

## **CHAPTER 7 NATIONAL PARKS: A ROLE REVISITED**

The focus of this thesis, throughout, has been on the national parks of New South Wales and the factors which will most likely affect the way in which the National Parks and Wildlife Service manages these national parks in respect of a growing emphasis on recreation and tourism. Four key themes have re-occurred throughout the thesis. These are tourism, funding, the private sector, and zoning. It is likely that the future of the National Parks and Wildlife Service will be influenced by one or all of these themes.

The objective of this chapter is to discuss these four main issues in the context of the literature and the results of the survey. The author has elected again to use the four key themes as sub-headings in order to retain the structure set in the other chapters. Inevitably, some of the information used in earlier chapters is noted again here as a basis for speculation about the findings of the present research.

### **7.1 Tourism and National Parks**

There is little doubt that tourism and recreation will develop over the next few years as a major management challenge for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. Chapter Two of this thesis stated that tourism of all kinds is developing at a rate close to 9 per cent per annum, making it the world's largest and fastest growing civilian industry (Trauer and McIntyre 1998). Tourism in natural areas, such as national parks, is proving itself to be one of the fastest growing components of the tourism industry (McIntyre and Boag 1995).

It has been stated previously that there were 22 million visits to the national parks of New South Wales in 1997 and this figure is expected to reach 28 million visits by 2005 (Worboys *et al.* 1997). Although the National Parks and Wildlife Service is primarily a conservation organisation, there is little doubt that national parks are developing as a key recreation resource. In order to ensure the conservation of these parks, it may actually be necessary for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to focus equally on both tourism and conservation. If tourism is not managed accordingly, it is probable that the growing popularity of national parks amongst tourists will cause significant environmental degradation such as that which is occurring within parts of the Blue Mountains National Park.

It is possible to say that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is beginning to recognise its role as a tourism provider. As Chapter Three outlined, the National Parks and Wildlife Service has increased the level of spending on recreation facilities within parks from \$2 million in 1990 to \$22 million in 1998 (Table 3.2), although this amount fell to \$15 million in 2000. A plan was also outlined to include the term 'recreation' formally within the main policy of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. This is not currently the case (Woodford 2000a). Despite this, the Service still claims that conservation is its primary objective and that tourism is merely a secondary consideration behind conservation.

This observation is reinforced by the results of the survey carried out as a part of this thesis. The participants were asked if they felt that national parks are a key component of the tourism industry and 26 out of 29 agreed/ strongly agreed with this statement (Table 6.1). The majority of respondents (25 out of 29) also agreed/ strongly agreed that tourism in national parks can cause degradation (Table 6.2). However, when the participants were asked if they thought that the management of tourism and recreation in national parks is as important as conservation, the majority of the respondents disagreed/ strongly disagreed (17 out of 29, Table 6.33).

Interestingly, a senior member of the National Parks and Wildlife Service said that Service personnel grossly underestimate the amount of time that they are involved in visitor management programs. Perhaps it is appropriate, therefore, for National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel to be educated about their growing role in managing national parks for tourism. At the current time, there seems to be the perception within the National Parks and Wildlife Service that tourism in national parks is something to be endured rather than enhanced as a key component of parks management. Although some elements of the tourism industry can cause environmental

degradation, tourism and recreation can serve as a means of generating extra funding for parks. Again, it is interesting that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (28 out of 29) agreed/strongly agreed that conservation in national parks can be funded by tourism (Table 6.3). However, the general feeling seems to be that tourism is not as important as conservation. The conclusion to be drawn in this thesis is that it may not be appropriate for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to continue to see tourism and recreation as a secondary concern. Instead it needs to ensure that, for the overall well-being of national parks, conservation and tourism are managed simultaneously.

Having said that there is a need for tourism and conservation to be managed simultaneously, it needs to be recognised that such an approach will cost money. One possible solution is to use entrance fees to national parks for the management of tourism. Based on the survey used in the present study, the existing user charges (ranging between \$6 and \$15 per vehicle per day) are thought to be adequate, but it is felt that the annual fee of \$60 could be made higher, in the vicinity of \$100 per annum.

There is a strong argument that it is difficult to collect entrance fees for national parks efficiently. It was noted in Chapter Six that a cost recovery of between 10 and 20 per cent from user fees is considered to be normal (Hohl and Tisdell 1995). It is uneconomic to employ someone to collect fees at an entrance gate, particularly when there is more than one entranceway. Furthermore, the doubling of existing access fees would still not be sufficient to enable the National Parks and Wildlife Service to recover a significant proportion of its management costs (Westcott 1991). One option to increase fees may be to charge international visitors much higher fees. The proposal was put forward for Costa Rica whereby a 'park airport tax' could be introduced for all foreign visitors (Lindberg 1991). It might also be possible to collect more from entrance fees by increasing the cost of the annual pass. Again, the issue of how to police the use of annual passes in national parks remains a major management problem. Perhaps it would be appropriate to introduce significantly large fines for people caught using a park without the appropriate pass. Conversely, access could be monitored using a gate system and an electronic card, allowing people in possession of an annual pass to access the desired national park. Obviously, a great deal more consideration is necessary for an annual pass to become an effective management tool for national parks.

There is often some resentment felt toward the idea of entrance fees, as national parks can be classified as a public good, where access is a right for all (Schmid 1989). Unfortunately, for proponents of this argument, as the demands for access to national parks increase, someone needs to be prepared to pay for the management of these parks (Evans-Smith 1994). Given overall ideological trends, it is difficult to argue with the proposition that, if people wish to have access to national parks, they have to be prepared to pay directly for that privilege. Research shows that people who value natural areas are prepared to pay to use them (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). Any extra money generated through user charges can then be used to manage tourism in national parks. In short, funding is clearly a critical issue.

## **7.2 Funding and National Parks**

The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is a very large government organisation. As of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2000, the Service was responsible for 5 099 674 hectares of land or 6.37 per cent of the total area of New South Wales (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2000). In 2000, the Government contributed over \$200 million to national parks. Although this is a large amount, it is not enough. There are currently numerous demands placed upon the government for funding for health care, education and financial assistance programs of one type or another. As a result, extra spending on national parks, at least in the opinion of the politicians, is difficult to justify (Figgis 1994; Cohen 1996). Hence, the National Parks and Wildlife Service was required to generate \$60 million from 'other' sources to bring its total budget for 2000 to almost \$272 million (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2000). As was discussed in Chapter Three, much of the other source of income came in the form of asset re-evaluations. The revenue of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is therefore impacted by notional 'paper' money that cannot be used as cash to pay for current expenditure.

The participants from the survey were asked if they felt that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has inadequate resources and 12 out of the 15 participants from the National Parks and Wildlife Service strongly agreed that this is the case. The remaining three participants were a little less extreme in their view and they merely agreed. The majority of respondents from the other categories also agreed that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is under-resourced. However, many of the participants in the survey were aware that the situation is not unique to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, but rather is common throughout the public sector.

The 2000 Annual Report for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service indicated a large 'profit' of \$32 million. As was explained in Section 3.3 of this thesis, much of this profit is illusory and results from the accounting system used rather than from cash that is available for spending. However, despite the claim of such a large profit for the 2000 financial year, it was clear from the results of the survey that some Service personnel feel dissatisfied with the current situation within the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Almost all of the 15 participants commented that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has insufficient field staff and, as a result, the current staff are required to perform tasks outside of their area of expertise. For example, there seems to be an increase in the level of administration jobs that field staff are required to undertake, as opposed to undertaking active duties. Although the sample size from the survey was small, it was evident from the results that there is a degree of staff dissatisfaction and disillusionment within the Service that needs to be addressed.

If it is the case that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is under-staffed, it seems appropriate to suggest that the Service should spend a large proportion of the \$32 million 'profit' on increasing its number of staff. Increasing the number of field staff and administration staff within the Service may reduce the amount of time employees are required to perform duties they are not comfortable with. In turn, this could improve the morale of the staff within the Service and improve their level of job productivity. Although this scenario would be to the benefit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, it is unlikely due to the lack of money available for spending.

This view that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is under-funded is reinforced by a report outlining the National Parks and Wildlife Service signing a conditional agreement with Mawland Hotel Management to lease Quarantine Station and develop a tourism operation. On the one hand, this decision could signify that Quarantine Station is surplus to the requirements of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and is neither historically nor ecologically important within the national parks estate. Conversely, the decision could also indicate that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has some financial problems and is seeking the investment of the private sector to manage parts of the national parks estate. In support of this idea is the report that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is looking to work with the private sector and to operate national parks from a more commercial perspective (Woodford 2000). Appropriately, the private sector in national parks is the third theme of this thesis.

### **7.3 The Private Sector and National Parks**

The role of the private sector in the realm of public sector organisations was looked at in detail in Chapter Three. As Chapter Three pointed out, the private sector has become increasingly important in providing public facilities such as transport, communications, electricity and some forms of health care. If the National Parks and Wildlife Service is as financially restricted as it appears, the private sector may provide a means of generating extra funding for the management of national parks. Interestingly, it seems that the National Parks and Wildlife Service itself is not completely resistant to the notion of the private sector in national parks.

Although some of the participants from the survey were opposed to the idea of private sector involvement in national parks, the idea of the private sector working in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service was an appealing option to many. A partnership with the private sector could, after all, serve as a way of generating significant financial resources for the management of national parks. It is safe to suggest, therefore, that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is suffering from some degree of under-funding and the private sector could be a way to overcome this problem.

Using the partnership approach in national parks could see the National Parks and Wildlife Service released from many of its tourism and recreation responsibilities. Private developers could be allowed to access parts of the national parks estate to provide for tourism, while at the same time paying the National Parks and Wildlife Service an access fee. As was mentioned previously, the national parks of New South Wales are presenting themselves as a key recreation attraction. Almost 42 per cent of visitors to Australia visit a national park at some time during their stay (Australian Tourist Commission 1998) and this level of visitation may well serve as a market that the private sector would be keen to access.

It may also be possible to develop a partnership approach by using the private sector to undertake restoration and rehabilitation works within national parks. Private companies could be contracted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to restore walking tracks or to build public toilets, while all the time they would be guided by the Service itself. There is also the opinion that Service personnel are trained in the principles of conservation and are not trained in managing national parks for tourism and recreation (Moore and Carter 1993). Again the private sector could be contracted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to provide tours,

information sessions and basic user facilities within national parks, leaving Service personnel to work in the areas in which they are trained.

Although this study is not advocating the private sector over the current National Parks and Wildlife Service, it is necessary to point out that some parts of the private sector are very skilled in managing an area for both tourism and conservation. Chapter Three discussed at length a number of private sector developments, such as the Skyrail Cableway in Cairns, which have made a large investment, not only in the development of a tourist facility, but also in the conservation of the immediate environment. It is unfortunate that the private sector is viewed only as a potential source of money and capital when there are parts of the private sector which have the commitment and the knowledge to develop nature tourism facilities that are both successful and sustainable. Such private sector expertise and experience is a resource to be tapped.

Despite the notion of a partnership being discussed favorably here, this thesis concedes that private sector involvement poses some risk to the quality of the national parks. Therefore, any level of access by the private sector to national parks would require significant monitoring on the part of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. There would need to be a strict environmental assessment process prior to the private sector being allowed to access a national park. Some sort of guarantee, such as a security bond, would also be necessary to ensure private developers maintain the quality of the environment on which their business is based.

Furthermore, the role of the private sector in providing for tourism in national parks would need to be evaluated for each park as opposed to being made a broad-based policy. Some parks need the input of the private sector more than other parks. Obviously, it is difficult to see the purpose of encouraging the private sector to provide tourism facilities in parks where there is a significant provision of facilities off-site of the park. For example, the Blue Mountains National Park has a great wealth of facilities outside of the park boundary while a park such as the Warrambungles National Park has fewer recreation facilities in the surrounding areas and it is reasonable to suggest that some facilities could be provided on-site. Of course some parks (such as those with low visitation rates) might be unattractive to the private sector.

The private sector in national parks does have the potential to alleviate some of the management responsibilities facing the National Parks and Wildlife Service and to overcome some of the

financial restraints that are hampering national parks. However, the situation for the National Parks and Wildlife Service may be made worse if they are forced also to monitor the activities of the private sector. Thus, although a partnership may be acceptable in theory, it might prove to be difficult to implement in the real world and might actually be more costly, both in financial terms and in terms of labour, for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to implement.

#### **7.4 Zoning and National Parks**

The final theme in the examination of national parks management in this thesis is that of zoning national parks into different management areas. The Blue Mountains National Park was selected as a case study partly because the process of zoning was outlined as a management strategy within the Draft Plan of Management. The majority of the participants from the survey are in favour of zoning as a management tool in national parks.

Of the 29 survey participants, 26 agreed/ strongly agreed (including all of the participants from the National Parks and Wildlife Service) that zoning is an appropriate management tool. It is thought that this positive response stems from the fact that people are beginning to see national parks as a number of smaller areas within a single boundary rather than a single, uniform area.

The author suggests that it is appropriate to have several different areas within a national park, all with different management objectives. In view of the role of tourism in national parks, it is felt that it is appropriate to have a tourism/ recreation zone. Obviously, such a zone would have a management approach concerned with conservation but the overall focus of the zone would be tourism and recreation.

If a zoning approach was implemented in the management philosophy of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, it could be possible to rotate tourism and recreation to different areas within a park, similar to the crop rotation procedures used within the agricultural industry. By having several areas suitable for tourism and recreation within national parks, each area could be given a 'rest period' and rehabilitation procedures could be implemented so that no one area of a park is heavily degraded by tourism.

It was noted in both Chapter Three and Chapter Six that the majority of park visitors only access walking tracks and picnic areas. By having a tourism zone, a large proportion of visitor needs



could be met in a single area while the remainder of the park could remain relatively free of park visitors. It is also possible to suggest a wilderness zone where access is minimal and where the management focus would be conservation.

Assuming that the average user of national parks wants facilities that are easily accessible yet also in a natural setting it is possible to provide for such a demand by creating a wilderness-like area within the tourism zone of a national park. This is what might be described known as recreation substitution and this study advocates the use of such a process as a key management tool for national parks. By providing visitors with the experience they desire in an appropriate setting, it is possible to conserve the more fragile environments of a park.

Recreation substitution is the provision of recreation experiences so that acceptable, equivalent outcomes can be achieved either through the timing of the experience, the means of gaining access, the setting, or the activity (Hvenegaard and Dearden 1998, p.702). In other words, substitute settings refer to acceptable recreation alternatives under varying circumstances (Shelby and Vaske 1991).

Visitor acceptance of recreation substitution depends on the visitors' expectations, the perceived similarity of activities, prior experiences, social groupings and the setting (Baumgarther and Heberlein 1981; Brunson and Shelby 1993). Visitor preference for authenticity is also a contributing factor (Pearce and Moscardo 1986). As the importance of the desired activities attributes increases, the perceived number of substitutes decreases (Hvengaard and Dearden 1998).

In the Northern Territory, a survey was conducted to determine the attitude of tourists toward an artificial wetland. The result of the study indicated that 90 per cent of the respondents classified the experience of visiting an artificial wetland as ecotourism (Chirgwin and Hughes 1997). This suggested to researchers that modified and created environments are acceptable to tourists as long as they are well managed, aesthetically pleasing, and provided in a natural environment (Chirgwin and Hughes 1997, p.7). It is possible for tourism in national parks to be managed in a similar way, allowing for the majority of a national park to remain relatively free of visitors.

Even if the process of zoning is not formally identified as such, the process occurs in the majority of national parks. Obviously, there are areas of a park where access is easy, and visitor

facilities and amenities are well provided. Conversely, there are also parts of a park where access is much more difficult and requires a far greater time commitment and, as a result, visitor numbers are smaller. With this in mind, it is realistic to suggest that zoning within national parks could be embraced even further as a management approach for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In turn, tourism and conservation could be the focus in one part of the park while conservation could be the focus of another part of the park. Ultimately, through zoning, it may be possible to manage national parks for both conservation and tourism simultaneously, as opposed to one taking precedence over the other. Although this may already be the case to a certain extent, it is important for the management of tourism and conservation to be promoted within the Service and amongst the public as being of equal importance. This is not currently what is occurring. As was mentioned earlier in this Chapter, managing national parks for both tourism and conservation might be an effective strategy to ensure that national parks can be protected for the long-term.

## **CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION**

### **8.1 National Parks: A Future**

The focus of this thesis has been concerned with how tourism and recreation will impact upon the future management directions of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. From this core question, three other themes have been identified as potential questions that may need to be addressed in the future by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. These issues are funding, the private sector and zoning. This study has considered each of these themes and their relationship to national parks in detail and the following discussion is concerned with speculation about the future of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In Chapter Two, this thesis looked at the development of tourism and nature-based tourism within Australia. There is little doubt that the popularity of natural areas within this country, and within New South Wales specifically, will continue to serve as a major drawcard for tourists. One of the major recreation and tourism resources within New South Wales is national parks and Chapter Three and Chapter Four looked in detail at tourism and national parks, and in particular the Blue Mountains National Park. These chapters also showed that, despite the popularity of national parks, they are not without their problems. Like all public organisations, there never seems to be enough money. There are also changes occurring within the Government whereby increased accountability and decreased public expenditure are encouraged and even expected. As a result, the future make-up of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is a little uncertain. This fact was made apparent by the restructuring process that occurred within the National Parks and Wildlife Service in late 1999 (Woodford 1999).

In order to explore the future of national parks in New South Wales, it was necessary to draw on the knowledge and attitudes of people interested in national parks. Chapter Five describes how a questionnaire was designed with the aim of getting information from representatives of stakeholder interests. This information was then examined and a discussion of the results was presented in Chapter Six. It was the information from the survey and a synthesis of the literature that led to a discussion in Chapter Seven about the future of national parks in New South Wales. Naturally, it is only possible to speculate and to consider the future of national parks in terms of tourism and recreation, funding concerns and the private sector.

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Tourism and recreation are likely to become increasingly important in the future management approaches taken by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. This thesis discussed the need for tourism and conservation to be seen as of equal importance in the management of national parks. Currently, tourism in national parks seems to be given a secondary role behind conservation, although this is a requirement of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*. In order for the quality of the national parks to be protected, tourism will need to be seen as an issue in its own right and perhaps an amendment of the Act should be considered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

It was interesting to note that the National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel who participated in the study seemed to be almost accepting of the role of tourism and recreation in the future of national parks. However, many of these respondents seemed not to accept that they are the ones required to manage park users when they were trained in natural resource management. It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that tourism and recreation in national parks be managed as a separate entity and by staff employed specifically in the role of tourism and recreation managers.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a widespread misconception that tourism in national parks is bad and causes irreparable damage to an area. In some cases, some of the participants in the survey indicated that they would like to see tourism in national parks stopped altogether. However, national parks are a public asset and, as such, access to them should never be denied. It is reasonable to suggest that many of the problems arising from tourism in national parks are the result of tourism being a secondary management concern behind conservation. This, in turn, sees tourism in parks being managed by people who are trained primarily in the ecological

sciences as opposed to the social sciences. The implication of this is that there might sometimes be a 'quick-fix' management approach applied to tourism-related problems. Tourism needs to be seen as an integral part of national parks and, in order to protect the parks, tourism needs to be managed *simultaneously* with conservation.

For the National Parks and Wildlife Service to incorporate both tourism and conservation into a long-term management agenda will require a re-evaluation of some Service policies as well as the re-education and training of some Service staff. It might also be necessary for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to look at employing personnel trained in the processes of tourism management, rather than expecting people with a science background to fulfill a tourism role. Unfortunately, all of this will cost money and, like the majority of organisations reliant on public funding, there may not be enough money to make some much-needed changes.

Despite the National Parks and Wildlife Service reporting a substantial profit for the 1998 financial year, there is much evidence to suggest otherwise. The paper 'profit' seems in fact to be an artifact of accounting procedures that emphasise assets rather than cash income and expenditure. The majority of Service personnel who participated in the survey feel that there is inadequate field staff to perform the necessary duties. Other claims were made in regard to parts of the national parks estate being degraded and visitor facilities, such as those in the Blue Mountains National Parks, being outdated and of poor quality (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998h).

The Director-General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service has implemented a restructuring of the district management positions within the Service, to encourage the development of a 'new, more corporate, economic accommodating parks service' (Woodford 1999). This seems to suggest that, prior to the restructuring process, the Service was not operating economically. In turn, this reinforces the view that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is suffering from a lack of adequate funds.

What makes the situation for the National Parks and Wildlife Service worse is that the morale of the Service employees who participated in the questionnaire is very low and it has been reported that similar negative feelings exist among the majority of Service personnel (Woodford 1999). There seems to be uncertainty amongst the staff about where the National Parks and Wildlife Service is going and whether there will be job security. The morale of the Service

personnel was dampened even further by the deaths of four National Parks and Wildlife Service officers in a fire in the Kuring-gai National Park in June 2000.

As was mentioned at the conclusion of Chapter Six, it is necessary for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to address the decline in the morale of its employees. It is the opinion of the author that, without the full support of the staff, any management direction that is undertaken by the National Parks and Wildlife Service will be unsuccessful. If the decision-makers within the Service choose to pursue nothing else over the next five years, they should focus on the development of human resources within the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Unfortunately, this too costs money and, in some way, the National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to find a means to overcome this problem.

Herein lies the attractiveness of private sector involvement in some aspects of national park management. There is growing pressure from the private sector to be involved in national parks and, at the same time, the National Parks and Wildlife Service seems to be encouraging the participation of the private sector. This thesis concedes that the private sector has a great deal to bring to the management of national parks.

Although many of the participants in this study perceived the private sector to have little more than money to offer the management of national parks, experience shows that this is not the case. Chapter Three looked in detail at several tourism businesses that have committed themselves to protecting the environment on which their businesses are based. Often, this has occurred at considerable cost to the developer, such as the use of helicopters to build the Skyrail in Cairns. There is also a great deal of business experience and leadership skill within the private sector that could be used to manage national parks more effectively. Some of the participants in this study also felt that there is a role for the private sector in national parks via a contract with the National Parks and Wildlife Service whereby the private sector would perform a maintenance role within the parks. Although there needs to be a great deal of caution surrounding the inclusion of the private sector in national parks, it is important that the private sector be seen as more than just a financial investor.

If the private sector is allowed to have some level of access to national parks, it is the opinion of the author, in the light of the research undertaken in this thesis, that a private-public sector partnership would be most appropriate. In its crudest form, a partnership could occur with the

private sector being responsible for the management of tourism in national parks while the National Parks and Wildlife Service could be responsible for conservation. However, even in the case of a partnership, the National Parks and Wildlife Service would need to be actively involved in the work of the private sector and this, in turn, could make the situation worse for the Service than is currently the case. In theory, then, the notion of a partnership sounds acceptable but it may prove to be very difficult to implement.

Interestingly, the majority of National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel who participated in this study are favourably disposed to the idea of a partnership. In contrast, as was to be expected, there was considerable opposition to the idea of a partnership from the people responding on behalf of environmental groups. The suggestion was made several times in the survey that the private sector be involved in national parks via a 'bed levy'. In townships where a national park serves as a major drawcard, such as the case in the Blue Mountains, private tourism operations like motel owners, could introduce a small tax on their customers and then pass this money back to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. There is also the option of corporate sponsorship programs where private businesses 'sponsor' a part of a national park. Both of these two scenarios seem to be viable options that could be considered for the future of national parks

If the private sector is to be allowed to access parts of the national parks estate, it is reasonable to suggest that it only be allowed access to certain areas. This is where the notion of zoning is introduced.

National parks are not uniform and different parts of a park can withstand different levels of human modification. If tourism and private sector investments can be restricted to one or two areas of a park and managed accordingly, while at the same time generating much needed funds for the management of these parks, then this approach should be encouraged. Research suggests the majority of park users only access a small proportion of the park and it therefore seems that by zoning a national park into tourism areas and non-tourism areas, it would be much easier to manage national parks for both conservation and tourism.

It is encouraging that the attitude of the participants in this study seems also to be supportive of the notion of zoning in national parks. It is also interesting to point out that all of the participants were not averse to the notion of a commercial zone within national parks, which would allow access by the private sector to national parks. However, most of the participants indicated that

they would like to see each national park evaluated individually as opposed to zoning being used as a broad-base management tool. This does seem to be occurring within the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service where some parks, such as the Blue Mountains National Park, are being managed by a zoning approach, while other parks seem to be being managed as single land units.

The four issues considered in this thesis are all factors that could potentially influence the future of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Without doubt, there are many other questions that could be asked about the future of national parks in New South Wales. However, this study has looked in detail at tourism, funding, the private sector and zoning and the research has shown that these four factors need to be incorporated in some way into any new management procedures undertaken by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The aim of this thesis was to explore the extent to which the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service should incorporate tourism and recreation with conservation in the management of national parks. It is the opinion of the author of this study that, for the future of national parks, tourism and conservation should be managed simultaneously. National parks need to be looked at and managed as multifunctional entities. It is very unlikely that people will cease to visit national parks and, without correct management procedures in place, tourism has the potential to lead to major ecological damage. Identifying tourism as a management priority of national parks does not mean that conservation becomes a secondary concern. On the contrary, tourism as a management priority has the potential to help significantly in the long-term conservation of national parks.

Managing tourism simultaneously with conservation has a secondary impact. No longer can the majority of National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel come from an ecological background without the ability to manage for people in national parks. Instead, the staffing of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service has to be made up of a range of people with tourism and recreation management skills, and business management skills, as well as people with training in the management of natural resources. It is no longer appropriate to see national parks only as a conservation resource and, by changing the management approach of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, it may actually be possible to improve the way in which national parks are conserved.



Tourism and recreation in national parks do not occur in isolation. Rather, funding concerns, the private sector and zoning will all need to be incorporated into the future of national parks. Before any future for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service can be decided upon, a great deal more consideration is necessary of the themes of tourism and recreation, funding, the private sector and zoning.

## **8.2 Directions for Research into the Future of National Parks in New South Wales**

The ultimate focus throughout this study has been the future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. The input of various stakeholder groups and the information from the literature strongly suggests that the management and *modus operandi* of national parks are at a point of change. Before any change in direction of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is possible, there is a need for a detailed review of staff morale within the Service.

The issue of staff morale has been discussed in this Chapter already because information came from the results of the survey that suggests that there is a low level of staff morale within the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The attitude of many of the participants was that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is under-staffed and that this is leading to many of the existing staff within the Service having to work outside their area of expertise. Some of the respondents felt that they had taken on a greater administration role despite having tertiary training in natural resource management principles.

Although the sample size in this study is relatively small, the information gained from the participants has the potential to generate insight into the larger picture. From the 15 National Parks personnel who participated in this study, it was clearly evident that some were dissatisfied with their current role within the Service. It is in the best interests of the National Parks and Wildlife Service to look further into the morale of its staff so that the most appropriate course of action can be taken. Although this study is acutely aware that the National Parks and Wildlife Service is at a point of change, no new management approaches will be successful without the full support of the staff. Hence, this study suggests the need for a detailed examination of the morale of the staff within the current National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The point was made in this study that the role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service staff is changing to incorporate both conservation and recreation in the management of national parks, and this is seen as a problem (Robinson 1998; Ginns 1999). The problem is compounded further by the absence of a formal training centre, available to the staff and concerned with tourism and recreation management (Ginns 1999). It could prove valuable to the National Parks and Wildlife Service to instigate a study into the level of demand that exists within the Service for such a facility and how feasible it would be for the development of a staff training centre for the management of park visitors.

Closely related to the issue of staff morale is the discrepancy between the role that the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service see themselves having and the role that other organisations and departments see as appropriate for the Service. Again, the results from the survey indicate that the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service see themselves as decision makers in the management of national parks, while business groups and environmental groups see the role of the Service as executing the decisions after they have been made. In short, the participants from the National Parks and Wildlife Service see themselves as the decision-makers while the other participants did not. It may prove a valuable and interesting research topic for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to consider the role that they are seen as having within the public sector. By investigating this, the direction that the National Parks and Wildlife Service should take in the future might become more obvious.

This thesis looked in detail at the Blue Mountains National Park as a case study in order to observe the effects of tourism and recreation, funding, the private sector, and zoning, in the real world. It would be appropriate for a similar case study to be carried out on other national parks such as Kosciuszko National Park. This national park, within the alpine and skiing areas of New South Wales, has a very large visitor base as well as considerable private sector investments. It seems appropriate, then, that Kosciuszko National Park would also serve as an interesting study.

It would also be appropriate to consider parks where there is a relatively low volume of visitors, such as those in the western areas of New South Wales. The circumstances for these parks are different from those of the Blue Mountains National Park and Kosciuszko National Park. Perhaps the role of tourism and the private sector would be of little concern in national parks where there are relatively few visitors. Before any future management direction for the National Parks and Wildlife Service can be identified, the circumstances of different parks within the

national parks estate need to be understood. Further case studies of national parks, such as that which occurred for the Blue Mountains National Park, will assist in the determining the most appropriate future for all of the national parks in New South Wales.

This study has argued that the private sector has the potential to play a significant role in the future of national parks, particularly in terms of providing for tourism and recreation. It would be appropriate to conduct a detailed study into the role that the private sector sees itself having in the future of national parks. This thesis has considered in detail the potential role of the private sector in national parks and what the benefits may be for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Furthermore, the survey results featured the input from several tourism operators based in the vicinity of the Blue Mountains National Park. However, the focus of the survey was orientated toward the future of national parks and not the future of the private sector and national parks. The questions were also designed to be answered by National Parks personnel, other business groups, community groups and environmental organisations, as opposed to a specific group of tourist operators. This thesis suggests that there is a need to develop a second survey aimed specifically at tourism and recreation developers and to use this to discuss the role, if any, that tourism operators see themselves as having in the future of national parks. It would also be possible to consider how the private sector could best work with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and what they see as being the potential problems of such an alliance.

Before any management path is selected for the future of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, it is important that there is also a study conducted into the needs and expectations of the park users themselves. National parks in New South Wales are financed primarily through government funding and, while this is the case, the input of park users is crucial to the decision making process.

All of the ideas and issues discussed here as future research suggestions, are important in deciding the future of national parks in New South Wales. These suggested items of research were beyond the scope of this study, but, they are all important.

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# APPENDIX ONE

## MANAGEMENT ZONES OF THE BLUE MOUNTIANS NATIONAL PARK



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## **APPENDIX TWO**

### **TOURISM AND NATIONAL PARKS SURVEY**



**TOURISM AND NATIONAL PARKS SURVEY**

Could you please indicate the name of your organisation and the position you hold?

**Organisation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

Recent reports have suggested that the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is at a point of change in regard to its management perspectives. From the literature, five key issues have been identified. These issues are:

1. tourism and recreation within National Parks;
2. funding constraints;
3. private sector involvement in National Parks;
4. zoning of National Parks into high use and low use areas; and
5. the changing focus of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In this survey, a number of statements have been prepared concerning these five key issues and you are asked to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. In each case, five response categories are offered, each with abbreviations (strongly agree [SA]; agree [A]; ambivalent or don't know [DK]; disagree [D]; and strongly disagree [SD]). Please tick the box that best represents your views.

The survey has been designed with the aim of gauging your opinions and ideas regarding national parks rather than your knowledge of the workings of national parks.

**Tourism and Recreation within National Parks**

*National parks have always been an important recreation/ tourism resource within New South Wales. However, interest in and usage of national parks has increased dramatically in recent times. Some people suggest that tourism in national parks is just as important as conservation while others remain firm in the view that tourism and recreation will always be a secondary*

*objective of parks. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.*

1. National parks are a key component of the tourism industry.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

2. Increasing visitor numbers to national parks is causing significant environmental degradation.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

If you agree, can you give examples of such degradation? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Revenue from tourism and recreation should be used to finance conservation in national parks.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

4. When the parks themselves generate revenue, it should be kept locally rather than as consolidated revenue.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

5. Growing visitor needs in national parks are a significant drain on National Parks and Wildlife Service resources.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

What do you think are the main demands made by tourists on the National Parks and Wildlife Service? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. The National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to manage national parks for increased public access for tourism/ recreation.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

Do you have any suggestions for how this increased access can be implemented?

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### Funding Constraints

*As the management issues facing national parks gain increasing attention within the literature, the topic of funding has become a major discussion point. As is often the case with government departments, the budget of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is viewed by some as being incompatible with the management needs of national parks. Please indicate your response to the following statements.*

1. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is dramatically under-resourced for the management requirements necessary.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

Are there any particular fields where you think the National Parks and Wildlife Service is under-resourced? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. In terms of State Government funding, national parks expenditure seems to be being downgraded in importance.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

3. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is capable of generating more revenue than is currently the case.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

In what ways could the National Parks and Wildlife Service generate extra funding?

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4. Increasing 'user charges' is an appropriate source of revenue for parks.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

What sort of admission charge, if any, do you think should be charged per vehicle per day?

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What do you see as an appropriate charge for an annual pass to national parks?

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5. What do you think the National Parks and Wildlife Service should do if they have insufficient financial resources to meet the demands currently placed upon them?

SA	A	DK	D	SD

6. How do you think the National Parks and Wildlife Service should be spending their money? Please rate the following areas of expenditure on a scale of importance between 1 and 5 (where 1 is 'extremely' important and 5 is 'not really' important).

Rangers 1 2 3 4 5

Tracks 1 2 3 4 5

Conservation 1 2 3 4 5

Camping grounds 1 2 3 4 5

Brochures 1 2 3 4 5

Interpretive signage 1 2 3 4 5

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### Private Sector and National Parks

*The possible involvement of the private sector in the running of national parks is an issue that has been given a great deal of attention in the literature within the last decade. Some suggest*

*that a private commercial element linked to the National Parks and Wildlife Service will help to generate necessary management funds, while others condemn any involvement of the private sector in parks. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.*

1. The private sector has the expertise to manage tourism and recreation in national parks more effectively than does the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

Are there any specific areas where you feel that the expertise of the private sector can be used in national parks?

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2. The private sector has the resources to manage tourism and recreation in national parks more effectively than does the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

Are there any particular resources that the private sector could bring to the management of national parks?

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

SA	A	DK	D	SD

In the case of a partnership, are there any conditions that you feel should be imposed?

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4. The National Parks and Wildlife Service should allow greater licensing of private commercial operations in national parks.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

Under what arrangement would you see this arrangement as appropriate?

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4. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being 'extremely' appropriate and 5 being 'not really' appropriate) how appropriate do you see the following commercial activities in national parks?

Restaurants	1	2	3	4	5
Shops	1	2	3	4	5
Tours	1	2	3	4	5
Resort style accommodation	1	2	3	4	5

5. The National Parks and Wildlife Service should lease certain areas of the national parks estate to the private sector.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

What do you see as the advantages of such a process?

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What do you see as the risks of such a process?

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## Zoning and National Parks

*One of the most common management techniques proposed for national parks is that of zoning. The principle behind zoning involves identifying different areas of national parks suitable for different uses. Effectively, zoning in national parks would result in the identification of areas suitable for intensive uses such as recreation and tourism and low use areas suitable for minimalist activities. Please indicate your response to the following statements concerning zoning in national parks.*

1. Zoning national parks into different geographical areas is an appropriate management tool.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

If so, what types of zones do you see as appropriate?

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2. It is appropriate to have tourism limited to only one area of a national park (a tourism zone).

SA	A	DK	D	SD

3. It is appropriate to restrict commercial activity to only one area of a national park (a commercial zone).

SA	A	DK	D	SD

4. There should be conservation zones within national parks with access only by permit.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

5. Do you have any ideas about who should be responsible for the design and delimitation of zones within national parks?

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6. Have you any suggestions to ensure visitor behaviour is appropriate in the various zones?

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## Changing Focus of the National Parks and Wildlife Service

*In light of the issues listed earlier in this survey, some researchers are beginning to question what is the best way forward for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. You are asked to indicate the extent you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the future management direction for national parks in New South Wales.*

1. National parks need to become more commercially orientated.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

In what ways, if any, do you feel national parks can become more commercially orientated?

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2. Recreation and tourism are as important as conservation in managing national parks.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

Is there anything you would like to add to support your views?

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3. The National Parks and Wildlife Service needs to improve its management of recreation and tourism facilities within national parks.

SA	A	DK	D	SD

4. A local management committee should determine the degree to which a particular park should become commercialised for tourism.

SA	A	DK	D	SD



5. What do you see as being the main challenges facing the management of national parks in the next 10 years?

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6. What do you think have been the main challenges for National Parks and Wildlife Service to overcome in the last 10 years?

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Are there any other comments that you would like to make about any of the topics covered in this survey?

Thank you for your co-operation. Your help is much appreciated.

Fiona Burton

March, 2000