



Lake Petrarch, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, proposed as a new landing site for helicopters. Photo © Rob Blakers

Submission Guide: Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area



World Heritage forests of the Upper Florentine, available for logging under the Draft Management Plan. Photo © Kip Nunn



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Have your say on the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

Tasmania's World Heritage Area (WHA) is one of the world's great temperate wilderness areas. Since 1982, it has been listed as World Heritage for its outstanding natural and cultural values, including its ancient rainforests, glaciated mountains, wild coastline, intricate cave-systems, extensive moorlands, threatened species, giant eucalypt trees and Aboriginal heritage.

A management plan stipulates how the area is to be treated by land managers and covers critical issues such as access, development and fire policy. A good management plan should inspire staff and the public to respect and care for the WHA. Unfortunately, the draft plan released in January 2015 is fundamentally flawed.

This guide is designed to help you have your say to help keep the Management Plan strong and to protect the WHA from inappropriate development, intrusive mechanized access, logging, mining and the loss of wilderness. You have until 5pm, Sunday 22 March 2015 to make a submission.

Key Issues to address in a submission about the Management Plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

1. Dismissal of Wilderness

The Draft Plan attacks and dismisses the concept and protection of wilderness. It renames the Wilderness Zone, which has long protected wild, remote country, from inappropriate development, and proposes it become a 'remote recreation' area. While it is claimed this is done out of respect for Aboriginal sensitivities to the word 'wilderness', the term is only dropped from the zoning, where it presents a barrier to float plane and helicopter access and built tourism development. Government

still uses the term in media releases and marketing. The removal of wilderness from the objectives of management will undermine protection of the integrity of the WHA.

KEY SUBMISSION POINTS

- **The protection of wilderness should be retained as an explicit management objective.**
- **The Wilderness Zone should be retained and its protections strengthened.**

2. Logging and Mining Permitted within the World Heritage Area

The Draft Plan removes the prohibition on logging and mining in the WHA. It sets out a process for allowing logging in World Heritage-listed forests such as the Styx, Florentine, Weld and Great Western Tiers. Until now, the Management Plan only allowed the recovery of Huon Pine driftwood. The Draft Plan describes the tall-eucalypt forests of the WHA – the tallest hardwood forests on Earth – as of local significance only. This is an attempt to remove international and national protection against logging. In addition, certain areas within the World Heritage Area are not protected from mining and the Draft Plan does not explicitly prohibit mining.

KEY SUBMISSION POINTS

- **The plan should explicitly prohibit logging and mining.**
- **The tall eucalypt forests should be recognised as a value of international significance.**
- **Conservation Areas, Regional Reserves and areas of Future Potential Production Forest Land in the World Heritage Area should be upgraded to national park status to protect them from logging and mining.**

3. Commercial Mechanised Access to Remote Areas

The Draft Plan allows helicopter and/or float plane landings in previously off-limits wilderness areas such as Lake Judd, Lake Petrarch, New River Lagoon, Prion Beach, Port Davey, the Frankland Range, Travellers Rest Lagoon, Lake Olive, Lake Rotuli, Lake Ina and the Walls of Jerusalem. Jet skis are permitted in the WHA in parts of Port Davey and Macquarie Harbour. Such intrusions will shatter the serenity across wide tracts of the WHA and threaten its ecological integrity.

KEY SUBMISSION POINTS

- **Current restrictions on landing aircraft within the World Heritage Area should be tightened (meaning the above areas would remain off-limits).**
- **Jet skis should be prohibited in the entire World Heritage Area.**

4. Built Commercial Tourism Developments

Until now, tourism accommodation was deliberately focused on nodes close to, but outside the WHA boundary. The Draft Plan permits built commercial accommodation such as hotels, exclusive lodges and private huts inside the entire reserve. This effectively privatises a public asset at the expense of everyday users and the protection of values. It will provide a hub for helicopter or float plane activities and unfairly compete with existing accommodation services in regional communities surrounding the WHA (such as Strahan, Cradle Village, Maydena and the Far South).

KEY SUBMISSION POINT

- **Current restrictions on built commercial accommodation should be retained and no new permanent structures for commercial tourism should be erected outside of the Visitor Services Zones.**

5. World Heritage Values Inadequately Documented

The Tasmanian Wilderness satisfies seven of the ten criteria for Outstanding Universal Value, one of only two sites on Earth to do so. Yet many of these values are not properly listed, including those pertaining to tall-eucalypt forests, meromictic lakes and the exceptional beauty of the landscapes. Recent government reports describing World Heritage flora, fauna and landforms are ignored. If the values of the Tasmanian Wilderness are not properly identified, how can they be protected?

KEY SUBMISSION POINTS

- The Plan should comprehensively list the characteristics of the WHA that relate to each of the seven World Heritage criteria.
- Previous objectives to restore, identify, address and 'more fully understand' the values and threats should be reinstated into the Vision section of the Plan.

6. Parks and Wildlife Service Sidelined

The Draft Plan would sideline the expertise and dedication of Tasmania's Parks and Wildlife Service by shifting its focus to tourism and recreation management over conservation and by giving key decision-making roles to other bodies. A 'tourism master plan' will determine policy on development, staff training and 'sustainable use'. A highly political Assessment Panel will recommend tourist developments to proceed within the WHA. This will relegate the Parks and Wildlife Service to being a service provider to the hospitality industry.

KEY SUBMISSION POINT

- Decisions about how the World Heritage Area will be managed should be made by experts in nature

conservation and cultural heritage – not delegated to those representing commercial interests.

7. A Dangerously Confused Fire Policy

The Draft Plan rightly identifies fire as being one of the key threats to some of the values of the WHA. It describes the complex challenge for managers in using fire without destroying sensitive vegetation such as rainforest, King Billy pine, Huon pine and deciduous beech. However, the Draft Plan also contains many simplistic and even contradictory comments. This confusion is not conducive to management of such a powerful phenomenon in a World Heritage Area.

KEY SUBMISSION POINTS

- A precautionary approach to the use of fire, especially in an era of climate change, is absolutely essential.
- Protecting rainforests and other sensitive vegetation from fire must be an explicit objective of management.

Together, the above failings threaten the ecological integrity and wild character of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The Draft Plan is

inadequate to govern management of a World Heritage Area. It should, instead, properly list all natural and cultural values of the Tasmanian Wilderness and articulate how they will be preserved for future generations.

KEY POINT

- Maintaining the protection of wilderness is the key to achieving this outcome.

Further information

Management Plan (Tasmanian Government)

- <http://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/conservation/tasmanian-wilderness-world-heritage-area/new-tasmanian-wilderness-world-heritage-area-management-plan>

Australian Environment Minister Greg Hunt

- <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/hunt/>

Australian Government (World Heritage)

- <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/tasmanian-wilderness>

UNESCO's World Heritage List

Tasmanian Wilderness

- <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/181>

Criteria and values

- <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>

Send submissions to:

Draft TWWHA Management Plan Representation
Director of National Parks and Wildlife
Department of Primary Industries,
Parks, Water and Environment
PO Box 44, Hobart TAS 7001
Email: twwhamanagementplan@dpiwwe.tas.gov.au

Copies to:

As the process is a political one, please also send copies to:

- The Minister for the Environment, Hon. Greg Hunt MP, PO Box 274, Hastings, VIC, 3915.
Email: Greg.Hunt.MP@aph.gov.au
- The Premier of Tasmania, Hon. Will Hodgman, Shop 96, Channel Court, Kingston Tas 7050.
Email: premier@dpac.tas.gov.au



Outstanding tall eucalypt forests of the Styx Valley with Mt Anne in the background. Logging in the Styx is permitted under the Draft Management plan. Mt Anne is allowed to be developed for commercial tourism accommodation under the proposed plan. Photo © Rob Blakers