potential logging activities adjacent to the WHA.

1995 WHC-CONF.203/5 IUCN gave an update on the situation and recalled that: (a) forested land exists outside the site which may have WH value, and (b) adjacent road building & logging could negatively impact on the WH site. In a letter dated June 1995, the Australian Minister for the Environment affirmed the commitment of the Australian & Tasmanian Governments to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Tasmanian forests. The Bureau insisted that the integrity of the site be respected, and thanked the Australian Minister for his encouraging response.

1996 WHC-CONF.202/2 The authorities informed WHC of an ‘Interim Forest Assessment’ undertaken in areas adjacent to the WH property. The outcome of the negotiations between the Commonwealth & Tasmanian Governments identified eight separate ‘coupes’: 5 to be protected from logging, and 3 to be made available for timber harvesting. Discussions involving both natural & cultural aspects were also undertaken. The Bureau commended the State Party for its efforts to carry out the preliminary assessment of additional WH features.

1997 WHC-CONF.208/8BRev IUCN reported on the Regional Forestry Agreement (RFA) signed by the Prime Minister of Australia & the Premier of Tasmania in November 1997. IUCN noted that the thematic methodology for identifying WH value by an independent expert panel had been exemplary in its approach. However, the allocation of public forest land for production and protection had been made at a political level which did not meet IUCN aspirations on boundary improvements. IUCN offered to perform an ongoing “audit function” for Australian WH sites. The Australian Government felt that the outcome of the RFA was a major gain for conservation in Tasmania.

1998 WHC-CONF.201/3b The Australian Minister for the Environment informed WHC that a number of areas classified as Dedicated Reserves adjacent to the existing WHA may be available for boundary modification under the terms of the RFA.

1998 WHC-CONF.202/4 The Australian authorities informed WHC that they would provide a timetable for the implementation of the 1997 RFA when the Tasmanian & Commonwealth Governments reached an agreement. The Bureau requested WHC to transmit a report from Australian NGOs to the State Party.

1999 WHC-CONF.209/14 Australia informed WHC of: (a) the recently completed Tasmanian Wilderness WH Area Management Plan developed by the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service; and (b) the new ‘Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act’ 1999. The Australian Committee for IUCN (ACIUCN) proposed to undertake an assessment of the Tasmanian Wilderness and supported, in principle, the RFA process as a significant step towards a comprehensive, adequate & representative reserve system, and basis for the ecologically sustainable management of forests in Tasmania.

2000 WHC-CONF.202/5 IUCN informed WHC that, as with Shark Bay, ACIUCN has established a collaborative process to finalise a report on the state of conservation for the Tasmanian Wilderness. Issues to address included helicopter tourism & impacts associated with bushwalking. WHC was also informed by letter that the Australian government would work with ACIUCN to finalise the report.

2001 WHC-CONF.208/10 IUCN informed the Bureau of: (a) the proposed ‘Basslink project’ involving an electricity link to connect the Tasmanian Gordon River Hydro Electric Scheme (entirely within the TWWHA) with the Australian mainland grid: changes to the turbines & water release are forecast to modify ecological processes in the inter-tidal zone and cause degradation to the riparian vegetation; and (b) a proposed ecotourism resort at Planters Beach (covered by the 1999 WHA plan) where treated sewerage in the dune system may impact on a shell-collection site used by indigenous communities. The Bureau invited the State Party to submit detailed status reports, including outcomes of any EIAs, on both projects.