

## NEW ZEALAND

### Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand



#### II.1 Introduction

Year of Inscription 1990

#### Organisation Responsible for the Report

- Department of Conservation (DoC)  
P O Box 10420  
Wellington  
New Zealand

#### II.2 Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria N i, ii, iii, iv

#### Statement of Significance

- Proposed as follows:  
“The area has outstanding universal significance for its Gondwana taxa, and it contains great diversity of landforms, flora and fauna.”
- A major biogeographic feature of New Zealand’s vegetation occurs within the region. The wetter, milder west is characterised by luxuriant rain forest and wetlands; the drier, more continental east has more open forest (generally mountain beech), shrublands and short tussock grasslands.
- The total wild population of 220 endangered takahe (a large flightless bird “rediscovered” in 1948), and the entire population of two of New Zealand’s six varieties of kiwi, are found in the site.

#### Status of Site Boundaries

- The 2.6 million ha area of Te Wāhipounamu includes the national parks of Aoraki/Mount Cook, Westland /Tai Poutini, Mount Aspiring and Fiordland.
- Since 1990, various adjacent Crown-owned lands have been reclassified to form additions to Te Wāhipounamu’s buffer zones. Further additions to buffer zones will occur as circumstances dictate.
- The Crown has successfully negotiated the purchase of the forest cutting rights on all but two of the blocks within the Waitutu forest.

#### II.3 Statement of Authenticity/Integrity

#### Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- The WH value is considered to have been maintained and, in several key instances, enhanced.
- The additions of South Okarito and Waikukupa forests to Westland NP in 1982, and Red Hills to Mount Aspiring NP in 1990, signalled a significant shift from extractive industries to sustainable use in the area.
- The Olivine Wilderness Area (83,000 ha) was gazetted in 1997, providing statutory protection to the wilderness value of this remote area of mountains, glaciers and wild rivers in Mount Aspiring NP. At the northern boundary of the site, a new wilderness area (Adams) was opened for public comment and recently approved by the Minister of Conservation.

#### II.4 Management

#### Administrative and Management Arrangements

- Te Wāhipounamu is protected under the Conservation Act (1987), the National Parks Act (1980), and the Reserves Act (1977), and is managed by the New Zealand Dept. of Conservation.
- In 1996, legislation was enacted to formally establish Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu as the Maori tribal authority. The negotiated Deed of Settlement led to the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 which recognises 5 defined *Tōpuni* (chiefly) places and protects a number of plant and animal *taonga* (treasure) species.
- The formal changes of name of two national parks (Westland to Westland-Tai Poutini; and Mt Cook to Aoraki-Mt Cook) also reflect the official recognition of Ngāi Tahu associations with Te Wāhipounamu.
- Te Wāhipounamu is managed by the DoC according to Conservation Management Strategies approved by the New Zealand Conservation Authority.
- ‘Operative management plans’ exist for the 4 national parks in the site, and the Regional General Manager (Southern Region) delegates accountabilities for WH Area matters to a ‘co-ordinating panel’ of conservancy representatives.

- Draft management plans are currently being reviewed with full public consultation. The plans provide a set of guiding principles that reflect the World Heritage status of the site.

### Present State of Conservation

- Proposed plans for tourist aircraft activity over Fiordland NP are subject to appeals in the Environment Court.
- A legal challenge to the addition of land to Westland National Park did not proceed.
- “A very substantial recovery of vegetation” followed the recreational hunting of red deer in the 1970s.

### Staffing and Training Needs

- Te Wāhipounamu is managed by DoC staff located in 4 conservancies and their component area offices and field centres. Staff are trained in all aspects of Park management

### Financial Situation

- The site is managed and administered by DoC though central government funding. No figures supplied.
- \* International Assistance from WHF: none.

### Access to IT

- DoC operates a reliable national network with internet capacity.

### Visitor Management

- “In the New Zealand context, the principle issue is about the maintenance of natural character. Visitor pressures are therefore not so much about volume as quality of experience.”
- A range of private sector tourist activities operate under concession agreements. The DoC also opened the Haast Visitor Centre in 1991 with interpretive information on World Heritage value.
- At major visitor attractions such as Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers, Aoraki/Mount Cook and Milford Sound, “issues are frequently associated with aircraft access, over-flying and perceptions of crowding. The effects tend to be on the visitors rather than the site.”

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## II.5 Factors Affecting the Property

### Threats and Risks

- Predation of juvenile kiwis, mohua, and indigenous blue ducks by stoats & rats.



View of Franz Joseph Glacier

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- Disruption of forest ecosystem fruiting, seed dispersal and pollination by the omnivorous Australian brushtail possum.
- Feral introduced Himalayan *thar* and deer species.
- Several species of hawkweed which displace up to 80% of native inter-tussock vegetation.

### Counteractive Plans

- Poisoning of possums with biodegradable 1080 (*sodium monofluoroacetate*) in cereal bait or gel form by GPS-controlled “aerial sowing”.
- Himalayan Thar Control Policy.
- South Island Wilding Tree Control Strategy.
- Visitor strategy and concession agreements. Booking systems have been introduced for the most popular walking tracks.

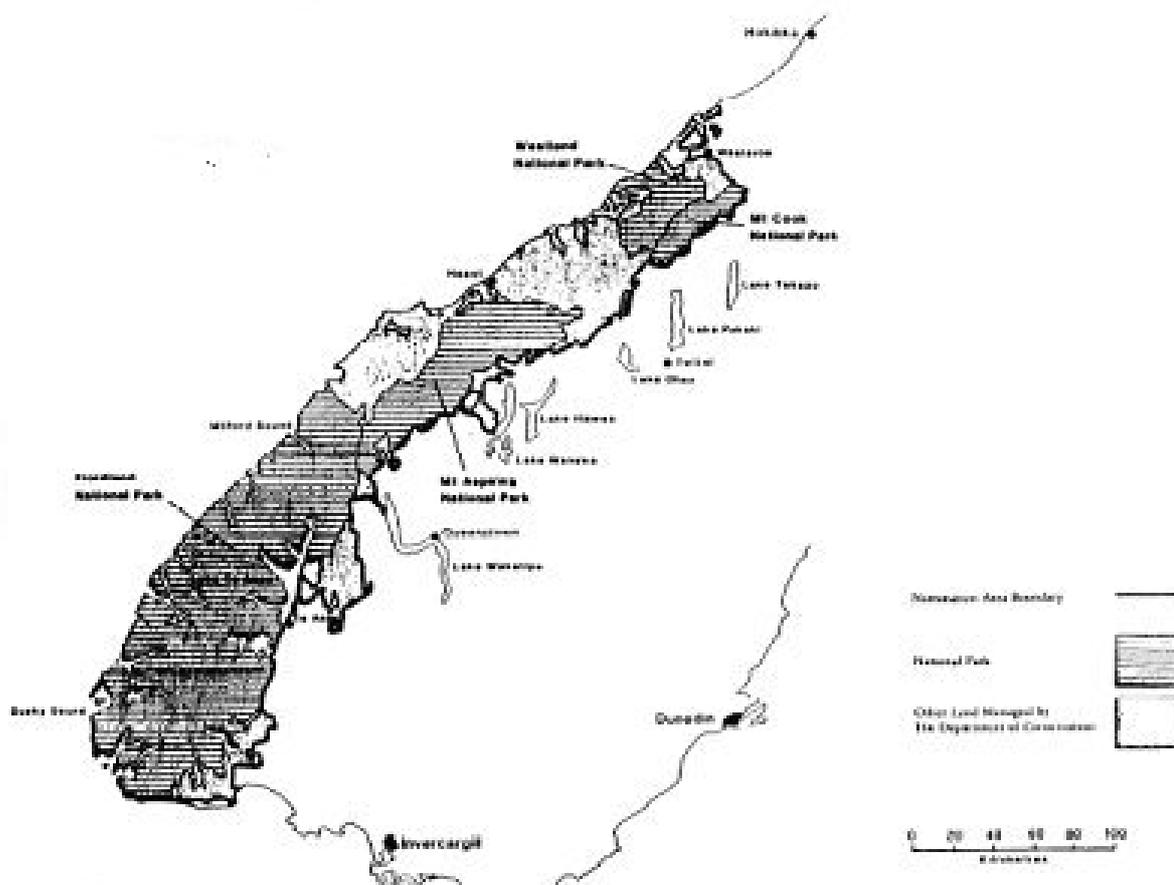
## II.6 Monitoring

### Monitoring Arrangements

- A number of different monitoring strategies cover the following areas: (i) biodiversity; (ii) visitor numbers; (iii) studies of aircraft overflight; (iv) modifications in the thickness of the Dart Glacier; (v) national network of permanent ecological plots; (vi) an ecosystem research programme in the Waitutu Forest (indigenous forest-pest interactions).

### Monitoring Indicators

- Indicators for biodiversity include: (i) monitoring of ‘seed rain’ to follow the beech mast cycle; (ii) pest indices for stoats, rats and mice; (iii) bird counts; (iv) permanent plots in tussock grassland; (v) permanent plots in forests (to assess the impact of deer); (vi) monitoring of foliage condition on indicator tree species.



Map of Te Wahipounamu showing nominated area boundary (thick black line) and national park (stripped area)

## II.7 Conclusions and Recommended Actions

### Conclusions and Proposed Actions

- The Dept. of Conservation is currently in the “early development phase of design, testing and costing [of] an inventory and monitoring system that will meet its reporting requirements” at national and international levels.
- The project is expected to result in the identification of a ‘national multi-scaled biodiversity assessment-sampling programme’ that will: (i) “detect changes in biodiversity that exceed the range of natural variation, across a range of spatial and temporal scales; (ii) provide an early warning of potential irreversible changes; (iii) provide reports on changes in pressure and the status of biodiversity condition.”
- No stated need for support from the WHF.

### \* State of Conservation Reports

1989 Committee CONF.004/5 The Committee was informed by IUCN that concern had been expressed regarding interest by Comalco New Zealand Ltd in purchasing a stake in the hydro-electric scheme in the national park to draw power for an aluminium smelter located outside the Park. IUCN noted that when Fiordland was inscribed as a WH site, the existence of the power scheme was accepted because of its design and modest scale in relation to the 1.2 million ha site, and because of the strict rules governing operating levels of Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri monitored by an independent Guardians group. When electricity generation in NZ passed from the government to a State corporation, Comalco expressed interest in gaining an ownership interest in the Manapouri generation and transmission assets. IUCN’s enquiries have shown however that the NZ Government accepts a commitment by Comalco that, in the event of it gaining an interest in these assets, it would recognise the need to continue the operational rules.

The Committee commended the State Party on its initiative to give a statutory role to the Guardians group, and in its efforts to ensure that any changes in ownership

of electricity generation would not threaten the integrity of the WH property.

1993 Bureau CONF.001/3 At its previous session in 1992, the Committee was informed that the Government of New Zealand had approved an application from a private company for a license to export water from inside the WH site. The exportation of freshwater required the construction of a dam, a buried pipeline, and four large reservoirs at Jackson's Bay.

The Committee noted that the visual and ecological impacts of the proposed development project were not clear, and that the legal and economic considerations were being actively debated. The Centre contacted the authorities and requested them to keep the Committee informed of the environmental impacts of the water export project.

In April 1993, the authorities informed the Centre that the Minister of Conservation had indicated to Okuru Enterprises Ltd. that he would not approve a pipeline inside the Mt. Aspiring NP located within the WH property. Okuru Enterprises Ltd. subsequently modified their application to obtain water from a creek outside the NP, which was advertised for public comment, and would be re-submitted to the Minister of Conservation. The authorities assured the Centre that the environmental impact of the modified proposal would be carefully considered, and that the value of the WH area would be an important consideration in reviewing any water export project.

1994 Bureau CONF.001/3b Three issues were discussed by the Bureau.

(1) In June 1994, the NZ Minister of Justice stated that "small parcels of conservation of land may be returned to Ngai Tahu and other iwi (Maori tribes) to protect *wahi tapu* or sacred sites". Although the Maori Ngai Tahu iwi had supported the NZ WH nomination, they had also pursued land claims in the Waitangi Tribunal set up to consider Maori land grievances under the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) set up between Maori leaders and the British. IUCN noted that the Ngai Tahu claims might include some land in the WH area, and considered it helpful to invite the NZ Government to report on any implication of the Treaty claims on the WH property.

(2) IUCN noted that continued cattle grazing was prejudicial to the natural value of parts of Mount Aspiring NP, including the Siberia area, the Wilkin Valley, Cattle Flat and Dredge Flat within the WH property. It recognised, however, that NZ National Parks Policy aimed to phase out cattle grazing in national parks where it was considered to be prevent forest regeneration, and invited the Dept. of Conservation to report on proposals to end grazing at the site. (3) IUCN further noted that when Fiordland National Park was listed as WH in 1986, it had proposed to include the Waitutu forest along the park's southern boundary. When Fiordland National Park was later incorporated into the larger Te Wahipounamu site in 1990, part of the Waitutu forest under government

ownership was listed, whilst the coastal section of forest under Maori ownership was not. IUCN reported concern among conservation interests in New Zealand that the owners of the coastal forest had entered into a logging contract which would threaten the integrity of the adjoining Waitutu forest land within the WH property.

1999 Committee CONF.209/14 IUCN reported that it was awaiting a response from the NZ Dept. of Conservation (DOC) regarding concerns expressed by the Forest & Bird Society (FBS) of NZ on the management of the introduced *thar*, a mountain goat. The FBS claimed that a high level of *thar* were maintained for recreational hunting leading to concerns regarding the impact on the indigenous flora and the integrity of the alpine ecosystem.

The Bureau requested the NZ Dept of Conservation to provide a detailed report on the management of the *thar* in Te Wahipounamu

2000 Bureau CONF.202/5 The Centre reported that it had not yet received a report by the State Party on the management of the introduced *thar* as requested before 15 April 2000.

2000 Committee CONF.204/10 As requested by the Bureau, the DoC supplied a report on the management of the *thar* which outlined that the 'Himalayan *Thar* Management Policy' was applied throughout the country for the "sustained control" of the animal and the "maintenance of an ecologically acceptable vegetation and estate condition". At the time, the Control Plan had reduced the total number of *thar* from more than 13,000 to less than 7,000 in just five years. The DOC noted its commitment to a scientifically robust monitoring programme to measure the impacts of *thar* on vegetation and expected to report on these results by 2002/3. Following the report from the State Party, IUCN consulted with the FBS which was pleased that the State Party had acted on the concerns raised. However, the possibility of the WH area being re-populated by *thar* from outside the area continued to be a cause for concern.

The New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA), which has a statutory role under the National Parks Act expressed some dissent on the overall *Thar* Management Policy claiming that: (i) a concerted effort over a few years was required as opposed to selective culling and monitoring; (ii) a review of the policy should be carried out in 2000; and (iii) any decision would be a political one as consensus would never be reached among the deeply divided interests.

The Bureau requested the State Party to give due consideration to changes called for by the NZCA when it reviewed the *thar* control policy's impacts in 2002/2003.