

WORLD HERITAGE MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION PROPOSAL – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

TASMANIAN WILDERNESS (AUSTRALIA) – ID No. 181 quint

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Tasmanian Wilderness, Australia, is a mixed property. Initially inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1982, the property was subsequently extended in 1989. In 2008, a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission visited the property and noted that there are currently 21 formal reserves, mainly to the north and east of the property, which are adjacent to the property and covered by its management plan. It recommended (Committee decision **32COM 7B.41**) that these areas be added to the property as a boundary modification, and the relevant areas referred to by the mission have been subsequently added to the property as minor boundary modifications with the support of both IUCN and ICOMOS (decisions **34COM 7B.38** and **36 COM 8B.45**)

The Committee also noted the potential for additional areas to be included in the property, and in **32COM 7B.41** at point 5, the Committee:

- *Reiterates its request to the State Party to consider, at its own discretion, extension of the property to include appropriate areas of tall eucalyptus forest, having regard to the advice of IUCN; and also further requests the State Party to consider, at its own discretion, extension of the property to include appropriate cultural sites reflecting the wider context of Aboriginal land-use practices, and the possibility of re-nominating the property as a cultural landscape.*

This request was also reiterated at 34 COM 7B.38 and most recently in 36 COM 8B.45.

The below evaluation by IUCN relates to the natural values which are cited as the basis of the proposed boundary modification, and the cultural values will be considered by ICOMOS.

2. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED BOUNDARY MODIFICATION

The proposed boundary modification includes areas along the northern and eastern boundary of the property, encompassing extensive stands of tall eucalypt forest, associated rainforest, significant karst and glacial landforms as well as alpine and sub-alpine environments.

It comprises fourteen areas adjoining the property, which are described in the material provided by the State Party, and named as follows:

1. Nelson Falls Catchment
2. Dove River
3. Upper Mersey
4. Mole Creek Karst
5. Great Western Tiers (Northern)
5. Great Western Tiers (Eastern)
6. Upper Derwent
7. Florentine
8. Mount Field
9. Mt Wedge-Upper Florentine
10. Styx-Tyenna
11. Weld-Snowy Range
12. Huon-Picton
13. Hartz-Esperance
14. Recherche

The total measured area of the additional reserves to be included through the boundary modification is 172,500ha, adding to the current reported area of the property of 1,412,183ha (an increase of c.12%).

A summary map of the proposed extension is provided in the State Party's submission, and this is complemented by detailed maps that have also been submitted following a request from the World Heritage Centre. Detailed information on the proposed modification is provided in documents provided by the State Party that are available to the Committee.

IUCN notes that the eastern boundary has been a source of constant concern since the extension of the property, as has been noted in the relevant Committee decisions cited above. Support for the proposal to include additional areas has been reiterated by the World Heritage Committee on several occasions.

The State Party notes that the proposal has been facilitated by a significant agreement reached on these matters between the various interests in Tasmania. This has entailed the confirmation of the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement which was signed by the Australian and Tasmanian governments on 7 August 2011. The State Party notes that this agreement aimed to further protect high conservation value areas of Tasmania's native forests, including possible nomination of appropriate areas for inclusion in the World Heritage Area. Under the terms of the agreement, important areas adjacent to the property were given interim protection from logging, while an independent verification process to assess their values and timber supplies was undertaken.

The further context for the modification is an agreement from November 2012, in which key forestry industry, union, community and environmental groups developed an agreed position on the future of Tasmania's forest industry and environment – the

Tasmanian Forest Agreement 2012. The agreement included the recommendation that governments nominate “a proposed minor extension” to the World Heritage Committee, for consideration in June 2013.

3. IMPACT ON OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

The State Party notes that the resulting proposal is comprised of areas that were recommended for inclusion in an extension of the property as a result of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement; as well as existing reserves under the Tasmanian *Nature Conservation Act 2002* or *Forestry Act 1920*, and small areas of privately managed conservation land, which extend or link the property and the Tasmanian Forest Agreement areas. The proposed modification asserts that the various parcels of land are included in a more rational and contiguous boundary. The proposed new boundaries recognise connectivity and improve integrity of natural heritage, notably karst systems, glacial landforms, and areas of better developed tall eucalypt forest combined with rainforest on different geology and more productive soils.

The information prepared by the State Party provides a clear and specific assessment of the additional contribution of the proposed new areas to be added to the property to its Outstanding Universal Values, related to the four natural World Heritage criteria. This is summarised in section 4 of the proposal document, and set out specifically for each component of the property in section 4 of the supplementary information. In addition, the supplementary information contains a series of annexes that indicate the additional contribution that the additional areas will make to species conservation. The process of verification including via independent scientists is also clearly explained.

In terms of protection and management, the State Party notes that the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service will continue to be the lead agency managing the property in line with existing management systems and processes. The new areas will be incorporated in the existing Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan when it comes up for a full review in 2015. Until that process is complete the new areas will be managed in accord with the objectives and general management strategies of the current plan. Protocols for management of transport corridors and significant electricity infrastructure that have been excluded from the proposed area will be developed with the relevant management agencies to ensure management is compatible with the surrounding world heritage property. The State Party also indicates that funding of \$AU9million (c.USD 9.3 million) has been agreed to support management of the new reserves, as part of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement.

The State Party notes also that the Tasmanian Forest Agreement 2012 recognises that there will need to be a transitional period to allow wood requirements to be met while logging schedules are redirected to areas outside the agreed reserves. Within the areas that were recommended by the Tasmanian Forest

Agreement 2012 to be included in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, transitional arrangements have meant that a small number of coupes may be logged after June 2013 and this will be complete by September 2013. These areas are excluded from the proposed boundary modification.

IUCN has considered the proposal, including through consultation with IUCN representatives involved in the original extension, and concurs with the assessment of the State Party that the proposal will both add to the integrity of the property as currently inscribed, in relation to its natural values, as well as facilitating improved protection and management, in recognition of the issues that have been noted previously regarding the property’s boundary.

IUCN has taken note that some letters of objection were received by the World Heritage Centre to the nomination, and that a reply to the points raised has been provided to the World Heritage Centre by the State Party.

IUCN notes that the lands included in the property include some privately owned reserves, included at the request of the relevant landowners. They also note that the State Party indicates that no agricultural land has been included in the revised boundary.

IUCN notes that the size of the property is around the unofficial upper level for consideration as a minor boundary modification (which has been considered as typically c.10%). IUCN considers that it is reasonable and appropriate for the Committee to approve the proposal through the minor modification process, given (a) the clear and established position of the World Heritage Committee noted in its past decisions, (b) the degree of past consideration of these issues by the Committee and Advisory Bodies, including via both evaluation and monitoring missions, and (c) clear analysis provided in the proposal regarding its values, integrity, protection and management.

4. OTHER COMMENTS

IUCN considers that the positive response of the past requests from the World Heritage Committee is to be welcomed, and suggests that the Committee may wish to comment on this.

5. RECOMMENDATION

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee

1. Having examined Documents WHC-13/37.COM/8B and WHC-13/37.COM/INF.8B2;

2. Recalling its previous decisions on the Tasmanian Wilderness (Australia), including **32COM 7B.41**, **34COM 7B.38** and **36 COM 8B.45**;

3. Approves the minor modification of the boundaries of the Tasmanian Wilderness (Australia), in line with the proposal of the State Party;

4. Notes with appreciation the positive response of the State Party to the previous recommendations of the Committee;

5. Requests the State Party to provide to the World Heritage Centre, by 1st February 2016, a report confirming the implementation of the actions identified in its boundary modification submission, including incorporation of the new areas into the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan, for possible consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 40th Session in 2017.