

Tasmanian National Parks Association President's Report 2012-13

I would like to thank you all for coming to tonight's AGM as it is the members that give strength to the TNPA and its commitment to stand up for Tasmania's conservation reserve.

We are all familiar with that well known Chinese proverb – "May you live in interesting times" for yes, indeed, it is interesting times we live in!

With the recent change of government at the Federal level and a possible change at the State level next year, the future suddenly seems far less certain and in some ways more scary. However, in a "Good-News", Bad-News" story, lets us first survey the Good News.

Since its launch in September 2001, and for over 12 years now, the TNPA has continued to position itself as the primary public voice on issues impacting on conservation reserves in Tasmania and I again thank all our members and supporters who have joined us on this challenging journey during this time.

While it is difficult to know what may have come to pass in Tasmania's national parks had the TNPA not been around (for example, perhaps a few more developments within our parks), nevertheless we like to think that we have made a difference in standing up and defending what we believe in.

The State's wild places and the animals that live within them aren't able to speak on their own behalf. They need an advocate who promotes and tries to safeguard these vanishing, wild areas. There is also a need for an advocate to protect remote and wild places for those who seek to explore the wonders of the natural world and for those who also seek spiritual renewal and solace in such places from an ever increasing urbanised and commercial world. That's why all of us are working together to champion the protection of Tasmania's wild places and other reserved lands.

However, too many within our governments and developers seem to remain unenlightened of these needs and so the good fight continues.

And so what has the TNPA be up to since the last AGM. A quick scan through my bulging email InBox yesterday indicated a raft of activities, including the following:

The following submissions were made commenting on draft reports seeking public comment:

- Draft Mount Wellington Park Management Plan
- Maria Island Ecotourism Feasibility Study Draft Report
- Walls of Jerusalem Recreational Zone Draft Plan
- Consultation Draft of the Tasmanian Coastal Policy Statement

The following issues, some brought to our attention by TNPA members and other members of the public, were followed up with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and/or government Ministers and/or other relevant groups:

- The successful eradication of pests from Macquarie Island but urging the need for further follow-up and on-going monitoring to ensure the long term success of this project.
- The proposal to cease the operation of the Abt railway on the west coast.
- The revision of the Overland Track Usage Policy - subsequently called Guidelines.
- Advertised landings by Tasmanian Air Adventures in national parks and the World Heritage Area.
- The potential to create “remoting zones” on parts of the recently sold Pollin estates e.g. at Gowan Brae.
- Issues relating to the grooming on ski slopes on Mt Mawson within Mt Field National Park.
- The licence conditions granted to Riverfly - a commercial fly fishing outfit taking clients into the Central Plateau and WHA via Skullbone Plains where they have recently established a standing camp.
- Recreational vehicle usage on the west coast, especially the use of a barge on the Pieman River to take 4WD bikes south.
- The increase in litter in national parks and the need to re-invigorate the Minimal Impact Bushwalking code of conduct.
- The development at Pumphouse Point on the shores of Lake St Clair, which now appears to be proceeding after a lengthy delay though on a much reduced scale.
- A continued focus on the Three Capes Track development and follow up letters to, and meetings with, the Premier and Ministers. We also provided a submission to, and appeared before, the Joint Parliamentary Public Works Committee hearings on the Three Capes Track. Unfortunately apart from noting some safety issues relating to the cliff no changes were recommended by this Committee.
- Ongoing and lengthy negotiations with the Government, Greens, Environment Tasmania, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust and other stake-holders concerning the new National Parks and Reserve Authority for which legislation has recently been introduced into the Tasmanian Parliament.
- The TNPA was a member of the consultative group to discuss the viability of a Wellington to Wilderness Multi-Use Recreational Trail. This has now morphed into a proposal for a Mount Wellington to Glenorchy Mountain Bike Trail.

There was also the usual stream of letters to the Mercury and the inevitable administrative issues to keep us all on our toes!

As well as these issues, the TNPA also continued to organise and received support from a number of regular events, principally:

- Nov'12 -Buttongrass Ball with proceeds going to TNPA. Thanks again to David Wanless, band and the Folk Federation of Tasmania. And please do not forget the upcoming event on 30 November.
- April/May'13 - TNPA Autumn Walks –Thanks to Catharine for organising this year's walks and all walk leaders.
- Aug'12 - “Tarkine” slide-night at the University as a fundraiser – A big thank you to Rob Blakers, Chris Bell and Prof Jan McDonald and organisers for a wonderful night.
- TNPA Salamanca Stall on Saturday's – Again, many thanks to those who have helped with this activity.
- And finally, thanks to all who helped produce the edition of the 16th issue of the TNPA News which was printed mid-year.