

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

IUCN TECHNICAL REVIEW

1. IDENTIFICATION NUMBER AND NAME 181 WESTERN TASMANIA WILDERNESS NATIONAL PARKS
2. LOCATION: 145° 25'E to 146° 48'E longitude, and 41° 35'S to 43° 50'S latitude.
3. NOMINATED BY: National Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania
4. DOCUMENTATION:
 - (i) Nomination form, maps and photos
 - (ii) Supplementary documentation (IUCN)
 - a) Consultations: J.G. Mosley, Director, Australian Conservation Foundation; The Director, National Parks and Wildlife Service; Bruce W. Davis, Senior Lecturer in Administration, The University of Tasmania; Greg Middleton, Chief Resources Officer, National Parks and Wildlife Service of Tasmania.

5. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The nominated site includes three national parks -- Southwest (442,240 ha), Franklin Lower Gordon Wild Rivers (195,200 ha), and Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair (131,915 ha) -- which together comprise one of the world's last great remaining temperate pristine wildernesses. With distinctive landforms, outstanding examples of cool temperate rainforests, important aboriginal sites (the Tasmanians are now an extinct race of humans), and many endangered species of plants and animals (including, perhaps, the Thylacine or Tasmanian Wolf), the area is unique and special at a world scale. The Southwest National Park is a Biosphere Reserve.

6. INTEGRITY

Many conservationists in Australia feel that a somewhat larger area, to include at least the Walls of Jerusalem National Park (11,510 ha, declared in 1981), should be considered. The most serious threat to the site is the construction of hydroelectric dams, a highly controversial issue in Tasmania; while some consultants felt that any decision on World Heritage status for the site should be deferred until the question of the proposed "Gordon-below-Franklin Dam" is settled, others argued that with the recent fall of the state government, the dam project has died and that World Heritage recognition would help convince future governments of the international importance of the site. There will continue to be exploitation of forests and minerals in the buffer zones of the Site, but these should not provide cause for concern if they are managed appropriately. Management plans exist or are in preparation for all of the individual national parks, but there is as yet no formal mechanism for coordinating their management (beyond the normal coordination provided by the Director of the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Department); there is a serious problem of staffing the parks in Tasmania, requiring Commonwealth Government assistance.

7. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

The Western Tasmania Wilderness National Parks contain beech forests comparable with New Zealand or South America, but lack the glaciers and fiords of these regions. The distinctive features of the Tasmanian system are its unique combination of mountains, forests, plains, and lakes in an aesthetically and ecologically fascinating blend quite different than the systems found at similar latitudes on other continents or large islands.

8. EVALUATION

The Western Tasmania Wilderness National Parks site meets all four criteria for natural World Heritage Sites, and meets cultural criteria as well.

9. RECOMMENDATION

The Western Tasmanian Wilderness National Parks should be placed on the World Heritage List. There are a number of steps that the World Heritage Committee might wish to consider to improve the conservation status of the Site:

- a) to urge the Australian Government and the State of Tasmania to consider very carefully any future efforts to build hydroelectric dams within the site, and to seek all possible options before proceeding with any dam within the World Heritage Site;
- b) to urge the State of Tasmania to consider incorporation of the Prince of Wales Range, Denison River Valley, and the Spires Range into the Wild Rivers National Park, and urge the Government of Australia to consider adding both the enlarged Wild Rivers National Park and the new Walls of Jerusalem National Park to the Site;
- c) to encourage the Commonwealth Government to provide assistance to the Tasmanian National Park and Wildlife Service to enable the World Heritage Site to be properly staffed;
- d) to encourage the Tasmanian National Park and Wildlife Service to establish a special coordinating mechanism to manage the World Heritage Site.



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