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WHC-2000/CONF.203/INF.6

Paris, 12 October 2000

Original :English only

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
ORGANIZATION**

**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL
AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

BUREAU OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Twenty-fourth extraordinary session

Cairns, Australia

23 November – 24 November 2000

**Information Document: ACIUCN Report on the state of conservation of the Wet Tropics of
Queensland World Heritage Area, Australia**

This report was prepared by the Australian Committee of IUCN (ACIUCN) using an extensive process of consultation with all stakeholders concerned with the conservation of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area. Focused recommendations derived from this report by IUCN are included in the Working Document WHC-2000/CONF.203/5 on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.



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WET TROPICS OF QUEENSLAND WORLD HERITAGE AREA

CONDITION, MANAGEMENT & THREATS

7 September 2000

1. Introduction

The Operational Guidelines to the World Heritage Convention define two types of reporting: periodic and reactive. Periodic reporting is that undertaken by the State Parties to the Convention in which they set out information concerning the 'condition' of their world heritage sites and the legal and administrative arrangements that have been put in place to fulfil their requirements as a party to the Convention. Reactive monitoring is reporting by the World Heritage Centre, other sectors of UNESCO and the advisory bodies to the World Heritage Bureau and Committee on threats to specific world heritage sites. This report is of the latter type.

The report has been compiled over several months culminating in its adoption by ACIUCN at its 42nd Ordinary Meeting 6-7 September 2000. As a first step in compiling the report nomination and evaluation documents for the listing of the Wet Tropics of Queensland as a world heritage area were consulted, as was the Rapporteur's Reports of Sessions of the World Heritage Committee and its Bureau. In the first stage, a questionnaire was circulated by ACIUCN to forty-four organisations, agencies, and individuals representing a range of interests in the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area, including Commonwealth, State and local government authorities, conservation groups, members of the Wet Tropics Management Authority Board, Consultative and Scientific Advisory Committees, scientists, locals and industry groups. A list of those circulated is at Annex 1. The questionnaire sought recipients' views on the overall condition of the world heritage site, particularly related to maintenance of world heritage values¹; management of the site, including over time; actual and potential threats; and recommendations for action. Of the questionnaires circulated, sixteen responses were received representing a return rate of some 36 percent. These responses covered the diversity of sector interests surveyed. Responses were then collated into a report (*Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area: State of Conservation Report*, 4 October 1998) which also drew on relevant formal policies and/or decisions of the Australian Committee for IUCN.

In the next stage, this report was circulated to all members of ACIUCN (a list of members is given at Annex 2) and all those who had responded to the initial questionnaire. Comments were invited on the report, specifically with respect to: the accuracy of statements in the report; omissions from the report; recommendations for action; and priority issues and actions. A small working group of ACIUCN members was then formed consisting of representatives of government agency (both Commonwealth and state) and non-government organisation members of ACIUCN and the Chair of the Wet Tropics Scientific Advisory Committee. (Members of the Working Group are noted at Annex 3.) Using the 4 October 1998 report as the base document, the role of the Working Group was:

- to review the comments received
- to clarify issues of fact
- to identify where there is disagreement and what the points of disagreement are
- to list the threats to the world heritage property and to highlight those that are most significant in terms of the integrity of the property and maintenance of world heritage values, particularly those that are immediate priorities for management
- to note what actions are currently being taken to address the threats; and
- to prepare clear recommendations to IUCN and the World Heritage Committee for action.

The Working Group met in Cairns at the offices of the Wet Tropics Management Authority on 16 February 1999.

In the final stage the Working Group's discussions were incorporated into an agreed, revised report. This final draft was then circulated to all ACIUCN members and presented to the 42nd Ordinary Meeting of ACIUCN, 6-7 September 2000, for adoption.

In preparing this report, members of the Working Group and ACIUCN recognised the biophysical connectivity between the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics world heritage areas.

2. Background

The Wet Tropics of Queensland was inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 12th Session of the World Heritage Committee, meeting in Brasilia, Brazil from the 5-9 December 1988. It was entered on the list having met world heritage criteria N(atural) (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv). In its 1988 evaluation of the nomination, IUCN noted the essentially

¹ The phrase 'world heritage values' has slipped increasingly into common usage in recent times. The World Heritage Convention and the Operational Guidelines use the term 'value' only in the context of 'outstanding universal value'. For a natural site, 'world heritage values' typically refers to those biophysical and aesthetic attributes that are seen as the reason why the property is of 'outstanding universal value' (see Lucas et.al. 1997). This is the context in which world heritage values are discussed in this report. The Australian Government has published statements of world heritage values for each Australian world heritage property in the context of Administrative Guidelines for the implementation of provisions of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)*. This is described in more detail in Section 3 of this report. ACIUCN believes management of world heritage properties should ensure the protection of both the property and its associated world heritage values.

intact nature of the tropical rainforest (80% of estimated pre-European settlement coverage) but with a substantial amount of lowland forest clearing and previous selective logging throughout the area. It further noted a number of human disturbances throughout the area including transmission lines, quarries, abandoned mine sites, logged areas, and hydrodams, and some site specific impacts from over-grazing, intensive recreational pressures and the Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield road but suggested that these accounted for a small proportion of the total size of the area and most could be subject to restoration efforts. In inscribing the site on the list, the World Heritage Committee “*recommended that an appropriate management regime be established*”.

At the June 1991 meeting of the Bureau, concerns were expressed at delays in the management planning process, lack of funds for field management activities, the pace of tourism development, and a proposed hydropower development (the Tully-Millstream dam). At the December 1992 meeting however the World Heritage Committee noted with satisfaction the level of progress made in instituting management arrangements; drafting legislation; improving budgetary allocations; and rehabilitating degraded forest areas. The issue of possible land clearing within the world heritage property was raised at the June 1998 Bureau meeting.

3. Management Structures and Processes

The primary goal for the world heritage area under the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998* is to implement Australia’s international duty to “*protect, conserve, present, rehabilitate and transmit to future generations the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area within the meaning of the World Heritage Convention*”. ACIUCN believes management of world heritage properties should ensure the protection of both the property and its associated world heritage values.

3.1 Management and Consultative Arrangements

In 1990 the Commonwealth Government and the Queensland Government set up a management scheme for the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area. This involved joint funding and establishment of the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) in 1992. Special legislation for protection and management of the area was enacted by the Queensland State Government in 1993 (*Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*) and the Commonwealth Government in 1994 (*Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Conservation Act 1994*).

Management structures for the world heritage area include a Ministerial Council, established in 1990, comprising two Federal Ministers (for environment and tourism) and two State ministers. The Queensland Minister for the Environment chairs the Council. It co-ordinates policy and funding between the two levels of government, approves management plans and appoints a Board of Directors. The Board, which is set up under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*, consists of six directors: five of these are private citizens who serve as directors in a part-time capacity. Two are nominated by the Commonwealth and two by the State. The Chairperson is jointly nominated. The Executive Director of WTMA is a non-voting director of the Board. Appointment of Board members is at the discretion of the relevant ministers, drawing on a range of expertise. Following discussion at its 40th Ordinary Meeting, September 1999, ACIUCN strongly recommended to the relevant Commonwealth and State ministers that at least one member appointed to the Wet Tropics Management Authority Board should be a person recognised by the conservation movements as having conservation expertise. [*Recommendation 1*].

A Scientific Advisory Committee and a Community Consultative Community have been established. Members of the Community Consultative Committee represent a range of stakeholder interests including education, tourism, local government, primary production, conservation, recreation, scientific community and Bama Wabu (Aboriginal).

In addition, the Authority has established a number of key liaison groups to further expand the consultative process. These groups include a Tourism Industry Liaison Group, a Conservation Sector Liaison Group and a Neighbours and Landowners Liaison Group.

Whilst the Wet Tropics Management Authority fulfils a policy planning, co-ordinating, funding and monitoring role in relation to management activities, day-to-day field management is primarily the responsibility of land managers (mostly Queensland state government land management agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Natural Resources). The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area is characterised by a diversity of different land tenures, and a corresponding range of government agencies and private land holders with responsibilities for managing these tenures under different legislation. The Authority seeks to form effective partnerships with government land management agencies and key sectoral groups to facilitate complementary management of the area.

3.2 Legislative Measures

- 3.2.1 *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 and Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998*

One of the most important obligations for the Authority, under both the intergovernmental agreements and the act, has been the preparation of a management plan for the entire Wet Tropics Area. Development of the Plan took place over many years and involved an extensive programme of community consultation. The *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998* was finally gazetted on 22 May 1998 and came into force on 1 September 1998. The statutory plan is subordinate legislation under the act. It provides the legal framework for management of the area and for constraining potentially damaging activities. Management strategies are contained in an accompanying document *Protection Through Partnerships* (WTMA 1997) which details the policy framework which guides decisions made under the legislation.

Under the Plan, the world heritage area is zoned into four management zones within which various types of activities are allowed, prohibited or permitted. The zoning scheme is based on a “distance from disturbance” model. Generally, Zones A and B are natural areas with a high degree of ecological integrity and are afforded a higher level of protection of natural values (with fewer exemptions to prohibited activities) than Zones C and D.

The Authority has a statutory obligation to monitor, advise and report to the Ministerial Council on the state of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. To this end, a set of environmental indicators have been developed by the Authority, in consultation with its Scientific Advisory Committee, as the basis for more structured monitoring of the state of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area.

3.2.2 *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

ACIUCN believes management of world heritage properties should ensure the protection of both the property and its associated world heritage values. The Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) came into force on 16 July 2000. The world heritage protection provisions of the EPBC Act apply directly to actions (inside or outside a declared world heritage property) that have, will have, or are likely to have a significant impact on the world heritage values of the property. Administrative Guidelines have been issued to guide the Commonwealth Minister in determining whether an impact on world heritage values is significant. To support the Administrative Guidelines, the government has published statements of values for each Australian world heritage property based on information contained in nominations and subsequent values revisions and updates. ACIUCN notes that the statements of values will be important in guiding government decisions under the EPBC Act. ACIUCN also notes that the statements of values compiled for the implementation of the EPBC Act are also under current government policy likely to provide a basis for future systematic reporting by the Australian Government for the purposes of paragraph 71 of the Operational Guidelines to the World Heritage Convention. The EPBC Regulations 2000 prescribe principles for the management of declared world heritage properties which provide for the integration of Commonwealth, State or Territory and local government responsibilities and consistent management of world heritage and other values.

4. Responses to Questionnaire

This section details the responses that were received to the questionnaire circulated by ACIUCN. Respondents were asked to keep their answers brief and the level of detail provided therefore varied considerably. Condition, management and threats are all interrelated and this was clearly seen in the responses received. This section presents views expressed by respondents. ACIUCN's views are reflected in section 5 and subsequent sections.

4.1 Condition of the World Heritage Site

In the questionnaire, respondents' views were sought as to whether, overall, they would say that the values for which the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area was included on the world heritage list have been maintained and/or enhanced since listing. They were also asked to state the most significant factors influencing their assessment. There was no unanimity of view amongst those responding to the questionnaire on this point, although some two-thirds of respondents felt the values had been maintained. Others interpreted the situation differently.

Factors cited by respondents who believed that the world heritage values of the Wet Tropics world heritage area have been maintained and/or enhanced included:

- that the Wet Tropics Management Authority, legislation, and the Wet Tropics Plan are now all in place;
- management of surrounding lands has incorporated world heritage values;
- high level of community support and increased understanding and appreciation by the community of the significance of the world heritage area and the socioeconomic benefits, as well as environmental and ecological benefits, of protecting its natural values;
- cessation of logging and destructive activities such as road building;
- closure of many logging roads and snig tracks;
- increased scientific knowledge upon which to base management decisions;
- an increasingly more mature and conservation-oriented tourism industry, with some exceptions;

- active rehabilitation of previously impacted sites;
- buy back of forested freehold lands adjacent to the world heritage boundary for later inclusion in the boundary;
- improved interpretation and presentation of the world heritage values throughout the region;
- increased monitoring of impacts on the world heritage area as well as outside it;
- better working relationships with on the ground land managers like departments of Environment and Heritage and Natural Resources;
- apparently healthy natural ecological processes.

For those who believe that the world heritage values have not been maintained or enhanced since listing, factors cited by respondents included:

- boundary or edge effects not able to be managed, diminished or removed with current priorities and resources, especially adverse effects of development;
- no buffer zone has been established around the world heritage area;
- grossly inadequate budget (massive increase in funding required for enforcement, education, basic research, and to provide alternatives to land clearing as a rate base for local councils);
- inability to effectively monitor and manage condition;
- weak state and national commitment to conservation - priority to use, not protection;
- extinction or decline of several significant species and disappearances of several populations of rare and threatened plants and animals especially cassowaries;
- pace of lowland clearing of forest for sugar cane expansion;
- pace of coastal development and overuse for tourism of particular sites and a lack of local government commitment to adopt conservation measures;
- resistance of local government to accept the world heritage listing and their proactive undermining of protection strategies;
- inadequate law and failure of the Wet Tropics Management Authority to apply what law they have;
- financial and management friction between the Queensland and Commonwealth governments often leading to a failure to resolve key management issues.

4.2 Management

Noting that management can include a range of considerations and factors such as the day to day operations, management arrangements, resources, responsiveness to concerns, etc. the questionnaire asked respondents to rate the management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area on a scale of five from “very poor” to “excellent”. They were also asked to indicate whether they considered that management of the world heritage area was better; similar; or worse than when the area was inscribed on the World Heritage List. Reasons for their assessment were sought in each case.

Comments about management reflect on the complexity of the region both within and outside the world heritage area boundaries, and the number of different interest groups within the area which results in the process of public consultation and management plan development being understandably slow. Many of the factors cited by respondents as being significant in forming their view as to the condition of the area relate to management considerations and were repeated here. Management was rated generally by respondents from “poor” to “very good” (on a scale of five from “very poor” to “excellent”), with one indicating “excellent”. The majority of respondents believed that management was either “good” or “very good”. With one exception only (who thought management was similar), all respondents felt that management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area was better than when the area was inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Based on the responses received, it is difficult to get a consistent picture of management, particularly as some responses were in fact contradictory. For example, different views were put forward as to the current state of the relationship between the various government agencies with interest in the world heritage area and relationships with community groups.

Factors cited by respondents for a positive management assessment included:

- whole area framework and strategic plan, plus legislative plan, now in place;
- increased public awareness through education, interpretation and community activities, and good community involvement;
- a relatively well-supported Authority is in place;
- the commitment of the Board and staff;
- very good cooperation between scientists, managers and policy makers;
- increased scientific understanding and application of scientific knowledge in all aspects of management;

- gradual development of better data and knowledge base for management;
- prevention of any major extractive industry including cessation of logging;
- the considerable amount of time spent by the management team in assessing and understanding both the region as a whole and the issues involved and the individual areas of concern;
- the partnership approach to all stakeholders and the willingness of management to discuss issues and talk with the local community concerned;
- positive action taken to rehabilitate certain areas;
- increased usage and appreciation of the Wet Tropics and awareness of values and their significance;

On the other hand, respondents also cited:

- politicisation of decision-making, particularly at state level;
- inadequate, or contracting, resources;
- weak political commitment;
- the inability to effectively control threatening processes adjacent to the area or limit the level of tourism and development in critical areas;
- lack of legislative capacity to manage tourism through the Wet Tropics Management Authority;
- weakened science base due to Board and staff changes and insufficient staffing;
- the time taken to produce a basic management plan;
- inadequate staffing levels;
- bureaucratic constraints preventing an adequate response to threatening processes;
- lack of visible evidence of interest by the management body as to the average citizen's expectations for world heritage;
- lack of return on administrative costs;
- unnecessary restrictions placed on the community;
- poor knowledge, limited understanding;
- little public consultation input taken up in the final plan.

Again, some contradictions are evident, particularly, for example, in the comments about the level and application of science. Perhaps some of the comments represent more a vision for the world heritage area that is being worked towards than an achieved result. Whilst some respondents have focused on the improvements made over time, others have focused on what still needs to be done.

4.3 Threats

Respondents to the questionnaire were also asked what they perceive as the current threats to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area. They were asked to indicate the way in which the threat (either current or potential) is having a detrimental effect on the world heritage site and what actions they would recommend to ameliorate the threat. All of the threats raised by respondents are addressed in the following sections.

5. **Threats to Integrity**

The threats identified by respondents in the questionnaires formed the basis for discussion in the Working Group. This section, and its recommendations, represents ACIUCN's views as to the current and/or potential threats to the integrity of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area.

Threats, either current or potential, to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area include:

5.1 Introduced Species

A range of separate issues were raised under this broad heading. The threats originate from both inside and outside of the world heritage area and are current and ongoing.

Specific problems mentioned were:

5.1.1 *Feral Pigs*

Feral pigs are a serious, current threat to the world heritage area. They have become well established throughout the region and are a major pest both for agriculture and the natural environment. Large breeding populations are found within the world heritage area. Evolutionary isolated biological systems which characterise the area are especially vulnerable to pig activity. Their presence results in major transformation of soil surface and ground layer vegetation; subsequent stream and/or river bank instability and sedimentation problems in freshwater streams. They have also been implicated in the spread of diseases and pests such as weeds, pathogens and feral worms. The problem is presently unquantified and control is extremely difficult. Conventional approaches of trapping, poisoning and shooting provide only short-term, localised benefits. In the long-term, some form of

biological control through immunocontraception or lactation inhibition appears necessary. Immunocontraceptive methods are currently being investigated with scientists aiming to develop a safe, highly effective birth control agent administered in a bait.

Recommendations:

- That current cooperative efforts between the Authority, other government agencies, community groups and private landholders to control feral pigs in the world heritage area be continued;
- That to provide a long-term solution continuing research efforts into some form of biological control for feral pigs be maintained.
- That further research be undertaken to determine the extent of the impact caused by feral pigs and to establish priorities for remedial action and control measures. [*Recommendation 2*].

5.1.2 *Other Invasive Faunal Species*

A large number of species including mammals, birds, reptiles, freshwater fish, amphibians and invertebrates have been introduced to the region and become naturalised within the world heritage area. The presence of invasive faunal species can result in direct loss of important native species through predation, displacement of native species and modification of habitat. The threat is both real and/or potential, but its extent is presently unquantified although in some areas it may be locally severe. The issue is not just confined to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area but is an Australia-wide problem. The impact on the world heritage area can potentially however be more profound. Of particular concern is dogs and cats, both domestic (especially from properties neighbouring the world heritage area) and feral.

Damage/effects can include:

- Predation of native animals including the endangered cassowary, tree kangaroo and possums by unrestrained domestic dogs, feral dogs and dingo crosses
- Predation by cats, both domestic and feral, on a range of small native wildlife including birds, reptiles, native rodents, small marsupials and frogs
- Modification of ecological processes by cattle, particularly in the unfenced westerns sections of the world heritage area
- Loss of native species through poisoning from ingesting cane toads
- Competition with native frogs by cane toads for available food and breeding sites.

A Wet Tropics Pest Strategy is being prepared under the auspices of the Rural Land Protection Board and the Far North Queensland Pest Advisory Committee and its development and implementation is encouraged.

One specific issue is that of commercial beekeeping and possible impacts from loss of flower nectar sources for birds and insects and significant loss of hollows for a range of animals. Beekeeping is a controlled activity under the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998*: it is allowed on private lands within the world heritage area outside of rainforests; and a permit is required for public lands within Zones C and D. The effects of beekeeping within the world heritage area are not fully known and research and more data is needed to ascertain this.

Recommendations:

- That further research be undertaken to determine the extent of the damage caused by invasive faunal species, the species most at risk and to establish priorities for remedial action and control measures
- That the damage caused by domestic dogs and cats to native species be emphasised through public education programmes aimed at seeking the cooperation of landholders and appropriate control measures instituted where necessary
- Commercial beekeeping be prohibited in the world heritage area and within foraging range on adjoining lands unless it can be demonstrated that it does not damage world heritage values. [*Recommendation 3*].

5.1.3 *Environmental Weeds*

This threat initially originated from outside of the area but some have now established within it. The threat is both a current and potential one. Invasive weeds are capable of causing major modification to species richness, abundance or ecosystem function and of forming virtual monocultures thereby displacing a vegetation stratum and modifying natural processes. The list of recognised environmental weed species becoming established within the region is increasing. Some of these weeds are already threatening the integrity of the world heritage area whilst others are considered to have potential for rapid spread.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority is funding the Rainforest Co-operative Research Centres's strategic research in relation to environmental weeds, their respective threat and risk potential, and associated control

options. ACIUCN recommends that a strategic bioregional assessment of the problem be undertaken and a weed action plan, co-ordinated across the various land management agencies and local authorities, be developed. [Recommendation 4.] As part of the weed action plan, consideration should be given to a tightening of restrictions on the importation of plants.

5.2 Land Use and Infrastructure Developments

These threats may be located either inside or outside of the world heritage area boundary and are both current and potential. Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is a complex issue, arising from the size of the property itself, its disjunct nature and diversity of land tenures throughout the property. Local government activities in particular have been identified as a source of pressure for infrastructure development.

Of particular concern is the issue of fragmentation of lowlands resulting from a range of development activities including clearing, infrastructure developments, urban expansion (e.g. Mission Beach; Daintree-Cape Tribulation) and waterway alterations. Whilst the fragmentation occurs in the region but outside of the world heritage area, it nevertheless has the potential to cause significant impact on the integrity and values of the world heritage area and have downstream impacts on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Management of potentially threatening processes such as infrastructure and other land use developments needs to be addressed within the context of an integrated regional planning approach as a framework for local government planning which includes determination of carrying capacity, assessment of ecologically sustainable population levels, and sustainability of population growth. Such a regional planning process may also require a re-thinking of the economic basis of the area with economic benefits not predicated on increased urban growth.

The FNQ Regional Planning Project (FNQ 2010) was initiated by the Queensland Government to provide such a regional planning context. The purpose of FNQ 2010 was to develop the Far North Queensland Regional Plan (FNQ Regional Plan). Both the Queensland Government and Regional Organisation of Councils (on behalf of local government in the region) have now formally endorsed the Regional Plan as the principal strategic framework guiding development and management in the region. The regional plan is a non-statutory policy document that provides essential advice to the community and to public decision-makers for use in land use planning, infrastructure provision and resource management responsibilities. The regional plan will function as the principal regional policy document for integration of regional planning considerations within local government planning schemes under Queensland's *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

Codes of practice for development and/or maintenance of infrastructure within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (e.g. electricity, water supply, roads) have been developed but their adequacy and implementation needs to be evaluated. Compliance with such codes is now required by permits issued under the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998*.

(See also section 7.2 Land Tenure and Associated Use Rights and the recommendations contained therein.)

Specific issues include:

5.2.1 Electricity Supplies

Infrastructure corridors associated with powerlines (and roads) result in some of the most significant impacts on the world heritage area. As well as resulting in direct loss of vegetation, impacts include fragmentation of the integrity of the area, impacts on wildlife movement, accelerated spread of weeds and movement of pests, altered fire regimes and waterflows, and impact on scenic landscape values.

< Proposed Grid Electricity into the Daintree

The issue of whether to extend grid electricity into the Daintree has been an ongoing source of controversy. The threat is not the actual construction work itself, which will be mostly outside of the world heritage area (although there is likely to be some localised impacts where the route crosses the world heritage area) but that once grid electricity has been provided it will be the impetus for increasing urban expansion adjacent to the world heritage area. The proposed grid extension will have both direct and indirect adverse impacts on the biological values of the Daintree region, with indirect impacts including loss and fragmentation of habitat (including streams and groundwater), urban and tourism sprawl, and multiple flow-on effects including impacts on presentation of the world heritage area.

The Wet Tropics Ministerial Council has commissioned a Daintree Futures planning project with terms of reference to develop options which will protect biodiversity conservation requirements, sustain the nature based tourism industry as well as providing equitable community services for the resident population. The provision of electricity is being considered within the context of this planning project. The report was released for public

comment in August 2000 after which the report and public comments will be forwarded to Ministerial Council for consideration.

ACIUCN has previously opposed proposals to extend grid electricity north of the Daintree River due to their potential to cause long term cumulative adverse impacts on the Daintree section of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and surrounding region. It has noted that assistance to residents through schemes such as the Daintree Remote Area Power Scheme (DRAPS), have already provided access to power for the large majority of owner-occupiers north of the Daintree River. ACIUCN reiterates its opposition to the extension of mains power north of the Daintree, but recognises that it may be appropriate to review this position when the Daintree Futures Study (which seeks to secure a sustainable future for the Daintree coastal region) is finalised. [*Recommendation 5.*]

5.2.2 Roads (See also section 5.3 Tourist Development and Pressures)

Roads are a major issue within the world heritage area. The threat is both current and potential, with the continued expansion of corridors through key areas likely to result in fragmentation, edge effects, disruption to faunal movements and reduced visitor satisfaction. The Department of Main Roads in collaboration with the Wet Tropics Management Authority has recently produced a *Roads in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area - Best Practice Manual* and road works within the world heritage areas are now subject to compliance with the guidelines and standards within this manual.

ACIUCN recommends:

- That any roads strategy for the world heritage area include promotion of alternative routes outside the world heritage;
- That no road developments or upgrades be permitted if they are likely to have significant adverse impact on the world heritage values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Therefore, any further road proposals or upgrades of existing roads that have the potential to cause negative impacts on the property or world heritage values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area must be subject to a full environmental impact assessment process (including assessment of the direct impacts of the proposed work and any socioeconomic, environmental and infrastructure effects on the integrity of the world heritage area) and effective ongoing environmental management². [*Recommendation 6.*]

Specific roads of concern include:

< Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield Road

The Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield Road has been steeped in controversy even before the area was world heritage listed. The original road was constructed without any environmental assessment and resulted in loss of visual amenity as well as other impacts. It has continued to be a source of controversy, most recently during the recent upgrading by the Douglas Shire Council. The road causes a combination of erosion, edge effects, pollution of waterways, disruption to faunal movements and impacts on visual amenity. As a condition of approval for recent sealing and improved drainage on a section of the road over the Cowie Range, the Douglas Shire Council is required to develop a strategy for the road. It is the view of the Wet Tropics Management Authority that the recent stabilisation works were appropriate at that point in time and that downstream effects with respect to pollution have been improved as a result of the stabilisation. A consensus strategic approach to the future of the Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield Road is required and ACIUCN recommends that both the Commonwealth and state governments support the process of planning for the area by ensuring that it is properly funded, carried out in a timely manner and implemented. Further to recommendation 6 above, any consideration of the future of the Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield Road should include consideration of closure of the road.. [*Recommendation 7.*]

< Kuranda Range Road

This is a current complex and controversial planning exercise which has important implications for the world heritage area. FNQ 2010 has identified upgrade of this road as a key element in its regional growth management framework. ACIUCN believes that options under consideration in the Integrated Transport Study for Kuranda Range are likely to have a significant impact on world heritage values.

< Southedge (Quaid) Road

This has been another very contentious road since listing of the world heritage area. The road has never been publicly gazetted and whilst closed to the public, has had significant environmental impacts including those resulting from a serious washout in early 1999. Whilst the FNQ Regional Plan does not identify a regional need

² Note: The Wilderness Society, Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Environment Centre NT and Australian Conservation Foundation opposed the inclusion of the word "significant" in this dot point.

for this road there have been proposals in the past to open the road, including an application received in 1999, with proponents including the Cook and Mareeba shire councils. ACIUCN recommends that Southedge Road be removed and the area rehabilitated. [*Recommendation 8.*]

5.2.3 *Water Extraction and Impoundments*

The demand for water is largely external to the world heritage area and whilst a current threat is also potentially a major emerging management issue. Rainfall in the area, whilst high, is distinctly seasonal and unreliable, with consumption demand (urban water requirements, agriculture, provision of hydroelectric power, visitor water requirements) expected to increase. Provision of consumptive supplies has tended to ignore the ecological requirements for water within the stream itself. Direct impacts can include inundation and destruction of stream habitats from dams and weirs; isolation of downstream reaches and tributaries from upper tributaries; and impoundments acting as major barriers to aquatic dispersal. There continues to be steady pressure to reconsider the Tully-Millstream dam and construction of that dam is, for example, written into the Cardwell Shire Council Corporate Plan as a means of creating employment. A coordinated regional planning approach to the issues of water needs, supply, allocation and management is vital and this is beginning to be addressed through the Water Allocation and Management Planning and FNQ Regional Planning processes. FNQ 2010 project investigations associated with potential damming of the Upper Herbert remain a concern.

Specifically, ACIUCN recommends:

- That as a first priority conservative environmental flows be calculated and that these be the driving force in any decision-making, rather than what people claim they need
- That on the demand side, best practice management be developed and implemented to encourage more efficient use of water resources by industry sectors
- That there be no further construction of dams or weirs if they are likely to damage world heritage values. Therefore any further proposals for construction of dams and weirs, or increased water extraction on rivers, that have the potential to cause negative impacts on the property and the world heritage values of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area must be subject to a full environmental impact assessment process and effective ongoing environmental management;

and reiterates its previous policy that the Tully-Millstream Dam proposal not proceed. [*Recommendation 9.*]

5.2.4 *Expansion of Sugar Cane*

Occurring outside of the world heritage area, the threat arising from further clearing of native vegetation in open forests and woodlands and the destruction of lowland habitat and drainage of wetlands to facilitate the expansion of sugar cane growing and other activities, is both a current and potential threat. Native vegetation clearing in areas of lowland rainforest has direct impacts through habitat destruction on species such as cassowaries and mahogany gliders. In addition to direct effects from clearing, sugar cane growing produces downstream effects such as increased nutrient and sediment run-off in mangrove areas and increased demand for water. Another area of concern is on the Atherton Tablelands where sugar cane expansion is dramatically increasing demand for water for irrigation purposes, with consequential changes to water flow regimes and increased sedimentation of waterways flowing through the world heritage area and further to the Great Barrier Reef. Such vegetation clearance also appears to be adversely influencing roosting habitats available to the Little Red Flying Fox (*Pteropus scapulatus*) causing them to concentrate in remaining areas and exposing the edges of the world heritage area to unusual densities of the animal for longer periods than normal. This in turn may damage the integrity of the forests and make them vulnerable to invasion by exotic vines and tree species modifying or affecting endemism values and ecological interactions.

ACIUCN recommends that the Queensland Government introduce and implement native vegetation protection controls including ecological communities 'of concern' or 'vulnerable to extinction' across all tenures within the Wet Tropics bioregion as a matter of urgency. [*Recommendation 10.*]

5.3 Tourism Development and Pressures

As the area becomes more recognised, so the numbers of visitors increase and consequently the demands on, and for, various facilities (see also section on infrastructure development). The threat is current. Tourism has resulted in the deterioration of certain sites through vegetation loss, water pollution, and impacts on wildlife, including biota central to the world heritage values. Overcrowding can also impact on natural vistas, scenic beauty (another world heritage value) and visitor experience. Commercial tourism needs have increased pressure for the maintenance of roads into areas of high conservation value, for example the Mount Lewis and the Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield roads.

It should also be recognised that tourism has the potential to assist in presentation of world heritage values.

Tourism is the major direct use of the world heritage area. In a 1997 report to the Wet Tropics Management Authority, Sally Driml (Driml 1997) reports that a survey of visitors revealed nearly half the respondents (45.6%) nominated rainforest experiences as one of their three main reasons for visiting the region. The authority reports that in 1998, over 48% of Queensland's nature based tourism operators were based in Tropical North Queensland, and 210 companies had permits to visit the Wet Tropics. The tourism industry contributes significantly to the economy at both a local and regional scale. Direct tourism use of the world heritage area is estimated to generate over \$179 million, based on expenditure associated with commercial tours, hire cars and running costs for private vehicles. Total gross expenditure for the region (which includes flow-on effects to the local economy) is estimated to be \$753 million.

In her report, Driml concluded that to date (1997) visitor numbers and infrastructure have not caused negative reactions for the vast majority of visitors. She suggested that whilst it was possible that critical natural capital was being maintained (essential for sustainable tourism), in the face of expected growth in visitor numbers and given uncertainty about cumulative and indirect impacts, there was no guarantee that this would continue to be met in the future. In her conclusions, Driml states that:

"This result points to the significant national benefits that arise from tourism and recreation in this protected area, given adequate management.

In all cases where projections are based on current levels of management funding, a shortfall in funding is identified. Thus the criteria and conditions for sustainable tourism in the Wet Tropics WHA will not be met unless this is addressed - as soon as possible."

A coordinated approach to planning and management of tourism, with the Wet Tropics Management Authority as the lead agency, is required. This should include management of ecological impacts, assessment of carrying capacity at individual sites and across the region, assessment of mechanisms to disperse visitor movement throughout the whole region and determine appropriate levels and types of use for different areas (e.g. passive recreation, accommodation, etc.). Where specific road closures have been identified in the Wet Tropics Management Plan a firm stand should be maintained and additional access points resisted. Funding appropriate to the level of tourism activity should be provided by industry and governments to ensure that planning, management and monitoring resources associated with tourism use are adequate. [Recommendation 11.]

Following on from the adoption of the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998*, ACIUCN notes that a *Nature-Based Tourism Strategy for the World Heritage Area*, which addresses both local recreational use as well as commercial tourism and aims to provide a regional framework for development and management of nature-based tourism opportunities as well as provide guidelines and standards for management at the sub-regional level was released by the Authority in August 2000. A wet tropics walking strategy is also being developed to provide an agreed set of priorities and standards for the development and maintenance of a walking track network throughout the area.

5.4 Global Warming and Climate Change

This is a potential threat. The inherent dynamics of the Wet Tropics ecosystems and the way forests and their essential functional processes are likely to be affected by the predicted changes in climate. Substantial changes to systems, particularly on the coast may result and issues such as location of protected areas may need to be reconsidered.

ACIUCN recommends that:

- Planning schemes for the areas within the Wet Tropics biogeographic region should take account of global warming, predicted sea level rise, and increased storm surge to ensure that management of land use is adequate to protect world heritage values.
- The World Heritage Committee commission a scientific report on the potential impacts of global warming on the natural and cultural values of world heritage areas; and
- The World Heritage Committee assist state parties to identify and fully address the effects of global warming on world heritage areas in their jurisdictions and cooperate with other relevant international bodies, particularly the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), to address concerns at the impacts of global warming on world heritage areas in an integrated manner. [Recommendation 12.]

6. **ACIUCN Policies and Actions**

ACIUCN welcomes the gazettal of the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998* and the widespread consultation involved in its formulation although the length of time taken for its completion is a matter of regret. Gazettal of the Plan is consistent with principles espoused in ACIUCN's document *The Richmond Communiqué: Principles and guidelines for the management of Australia's world heritage areas* (November 1995) that management plans for each world heritage area be developed and implemented as a high priority and that the primary objective of the management plan must be to protect the world heritage property in perpetuity, whilst still recognising the implications for management of other natural and cultural values.

The Richmond Communiqué also provides significant emphasis on the need for recognition of cultural values, particularly indigenous cultural values, and the active involvement of indigenous peoples in all aspects of world heritage (from identification, to nomination, to management and monitoring). Specifically, it was recommended that all existing world heritage areas be assessed for their cultural landscape values.

In January 1998 the Review of Aboriginal Involvement in the Management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area was published. Its recommendations included establishment of a forum to progress negotiations towards formal involvement of Rainforest Aborigines in the joint management of the area. That forum, referred to as the Interim Negotiating Forum, has been established with support from the Commonwealth and Queensland governments.

Specific issues concerning the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area have been brought to ACIUCN's attention over a number of years. These include: the proposed Tully Millstream Hydroelectric Dam; the Skyrail project at Kuranda; and the proposed extension of grid electricity into the Daintree area. Skyrail of course is now a reality.

The Australian Committee for IUCN has a longstanding policy to oppose inappropriate developments in world heritage areas and believes that it is ultimately the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, as the signatory to the World Heritage Convention, to take action to ensure that world heritage values are protected. ACIUCN has policies opposing any Tully Millstream Hydroelectric Dam and the proposed extension of grid electricity (see Annex 1).

7. Other Comments and Recommendations

Many of the threats to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area arise from increasing population and development in the region. This results in increased demands for power, water, service corridors, road, agricultural and rural development and concomitant problems associated with waste disposal, feral animals and plants, chemicals, fire management and so forth. A regional, strategic planning approach supported by a focussed, predictive science programme incorporating socioeconomic as well as ecological and environmentally-oriented streams is needed. But plans are only effective if they are implemented, and policies and provisions are enforced, which requires provision of adequate resources. This requires political will at all levels of government. The Wet Tropics Plan can override local council planning schemes and imposes conditions on regulated activities, thereby providing a significant level of control to the Authority over adverse impacts. The Wet Tropics Management Authority has adopted a five year strategic plan (1998-2003). The strategic plan provides the basis for developing the Authority's annual programme and budget for submission to the Ministerial Council. Now that the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998* has been gazetted the necessary level of resources should be provided to ensure that the Strategic Plan is fully implemented as a matter of high priority. [*Recommendation 13.*]

A number of other issues arose in the course of compiling this report. These include:

7.1 Aboriginal Cultural Values

The original nomination of the Wet Tropics for world heritage listing proposed that in addition to the four natural criteria, the area also justified listing as a cultural property on the basis of the extant Aboriginal rainforest culture, with Aboriginal occupation dating back at least 40,000 years. (DASETT 1987). Whilst this was not proceeded with at the time, there is a widely held view that the Aboriginal cultural landscape of the region is undoubtedly of world heritage significance. It was suggested to ACIUCN that these outstanding cultural values of global significance may themselves be under threat both as a result of actions such as weed control activities that affect cultural sites as well as inactions such as the failure to utilise and respect indigenous languages, thereby weakening their relevance.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority has sought better involvement of indigenous people in management of the world heritage area. Amongst actions taken, the Board has approved a protocol that outlines consultative arrangements between the Authority and indigenous people and is currently working on a specific protocol for involvement of indigenous people in permitting.

A two year study on indigenous involvement in management of the world heritage areas has been undertaken. One of the recommendations within this report is that consideration be given to renominating the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area for cultural values. The review contains a Vision Statement (*Review Steering Committee 1998*):

“That an agreement for management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is negotiated that places the traditional carers for their country in a position to assert their legitimate (including customary-law) rights and interests, for the protection and preservation of cultural survival for the present and future generations.”

Noting that the Interim Negotiating Forum has now been established, ACIUCN recommends:

- That the cultural values of the area be formally documented and recognised with a view to renominating the area as a cultural property and increased indigenous involvement in management;
- That appropriate joint management agreements be negotiated with Rainforest Aborigines. *[Recommendation 14.]*

7.2 Land Tenure and Associated Use Rights

The Wet Tropics world heritage area comprises a variety of land tenures and different tenures have different implicit use rights associated with them, for example the right to build a house on freehold land. There will always be a tension between management of the world heritage property to maintain world heritage values and the needs and wants of freehold and leasehold property owners. Population increase and the further settlement of existing freehold properties, particularly in the area between Bloomfield and Daintree rivers, will impact on flora and fauna through fragmentation, edge effects, introduction of additional exotic plants and animals, increases in dogs and cats, additional traffic pressures and reduction of water quality. Consideration of impacts on world heritage areas is not always the primary concern in decision making by local councils.

Under the Daintree Rescue Package, significant funds were provided by both the Commonwealth and Queensland state governments to buy back properties of high conservation value in the Daintree region. The programme has been completed. Governments have not provided additional funds to renew the programme. There remains however a need for greater level of protection and control of activities in areas of Daintree lowland forests and rainforests, and in other areas of lowland forest in key strategic locations south of the Daintree River. ACIUCN supports the continuation of a programme, with strategic land acquisition as a core component, to fulfill the objectives of the Daintree Rescue Package utilising a range of mechanisms and urges the Queensland and Commonwealth governments to expedite the process. *[Recommendation 15.]*

As referred to in Section 5.2, the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council commissioned the Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre to undertake the 'Daintree Futures' planning study to develop options which would conserve biodiversity values, sustain the nature based tourism industry, as well as providing equitable community services for the resident population. The Ministerial Council is yet to consider the recommendations contained in the study.

It is the policy of the Wet Tropics Management Authority to encourage the conversion of land tenure to a higher order of protection (e.g. national park) where opportunities arise. Renewal or conversion of tenure is however ultimately the decision of the Department of Natural Resources, with advice provided by the authority on the sustainability of land management practices. ACIUCN urges the incorporation of acquired lands into the world heritage area.

A review of boundaries for the world heritage area is proposed under the Strategic Plan. Whilst supporting the inclusion of additional areas of high conservation value in the world heritage area, there is a concern to ensure that any review of boundaries not result in the exclusion from the world heritage site of areas considered to be disturbed but which are important and necessary from an integrity and management point of view.

ACIUCN recommends that the principal objective of any review of boundaries be to enhance the integrity of the world heritage area and to consider the incorporation of additional areas of world heritage significance. *[Recommendation 16.]*

7.3 Fire Management

Whilst not necessarily a threat, fire (both inside and outside of the boundaries) is a management issue for the world heritage area. The Wet Tropics world heritage area is a mixture of both rainforest and non-forest community types and whilst rainforest are extremely sensitive to fire, most of the non-rainforest communities, with the exception of mangroves, are fire adapted or rely on certain fire regimes for their maintenance. Many scientists are concerned at encroachment by rainforest species on open forest communities. Significant ecological changes may occur, both as a result of fire but also in the absence of fire for those communities that are dependent on it. Coordinated fire management planning is needed for the wet tropics bioregion as a whole, as is research to identify optimal burning regimes. *[Recommendation 17.]*

7.4 Disappearance of Upland Stream Dwelling Frogs

The global phenomenon which has seen many species of frogs disappear from relatively undisturbed habitats at high altitudes throughout the world is also evidenced in the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area. The causal agent/s or reason for the declines is unknown. Within the Wet Tropics, at least four species of upland stream dwelling frogs are missing, as well as three declining species of stream dwelling rainforest frogs which are still found at lower altitudes. Research aimed at identifying the actual threatening process is a priority as is the development and implementation of recovery plans. *[Recommendation 18.]*

7.5 Community Attitudes Surveys

As has been noted earlier, declaration of the Wet Tropics WHA was accomplished in a climate of confrontation, with strong levels of opposition amongst some sectors. Despite the perception of widespread local community opposition to listing the area has in fact always received a good level of community support. A benchmark survey of community attitudes, commissioned by the Wet Tropics Management Authority in 1992 showed that nationally 71 % supported listing of the Wet Tropics, with 74% support in North Queensland. The only significant pockets of opposition found were in the Tablelands and in the coastal area between Cairns and Townsville.

Further surveys were carried out in 1993 and 1996. The 1996 survey showed continued high support for the world heritage listing in both cities and in the region (77% in the cities; 80% in the region) but with continued lower support in the Tablelands, South and North regions than in Cairns or Townsville. A majority of respondents (54% in cities; 61% in the region) felt that there had been a positive effect on the local communities as a result of the world heritage listing. Perceived benefits of the listing included attracting tourists and environmental protection. Regional residents also frequently mentioned the listing's preservation value, both in terms of ensuring the area remains for future generations (24%) and in terms of preserving its beauty and scenic qualities (21%) in contrast to only 8% of respondents in the cities mentioning these benefits. The greatest disadvantage of the area's listing mentioned was loss of jobs and/or damage to surrounding local economies (39% in the cities; 36% regionally). This however represented a significant decrease in the extent to which regional residents held this perception (down from 48% in 1993). Tablelands residents were the most negative about the listing's effect on local economies (51%).

7.6 Concluding Comment

Whilst embroiled in controversy the nomination and subsequent listing of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area has had a number of positive effects including:

- the cessation of commercial logging within the property
- increased acceptance in the community of "sustainable presentation"
- the creation of a coherent, holistic, integrated management unit
- a focus on conservation for the area
- the protection of ecological goods and services; and
- the development of a significant sustainable nature based tourism industry generating considerably more wealth for the regional economy than previous commercial logging.

On balance, ACIUCN believes that since listing the values of the world heritage area have been enhanced through removal and management of many threatening processes, particularly logging, but also including mining and infrastructure developments. There are still however a number of threatening processes that require further management action as detailed in section 5 of this report. Clearing of high conservation value rainforest has occurred within the world heritage area, although it must be noted that this was prior to gazettal of the *Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998*.

Listing of the Wet Tropics of Queensland on the world heritage list was actively opposed by the then Queensland State Government, and some other sections of local government and the local community. ACIUCN recognises that there is now good cooperation between the Commonwealth and state government authorities, facilitated by the Wet Tropics Board and Ministerial Council. Better cooperation also exists between the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the state government land management agencies, facilitated by the Principal Agencies Forum (PAF), consisting of relevant directors from the Authority, the Department of Natural Resources and the Environmental Protection Agency, designed to resolve issues cooperatively in a partnership arrangements. There is a perception at least however that continuing tensions still exist between various Queensland management agencies and the Wet Tropics Management Authority and that some sections of local government continue to resist the world heritage management regime and promote activities detrimental to the maintenance and protection of world heritage values. The role and actions of local government in management still remains an issue for debate. Whilst the various agencies do participate in regional planning initiatives, implementation of such initiatives requires close cooperation to carry out the plans. At the same time local community support for the Wet Tropics world heritage area has always been strong and continues to grow and the area generally enjoys overwhelming community support despite some pockets of local individual resistance particularly where world heritage listing is seen as impeding development proposals.

Within the conservation movement, high priority is placed on the development of a Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy to ensure greater community involvement in the management of the world heritage area and to develop closer partnerships between local community sectors, traditional owners and world heritage area management agencies. Such a strategy should establish priorities and mechanisms for improved conservation management supported by enhanced community involvement in world heritage area conservation management. The Wet Tropics Management Authority also identifies development of a conservation strategy (which would include an audit of current conservation programmes and identification of future conservation management needs) as a high priority.

Some of the tensions referred to above would appear to be part and parcel of the political dynamics in Australia and not therefore easily solved. They are nevertheless a concern and need to be addressed. As part of this process, ACIUCN recommends that:

- adequate resources for management, education, publicity, research, maintenance and provision of facilities, etc. be provided;
 - high priority be placed on the development of a Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy with the aim of facilitating greater community involvement in Wet Tropics World Heritage Area management;
 - the Wet Tropics Management Authority continue to build stronger partnerships with all stakeholders, including neighbours of the world heritage area;
 - the values of the area to the region be promoted, thus instilling increasing community and agency support for maintaining its integrity;
 - a programme of regional planning be instituted which encompasses all local government areas where planning decisions may affect Wet Tropics world heritage property and its associated values;
 - a programme to train senior local government officials in world heritage management be instituted.
- [Recommendation 19.]*

List of Recommendations³

1. That in making appointments to the Wet Tropics Management Authority Board the relevant Commonwealth and State ministers ensure that at least one member appointed to the Board should be a person recognised by the conservation movements as having conservation expertise. (See section 3 Management Structures and Processes.)
2. Feral pigs:
 - That current cooperative efforts between the Authority, other government agencies, community groups and private landholders to control feral pigs in the world heritage area be continued;
 - That to provide a long-term solution continuing research efforts into some form of biological control for feral pigs be maintained;
 - That further research be undertaken to determine the extent of the impact caused by feral pigs, and to establish priorities for remedial action and control measures. (See section 5.1.1 Feral Pigs.)
3. Invasive faunal species:
 - That further research be undertaken to determine the extent of the damage caused by invasive faunal species, the species most at risk and to establish priorities for remedial action and control measures;
 - That the damage caused by domestic dogs and cats to native species be emphasised through public education programmes aimed at seeking the cooperation of landholders and appropriate control measures instituted where necessary
 - Commercial beekeeping be prohibited in the world heritage area and within foraging range on adjoining lands unless it can be demonstrated that it does not damage world heritage values. (See section 5.1.2 Invasive Faunal Species.)
4. That a strategic bioregional assessment of the problem of environmental weeds be undertaken and a weed action plan, coordinated across the various land management agencies and local authorities, be developed. (See section 5.1.3 Environmental Weeds.)
5. ACIUCN reiterates its opposition to the extension of mains power north of the Daintree, but recognises that it may be appropriate to review this position when the Daintree Futures Study (which seeks to secure a sustainable future for the Daintree coastal region) is finalised. (Section 5.2.1 Electricity Supplies.)
6. Roads:
 - That any roads strategy for the world heritage area include promotion of alternative routes outside the world heritage area;
 - That no road developments or upgrades be permitted if they are likely to have [significant] adverse impact on the world heritage values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Therefore, any further road proposals or upgrades of existing roads that have the potential to cause negative impacts on the property or world heritage values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area must be subject to a full environmental impact assessment process (including assessment of the direct impacts of the proposed work and any socioeconomic, environmental and infrastructure effects on the integrity of the world heritage area) and effective ongoing environmental management. (See section 5.2.2 Roads.)
7. Further to recommendation 6 above, that any consideration of the future of the Bloomfield to Cape Tribulation Road should include consideration of closure of the road. (See section 5.2.2 Roads.)
8. That Southedge Road be removed and the area rehabilitated. (See section 5.2.2 Roads.)
9. Water extraction and impoundments:
 - That as a first priority conservative environmental flows be calculated and that these be the driving force in any decision-making, rather than what people claim they need
 - That on the demand side, best practice management be developed and implemented to encourage more efficient use of water resources by industry sectors
 - That there be no further construction of dams or weirs if they are likely to damage world heritage values. Therefore any further proposals for construction of dams and weirs, or increased water extraction on rivers, that have the potential to cause negative impacts on the property and the world heritage values of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area must be subject to a full environmental impact assessment process and effective ongoing environmental management;

³ Not all recommendations were endorsed unanimously. Recommendations should be read in conjunction with the relevant section of the report where requests by member agencies or organisations to formally have their position transmitted with the decision are noted.

- That the Tully-Millstream Dam proposal not proceed. (See section 5.2.3 Water Extraction and Impoundments.)
10. That the Queensland Government introduce and implement native vegetation protection controls including ecological communities 'of concern' or 'vulnerable to extinction' across all tenures within the Wet Tropics bioregion as a matter of urgency. (See section 5.2.4 Expansion of Sugar Cane.)
 11. That a coordinated approach to planning and management of tourism, with the Wet Tropics Management Authority as the lead agency, be undertaken. This should include management of ecological impacts, assessment of carrying capacity at individual sites and across the region, assessment of mechanisms to disperse visitor movement throughout the whole region and determine appropriate levels and types of use for different areas (e.g. passive recreation, accommodation, etc.). Where specific road closures have been identified in the Wet Tropics Management Plan a firm stand should be maintained and additional access points resisted. Funding appropriate to the level of tourism activity should be provided by industry and governments to ensure that planning, management and monitoring resources associated with tourism use are adequate. (See section 5.3 Tourism Development and Pressures.)
 12. Global Warming and Climate Change:
 - That planning schemes for areas within the Wet Tropics biogeographic region should take account of global warming, predicted sea level rise, and increased storm surge to ensure that management of land use is adequate to protect world heritage values;
 - That the World Heritage Committee commission a scientific report on the potential impacts of global warming on the natural and cultural values of world heritage areas;
 - That the World Heritage Committee assist state parties to identify and fully address the effects of global warming on world heritage areas in their jurisdictions and cooperate with other relevant international bodies, particularly the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), to address concerns at the impacts of global warming on world heritage areas in an integrated manner. (See section 5.4 Global Warming and Climate Change.)
 13. That the necessary level of resources be provided to ensure that the Strategic Plan is fully implemented as a matter of high priority. (See section 7 Other Comments and Recommendations.)
 14. Aboriginal Cultural Values:
 - That the cultural values of the area be formally documented and recognised with a view to renominating the area as a cultural property and increased indigenous involvement in management;
 - That appropriate joint management agreements be negotiated with Rainforest Aborigines. (See section 7.1 Aboriginal Cultural Values.)
 15. That a programme be implemented by the Queensland and Commonwealth governments as a matter of priority, with strategic land acquisition as a core component, to fulfill the objectives of the Daintree Rescue Package utilising a range of mechanisms. (See section 7.2 Land Tenure and Associated Use Rights.)
 16. That the principal objective of any review of boundaries be to enhance the integrity of the world heritage area and to consider the incorporation of additional areas of world heritage significance. (See section 7.2 Land Tenure and Associated Use Rights.)
 17. That a coordinated fire management planning regime, including research to identify optimal burning regimes, be developed and implemented for the wet tropics bioregion as a whole. (See section 7.3 Fire Management.)
 18. That research aimed at identifying the actual threatening process/es resulting in the disappearance of upland stream dwelling frogs be undertaken and funded as a priority; with subsequent development and implementation of recovery plans. (See section 7.4 Disappearance of Upland Stream Dwelling Frogs.)
 19. Support for the World Heritage Area:
 - That adequate resources for management, education, publicity, research, maintenance and provision of facilities, etc. be provided;
 - That high priority be placed on the development of a Wet Tropics Conservation Strategy with the aim of facilitating greater community involvement in Wet Tropics World Heritage Area management;
 - That the Wet Tropics Management Authority continue to build stronger partnerships with all stakeholders, including neighbours of the world heritage area;
 - That the values of the area to the region be promoted, thus instilling increasing community and agency support for maintaining its integrity

- That a programme of regional planning be instituted which encompasses all local government areas where planning decisions may affect Wet Tropics world heritage property and its associated values ;
- That a programme to train senior local government officials in world heritage management be instituted. (See section 7.5 Concluding Comment.)

LIST OF THOSE TO WHOM QUESTIONNAIRE WAS SENT

Berwick, Cr Mike - Douglas Shire Council
Biddlecombe, Mrs Truus
Burns, Cr Colin
Charters, Mr Tony - Manager - Environmental Tourism, Queensland Tourist & Travel Corporation
Comben, Mr Pat - Director, Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland
Courtenay, Mr John
Dacey, Mr Tom - Secretary, Wet Tropics Management Authority Board
Deeral, Mr Eric
Giandomenico, Cr Pino - Mayor, Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Gloor, Mr Chris
Hill, Ms Rosemary
Hitchcock, Mr Peter
Hopkins, Dr Mike - Chair, Wet Tropics Scientific Advisory Committee
Hundloe, Prof. Tor - Chair, WTMA Board
Irvine, Mr Tony
Keto, Dr Aila - President, Australian Rainforest Conservation Society Inc.
King, Mr Daryl - Director, World Heritage Unit, Environment Australia
Kitching, Prof. Roger
Krockenberger, Mr Michael - Campaigns Director, Australian Conservation Foundation
Lloyd, Miss Michelle
MacDonald, Mr Nev
Mansford, Mr George
McDonald, Prof. Geoff
McFadzean, Mr Gavin - Coordinator, Cairns & Far North Environment Centre
Nielsen, Mr Les
Norman, Mr Robert
Pearson, Mr Noel - Chair, Cape York Land Council
Pezzutti, Cr Jeff - Cairns City Council
Rafferty, Mr Ian
Richards, Ms Fiona
Russell, Cr Stephen
Schneiders, Mr Lyndon - The Wilderness Society
Seagren, Ms Fran
Sheather, Mr Allan
Smyth, Dr Dermot
Stewart, Mrs Barbara
Stork, Prof. Nigel - Director, CRC Tropical Rainforest Ecology & Management
Tager, Mr Jeremy - Coordinator, North Queensland Conservation Council
Tanna, Mr Archie - Bama Wabu Aboriginal Council
Truscott, Ms Marilyn - President, Australia ICOMOS
Valentine, Dr Peter - Chair, Community Consultative Committee
Watkinson, Mr Russell - Executive Director, Wet Tropics Management Authority
Whitney, Mr Norman
Wilks, Ms Leanne
Winter, Dr John
Wyles, Mr Clarence
Zethoven, Ms Imogen - Corodinator, Queensland Conservation Council

ACIUCN Members

Government Agency Members:

Australian Heritage Commission
Department of Conservation & Land Management, Western Australian
Department for Environment and Heritage, South Australia
Environment Australia, Department of the Environment and Heritage

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
State Forests of NSW
Wet Tropics Management Authority

National Non-Government Organisation Members:

Association for Research & Environmental Aid
Australian Conservation Foundation

Australian Marine Conservation Society Inc.

Australian Rainforest Conservation Society Inc.
Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers
Conservation Council of South Australia Inc.
Conservation Council of Western Australia Inc.
Environment Centre Northern Territory Inc.
Environment Institute of Australia Inc.
Greenpeace Australia

National Parks Association NSW
National Parks Australia Council
Nature Conservation Council of NSW
Project Jonah Australia
Queensland Conservation Council Inc.
Royal Zoological Society of South Australia
School of Resource, Environmental & Heritage Sciences, University Of Canberra
The Wilderness Society
Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia

Wildlife Survival Inc
World Wide Fund for Nature Australia

Non Voting Members:

Primary Industries (South Australia)
Tasmanian Conservation Trust Inc.
The Trust for Nature (Victoria)
Mr Peter Hitchcock
Mr Graeme Kelleher
Mr Michael Kennedy
Prof Bruce Davis

Members of the Working Group

Mr Rod Atkins/Mr Jonas Rupp, World Heritage Unit, Environment Australia
Mr Max Chappell, Wet Tropics Management Authority
Ms Pam Eiser, Executive Officer, Australian Committee for IUCN
Ms Rosemary Hill, Australian Conservation Foundation
Dr Mike Hopkins, Chair, Wet Tropics Scientific Advisory Committee
Ms Nicky Hungerford, Queensland Conservation Council
Dr Peter Valentine, Chair, Wet Tropics Community Consultative Committee

Extension of Electricity Grid Power North of the Daintree River

NOTING that the route for the proposed electricity grid extension north of the Daintree River to Cow Bay and Thornton Beach crosses the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area;

NOTING ALSO that land has been purchased with funds from the Commonwealth-Queensland Daintree Rescue Package for future inclusion in the world heritage area;

NOTING that the proposed grid extension will have both direct and indirect adverse impacts on the biological values of the Daintree region, with indirect impacts including loss and fragmentation of habitat, urban and tourism sprawl, and the multiple flow-on effects of urbanisation being of utmost concern;

AWARE that 91% of current owner-occupiers north of the Daintree River already have access to power through the Daintree Remote Area Power Scheme (DRAPS);

The Australian Committee for IUCN, at its 35th Ordinary Meeting, 25-26 February 1997:

CALLS UPON the Commonwealth Government and Queensland Government to:

- i) reject or withdraw the proposed grid extension due to its potential to cause long-term cumulative adverse impacts on the Daintree section of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and surrounding region;
- ii) reinstate assistance to residents in the form of DRAPS/HRAPS (Household Remote Areas Power Scheme).

Select Reference List

- ACIUCN (1995), *The Richmond Communique: Principles and Guidelines for the Management of Australia's World Heritage Areas*, Occasional Paper Number 6, Adopted by the participants at a national workshop held at Richmond, NSW 7-9 August 1995, Australian Committee for IUCN, Sydney.
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WET TROPICS OF QUEENSLAND WORLD HERITAGE AREA – FOCUSED RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE ACIUCN REPORT

The World Heritage Committee at its meeting in December 1999 requested that IUCN and the State Party provide a detailed and up-to-date state of conservation report for the Wet Tropics of Queensland, including a focused set of recommendations and a plan for their implementation as had been developed for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. It noted and commended the consultative process involving stakeholders undertaken in arriving at the Great Barrier Reef reports.

On 7 September 2000 the Australian Committee for IUCN (ACIUCN) adopted its report *Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area: Condition, Management & Threats* during its 42nd Ordinary Meeting.

At the same time, the meeting considered a draft set of focused recommendations. These were arrived at following a clustering analysis of the recommendations contained in the September 2000 report with the aim of identifying recommendations for priority actions. ACIUCN formally adopted the focused recommendations during its 42nd Ordinary Meeting on 7 September 2000.

The analysis identified four priority action areas:

1. Support for Management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area (*Recommendations 13 and 19 in the ACIUCN Report*)

The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area was inscribed on the World Heritage List in September 1988. It is subject to many and changing pressures and interactions of human use which can impact on its complex and incompletely understood ecosystems. The first Wet Tropics Management Plan was not completed until May 1998. Implementation of that plan requires ongoing commitment of expertise and resources.

ACIUCN recommends that the Commonwealth and Queensland governments commit to a strategy, including a revised intergovernmental agreement incorporating a new financial agreement, which will provide and sustain adequate resources to enable the Wet Tropics Management Plan and the Strategic Plan 1998-2003 to be fully implemented. This should be done with particular regard to field management, education, partnership building, research, monitoring, provision and maintenance of facilities and the capacity for strategic analysis and planning such as that required for the review of the Plan in 2003.

2. Management of Native and Introduced Species (*Recommendations 2, 3, 4, 10, 17 and 18 in the ACIUCN Report*)

The needs and most appropriate management regimes for management of many native plant and animal species are poorly understood. Matters of concern include optimum fire management strategies and the factors underlying the decline in several frog species.

There is also a need to address the problems caused by exotic plant and animal species, introduced for agricultural or domestic purposes, which have now become weed, feral or invasive species threatening native plant and animal communities.

ACIUCN recommends that substantial effort be applied to research, education, partnership building, and planning to address the protection of native vegetation, the management of fire, the control of current feral and exotic species and the management of the introduction of species in order to minimise the risk of impacts on native flora and fauna and to identify and address the threats to sensitive native species.

3. Management of Land Use and Human Impacts Within and Beyond the Boundaries of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area (*Recommendations 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 15 in the ACIUCN Report*)

Long term protection of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area and its associated values depends on containing and minimising the impacts of human use and activity upon the native flora, fauna and ecological processes. The provision of services for human use and access can have significant adverse impacts.

There is concern at the potential for ecological damage within the area as a result of provision of roads and electricity, the extraction of water, the development of facilities for tourism and the effects of climate change and global warming. There is also concern that inappropriate management of lands and crop species in the region but outside the area have the potential to create adverse impacts within the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area and the adjoining Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

ACIUCN recommends that management of land use and the provision of services for residential, urban, industrial and tourism developments be subject to full environmental assessment, impact minimisation and monitoring, taking into account the implications of climate change. The design for such facilities should be required to avoid and address fragmentation of habitat of native species through the fullest use of measures including strategic land acquisition.

ACIUCN reiterates policies adopted at earlier meetings which call for the rejection of proposals to construct the Tully Millstream Dam and to extend the electricity grid north of the Daintree River but recognises that it may be appropriate to review its position on mains power north of the Daintree when the Daintree Futures Study (which seeks to secure a sustainable future for the Daintree coastal region) is finalised.

4. Strategic Issues for Future Management (*Recommendations 1, 14 and 16 in the ACIUCN Report*)

The current Strategic Plan covers the period 1998 – 2003 and identifies the need to review the boundaries of the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area. The principal objective of such a review should be to increase the integrity of the world heritage area. Since the area was inscribed, greater understanding has developed of the cultural values of the area, the need for greater indigenous involvement in the management of the area and the factors affecting the integrity of the boundaries for several distinctive species.

ACIUCN recommends that the cultural values of the area for indigenous people should be formally documented and that there should be increased indigenous involvement in management negotiated with traditional owners and their representatives.

ACIUCN also recommends that the area be renominated for its cultural values and to take account of any changes to boundaries to increase the integrity of the area which may arise from the boundary review.

ACIUCN further recommends that at least one member of the Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority be a person recognised by the conservation movement as a person having conservation expertise.

R.A. Kenchington
President
Australian Committee for IUCN

7 September 2000