TNPA NEWS

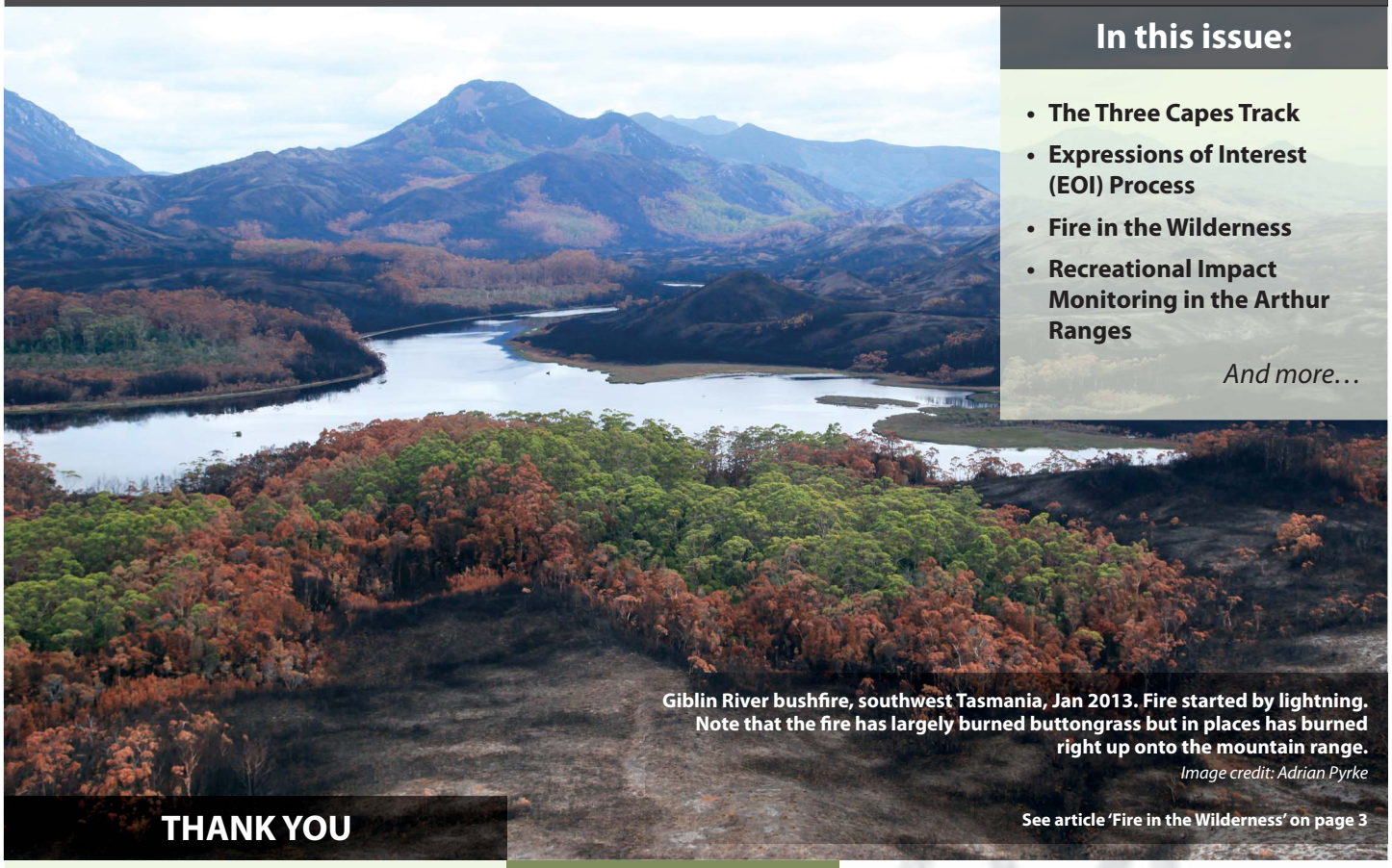
TASMANIAN NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION INC

Newsletter No 22 Summer 2016

In this issue:

- **The Three Capes Track**
- **Expressions of Interest (EOI) Process**
- **Fire in the Wilderness**
- **Recreational Impact Monitoring in the Arthur Ranges**

And more…



Giblin River bushfire, southwest Tasmania, Jan 2013. Fire started by lightning. Note that the fire has largely burned buttongrass but in places has burned right up onto the mountain range.

Image credit: Adrian Pyrke

See article 'Fire in the Wilderness' on page 3

THANK YOU

The TNPA Management Committee would like to thank the following people and organisations who over the last 6 months have volunteered their time to assist the TNPA, or have helped us in other ways.

Salamanca Market and/or Sustainable Living Festival Stalls: Patsy Jones, Debbie Quarmby, Jenny Burnett, Rob and Toni Hill, Susan Keleher, Jane Wilson, Anne McConnell, Dieter Nikolai, Chris Bell, Rob Blakers, Simon Olding, Dave Ross, Nick Sawyer

Buttongrass Ball: Folk Federation of Tasmania, Dave Wanless, the VerandahCoots, As the Crow Flies and Plants of Tasmania

NPAC AGM & Meetings: Glenys Jones, Adrian Pyrke, Nick Sawyer, Anne McConnell

Administrative Assistance to the TNPA: Amy Lin

TNPA News Production (this issue): Ricoh Business Centre, Bec Kurczok

Other Support and Assistance: Jess Feehely, Paul Smith, The Tasmanian Conservation Trust, The Wilderness Society

EDITORIAL

"To protect, present and manage in concert with the community, Tasmania's unique and outstanding reserve system for all people, for all time."

This is the vision statement for the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). But is the agency in any way able to live up to this vision? So many of the articles in this issue of TNPA News point to the same conclusion: the PWS, subject to frequent budget cuts, staff reduction, loss of expertise - and sidelining - over many years, is being prevented from carrying out its core responsibilities of protecting and managing our national parks and other reserved areas. Rather, what remains of the agency has been directed to implement the current state government's agenda of "unlocking" our parks, which requires refocusing its priorities into providing facilities for tourists and facilitating commercial tourism developments. Our reserve system, Tasmania's 'jewel in the crown' and principal tourist drawcard, is the casualty.

PWS staff are not in a position to speak out about either the lack of resources or the change in priorities and, relative to its size, PWS has probably lost more staff from budget cuts than any other government agency – see previous issue of TNPA News for a report from the CPSU titled *The Impact of Budget Cuts on the Parks and Wildlife Service*. The TNPA will continue to push for a fully resourced Parks Service that can indeed protect, present and manage Tasmania's unique and outstanding reserve system.

To protect, present and manage in concert with the community, Tasmania's unique and outstanding reserve system for all people, for all time.

Vision statement of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service

by Catharine Errey
President, TNPA

From The President's Pen

Key Issues for the TNPA Over the Past 6 Months

During the second half of 2015 the key issues for the TNPA continued to be:

1. The draft TWWHAMP (Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan)
2. The government's EOI process for commercial tourism projects in national parks and reserved areas, and
3. The proposed changes to national park management plans – with the specific intention of enabling commercial tourism projects that would not be permitted under the existing management plan

When the World Heritage Commission (the international governing body for all World Heritage properties) released its report (in late June/early July) on the draft TWWHAMP, one of its requests was for a Reactive Monitoring Mission to visit Tasmania, to look at the TWWHA and to meet with relevant parties. A time was set aside for the Mission to meet with representatives from ENGOs (Environmental non-government organisations) and TNPA's Nick Sawyer was part of the ENGO expert group which carefully planned and prepared their presentations to the Mission. This meeting took place in late November. The Mission has not yet released its report.

The Tasmanian ENGO alliance (it is not a formalised group) has continued to meet and work together on all issues that impact on Tasmania's national parks and reserved areas – and the TNPA continues to play an active role in the alliance.

At the end of October/beginning of November, the National Parks Australia Council (the peak body for all the state National Parks Associations) held its AGM and meetings in Hobart. TNPA's Nick Sawyer hosted and organised the meetings. I wish to acknowledge all the time and work that Nick put into this very successful event.

In September the state government announced the opening date and fees for its Three Capes Track in the Tasman National Park. There was much media and public interest (particularly in the fees!) and also extensive (and no doubt expensive) publicity and promotion for the walk. TNPA, along with some of the other ENGOs, has continued to take the government to task on the lack of information available on what the public (independent walkers) can and can't do in what is, after all, a publicly funded national park. In this issue of TNPA News you will find two articles on aspects of the Three (more accurately 'Two') Capes Track.

As the government quietly drip feeds its proposed changes to management plans for national parks (initially Narawntapu and more recently the much higher profile Freycinet) the TNPA has been alerting its members to closing dates for the public to make submissions on these changes, along with information to help make an informed submission. We can expect 'announcements' (in the Public Notices of the newspaper) of proposed changes to other national parks – and of course these are not the long overdue reviews of Management Plans but purely changes to allow commercial tourism developments that could not take place under the existing management plan. The TNPA will continue to alert members to these proposed changes.

And lastly, fire! The TNPA's biggest concern: the most serious threat of all to our national parks, foreshadowed in the article "Fire in the Wilderness", written for this issue of TNPA News just prior to the dry lightning strikes which ignited the bushfires that continue to burn in many areas of the TWWHAMP and the Tarkine. The map of lightning caused fires in that article (on page 4) will contain many additional patches of red when updated. These fires had the potential to obliterate much, if not most, of the Gondwanan alpine vegetation that makes the TWWHA so special. We were extremely fortunate that their outbreak was followed by a spell of unusually benign weather which saved us from the "worst case scenario" and facilitated efforts to control them. But summer is not yet over. The possibility remains that hot, windy conditions could cause some of these fires to flare again but it appears that we may have been lucky, the fires have so far been minor compared to what they could have been. Let them remind us of the urgency of formulating a new approach to the management of fire in western Tasmania which acknowledges the reality of a hotter, drier climate that has fundamentally changed much of what we thought we knew about the ignition and behaviour of wildfire in Tasmania.

TNPA EVENTS

The Buttongrass Ball

The annual Buttongrass Ball for 2015 happened to take place on the same weekend as the National Parks Australia Council (NPAC) AGM and meetings, taking place in Hobart, and the Sustainable Living Festival so it was a very full weekend for TNPA 'personnel'.

The ball was good fun and relatively well attended (and included two NPAC people and around six TNPA members).

The night raised $412 for TNPA, which is pretty nice for us having to do very little.

Thanks are due to David Wanless, who calls the dances, the bands VerandahCoots and As the Crow Flies, for donating their time, to the volunteers from the Tasmanian Folk Federation and to Plants of Tasmania for the loan of potted buttongrass yet again. Thanks also to Anne McConnell, for her part in organizing the event and for decorating the hall—the Keep the WHA Wild Banner helped lift the decoration for the night (see page 20).

by Adrian Pyrke

Fire in the wilderness

Giblin River bushfire, southwest Tasmania, Jan 2013. Fire started by lightning. Note that the fire has largely burned buttongrass but in places has burned right up onto the mountain range. *Image credit: Adrian Pyrke*

The bushfire situation in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) has worsened significantly in the last 40 years. In the early 1980s, malicious and spiteful lighting of fires was rampant, particularly along the Lyell Highway, although this human malevolence seems to have largely abated. Accidental ignitions from campfires and other human folly require vigilant controls, but they are not the most significant threat. **Since the early 2000s fires started by dry lightning have become the most significant concern**. A common pattern, apparently rare until the last 15 years, is a dry lightning thunderstorm followed by a day of very hot, dry and windy weather. In February 2007 dry lightning started several fires in southwest Tasmania that rapidly developed into huge conflagrations. One of these, the Reynolds Creek fire, travelled over 30 kilometres in a day. Another large fire started on the same day and burnt to the top of the Western Arthurs. In January 2013, while the Dunalley fire was raging, the Giblin River fire in the southwest was started by lightning and burnt over 40,000 hectares under the worst bushfire weather that southern Tasmania has experienced for a long time.

Lightning Fires

The intensity and ferocity of these large lightning fires is hard to imagine – obvious from a distance because of the immense plume of smoke reaching many kilometres up into the atmosphere. Few people saw these fires closely as they were occurring, but observations made afterwards tell the sorry tale. The sheer scale of these fires is daunting and not fully appreciated by many Tasmanians. Organic soils, fauna, fire sensitive rainforest and alpine vegetation suffered, but fortunately most of the vegetation burnt was the more fire adapted buttongrass. These are not the kind of fires that we want to see in the TWWHA. Unfortunately, however, we should expect to see more.

Are Lightning Fires Normal in Southwest Tasmania?

Comments have been made on www.bushwalk.com about the efforts of the Parks and Wildlife Service to extinguish these 'natural' fires – some people believe they should be allowed to run their course. But how natural are these lightning fires? It is conceivable that climate change has altered the patterns of lightning storms and associated rain – indeed **scientists in the 1980s noted that lightning fire was largely absent from southwest Tasmania**. It certainly isn't now. The total mix of ignitions, regardless of source, is what fashions vegetation and associated biota; more important factors are the season of burning, size of fires and frequency. The actual source of the ignition, be it a match, a flare, a fire stick or a bolt of lightning, does not make it an inherently correct kind of fire in terms of maintaining natural diversity. There is definitely a place for appropriate fire, however, to maintain a healthy environment.

Inappropriate and Appropriate Burning in the Wilderness

In the late 19th and early 20th century white people destroyed large areas of our most fire sensitive conifer forests and alpine heathlands in western Tasmania by ignorant burning as well as by other activities such as mining. Aboriginal people burnt regularly for cultural reasons for thousands of years, yet King Billy Pine and Deciduous Beech, both trees that take hundreds of years to recover following fire, co-existed in vast stands – many of these have gone

in the last 150 years. The Indigenous burning must have been applied skilfully, specifically and judiciously, and the extensive areas of flammable buttongrass visible today are evidence of this active land management. The rainforest, conifers and alpine heathland we have left are very precious and no opportunity should be missed to accord fire protection to these fire sensitive areas. It is likely that climate change will make this a significant challenge.

Effective Fire Management in Remote Wilderness

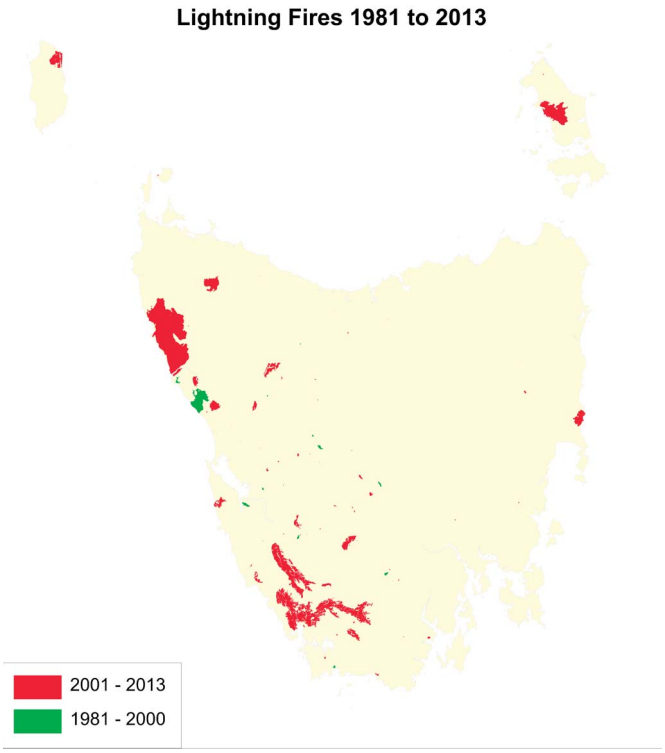
Effective fire management depends on a range of risk management actions, none of which on their own provides a complete solution. Putting out unwanted fires, or suppression as it is called by the professionals, is important and while improved success in recent decades has been aided by the development of technology, equipment (e.g. helicopters) and commitment, fire-fighting can only do so much to protect the remote Tasmanian wilderness. The ability to quickly detect lightning and fires using technology (e.g. satellite imagery, aircraft and remote lightning detectors) has become an important weapon, but it hasn't removed the problem. Fires in buttongrass can spread very quickly and some lightning fires attain an uncontrollable size so rapidly that early suppression is all but impossible. Moreover, on days such as 4 January 2013 when fires in Tasmania destroyed over 200 houses, the highest priority for all fire-fighters is protecting people's lives, so the destructive impact of the fires in the wilderness is hard to address with the limited resources available in Tasmania.

Using Fire to Fight Fire

Using fire to fight fire is another fire management option. Bushfire researchers have developed computer simulation models that are able to test how planned fires reduce the impact of the larger, more intense unplanned fires. One such study tested many different planned fire scenarios lit in buttongrass in southwest Tasmania. These models create fires that spread through realistic vegetation, over actual terrain and are based on real weather from meteorological records. Fortunately the fires are all in cyberspace so many 'experiments' can be designed and tested. The evidence from the simulations is that planned fires in buttongrass, applied at the right size and strategic locations, can significantly reduce the unwanted burning of alpine vegetation and rainforest in southwest Tasmania. This is because the planned fires become barriers across the landscape that limit the spread of the destructive summer fires.

Planned Burning of Buttongrass

The technical understanding of the right conditions under which to burn buttongrass is now well developed, based on research and practice over the past 25 years. Planned burning is conducted mostly in autumn when the rainforest and alpine vegetation is sodden wet but the buttongrass burns nicely under these conditions which are milder than in summer. Thus the risk of accidentally burning the areas that should be protected from fire is extremely low. The weakest link is the weather forecasting for remote areas, however forecasting accuracy will continue to improve in leaps and bounds over the next decade as it has over the preceding ones. So fire as a management tool can continue to be skilfully applied in the right places in the TWWHA.



Note very low frequency/extent of lightning fires in areas shaded green (1981 – 2000) and increased incidence/extent in red shaded areas (2001 – 2013). An updated version of this map would of course show a greatly increased area of lightning fires in the TWWHA.

Image credit: Adrian Pyrke

The Complexities of Controlled Burning

One challenge is to further develop our understanding of how fire impacts buttongrass vegetation, although much knowledge has been acquired from research. While buttongrass is certainly much more tolerant of fire than rainforest or native conifers, how often can it be burnt and yet maintain its natural diversity? This is a complex question of spacing and timing of planned fires that also provide a quantifiable benefit for protecting the fire sensitive vegetation. While the simulation modelling demonstrates the protection benefit, the model has weak components that require better data inputs to provide more reliable answers. For example, we currently have a poor understanding of how and when fire burns in Tasmanian rainforest – in an average year there are only a couple of days when the rainforests are dry enough and the wind is sufficient to carry the fire through the vegetation. Therefore rainforests rarely burn, but they can.

Ongoing Research and Active Management are Crucial

Planned burning on its own is not the total answer to protect the fire sensitive natural values of the TWWHA. Nor is fire suppression. The modelling evidence suggests, however, that a lot of planned fire is required to make a difference. Simply dabbling in tiny areas will not be enough. Planned fire needs to be applied, the impacts on flora, fauna and soils monitored, and models further refined when new or better data becomes available. A real, live experiment with planned fire requires implementation with judicious periodic review as to effectiveness and impacts. The risk is that without this active management, the rainforests, conifers and alpine vegetation will continue to degrade and disappear and there is always the possibility of even larger and more catastrophic summer bushfires.

Managing the Fire Threat to the TWWHA Requires a Lot More Investment

Managing the fire threat to the TWWHA requires a lot more investment. Planned burning in the TWWHA is afforded very limited resources at the present time and not nearly enough is being done. A focus on protecting people, properties and towns is understandable but fire management in the remoter parts of Tasmania should not be neglected – it is a big part of the responsibility of custodianship for the natural values. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for Aboriginal people to re-establish burning and cultural links to the country that they lived in and managed for thousands of years. While the patterns of burning from pre-European time are not well known and may not be easy to replicate, contemporary Aboriginal custodianship and management of natural values in the wilderness are entirely compatible.

Postscript

On 13 January 2016, only a week after this article was written, western Tasmania was hit by an unprecedented number of lightning strikes that ignited in excess of 80 bushfires. At the time of writing this postscript, fires are still burning and many will continue to do so all summer. The worst impact on fire sensitive forests and alpine vegetation may still be to come. Dire predictions about climate change and fire threat to the TWWHA are unfortunately very real as we can now see. The time for action and increased investment in planned burning and fire suppression is now.

About the author

Adrian Pyrke worked a total of 25 years for the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service as a ranger, fire management officer and state fire manager, retiring in 2014. Adrian's service commenced in 1977 but included an interlude away from the Parks and Wildlife Service between 1982 and 1994 during which he studied, worked as a botanist in Victoria and completed a PhD in vegetation ecology. Adrian is currently working as a fire consultant.

by Nick Sawyer

The Expressions of Interest (EOI) Process **OR** Why Tasmania needs a legislated process to control development on reserved land

EOI Update

The state government's initial call for expressions of interest (EOI) in tourism developments in national parks and reserves occurred shortly after the 2014 state election but has been overshadowed by the review of the management plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and the hype associated with the opening of the Three Capes Track.

Some of the 25 EOI proposals to proceed to Stage 2 (which is when they are made public) are for the construction of infrastructure, some are for activities only, and some include both.

Three of these proposals have already been granted all the approvals necessary for them to proceed:

- Guided Freycinet walk;
- Guided boat charter experience in Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour [1]; and
- Blue Derby Pods Ride.

The first two were able to be approved without any public consultation since they required neither a change to the management plan nor LUPAA approval. The Blue Derby Pods Ride, which involved the construction of accommodation "pods", did require development approval from Dorset Council and the application was advertised on 14 November 2015.

Changes to management plans for Narawntapu and Freycinet national parks have been advertised for public comment. These changes are required for EOIs within these parks to proceed. Many of the EOI proposals within the TWWHA cannot proceed under the current management plan so they await the finalisation of the 2014 draft plan. Some of the proposals, such as the Blue Derby Pods Ride are located in reserves that do not have a management plan.

[1] At the time of writing there is a discrepancy between information on the Coordinator-General's website and a government media release, but it appears that this proposal has received all its approvals.

EOI Process

The process for the assessment of these proposals is described on the Coordinator-General's website http://www.cg.tas.gov.au/ and in the 2014 draft TWWHA Management Plan.

They describe the EOI process as an administrative process within the existing legislative framework. An assessment panel (the majority of whom are senior public servants) tests the proposal against the objectives of the relevant reserve class under the NPRMA and the purposes of reservation under the NCA. It appears that the panel also assesses the proposal against the terms of any management plan, and can make recommendations for amendments to the plan if they consider that the proposal has merit despite being contrary to current restrictions. This assessment informs the Minister's decision. The Minister may then enter into contractual negotiations for lease or licence arrangements. In addition, all proposals are subject to any applicable State and Commonwealth approval [sic] processes.

Concerns regarding this process:

- The only publically available information on the proposal itself is the extremely brief description provided on the Coordinator-General's website. **This would be quite inadequate as the basis for a development application to a Tasmanian council, for example.**
- **The assessment panel is unaccountable.** Neither their deliberations nor their report to the Minister are available to the public. Again, this contrasts with a council's assessment

of a discretionary development application in which the assessment documentation is available to the public, subject to public comment and (potentially) an appeal.

- The general public has a poor understanding of mainstream planning processes but these do attempt to inform the public and facilitate public involvement with requirements and standards for advertising of development proposals. In contrast, the description of the EOI process is confusing and it is fails to make clear what, if any, opportunities exist for public involvement. e.g. I have been asked if the current call for public comment on 2015 draft Management Plan for Freycinet National Park is the only opportunity for comment on the EOI proposal to expand Freycinet Lodge. My response was "maybe". There needs to be a site plan[2], which is subject to public comment, but there is no unambiguous commitment to undertaking a public RAA, which is the key assessment process – see below.
- A RAA is the normal process for assessing the impacts of a proposal against the requirements of the management plan and on the natural and cultural values of a reserve, including the social and recreational values (visitor experience) – these are the values most likely to be overlooked by the Assessment Panel's narrow focus on legislated requirements. If an RAA is not undertaken it is unclear how, or if, these impacts are assessed, and how the conditions of approval (contained in the lease or licence arrangements) are determined.
  - It is not clear if the RAA is an "applicable State process" since it is non-statutory, although verbal advice states that a RAA will be required for all EOI proposals subject to a management plan.
  - The RAA is not statutory so, even if an RAA is undertaken, there is no possibility of appeal or legal challenge to its findings.
  - A RAA is not automatically made public, and public comment is only sought "for major proposal or if consultation is considered beneficial" so, even if an RAA is undertaken, it may never be released unless subjected to a Freedom of Information request.
- An EOI proposal may require assessment under LUPAA, particularly if it involves the construction of infrastructure. This is a statutory assessment process which may provide both public comment and appeal rights but it cannot be relied upon to do so because most planning schemes now provide that a development that has received a positive RAA will be permitted, so will be advertised only if another discretion is triggered under the scheme. In any case, the LUPAA assessment is confined to the requirements of the council planning scheme, so it cannot be relied upon to address the impacts on the broad range of reserve values, which the purpose of the RAA.
- In cases where the EOI is not permissible under the current reserve management plan the statutory process for amending a management plan still has to be followed but the two amendments proposed to date (Narawntapu and Freycinet) include no reasoned justification or assessment of the impacts on the reserve.

Despite claims of openness and transparency, the EOI process amounts to ensuring that the approval meets the requirements of Tasmanian legislation while minimising opportunities for scrutiny[3] and potentially avoiding any professional assessment of impacts on reserve values including the social and recreational values – the values most likely to affected by a tourism development.

The approval resulting from such a poorly considered process is likely to fail one of the key objectives of a good planning process – public acceptance. i.e. a social licence to operate. This is not a good outcome for the tourism industry, the PWS or, particularly, the proponent.

The vast majority of development proposals in Tasmania do not occur on reserved land and are guaranteed an open and transparent assessment by Tasmanian planning legislation. The minimal scrutiny provided by the EOI process is only possible in the absence of a corresponding statutory process for the assessment of development on reserved land in Tasmania. The final section of this paper proposes such a statutory process.

Glossary and explanation:

1999 TWWHAMP: the New Proposals and Impact Assessment Process defined on page 67 of the 1999 Management Plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (which is still the current management plan for the TWWHA). The process is statutory because it is defined in a statutory management plan. This is the process that led (in the early 2000s) to the rejection of additional commercial helicopter/floatplane landing sites and the approval of the (never constructed) Cockle Creek Lodge.

EMPCA: *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act, 1994*. The Tasmanian legislation which specifies the assessment and regulation of industrial activities. It is unlikely to be triggered by a tourism development on reserved land but it is possible that a resort could need a sewage treatment plant large enough to require assessment under EMPCA (it is also possible that a major resort proposal could be declared a Project of Regional Significance, leading to an entirely different assessment process).

EOI: an Expression of Interest submitted in response to the Tasmanian Government's advertising of *Tourism investment opportunities in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, National Parks and Reserves*.

EPA: Environment Protection Authority. The Tasmanian government body with responsibility for the implementation of EMPCA.

LUPAA: *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act, 1993*. The Tasmanian legislation which specifies the process for local government assessment of any proposal which requires a development application (i.e. anything which involves construction of infrastructure).

NCA: *Nature Conservation Act 2002*. The Tasmanian legislation to provide for the declaration of national parks and other reserved land.

NPRMA: *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002*. The Tasmanian legislation to provide for the management of national parks and other reserved land.

RAA: Reserve Activity Assessment. The PWS' process for environmental and social impact assessment. This is a generally sound process but it is not statutory; it is defined by department policy, not by law, so it can be changed without parliamentary approval. It defines four levels of assessment according to the nature of the proposal and the magnitude of the likely impacts. There is no requirement for public release of a RAA and public consultation is optional for levels 2 and 3, mandatory only for level 4. This is the major weakness of the RAA because there have been instances where significant proposals have not been subject to public consultation so the RAA is just internal PWS documentation. Not only is there no public input into the assessment but the public may even be unaware of the proposal itself until far too late to influence the outcome.

RMPS: Tasmania's Resource Management and Planning System, which includes both LUPAA and EMPCA.

Commonwealth Approval

The challenge of obtaining Commonwealth government approval (which will be necessary for many of these proposals if they

[2] A site plan is subsidiary to a management plan. It provides additional detail on the management of a particular small area. The requirement to develop a site plan and make it available for public comment is contained in the current Freycinet Management Plan. Few, if any, of the other EOIs are likely to require the development of a site plan.

[3] Any opportunity for public comment arises from the other legally required processes such as changing a management plan or LUPAA assessment, not from the EOI process itself. Hence it is possible for a proposals such as the boat charter in Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour to be approved with no public involvement

have the potential for significant impacts on world heritage values or federally listed threatened species) appears to be left to the proponent.

Since the EOI process is not statutory and does not provide for public consultation it is possible that any proposal which does require Commonwealth government approval will separately require a full assessment conducted by the Commonwealth. This may come as a rude shock to proponents who were unaware of the implications of "subject to any applicable State and Commonwealth approval processes".

The need for a statutory process to control development on reserved land

The concept of needing to control development on reserved land may appear to be an oxymoron but visitor facilities (at some level) are generally considered necessary and appropriate in some locations in most national parks and reserves. Hence it is necessary to have **rules** and a **process** to determine what can be permitted.

The **rules** are usually set at two levels – the broad requirements contained in legislation and the detailed prescriptions contained in management plans. With the exceptions of the backlog of reserves without management plans and the yet-to-be-finalised 2014 draft TWWHAMP, the rules in place in Tasmania are generally reasonable and adequate to protect the natural and cultural values of our national parks and reserves, so long as they are enforced …

If the **process** to implement these rules is to have the confidence of the public, it needs not only to be honest but be seen to be honest:

1. It needs to be statutory (defined in legislation, in this case the NPRMA). Only a statutory process can by legally challenged. A statutory process cannot be changed without parliamentary approval, which provides opportunity for public scrutiny.
2. It needs to be open and transparent (e.g. all information including a detailed description of the proposal and the assessment documentation readily available).
3. It needs to provide for public comment and require a considered response to this comment. This provides the opportunity for the planning authority to respond in detail to particular concerns and sometimes public comment may raise new issues that had not been considered. Public scrutiny usually results in a better decision and greater public acceptance of the decision.
4. It needs to provide for third party appeal rights. These provide the public with a mechanism for enforcement of the "rules". "Vexatious" appeals are rare despite some claims to the contrary and the decision-making authority is much less likely to "stretch" its interpretation of the law when it knows that it may be required to justify its decision to an independent umpire.

Since its inception in the 1990s the intention of Tasmania's RMPS has been to provide a single integrated application – assessment – approval process for all planning applications.

This integrated process is most widely used in the assessment of industrial developments which require approval under both EMPCA and LUPAA. These two acts are linked so that "planning" aspects of a proposal are assessed by local government and "environmental" aspects by the EPA and the public comment and appeal processes are coordinated. This process has worked well for many years; it ensures that only a single application is required, leading to a single public comment period, a single appeal hearing (should there be one) and a single permit issued by the planning authority (the local council).

Unlike the specialist, coordinated assessment afforded to Level 2 industrial activities by EMPCA, the RMPS legislation does not set specific requirements for assessment of development on reserved land. Around 50% of Tasmania is now in some category of reservation and there is increasing pressure to provide facilities for tourists in these areas.

The main process for the assessment of developments on reserved land (the PWS' RAA) is not even statutory, and has no explicit status within the RMPS. In contrast, the New Proposals and Impact Assessment Process defined in the 1999 Management Plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is statutory because it is defined in a statutory management plan.

Without a rigorous and enforceable approach to assessment of development on reserved land, there is little consistency or public confidence in decision making. An obvious solution to this is to amend the NPRMA to:

1. Define an assessment process for proposals on reserved land within the NPRMA. This could be based on the RAA subject to the inclusion of stricter guidelines to ensure that only the most trivial proposals avoid public scrutiny.
2. Explicitly link the assessment process required by the NPRMA to LUPAA in a similar manner to EMPCA. This could ensure that impacts on park values are assessed by PWS and "planning" aspects are assessed by local government, and the public comment and appeal processes are coordinated.

No planning process can ever avoid some influence from the current government but these proposed amendments to define a statutory process for the assessment of development on reserved land would address the obvious deficiencies of current legislation while utilising existing public comment and appeal processes, which should enhance their acceptability. They would also close the loophole exploited by the EOI process.

Thanks to Jessica Feehely of the Environmental Defenders Office for her advice on an earlier draft of this paper.

Nick Sawyer was a planner with the [Tasmanian] PWS for seven years and a Senior Environmental Officer with the [Tasmanian] EPA for ten.

The following table compares the four planning processes currently utilised in Tasmania:

	1999 TWWHAMP	RAA	EOI	RMPS
Statutory	Yes	No	No	Yes
Public disclosure of information	Yes	Only if public comment is sought	No (only a very basic description of the proposal is available)	Yes
Public comment	Yes	Only for major proposal or if consultation is considered beneficial	Not as part of EOI process itself	Yes
Third party appeal rights	No	No	Not as part of EOI process itself	Yes

by Nick Sawyer

Nature-Based Tourism –World Leader or Mediocrity?

They just keep on coming! The Tasmanian wilderness has never been under threat from so many proposals simultaneously:

- The Expressions of Interest process has resulted in many proposals for tourism developments in reserves which would be rejected under current management plans and the approval without public scrutiny of others.
- The yet to be finalised 2014 draft TWWHAMP removes most of the constraints on tourism development within the TWWHA.
- An additional downhill mountain bike track and a longer "epic ride" are foreshadowed for Mount Wellington. The "epic ride" has the potential to diminish the wild character of the Wellington Plateau (uniquely wild country so close to a major city) and both will improve the business case for the cable car by providing customers who need a one-way trip to the Pinnacle.

Not all the proposals are problematic but the abysmal standard of both the assessment and public debate does not bode well for their rational consideration. Most of the public debate on the Three Capes Track has either denied that there is an impact on the wild character of Tasman Peninsula or wilfully ignored it. Of course such a development has an impact! The question is whether the outcome justifies the impact. It would be helpful for future debate if we could focus on this.

The ostensible justification for these proposals is an intention to make Tasmania a world leader in nature-based tourism, to be achieved by the state government's policy to "unlock our World Heritage Areas and national parks".

But will this ultimately boost our nature-based tourism or reduce it to mediocrity?.

Wilderness is fundamental to the reason why so many visitors appreciate Tasmania today. It is also one of the world's scarcest resources and becoming scarcer by the day. The world has plenty of "natural" areas where lakes are ringed by resorts and the peace and quiet shattered by sightseeing helicopters and floatplanes.

Given the importance of wilderness to Tasmania's "brand" it is extremely foolish to contemplate a tourism future which does not have the maintenance of wilderness as its centrepiece, yet this is exactly what is currently proposed.

The tourism "policy" of the present government is essentially "the market knows best". There is an obvious problem with this approach – market forces dictate that short-term profitability trumps long-term sustainability. The tourism industry has an incentive to capitalise on wilderness, even if it is simultaneously degrading it.

With sensible management Tasmania can provide both a wilderness experience for users who want it, and a thriving nature-based tourism industry, into the future:

- Let's make a selling point of Tasmania's absence of "wilderness resorts", scenic flights or cable cars disfiguring our mountains.
- Let's acknowledge that "sensitive" architecture and "sustainable" design are not sufficient to make development in the wilderness appropriate.
- Let's agree that we need a tourism policy with a vision for the future, not just an endorsement of the prevailing political philosophy that "the market knows best". The policy needs to acknowledge the fundamental importance of wilderness and ensure that all proposed developments are tested against their impacts on wilderness.
- Let's have an open and transparent assessment process for proposals on reserved land which guarantees public comment and appeal rights. In addition to ensuring a proper assessment, it would provide successful proponents with a social licence to operate.

The current "policy" of "unlock our parks and World Heritage areas" with little regard for the consequences may result in immediate profits for some in the tourism industry but in the longer term the onslaught on Tasmania's wilderness will not only spoil Tasmania for those who appreciate its natural qualities, it will also diminish the tourism industry by undermining its fundamental attraction.

TNPA EVENTS

by Jane Wilson, Stall Coordinator

TNPA stall at the Sustainable Living Festival October 31 & November 1 2015

For the last 17 years Sustainable Living Tasmania has held a Hobart festival. A focus on caring for the planet is the theme which links diverse exhibitors at the 2 day weekend event. In 2015 TNPA participated for the first time - joining over 80 stallholders. Community groups, local government enterprises, artists, performers, cooks and small businesses showcased their ventures to an audience of over 8,500 visitors. The indoor/outdoor venue was Princes Wharf No 1 Shed on the Hobart waterfront and entry was by way of a gold coin donation.

Stunning banners featuring images of Tasmanian world heritage areas and national parks taken by photographers Rob Blakers and Chris Bell adorned the TNPA stall marquee. These drew in festival goers as they strolled along towards the back of the shed where the stall was located. Our neighbours, on The Orangutan Project stall, were friendly and welcoming. Most importantly, however, the stall was positioned close to the UTAS Why Sci stall, which held regular demonstrations of icecream preparation using liquid nitrogen. These were a magnet for children and adults alike who got a chance

to consume icecream cones for free!

Information about TNPA and current issues was readily available from the stall and from stall volunteers. The hot discussion topic was the Three Capes Track walk. Many expressed their dissatisfaction with the project and the high fee for the walk. A lack of clear information from the government about access to the Track for PWS Park Permit holders who may not want to pay the $495 fee made fielding questions difficult at times. A number of people hadn't heard of TNPA. Some wondered if the TNPA was the PWS and wanted opportunities to volunteer.

TNPA stall at Sustainable Living Festival
Photo: Jane Wilson

Jane with the signed letters ready to be delivered to Minister Groom

Image credit: Nick Sawyer

The stall was very successful as an awareness raising exercise. The main focus was asking people to sign, and add their name and address, to individual copies of a letter to the Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage, the Hon. Matthew Groom. It contained three questions; one on issues with the Draft 2014 Tasmanian World Heritage Wilderness Area Management Plan, one on the ill-conceived Three Capes Track project and the last on the lack of funding to PWS. It wasn't necessary to approach people and ask them to sign the letter. Many spotted the card table at the front of the stall, saw the letter, read it through and signed it with little prompting. Individual envelopes were later hand addressed - adding Minister Groom's details on the front and the signers' names and addresses on the back. 143 letters (of which10 were from non-Tasmanians) were hand-delivered to Parliament House. [A detailed reply from the Minister was received by letter signers between Christmas and New Year 2015].

For stall volunteers the festival experience was a joyful gathering of like-minded folk. TNPA's coffers weren't depleted by festival participation. See you at the 2016 festival!

The TNPA would like to sincerely thank the following people: Lissa Villeneuve, Michele Mathews and others from SLT for a very well organised event, and for the potted tree lent to the stall, Dieter Nikolai for help with transporting and setting up the marquee (and for the lack of knots on the banner ties!), Catharine Errey and Nick Sawyer for help with taking it down, the volunteer from the Bonorong stall who helped re-position a banner, Rob Blakers for donating a portion of the proceeds of calendar sales, Chris Bell for making and donating cards to sell, Anne McConnell for her Three Capes Track poster concept which formed the basis for one of the handouts, Nick Sawyer for book donations, his "Join Us" poster idea and for his assistance editing handouts and the letter, Debbie Quarmby, Rob and Toni Hill, Susan Keleher and Catharine for their assistance with running the stall (Note: Rob and Toni not only helped on the stall but walked to Officeworks on Saturday afternoon after copies of the letter ran out. They provided a further 100 copies, though only 50 had been requested (a prescient decision) and, lastly, thanks to Baristasista for free coffee vouchers.

TNPA UPDATE

by Nick Sawyer

Three Capes Track
Marketing or pragmatism – which will prevail?

Aerial photo of Surveyors Cove hut complex on the Three Capes Track taken a few weeks before completion. It comprises two 24 bed bunkhouses, a large kitchen/dining room, staff accommodation, toilets, a helipad and lots of water tanks (the smaller white building towards the rear is assumed to be temporary construction worker accommodation). A firebreak extends around three sides of the complex – this will need to be kept clear permanently, probably by re-burning at regular intervals. All three hut complexes are of similar size and layout. They are the largest infrastructure complexes ever constructed in a remote part of a Tasmanian national park and, as such, set a worrying precedent for future development in other national parks.

The eastern half of the Three Capes Track (a.k.a. The Two Capes Track) is now a *fait accompli*. It has been open to the public since just before Christmas. Initial media response has been generally very positive and it appears to have been fully booked for most of this time.

Superficially Three Capes appears a great success but let's examine aspects of the track more closely.

Clarification

The Three Capes Track, as originally proposed (see map below), comprised a western half and an eastern half, linked by a ferry crossing of Port Arthur. Each of the overnight nodes was intended to comprise both PWS huts and upmarket commercial accommodation.

Only the eastern half has been constructed. It is promoted as the Three Capes Track even though it only reaches two of the capes. It starts with ferry trip from Port Arthur to Denmans Cove and walkers are required to stay one night in each of the three PWS hut complexes at Surveyors Cove, Munro and Retakunna. The proposed parallel system of upmarket commercial huts is yet to be constructed.

Some Basic Geography

The Three Capes are Capes Raoul, Pillar and Hauy. All three have been accessible for many years via established walking tracks. Capes Raoul and Hauy could both be reached in about two hours on tracks which were of adequate standard for most people who were prepared to walk this distance. Cape Pillar is a longer walk—slightly too long for the average walker to do as a day trip so usually visited as a two or three day trip using one of several informal campsites. In all three cases, the main attraction was the spectacular coastal scenery near the cape itself.

In recent years the tracks to Capes Raoul and Hauy have been upgraded to make them more appealing to tourists with minimal bushwalking experience (the Cape Hauy Track is also the final section of the Three Capes walk).

The northern half of the old Cape Pillar Track (Fortescue to Tornado Ridge) remains open and unchanged but the southern half (Tornado Ridge to Cape Pillar) has become part of the Three Capes Track. This has involved substantial rerouting and reconstruction of the track to a much higher standard. The original route (Fortescue—Tornado Ridge—Cape Pillar) remains the most direct route to Cape Pillar and the upgrading has shortened the walking time by about an hour.

So the Two Capes Track incorporates a completely new section of track from Denmans Cove to Tornado Ridge, then follows existing (but substantially rerouted and upgraded) tracks to Cape Pillar and back over Mount Fortescue to Cape Hauy and Fortescue.

The spectacular coastal views which feature in most of the Three Capes publicity material are largely confined to the short section from Munro to Cape Pillar which can be reached most directly by the old track from Fortescue Bay.

The Three Capes Concept

The traditional access to the three capes has been to visit Capes Raoul and Hauy as daywalks and Cape Pillar as an easy two or three day walk using the pre-existing direct track from Fortescue and camping somewhere in the Munro—Retakunna area.

The crucial question which will make or break Threes Capes is whether the marketing and the huts on the new track are sufficient to attract walkers away from the traditional approach, which has been made quicker and easier by the track upgrades, does not cost $495, and takes two or three days, not four!

When shown the original Three Capes proposal the reaction of most experienced local walkers has been something to the effect of "how on earth did anyone come up with this!"

Conceptually it was to be a wilderness walk with walkers staying in remote cabins each night, yet there was to be extensive contact with civilisation (Port Arthur and the ferry) at its midpoint—hardly conducive to a wilderness experience! It would have taken walkers within a very short distance of the road access to the Cape Raoul Track and entered civilisation at Port Arthur. Most walkers would want to use these as start or finish points for a walk, and if walkers were expected to pass through Port Arthur after a couple of nights on the track most would want to break the walk for a meal with fresh food, a beer, a shower and to sleep in private in a bed with sheets. This route is not compatible with the concept of a long distance walk in natural surroundings.

The official line is that the government remains committed to the completion of the Three Capes Track (i.e. construction of the western half) but it is to be hoped that they wait a while and review the strengths and weaknesses of the current track before extending it. Any remaining funding is likely to be required to construct campsites for independent walkers (see "independent walkers" next page).

A far cheaper option for those walkers who want a longer trip is to continue north along the coast from Fortescue using the scenic coastal track constructed by the Hobart Walking Club decades ago.

Alternatives

The Tasman Peninsula has a major limitation as a location for a long distance "wilderness walk"—the undeveloped area is simply not big enough! See the comments above on the original proposal. The Two Capes Track that is now open arguably cannot now be termed a "wilderness walk", as the highest quality wilderness area on this Track (and on the Tasman Peninsula) – Retakunna and Lunchtime Creek – have now been destroyed. It would have been far more sensible to build on the area's strengths by promoting a series of shorter walks (e.g. the TNPA's proposed *Great Tasman Coastal Experience*)—see map page 12.

This might not have achieved the "iconic" status to which Three Capes aspires but it would have been far cheaper to construct and would not have been a gamble with $25 million of public money. This more sensitive, low key approach would have had far lower impacts on the wilderness and natural values of Tasman National Park.

It would also have had the major benefit that visitors doing multiple shorter walks would use existing nearby accommodation, contributing to the local economy. In contrast, the Three Capes Walk with its easy four days, three nights schedule locks walkers into using accommodation within the national park and gives them little incentive to spend additional time on Tasman Peninsula.

Track impacts the wilderness and natural qualities of Tasman National Park

This area of the Tasman National Park previously had only a basic, but quite adequate, walking track and no huts. It was popular with local walkers who appreciated it as it was. Wilderness is, by defini-

Three Capes Track – original proposal

The crucial question which will make or break Three Capes is whether the marketing and the huts on the new track are sufficient to attract walkers away from the traditional approach, which has been made quicker and easier by the track upgrades, does not cost $495, and takes two or three days, not four!

tion, an absence of development so the new facilities obviously have a massive impact on the wild character of the area despite media claims to the contrary – see Grant Dixon's accompanying article.

Track is a not yet proven success

The track has only just opened. The majority of the bookings are a response to the pre-opening publicity, including the extraordinary endorsement by Lonely Planet long before the track opened. In the longer term it will be judged on feedback from actual users whose concerns may include:

- There has been very little publicity of the independent walker option (see "independent walkers" next page) so most walkers would have been unaware of this alternative when they made their booking;
- Only one standard of accommodation is currently available which is quite expensive and not particularly luxurious (see "Luxury Accommodation" next page);
- The fixed schedule is likely to irritate fit walkers who may prefer to complete the walk in two long days rather than the mandated three and a half easy ones (experience from the Overland Track is that many walkers are overseas backpackers who are young, fit and time-poor—they prefer to complete the track in the minimum possible time).

Independent Walkers

The Overland Track provides the options of using the commercial Cradle Huts operation, a commercial camping trip, or walking independently using the PWS huts or camping (the fee for a permit to do so is $200—one quarter of the cost per night of Three Capes). In contrast, all the publicity relating to Three Capes has focussed on the commercial walking operation run by the PWS—pay a $495 fee and use the provided huts (see "Luxury Accommodation" below).

[N.B. At Three Capes the PWS is running a commercial tourism operation—the Three Capes huts are not directly comparable to the PWS Overland Track huts. The PWS has already been criticised by commercial operators for unfairly excluding competition from Three Capes.]

Despite a long standing commitment that local walkers could continue to access Cape Pillar by the old track and camping, little attention has been given to providing for such walkers—in particular, the very limited camping opportunities in the area and the possibility that many walkers may prefer this option. The pre-existing track from Fortescue with optional return over Mount Fortescue (no car shuffle required) provides the most direct access to the spectacular coastal views between Munro and Cape Pillar, and Capes Raoul and Hauy remain easy daywalks. i.e. all the "best" sections of the track can be visited without walking the entire track (and paying the associated fee).

There is currently some confusion over whether independent walkers may walk the entire track but there is no doubt that they may walk the eastern section without paying the $495 fee as long as they have a current parks pass, they walk the track from west to east (to reduce the risk of spreading pathogens) and they do not stay in the huts. Once this becomes widely known (unsurprisingly PWS and the government appear reluctant to publicise this option) it is likely to result in overcrowding and overuse issues at the existing campsites. It also has the potential to undermine the financial viability of the track if many walkers who would otherwise have paid the fee for the Three Capes experience choose to use their own tent.

Standard of construction

Given the target market for the track it was not unreasonable to aim for "dry boot" standard but this has been interpreted rather too literally. Construction is mostly of a high standard but there is a remarkable amount of stonework and long sections of boardwalk over ground which would rarely be wet. Both are expensive to construct and most walkers prefer a natural surface where possible. The Cape Hauy section (constructed a couple of years earlier) was similarly criticised (especially for the number of stone steps which were particularly unpopular with anyone with knee problems) but unfortunately this criticism did not lead to changes for the rest of the track. A slightly lower standard of construction would have been quite adequate and would have substantially reduced the overall cost.

"Luxury" Accommodation

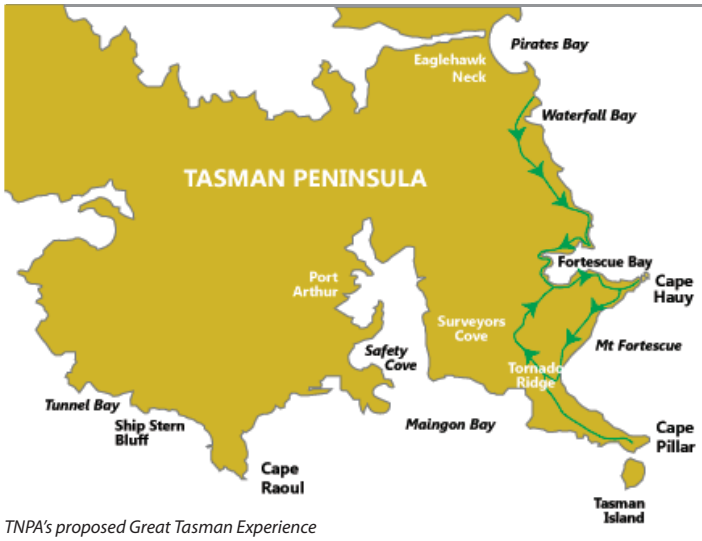
Irrespective of the quality of the detail design, the hut complexes provide only basic communal accommodation. Each hut complex includes two 24 bed bunkhouses and a separate kitchen/dining hut. This is not comparable with an upmarket commercial operation which would provide private bedrooms and prepared meals, albeit at considerably greater cost. The Three Capes huts are slightly upmarket of the PWS Overland Track huts but they are also four times the price per night! Showers are not provided apart from a single outside shower at Munro. The area is generally short of water (a major reason for the large roof area of the huts is to maximise rainwater catchment) so provision of additional showers is unlikely and a swim is not an option because the only points where the sea can be accessed are at the start (Denmans Cove) and the end (Fortescue Bay).

Viability

The Three Capes Track is a very expensive gamble ($25 million of public money), based on very limited market research and ignoring much professional advice. Even if the chosen concept proves popular it is hard to see it ever providing sufficient benefits to the Tasmanian economy to justify the initial expenditure. The key question is not "is the track a success?" but "could the $25 million have provided a greater benefit to Tasmania if it had been spent on something else?"

The $495 fee is unlikely to cover the running costs of the operation. Each of the three hut complexes is to be staffed throughout the year i.e. a minimum of three full time equivalent staff. All servicing (e.g. removal of sewage) requires the use of a helicopter and the hut complexes are likely to need additional water during summer, especially during the first summer of operation. i.e. running expenses will be substantial.

The target of 10,000 walkers per year has been mentioned (and is probably the minimum necessary if the fee is to cover routine expenses) but no justification is provided. The capacity of the walk is 48 departures per day. This equates to a capacity of around 17,500 walkers per year. i.e. the target requires 57% capacity averaged over the whole year. This seems very optimistic. Tasman Peninsula may be less exposed to the extremes of winter weather than the Over-



TNPA's proposed Great Tasman Experience

land Track but it not as sheltered as Freycinet either. It is a very bleak place when a cold south-westerly is blowing. There is a reason for place names like Hurricane Heath and Tornado Ridge! It may not be a very popular walk outside the summer months.

A hidden cost is the PWS resources (e.g. staff time) that appear to have gone into the construction and promotion of the track. This will never show on any balance sheet but represents substantial resources that could have been better used elsewhere.

Environmental Sensitivity

It has been claimed that "beyond issues of scale, the accommodation is sensitive to the environment". The sheer scale of the villages makes them insensitive to the environment and inappropriate in a remote area of a national park irrespective of the quality of the design and construction. It has also been claimed that the villages will "settle in the landscape once construction is complete". This can never be permitted because fire safety dictates that an area immediately surrounding the huts must be permanently kept completely clear of vegetation.

The Future

It is possible that the marketing will win out and the Three Capes Track will become a popular iconic walking experience but this is a more probable future:

- The majority of walkers will access Cape Pillar by the old direct track from Fortescue and camping. Campsites will need to be constructed/upgraded (i.e. to provide tent platforms, water supply and toilets) in the Retakunna—Munro area to cater for the increased numbers, and the old track will need maintenance, if not upgrading;
- PWS will eventually withdraw from subsidising its unprofitable commercial walking operation and the hut complexes will be leased to a bona fide commercial operator for a peppercorn rent. Each 24 bed bunkhouse will be converted into two or three luxury double bedrooms for the new clients (this would actually be a good environmental outcome because it would avoid the construction of a second set of huts for a commercial operator);
- Visitors seeking a longer walk will continue north from Fortescue to Waterfall Bay using the scenic coastal track constructed by the Hobart Walking Club decades ago;
- Cape Raoul will remain a short, easy day walk separate from the walks east of Port Arthur. If the link between Cape Raoul and Port Arthur is constructed it may become a popular day-walk but few will use it to directly connect with the tracks east of Port Arthur; and
- Last, but not least, a government committee will inquire into how so much money came to be spent on such a poorly researched project with no proper business plan.

Postscript

Anecdotal evidence from the Three Capes Track, after a few weeks of operation, is that many walkers are bored and frustrated by the amount of time spent hanging around the huts.

by Grant Dixon

Loss of wilderness quality associated with the development of the Three (two) Capes Track

There have been many flaws and concerns associated with the assessment and construction and promotion of the new Three Capes Track development, which opened for use in late December 2015. Most such issues have previously been raised in this newsletter as well as the wider printed and electronic media, but the impact on wilderness has not been clearly described and has largely been ignored by the proponents.

Aerial photographs of the near-complete hut complexes were captured and publicised by The Wilderness Society in early December 2015, partly to illustrate the impact on wilderness character of the development. In response to the considerable publicity this generated, Luke Martin (CEO of Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania) stated: "to suggest a one-metre-wide track and small huts are trashing the wilderness value of the National Park is baseless scaremongering" (although the huts are hardly "small" - see below - nor the track corridor limited to one metre in width), further adding that "less than 0.2 per cent" of the Tasman National Park had been affected by the clearing for the Three Capes Track.

These statements reflect a clear (and perhaps, on the part of Mr Martin, intentional) misunderstanding of what characteristics make wilderness important and, more importantly, what is required to maintain and manage it. Construction of the Three Capes Track has resulted in perhaps the most dramatic loss of high quality wilderness in eastern Tasmania in modern times, and it has been perpetrated by the Parks and Wildlife Service, the state's conservation management agency.

The draft *Three Capes Track Development Plan and Environmental Management Plan* (DPEMP) was prepared in 2011. While this draft plan discussed the potential visual impact of aspects of the then-proposed development (concluding they would be minimal), there was no mention of wilderness. This is remarkable given that the area then contained some of the highest wilderness quality in eastern Tasmania, and the only such remnant on Tasman Peninsula. Furthermore, the Parks and Wildlife Service's (PWS) Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) criteria (the PWS environmental impact assessment process under the auspices of which the DPEMP was prepared) specifically indicates (in the internal version in use at the time; PWS 2010) that potential impact on wilderness values is one of the things that should be considered for proposed developments. Submissions (both public and internal) clearly pointed out that neither the DPEMP, nor any of the reports prepared to supplement it, described the potential effect of the Three Capes Track development on wilderness values, but all were ignored.

Defining and mapping wilderness

There is a broad diversity of opinion about the meaning of the word 'wilderness' and about the measures that are necessary to protect wilderness. The situation has not been helped by the fact that numerous definitions of the term are in circulation, and that the word 'wilderness' is often used loosely to the point where it is virtually meaningless.

The values associated with wilderness are diverse and sometimes subtle, and cannot be fully accounted for in quantitative terms (Landres *et al* 2008). It is nevertheless possible to identify some of the key physical and geographical attributes that are necessary and sufficient for an area to qualify as wilderness, and to a large extent it is possible to quantify these attributes. Assessments based on such measurements can be used for estimating the extent and quality of existing or potential wilderness across a given region, and can be a useful tool for protecting, maintaining and enhancing wilderness character. The commonly recognised qualities of wilderness are naturalness and remoteness, in particular remoteness from mechanised access.

In the mid-1980s the Australian Heritage Commission developed a wilderness-assessment methodology as the basis for a nationwide wilderness inventory (Lesslie *et al* 1988a, Lesslie and Maslen 1995). The National Wilderness Inventory (NWI) methodology identifies remoteness and naturalness as the key components of wilderness character (termed "value" in the NWI methodology). Rather than attempting to distinguish 'wilderness' from 'non wilderness' the methodology assesses wilderness value as a continuum ranging from urban to pristine. The methodology was used to assess wilderness character across Tasmania (Lesslie *et al* 1988b) and other parts of Australia in the late 1980s and 1990s. It has since formed the basis for several studies in Europe (e.g. Henry and Husby 1995, Carver *et al* 2002), and wilderness character mapping undertaken in the USA is also based on remoteness and naturalness indicators (Landres *et al* 2008, Carver *et al* 2013, Tricker *et al* 2013).

Although the NWI methodology is the most comprehensive wilderness-assessment methodology yet developed in Australia, it has some deficiencies. To address some of these, a modified version of the NWI approach was developed in 2005 (Hawes 2006, Hawes *et al* 2015).

The Munro hut, located on a new section of constructed track, overlooking Munro Bight with Mt Fortescue beyond, has had the greatest impact on wilderness quality as it lies near the heart of the area of former highest wilderness quality.

The fundamental point that wilderness mapping can illustrate is that a location or area can have high wilderness character *only* if it is surrounded by areas of land or sea that are in a largely undeveloped condition (although such remoting country may not in itself have high wilderness character). Maintaining high wilderness character therefore requires maintaining the predominantly natural and undeveloped condition of both high quality wilderness *and* its associated remoting country.

Of course, no amount of data can fully convey the ecological significance of a pristine landscape, nor can maps such as those derived in this study necessarily represent the less tangible or more personal qualities of wilderness, the perception of which inevitably varies with the individual.

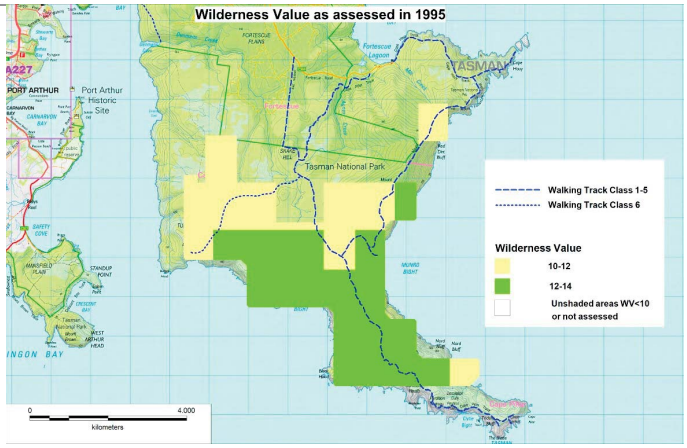
Change in wilderness character associated with the Three Capes Track development

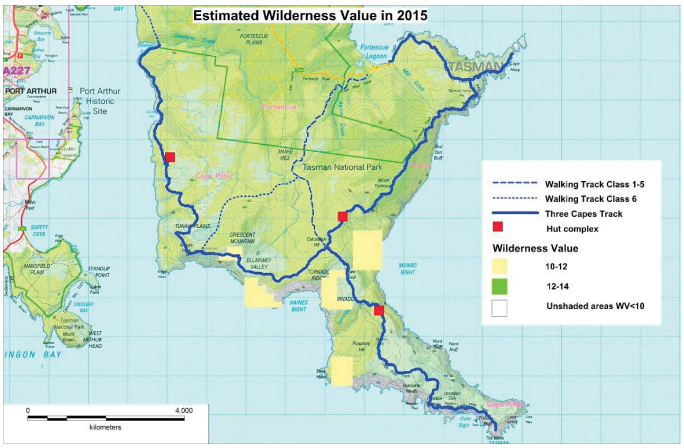
The most recent formal mapping of wilderness character (value) of Tasman Peninsula was that undertaken in 1995, using the NWI methodology, during the Tasmania-wide mapping that formed part of the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process. It shows a small area of high quality wilderness (wilderness value >12, the threshold defined by the RFA) on the Cape Pillar Peninsula, the only such remnant on Tasman Peninsula.

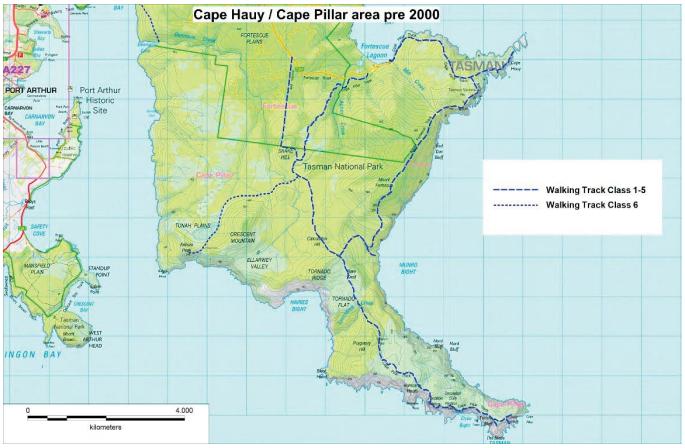
As noted above, PWS developed a revised wilderness mapping technique in 2005 but it was only applied to the World Heritage Area. The two mapping methodologies treat buildings, huts and tracks slightly differently, but either would show significant degradation of wilderness character (value) associated with the Three Capes Track hut and track construction.

Prior to construction of the Three Capes Track, most of the area south of the Fortescue Bay road, and particularly beyond Calcula-

tion Hill, contained only tracks originally cut or marked by walkers with a mostly unimproved natural surface. The area also contained no huts and virtually no built infrastructure (just some sections of boardwalk and planking on the track between Agnes Creek and Calculation Hill). Construction of the high grade Three Capes Track network (including both major upgrading of sections of pre-existing track plus some new tracks) and (in particular) the three hut complexes, has had a major impact on both the naturalness and remoteness of and hence significantly degraded the wilderness character of the area. The following comparative maps show that the development has completely obliterated the former area of high wilderness quality (wilderness value >12) that existed on Tasman Peninsula immediately prior to construction of the Three Capes Track.







References

Carver, S., Evans, A. and Fritz, S., 2002. Wilderness attribute mapping in the United Kingdom. *International Journal of Wilderness* 8-1: 24-29.

Carver, S., Tricker, J. and Landres, P., 2013. Keeping it wild: mapping wilderness character in the United States. Jou*rnal of Environmental Management* 131:239-255.

DPIPWE, 2011. *Three Capes Track – draft Development Plan and Environmental Management Plan*.

Hawes, M., 2015. The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Mapping Report. Report to Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, June 2006. http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/file.aspx?id=38815

Hawes, M., Ling, R. and Dixon, G., 2015. Assessing the wilderness value of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, Australia. *International Journal of Wilderness* 21(3): 35-41, 48.

Henry, D. and Husby, E., 1995. Wilderness Quality Mapping in the Euro-Arctic Barents Region: A Potential Management Tool. http://gis.esri.com/library/userconf/proc95/to150/p113.html

Landres, P., Barns, C., Dennis, J., Devine, T., Geissler, P., McCasland, C., Merigliano, L., Seastrand, J. and Swain, R. 2008. *Keeping it wild: an interagency strategy to monitor trends in wilderness character across the National Wilderness Preservation System*. Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-212. Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station

Lesslie, R. and Maslen, M. 1995, *National Wilderness Inventory Australia: Handbook of Procedures, Content and Usage* (2nd ed), Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

Leslie, R., Mackey, B. and Preece, K. 1988a. A computer-based methodology for the survey of wilderness in Australia. *Environmental Conservation* 15, 225-232.

Lesslie, R.G., Mackey, B.G. and Shulmeister, J., 1988b. *Wilderness Quality in Tasmania*. Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

PWS, 2010. *Reserve Activity Assessment Manual*. Version 1 (July 2010).

Tricker, J., Landres, P., Chenoweth, J., Hoffman, R. and Ruth, S., 2013. Mapping wilderness character in Olympic National Park. Final Report. Missoula, MT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute.

by Grant Dixon

Recreational impact monitoring & management of the Arthur Ranges, Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage **Area**

A major report describing recreational impacts, changes and management in the Arthur Ranges over a 20-year period was published by the Parks and Wildlife Service last year. The study demonstrates the value of longitudinal monitoring programs for describing both the severity and extent of recreational impacts and the effectiveness of management measures. However, the situation in the Arthur Range exemplifies much of the 'real world' where, despite an abundance of data, changing policies and limited management resources have stalled efforts to achieve sustainable recreation management.

The following comprises the report's own summary of the various findings. The full document can be downloaded from http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/indeX.aspX?base=39195

The report describes the findings of a walker-impact monitoring program that has been undertaken in the Arthur Ranges during the 20-year period 1994-2014. It also discusses the relationship of these findings to the management actions that have been implemented and the recreational changes that have occurred in the Arthur Ranges during the same period. The monitoring program (part of a wider program that encompasses tracks and major routes throughout the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, TWWHA) is unusual in both its scope and duration, with components monitoring on- and off-track impacts as well as campsites and visitation. Recreation impact monitoring programs of this scope and length are rare internationally, one of the reasons there are so few rigorous assessments of the effectiveness of recreation-management strategies in natural areas.

Traverses of the rugged Arthur Ranges are considered major bushwalking challenges and have been undertaken regularly since the 1960s. Excluding the lowland approach routes, the Western Arthur Range traverse track is 37.1 kilometres in length and the Eastern Arthur Range traverse is 14.5 kilometres in length. The majority of these traverses are classified T3 (PWS 2014), although a section of T2 and T4, and side routes of T4 and Route class, also exist.

The rugged topography has confined recreational use to narrow corridors throughout much of the range and, being visitor-created, the route was not sited for long-term stability. A well-worn, visitor-created trampled route, the beginnings of the present problems, existed through much of the Eastern and Western Arthur Ranges by 1980, and by the late 1980s some walkers were commenting on track erosion. Limited historic data suggests significant deterioration had also occurred at major campsites by that time.

The first management measure affecting the Arthur Ranges was the banning of air drops for bushwalkers in the late 1970s and this was highly successful at reducing litter. The PWS's Minimal Impact Bushwalking (MIB) campaign (1985-1994), with associated periodic on-ground Track Rangers, was also successful, reducing fire use, litter and faecal waste impacts at campsites.

During the 13 years from 1993 to 2006, substantial works were undertaken in the Arthur Ranges. In the Arthur Range terrain and environmental considerations limit options for relocating impacted sites so a containment approach was considered the most practical management option for the most impacted areas. Tracks and campsites were hardened or stabilised, Priority Erosion Control (PEC) works were carried out in many localities to buy time until follow-up intensive stabilisation could be undertaken (but this has not occurred), toilets and (in some cases) water collection systems, were installed at major campsites, a fan-out (dispersal) strategy was promoted on some alpine moorlands, and signage was installed to inform users about management actions and preferred behaviour.

During the same period, user regulation was also proposed as a tool to manage recreational impacts (part of a wider proposal for the TWWHA at the time). This precipitated protracted consultation with recreational stakeholders that was ultimately ineffectual at achieving on-ground changes in the Arthur Ranges and elsewhere. Other constraints on the ability of managers to address all recreational impact problems include the rugged nature of the terrain, limited re-route options and resultant high per metre cost of any works.

Built infrastructure is concentrated near the western end of the Western Arthur Range and in the Thwaites Plateau-Federation Peak section of the Eastern Arthur Range. In 2014 $ terms, its construction involved the investment of well over $1.5 million, largely from federal TWWHA funding.

Despite this investment, 84% of the route through the Western Arthur Range and 70% of the Eastern Arthur Range (not including the plains approach track sections) remain unimproved with much of these routes subject to serious and ongoing problems.

The capacity of PWS to maintain the considerable investment in infrastructure (7.9 km of hardened or stabilised track, a further 2.2 km with some drains and steps, eight hardened campsites

Walking Track Classification - Overview

T1	T2	T3	T4	Route
Bushwalking track May be extensively hardened	Rough bushwalking track, limited surfacing	Rough bushwalking track, mostly unimproved	Often indistinct tracks	Largely free of tracks

**Note that the classification scheme also includes specifications for length, width, surface and drainage, gradient and other aspects of walking tracks

and five toilets) in the Arthur Ranges is also a significant concern. Currently (2014), more than 1.5 kilometres of track with infrastructure is in sub-optimal condition (880 metres is in "marginal" condition" and 640 metres is in worse condition, being considered "poor" or "very poor").

Visitation

Western Arthur Range

- Annual visitation to the Western Arthur Range has declined from the highs of the late 1980s and mid-late 1990s (600 walkers/year) but visitation to the Moraine A–Lake Oberon section of the range is still around 500 walkers/year.
- There has been a notable change in walkers' route intentions during the last 10-15 years, with a greater proportion of walkers intending to visit only the more accessible western end of the range and a decline in walkers intending to attempt a full traverse of the range.
- While the above change is not quite so dramatic when routes actually followed are considered, there has been a real decline in visitation to the eastern end of the Western Arthur Range, beyond Moraine K. Based on a total of 500 walkers/year visiting the range, current estimates imply some 300 walkers/year continue through the mid-section of the range (Lk Oberon to Moraine K) but <100 walkers/year continue beyond Moraine K to Lake Rosanne.
- The mean Western Arthurs trip length during recent years was five nights. This compares to seven nights two decades ago, and is likely a reflection of the above-noted change in intended itineraries.
- Somewhat less than 2000 walker nights/year were spent in the Western Arthur Range in recent years.

Eastern Arthur Range

- Annual visitation to the Eastern Arthur Range has declined from a high of around 400 walkers/year during the 1990s to an estimated <250 walkers/year more recently.
- More than half of all walkers access the range (Federation Peak area) from Farmhouse Creek. This, combined with the aforementioned decline in overall visitation, probably also means fewer walkers now traverse the Eastern Arthur Range itself each year than during the 1990s.

Visitor characteristics

Analysis of 2010-2013 walker registrations to the Arthur Ranges reveals:

- Visitation is quite seasonal. January is the peak month (26%) and with 91% occurring during the December to April period.
- 41% of walkers were from Tasmania, 55% were from interstate, and 4% were from overseas.
- Mean party size was 2.5 walkers.

Tracks

The characteristics, scale and rate of change of track impacts are influenced by both the environmental setting (specifically gradient, drainage, and substrate) and usage.

Western Arthur Range

The maximum width prescribed by the relevant track classification is exceeded on more than a third of the main Western Arthur Range traverse route, and is worst in the mid-section of the range (Lk Cygnus to Moraine K). Furthermore, in this relatively-unimproved section of the range, overall track width has increased significantly

since 2007 (the proportion exceeding the maximum width prescribed by the track class has increased from 26% to 39%).

Based on track Typing (Dixon et al 2004), up to 56% of the unimproved sections of the main traverse route are highly susceptible to erosion. Many sites are highly eroded already. Serious erosion (depth >25cm) already occurs on 21% to 24% of the more-trafficked Moraine A to K part of the Western Arthur Range but only 10% of the Moraine K to Lake Rosanne section.

At the fixed clustered transect monitoring sites, there has been a mean increase in all impact monitoring parameters for all track Types in the Western Arthur Range over the twenty year monitoring period (1994-2014). Mean depth increases of the order of 50-100% have occurred since 1994. Mean width increases have been greatest in the low-use Moraine K - Lake Rosanne section of Western Arthur Range; up to around 40% since 1994.

Dramatic and apparently active deterioration has occurred in many areas, notably various steep sections between Mt Pegasus and Haven Lake and in some alpine moorland areas. At such sites this is associated directly with trampling, water flow being a supplementary factor at least in the range proper.

Within the lower-use Moraine K to Lake Rosanne section of the range, while active deterioration is occurring, track conditions generally display notably less current impacts than the Moraine A-K section. The greatest 1994-2014 deterioration has been recorded at sites on the Phoenix traverse (alpine) and the Lake Rosanne track.

Rates of change in the Moraine K to Lake Rosanne section of the range are broadly similar to those in the Moraine A to K section. Hence rates of change are proportionally greater (relative to current values) in the less impacted, less trafficked part of the range. This observation is consistent with the widely-recognised curvilinear relationship between usage and impacts, low usage typically causing relatively high levels of impact.

While not the subject of quantitative monitoring, significant erosion exists on some low class (T4) side routes (e.g. Mts Sirius and Orion).

Eastern Arthur Range

Extensive track hardening (totalling 3 km, plus 1.2 km of PEC) was undertaken in the Eastern Arthur Range during 1994 - 2002. This has increased the relative proportion of robust terrain in the range subject to trampling. Much of main route traversing the Eastern Arthurs is now quite resilient. However ongoing deterioration is occurring on Moss Ridge, mid Luckmans Lead, and probably on the steep slope above Bechervaise Plateau.

Pad development and broad-scale trampling

The extent of pad (incipient track) development on most Route-classified side routes is generally considered acceptable, either because it occupies <25% of the extent of the relevant route or because the current levels of impact are due to past heavier use and erosion (as is the case on Moraine

E and the Lk Fortuna access tracks, for example). Nevertheless, increased pad development has occurred on some side routes (e.g. Procyon Pk in the late 1990s, and the upper Seven Mile Creek access to Moraine K more recently).

During the 1990s, a fan-out strategy was promoted at a number of alpine moorland localities in the Arthur Ranges, the aim being to disperse walker trampling and so minimise the locations where trampling thresholds might be exceeded. In most instances, the primary intent of this approach was to minimise the ongoing impacts until more intensive hardening works could be carried out. At some sites, this was unsuccessful even in the short term and the fan-out strategy was soon abandoned in favour of expediting the hardening of a preferred route. However, a fan-out strategy has proven and remains successful at Goon Moor and the side-route to Thwaites Plateau campsite, perhaps partly thanks to the decline in use of the Eastern Arthur Range in the last decade or so.

Construction of camping platforms and hardened access tracks at major camping areas has generally resulted in a reduction in the extent of broad scale trampling in the vicinity of these campsites (e.g. Lk Oberon, Hanging Lk), although a remnant pad network remains in many cases (e.g. High Moor).

Campsites

In the Western Arthur Range, the late 1990s saw hardening of many popular campsites but also notable deterioration of some unimproved campsites, most within the Moraine A to K section of the range (e.g. Square Lk, High Moor, Lk Rosanne). Post-2000 campsite deterioration has also occurred, but mostly on unimproved sites within the low use Moraine K to Lake Rosanne part of the range. Some new campsites have also appeared in this part of the range.

Hardening of campsites in the Eastern Arthur Range, all completed by the early 2000s, has reduced the number of very seriously impacted camp sites (because tent platforms were constructed over them in many cases). There has been a concomitant reduction in the proportion of moderately-impacted sites, probably due to slow recovery of disused sites with the capacity to recover and perhaps also due to reduced use of the range itself.

The construction of tent platforms at many major alpine campsites, mostly during the 1990s, has successfully focussed camping pressure and so constrained or limited impacts. These sites have become de facto designated campsites (helped by the fact that they were mostly located on pre-existing degraded sites and hence where walkers traditionally chose to camp).

Revegetation of closed or disused alpine campsites in the Arthur Ranges has been very slow.

- Campsites with some ongoing use since "closure" (e.g. Lk Cygnus), which were previously seriously eroded with little remnant soil (e.g. Lower Goon Moor), or which while retaining full organol cover had become completely bare (e.g. sites at Lk Oberon and Haven Lk) have displayed only minor revegetation after some twenty years (and most of this has not commenced until relatively recently).
- Degrading sites which were caught early enough and so retained organic soil and at least a patchy vegetation cover when they were closed have fared better. Even so, improvement has been relatively minor after more than ten years at sites at Upper Bechervaise Plateau and High Moor. Sites at Upper Goon Moor and the less-impacted Hanging Lake sites have displayed significant revegetation (small cushions, sedges, grass and graminoids) over 15+ years.
- Attempts at assisted revegetation by the laying of jute matting appears to have slightly improved outcomes, at least where the disturbed area was smaller (e.g. Lk Oberon and Haven Lk vs Upper Goon Moor).

Conclusion

A range of management actions have been implemented in the Arthur Ranges from 1993 to 2006 (campsite hardening, track hardening, rerouting, stop-gap Priority Erosion Control measures, information and educational signage, toilets, fan-out promotion, etc.) and most have been moderately and in some cases highly successful. Notwithstanding this success, these measures fell far short of what was necessary to stabilise impacts (particularly track impacts) throughout the ranges. The refocussing of agency budget priorities since the early 2000s has stalled efforts to achieve sustainable management of the Arthur Ranges.

by Robert Campbell

Does Tasmania Need a Wilderness Act?

How do we define wilderness and how is it best protected? These questions have been central to the ongoing debate in recent years given the ongoing review of the management plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

The importance of wilderness is globally recognized with Wilderness Areas recognized under Category Ib of the IUCN Protected Area Categories System. The primary objective of such areas is to *"protect the long-term ecological integrity of natural areas that are undisturbed by significant human activity, free of modern infrastructure and where natural forces and processes predominate, so that current and future generations have the opportunity to experience such areas"*

The IUCN lists distinguishing features of Wilderness Areas to include being *"free of modern infrastructure, development and industrial extractive activity, including but not limited to roads, pipelines, …, other permanent structures, mining,…, agriculture,…, low-flying aircraft etc., preferably with highly restricted or no motorized access".*

Furthermore, Category Ib Wilderness Areas are seen as distinct from Category Ia (Strict Nature Reserve) areas which are usually strictly protected areas with generally limited human visitation and Category II (National Park) areas which usually includes (or plans to include) use by visitors, including supporting infrastructure, whereas for Ib visitor use is more limited and confined to those with the skills and equipment to survive unaided.

Both within Tasmania and globally, Tasmania's wilderness areas have long being recognised for their outstanding features and this recognition culminated in the declaration of the Tasmanian Wilder-

ness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) in 1982. The inclusion of the term wilderness in the name of the WHA property was an acknowledgement that the wilderness character of the area was an overarching theme to which all other values contribute and enhance. This has recently been re-affirmed by the World Heritage Committee which has stated that the *"…wilderness character of the property..(is)..one of its key values and …fundamental for its management"*

The current (1999) management plan for the TWWHA includes an objective to *"maintain or enhance wilderness quality"* and this is achieved through the use of a zoning system where the listed objectives for the Wilderness Zone include *"to retain a challenging unmodified natural setting that suitably experienced and equipped people can visit.."* and *"to use wilderness as a primary means of managing, protecting and conserving World Heritage and other natural and cultural values"*

With the release of the Draft Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 2014 there was widespread criticism of the removal of the recognition and protection of wilderness as a management objective and the inadequacies of the proposed zoning system to help effectively regulate use of, and activities within, the TWWHA. The later change, coinciding with the State government's call for Expressions of Interest for new tourism developments and activities in the TWWHA, was seen by many as allowing inappropriate new uses which would lead to a degrading of wilderness values. For example, the placement of infrastructure associated with the Three Capes Track has resulted in the loss of wilderness values within the Tasman National Park (see the article by Grant Dixon in this newsletter).

Given these recent concerns, where the policies of an incumbent government can result in changes to the TWWHA management plan which threaten the acknowledged wilderness values of the area, one can ask whether there are other means by which these values can be afforded greater protection, free from the whims of individual governments. In search for an answer it is instructive to look at other avenues through which wilderness areas have been acknowledged and offered protection.

Central has been the use of explicit Wilderness Acts by several jurisdictions around the world. The most well-known is the 1964 Wilderness Act of the United States of America, which created a way for Americans to protect their most pristine wildlands for future generations and which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2014.

The Purpose of the US Act includes the statement: *In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to … secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness".* According to the Act: *"a wilderness..is ..recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain…retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation…".*

Written by The Wilderness Society's Howard Zahniser, this Act, which is considered one of America's greatest conservation achievements, created the National Wilderness Preservation System which provides the means for Americans to protect unspoiled natural areas and currently protects nearly 110 million acres of wilderness areas (5% of the land in the United States). Considered the highest form of land protection, no roads, vehicles or permanent structures are allowed in designated wilderness which also prohibits activities like logging or mining. Today, millions of Americans enjoy wilderness areas for hiking, camping, backpacking, fishing and more. The Wilderness Act continues to protect unspoiled wildlands with the possibility of new designations each year.

Closer to home, both New South Wales and South Australia have enacted Wilderness Acts (1987 and 1992 respectively). In NSW the term 'wilderness' is used to describe large, natural areas of land that, together with their native plant and animal communities, remain essentially unchanged by modern human activity. By 2010, the state's declared wilderness reached some two million hectares, which is approximately 2.5 per cent of NSW. The Act in South Australia seeks to provide for *'the protection of wilderness and the restoration of land to its condition before European colonisation'* and as of June 2015 the 14 declared wilderness reserves had a total area of 1,843,449 ha or 1.9% of South Australia's area.

Whether such Wilderness Acts afford greater protection to a designated wilderness area remains uncertain, but unlike the changes to statutory management plans (like that for the TWWHA) there may be a need for greater public and parliamentary scrutiny for changes under a legislated Act. Despite the stated objective to preserve the natural, primitive and remote character of wilderness areas under the National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002 it is my understanding that presently in Tasmania there is no effective legislated protection offered to wilderness areas.

Wilderness worldwide is a scarce and diminishing resource which needs protecting to ensure it will be available for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations so that they also have the opportunity to see and experience unspoilt landscapes. While helping to maintain biological diversity and habitats that assist in the conservation of endangered species, wilderness also offers people a place of solitude and inspiration and offers an escape from the pressures of day-to-day life. Wilderness also helps to conserve areas which are culturally significant to indigenous people.

Within Tasmania we are privileged to be custodians of a magnificent wilderness area and all Tasmanian's should be proud that the system put in place over 30 years ago to protect this wilderness has to a large extent worked well. Nevertheless, as highlighted above, protection of this wilderness is not ensured and threats to its outstanding values remain. To ensure that this unique heritage remains available for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations it is incumbent upon us to seek appropriate means of achieving this outcome. The question therefore remains as to whether the present approach (via the present TWWHA management plan and future revisions) has the ability to achieve this outcome or whether other legislative means (such as a Wilderness Act) may be more appropriate.

Personally I do not have an answer to that question. The issue is complex but perhaps can be informed by a debate on the pros and cons of the present and different management approaches to wilderness protection. Perhaps we can continue this debate in forthcoming issues of the TNPA News and as such I call on those with an interest in this issue to offer their views.

I would like to finish with the following quote taken from the latest National Geographic (Jan 2016 issue)which leads with the question "Why we need wild". *"But like any protected area, the Serengeti is essentially an island, a primeval world that has survived into the 21st century. It exists only because humans have agreed – or have been forced to agree - not to conduct business as usual within its boundaries. That covenant is always open to challenge and, for the sake of future generations, must always be renewed".*

BOOK REVIEW

Review by Jane Wilson

Southern Cross Safari: Around Australia by Bus and Train by Bruce Gall

Redgum Publishing: Canberra, 516 pages. Pub: 2015 (paperback). Includes one route map of Australia.

Order online from http://southerncrosssafari.com/ in paperback ($34.95) or as an e-book.

Paperback version available for loan from LINC Tasmania

This book tells the tale of a long journey around Australia taken over a number of years. Bruce Gall visited towns, cities, national parks and reserves using public and private bus and rail transport, sometimes boats, rental cars and occasionally bicycles and "shank's pony". Bruce is an ecologist, former park ranger and park superintendent, and former Director of the QNPWS. He writes with obvious authority about parks and reserves. The author is clear from outset that the book was intended to be the story of a trip, not a guidebook. My assessment is that it straddles both genres and ventures into two more: that of public comment on park management strategies and the encyclopaedia! Bruce visited a total of approximately 165 reserved areas, including 101 national parks. There is a daunting amount of factual material in the book which made it impossible for me to enjoy it as a cover to cover read. Dipping into chapters here and there, Kakadu one night, Lamington the next etc. is my recommended approach. Bruce has a great sense of humour and there are some very amusing tales within the narrative, but the majority of the encounters he describes with fellow travellers are fleeting, lacking in richness and some are quite negative. If he had restricted himself to fully developing just the travel story the resulting book could have been engaging and eminently readable.

The strength of this book for me, and so potentially for other TNPA members, lies in Bruce's love of nature and wild creatures and his associated observations, together with his comments on park management.

A keen eye for, and appreciation of wildlife is a delightful thread in the book. Informed comments on reserve track conditions, park interpretation, presentation, and management add to the usefulness of the book. It even includes snippets of information from signs and panels in reserves, which often share glimpses into early indigenous history. The downside of the many facts and observations is information overload. The book is 516 pages long and lacks images (a sticker in the book refers readers to an associated website for these), detailed maps and an index.

Bruce's damning conclusions are that many tracks in Australia's world heritage properties, parks and reserves are poorly maintained and that track signage is often inadequate. It is important to note here that his journey started in 2006 and ended in 2009 after his visit to Tasmania (email from the author – no dates are given in the book). Sadly, given the lack of funding for park and reserve management in Australia over the intervening years, a number of the places Bruce visited may not have had tracks upgraded or other improvements made in the years since his trip. This is certainly the case for some places in Tasmania (see comments section of this review).

Members intending to journey to any of the places Bruce visited would find the relevant book sections interesting and well worth consulting before travelling. Many will find the information on towns, cities, transport and accommodation options as useful as the material on parks and reserves. Accessing an e-book version would overcome the lack of an index, as it would be easily searchable.

Some of Bruce Gall's comments on his visit to Tasmania:

"Ben Lomond and Narawntapu National Parks are both about 60 km from Lonnie – in different directions! No buses went close. I phoned two operators who advertised customised tours, but not, I was told, for one passenger. Why couldn't they offer a 'one person' premium to make it worth their while [?]". (p. 379).

"I…asked about the shuttle bus [from Derwent Bridge] to Lake St Clair". (p. 428) [There isn't such a shuttle bus, although this wasn't made clear to Bruce. See also p. 429].

"Then I found *Tasmanian Wilderness Experiences*; it seemed too good to be true. Graham McLean would take people just about anywhere…and happy to have just one client. I had finally found an operator who put service ahead of self." (p. 415).

"She then told me they were down two ranger positions, they're not replacing staff, they've lost six enterprise staff…and she doesn't normally work on the counter". (p. 446) [Conversation with uniformed staff member at Cradle Mt. Visitor Centre].

"We reached Marion's Lookout. If I were her I'd be very upset: it was an eyesore, a scarred scape of crisscrossing slaty tracks and bare ground, with only the viewing platform stabilised". (p. 445)

"I would close the goat track". (p.445) [Bruce refers to the extremely steep direct descent track from Marions Lookout to Dove Lake. At the time he went down it he wasn't aware of an alternative route - almost certainly because of inadequate signage at the track junction. The "goat track" is useful for losing altitude very quickly should a blizzard or similar develop at the Lookout].

"We followed the [Cradle Mt.] Face Track…then negotiated gnarled fagus roots. Here the track deteriorated to a boggy mess, with loose planks evidence of failed attempts to provide a stable surface…not world heritage standard". (p.444).

"I battled the gale around the top [of Mt. Wellington], looking for a way down, eventually finding the Zig Zag Trackhead. Four destinations were listed, Fern Tree was not one of them." (p. 423).

"The final leg to the car park [Lake Dobson carpark at Mt. Field] followed a steep road through ski lodges, an unattractive ending to a fascinating day (p. 417).

Note: Bruce described two people he met on his travels as "…deaf-mute". (p. 207). This archaic term is regarded as offensive and discriminatory by the deaf community (as is the phrase 'deaf and dumb'). The only descriptor required here is the word 'deaf'. This likely completely inadvertent error needs correcting.

TNPA NEWS

TNPA News is published twice a year. It aims to provide informative articles on issues related to national parks and other reserves, as well as updates on TNPA activities and campaigns. The views expressed in TNPA News are not necessarily those of the TNPA Inc. For this issue thanks to Robert Campbell, Grant Dixon, Adrian Pyrke, Nick Sawyer and Jane Wilson. Original articles in TNPA News may be reproduced but please acknowledge the author and source.

Contributions to TNPA News #23 are welcome (deadline 20 June 2016). Please send contributions to: admin@tnpa.asn.au (attention: TNPA News editor)

This newsletter was correct as at 1 Feb 2016.

Editor TNPA News 22: Catharine Errey

Newsletter production by Ricoh Business Centre Hobart

'New Look' TNPA Market and Festival Stall

TNPA stall at Salamanca Market *image credit: Jane Wilson*

For quite a few years the TNPA has been running an occasional information stall at Hobart's Salamanca Market, using the 'charities' site that the Hobart City Council makes available for not-for-profit organisations.

In 2015 the TNPA Committee decided that it was time to do a revamp of the stall. We purchased a marquee, not just for protection from the elements but also so that we had a better set-up for displaying posters, banners etc. Leading wilderness photographer and TNPA management committee member Chris Bell had the splendid idea of producing banners with photographic images showcasing some of Tasmania's outstanding wilderness areas.

Chris invited fellow wilderness photographer Rob Blakers to be part of this project and Rob was only too happy to contribute some of his superb images. It was decided to produce two banners, one featuring images from the TWWHA (World Heritage Area) and the other with images from national parks, such as Freycinet and Tasman, which are not part of the TWWHA.

Simon Olding and Dave Ross also contributed their skills and time to the production of the banners.

Anne McConnell organised the narrow banner for the front of the marquee, with the TNPA name and logo.

The marquee and banners had their first 'outing' at the Salamanca Market stall of 26 September.

The stall was also held at the Sustainable Living Festival – see report on page 8 of this issue of TNPA News.

Tasmanian National Parks Association Inc

Patron: Peter Cundall

TNPA Management Committee
President: Catharine Errey
Vice Presidents: Nick Sawyer & Chris Bell
Treasurer: Patsy Jones
Secretary: Vacant
Other committee members: Robert Campbell, Grant Dixon

Contact Details
Postal address: GPO Box 2188, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001
Email: admin@tnpa.asn.au
Website: www.tnpa.asn.au
Phone: TNPA Secretariat 0427 854 684

Meetings
Management Committee meetings are usually held once a month on a Monday. Members and supporters are welcome to attend meetings. Meeting dates and venues are advertised in the TNPA email communique but time/venue may change so check with Secretariat (0427 854 684) before attending.

Have your say...

ABC Local Radio: Mornings - Leon Compton
tasmornings@your.abc.net.au or 1300 222 936

Letters to the Editor at The Mercury
mercuryedletter@dbl.newsltd.com.au or
GPO Box 334 Hobart 7001

Letters to the Editor at The Examiner
mail@examiner.com.au or PO Box 99A Launceston 7250

Letters to the Editor at The Age
letters@theage.fairfax.com.au

Premier will.hodgman@parliament.tas.gov.au

Minister for Environment, Parks & Heritage
matthew.groom@parliament.tas.gov.au

Opposition (Labor) Spokesperson on Parks
craig.farrell@parliament.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Greens Spokesperson on Parks
Cassy.OConnor@parliament.tas.gov.au