

# STATE PARTY REPORT ON THE STATE OF CONSERVATION

OF THE

## TASMANIAN WILDERNESS WORLD HERITAGE AREA (AUSTRALIA)

**PROPERTY ID 181bis** 

IN RESPONSE TO DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE WHC 31 COM 7B.43

FOR SUBMISSION BY 1 FEBRUARY 2008

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#### WHC DECISION 31 COM 7B.43

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE Thirty-first session Christchurch, New Zealand 23 June-2 July 2007

43. Tasmanian Wilderness (Australia) (C/N 181) Decision: 31 COM 7B.43

The World Heritage Committee,

- 1. Having examined Document WHC-07/31.COM/7B,
- 2. Recalling Decision **30 COM 7B.32**, adopted at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006),
- 3. Notes with concern the issues raised by NGOs in relation to the impacts of logging adjacent to the World Heritage property and the commencement of the North Weld Road which compromises options for future extensions to the World Heritage property;
- 4. Urges the State Party to consider the extension of the World Heritage property to include critical old-growth forests to the east and north of the property, or at least to manage these forests in a manner which is consistent with a potential World Heritage value;
- 5. Expresses its concern about the risk from fire related to forest regeneration and natural events, and its possible adverse impact on the World Heritage property, and requests the State Party to prepare a Risk Management Plan and to consider distancing the logging operations from the boundary of the property;
- 6. Taking into account the clarification provided orally by the State Party at the 31<sup>st</sup> session, also requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre /IUCN /ICOMOS mission to assess the state of conservation of the property, focusing on:
  - a) appropriate management of areas of heritage value which are currently outside the property,
  - b) an assessment of the degree of risk related to regeneration fires in areas adjacent to the World Heritage property as well as of the effectiveness of the fire management system in place,
  - c) impacts of proposed forestry operations (including the construction of new roads) on the outstanding universal value of the property,
- 7. Requests the State Party to provide the World Heritage Centre with an updated report by **1 February 2008** on the state of conservation of the property and the above mentioned issues for examination by the Committee at its 32nd session in 2008.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This Update Report on the State of Conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA, the property):

- responds to World Heritage Committee **Decision 31 COM 7B.43**; and
- provides an update to the **2007 State Party Report** prepared in response to World Heritage Committee **Decision 30 COM 7B.32**. The two documents should be read together.

Decision 31 COM 7B.43 relates to issues regarding the management of the TWWHA itself, external threats to the property and issues related to potential outstanding universal values outside the property. The Update Report separates discussion of issues relating to management of the TWWHA and issues relating to areas outside the property.

This Update Report demonstrates that the TWWHA is being effectively managed and that there is no substantive threat from forestry operations adjacent to the TWWHA. The Australian Government considers the management arrangements in proximity to the property boundary are appropriate to protect the property.

#### Management of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is a huge area covering over 20 per cent of the entire island of Tasmania

Since the listing of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in 1982, Australia has invested well over AU\$100 million in the management of the property. This funding has been jointly provided by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments. Due to this investment, the management of the property has received international acclaim, as outlined in the 2007 State Party Report.

A variety of potential threats to the natural and cultural World Heritage values of the property have been identified, including biosecurity, climate change and operations that pre-date the listing of the property. Management effort and research are focused on those issues that may directly impact on the property's World Heritage values. These are being addressed through national and state recovery programmes and the adaptive management arrangements for the property. As part of this adaptive management of the property, an interim review by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service of the 1999 Management Plan is nearing completion, with a full review due to commence in 2009-2010.

The area inscribed on the World Heritage List, including its diverse World Heritage values, has been shaped in many ways by fire. Anthropological evidence suggests that humans have occupied Tasmania for at least 35,000 years and possibly much longer. Aboriginal burning practices, and to a lesser extent lightning, have significantly influenced the development of plant and animal communities; some are adapted to fire, (e.g. buttongrass moorland), some are dependent on it for their survival, (e.g., eucalypt forest), and others are destroyed by it (e.g. native conifer stands and rainforest).

Prescribed or controlled burning is necessary in the management of natural and cultural values and assets inside the property. A substantial increase in the application of prescribed fire in buttongrass moorlands is required to protect the fire-sensitive ecological communities within the property. The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service is in the process of developing an Integrated Fire Risk Management Plan for the land it manages across the State of Tasmania, including the TWWHA. This plan is due to be complete by the end of 2009.

#### Management of Areas Adjacent to the Property

The TWWHA is the largest World Heritage property in Australia as a proportion of the surrounding State's land mass. At 20 per cent of Tasmania's entire land area, the property represents a major contribution by Australia to the conservation of the world's natural and cultural heritage. Taken together with the TWWHA, protected areas cover almost 45 per cent of the entire land area of Tasmania. As a result, Australia is not contemplating an extension to the TWWHA.

Old growth forest values for the TWWHA include Pristine Tall Eucalypt Forests, Eucalyptus Tall Open Forest including Eucalyptus regnans and rainforest. These old growth communities are well protected within the TWWHA, formal or informal reserves or by specified forestry management practices outside of reserves. Approximately 80 per cent of old growth forest in Tasmania is protected in reserves. This level of protection for these old growth forest types is far in excess of the target established by the IUCN of 10 per cent and in excess of the national reserve target established for the Regional Forest Agreement 1997 (RFA) of 60 per cent.

The Regional Forest Agreement (RFA), together with the 2005 Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement, provides the framework for managing and protecting heritage values of forests outside the TWWHA.

The second independent five year review of the implementation of the RFA is nearing completion, and recommendations are expected to be available by the time the mission visits Tasmania in March 2008. The Australian government recognises that this review provides a timely opportunity to ensure that implementation of the RFA is delivering on a range of environmental objectives, including heritage protection, as envisaged. Australia will discuss with the mission any outcomes of the review relevant to the property and of World Heritage values.

Since the 1930s all of the large fires that have burnt between what is now the World Heritage property and State forest have started in the World Heritage property and moved into State forest and not vice-versa. Since the establishment of the TWWHA in 1982 Forestry Tasmania has conducted a total of 521 silvicultural regeneration burns covering a total of 10,748 hectares of State forest within five kilometres of the property boundary. As noted in the background report, none of these 521 regeneration burns have escaped into the property.

The Forest Practices Code mandates specific prescriptions to avoid impacts on karst values and systems, as well as cultural values. Operational staff are required to seek specialist advice from geoscientists and Aboriginal Heritage Officers on site specific

requirements to protect natural and cultural values in areas identified as likely to contain such values.

The risks to natural and cultural values from forestry operations in the vicinity of the property have been evaluated as low and manageable. Given the extent and representativeness of the protected area estate in Tasmania, the significant resources given to fire management and the adaptive risk management arrangements for the property and nearby forest areas, there is no need to distance forestry operations from the property boundary.

## 1. RESPONSE FROM THE STATE PARTY TO THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE'S DECISION

This document includes the updated report requested in **Paragraph 7** of the World Heritage Committee's Decision. The updated report is provided for examination by the Committee at its 32nd session in 2008. As requested by the World Heritage Centre, the updated report follows the format for State of Conservation reports agreed at the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Committee in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Issues inside the World Heritage property are addressed distinctly from those relating to areas beyond the property.

#### 1.1. Paragraph 3

Notes with concern the issues raised by NGOs in relation to the impacts of logging adjacent to the World Heritage property and the commencement of the North Weld Road which compromises options for future extensions to the World Heritage property;

The World Heritage property boundary extends to a distance approximately 1227km. Of this, 72 per cent abuts reserves, 12 per cent is production State forest, and less than 9 per cent of this long boundary is potentially exposed to clearfell and burning operations. Most of the remainder of the boundary abuts private land.

As envisaged in the 1989 nomination, and accepted in IUCN's technical evaluation of the 1989 extension of the property, forestry operations continue in areas adjacent to the property, and potential impacts on natural and cultural values are managed in accordance with the Forest Practices Code and other requirements.

Almost all streams outside the property flow away from the property and therefore the effects of forestry operations on water or stream biota inside the property are minimal.

While some minor road works / construction have occurred, these have been conducted in accordance with agreed practices and standards. The recently constructed North Weld Road is a small (1.4 km) extension of an existing road system in the lower Weld Valley, and is no closer to the World Heritage property than existing forest roads and intensive forestry operations.

#### Management of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage property

No issues arise for management within the property, because no logging is conducted inside the property, and no forestry roads are built within the World Heritage property. The issue of future extensions to the TWWHA is addressed under 1.2 of this Update Report.

#### Management of Areas Adjacent to the Property

#### Forestry Operations

The State Party Report provided to the World Heritage Centre in February 2007 discussed at length management to prevent impacts from forestry operations on the outstanding universal values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage property.

Almost all streams outside the property flow away from the property and therefore the effects of forestry operations on water or stream biota inside the property are minimal. There are, however, a small number of streams that flow from State forest back into the property in karst. The Forest Practices Code mandates specific prescriptions to avoid impacts on karst values and systems, as well as cultural values. Operational staff are required to seek specialist advice from geoscientists and Aboriginal Heritage Officers on site-specific requirements to protect natural and cultural values in areas identified as likely to contain such values.

The management of risks associated with regeneration burns is discussed in Section 1.3 of this Update Report.

#### Roading

As an update to the 2007 report and in response to the specific issue raised regarding the construction of the North Weld Road, a case study on the Weld Valley is attached for information (**Attachment A**). The diagram in the case study illustrates the location of existing roads, previously logged areas by year, and planned logging areas. As shown, forest harvesting and regeneration has taken place in the Weld catchment since the early 1980s.

The recently constructed North Weld Road is a small (1.4 km) extension of an existing road system in the lower Weld Valley. Many forestry roads in the lower Weld Valley were built in the 1970s and 1980s, prior to the World Heritage listing, to provide access for harvesting of the forests in the area. Some of these roads are located within a short distance of the property boundary. The new North Weld Road has been constructed for minimal visual impact from the property and is no closer to the World Heritage property than existing forest roads and forestry operations.

All roading activities undertaken by Forestry Tasmania are regulated through the Forest Practices Code which includes the following general principles:

- Ascertain the presence of significant natural and cultural values before building roads; and
- Avoid road locations in areas where roading would substantially affect significant values.

The Code is available at http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/index.php?id=81

In 2005, the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement provided funding for Forestry Tasmania to construct new low-impact roading for the purpose of improving access for selective timber harvesting and to leatherwood apiary sites to maintain sustainable supplies of leatherwood honey. Most of these new roads are in north-west Tasmania, not near the property boundary. The North Weld Road is part of this program, being constructed to provide improved access to the special timbers and leatherwood resources within the Weld Valley. Special Timber Management Units (STMUs) are shown in the map at **Attachment E**.

Further information on Forestry Tasmania's procedures to minimise impacts from road construction is contained at **Attachment F**.

#### Aesthetic Values

The World Heritage property boundary extends to a distance of approximately 1227km. Of this, 49 per cent abuts formal reserves, 23 per cent abuts informal reserves, 12 per cent is production State forest, and the remainder is private land and some land managed by Hydro Tasmania. When Special Timber Management Units are excluded from this State forest figure latter figure, less than 9 per cent of this long boundary is potentially exposed to clearfell and burning operations. When higher altitude forest types are excluded, which are not managed on clearfell regimes, this figure is much lower.

As forestry operations can be seen from parts of the property, particularly mountain peaks along the eastern boundary, forest operations on adjacent lands have the potential to impact on aesthetic viewfields. In many cases, the views from these same mountains also include cleared agricultural land, towns and other infrastructure. Forestry operations have been conducted in these areas since before the listing of the property, and were outlined in the 1989 nomination and IUCN evaluation.

Impacts on the aesthetic values of the TWWHA are managed through various policies:

- the Forest Practices Code, which outlines the requirements to manage landscape and visual amenity values when planning and conducting any forest operation.
- The Manual for Forest Landscape Management 2006 also provides forest managers with a range of visual principles, procedures and practices to guide the planning and management of forests. This manual is available at <a href="http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/fileadmin/user\_upload/PDFs/Landscape\_CultHer/Landscape\_Manual\_background\_and\_contents\_pages.pdf">http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/fileadmin/user\_upload/PDFs/Landscape\_CultHer/Landscape\_Manual\_background\_and\_contents\_pages.pdf</a>
- At a planning level, Forestry Tasmania implements a "forestry in the landscape" approach so that, in general, the most intensive forest activities are the greatest distance from the property and other wilderness areas. This approach was described in the 2007 State Party Report. An updated diagram at **Attachment B** illustrates the approach. It is an extract from *Stewards of the Forest*, a Forestry Tasmania publication available in full at <a href="https://www.forestrytas.com.au/uploads/File/pdf/stewards">www.forestrytas.com.au/uploads/File/pdf/stewards</a> of the forest v5 screen.pdf
- Whilst there are some areas of forest close to the boundary that have been and will be logged, including clearfelling, most of these are regrown on rotations of between 80 and 200 years, which helps to minimise visual impacts.
- Visual management software is used to model the impact of harvesting operations from key points in the landscape, including from the World Heritage property. This approach provides a transition for activities adjacent to the property so that the natural and cultural values of the property are maintained.

Forestry Tasmania's draft Forest Management Plan 2008-2017 outlines this process at

www.forestrytas.com.au/assets/0000/0300/draft\_forest\_management\_plan\_1.3\_e mail.pdf

For several decades, it has been envisaged that forestry operations will be permitted to continue in some areas adjacent to the World Heritage property, with appropriate management through the Forest Practices Code. In its technical evaluation of the September 1989 nomination of the extension to the property, IUCN noted:

"Outside the boundaries of the site, extractive forestry operations will occur outside the eastern boundary with clear-cutting, road-building activity, the possibility of fire escape, and reduction in visual quality and wilderness values. These will hopefully be minimised through careful management and through application of the Forestry Commission's "Forestry Practices Code". However, the adjustments to the eastern boundary of the site made in the September 1989 revision to better follow natural features reduces the potential problem. Specific suggestions for adjustments of the eastern boundary reviewed during the IUCN field inspection have now been incorporated."

#### 1.2. Paragraph 4

Urges the State Party to consider the extension of the World Heritage property to include critical old-growth forests to the east and north of the property, or at least to manage these forests in a manner which is consistent with a potential World Heritage value;

In 1989 the TWWHA was extended by 78 per cent from its previous boundaries to 20 per cent of the land mass of Tasmania. Australia is not contemplating further extensions to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage property.

Old growth forest protection in Tasmania far exceeds the 10 per cent target set by IUCN and the 60 per cent national reserve criterion. Approximately 80 per cent of old growth forest in Tasmania is protected in reserves.

Areas outside the TWWHA are managed for a range of outcomes.

#### Management of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

As this Paragraph of the Decision refers to areas outside the TWWHA, this section does not discuss issues inside the TWWHA.

#### Management of Areas Adjacent to the Property

Consideration of extension to the TWWHA.

Australia is not contemplating an extension to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage property. The TWWHA is the largest World Heritage site in Australia as a proportion of the surrounding State's land mass. At twenty per cent of Tasmania's entire land area, the property represents a major contribution by Australia to the conservation of the world's natural and cultural heritage.

Mapping of Tasmania's old growth forests was undertaken for the first time in 1996 as part of the process for identifying all forest values leading to the RFA between the Australian and Tasmanian Governments. A total area of 1,246,000 hectares of old forest was identified on public and private land, representing around 16 per cent of Tasmania's land area. As a result of the RFA and the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement in 2005 (TCFA), almost one million of the 1.2 million hectares (or about 80 per cent) of old growth forest areas are now protected in identified reserves. Approximately 406,000 hectares of RFA-defined old growth forest are located within the TWWHA – about one third of the property's area.

All types of old growth forest represented in the TWWHA are therefore reserved on a statewide basis at levels that exceed the internationally recognised 'JANIS' reserve criterion that at least 60 per cent of each old growth RFA Forest Vegetation Community be reserved. The Forest Vegetation Communities of the areas of old growth forest to the north and east of the property are all communities that are well

represented in the property. Old growth forest values are largely protected through the existing reserve system and management practices under the Forest Practices Code

#### Australia's heritage assessment process

Australia has an agreed approach to heritage assessment at a national level and, under the RFA, for extensions to the reserve system and the TWWHA in Tasmania. This approach is consistent with the requirement under the World Heritage Convention to consider the environmental, social and economic aspects of World Heritage nominations<sup>1</sup>. Under the RFA, any World Heritage nominations of any part of the Forest Estate (i.e. State forest and private forest managed for production) will be from the Dedicated Reserve elements of the Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system<sup>2</sup>.

The Australian Government has in recent years revised the legislative arrangements for National and World Heritage listing. The 2003 amendments to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* established the National Heritage List. The April 2004 National Heritage Protocol outlined arrangements for the coordination of Australian, State and Territory Governments systems for the protection of heritage. Under that protocol it was agreed that, as a general principle, future nominations for World Heritage listing would only be drawn from the National Heritage List.

Current National Heritage nominations in Tasmania include the Tarkine Wilderness and the Great Western Tiers. These public nominations are being assessed for values under the provisions of national legislation. Public nominations for the National Heritage List are accepted each year. No new nominations were received for natural sites in Tasmania in the latest round of nominations.

<sup>2</sup> Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 1997 - Clause 41.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 1997 - Clause 40.

#### Management of old growth forests to east and north of property

Further to the discussion of old growth on page 6 of this Update Report, areas to the north and east of the TWWHA include a combination of old growth forest and other forest and non-forest vegetation types. They are also characterised by a mixture of different tenures with varying management objectives, and include significant areas that are already protected as formal and informal reserves (see 2007 State Party Report page 8 and Table 2).

The management framework outlined below demonstrates that protected areas and management practices covering 'old growth forests to the east and north of the property' provide protection for potential World Heritage values.

Areas to the north and east of the property include land zoned for management of old growth forest for protection of environmental values. These are areas designated as either Forest Reserves under the *Forestry Act 1920* or land designated by Forestry Tasmania as Informal Reserves. As noted in the 2007 State Party Report, timber harvesting is not permitted in either of these reserve categories and management of all reserves is conducted in accordance with the Tasmanian Reserve Management Code of Practice:

http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/publications/tech/management\_code/RMCODECO1.pdf

This management framework aims to protect the natural and cultural heritage values of the area and management for uses other than commercial forestry. Typical activities that might occur on these areas are nature conservation, fire management, research and recreation

Many areas to the north and east of the property have also been managed for wood production on a sustainable basis for many years. In addition, many contain forestry roads and areas of harvested and regenerated forest, in some cases up to the boundary of the TWWHA. This was not only recognised in the 1989 nomination of the TWWHA, but was an important consideration in the establishment of boundaries at that time. As mentioned above, the IUCN accepted this in its technical evaluation of the 1989 renomination of the property.

On land managed for commercial wood production, all forest operations are conducted in accordance with the Forest Practices Code established under the *Forest Practices Act 1985*. Extensive planning is therefore required prior to commencing any forestry operations to identify and manage all environmental and heritage values.

Many State Forest areas to the north and east of the property include Special Timber Management Units or eucalypt management areas where old growth eucalypt forest will be managed for timber production using a range of systems. In particular, no regeneration burns are conducted in these Special Timber Management Units (refer **Attachment E**).

As indicated in 1.1 above, the Forest Practices Code stipulates practices to manage particular natural and cultural values, such as those often found in karst landscapes.

#### Key figures on old growth forest

Old growth forest values are well represented in the TWWHA and other reserves outside the TWWHA. Of the total area of 1.23 million hectares of old growth forest almost one million hectares (approximately 80 per cent) are currently protected in reserves. Old growth forest outside of these reserves is also managed such that much of it will not be logged.

Old growth forest values as referred to in the TWWHA values statement include Pristine Tall Eucalypt forests, Eucalyptus Tall Open Forest including Eucalyptus regnans, and rainforest. All are well protected within the TWWHA, formal or informal reserves or by specified forestry management practices outside of reserves. The level of protection for these old growth forests is far in excess of the target established by the IUCN of 10 per cent and in excess of the national reserve criteria established for the RFA of 60 per cent.

Of the 519,000 hectares of old growth temperate rainforest in Tasmania, 464,000 hectares (89 per cent) is fully protected in reserves, of which 199,000 hectares (38 per cent) is in the TWWHA.

Of the 249,000 hectares of tall wet eucalypt old growth forest in Tasmania, 179,000 hectares (72 per cent) is fully protected in reserves, of which 87,000 hectares (35 per cent) is in the TWWHA.

Approximately 80 per cent of old growth forest in Tasmania is protected in reserves. Management of these reserved forests is largely non-interventionist, letting natural processes run their courses.

Around 20 per cent of all identified old growth forest areas are not reserved. Much of this forest, however, is either on privately owned land, or in areas of State Forest not planned for future harvesting.

A small proportion of old growth forest in State Forest areas will be available for harvesting. In recognition of the environmental, cultural, economic and social value of old growth forests in Tasmania – and also acknowledging the economic and non-economic value of forestry operations to the State – the Australian and Tasmanian Governments have committed to a program to significantly reduce clearfelling of public old growth forest, through the TCFA in 2005. This commitment is on target to reduce clearfelling to less than 20 per cent of the annual harvest area of old growth forest on State Forest by 2010.

In areas of State Forest adjoining the TWWHA, old growth forests are managed for a variety of objectives. There are two broad classifications of management intent in these areas: management for wood production and management for protection of environmental values. The case study map at **Attachment A** shows the zones reflecting these management intents within the case study area.

#### 1.3. Paragraph 5

Expresses its concern about the risk from fire related to forest regeneration and natural events, and its possible adverse impact on the World Heritage property, and requests the State Party to prepare a Risk Management Plan and to consider distancing the logging operations from the boundary of the property;

Since the 1930s all of the large fires that have burnt between what is now the World Heritage property and State forest have started in the World Heritage property and burnt into State forest. Not one has moved in the other direction

Since the establishment of the TWWHA in 1982 Forestry Tasmania has conducted a total of 521 silvicultural regeneration burns covering a total of 10,748 hectares of State forest within five kilometres of the property boundary. None of these 521 regeneration burns have escaped into the property.

The risks to values from forestry operations in the vicinity of the property are low and manageable given the extent and representativeness of the protected area estate in Tasmania, the significant resources given to fire management and the adaptive risk management arrangements for the property and nearby forest areas. As a result, there is no evidence to suggest there is a need to distance logging from the boundary.

An Integrated Fire Risk Management Plan is being prepared for Tasmania.

The risk of fire to the TWWHA has been evaluated as part of a recent report on fire management in the TWWHA prepared by an independent expert from the University of Tasmania, "Fire management in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area: A Report to the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service". It is provided at **Attachment D**.

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service is in the process of developing an Integrated Fire Risk Management Plan for all relevant Tasmanian Government agencies for the State of Tasmania, including the TWWHA. This plan is due to be complete by the end of 2009. Further information on the role of fire in the TWWHA and future directions for risk management planning for the property are at **Attachment C**.

A list of Tasmanian legislation, policies and operational plans, which together form the existing effective fire management framework, is attached to this update report (**Attachment C**), along with detailed information on how fire is managed in the World Heritage property.

The following information is drawn from the report by the University of Tasmania.

#### Management of Fire in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

#### Background to fire in the Tasmanian landscape

Fire has long been part of the natural and cultural environment of Australia as well as what is now the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Anthropological evidence suggests that humans have occupied Tasmania for at least 35,000 years and possibly much longer. Aboriginal burning practices, and to a lesser extent lightning, have significantly influenced the development of plant and animal communities; some are adapted to fire, (e.g., buttongrass moorland), some are dependent on it for their survival, (e.g., eucalypt forest), and others are destroyed by it (e.g., native conifer stands and rainforest).

The TWWHA, including its diverse World Heritage values, has been shaped in many ways by fire.

In Tasmania today, it is common for fire-adapted communities to adjoin fire-sensitive communities. Buttongrass moorland vegetation occurs within a mosaic of scrub and forest communities, with moorland occupying the most frequently burnt areas. Buttongrass moorlands are the first stage in the successional sequence of vegetation change towards rainforest.

All vegetation communities, including those more frequently burnt (e.g., buttongrass moorland) to the rarely burnt (e.g. rainforest), make an important contribution to the natural diversity of the TWWHA. Thus, it is just as important to actively promote fire in fire-adapted vegetation as it is to actively prevent and exclude fire in fire-sensitive vegetation.

Prescribed or controlled burning is necessary in the management of values and assets inside the property. In particular, fire research over the past 15 years has shown that a substantial increase in the application of prescribed fire in buttongrass moorlands is required to protect the fire-sensitive ecological communities within the property.

The University of Tasmania report (**Attachment D**) states whilst there have been no fires in the TWWHA that resulted from nearby forestry operations, there has been a significant increase in dry lightning storms over the past seven to ten years, with the potential for increased naturally-caused wildfire events. Relevant key papers are referenced in the report at **Attachment D**.

#### Management of Fire in Areas Adjacent to the Property

Since the establishment of the TWWHA in 1982 Forestry Tasmania has conducted a total of 521 silvicultural regeneration burns covering a total of 10,748 ha of State forest within five kilometres of the boundary of the TWWHA. As noted in the background report, none of these 521 regeneration burns have escaped into the property.

Whilst there may be a risk of adverse impact on the property from wildfire related to forest regeneration nearby, the risk is low. The report states that Forestry Tasmania has very stringent prescriptions for conducting regeneration burning which, when followed, result in regeneration burning being a low risk to the property. Risks are

mitigated and managed with these management prescriptions, such as undertaking regeneration burns at the appropriate time of year and during conditions when surrounding forest is too wet to burn. The procedures used by Forestry Tasmania significantly reduce the risk to the property from wildfire, particularly since the refinement of its management prescriptions in 1989.

Some key elements of these procedures and practices are outlined below.

- Under Forestry Tasmania's ISO 14001 Environmental Management System, all procedures are scrutinised through external audits, which are conducted at six monthly intervals. Regeneration burns are lit under carefully monitored weather conditions in autumn (generally from March to April). Fuel moisture is monitored within the area to be burnt and in the surrounding vegetation. High intensity regeneration burns are only undertaken when there is a sufficient moisture differential between the fuels to be burnt and the surrounding vegetation to minimise the risk of significant fire escape. Resources are deployed to each burn to monitor the edges until the fire is extinguished and, if required, to control any fire that burns outside of the prescribed area.
- The method, intensity and time of burning are dependent on the forest community and silvicultural system employed. The risk of fire escaping into areas outside the prescribed burning area is also dependent on these factors. No fire is used in the regeneration of forest within special timber management units (STMUs). Many of these areas are adjacent to the property as shown in the map at **Attachment E.**

The decision (paragraph 5), in considering risk from fire related to forest regeneration and natural events, requests that Australia considers distancing logging operations from the boundary of the property.

Australia considered the issue of logging in proximity to the boundary in (i) preparing the nominations considered by the World Heritage Committee in 1989 and (ii) through the negotiation of the 1997 Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement and 2005 Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement.

Australia notes that IUCN's 1989 technical evaluation recognised that logging operations would continue adjacent to the property and that any potential impact would be minimised through the application of management prescriptions such as the Forest Practices Code. These practices, including no burning in Special Timber Management Units, are described above and in the 2007 State Party Report. The Forest Practices Code is due to be reviewed in 2008 by the Forest Practices Authority.

Given the existence of appropriate and effective fire management prescriptions, the risk management plans (including Inter Agency Fire Management Protocols), the development of an Integrated Fire Risk Management Plan for Tasmania, and the statistical evidence that the risk from fire regeneration is low, there is no evidence to suggest that there is any need to distance logging operations from the boundary of the property.

#### 1.4. Paragraph 6

Taking into account the clarification provided orally by the State Party at the 31<sup>st</sup> session, also requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre /IUCN /ICOMOS mission to assess the state of conservation of the property, focusing on:

- a) appropriate management of areas of heritage value which are currently outside the property,
- b) an assessment of the degree of risk related to regeneration fires in areas adjacent to the World Heritage property as well as of the effectiveness of the fire management system in place,
- c) impacts of proposed forestry operations (including the construction of new roads) on the outstanding universal value of the property;

This Update Report and the 2007 State Party Report demonstrate that:

- a) The level of protection given to old growth forests in Tasmania exceeds international and national targets, and any remaining areas of identified heritage value outside the property are managed appropriately;
- b) The risk related to regeneration fires adjacent to the World Heritage property has been assessed as low;
- c) The potential impact of proposed forestry operations on the outstanding universal value of the property is minimised and managed through the application of the Forest Practices Code and other measures.

Australia has invited a joint IUCN/ICOMOS mission to assess the state of conservation of the TWWHA, scheduled for March 2008.

#### 1.5. Paragraph 7

Requests the State Party to provide the World Heritage Centre with an updated report by 1 February 2008 on the state of conservation of the property and the above mentioned issues for examination by the Committee at its 32nd session in 2008.

As mentioned above, this document is the updated report requested in **Paragraph 7** of the Committee's Decision. This updated report is provided for examination by the Committee at its 32nd session in 2008.

As requested by the World Heritage Centre, the updated report follows the format for State of Conservation reports agreed at the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Committee in Christchurch, New Zealand. The following section provides an update on issues other than those mentioned above.

## 2. OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE PARTY

A variety of potential threats to the natural and cultural World Heritage values of the property have been identified, including biosecurity, climate change and operations that pre-date the listing of the property. Management effort and research are focused on those issues that may directly impact on the property's World Heritage values.

These threats are being addressed through national and state recovery programmes and the adaptive management arrangements for the property. As part of this adaptive management of the property, an interim review of the 1999 Management Plan is nearing completion, with a full review due to commence in 2009-2010.

#### 2.1. Interim review of Management Plan

During 2007 the *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999* was subject to an interim review. Public consultation was conducted over 6 weeks around October 2007. The Plan Update will be finalised shortly. A full review of the Plan is scheduled to commence in 2009-2010. More information on the interim review is available online at www.parks.tas.gov.au

#### 2.2. Environmental Impact Assessment

From early 2007 the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service has been upgrading its impact assessment process. The revised system is more thorough, has increased accountability, greater transparency and offers significantly improved assessment of environmental, social and economic impacts. The system has four levels of assessment, will be electronically distributed and will integrate with all other local and Federal assessment processes. It is currently being trialed and is schedule for full implementation in the second quarter of 2008.

#### 2.3. Threat Management

Threats to World Heritage values of the TWWHA are taken extremely seriously by Australia. A number of potential threats to the TWWHA have been identified and are the focus of significant research and effort jointly by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments, and in many cases, in partnership with strategic partners such as universities etc.

The nature and management of these threats, discussed in further detail below, are central to Australia's management of the TWWHA under the World Heritage Convention and have been acknowledged in the interim review of the Management Plan and/or by the TWWHA Consultative Committee. The majority of management effort is dedicated to managing those issues which, through research and proper consultation processes, have been identified as the most significant threats to the outstanding universal values in the TWWHA. Effort and resources to manage these issues and their impact on the world heritage values of the area have therefore been the focus for Australia, and are expected to remain the priority into the future.

#### 2.4. Lake Fidler

Lake Fidler is one of three meromictic lakes located in the Gordon River system. As reported previously during the 1989 renomination process, the two other shallower lakes nearby had lost their meromixis. IUCN noted in its 1989 technical evaluation that, following the commissioning of the Middle Gordon Power Scheme, only one of three unique meromictic lakes beside the Gordon River retained the condition.

The underlying cause of the disturbance to the natural meromixis in these lakes related to the operation of the Middle Gordon Power Scheme which pre-dates the World Heritage listing of the property. Following the previous loss of meromixis in Lake Fidler in 2003, Hydro Tasmania had partial success in restoring the meromixis through a saline recharge in 2004, though at considerable expense. Since that recharge, unfortunately the meromictic state has continued to decline gradually.

At the November 2007 meeting of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Consultative Committee, Hydro Tasmania predicted the loss of meromixis of Lake Fidler in mid 2009 and proposed not to undertake a further saline recharge or further monitoring. The Consultative Committee requested that the State Party inform the World Heritage Committee of this situation and that management agencies explore options to maintain and monitor the meromixis. Hydro Tasmania and the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service are currently evaluating various scenarios.

#### 2.5. Basslink

A changed management regime for the Gordon River Power Station has resulted from the recent installation of the Basslink undersea power cable connecting Tasmania to mainland Australia. Prior to the commissioning of the cable, research during the assessment process indicated that the operation of Basslink could potentially cause changed conditions downstream along the Gordon River system in the south west of the World Heritage property.

Potential effects include: reduction in habitat availability for macroinvertebrate and fish communities; follow-on effects due to reduced food supplies for fish, platypus and native water rats; projected further erosion of alluvial sediment banks; and a projected acceleration of vegetation losses in riparian zone. Investigations found that all present and Basslink-projected impacts were greatest in the first 15km downstream of the power station, upstream of the Denison River, a major unregulated tributary.

In response to these research findings, Hydro Tasmania made two commitments to address Basslink impacts in the Gordon River. These commitments were to maintain a minimum environmental flow of 19 m³/s in summer and 38 m³/s in winter to maintain habitat area for macroinvertebrates and ensure adequate food supplies for fish and aquatic mammals; and to implement a rampdown rule to address the risks of increased river bank erosion. Results from post-Basslink monitoring will be compared to baseline information gathered in nearly five years of monitoring that occurred prior to Basslink coming on line in April 2006. Further information on this issue is available online at

 $\frac{http://www.hydro.com.au/home/Our+Environment/Water/Basslink+Environmental+S}{tudies/Gordon.htm}$ 

#### 2.6. Biosecurity issues

In the last few years, a number of biosecurity issues have emerged in Tasmania, some of which may threaten listed World Heritage values. These emerging issues have been acknowledged in the interim review of the Management Plan for the property.

#### • Devil Facial Tumour Disease

The Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisii*) is considered a World Heritage value, and is one of the marsupial carnivores for which the TWWHA is a stronghold. The species is found across Tasmania. Since 1996 a devastating and hitherto unknown facial tumour disease has struck the species, with a very high mortality rate amongst those infected. It is believed to be spread from animal to animal, through direct contact. The disease was recently found at only a small number of locations at the edges of the property, such as Cradle Mountain and Strathgordon, but is believed to be spreading in a westerly direction across Tasmania. It is reported that devils in the more remote areas of the south west of Tasmania are so far free of the disease.

The Tasmanian devil is listed as vulnerable<sup>3</sup>. Threatened fauna and flora may be listed in any one of the following categories as defined in Section 179 of the EPBC Act:

- Extinct:
- Extinct in the wild\*;
- Critically endangered\*;
- Endangered\*;
- Vulnerable\*; and
- Conservation dependent.

The Australian and Tasmanian Governments have invested significant effort and resources in a multi-faceted strategy for the recovery of the species, research into the disease and the prevention of its further spread. Further information on this issue is available online at <a href="https://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/LBUN-5QF86G?open">www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/LBUN-5QF86G?open</a>

#### • Amphibian chytrid fungus

Chytridiomycosis is an infectious disease affecting amphibians worldwide. The disease has been recorded in other regions of mainland Australia and now Tasmania. Some species of endemic frogs are amongst the World Heritage values of the property. Chytridiomycosis is caused by the amphibian chytrid

<sup>\*</sup> Only species in those categories marked with an asterix are matters of national environmental significance (protected matters) under the EPBC Act.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> S. 179 Under national legislation, a native species is eligible to be included in the *vulnerable* category of threatened species at a particular time if, at that time:

a) it is not critically endangered or endangered; and

it is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future, as determined in accordance with the prescribed criteria

fungus, *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*. This is a highly virulent fungal pathogen of amphibians capable at the minimum of causing sporadic deaths in some populations, and 100 per cent mortality in other populations. Surviving individuals are believed to be carriers. A national Threat Abatement Plan has been prepared. In August 2007, researchers reported to the Consultative Committee for the TWWHA that the disease has been detected in frogs in many areas across the State, including the margins of the property.

Research and management is now focused on developing effective biosecurity measures to contain both the amphibian chytrid fungus and root-rot *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, another pathogen found in the TWWHA and in other areas of Australia. *P. cinnamomi* can be spread in soil and water and affects plants.

The measures being developed are expected to include wash-down disinfection procedures and caution when sourcing and transporting water for fire fighting. The Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries and Water is raising awareness and liaising with the Parks and Wildlife Service and Forestry Tasmania on this issue to review land management and visitor management practices in the light of new information on the distribution and spread of the chytrid fungus. More information on these issues is available at

http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/ktp/frog-fungus.html

 $\frac{http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/tap/phytophthora/index.html}{}$ 

#### • Platypus - fungal disease

Two of only three surviving species of monotremes – the most primitive group of mammals – are part of the suite of World Heritage values of the property. These are the platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) and the shortbeaked echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*). Although the platypus is currently common and widespread, there is concern about the potential impact of an infection caused by an aquatic fungus, *Mucor amphiborum*. Affected animals develop ulcers on various parts of the body that can lead to death from secondary infection and inability to control body temperature. So far the disease appears confined to northern water catchments but there are anecdotal reports of the disease in southern and north-western river systems, which have indicated that the disease may be spreading to other areas. Further details on this issue are available at

http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/wildlife/mammals/Platypus\_Mucormycosis.pdf

#### • Other Invasive Species

The **European fox** (*Vulpes vulpes*) has recently been introduced illegally into Tasmania. Although there have been very few reliable sightings of foxes, the potential impact of the fox on both livestock and native species has been demonstrated on mainland Australia. The Tasmanian Government is aiming to eradicate the fox before it can establish in Tasmania. Information on this issue is available online at

http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/ThemeNodes/LBUN-5K438G?open

- The **Superb lyrebird**, (*Menura novaehollandiae*) a native species to mainland Australia, but not to Tasmania, is becoming established in some areas around the edge of the TWWHA, particularly in the south east of Tasmania. Further work is needed to assess the impact that the introduced Superb Lyrebird (*Menura superba*) has on lizard species in forested areas. <a href="http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/wildlife/reptile/repindex.html#top">http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/wildlife/reptile/repindex.html#top</a>
- Another emerging issue is the spread and establishment of highly invasive
   weeds such as sea spurge and marram grass, particularly around the south and
   west of the property. Specially trained teams are targeting weeds around the
   south and western coastline. Further information on this issue is available
   online at www.parks.tas.gov.au/factsheets/threats/CoastalWeeds.pdf

#### • Orange-Bellied Parrot

The Orange-Bellied Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) is a World Heritage value of the property and is listed as critically endangered under Australian and Tasmanian threatened species legislation. A captive breeding programme has been established as part of the Recovery Plan for the species. Some birds held in captivity outside of the property, as part of this programme, have contracted Psittacine circoviral disease. The disease is listed as a key threatening process under national legislation. The disease is not known within wild populations of the species.

#### 2.7. Climate Change

At 20 per cent of the Tasmanian landmass, with extensive mountain ranges and incorporating large areas with very active coastline, the World Heritage property is at risk from climate change. However, the size of the area and the diversity of ecosystems contribute to the adaptive capacity of the area.

Potential impacts on the property include, but may not be limited to:

- rising sea levels and more intense or frequent storm events potentially damaging and submerging a range of World Heritage values along the coastline and waterways
- higher temperatures potentially resulting in changes of geographic distributions of ecosystems
- alterations in normal weather patterns potentially resulting in increases in dry lightning storms and changes to rainfall amounts and distribution
- potential 'knock-on' effect on ecosystems dependent on rainfall and moist conditions, fire-sensitive ecosystems and riverine systems.

Over the longer term these impacts will affect some World Heritage values, but on current information they will alter the nature and distribution of, rather than remove, the existence of a range of outstanding universal values in the property.

The impacts of climate change on a range of coastal values in the property are discussed and addressed in a proposed revision of Tasmania's State Coastal Policy,

which is expected to be released in 2008. More information and a copy of the proposed Policy is at

www.environment.tas.gov.au/cm proposed state coastal policy 2006.html

#### 2.8. Ongoing Management of Cultural Sites

Most cultural heritage sites within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area are in reserves managed by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). Three of the major Pleistocene cave sites – Kuti Kina, Wargata Mina and Ballawinne – were handed back to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community by the Tasmanian Government in 1995. Freehold title was vested in the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT), on behalf of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, under the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995* (Tas), which came into operation on 14 November 1995. These sites are managed on behalf of the Aboriginal community by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (TALSC).

The majority of the Pleistocene Aboriginal cave sites in the TWWHA are in Precambrian limestones and dolomites in the valley bottoms in remote areas, difficult to access, and their locations are not known to the general community. As a result they are generally not subject to disturbance. However, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (TALSC) has expressed concern about the impacts of human activity on some sites, in particular Kuti Kina and Wargata Mina. TALSC would also like to see acknowledgement of the entire TWWHA as an Aboriginal landscape; greater Aboriginal engagement in management; and a greater commitment of resources to cultural heritage protection and management, including resources to TALSC to undertake appropriate management of Aboriginal held sites within the property. (2004 State of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area report).

Systematic surveys of the coast within the property have shown that many of coastal Aboriginal sites, particularly those on Holocene dunes, are subject to, or at risk from, wind and/or wave erosion. The 2004 *State of the TWWHA* report notes that coastal erosion of Aboriginal heritage sites is one of the main threats causing impacts to the cultural values of the property. The report also notes the potential for erosion to be initiated or exacerbated by human impact. Coastal erosion remains a significant threat to coastal Aboriginal sites and this threat is likely to significantly increase as a result of climate change. Ongoing sheet erosion of the Central Plateau and visitor activities and infrastructure are also identified as threats to Aboriginal cultural sites.

A program of coastal site stabilisation and monitoring initiated by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) and continued by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Heritage Office, in partnership with TALSC, has resulted in the stabilisation and revegetation of a number of important coastal sites.

Disturbances to Aboriginal heritage sites in some areas were reduced or eliminated through the closure or diversion of tracks and the restriction of damaging activities.

Losses of Aboriginal landscapes (identified through comparisons of current landscapes with descriptions by 19th century explorers) are recognised as having resulted at least in part from modern fire management regimes. This recognition has

prompted the initiation of research into developing Aboriginal fire management techniques that may lead to the restoration of Aboriginal heritage landscapes (2004 *State of the TWWHA* report).

In the light of the view of cultural heritage staff within the PWS and TALSC that the "current state of protection and conservation of Aboriginal heritage within the TWWHA was less than satisfactory" (2004 State of the TWWHA report) the current review of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999 gives special attention to the management of Aboriginal heritage within the property, with a view to improving the conservation and protection of Aboriginal heritage.

#### 2.9. Flood damage

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service has also reported on damage from recent floods and heavy rains in Tasmania in late 2007. This included:

- Serious damage to visitor infrastructure from flooding along the Gordon River and at Sarah Island, Macquarie Harbour.
- Substantial damage to the road surface and banks subsiding for the Crotty Rd, Mt McCall Road and Bird River track including an extensive landslip in the Bird River Area.

The approximate cost to replace impacted infrastructure is estimated at \$3 million. Values affected are mostly vegetation including Gondwanan linked species such as Huon pine along the rivers.

#### 2.10. Wielangta Court Case – Eastern Tasmania

In the 2007 State Party Report, it was reported that a judgement had been delivered in December 2006 by the Australian Federal Court on a court case involving logging on the east coast of Tasmania, in the Wielangta State Forest (*Brown v Forestry Tasmania 2006*). The Wielangta State Forest is not located near the property.

The case related to whether forestry operations in Wielangta are likely to have a significant impact on the broad toothed stag beetle, the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and the swift parrot, and whether the forestry operations had been undertaken in accordance with the RFA.

The December 2006 decision was successfully appealed by Forestry Tasmania to the full bench of the Federal Court during 2007. The 2007 appeal judgement is available online at: <a href="https://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/FCAFC/2007/186.html">www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/FCAFC/2007/186.html</a>. The other party has sought leave to lodge an appeal to the High Court of Australia.

#### 2.11. Pulp Mill at Bell Bay, north east Tasmania

The World Heritage Centre wrote to the State Party during 2007 concerning media reports about the proposal to construct a pulp mill at Bell Bay, in the Tamar Valley, north east Tasmania. During 2007 the Tasmanian Parliament approved a

comprehensive permit for the construction and operation of a pulp mill, comprising 44 schedules prepared by 19 independent authorities and regulators.

In August 2007, the then Australian Government Environment Minister approved the pulp mill subject to 48 conditions which must be met before construction commences. In summary, the key elements of the 48 conditions are:

- An integrated Environmental Impact Management Plan that will strictly prescribe all actions relating to matters under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.
- An independent panel, drawn from national and international experts, to oversee the design, implementation and monitoring of the pulp mill.
- An independent inspector, appointed by the Australian Government, to monitor compliance, and
- Guarantee of tertiary treatment of effluent, in the unlikely event it becomes necessary.

The Wilderness Society raised concerns *inter alia* about the source of the wood for the mill, however an appeal by the Wilderness Society against the lawfulness of the assessment process was unsuccessful. There is a current legal challenge against the Minister's decision to approve the project. The proposed mill will not use wood from the TWWHA, as no logging is permitted inside the property. The proponent has stated that no old growth forest will be used in the mill.

More information on this issue is available at <a href="http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2007/3385/decision.html">http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2007/3385/decision.html</a>

## 3. POTENTIAL MAJOR RESTORATIONS, ALTERATIONS AND/OR NEW CONSTRUCTION(S) WITHIN THE PROTECTED AREA

The following provides a summarised update on potential and current redevelopments within the protected area covered by the Management Plan for the property. Full details on these activities can be made available to the mission if required.

The interim review of the 1999 Management Plan, once adopted, will formally update the procedures for impact assessment to be consistent with the World Heritage management principles in national legislation, namely the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000*.

The TWWHA Consultative Committee has always had a formal place in these procedures, and provides advice to both the Tasmanian and Australian Governments on such matters. Members of the mission will have an opportunity to meet with members of the Consultative Committee.

Visitor Services Sites or Zones are the places where the majority of visitor facilities are provided and are the locations where the majority of visitors experience the World Heritage property. In one of the Visitor Services Zones (Lake St Clair) and at one of the Visitor Services Sites (Cockle Creek) new visitor facilities are undergoing assessment or are being built by commercial proponents.

#### 3.1. Tourism redevelopment at Lake St Clair

Lake St Clair is a Visitor Services Zone provided for in the Management Plan for the TWWHA. It lies at the edge of the property, and is the source of the Derwent River. Since the 1930s there has been visitor accommodation at Lake St Clair. In recent years, various projects have been proposed, in accordance with the Management Plan for the property, at this location. The latest proposals are:

- Redevelopment of tourist facilities at Cynthia Bay, Lake St Clair
  The leaseholder of the Cynthia Bay facility is seeking a variation from an
  earlier approved proposal. The revised proposal is under consideration by the
  Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.
- Adaptive re-use of Pumphouse Point for tourist facility
   Over recent years several proposals have been made for this site but have not proceeded. The current leaseholder has submitted a proposal for adaptive re-use of the existing buildings at Pumphouse Point and the construction of additional accommodation on the access road to the Point.

#### 3.2. Tourism development at Cockle Creek

Cockle Creek is a Visitor Services Site provided for in the Management Plan for the TWWHA, but lies outside the World Heritage property itself. It marks the entrance / exit point for the South Coast Track, one of the main long-distance walking tracks in the property. These proposals lie within the area covered by the Management Plan for the property.

#### • Planter Beach, Cockle Creek East

A development proposal for tourist accommodation was approved in previous years. The site lies outside the property.

#### • Freehold land at Cockle Creek East

This proposal is essentially an amendment to the above development. It relocates the proposed main visitor lodge (reception, restaurant and visitor centre) from the approved location at Planter Beach to a block of freehold land outside the National Park and outside the TWWHA. The proposal has been approved and complementary broader site planning for the Cockle Creek environs is underway.

#### 3.3. Mineral exploration in Adamsfield Conservation Area

In November 2007 the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service reported to the Consultative Committee that mineral exploration on a lease within the Adamsfield Conservation Area was proposed. This is the only location within the World Heritage property where this activity is permitted under the Management Plan. The Adamsfield area was subject to mineral prospectivity prior to the 1989 extension of the property and was clearly mentioned in the nomination document.

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service has advised the proposal will need to follow the assessment procedures under the Management Plan to ensure there is no significant impact on World Heritage values from this activity if it proceeds. The Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts may also need to assess the proposal.

## 3.4. Mineral exploration in the adjacent South West Conservation Area

In December 2007 Planet Minerals Pty Ltd applied for a exploration licence over a significant portion of the South West Conservation Area between Cox Bight and Melaleuca. This reserve is surrounded on three sides by the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage property. Mineral Resources Tasmania has sought Parks and Wildlife Service advice. The Parks and Wildlife Service is formulating its comment on the proposed licence application.

#### 3.5. Cradle Valley Centralised Sewerage Scheme

During 2007 a detailed impact assessment was completed on a project to install a centralised sewerage scheme at Cradle Valley. The Cradle Valley village lies outside the property, with visitor services just inside the property. Pencil Pine Creek runs between these two areas. Cleaned water resulting from the scheme will enter Pencil Pine Creek under a road bridge, thence running downstream out of the property. Advice from the Consultative Committee informed a detailed examination of water quality, visitor experience and cultural heritage issues during construction and operation. It is expected that the treatment of sewerage under the new scheme will be far superior environmentally to the existing treatment using individual systems for each accommodation lodge.

#### 4. ATTACHMENTS

- A Case Study of the Weld Valley
- B Forestry Tasmania's Updated *Forestry in the Landscape* approach
- C Tasmania's Fire Management Framework & Role of Fire in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area
- D UTAS Innovation Ltd Background report November 2007

Fire management in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area: A report to the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.

- E Map: Special Timber Management Units: no regeneration burns
- F Additional information provided by Forestry Tasmania on Roading