# CHAPTER 4   BLUE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK- A CASE STUDY.

The previous two chapters of this thesis have considered at length some of the factors that may very well determine the future management direction of national parks in New South Wales. Chapter Two addressed the growing interest of visitors in natural areas such as national parks. In fact, as was mentioned in Chapter Two, nature-based tourism is the fastest growing element of the tourism industry (Goodwin 1996).

Chapter Three looked more specifically at the national parks estate of New South Wales and the role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Among the most common themes to evolve from Chapter Three were the funding constraints facing many government agencies, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the move by the Government to encourage the private sector to undertake a more active role within the public sector. The chapter also contained a review of recent media reports that suggested there might be a more commercialised approach being incorporated into the National Parks and Wildlife Service, with the potential for a role for the private sector in National Parks. With these issues in mind, the suggestion was made in Chapter Three that the future direction to be taken by the National Parks and Wildlife Service appears unclear. It was also suggested that parts of the national parks estate may need to be managed in the future in a way that is different from what is currently accepted. In order to investigate these issues more fully, it is appropriate to turn to a case study.

No one park, or even a small group of parks, can of course be representative of the national parks estate as a whole. The choice of a case study was therefore influenced by a desire to select an area that is known to exhibit many of the critical features highlighted in this thesis: high volumes of visitors, pressure on resources, management challenges, and a variety of stakeholder and user groups who could be approached for their views on possible future management strategies. With this is mind, the Blue Mountains National Park was selected as a case study. The Blue Mountains National Park is very popular with both domestic and international tourists. Like most of the national parks estate, it suffers from insufficient funds. Moreover, there is a level of interest from the commercial sector in access to parts of the Park. There is also a zoning plan for the Blue Mountains National Park outlined within the Draft Plan of Management. This is significant because zoning was considered in Chapter Three as a tool that may be used more extensively by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. A *de facto* form of zoning was also considered in Chapter Two with a discussion of the recreation opportunity spectrum. The Blue Mountains National Park also has a range of business groups and user groups in the vicinity of the Park which can be identified as potential participants in a survey of attitudes towards the future management possibilities.

In looking at the Blue Mountains National Park as a case study, it should be reiterated that the author does not assume the park to be representative of all national parks in the State. There is obviously a great deal of variation between national parks in terms of their size, location, visitor numbers and management priorities and no single national park will represent the entire national parks system. However, the Blue Mounatins National Park was used as the case study as it is a large natural and recreational area, parts of which are only 50 kilometres (at its nearest boundary) from Sydney, and it is a park that is likely to feel the pressure from the rapid visitor growth that has been predicted for tourism generally. It is also a park that is known to the authour and it was convenient in terms of being accessible for fieldwork.
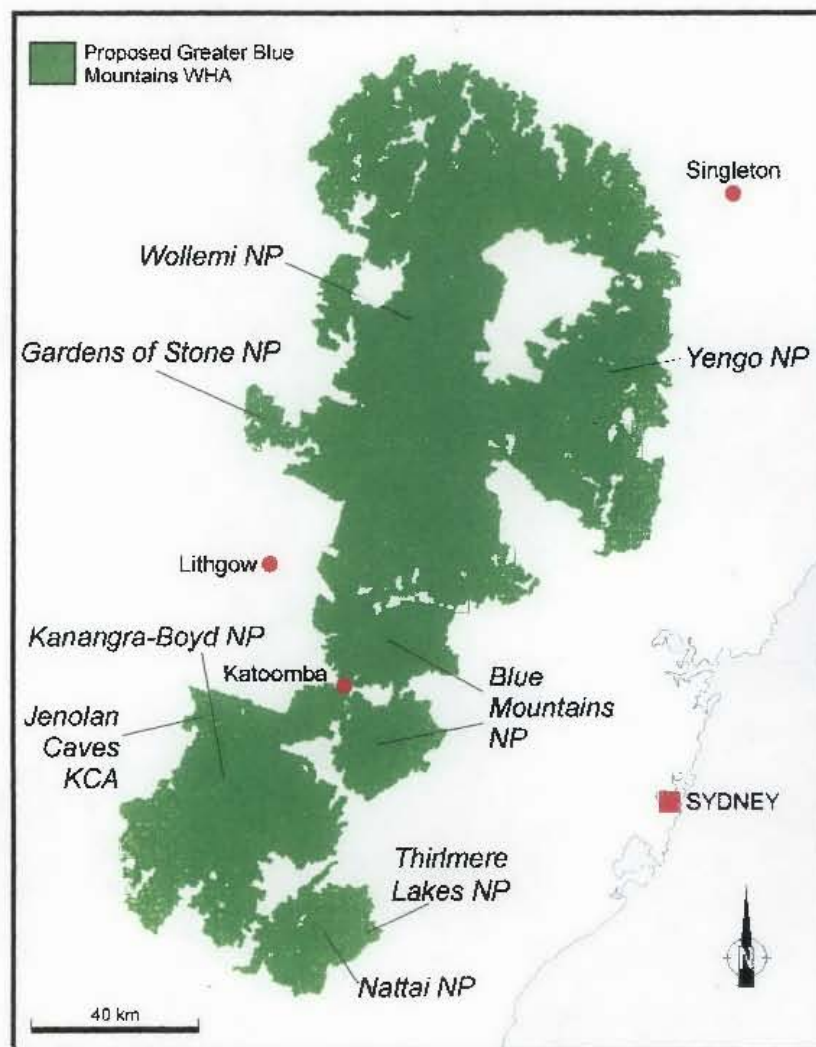
## 4.1    Features of the Blue Mountains National Park

The Blue Mountains National Park was officially declared in 1959 with the reservation of 62 000 hectares of land. Since that time, there have been a number of additions to the park and, as of June 1998, the size of the Blue Mountains National Park totalled 247 000 hectares (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998g). The Blue Mountains National Park also combines with several other parks in the area to make a conservation block of almost one million

hectares of continuous natural bush land. The surrounding national parks that make up the conservation area are the Goulburn River National Park, Yengo National Park, Wollemi National Park, the Gardens of Stone National Park, the Kanangara Boyd National Park and the Nattai Nature Reserve. Figure 4.1 illustrates the location of the Blue Mountains National Park, relative to the other parks in the area.
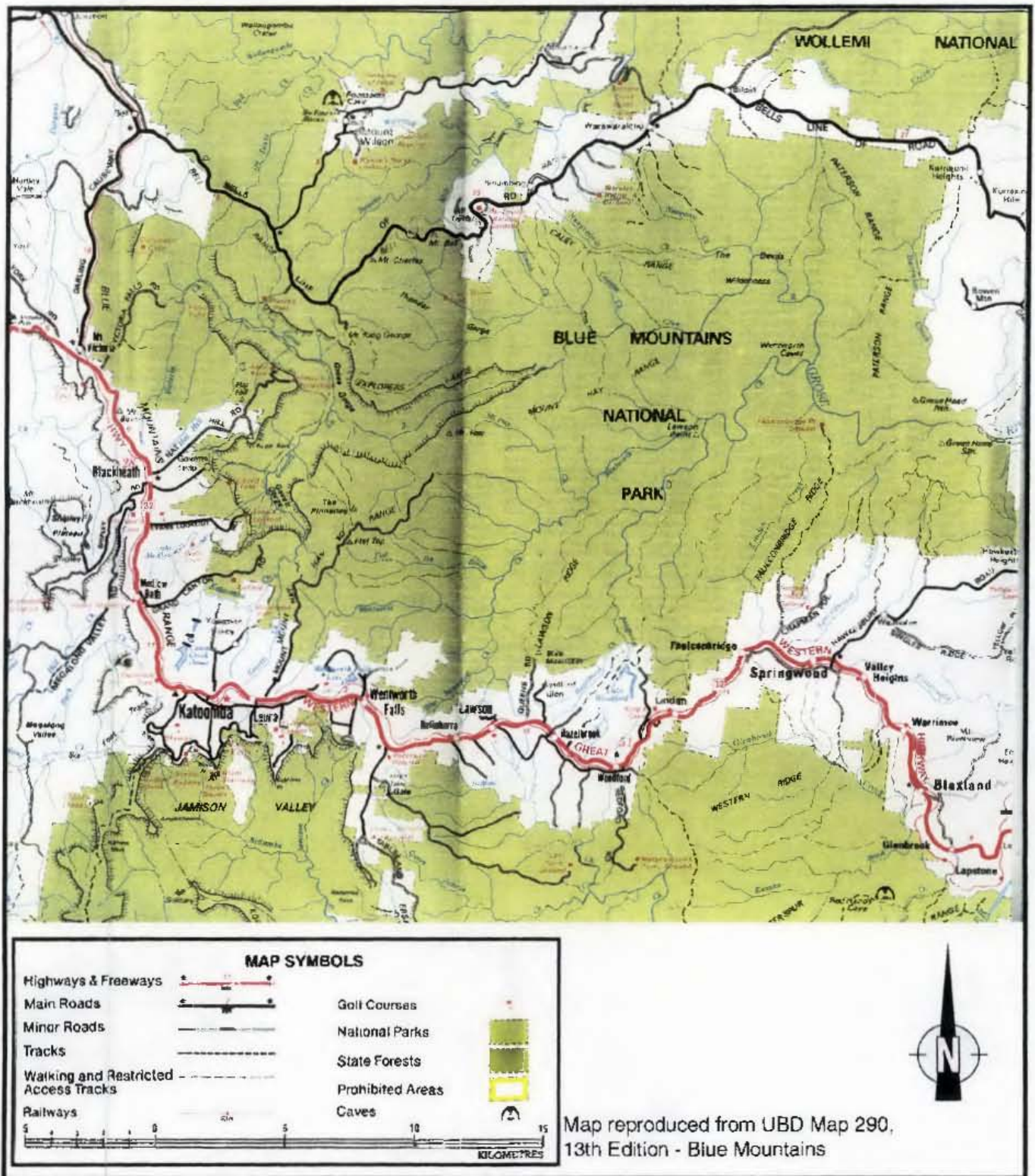
It is this one million hectares that has been declared the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. This listing gives the Blue Mountains National Park the same status as the Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef and the Great Wall of China. The process to have the area declared as World Heritage took 14 years and the outcome has been deemed a great success by conservationists (Australian Leisure Management 2001).

**Figure 4.1**: One million hectares of national park surrounding the Blue Mountains National Park.

The Blue Mountains National Park is quite distinct from many parks in that it has a highly modified urban core adjacent to its boundary as well as containing vast areas of wilderness. The Park is traversed by two major roadways and a rail line. It also encompasses an urban settlement of approximately 25 townships. A part of one of the major roadways, the Bells Line of Road, is contained within the Blue Mountains National Park. The Roads and Traffic Authority (1996) estimates 11 323 vehicles travel the Bells Line of Road per day (recorded as average daily traffic) and 20 453 vehicles travel the Great Western Highway per day. This equates to an average of over 30 000 vehicles travelling in close proximity to the Blue Mountains National Park each day. Furthermore, 102 passenger trains travel the Western rail line per week. On top of this, there are a large number of freight train services. McKay (1977) suggests that no other Park within Australia would have the density of development that has occurred close to certain areas of the Blue Mountains National Park. Figure 4.2 illustrates the location of the Bells Line of Road and the Great Western Highway, relative to the boundary of the Blue Mountains National Park. For the most part, the Western Rail line follows the Great Western Highway.

Figure 4.2: The Blue Mountains National Park is traversed by the Great Western Highway, the Bells Line of Road and the Western rail line.



MAP SYMBOLS

Highways & Freeways

Main Roads

Minor Roads

Tracks

Walking and Restricted Access Tracks

Railways

Golf Courses

National Parks

State Forests

Prohibited Areas

Caves

Map reproduced from UBD Map 290, 13th Edition - Blue Mountains

Actual developments within the Park include two information centres, one at Blackheath and one at Glenbrook. There is also a Heritage Centre at Blackheath, on-park staff residences at Bilpin and Glenbrook and on-park helicopter pads at Blackheath, Grose Valley and Glenbrook Creek. There are approximately 175 kilometres of public access roadway gazetted as part of the Park. These are the responsibility of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. There is a further 275 kilometres of roadways within the Park which are not accessible to the public but are still the responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service,

At the other end of the spectrum, there are three areas of the Park that have been identified and declared as wilderness under the *Wilderness Act 1987* (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998h). In fact, a large area of land, approximately 288 000 hectares, made up in part by the Wollemi National Park and the Blue Mountains National Park, has been identified as wilderness, making this one of the largest areas of wilderness in New South Wales (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998g).

The Blue Mountains National Park also includes an area of land jointly managed by the Sydney Water Corporation and the National Parks and Wildlife Service as part of the Warragamba Special Area. This catchment makes a significant contribution to Lake Burragorang, one of the main water supplies for Sydney. In accordance with State Government legislation, there are limits on the type and level of pollutants that can be discharged into the waterway. Therefore, access to this area is restricted mainly to foot access and, as a result, human modification is minimal.

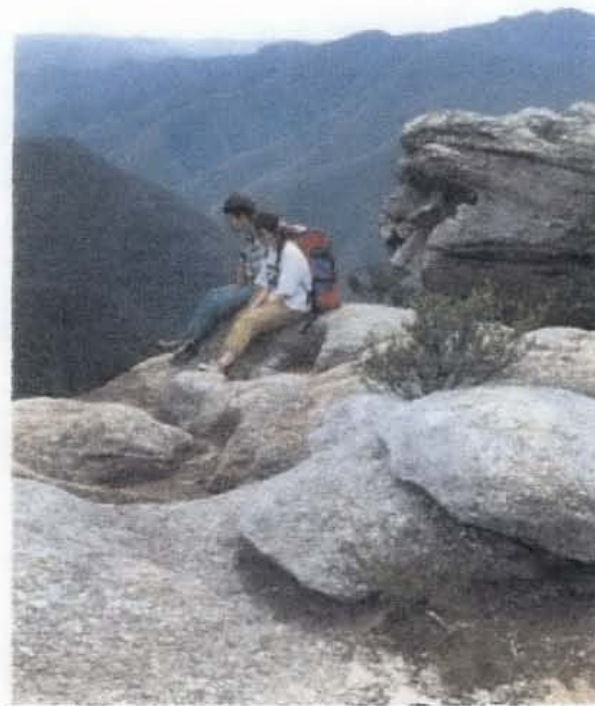## 4.2     Tourism and the Blue Mountains National Park

The Blue Mountains National Park is a popular recreation attraction. Although there is no formal visitor-monitoring program, estimates from the Bureau of Tourism Research, the National Parks Visitor Centres and from camping permits, suggest that there are approximately 3 million people visits to the park per year. This figure is expected to increase as tourism to the Blue Mountains region develops by almost 40 per cent between 1998 and 2003 (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998g).

The Blue Mountains National Park is a popular tourist attraction for bushwalking, photography, wildlife observation and picnicking activities (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife

Service 1998h). Additionally, the park is particularly popular for activities such as canyoning, abseiling and rock climbing due to accessibility and the number of cliffs and canyons within the park (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998g).

Much of the visitor interest in the Blue Mountains National Park stems from the ecological and cultural features as well as the accessible walking tracks and scenic lookouts (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998g). The Blue Mountains Draft Plan of Management estimates that there are over 1000 species of flowering plants within the park, 46 mammal species including 27 marsupials, over 200 bird species, 58 reptile species and 32 amphibian species. Aboriginal occupation of the park has also been recorded, with 700 Aboriginal sites being registered with the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. Furthermore, some Aboriginal groups still maintain an active interest in many of these sites. The Park also contains evidence of the early European occupation of Australia and, as a result, certain sites within the park are declared as being of historic significance. Plates 4.1a and 4.1b illustrates some of the better known features of the Blue Mountains National Park.

**Plates 4.1a:** A scenic view of the Blue Mountains National Park.

**Plates 4.1b:** The Three Sisters, Katoomba, are a key feature of the Blue Mountains National Park.



The location and accessibility of the Blue Mountains National Park relative to the major metropolitan area of New South Wales are major reasons why the park is a popular tourist attraction. Research has indicated that national parks which are less than a half-day drive from the major population centres are the most popular parks in terms of visitor numbers (Preece *et al.* 1995). Figure 4.3 illustrates the location of the Blue Mountains National Park relative to the major population centres of Sydney, Gosford and Wollongong. As Figure 4.3 shows, the park is clearly less than half- day's drive from these major centres, particularly along roads like the Great Western Highway and the Bells Line of Road, making it an ideal weekend destination.

**Figure 4.3:** The location of the Blue Mountains National Park relative to the major population centres of Sydney, Gosford and Wollongong.
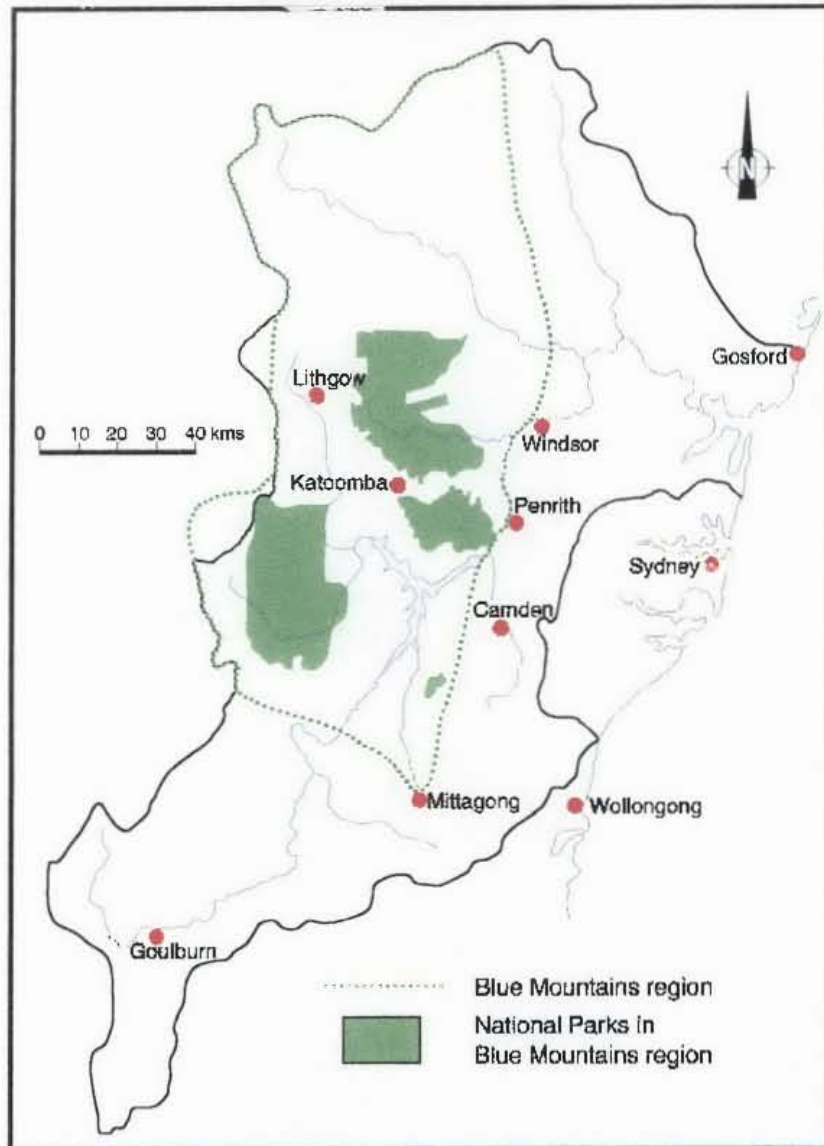


The Blue Mountains area also has a large diversity of other tourist attractions. Visitors to the Blue Mountains area have the opportunity to participate in various recreation activities including the Zig Zag Railway, Jenolan Caves tours, various Art Gallaries, Evans Lookout, the Explorers Marked Tree, Everglades Garden, The Giant Stairway, the Scenic Railway and Skyway, and 'The Edge' maxi vision cinema. Plates 4.2a and 4.2b illustrates some of the recreation opportunities of the Blue Mountains area.

**Plates 4.2a:** The Zig Zag Railway is a popular tourist attraction within the Blue Mountains Area.
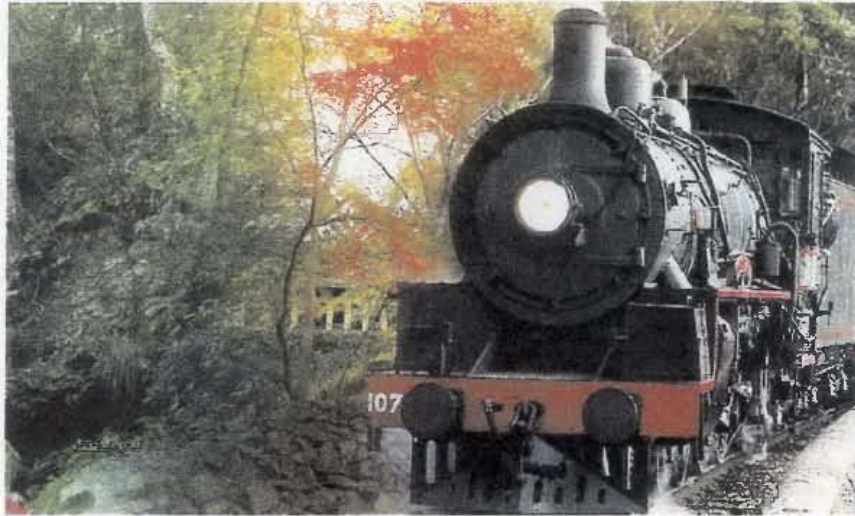


**Plates 4.2b:** The Scenic Skyway, Katoomba, is another popular attraction within the Blue Mountains area.



Predictably, given this level of attraction and visitation, there are concerns within the Blue Mountains National Park regarding the impact of park users on the quality of the park. It is

thought in some quarters that some of the recreation activities, such as canyoning and abseiling, are causing a loss of vegetation and the erosion of particular areas. The Three Sisters is a case in point.

Rock-climbing on the Three Sisters was first established back in the 1930s. However, as the interest in the area has increased and with the development of commercial activities based at the site, such as abseiling, there is significant erosion and loss of vegetation. The eastern side of the Three Sisters is included in the Blue Mountains National Park while the western side is freehold land owned by the Blue Mountains City Council. It is the western side where many of the problems are occurring and there is a proposal in the Draft Management Plan for a co-operative approach between the Service and the Blue Mountains City Council. Consequently, climbing on the Three Sisters is now banned. There are also a number of other sites within the actual park, such as the Glenbrook Gorge, the Jamison Valley cliff line and the Grose Valley cliff line, where it has been necessary to prohibit access for abseiling activities. Furthermore, some of the walking tracks and camping sites, such as the famous Grose Valley, are in need of major rehabilitation works (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998g).

It is believed that many of the problems caused by recreation within the Park are the result of poorly designed and /or old equipment (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998g). Recreation in the Blue Mountains National Park began over 100 years ago and many of the facilities implemented around that time are not compatible with the high numbers of park users at the current time. Specifically, concern was raised in 1998 that the famous Three Sisters site is being loved to death (Meredith 2000). The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is focused on addressing these problems and a major review of existing facilities is planned as part of the Draft Management Plan for the Park. There are also plans to establish a visitor awareness program to regulate visitor numbers and to reduce the impact of park users and encourage user safety (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998g).

## 4.3    The Blue Mountains National Park and The Private Sector

The Blue Mountains National Park has a unique history in many ways and one which is closely related to the commercial sector. It was actually a would-be developer, C. A. Hungerford, with a plan to establish a walnut plantation in the 1930s, who was persuaded by a group of dedicated bushwalkers to sell them his lease (McAlpine and Christian 2000). This set in motion the

reservation of a number of small areas that eventually resulted the development of the Blue Mountains National Park in 1959.

Today, interests from the private sector make up a significant and growing component of the Park. Commercial leases, for activities such as guided walks and tours, abseiling, rockclimbing and canyoning within the Blue Mountains National Park, are worth in the vicinity of $100 000 per year to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Brown 1999).

There are also a number of commercial operations on the boundary of the Blue Mountains National Park which rely heavily on the park as an advertising tool. These developments include Jemby Rinjah Lodge which advertises 'walking through historic trails in the adjacent national park', Jamison Guesthouse with 'views overlooking Jamison Valley', Coxs River Escapes with 'overnight camps on both private property and national parks' and Aussie Bushabout Holidays where there are 'private wilderness cabins surrounded by national park'. The Blue Mountains National Park seems to serve as a great drawcard for the area and, although the developments just described are not in the Park itself, they use their relationship with the Park to their best advantage and in the overall promotion of the area.

There has also been interest from Earth Sanctuaries Ltd, a private conservation company, in developing an ex-mine site that was recently declared a part of the Blue Mountains National Park. The research of Earth Sanctuaries Ltd suggested that the site was commercially viable and ultimately suitable for the development of a private commercial wildlife sanctuary. The proposal was put to the State Government but was not taken up (Luscombe 1999).

Obviously, the commercial interests in the Blue Mountains National Park are quite large and would probably increase if the commercial sector were given the opportunity to do so. If the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service ever chose to work with the private sector, the Blue Mountains National Park would probably be one of the first areas they would consider.

## 4.4    Zoning and the Blue Mountains National Park

As a part of the Draft Management Plan for the Blue Mountains National Park, a number of settings or zones were identified to assist in the long-term management of both conservation and

recreation within the Park. Four areas were identified: Developed areas, Natural areas, Wilderness areas and the Restricted areas. Figure 4.4 illustrates the location of the four proposed zones.

The zoning process is closely linked with the notion of the recreation opportunity spectrum, a *de facto* form of zoning (see Chapter Two). Basically, the recreation opportunity spectrum encourages a range of recreation opportunities within one setting (e.g. a national park) so as to satisfy the most number of users. Within the Blue Mountains National Park, there are a range of recreation opportunities and recreation settings. These include, on the one hand, lookouts which are easily accessible and, on the other hand, wilderness experiences in the relatively inaccessible Park's gorges and canyons. There are also vast numbers of remote locations that are accessible to experienced visitors to undertake a self-reliant recreation experience. For there to be this range of opportunity there also has to be a range of settings, also known as zones.

## Developed Zone

The developed zone was identified to encompass the areas where there are many visitor facilities such as sign-posted walking tracks, lookouts, picnic areas and camping sites. In other words, the developed zone is made up of the areas where there is a high number of visitors per annum. As Appendix One illustrates, the developed zone includes the popular Glenbrook precinct, the Jamison Valley escarpment between Wentworth Falls and Katoomba and the upper Grose Valley near Blackheath. Access to the developed zone is easy via the major roadways and via rail access. In fact, visitor use is concentrated mainly around the Great Western Highway and the Bells Line of Road, the locations of which are shown by Figure 4.2.

The management of the developed zone differs from other zones in that a great deal of site maintenance is required. There is a much greater focus on infrastructure development in this zone and it is important that there is a strong management presence within the park during peak visitor periods.

## Natural Zone

The natural zone is made up of the areas that are not developed zones, not wilderness areas and not restricted access areas. Appendix One illustrates the natural zones of the Blue Mountains National Park. Recreation within this zone is generally more dispersed and self-reliant than in

the developed zone. Within the natural zone, the national parks personnel cater for low level use and work to maintain a 'naturalness' about the zone. In short, this is very much a residual category, left over after the more specific zones have been identified.

Wilderness Zone

This zone is made up of the areas that are declared as wilderness within the Blue Mountains National Park. Appendix One illustrates the areas of wilderness. There are no visitor facilities within the wilderness zone and any form of recreation is self-reliant. Public access roads are provided only outside the wilderness zone. Similarly, walking routes are sign-posted outside of the zone. The national parks personnel are not required to manage recreation within the wilderness zone and the only facilities that are permitted by Service policy are those necessary for the protection of the natural/ cultural resources.

Restricted Access Zone

The restricted access zone is illustrated by Appendix One and is made up of 3 km of land surrounding the full level of Lake Burragorang. Lake Burragorang is one of Sydney's main water supply and, to avoid contamination, access is minimal and limited only to bushwalking along defined corridors. Access routes and basic visitor facilities are provided at McMahons Lookout only, which is outside the restricted access zone. The current access conditions to the area are being reviewed by the Sydney Water Corporation and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

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The zoning scheme designed for the Blue Mountains National Park allows for each zone to be managed for appropriate level of access. Using the zoning approach, the Service will be able to work toward minimising the conflict between visitors in so far as different use types are appropriate in different zones and will be allocated accordingly. Furthermore, with the majority of recreation occurring within the developed zone of the Blue Mountains National Park, it seems logical to assume that the National Parks and Wildlife Service will be able to focus their management priorities more effectively than if recreation facilities were distributed throughout the Park.

The zones were determined based on a number of pre-existing considerations. Firstly, there is a significant proportion of the Park that is legally declared as wilderness under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Appendix One illustrates large areas of wilderness to the north and to the south of the Park and the integral nature of the Parks wilderness in a regional setting. Secondly, much of the southern section of the Blue Mounatins National Park is included in the Warragamba Special Area, which surrounds Lake Burragorang, one of Sydney's main water supplies. As mentioned previously, access to this part of the park is minimal to avoid the contamination of the water. Hence, this area of the Park is called the restricted zone. The third zone, the developed zone, was determined on the basis of where visitor use is most prominent. The upper section of the Blue Mountains National Park (Appendix One) has an extensive system of lookouts and walking tracks and it is this area of the park that receives the most visitors. The developed zone was determined to incorporate the Glenbrook precinct, Jamison Valley escarpment between Wentworth Falls and Katoomba, and the upper Grose Valley escarpment near Blackheath. The fourth zone was then determined to be all remaining land that was not either a wilderness zone, restricted access zone or a developed zone and the fourth zone was called the natural zone.

In short, the zones in the Blue Mountains are, to some extent, a *post hoc* recognition of a usage pattern that developed over a period of years. In no way were they an attempt to provide a range of recreation opportunities, as suggested is appropriate in the recreation opportunity spectrum literature. Their existence does, however, suggest that differentiation into zones with differing recreational emphases is being considered as a management strategy in handling visitor numbers.

## Chapter Summary

The Blue Mountains National Park serves as an example of a park that is close to a major urban centre and one experiencing a rapid increase in visitor numbers. In turn, there are management implications associated with this rise in visitor interests, such as the need for zones and the need to accommodate the interest of the private sector. It is these issues and their potential to impact upon the future of national parks that is being considered in this study. The Blue Mountains National Park therefore serves as an example of how the issues looked at in this study are impacting upon a real world national park.

The private sector has shown a strong interest in the Blue Mountains National Park and there is a large contingent of commercial activities, such as guided tours, already operating within the park. There is also a large element of tourism infrastructure throughout the Blue Mountains area that is reliant upon the Blue Mountains National Park to draw visitors.

There exists a Draft Plan of Management for the Blue Mountains National Park and a key feature of the Plan is the implementation of zoning practices within the Park. The Plan identifies four main areas within the park ranging from a developed area, where recreation is the focus, to a restricted access zone, where access is limited to a single walking track. As was noted in Chapter Three, national parks are not uniform in their make-up and different parts of the national parks estate can be managed in different ways via a zoning approach. The Blue Mountains National Park is an effective example in demonstrating how the zoning process can be implemented.

The Draft Management Plan for the Blue Mountains National Park has outlined the long-term management objectives for the Blue Mountains National Park. The following is a summary of these objectives.

1.  To protect the Park as a part of the Sydney Basin bioregion and to maintain the ecological relationship between the Park and adjoining land.
2.  Protection of water catchments, particularly Sydney's water supply.
3.  Protection and promotion of the scenic values of the Park.
4.  Protection of the diverse range of flora and fauna within the park especially endangered populations.
5.  Provide high quality visitor facilities and information and to maintain the nature-based tourism opportunities available.
6.  Manage the wilderness areas in combination with adjoining national parks and to enhance self-reliant recreation opportunities.
7.  Manage tourism and recreation within the park to ensure sustainable use, to minimise damage to the park and to provide a diversity of recreation opportunities.
8.  Promote public awareness of the park and its natural, cultural and historical features.

This set of objectives clearly highlights the tension between conservation/ preservation and recreation/ tourism that is at the heart of this thesis. Each of these objectives has been broken down in the Draft Management Plan into specific responsibilities and each of these

responsibilities has been prioritised as being of low, medium, high or ongoing concern. The conservation objectives have been given a high priority while many of the recreation objectives have been given a medium priority. This might suggest that conservation is preferred over tourism. The maintenance of user facilities and monitoring visitor use within the Park was nevertheless given a high priority. A high priority was also given to increasing public input to park managers through user groups. Clearly then, an attempt is being made to accommodate the high visitation rates associated with the park's attractiveness as a tourism and recreation venue.

As a part of a management review in the Blue Mountains National Park, there is also to be a review of how user fees are collected within the park. At the current time, there are two information centres, one at Blackheath and one at Glenbrook. The information centre at Blackheath receives the majority of visitors and is able to collect the majority of fees. However, it has been difficult for the Service to determine exactly how many people visit the Blue Mountains National Park because of the variety of access ways. This is a concern which management wishes to address.

Commercial ventures within the park are also to be monitored more closely and a high priority has been given to excluding unlicensed operators from the park. There is no indication that more commercial ventures are being sought for the park.

In summary, the Draft Management Plan has outlined detailed objectives for the future management of the Blue Mounatins National Park. However, one limitation is that there is no indication of how the Service will monitor whether these objectives are being achieved over time and if the strategies that have been put in place to achieve the objectives are effective. This is particularly the case with the objectives associated with conservation.

The focus of the current study is to examine how the growth of tourism and recreation will effect national parks. From what has been seen in this brief description of the Blue Mountains National Park, it is realistic to suggest that visitor interest will continue to be a major management concern in the Park. As long as the Park is a drawcard for tourists, it is likely that the private sector will be interested in being involved in the management and operation of the park in some way. Using the Blue Mountains National Park as a case study serves to demonstrate some of the issues that were discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. It also enables stakeholder groups to be identified as potential participants for a survey designed to discuss the issues that may

shape the future of national parks in New South Wales. It is to such a survey that attention now turns.

# CHAPTER 5    METHODOLOGY

## 5.1    Introduction

A review of recent literature and media reports has shown that the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is at a critical time in its development. The traditional policies and practices of the Service are being challenged because of a rapidly developing demand for tourism in national parks at a time when there appears to be a lack of adequate government funding (Howard 1997). Reports have suggested that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is looking to develop business opportunities within the national parks estate as a means of generating extra funds (Roberts 1993). There has also been a move by the Service to incorporate zoning into its management regime by viewing national parks as a number of smaller areas as opposed to one single entity. The previous chapter, Chapter Four, looked specifically at the use of zoning in the Blue Mountains National Park.

As national parks become increasingly important recreation resources and as people continue to become concerned for the future of the environment, national parks will remain a much discussed topic. The future demand for tourism is likely to increase. The future of national parks will therefore continue to be questioned as interest from the private sector continues to grow and as government funding becomes less and less certain. In order to reflect further on the future of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, this study set out to ascertain the views of stakeholder groups. This necessitated an overview of possible research methodologies so that the most appropriate one could be selected.

## 5.1.1 Methodological Options

This study is concerned with how tourism will factor into the future of national parks in New South Wales. Chapter Two examined the tourism industry in Australia and Chapter Three looked in detail at the national parks in New South Wales. The information presented in these chapters and in Chapter Four, a Blue Mountains Case Study, came from secondary sources such as journals, the media, national parks publications and literature sources. In using these secondary sources, it was possible to provide a detailed background to the issues being considered in this study.

To specifically address the question of how tourism will factor into the future of national parks in New South Wales, it was necessary to obtain primary data to augment the picture obtained from secondary data. The reason for this is simple: this study is concerned with the future and what people think will be factors likely to influence the future of national parks. To determine these views, it was necessary to identify potential stakeholders and to develop a method to encourage these stakeholders to describe their views. Two main alternatives presented themselves: a qualitative in-depth interviewing approach with individual representatives of the stakeholder groups and a quantitative broad-brush questionnaire/ survey of the same people (Gardner 1976; Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000). Qualitative interviews have certain advantages over survey results. They provide an opportunity for additional questions and for the teasing out of unexpected views and opinions. They allow for trust and rapport to be developed in a conversation-like interview. In an interview, it is likely the interviewer can determine the mood of the interviewee toward the topic and allow the interviewee to clarify any questions in the interview. The interview process tends to be less restrictive than the questionnaire process and the interviewer is also able to control the sequence in which the questions are looked at. Interviews can also ensure a more complete data set because the interviewer can ensure all the questions are answered (Gardner 1976).

In-depth interviews do however have some disadvantages. For example the interview process can be questionable in terms of validity. Observations by interviewers can be selectively reported and the act of the interview itself can influence the interviewee's behaviour. It is also difficult to replicate the findings of an interview and there are low levels of reliability associated with interviews because there is minimum control over what data are selected for interpretation and discussion (Foddy 1993). Interviews also involve a substantial cost in both financial terms

and in terms of time (Gardner 1976). This was a critically important issue that militated against face-to-face in-depth interviews in the current research. Furthermore, for the interview process to be successful, the interviewer needs to be confident that respondents can reliably interpret what it is that the interviewer is trying to express (Foddy 1993). This last point is particularly crucial in the present study where the range of stakeholder groups is very broad and where the challenges of interpretation are therefore significant.

Not only are interviews time consuming in their own right but they can also involve a laborious pattern of recording and transcription prior to the use of the results. Also, in the present study, qualitative in-depth interviews would have been logistically challenging because of the varied location of the stakeholders and the resultant problems in scheduling and timetabling interviews. It is because of these problems that the author developed a preference for a questionnaire survey that basically sought quantitative data. This is not to say that quantitatively-based data is without weakness. On the contrary. Such surveys can only give overall descriptive data (even quantitative). They do not facilitate the probing of subtle variances in responses. Moreover, they can result in lower response rates than personal interviews. The questions in a questionnaire also need to be simple and straightforward (Gardner 1976) because there is no opportunity to probe for further responses. In addition, if a mail survey is used, there is no control over where and by whom a questionnaire is completed (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000).

Nevertheless, the quantitative questionnaire survey was logistically more suited to the present study. In addition, it was felt to be more appropriate to the situation where the aim was to get comparative data to describe the relative positions of the stakeholder groups. In short, given the goal of obtaining a simple and generalised portrayal of stakeholder opinions, a questionnaire survey approach was selected as the most appropriate methodological option.

It also allowed for anonymous responses (Foddy 1993), which was an important consideration when looking at the adequacy of the management regime of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The questionnaire process also involved lower costs and a wide geographic area could be covered for minimal outlay. A questionnaire approach also reduced the bias error that is commonly associated with interviews where the interviewer may misinterpret the responses of the interviewee. A questionnaire also allows for a participant to give considered responses as opposed to the immediate responses necessary in interviews (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias

2000). In short, it was felt that a questionnaire survey had advantages over in-depth interviewing terms of logistical validity and reliability (Oppenheim 1966; Minichiello *et al.* 1990 and Maher and Burke 1991)

Fundamentally, it was because of the low costs associated with the self-administered questionnaire process and the ability to cover a wide geographic area by use of telephone and mail that the questionnaire process was used in this study. Theoretically, the questionnaire survey could have been administered personally by travelling around and meeting respondents but this was unacceptable for the same logistical reasons that prevented the in-depth interviews. A mail survey was therefore selected. Such a questionnaire survey provided an opportunity for quantitative data to be collected on what people think and these data could then be compared across the different stakeholder groups. A quantitative check-list based questionnaire helps to describe how much of a characteristic or attitude that exists (Shelley 1984), and this is an important consideration for this study.

Although selecting the self-administered questionnaire helped provide the quantitative and comparative data needed for the present day, it did not preclude the stating of some opinions. Indeed, the questionnaire provided an opportunity to blend primarily quantitative data questions with questions geared to eliciting qualitative data. In this sense, the approach that was adopted provided the best of both worlds; quantitative measurements that enabled the comparison of groups and qualitative data that provided insight into respondents thinking. Although necessarily more limited than what could have been derived from in-depth interviews, these qualitative insights were nevertheless important.

The questionnaire developed for this study (Appendix 2) was made up of some open-ended questions as well as mostly closed (checklist) questions. Open-ended questions permit participants to give an answer in their own way. Checklist questions allow for limited answers and often involve a rating scale (such as strongly agree to strongly disagree, the scale used for this study) (Gardner 1976). Open-ended questions are similar to the interview process whereby the respondent is able to express themselves in their own words. They differ in that there is no elaboration or exchange and therefore no probing of the subtlety of responses. Thus, although open-ended questions provide a qualitative data set within the questionnaire, there is no onus on respondents to give full and meaningful answers (or any answers at all). Moreover, a major problem with open-ended questions is that characteristic of interviews: it is difficult to interpret

and code the answers (Foddy 1993). Open-ended questions were therefore kept to a minimum and used only in contexts where their meaning was unequivocal.

In saying this, it must be acknowledged that closed questions also have some problems and their adoption was not therefore an unquestioning one. One of the biggest limitations with closed questions is that they suggest the answer to the respondent. Closed questions can force a respondent to choose from an alternative that they may not have selected had the question been asked in an open-ended form (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000). In the present study, this was felt to be only a minor consideration because the respondents categories were derived from views expressed in the literature and therefore representative of the field of inquiry. This being the case, the major part of the questionnaire used in this study was made up of closed questions. This had two advantages. Firstly, such questions produce answers that are more easily computerised and analysed and, secondly, closed questions allow respondents to provide answers to questions that can be meaningfully compared (Foddy 1993). This is important for this study where the opinions of different stakeholders regarding the future of national parks in New South Wales are being considered and contrasted.

## 5.2    Questionnaire Design

Five key issues concerning the future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service were identified from the literature. These five key issues are:
- tourism and recreation within national parks;
- funding constraints;
- private sector involvement in national parks;
- zoning of national parks; and
- the changing focus of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

For each of the five issues, a number of points were identified from the literature review and made into statements to which the participants were asked to indicate a response. These statements and response categories, known as closed questions, formed the core of the questionnaire. Each statement had the response options of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'don't know /ambivalent', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'. These categories formed an ordinal scale with verbal labels for each point on the scale. There was also an opportunity provided for participants

to write further comments for some of the issues in the form of open-ended questions. This additional information was used to form a part of the results. A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix Two. The standard response categories were used to facilitate comparisons between groups and between issues.

A five-point ordinal scale but without verbal labels for each point on the scale was also used for two parts of the questionnaire. Firstly, a 'numerical' ordinal scale was used to question the participants on what they thought was important for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to be spending its money on. Secondly, the same technique was used to consider what are potentially important commercial developments for national parks. These scales were used in relation to Part 2, Question 6 and Part 3, Question 5, respectively.

Prior to a final decision being made on the content of the survey, the survey instrument was pre-tested on a number of people experienced in social science research. The individuals were asked to comment upon the five key issues and each of the statements. The information gained from this exercise was then incorporated into the questionnaire. In no instances were significant changes needed.

The first page of the questionnaire was presented on paper showing the official letterhead of the School of Human and Environmental Studies of the University of New England. A brief introduction was also presented on the first page (including details of how the instrument was to be completed), followed by the first topic 'Tourism and Recreation within National Parks'. Page three looked at the issue of Funding Constraints and page four was concerned with the Private Sector and National Parks. Page seven outlined the questions for Zoning and National Parks while the Changing Focus of the National Parks and Wildlife Service was contained on the last two pages, pages eight and nine. At the conclusion of the survey, there was the opportunity for the participants to make further comment on either the content or the style of the survey. At the start of each of the five key sections, there was a passage outlining why that topic was of interest. In order to make these introductory passages stand out from the questions, they were italicised. The questionnaire gained ethics clearance from the University of New England Human Research Ethics Committee.

## 5.3　　Sample Selection

Clearly, the range of potential stakeholders concerned with the future of national parks is enormous. In order to constrain the survey to manageable proportions and to build upon the case study material already presented, the focus of attention was the Blue Mountains area. Predictably, some of the stakeholder groups were also from state and national organisations with an interest in what occurs within the Blue Mountians National Park. Given this, a list of stakeholder groups was devised as a starting point for identifying potential participants for the survey. This list of stakeholders is shown below. It is important to note that this study stopped short of looking at individual recreational user clubs largely because it would have taken a great deal of time and resources to find the appropriate personnel and the minutes of meetings from each club. The initial group of stakeholders was identified as:

- Federal Government

    Australian Tourist Commission

    Tourism Council of Australia

    Office of National Tourism

    Bureau of Tourism Research


- State Government

    Office of the Minister for Tourism

    Office of the Minister for Environment

    New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service

    New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development

    New South Wales Department of Urban Affairs and Planning

    Department of Land and Water Conservation


- Local Government

    The Blue Mountains Tourism Association

    The Blue Mountains City Council

    Lithgow City Council

- State Tourism Organisations

    Tourism New South Wales


- Conservation Organisations

    National Parks Association

    Australian Conservation Foundation

    Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales

    The National Trust

    The Total Environment Centre


- Community Groups

    The Blue Mountains Conservation Society

    The Blue Mountains Bushwalking Group

    The Blue Mountains Rare and Endangered Species Group


- Commercial Businesses

    Mawland Hotel Management

    Jemby Rinjah Lodge

    Earth Sanctuaries Ltd


The role of each of the stakeholder groups which was approached to participate in the survey is described in more detail in the subsequent text.

In deciding on stakeholder groups, a decision was made to avoid approaching indigenous groups to participate in the survey. It was felt that the relationship between Aboriginal groups and national parks warrants a thesis in its own right. By only giving a token interest here, it was believed that the researcher would be doing the relationship a great injustice. Futhermore, the issue of land rights is complex and sensitive and would have required a detailed review of the historical documents. This would have resulted in this study taking an anthropological perspective which is quite different from the existing aim of looking at the future relationship between tourism and national parks.

From the initial list of potential participants, five categories of stakeholder were identified. These five groups were:

- National Parks and Wildlife Personnel

- Business Groups

- Environmental Groups

- Other Government Organisations and

- Other Groups.

The detailed composition of each of these groups is outlined below.


National Parks and Wildlife Service Personnel


The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is the organisation responsible for the management and conservation of national parks in New South Wales. Senior management personnel were approached to participate as were staff from the Armidale Office and the Blue Mountains Office. It was thought important to consider the opinions of the people actually working within the parks as opposed to looking only at the people in the decision-making positions.

Fifteen questionnaires were distributed randomly in the Armidale Office and 15 in the Blue Mountains Office of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This was done in order to get a broader perspective than just those immediately involved  The respondents from the National Parks and Wildlife Service who completed the questionnaire comprised:

- 2 Administration officers,

- 3 Senior field officers,

- 1 Field officer,

- 5 Rangers,

- 2 Area Managers,

- 1 Regional operations coordinator and,

- 1 Pest management officer.

Obviously, there is a large cross-section of National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel represented in this study. The Director-General of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and a senior member of the Service from Head Office were also asked to participate in this study. Both declined the invitation.

Business Groups

One of the purposes of using the Blue Mountains National Park as a case study was to identify specific business groups and community groups who could be studied in relation to their attitudes and opinions on the future of national parks. Without the case study, it could have proved difficult to isolate one particular group of businesses that would be suitable for inclusion in the present study. The following is a list of businesses which were approached to be involved in this study:

- Jemby Rinjah Lodge, Blackheath. This business is an accommodation facility, located adjacent to the Blue Mountains National Park, which uses the park as a component of its advertising approach.

- Earth Sanctuaries Ltd. This company is involved in private, commercial conservation projects throughout Australia and was interested in developing a sanctuary on an area of land recently declared a part of the Blue Mountains National Park. Although Earth Sanctuaries agreed to participate, it was not possible to use their responses due to Earth Sanctuaries requiring the signing of a Confidentiality Deed. To avoid any legal ramifications at a later time, it was decided that the input of Earth Sanctuaries would not be used in this study.

- Biznet Blue Mountains. This organisation serves as a central link for the business communities throughout the many townships within the Blue Mountains.

- Blue Mountains Tourism Organisation. This group serves as a central marketing branch for tourism within the Blue Mountains.

- Kanangra Lodge. This is a private business that provides accommodation facilities overlooking the Blue Mountains and which uses the Blue Mountains National Park as a part of its advertising approach.

- Coxs River Escapes. This business is reliant on access to the Blue Mountains National Park. Coxs River Escapes is an adventure-based tourism business, providing camping tours into natural areas, including the Blue Mountains National Park.

- Ecotourism Association of Australia. This organisation is concerned with the impact of nature-based tourism facilities upon their surrounding environment.

- Mawland Hotel Management. This business has signed a preliminary contract to lease a part of Quarantine Station from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and therefore might be considered characteristic of businesses interested in private sector involvement in national parks .

Environmental Groups

The primary objective of national parks is conservation. Therefore, it was important to include the opinions of environmental groups when considering the future of national parks. The organisations that were approached as a part of the environmental contingent were:

- Wilderness Society. This is a national, community-based organisation that aims to protect the future of wilderness and other high conservation areas throughout Australia.

- Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales. This is a non-government group that serves as the umbrella organisation for approximately 120 conservation and environmental groups, including the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

- National Parks Association. This Association is a non-government, community group dedicated to the conservation of the natural areas throughout New South Wales, particularly national parks.

- Total Environment Centre. This is a non-government organisation that works with the community to bring environmental concerns to the attention of the appropriate management groups.

- Australian Conservation Foundation. This is Australia's major leading non-government, non-profit environmental organisation concerned with ecological reform, accountability and encouraging sound management practices in regard to conservation issues.

- National Trust of Australia. This group is concerned with managing all aspects of Australia's heritage including cultural, structural and environmental elements.

- Blue Mountains Rare and Endangered Species Group. This is a community group concerned with the future of the Blue Mountains Environment.

- Blue Mountains Conservation Society. This Society is concerned with the conservation future of the Blue Mountains and with educating the general public in regard to the significance of conservation.

Other Government Organisations

Due to the focus of the research being national parks, the government organisations were divided into the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Other Government organisations. This was simply because it seemed reasonable to inquire whether the group with prime responsibility (the

National Parks and Wildlife Service) had views, opinions, and attitudes that differed from other arms of government. It was decided, ultimately, not to include Federal Government groups in the survey as national parks are a State government concern. The Other Government Organisations identified to participate in the survey were:

- Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. This department is made up of a number of agencies concerned with the planning, policy and regulation of the natural and built environments.

- Office of the Minister for Environment. The Minister for the Environment declined to participate and instead asked a representative from the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service to complete the questionnaire. The Office of the Minister for the Environment is represented by several State Government agencies other than the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and these are the Environmental Protection Agency, the Sydney Catchment Authority and Waste Service New South Wales.

- Office of the Minister for Tourism. The Minister for Tourism declined to participate and instead asked a representative from Tourism New South Wales to undertake the questionnaire on the Minister's behalf. Tourism New South Wales is the State Government organisation responsible for the development of tourism in New South Wales.

- Department of State and Regional Development. This department is responsible for developing industry and business opportunities within New South Wales for encouraging the growth of the State's economy.

- Department of Land and Water Conservation. This is the principal State Government agency responsible for managing natural resources (i.e. soil, water and vegetation).

- Tourism New South Wales. This is the State Government organisation responsible for the promotion and development of New South Wales as a holiday destination.

- Blue Mountains City Council. The tourism manager from the council was contacted.

- Lithgow City Council. The tourism manager from the council was contacted.


## Other groups

This category is made up of interested community groups and concerned user groups interested in the future of the national parks. The following groups were contacted:

- Springwood Bushwalking Club and,

- Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking club,

Clearly, each of the groups approached has a varied (and sometimes large) membership. Although it is unlikely that any one spokesperson could reflect all shades of opinion within the group in question, the opinions of a large number of people were covered in one form or another. In fact, many of the respondents represented organisations with a membership of several hundred. It should be noted that there are more respondents speaking on behalf of the National Parks and Wildlife Service than on behalf of any other group. This is reasonable given the nature of this stakeholder group. The imbalance in the size of group representation is not therefore a weakness and does not invalidate the statistical analysis that followed. The following section of the Chapter looks at how the data were collected and which stakeholder groups agreed to participate and which did not.

## 5.4    Obtaining Data

Preceding the actual survey, an introductory letter was sent to a representative of each of the stakeholder groups. In some cases, two letters were sent out to different people within the one organisation to improve the likelihood of a response. This occurred with the Wilderness Society and the National Parks Association. The introductory letter was presented on official School of Human and Environmental Studies letterhead and introduced the researcher, the project supervisors, and the objectives of the research, to the potential participant. The participant was asked to contact the researcher by either telephone or e-mail, if they would be willing to participate in the research and to indicate the most convenient way for them to be involved. A total of 21 introductory letters was sent out. Only two groups, the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning and the Wilderness Society made contact with the researcher

Two weeks after the introductory letter had been sent to the stakeholder groups, the researcher contacted the potential participants by telephone. The participants were again asked if they would be willing to participate and were given the option of a telephone survey at later time, a face-to-face administration of the questionnaire, or completing the questionnaire by mail.

There were two exceptions to this general rule. These were where the participants were not given an option of the phone survey or the questionnaire but, instead, were simply asked to complete the questionnaire. First, in the case where a name and the contact details of a person within a particular group were unknown, an introductory letter and questionnaire were sent to the

appropriate office bearer at the nominated postal address (e.g. the President of the Blue Mountains Rare and Endangered Species Group). A total of 10 introductory letters and questionnaires was sent out using this method. Secondly, the participants from the Armidale Office and the Blue Mountains Office of the National Parks and Wildlife Service were asked to complete the questionnaires after the researcher had gained permission from the Area Manager of each office to approach the staff. The participants were asked if they could return the completed questionnaire by the end of April 2000, using the stamped, self-addressed envelopes that were provided. In total, 61 questionnaires were distributed.

## 5.5    Response Rate

Generally speaking, the response to the questionnaire was good. The overall response rate was 47.5 per cent. A response rate of between 20-40 per cent is generally what can be expected from self-administered questionnaires (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000). Within the questionnaire, the ordinal scales presented no problem. Somewhat surprisingly, the majority of the respondents (26 out of 29) also offered at least one additional comment at some point in the completed questionnaire to the questions requiring an assessment of agreement or disagreement. The only point throughout the survey that seemed to cause problems was the use of the numerical ordinal scales. The problem arose in that a number of participants only responded to a part of the question or missed out the question completely. This was a problem that did not become evident during the pre-testing of the questionnaire.

Out of the 21 introductory letters that were sent out, three organisations agreed to a telephone survey and two agreed to a face-to face administration of the questionnaire. A fourth participant also agreed to a face-to-face meeting, but the session did not proceed as the participant withdrew his involvement. The majority of respondents from the first group chose to receive a copy of the questionnaire to complete during their own time. Interestingly, several of the participants asked for the questionnaire to be sent via e-mail as an attached document. At the request of the participants, six questionnaires were e-mailed. Only four were returned. The two who failed to return the questionnaire were participants from the Blue Mountains City Council and a representative from the National Parks Association, both of whom had agreed to participate via email. One concern with the e-mail approach was the incompatibility of different computer networks. There were several instances where attachments had to be re-sent using a different program or format and this caused some degree of inconvenience, particularly for the participant.

A representative from the Ecotourism Association of Australia and the Wilderness Society elected to have the questionnaire mailed out. Only the representative from the Ecotourism Association of Australia returned a completed questionnaire.

From the 21 introductory letters sent out, a total of 10 completed questionnaires was obtained. As was mentioned previously, the Office for the Minister for Tourism and the Office for the Minister for the Environment both declined to participate but asked representatives from their respective Government agencies to participate on their behalf. The Department of Urban Affairs declined to participate as they felt the subject matter was out of their jurisdiction. There was also no response from the Total Environment Centre.

Of the 10 questionnaires that were sent out to the office holder of a stakeholder group, only three were returned. Of the 30 questionnaires sent to the National Parks and Wildlife Staff, 15 were returned.

Table 5.1 is a summary of the response rate to the questionnaire. The name of the stakeholder group is listed and the type of approach is noted (i.e. introductory letter only, introductory letter and questionnaire, or questionnaire through the Area Manager of the National Parks and Wildlife Service). It is then indicated if the participant agreed to participate or not and then how the participant completed the questionnaire (i.e. face-to-face meeting, telephone survey, e-mail or mail return of the completed questionnaire to the researcher). It is also noted if the participant later declined to be involved after initially agreeing to participate.

**Table 5.1:** A summary of the response rate to the questionnaire concerned with the future of National Parks in New South Wales (the table is contained over two pages).

| Stakeholder Group | Type of Approach | Initial Response | Outcome |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| National Parks Personnel | | | |
| Director-General of NPWS | Introductory letter | None | - |
| Senior NPWS Official | Introductory letter | None | - |
| Armidale and Blue Mountains Office of NPWS | 30 questionnaires (15 to each office) | Yes | 15 Completed questionnaires |
| Business Groups | | | |
| Jemby Rinjah Lodge | Introductory letter | Yes | Later declined |
| Earth Sanctuaries | Introductory letter | Yes | Telephone survey but unable to use input |
| Biznet Blue Mountains | Introductory letter | Yes | Via Email |

| Blue Mountains Tourism Organisation | Questionnaire | No | - |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kanagra Lodge | Questionnaire | No | - |
| Coxs River Escapes | Questionnaire | Yes | Completed questionnaire |
| Ecotourism Association of Australia | Introductory letter | Yes | Completed questionnaires |
| Mawland Hotel Management | Questionnaire | No | - |
| Environmental Groups | | | |
| Wilderness Society | Introductory letter | Yes | Did not complete |
| Wilderness Society | Questionnaire | No | - |
| Nature Conservation Council of NSW | Introductory letter | Yes | Via email |
| National Parks Association | Introductory letter | Yes | Face-to-face meeting |
| National Parks Association | Introductory letter | Yes | Did not complete |
| Total Environment Centre | Introductory letter | No | - |
| Australian Conservation Foundation | Introductory letter | Yes | Telephone survey |
| National Trust of Australia | Questionnaire | No | - |
| Blue Mountains Conservation Society | Introductory letter | Yes | Email |
| Blue Mountains Rare and Endangered Species Group | Questionnaire | No | - |
| Other Government Organisations | | | |
| Department of Urban Affairs | Introductory letter | Yes | Declined |
| Office of Minster for Tourism | Introductory letter | Yes | Declined |
| Office of Minster for Environment | Introductory letter | Yes | Declined |
| Department of State and Regional Development | Introductory letter | Yes | Face-to-face meeting |
| Department of Land and Water Conservation | Questionnaire | No | - |
| Tourism NSW (on behalf of Tourism Minister) | Introductory letter | Yes | Telephone survey |
| Tourism NSW | Questionnaire | No | - |
| Blue Mountains City Council | Introductory letter | Yes | Did not complete questionnaire |
| Lithgow City Council | Introductory letter | Yes | Via email |
| Other Groups | | | |
| Springwood Bushwalking Club | Introductory letter | Yes | Via email |
| Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club | Questionnaire | Yes | Completed questionnaire |

It is interesting to note that, in the case of this research, contacting potential participants first, via a letter or, in the case of the National Parks and Wildlife participants, through the Area Manager, gave a far better return rate than by sending out the questionnaires to anonymous participants. A

return rate of 50 per cent was noted when the participants were contacted first, while the return rate when both the letter and the questionnaire were sent together was only 30 per cent. In total, 61 people were asked to participate and a total of 29 responses were returned.

## 5.6    Data Analysis

Before outlining how the data were analyzed, it is important to point out that the sample size is small, and hence any results that are found cannot be used to draw incontrovertible conclusions one way or another in regard to the views of all stakeholders and stakeholder types on the importance in national parks management. Rather, the sample allows for insight into the opinions of the stakeholder groups as opposed to the designated views. This, in turn, gives some indication to the issues that warrant further investigation.

The data from the questionnaire were analysed in two ways. First, the respondents' answers to the statement questions were entered into Minitab and cross-tabulated according to respondent type and answer. This indicated the number of respondents from each of the five categories who answered a question in a particular way. It was then possible to present these data in tables and to draw conclusions about the overall opinions of the stakeholder representatives toward a particular issue.

Statistical testing of the tables was not appropriate. Although many of the response categories in the questionnaire schedule comprise ordinal scales, and therefore are potentially suitable for analysis by means of nonparametric tests of significance (such as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov two sample test and the Kruskal-Wallis one way analysis of variance (see Siegel and Castellan 1988)), such testing would have served no purpose other than the demonstration of a proficiency in statistical manipulation. There are three reasons for this. First, the respondents were not directly comparable in a statistically meaningful sense because some (e.g. environmental groups) acted as spokespeople for a large membership whereas others (e.g. National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel) responded as individuals. To apply a statistical test would have been tantamount to forcing equivalence on all categories. Secondly, testing could have been conducted by examining each group of respondents as a one-sample case (i.e. assessing whether each response distribution was significantly different from what might have occurred by chance), by comparing two groups (e.g. public and private sector responses), or by comparing all groups (the $k$-sample case). The scope for statistical testing was therefore considerable but such testing

would have revealed nothing more than was evident from a simple comparison of raw scores. Finally, in some instances, the small number of respondents meant that the distribution of responses was such that it would have invalidated some of the requirements for statistical testing (e.g. attempts to test for differences in the distribution of responses to open-ended questions would have contravened the cell frequency requirements of tests such as chi-square (Siegel and Castellan 1988). In short, in terms of deriving useful information from the questionnaire responses, it was appropriate to treat the returns as a population and to proceed with interpretation by means of examination of actual scores rather than to attempt to contrive 'statistical significance' by means of inappropriate procedures.

The second type of analysis was qualitative in nature. Throughout the questionnaire, the participants were given the opportunity to make further comment about particular issues. These comments were recorded and a tally was taken to show the number of participants with similar opinions. This information was then used in the results to expand further upon the information provided by the participants.

# CHAPTER 6    RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 1897, National Park, later renamed Royal National Park, was set aside as recreation land for the ever expanding population of Sydney (Hall 2000), as was noted in the detailed chronology of the development of national parks and the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service that was presented in Chapter Three. Although this original piece of land was for recreation purposes, over time the focus of such parks moved toward that of conservation and preservation (Pigram and Jenkins 1999). Today, the enduring concern of national park agencies remains conservation although this focus has evolved and changed to include the management of people in national parks as well as conservation. It is the argument of this study that without making recreation in national parks a management priority, conservation in national parks will not be achievable. With this in mind, the role of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service seems to be evolving in an attempt to incorporate the most appropriate management strategies for both people and ecosystems in the future of national parks.

Five key issues were identified from the discussion presented in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, being factors that may affect the future of the national parks system. These issues are:

- tourism and recreation within national parks;
- funding constraints;
- private sector involvement in national parks;
- zoning of national parks; and
- the changing focus of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Each of these issues was covered by a set of questions within a questionnaire distributed amongst stakeholder groups concerned with the future of the national parks in New South Wales, specifically in the Blue Mountains area. The following is a discussion of the results of the survey, divided into categories concerned with each of the five issues outlined above. The opinions of the main stakeholder groups (National Parks personnel, Business Groups, Environmental Groups, Other Government Groups and Other groups such as bushwalking clubs) on the various issues are discussed in the same section, thereby providing a comparison.

## 6.1    Tourism and Recreation within National Parks

Tourism and recreation in national parks is becoming increasingly popular, not just in Australia but around the world (State Task Force on Texan Nature Tourism 1994). In Chapter 3, the popularity of Australia's national parks was discussed and it was pointed out that almost 60 per cent of the population visit a national park during the course of a year (McGregor 1999). It was also pointed out that staff of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service drastically underestimate their role within the tourism industry (Ginns 1999). This said, the first section of the questionnaire focused on tourism and recreation within national parks.

The first question was concerned with the significance of national parks to the tourism industry. Table 6.1 shows the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the idea that national parks are a key component of the tourism industry. It is evident from the data in Table 6.1 that the majority of respondents agreed with this initial statement. It is interesting that, although Ginns (1999) had previously suggested that parks personnel underestimate their role in tourism, all of the participants from the National Parks and Wildlife Service agreed that national parks are a key component of the tourism industry. However the level of agreement with the proposition that national parks are a key component of the tourism industry was somewhat lower than the other major stakeholder groups, as evidenced by the relative size of the 'strongly agree' and 'agree' categories.

**Table 6.1**: National parks are a key component of the tourism industry.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 4 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 13 | 13 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

Despite the growing significance of national parks to the tourism/ recreation industry, tourism in national parks is not without problems. The costs associated with the maintenance of park facilities such as walking tracks and picnic areas, have increased almost tenfold between 1990

and 1998 (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998f). Some reports have gone as far as to suggest that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is moving away from conservation and instead is being forced to focus on the management of recreation (Robinson 1999). All of this is said to be at the cost of the parks themselves, with claims that parts of the national parks estate are highly degraded (Evans-Smith 1994). This notion that tourism/ recreation is resulting in the degradation of national parks was included in the questionnaire and the results are presented in Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2:** Increasing visitor numbers to national parks causes significant environmental degradation

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 8 | 13 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

Obviously, the majority of respondents agreed with the notion that tourism causes degradation in national parks. When asked to indicate the types of degradation within national parks, the most common response related to erosion of access ways (10), both vehicle access and walking tracks, and waste disposal impacts (6). Other issues included declining water quality, overcrowding, and an increase in weed species.

What is interesting to note from Table 6.2 is the distribution of the responses from the national parks personnel. Although the majority of responses from parks personnel are in agreement with the statement, there is a wide spread of opinion over all of the categories. In fact, one National Parks respondent indicated that the impacts of tourism on national parks are confined to only a few areas and that these impacts can be modified through appropriate planning and funding strategies. Another respondent from the National Parks and Wildlife Service suggested that the impacts of tourism in national parks are far less than the impacts from primary production practices. Of course it may be that National Parks personnel, charged with the care and maintenance of parks, have a vested interest in denying the existence of degradation. A

representative of the National Parks Association believes that it is not the tourists that cause the damage to national parks but instead some of the Service's management approaches, such as building raised walkways, are what cause the problems. In the opinion of this respondent, the construction of the raised walkways within national parks causes more damage in the long-term than do visitors themselves. Such conflicting views are revealing

Many of the comments from the National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel suggest that the impacts of tourism are site-specific rather than being widespread. With the opinions of the National Parks personnel in mind, it is appropriate to suggest that tourism in national parks is not as damaging as some would have people believe. Nevertheless, tension undoubtedly exists between the encouragement of tourism and the protection of the environment, at least to the extent of the disbenefits from tourism being widely recognised. One way of overcoming this tension might be to provide a nexus between conservation and tourism.

Table 6.3 presents the results from the question of whether the money generated from tourism in national parks should be used to fund conservation. As the figures demonstrate, nearly every respondent agrees or strongly agrees with this idea. The one respondent who disagreed was from the Australian Conservation Foundation and made the valid point that funding from tourism may allow the government to reduce its monetary responsibility for the management of national parks.

This view expressed by the representative from the Australian Conservation Foundation possibly has its origins in the disenchantment with the increasing assumption by governments that everything must pay its own way (Spearritt 2000). This 'mood' of government and attitude to 'user pays' stem from that which is more commonly referred to as economic rationalism or neo-liberalism. Economic rationalism means different things to different people but one element of it involves privatising what were originally public authorities (Walmsley 1993). One of the aims behind economic rationalism is the operation of public authorities in a business-like manner, effectively improving efficiency and releasing the government from costly responsibilities. Examples of such 'corporatisation' can be seen in areas such as banking and telecommunications (Robinson *et al* 2000).

The implementation of user pays is an element of economic rationalism and it is seen as a means of assessing genuine demand for a service, through an indication of what people are willing to

pay (Spearritt 2000). User pays principles and cost recovery are increasingly being considered for places that have been traditionally free for public access, such as libraries, art galleries and national parks (Spearritt 2000).

The impact of economic rationalism and user pays upon national parks may be that national parks will be put under pressure to achieve a profit or at least to minimise any economic loss. If the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is required to strive for a profit, the input of the Government into these areas may become smaller over time. It is this reduction in the input by the Government that concerns the representative from the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Despite this concern, there is the feeling that people only value what they pay for and people should, at least in part, be required to pay for what they use (Spearritt 2000). The issue of user pays and national parks is looked at in the later stages of this Chapter where some of the advantages associated with user pays principles are outlined. However, it is important to note that the cost recovery associated with user fees is minimal (Morgans 1996). Often the costs associated with collecting the fees are uneconomic compared to the revenue raised. This is true not only for Australia but for the United States and Canada where there are more park users. For user fees to cover the management costs of the national parks estate, they would need to be so high that it would deter the majority of people from using national parks. It is likely, then, that the Government will always be required to make large financial contributions to national parks management unless the entire estate is privatised, a very unlikely scenario. Of course, in light of the current economic climate, it is possible that the private sector may serve to supplement the income of national parks through providing recreation opportunities. The responses in Table 6.3 are therefore important.

**Table 6.3**: Revenue from tourism and recreation should be used to finance conservation in national parks.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 8 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 17 | 11 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

A second issue closely related to the idea of using money from tourism to fund conservation is the issue of whether the money raised by a particular national park should stay with that park or become a part of consolidated revenue. It was noted in Chapter Three that revenue generated by a particular park currently goes into a single account and is then redistributed by the Head Office of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Creamer 1999). Table 6.4 presents the results from the question on whether the parks themselves should retain any money collected locally.

**Table 6.4**: When the parks themselves generate income, it should be kept locally rather than as consolidated revenue.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 7 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 12 | 10 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

The majority of the respondents agreed that the revenue collected from a particular park should be retained locally. However, a Government respondent from the New South Wales Premiers Department pointed out that there are equity issues to be considered. The significance of this comment lies in the fact that not all parks are capable of generating the same amount of revenue and yet all have needs. Of course, and in contrast, it can be argued that the parks generating the money are also the parks in need of extra funding as they are most likely to be the areas with

high levels of visitor interest. The scores of the National Parks personnel indicate that the majority agree/ strongly agree that monies raised should be kept locally, although there are some who disagree, thereby implying that they support the notion of consolidated revenue. Interestingly, environmental groups were equally divided on whether revenue should be retained locally. This is probably because some of the respondents from the environmental groups were against tourism in national parks and therefore against the idea that tourism could be used as a funding device.

One area that is said to be a significant drain on National Parks and Wildlife Service resources is the growing demands made by park visitors. When the participants were asked to indicate what they thought were the main demands made by park users, the overwhelming response was that visitors demanded facilities such as toilets, camping areas and picnic tables (20). This was closely followed by the response that park users demand access ways both for walking and vehicles (15). Other responses included the need for information, rubbish collection, and even search and rescue facilities.

It could be assumed from this information that many park users in New South Wales are not after a self-reliant experience when visiting a national park and that they require at least some sort of basic user facility. Research suggests that the majority of park users never venture away from the key visitor areas such as picnic spots and walking tracks (Pigram 1993). With this being the case, recreation and tourism in national parks can probably be constrained to a limited area and, as suggested by a participant from the National Parks Wildlife Service, the implementation of appropriate planning and management strategies can overcome many of the adverse impacts. Of course, whether the funding for this localised provision comes from local revenue or central funds is a question on which opinion is divided. Realistically both sources are likely to be used. Indeed, the future of many parks would seem bleak if local needs had to be met entirely from local revenue.

Rising user expectations are of course something that the National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to factor into its planning. Other things being equal, there is an opportunity cost in spending money to satisfy visitor needs. The questionnaire therefore asked the respondents if they felt that the growing needs of visitors are a drain on the National Parks and Wildlife Service resources. The results are presented in Table 6.5.

**Table 6.5:** Growing visitor needs in national parks are a drain on National Parks and Wildlife Service resources.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 6 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 9 | 14 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

As Table 6.5 indicates, a large majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the notion that parks visitors are a considerable drain on the resources of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Yet despite this, when the respondents were asked if the National Parks and Wildlife Service should manage national parks for increased public access, a majority of the group also agreed. Tourism and recreation in national parks are presented by some as being against the conservation philosophy of national parks, yet as shown by Table 6.6, the majority of respondents agreed with increasing the level of public access in national parks. The only significant opposition came from three National Parks personnel. Interestingly, two of these respondents were of the opinion that tourism in national parks causes degradation. Curiously, one of the respondents who disagreed with managing national parks for increased public access also disagreed with the statement that tourism is a significant drain on the National Parks and Wildlife Service resources. Instead, it was his or her opinion that tourism in national parks needs to be managed more effectively by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Table 6.6:** The National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to manage national parks for increased public access for tourism/ recreation.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 4 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 (2)* |
| Other Government Personnel | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 8 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree.  * = number of no response indicated.

The respondents were asked to indicate how access to national parks could be increased. One of the most interesting answers from a National Parks and Wildlife Service participant was that of commercialisation. Other responses included improving the existing facilities, increasing ground staff, improved planning, and more interpretive programs conducted within the parks. An Area Manager within the National Parks and Wildlife Service suggested that access could be improved by developing one or two areas and leaving the remaining areas unmodified. Based on the research that suggests the majority of park users only access the picnic areas and walking tracks of a national park, this suggestion seems quite appropriate.

\*          \*          \*

The results discussed in Section 6.1 of Chapter Six indicate a positive attitude from the stakeholders toward tourism in national parks. It appears that the inevitability of national parks as a key tourism resource is being gradually accepted and the respondents seem to be of the opinion that tourism has the potential to generate funds for the management of national parks. Although tourism in national parks was described by one respondent as being costly to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the majority of respondents do not seem averse to increasing access to parks and this suggests a positive future for tourism in national parks.

Unfortunately, the National Parks and Wildlife Service is not immune from the financial situation of the Government. As was discussed in Chapter Three, there are a number of reports that suggest that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is lacking in sufficient management

funds. The following section of the discussion considers the opinions of the respondents in relation to the financial position of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

## 6.2    Funding Constraints

As national parks gain increasing visitor and media attention, the topic of funding has become a major discussion point. The responsibilities of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service are expanding, as society not only demands the conservation of natural areas but also access to these same areas. Unfortunately, increasing the level of funding close to the real costs associated with managing the State's national parks is unlikely (Cohen 1990). The questionnaire asked the participants to reveal their opinions regarding the funding of national parks and to indicate to what extent they believe the National Parks and Wildlife Service may be able to generate its own funding.

The first question of the second section of the questionnaire asked the respondents if they believed that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is seriously under-resourced for the management requirements necessary. It was expected that the responses to this question, particularly from the National Parks and Wildlife Service employees, would take a particular direction as employees will probably always be in favour of more funding. The question was however intended to check on how National Parks and Wildlife Service respondents might differ from those of the population of large. As Table 6.7 indicates, the majority of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement. In fact, all of the participants from the National Parks and Wildlife Service Personnel agreed or strongly agreed with the view that the Service is under-resourced. Three respondents, understandably, felt that they were ill-equipped to answer the question. Only one respondent (from a business group) disagreed with the proposition that was put forward in the questionnaire.

**Table 6.7:** The National Parks and Wildlife Service is dramatically under-resourced for the management requirements necessary.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 12 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 17 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

When the respondents were asked to indicate the areas they felt were lacking in financial resources, almost half of the participants indicated that the Service suffers from an inadequate number of field staff (14). One respondent from the business community in the Blue Mountains said that, although there is a lack of staff within the Service, the problem is compounded by existing staff having to perform office duties as opposed to field duties within the parks.

Other responses included inadequate resources for introduced species management, research, conservation, the acquisition of new areas and education programs. However, the second most common response, behind the lack of field staff, was the inadequate maintenance of visitor facilities (8). This observation was made by almost one-quarter of all respondents. This tends to strengthen the suggestion, made earlier, that recreation is a well-accepted part of national parks management. It also reinforces the fact that visitor facilities are the main point of contact for many park users with a result that the quality of these facilities significantly influences visitor perceptions of parks.

The respondents were then asked, in terms of Government funding, whether national parks are being downgraded in importance. The responses to this question are summarised by Table 6.8.

**Table 6.8:** In terms of State Government funding, national parks expenditure is being downgraded in importance.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 7 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 13 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree.

Again, the majority of respondents, as shown by Table 6.8, tend to be in agreement with the proposition that national parks are being downgraded in importance. However, it was also argued by participants from the Other Government category and the Environmental Groups that all areas of government spending are being downgraded. The changing role of the government within Australia has certainly seen a reduction in expenditure in favour of the private sector providing for services (Ryan 1997). Thus, it was pointed out by some respondents that it is unfair to suggest that only national parks are facing economic constraints when, in fact, all groups reliant on public funding are suffering from inadequate resources as a part of the reform process. Interestingly, there was some disagreement with the overall proposition on the part of the National Parks personnel. This is significant because they are best placed to know about the funding levels in real terms.

It has been suggested by some academics and some media reports that the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service should become increasingly self-sufficient, effectively reducing its reliance on the Government (Prasser 1996). The participants were asked to indicate their opinion on this idea by responding to the statement that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is capable of generating more revenue than is currently the case. One respondent, from the Australian Conservation Foundation, was adamant that the National Parks and Wildlife Service should never have to generate its own management funds. However, under the current economic climate where at least some degree of reform seems likely, it may no longer be appropriate to say national parks should not have to be rather more self-sufficient than they have been in the past. Indeed, it may become necessary to focus on ways that the Service can generate funding without degrading the national parks estate. The majority of the other

respondents agreed that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is able to generate more funds than is currently the case. Table 6.9 summarises the opinions of the respondents.

**Table 6.9**: The National Parks and Wildlife Service is capable of generating more revenue than is currently the case.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 5 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 11 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

In the context of Table 6.9, the participants were asked to suggest ways that they felt the National Parks and Wildlife Service could generate extra funding. One response was the implementation of a bed tax for accommodation facilities based in townships where a national park is the major attraction. There was also the suggestion of selling research findings, prioritising expenditure more effectively, and improving public support for the Service. Participants from both the Environmental Groups and the Other Government group strongly suggested the notion of lobbying the government for extra funding.

There was also a common response made by a number of participants from both the Business Group and the National Parks Personnel. The point was made that the National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to improve the business management skills of some of its senior management officials. The suggestion was also made that the Service should be divided into two components: a business component and a regulatory component. By having two distinct parts within the Service, it is thought that conservation can be managed effectively while, at the same time, the Service itself can become commercially competitive. This then removes the opportunity for third party investments, such as has occurred at Quarantine Station, and enables the National Parks and Wildlife Service to operate commercial ventures for its own gain. Under the current organisation of the Service, this is not the case and valuable resources are being lost to private investments.

The most common response by far to the question seeking suggestions for increasing park revenue was user fees. A representative from the National Parks Association believes that people are prepared to pay for access to national parks and all the National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to do to capitalise upon this is to find an economic and effective means of collecting these fees. One suggestion for collecting fees came from a member of the business community in the Blue Mountains. He said that the Service should use the tour operators licensed within a park to collect fees and check the permits of all park users, effectively removing some of the burden from the Service itself.

The implementation of access fees to national parks is not of course, straightforward. There are equity issues to be considered such as those discussed in Chapter Three, because, ultimately, national parks are a public good and, therefore, should be accessible to all socio-economic groups (Voorhees 1995). In order to shed light on this issue, the idea of increasing user charges was proposed to the participants of the survey as a financial strategy for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Table 6.10 presents a summary of the response to this idea.

**Table 6.10**: Increasing user charges is an appropriate source of revenue for national parks.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 4 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 15 (1)* |
| Business Groups | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 8 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree, *= number of no response.

As Table 6.10 indicates, the attitude toward increasing user charges is favourable. The majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the concept of user charges. However, the participants from the National Parks Personnel did seem mixed in their opinions toward access fees. The majority of Parks Personnel commented that user fees should be site-specific, depending upon the visitor facilities available at the park and the location of the park relative to metropolitan areas. Some respondents from the Service disagreed entirely with the concept of

user charges. The range of opinion here suggests that National Parks Personnel have a more sophisticated view than do the other respondents, at least to the extent of seeing the matter of charging as site-specific.

Entry fees and user charges already exist within some national parks and have done so since the early 1960s. From November 2000, popular parks, such as the Blue Mountains National Park and Warrumbungle National Park, have had an access fee of $6 per vehicle per day. Metropolitan parks or parks close to Sydney such as Royal National Park and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park have an access fee of $10 per vehicle per day. Access to the southern section of Kosciuszko National Park is $15 per vehicle per day. From November 2000, the vehicle based day entry fee was applied to a further 22 national parks. There is also an annual pass available, priced between $40 per annum for access to country parks and $80 per annum for access to all national parks in New South Wales. Respondents were asked to indicate what they felt to be an appropriate price for day access and the majority indicated that the current $6-10 charge was acceptable (10).

The respondents were also asked to indicate an appropriate price for an annual pass to national parks. Although some respondents disagreed with the concept of an annual pass, the majority of the suggested prices were much higher than the existing charge of $40-$80 per annum. The most common response from those that answered was that an annual pass should cost between $100 and $150 per annum (9). A participant from the Other Government Group even suggested a charge in the vicinity of $200 per annum. In the light of these suggestions, it might be appropriate that the existing price of an annual pass is reconsidered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and adjusted accordingly.

Suggestions for increased fees fit with overseas research and practice in relation to willingness to pay. For instance, the majority of parks in the United States and Canada impose entry fees for vehicles and for camping access. However, like the situation in Australia, the United States and Canadian authorities have problems in collecting the fees from the national park users. The United States experience has also shown that, generally, the proportion of fees kept within the park is minimal (Morgans 1996).

In Rwanda, where there are inadequate funds available to collect individual entrance fees, a user charge program has been successfully put into place. International visitors to the Mountain

Gorilla Project are charged in excess of $US 170 per day and they make the payment prior to visiting the area (Sherman and Dixon 1991). User charges have also been implemented with some success in Kruger National Park as a means to reduce water and electricity consumption. In a six month trial period where visitors were required to pay for all electricity and water used, there was a reduction in electricity consumption by 52 per cent and a reduction in water consumption by 74 per cent (Preston 1994). In Australia however, as in many other parts of the world, it is the collection of user fees that is the sticking point. As a rule, a cost recovery of only 10-20 per cent can be expected from user fees (Hohl and Tisdell 1995) and the development of a more economically viable mechanism for collection is an area that requires significantly more research.

After considering how the National Parks and Wildlife Service can generate extra revenue, it is important also to discuss how the Service should then spend its budget. Six key areas of expenditure were identified and each of the participants was asked to indicate how important it is for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to spend its resources in these areas. Responses were recorded on a five-point ordinal scale that ranged from 1 ('extremely important') to 5 ('not really important'). An average score for each statement was calculated and included in each table. The higher the numerical scale, the less the importance attaching to a particular issue. This is the scaling used in Tables 6.11-6.16. The six key areas were:

- rangers
- access tracks
- conservation
- camping grounds
- brochures and
- interpretative signage.

The respondents were also given the opportunity to suggest other areas where the spending of the national parks budget would be appropriate. Some of the most common responses included introduced species control, endangered species management, research, public relations, fire management and land acquisitions.

Table 6.11 summarises the attitude of the participants toward Service spending on rangers. Obviously, the attitude toward rangers was very positive, with the majority of respondents giving a rating that indicated that they thought rangers were very important. This result is in keeping

with the attitude discussed previously that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is under-staffed.

**Table 6.11**: National Parks and Wildlife Service spending on rangers.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 8 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 15 | 2.1 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 (1)* | 2.8 |
| Environmental Groups | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| Other Government Personnel | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 (1)* | 1 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 17 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 29 | 1.78 |

( )*= number of non response

Service spending on conservation was also classified by the majority of the respondents as being very important. The attitudes of the participants is presented in Table 6.12. These results show that two respondents from the National Parks and Wildlife Service indicated that spending on conservation is not really important. This is in fact an unlikely result. Assuming that it does not represent an incorrect interpretation of the rating scale, it suggests that some National Parks Personnel have a view of priorities that differs markedly from the traditional one.

**Table 6.12:** National Parks and Wildlife Service spending on conservation.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 10 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 15 (1)* | 1.7 |
| Business Groups | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 (1)* | 2 |
| Environmental Groups | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1.5 |
| Other Government Personnel | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| Other | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1.5 |
| Total | 20 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 29 | 1.54 |

( )* = number of non responses

The attitude of the participants toward spending on access tracks was also positive. Table 6.13 indicates that the majority of respondents were in favour of spending for access tracks and this is encouraging in terms of future attitudes toward visitor access in national parks. The only significant difference here was for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Increased spending on access tracks would open up national parks to visitors and these results demonstrate a mood among some Service personnel of keeping access limited and, therefore, limiting degradation caused by visitors.

**Table 6.13**: National Parks and Wildlife Service spending on access tracks.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 1 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 15 (2)* | 2.9 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 (1)* | 2.8 |
| Environmental Groups | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2.7 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 (1)* | 3 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 6 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 29 | 2.68 |

( )*= number of non responses

The attitude of the respondents toward spending the national parks resources on campgrounds was not as positive as the reaction toward spending on access tracks. Overall, the majority of respondents indicated that they were unsure of the appropriateness of spending money in national parks in this way. Table 6.14 indicates the attitudes of the participants. It is interesting that the views of the National Parks Personnel clustered around the middle of the scale.

**Table 6.14:** National Parks and Wildlife Service spending on campgrounds.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 1 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 15 (1)* | 3 |
| Business Groups | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 (1)* | 2.7 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 (1)* | 2.5 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 3 | 5 | 10 | 5 | 3 | 29 | 2.84 |

( )*= number of responses

The final two categories of spending were brochures and interpretative signage. Both of these strategies are promoted within the literature as key management tools for national parks (Smith 1993) because they provide the opportunity for visitor education and interpretation. However, the response of the participants toward spending in these areas was ambivalent. Table 6.15 summarises the attitudes of the respondents toward spending on brochures and Table 6.16 summarises the attitudes toward spending on interpretative signage. The predominant category in both instances was the middle of the scale, suggesting a degree of ambivalence about the expenditure in question. There are potentially many reasons for the ambivalence, not least, experience with poorly done brochures and signage. It was however beyond the scope of this study to probe the ambivalence in question although it is clearly something to be pursued in future research.

**Table 6.15**: National Parks and Wildlife Service spending on brochures.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 1 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 15 | 3.3 |
| Business Groups | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 (1)* | 2.5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3.7 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 (1)* | 2.5 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 2 | 5 | 11 | 5 | 4 | 29 | 3 |

**Table 6.16**: National Parks and Wildlife Service spending on interpretative signage.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 1 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 15 | 2.8 |
| Business Groups | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 (1)* | 3 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2.7 |
| Other Government Personnel | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1.6 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 4 | 6 | 15 | 3 | 1 | 29 | 2.62 |

( )* = number of non responses

It is surprising that there is such little support amongst the participants for providing information for park users. The National Parks and Wildlife Service promotes itself as being a conservationist and educator (Worboys *et al.* 1997). However, the majority of Service personnel who participated within this survey were ambivalent about spending park resources on education strategies such as brochures and interpretative signage. It may be appropriate to suggest that the National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to reinforce the importance of community education to Service personnel so that they are strongly supportive of spending in this manner.

\*          \*          \*

Overall, the participants in this study seem to be of the opinion that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is limited in terms of financial resources. The majority of respondents agree

that there is inadequate funding for the Service. However, there is also an awareness that this situation is not unique and that Government funding is being reduced in all areas of the public sector. What is positive is that the participants in this study can identify ways in which the National Parks and Wildlife Service can begin to generate more of its own funding. This could possibly mean that the National Parks and Wildlife Service becomes less reliant upon Government contributions. This is encouraging for the future of national parks, particularly in view of the current economic situation.

Despite this positive response, it may not be easy for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service to significantly supplement its income. This point was briefly touched on in a previous paragraph, but the management costs associated with national parks are so high that only 10-20 per cent of costs can be recovered from user fees and increasing entry fees will generally not help the situation to a significant degree (Morgans 1996). In the United States, where there are more visitors to national parks and the access fees are higher than in Australia, the level of cost recovery is still low relative to park expenses (Hohl and Tisdell 1995).

Although it was not proposed as an alternative by the majority of participants within this survey, the private sector has been identified within the literature as a way for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to generate extra management funding and acquire extra management expertise. The following section therefore looks at the attitudes of respondents toward the private sector and national parks. It is important to note that the term 'attitude' is used here to signify the views and opinions that might underpin behaviour. No attempt was made to measure and scale attitudes, as might occur in a psychological study of attitudes (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000). Although a more specific focus could have been adopted, this study is concerned with addressing broad-based issues rather than specifics.

## 6.3    Private Sector and National Parks

Traditionally, the public sector has been largely responsible for providing transport services, education, communication and public health care (Sly and Weigall 1992). However, there has been a move in recent years to reform the role of the Government and to encourage private sector management practices, if not the transfer of some responsibilities to the private sector (Scott 1994). As was discussed in Chapter Three, the private sector in New South Wales has become

increasingly important in providing public facilities such as transport, communications, electricity and gas, health care and employment services (Wearing and Smyth 1998).

It appears that the national parks estate of New South Wales may not be immune to the reform process being undertaken by the Government. Already there are estimated to be162 commercial lease agreements within the National Parks of New South Wales (Worboys *et al.* 1997).

There is considerable support for the notion that parts of the private sector serve as skilled managers of the nature tourism industry. One book, *National Parks-the Private Sector's Role* (Charters *et al.* 1996), is dedicated solely to exploring the successes of private industry in developing nature tourism. This notion that the private sector has the *expertise* to manage for tourism and recreation within national parks more effectively than the National Parks and Wildlife Service was put to the participants of this survey. As Table 6.17 indicates, the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement.

**Table 6.17**: The private sector has the expertise for managing for tourism and recreation within national parks more effectively than does the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 6 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

As could be anticipated, there was a strong reaction from the National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel against the idea (although three found themselves in agreement, providing further evidence of the difference of opinion that was noted earlier). In contrast, respondents from the business sector were more positive. Interestingly, the results from this section of the survey were different from what was found when the participants were asked to indicate their response to the statement that the private sector has the *resources* to manage national parks more effectively than the National Parks and Wildlife Service. As Table 6.18 indicates, the response

types were evenly divided between strongly agree/ agree and strongly disagree/ disagree on the resource issue.

It is possible that the results found in this section of the survey relate to the predominant view, in response to earlier questions, that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is under-resourced for the responsibilities that are placed upon it. Obviously, the private sector has the resources (i.e. money) to bring to national parks to alleviate some of the financial burden that the Service seems to be suffering. However, the participants were not comfortable with supporting the suggestion that the private sector has the expertise to manage national parks.

**Table 6.18**: The private sector has the resources for managing for tourism and recreation within national parks more effectively than does the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 15 (1)* |
| Business Groups | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 (1)* |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 (1)* |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree, ( )*= number of non responses

Money and capital were the most common response to the question about the resources that the private sector could bring to the management of national parks. The respondents were also asked to indicate the expertise they felt the private sector could bring to the management of national parks. The most common responses were in the management and provision of visitor facilities and marketing and business planning.

Although the majority of the respondents felt that the private sector had little more to offer national parks than money and capital, the notion of a partnership between the private sector and the National Parks and Wildlife Service met with a positive response. Table 6.19 summarises the responses and it can be observed that the majority of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the notion of a management partnership.

**Table 6.19**: A management partnership between the private sector and the National Parks and Wildlife Service is appropriate for the future of national parks.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 1 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 6 | 10 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

Interestingly, the majority of National Parks personnel agreed with the notion of a partnership. Perhaps this is a reflection of earlier results where Service personnel indicated that they felt the Service is under-resourced and under-staffed. Although a 'partnership' between the private sector and the National Parks and Wildlife Service requires a great deal more consideration, it may be a realistic alternative for the future of parks and one which some Service personnel are not opposed to. However, significant opposition might be expected from Environmental groups and from Other Government Organisations. Predictably, the business groups were in favour of a partnership.

Respondents were asked to indicate any conditions they felt should be imposed in the case of a partnership. The most common response from those that indicated an answer was that the National Parks and Wildlife Service should maintain the ultimate planning and approval control (6). Another suggestion was that a partnership should be implemented by way of contract. One respondent from the Blue Mountains Conservation Society suggested that the private sector could be involved in the management of national parks by carrying out rehabilitation and maintenance works under the guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. However, the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club both raised the concern that the idea of a partnership for the management of national parks would lead to economics becoming more important than conservation.

Following on from the question of a partnership, the participants were asked their opinion about the National Parks and Wildlife Service allowing greater licensing of private commercial operators in national parks. As Table 6.20 indicates, the response from the participants for

increasing commercial licences was mixed, with a relatively even distribution between strongly agree/ agree and strongly disagree/ disagree. Interestingly, the majority of the participants from the business sector strongly agreed with an increase in commercial licences. This suggests that some parts of the private sector would be keen to increase the potential for access to national parks. The response from the National Parks and Wildlife Service is likely to be mixed, given the diversity of opinion reviewed in this survey.

**Table 6.20:** The National Parks and Wildlife Service should allow greater licensing of private commercial operations in national parks.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 1 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 4 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

The participants in the study were asked how an increase in commercial licences could be achieved appropriately. The majority of National Parks Personnel suggested the notion of a contract, with strict conditions, that the private sector would be required to adhere to. Another common suggestion was to develop an accreditation scheme for private sector licence holders. The accreditation scheme would involve implementing strict regulation and ongoing assessment by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. However, this would require a significant commitment on the part of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which may defeat the purpose of encouraging the private sector into national parks.

The participants were then asked to indicate how appropriate they felt certain types of commercial activities were for national parks. The responses were recorded on a five-point ordinal scale that ranged from 1 ('extremely important') to 5 ('not really important'). An average score for each statement was calculated and included in each table. This is the scale used in Tables 6.21-6.24. The higher the numerical score in these tables, the lower the level of importance attaching to the issue. The four options were restaurants, shops, commercial tours

and resort style accommodation. The first option was a restaurant and Table 6.21 summarises the opinions of the participants toward a restaurant in a national park.

**Table 6.21**: Restaurants as a Commercial Development in National Parks.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 3 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 15 | 3.5 |
| Business Groups | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 (1)* | 1.5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 4.7 |
| Other Government Personnel | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 (1)* | 4 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | 6 | 6 | 4 | 11 | 2 | 29 | 3.74 |

( )*= number of non responses

As Table 6.21 indicates, the majority of respondents felt that restaurants were not important for national parks. However, respondents did indicate that they felt each situation should be judged independently as opposed to blanket approval/ disapproval. The only significant support for restaurants came from the business community and from a small number of National Parks Personnel.

The attitude of the participants toward shops in national parks was also quite negative. Table 6.22 summarises the results.

**Table 6.22**: Shops as a Commercial Development in National Parks.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 15 | 3.5 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 (1)* | 1.7 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4.3 |
| Other Government Personnel | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 (1)* | 3.5 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | 4 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 10 | 29 | 3.6 |

( )*= number of non responses

The attitude of the participants, especially that of the National Parks personnel, toward shops in national parks was surprising. The sale of goods and services such as souvenirs is listed in the Annual Reports for the National Parks and Wildlife Service as a significant source of revenue. Furthermore, it has been suggested that shops within national parks are an economic means of collecting user fees and distributing information to park visitors, given that the majority of park users visit a souvenir shop (Ginns 1999). It was anticipated that the attitude of the participants toward shops in national parks would be more positive than these results indicate.

The attitude of the respondents toward commercial tours in national parks was, in contrast to shops and restaurants, very positive. Table 6.23 illustrates that the majority of respondents thought that commercial tours in national parks were very important. The only significant negative response came from a group of National Parks Personnel.

**Table 6.23**: Commercial Tours as a Development in National Parks.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 5 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 15 | 2.5 |
| Business Groups | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 (1)* | 2 |
| Environmental Groups | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 |
| Other Government Personnel | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 11 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 29 | 2.3 |

( )*= number of non responses

The comment was made, however, that at certain times in a year, such as school holidays, the Service itself goes into competition with the commercial operators. In the off-season, the private operators take tours and pay their money to the Service. In peak periods, the Service itself operates tours at a subsidised price, effectively taking business from the private operators. Furthermore, the National Parks and Wildlife Service uses the money it has collected from the licence holders to subsidise the cost of the tours. The comment was made by several participants from the Business group that the National Parks and Wildlife Service should decide if they want to operate the tours or leave it up to the private sector. In view of these responses, it can be argued that the National Parks and Wildlife Service should not be doing both as it is leading to frustration for guides, rangers and the general public.

As was to be expected, there was a strong reaction against the idea of the resort accommodation in national parks. However, there were three National Parks Personnel who indicated that resort style accommodation is very important. Again, this suggests that some National Parks Personnel have ideas that are different from the basic policies of the Service. Table 6.24 summarises the results of the survey question where the participants were asked to state how important it is to have resort-style accommodation in national parks.

**Table 6.24:** Resort style Accommodation as a Commercial Development in National Parks.

| Participants | 1 extremely important | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not really important | Total | AVG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 15 | 3.3 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 (1)* | 1.6 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Other Government Personnel | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 (1)* | 2.7 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 12 | 29 | 3.5 |

( ) *= number of non responses

In relation to this question, some participants argued that, although resort style accommodation, such as Kingfisher Bay Resort and Village, Fraser Island, should be prohibited from national parks, basic low impact facilities could be approved. Other respondents suggested that all accommodation should be provided outside park boundaries. However, a representative from Tourism New South Wales said that off-park facilities detract from the experience of park users. The best solution is probably to determine visitor expectations and visitor needs and then provide the best facilities that cause the least level of environmental damage.

The final question in this section of the survey asked the participants about their opinions on leasing areas of the national parks estate to the private sector. Although the participants were positive toward increasing the licensing of commercial operators in national parks, they were generally opposed to the idea of leasing parts of a national park. Table 6.25 presents the results. As before, the only significant support came from a group with the National Parks Personnel and from Business Groups

**Table 6.25:** The National Parks and Wildlife Service should lease certain areas of the national parks estate to the private sector.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 7 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 11 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

Some participants did concede that leasing areas of national parks to the private sector has the potential to generate revenue for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. However, the general feeling was that the leasing process would cause the conservation objectives of the Service to be compromised, as well as the Service losing the ultimate control of the national parks estate.

*               *               *

Although the notion of the private sector being involved in national parks will remain a contentious issue, it was surprising to see that the participants were not completely opposed to the idea. Although the participants were against leasing parts of the national parks estate to the private sector, it seems that the participants in the survey recognised the benefits that the private investors could bring to national parks. The reaction of the participants to the notion of a partnership was far more positive than anticipated, given that there is a widely held perception in some quarters that a partnership between the private sector and the National Parks and Wildlife Service is the beginning of the end for national parks. The results of this survey suggest that licensing or contracting out to the private sector within national parks is an idea that deserves greater consideration. The next section of the survey is concerned with zoning national parks in such a way as to allow for the possibility of a greater role by the private sector.

## 6.4    Zoning of National Parks

Zoning in national parks is not a new concept. It already exists in parks such as the Blue Mountains National Park. It was included in the present survey in order to explore whether

stakeholders thought it should be used more extensively than it has been by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Not all national parks within the reserve system, or all parts of individual national parks, are uniform. Some areas have been more heavily modified than others. With this in mind, it is possible to question whether the highly modified parts of a national park can be sacrificed to further enhance tourism or to allow for a greater involvement by the private sector, while at the same time protecting other areas for conservation. This part of the questionnaire was therefore aimed at determining the opinions of the stakeholders toward such zoning in parks and what zones they felt should be included in the management of a national park.

The respondents were asked to respond to the statement 'zoning national parks into different geographical areas is an appropriate management tool'. It was evident from the results that the respondents, particularly those from the National Parks personnel, recognise that the national parks estate is not homogenous. Table 6.26 summarises the participants' responses and, obviously, the reaction to the statement was very positive. Nearly the entire group indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that zoning is an appropriate management tool.

Although zoning intrinsically refers to geographical areas, other types of zoning could be employed. For example, national parks could be zoned on the basis of time, such as seasons or days of the week. For example, some reserves limit access during breeding seasons such as Mutton Bird Island, Coffs Harbour. Access is then unrestricted at other times. An area could also be zoned on the basis of the ability of the participants to pay for the access. By charging large entrance fees, access to an area can be restricted. The questionnaire survey did not probe these various interpretations of 'zoning', preferring instead to focus on the generic activity of geographical zoning, leaving it to the respondents to add comments where appropriate.

**Table 6.26:** Zoning national parks into different geographical areas is an appropriate management tool.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 6 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 12 | 14 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

The participants were then asked to suggest the type of areas that they see as being necessary in the case of zoning within a national park. By far, the most common response was for there to be the inclusion of a wilderness zone (14). In fact almost half of all the participants indicated a need for a wilderness zone. Other common zones included a conservation zone (7), a recreation zone (5), developed areas (8), and a zone for the commercial sector (4). It is possible to suggest, therefore, that the stakeholder representatives participating in this questionnaire are prepared to see national parks being managed in a multifunctional fashion, given that the entire park is being managed for conservation as well as a specific part of the park having limited visitor access and an even higher conservation priority. Such zoning would not of course conflict with the overall park goal of protecting the ecology. It would merely operationalise the goal in a rather novel way.

The respondents were then asked to indicate their feelings toward the idea of a tourism zone within a national park. The rationale behind a tourism zone is that the majority of park users demand only basic facilities such as toilets, walking tracks and picnic areas, in an area that is easily accessible. It was mentioned earlier that research suggests that the average park user rarely moves away from picnic areas and walking tracks (Pigram 1993; McGregor 1999). With this in mind, it is possible to consider designating an area in a national park for the sole purpose of tourism, leaving the remaining areas of the park as unmodified as possible. A tourism zone within a national park would of course require a considerable amount of research into the needs and expectations of park users to ensure and maintain a positive visitor attitude.

The response from the participants in the survey to the notion of a tourism zone was mixed. As Table 6.27 indicates, there was an almost equal distribution of responses between agree/ strongly agree and disagree/ strongly disagree. The relatively large number of ambivalent responses may be the result of the respondents indicating that they felt a tourism zone should be a park specific decision rather than a general rule. It could also be the result of the questionnaire inadequately explaining what is meant by a tourism zone. It is interesting to note that the group of National Parks participants was more against than in favour of tourist zones. The point was made by a representative of the National Parks Association that even in the case of a tourism zone, conservation would still need to be a management priority. Otherwise, people could stop visiting the national parks.

**Table 6.27**: It is appropriate to have tourism limited to only one area of a national park (i.e. a tourism zone).

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 (1)* |
| Total | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

The response of the participants to the notion of a commercial zone appears to be more positive than the overall response to a tourism zone. As Table 6.28 indicates, the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with limiting the commercial activities within parks to only one area. The fact that respondents seem to draw a distinction between tourism and commercialisation is interesting. Just why a commercial zone is more acceptable than a tourism zone is not clear. It may be that tourism is widely interpreted to imply mass tourism rather than individually orientated ecotourism experiences that might be likely in national parks. Follow up research would clearly be appropriate for this issue in subsequent studies.

**Table 6.28**: It is appropriate to restrict commercial activity to an area of a national park (i.e. commercial zone).

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 15 (1)* |
| Business Groups | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 (1)* |
| Total | 9 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree ( )* = number of none responses.

It is important to point out, of course, that although the response to a commercial zone was positive, it does not follow that all of the participants condone commercial activity within parks. Some participants pointed out that they would rather see no commercial activity in parks, but where there is to be some, they would like to see it limited to only one area of a park.

The representative from Tourism New South Wales also pointed out that, although in theory it might be beneficial to have a commercial zone, it is not easy in practical terms to establish one. For the commercial zone to work, a site has to offer a commercial opportunity to the private investor, and this may not always be possible. Furthermore, there will be significant competition between commercial developers for particular sites. Therefore, this participant suggested that it would be more realistic to suggest having a number of commercial zones and a number of tourism zones within national parks, as opposed to having only one zone.

Following on from the tourism zone and the commercial zone, the participants in the survey were asked to indicate what they thought of an 'access by permit only zone' within national parks. As with the results from the previous question, where the majority of respondents indicated that they would like to see a wilderness zone, the response to a permit only zone was very positive. As Table 6.29 shows, the majority of respondents strongly agreed with the idea of a limited access zone.

**Table 6.29**: There should be a conservation zone within national parks, with access only by permit.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 6 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 (1)* |
| Environmental Groups | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 (1)* |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 15 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree, ( )* = number of non responses.

The participants were then asked about who should be responsible for the design of zones within national parks. Predictably, the majority of the respondents from the National Parks and Wildlife Service said that it should be the Service itself in charge of the design and implementation of the zones (7) (although there was an element of disagreement with this position). Conversely, the participants from the other four groups indicated that they were in favour of community groups and stakeholder groups making the decisions about zones. They also suggested that tertiary-trained personnel would be needed to plan for the design stage of zoning in national parks.

Although the participants from the other four groups did not suggest that the National Parks and Wildlife Service should be responsible for the design of the zones, a large number of respondents did suggest that it should be the Service personnel responsible for managing the different zones once they were operational (8). A common suggestion from the National Parks and Wildlife Service participants for regulating the different zones was the use of information and education strategies (3) as well as increasing visitor accountability (3).

Although the survey group is very small in numerical terms, it is interesting to note the discrepancy between the way the National Parks and Wildlife Service views its role and how the other stakeholder groups view the role of the Service. The participants from the National Parks and Wildlife Service suggested that they are a decision making body as opposed to a regulatory organisation. Conversely, the other stakeholder groups suggested a more regulatory role for the Service, leaving the actual decision making process to community groups and other stakeholder

organisations. It may be an interesting research topic to address further what the National Parks and Wildlife Service perceives its purpose to be and what other organisations see the role of the Service as being.

*                    *                    *

Overall, the response of the participants toward zoning in national parks was positive. There seems to be a realisation that national parks are not homogenous, unmodified areas. Instead different parts of national parks are seen to require different management approaches.

The attitude of respondents toward a wilderness zone or a zone with limited access was very positive, despite the realisation that such a zone could actually lead to the exclusion of the majority of park users. The participants seem to find some reassurance from the fact that, through a wilderness zone, there would always be some part of the park preserved.

Although respondents were not averse to the idea of a tourism zone within parks, it did seem that the majority of the group would like each park to be evaluated independently of other parks. Such sensitivity is of course laudable. Similarly, the idea of the commercial zone was appealing to some participants as it ensured commercial activities could be confined to only one area. However, some respondents were adamant that all commercial activities should be prohibited from national parks. Other participants suggested that there should actually be a number of smaller zones for tourism and commercial enterprise as opposed to single zones.

Overall, the respondents who participated in this survey seemed to accept zoning as a management tool for national parks and it may therefore be possible for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to use zoning more extensively than is currently the case.

The following section of the survey considers other issues regarding the future of national parks that need to be taken into account, notably in relation to the changing focus of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

## 6.5    The Changing Focus of the National Parks and Wildlife Service

In the last few years, there have been signs indicating that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is at a point of change.  In 1997, the Service released the Draft Nature Tourism and Recreation Strategy with the aim of improving the management of tourism and recreation within national parks.  As one part of the Strategy, the suggestion was made for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to manage recreation within parks with a more businesslike approach (Worboys *et al.* 1997).  Although the Draft Strategy has never been adopted, it quietly indicated a changing role for the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

At the end of 1999 and the beginning of 2000, the National Parks and Wildlife Service received considerable media attention, suggesting that the Service is at a point of change.  In November 1999, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported a restructuring of the Service under the direction of Mr. Brian Gilligan, Director-General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.  The premise behind the restructuring was reported to be a need for Service personnel not only to understand conservation principles but also economic and social issues (Woodford 1999).

In January 2000, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that an 'overhaul of the National Parks and Wildlife Service' was planned (Woodford 2000).  The report indicated that the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* is to be amended, allowing for greater commercial activities and a greater emphasis on recreation.  Following on from this came the report that much of the National Parks and Wildlife Service land acquisition account is to be used in areas away from the eastern seaboard (Woodford 2000b).  On the 29th June 2001, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is inadequately funded to implement the recovery plans for endangered species (Woodford 2001), a fact which highlights the management concerns facing the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

It seems obvious from these reports that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is attempting to adopt the role of recreation manager as well as that of conservation manager.  The Service now seems to be trying to incorporate both economic and social issues into the overall conservation of national parks.  This idea, that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is moving forward, was included as the final section of the questionnaire so as to try to understand what the stakeholder groups see as the best way for the future.

One area where the National Parks and Wildlife Service seems to be changing is in terms of its relationship with the commercial sector. As mentioned previously, the Director-General of the Service wants to take into account the economic aspects of the parks estate and there is a move within the New South Wales Government to utilise the private sector in areas that have traditionally been the responsibility of the public sector. The respondents were therefore asked if they agreed or disagreed with the idea of national parks becoming more commercially orientated. As Table 6.30 shows, there was a mixed result with almost equal numbers of respondents indicating agree/ strongly agree and disagree/ strongly disagree. This result is surprising in view of the earlier tables where much of the sample seemed opposed to the idea of the National Parks and Wildlife Service having to generate its own revenue. There was also a negative response toward the idea of the private sector in national parks and so it was anticipated that the majority of respondents would disagree with the statement that national parks need to become more commercially orientated

**Table 6.30:** National parks need to become more commercially oriented.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 2 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Table | 7 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

As could be expected, all of the respondents from the business group were in favour of national parks becoming more commercially orientated. Perhaps it can be assumed that private businesses such as those surveyed see the potential for a worthwhile investment. The division of opinion within the National Parks and Wildlife Service is again worthy of note.

The participants in the survey were then asked to suggest ways in which the National Parks and Wildlife Service could become more commercially orientated. The most common response from all of the groups was to improve the business planning skills within the service (8). One respondent from the National Parks and Wildlife Service said that there is a need for the Service to sell the product of national parks 'brighter and smarter'.

Increased commercialism simply does not happen. It has to be planned. A question was therefore put to the participants as to whether it should it be a local management committee that decides upon the degree to which a particular park becomes commercialised. Again, the results were mixed almost evenly between agree/ strongly agree and disagree/ strongly disagree. Table 6.31 summarises the results.

**Table 6.31:** A local management committee to determine the degree to which a particular national park should become commercialised.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 (1)* |
| Total | 5 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree ( )* = number of non responses

Although the results from this section of the survey were mixed, a number of participants did indicate that the degree of commercialism within a national park should be decided on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, the only opposition (and, implicitly, support for centralised control) came from some sections within the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The case for localism seems to be strong. By having a local management committee, it may be possible to allow for each park to be evaluated independently.

With the development of the Draft Tourism and Recreation Strategy and the growing emphasis on recreation, the National Parks and Wildlife Service seems to be accepting the fact that national parks are fast becoming a key tourism resource. The participants were asked if they felt that recreation and tourism are as important as conservation in managing national parks. As Table 6.32 illustrates, the majority of the respondents disagreed/ strongly disagreed with this idea.

**Table 6.32**: Recreation and tourism are as important as conservation in managing national parks.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 1 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 4 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 11 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

The general feeling amongst the respondents seemed to be that tourism and recreation are a luxury while conservation is a necessity. One participant from the National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel made the valid point that, without conservation, an area will become degraded and then people will not want to visit the area anyway. On the other side of the argument, there was a strong view amongst the participants that tourism is a way of generating community support for the conservation of national parks and, without community support, there is no conservation. Perhaps it is appropriate, then, to suggest that visitor use be given equal priority to conservation, rather than one being more important than another.

Following on with the notion that tourism is becoming increasingly important in national parks, the participants were asked if the National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to improve its management approach to the recreation facilities within parks. As Table 6.33 indicates, the majority of the respondents agreed that there is a need for the management of the recreation resources in national parks to be improved. Even respondents from the National Parks and Wildlife Service took little exception to this view. This result helps to reinforce the interpretation drawn earlier that the respondents seem to accept the role that national parks play in the tourism industry.

**Table 6.33:** The National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to improve the management of the recreation facilities within national parks.

| Participants | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Parks Personnel | 2 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| Business Groups | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Environmental Groups | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Other Government Personnel | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 8 | 12 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 29 |

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DK= don't know/ ambivalent; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree

The final two questions of the survey asked the participants to indicate the main challenges that the National Parks and Wildlife Service have had to face over the last 10 years and what challenges they see the Service having to address in the next 10 years.

## 6.5.1   Challenges for the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Last 10 years.

One participant from the Other Government Group said that the most challenging issue facing the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the past has been the refusal of the Service and of the community generally to acknowledge the need for change. One respondent also felt that there has been considerable difficulty in trying to balance the needs of industry and employment with the needs of conservation. Other problems that were noted included the growing demands made by visitors on the national parks themselves and upon the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Some more obvious problems such as resource degradation, the introduction of exotic species, and waste management were also mentioned regularly. The most common response from all five groups was however that the National Parks and Wildlife Service was faced with a lack of funds and a growing estate (10).

It was interesting to look at the responses from the National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel separately from the other groups because, although Service personnel mentioned some of the same problems as the remainder of the sample (such as budget constraints and degradation problems), they also mentioned other issues. One of the most interesting comments made from the Service personnel was the high degree of community expectations. Another interesting point

made by some of the National Parks and Wildlife Service was the low morale within the service. Some respondents felt that the role of the Service personnel had been moved away from natural resource management to a role of administration and 'cleaning toilets'.

Some of the comments made throughout the survey indicated a strong degree of dissatisfaction and frustration within some parts of the Service. Although the sample size from this survey is small, the results may indicate that there is a need for further research into the level of staff satisfaction within the Service. It is possible that the Service will operate more effectively if the personnel are given the opportunity formally to give their opinions on what they see as the future of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The diversity of views within the National Parks and Wildlife Service on some of the questions posed in this survey may be linked to a lack of clarity concerning the Service's mission.

### 6.5.2   Challenges for the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Next 10 years.

Again, inadequate financial resources were listed as the most common challenge (9) likely to affect the National Parks and Wildlife Service when respondents were asked for their views on likely changes over the next 10 years. The participants from the National Parks and Wildlife Service also indicated that a lack of community support and an unsupportive government will be major challenges facing the Service. The comment was also made by a participant from the Service that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has a poor reputation as a land manager and, hence, they receive a great deal of criticism from other sectors.

Other participants from the other groups indicated that low staff morale and a lack of community support would be two of the major challenges for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to overcome. Another common response from the participants was that the rapid development of tourism within national parks poses a problem, as does the need for the Service to balance tourism and conservation. A respondent from the Environmental Group went as far to say that the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service have inadequate skills and this will be a major challenge for the Service to overcome.

From the results presented here, it is difficult to suggest how the participants see the role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service over the next few years. As has been mentioned previously,

the participants seem to accept tourism in national parks. However, they seem uncomfortable with the idea that national parks should become more commercially oriented. There were different views as to whether conservation is more important than recreation or vice versa. Some respondents said that without conservation there can be no recreation while others said that without community support generated through tourism, there can be no conservation.

A great deal more research into the perceptions of both visitors and Service personnel is necessary when considering the future of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Although the number of participants in this survey is small, the results suggest that there does seem to be a need to address staff morale and staff satisfaction within the Service. Without the complete commitment of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, it would be difficult to implement any particular management direction. Therefore, one suggestion in considering the future of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is to take account of staff attitudes and community attitudes before committing to one particular future.

## Chapter Summary

It is possible to infer from the survey responses that there is a positive attitude amongst the stakeholder groups toward tourism in national parks. There seems to be an acceptance among the participants that tourism is a major part of the future of national parks. Moreover, respondents seem to be positive in relation to the idea of increasing user access within parks.

The participants seem to be very aware of the financial plight facing not only the National Parks and Wildlife Service, but all public sector organisations. The sample also seem to be aware that tourism provides an opportunity for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to become increasingly self-sufficient. Indeed the majority of the participants do not seem to be averse to the idea of tourism contributing to increased financial security.

It was anticipated that the participants would be very negative toward the idea of the private sector becoming involved in national parks. However, some respondents suggest that private investors have a great deal to offer the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The comment was in fact made that the Service needs to improve its business management skills so that it can become more competitive. Private sector involvement was taken as instrumental in this. In the case of the private sector working in national parks, the idea of a partnership with the National

Parks and Wildlife Service seems to be the most popular scenario, as long as the Service maintains overall control.

There seems to be a healthy realisation amongst the participants that national parks vary in terms of their ecological quality. The participants were positive toward the use of zoning as a management tool. However, it is obvious that at least some part of a national park would have to be declared a wilderness zone. The idea of the wilderness zone seemed to offer security to the respondents in that they felt they were preserving at least some part of a national park.

The final section of the survey was the most difficult for respondents to answer. The participants in the survey conceded that the National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to become more commercially orientated and they again suggested that the Service improve its business management skills. However, what is most enlightening is the high level of dissatisfaction amongst the National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel who participated in this survey and the perceived lack of community support for the work the Service does. Although there were only a small number of respondents from the Service, these results may indicate that action is necessary in the area of staff morale.

As for the future of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, there are no clear-cut answers. It is possible, using these results, to suggest that tourism will become even more important in the management of national parks. The private sector may be a way for the Service to overcome inadequate park funding, however there is a great deal of animosity that will need to be overcome first. What does seem important is for the Service to ensure the support of its workers before it chooses a way forward. Only then will a new management regime be effective.