Conceptions of Wilderness In Tasmania

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Abstract

With this project I set out collect and compare different conceptions of wilderness from individuals on all sides of the ongoing wilderness protection versus forestry debate in Tasmania. I purposed to share the results with all parties to bring them together to cooperate and work towards wilderness protection and sustainable forestry for the future of Tasmania.

I spent 5 weeks in April and May of 2008 researching the history of the concept of wilderness as well as Tasmanian wilderness issues. I interviewed 11 subjects, involved in the wilderness versus forestry debate in many different arenas, including forest ecologists, wilderness academics, foresters, and wilderness activists. I aimed to get a full and balanced account of Tasmanian conceptions of wilderness through those intimately involved with wilderness issues. I collected subject’s thoughts on the definition, history, and importance of wilderness as well as their personal histories of experience with wilderness. I analyzed the results to find several reasons why Tasmanian’s value wilderness, among them biodiversity, spiritual rejuvenation, and recreation and tourism. Different ideologies about nature’s inherent rights and utility to humans cause different interpretations of what defines wilderness and makes it valuable. I found that the concept of wilderness is relative, often-tenuous, and ever-changing, as human interaction with the natural world shifts. The future will see wilderness grow increasingly rare, which will no doubt alter our conceptions of and relations to it. Wilderness will remain as important as ever.

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1.0 Introduction

“Wilderness is a beautiful and biblical word,” writes James Woodford of the Sydney Morning Herald. The beauty of the word “wilderness” is perhaps only matched by the thoughts it generally evokes. James Woodford writes, “There is something almost magical about the idea of wilderness.”¹ For many that have spent time in it or pondered it, the idea of wilderness conjures up images of pristine nature, magnificent landscapes, and immaculate, brutal Earth in all its grandeur. Indeed the concept of wilderness, puzzling and gorgeous and grand, remains mysteriously hard to nail down or define with certainty. Wilderness is in the eye of the beholder.²

The notion of wilderness causes much debate, and citizens, activists, loggers, government, and other pundits argue over its meaning and following applications. It turns out that the concept of wilderness means many different things to many different people. What appears a simple idea has become muddled in numerous definitions and understandings from angles such as wilderness protection, recreation, hunting, land rights, industry, and growth. The confusion surrounding the word wilderness has complicated efforts to protect it as well as efforts to use it. Nowhere exemplifies the wilderness debate more fully than Tasmania. With more than 35% of this island state’s land designated as protected wilderness, Tasmania boasts of heaps of hectares of “untouched” wilderness, preserved in the state’s numerous national parks that make up

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² Barry Chipman (Tasmanian State Coordinator, Timber Communities Australia), in personal interview, April 29 2008.
the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.\textsuperscript{3} Tasmania has a thriving tourism
dustry that depends on the “clean and green” wilderness image that exists in Australia’s
“Natural State.”\textsuperscript{4} The concept of wilderness bombards visitors to Tasmania. Under Down
Under Tours (Appendix C), a popular tour operator writes in its brochure for bush
adventures, “You’ll get to feel the coolness of the rainforest, breathe deeply the freshest
air on the planet, smell the sassafras, spot a platypus, hug a tree, drink from a waterfall,
reflect at a river, hear the roar of the wild ocean, feel the salt on your skin, lose your mind
and find your soul.”\textsuperscript{5} Australians have come to equate Tasmania with wilderness and
wilderness with multi-faceted values and outcomes that range from resource extraction,
recreation, to spiritual communion with nature and even racism.\textsuperscript{6}

In reality much of Tasmania’s wilderness areas include remarkably old trees in
temperate rainforests containing species that exist nowhere else on Earth. The timber
industry has long harvested Tasmania’s forests, and continually push to log valuable
century-old trees hundreds of meters tall and up to fifteen meters across, much to the
dismay of nature lovers and tourists that seek solace in the Tasmanian wilderness and
bask in its awesome mystical power. Indeed these trees contain a lot of wood that
produces wealth from the export market of wood chips, mostly to Japan, to be turned into
pulp for paper products. Tourism is also a thriving industry in Tasmania. The battle rages
between wilderness enthusiasts and conservationists that cherish the mountains, valleys,

\textsuperscript{3} “The Heart of the Wilderness” Brochure, \textit{Southwest National Park}, Parks and Wildlife
\textsuperscript{4} Tourism Tasmania, “Wilderness Areas,” Activities and Attractions,
http://www.discovertasmania.com/activities_and_attractions/wilderness_areas.
\textsuperscript{5} Under Down Under Tours, “Tasmania is an indulgent place for the senses,”
rivers, and forests of Tasmania’s unique natural heritage and those wishing to harvest the forests to cash in on the ever-increasing demand for paper and other timber products and produce wealth for Tasmania.

It is my view that all sides of this ongoing battle would do well to step back and agree on terms. Tasmania, and the world, needs a universal understanding of the elusive concept of wilderness. By understanding just what exactly it is that people prize in wilderness, from recreation and rejuvenation to timber, biodiversity, hunting, or other values, we can thoughtfully move forward into a Tasmania that produces timber sustainably for world demand while holding onto its beautiful and special wilderness areas. As Bob Brown, leader of the Tasmanian Green Party and staunch wilderness advocate puts it:

“Unfortunately wilderness—pure wilderness—is not readily identifiable to the world’s public, which has become estranged from nature in this era of concrete and plastic conurbanisations. Wilderness, which never looks the same in any two places, can mean different things to different people. And the confusion about the meaning of wilderness provides an ideal smokescreen for the misusers of wilderness while they proceed to exploit and destroy it…we have to know what wilderness is and to stand honest and uncompromising in that definition.”

Until we fully comprehend the values that people put behind the concept of wilderness, Tasmania’s forests will remain locked in a bitter dispute with no apparent end. My goal in crafting this project is to collect different conceptions of wilderness from those on all sides of the wilderness versus forestry debate. These collected conceptions of wilderness will form a volume that unites the many voices of those involved with the fate of Tasmania’s wilderness so that all sides may understand one another and work together

7 Bob Brown, “The Use and Misuse of Wilderness- Southwest Tasmania” (Speech, Second World Wilderness Congress, Queensland, Australia, June, 1980).
towards a Tasmania that prizes and protects its remarkable and important wilderness while maintaining a sustainable and responsible timber industry; both of which benefits all Tasmanians.

1.1 A Brief History of the Western Concept of Wilderness

One of the earliest manifestations of the wilderness idea came in the 8th century epic poem *Beowulf*, where the word “wildeor” appeared to describe savage beasts inhabiting a dismal region of dark forests, crags, and cliffs. Paul F.J. Eagles and Stephen F. McCoy trace the evolution of this idea into the word wilderness in their book *Tourism in National Parks and protected Areas*:

“The word wilderness comes from the ancient German phrase ‘wil doer ness,’ meaning a place of wild animals. ‘Will’ means self-willed, creatures not subject to the domination of people. ‘Doer’ means a wild animal, and has come into English as deer… ‘Ness’ simply means place. Therefore a wilderness is a place where all of nature exists of its own accord, where humans are secondary and must not impose their will.”

This concept of wilderness gained fame through its generous use in the Christian Bible. Wilderness references abound, such as Jesus being “led by the Holy Ghost into the Wilderness.” The word appears 327 times in 42 different books.

The Western Biblical conception of wilderness survived and informed colonial expansion to near modern times. British expansion in the 17th and 18th century led to fortuitous interactions with the wilderness of seemingly endless frontier, in North America, Australia, and New Zealand. People of the colonial frontier viewed the uncivilized and lawless wilderness, which included local indigenous groups, as something to conquer and tame in the name of progress.

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8 *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. Friedrich Klaeber (Boston, 1992), 54.
10 Ibid.
A few like-minded thinkers experienced the wilderness of newly settled lands vanishing, and spoke out about its value to protect it from settlement. Now famous writers such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir wrote of the value of wilderness. John Muir wrote “going to the mountains is going home” and argued that “wilderness was a necessity.”\textsuperscript{11} Gustav Weindorfer experienced Cradle Mountain in Tasmania in 1910, saying, “This must be a national park for the people for all time. It is magnificent and people must know about it and enjoy it.”\textsuperscript{12} The 1900s saw a culmination of writers, artists, outdoor enthusiasts, and politicians that formed a powerful lobby for wilderness conservation that permeated the world. The idea of creating areas of preserved wilderness might have sparked laughter at the beginning of the century, yet by the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, nature reserves sprang up around the globe and national parks had formed in the United States and Australia.\textsuperscript{13} Royal National Park just south of Sydney, became Australia’s first national park in 1879.

Tasmania’s saw its first nature reserve in 1885, with the protection of Russell Falls for public enjoyment. Russell Falls greatly expanded and became Mount Field National Park, the oldest in Tasmania, formed in conjunction with Freycinet National Park, in 1916.\textsuperscript{14} With the 20\textsuperscript{th} century formation of national parks all around Australia, many states enacted legislative acts that expressly protected wilderness areas. Tasmania,

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 3.
while having thousands of hectares of wilderness, paradoxically still does not have its own clause for wilderness protection in any legislation.\footnote{Will Barton, \textit{Wilderness-The Future}, (Sydney: Envirobook 1994). 50-51.} The \textit{Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970} allows for general management provisions to provide de facto wilderness protection, although it never expressly mentions wilderness.\footnote{Geoff Mosley, Director, Center for Advancement of the Steady-State Economy, in personal communication April 30 2008.} The revamped \textit{National Park and Reserves Management Act 2002} charges national parks to “promote the natural, primitive, and remote character of wilderness areas.”\footnote{\textit{National Parks and Reserves Management Act} (2002).} The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area began in 1982 and protects much of Tasmania’s recognized wilderness, with the exception of the Tarkine region. 4 main national parks comprise the WHA and manage it accordingly: Franklin Gordon Wild Rivers, Southwest, Cradle Mountain/ Lake St. Clair, and Walls of Jerusalem.\footnote{Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999, Parks and Wildlife Service. Department of Primary Industries, Water, and Environment, 1999, Map 3.}

The WHA manages wilderness in Tasmania according to the definition set out in the 1999 Management Plan:

“A wilderness area is an area that is:
- of sufficient size to enable the long-term protection of its natural systems and biological diversity;
- substantially undisturbed by colonial and modern technological society; and
- remote at its core from points of mechanized access and other evidence of colonial and modern society.”\footnote{Ibid., 91-92.}

This definition, as well as other modern conceptions of wilderness expressly includes the possibility of indigenous occupation. Rather than excluding any historical human presence, wilderness now represents the abiding presence of non-human nature
and focuses on the impact of colonial occupation and modern technology.\textsuperscript{20} Aboriginal leaders in Tasmania challenged the claim that Tasmania’s land could be called wilderness, since such claims insensitively ignored the historical presence of their ancestors for thousands of years. Academics argued that wilderness never excluded Aboriginal presence, nevertheless the concept of wilderness changed slightly to emphasize a pre-European invasion character rather than areas beyond the impact of humans.\textsuperscript{21} Society has largely accepted this modern tweak to the wilderness concept, as evidenced by the book \textit{Celebrating Wilderness}, published in 2006. The book stresses that wilderness “does not necessarily mean pristine or completely unaffected by humans, for such places are rare. All areas that might be considered to be wilderness in Australia have been influenced by many thousands of years of Indigenous occupation and activity.”\textsuperscript{22}

The Regional Forestry Agreements between the Commonwealth and the state government of Tasmania of 1992 further defined wilderness in Tasmania. A group comprising the collaborative effort of conservation scientists and planners from all States, including Jamie Kirkpatrick from Tasmania, the Northern Territory, and the CSIRO, convened in 1993 to assess criteria for forest reserves in Australia. This became the Janis Criteria, published in 1997, which calls wilderness:

“Land that, together with its plant and animal communities, is in a state that has not been substantially modified by, and is remote from, the influences of European settlement or is capable of being restored to such a state; is of sufficient size to make its maintenance in such a state feasible; and is capable of providing

\textsuperscript{20} Pete Hay, Reader in Geography and Environmental Studies, UTAS, in personal interview April 24 2008.
\textsuperscript{21} Jamie Kirkpatrick, Ecologist, UTAS, in personal interview April 24 2008.
\textsuperscript{22} Ian Brown, ed., \textit{Celebrating Wilderness}, (Canterbury NSW: Envirobook 2006), 1.
opportunities for solitude and self-reliant recreation.”

This definition crucially determines what represents wilderness in the highly contentious areas of Southern Tasmania such as the Styx and Florentine forests that neighbor the WHA, where wilderness advocates claim the area has national park and world heritage qualities and the timber industry pushes to log its valuable timber assets. The Regional Forest Agreement aimed “to resolve the forest issue once and for all.” The Wilderness Society, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, and the World Wide Fund for Nature claim it failed to protect forests on many levels because it narrowly defined ‘old growth’ forest and deliberately misrepresents the variety of forests in Tasmania to leave them open to exploitation. At any rate, the forestry versus wilderness debate in Tasmania rages on.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service recently moved from a single statement defining wilderness to a National Wilderness Inventory (NWI), which represents the frontier of the wilderness concept in Australia. The NWI further fine-tunes the concept of wilderness by including topography to consider remoteness, under the pretense that shear steepness can significantly add to an area’s remote and therefore wilderness quality. The NWI is currently mapping wilderness areas across Australia using geographic information systems to consider view fields as conditions of remoteness.

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25 Ibid.

26 Tim O’Loughlin, WHA Planning Officer, Tasmania NPWS, in personal communication May 7 2008.
shows criteria for wilderness and the National Wilderness Inventory from the Janis agreement as part of the Regional Forest Agreement.

1.2 Purpose of My Study

While bureaucratic definitions and scientific conceptions of wilderness abound, Tasmania lacks personal and meaningful conceptions of wilderness. Individuals define, relate to, and experience wilderness in their own unique ways, whether walking, climbing, kayaking, on holiday, working, etc. To resolve conflicts over wilderness areas and forestry in Tasmania, I believe it is vitally important that both sides pause to reflect and reassess. What is wilderness anyway? What is it that we value in wilderness? What follows is a collection of conceptions of wilderness from those on both sides of the debate, involved in various ways. By sharing the collected thoughts of Tasmanians about their unique natural environment, I hope to close the rift between the environmental movement and the forestry industry so that all realize and agree that wilderness can flourish in Tasmania, while simultaneously maintaining a prosperous timber industry.
2.0 Methodology

2.1 Technique

I collected my data using discussion-based personal interviews. I asked each interviewee 5 broad questions to encourage reflection about his or her personal conception of wilderness. All interviews took place face to face (except David Bowman’s and Geoff Mosley’s due to their locations outside Hobart at the time) to promote personal interaction and a direct exchange of ideas, since wilderness is a somewhat elusive concept. I wanted to get to know interviewees and allow them to get to know me in order to establish trust and attempt to overcome the interviewer effect. This is also why I chose discussion-based interviews over other techniques such as surveys. Surveys do not facilitate deep reflection on a concept as vague as wilderness, whereas with interviews I could really probe interviewees to get their full thoughts. I also wanted to treat my subjects as individuals with personalities instead of numbers and data. Roderick Nash writes how wilderness designates a quality that produces a certain mood or feeling in an individual and is assigned to a specific place.\(^{27}\) Wilderness is relative. Figure M1 displays my interview questions, designed to allow time for personal reflection and expression.

Figure M1. Interview Questions

NOTE: All interviewees were asked these exact questions, no matter who they were or what they represented.

| 1) What does “wilderness” mean to you? |
| 2) How have you related to wilderness over your life? Visits, study, work, etc. |
| 3) Do you think the concept of wilderness has changed? If so, when, why, how? |
| 4) Is wilderness important? If so, Why? |
| 5) Anything you would like to add? |

2.2 Making Contacts

I chose to interview people on all sides of the forestry/wilderness debate, involved at various different levels and professions to maintain balance and get as varied conceptions of wilderness as possible. I chose to interview people connected to wilderness in various ways to ensure that they had somewhat developed their own ideas and conception of wilderness. My goal was to get a fair and balanced collection of wilderness conceptions by picking people involved with wilderness issues in different ways, such as activists, campaigners, writers, scientists, professors, and foresters, representing organizations on all sides of the debate. As much as I would have liked an equal representation of those in the timber industry and wilderness advocates, I had to get experts on wilderness to ground my study. They tended to fall more in the category of wilderness advocacy. I did not pursue random sampling because my goal was to bring the two sides of the debate together, rather than just get a random collection of wilderness conceptions from those outside the debate. As such, my study may leave out the thoughts of the average Tasmanian, but I believe this focuses the study more on those within the debate personally to help the two sides of the debate find common ground. In phone conversations or emails to arrange meetings I told interviewees I was a university student studying people’s conceptions of wilderness on both sides of the forestry/wilderness
debate and introduced myself as a neutral trying to build bridges and find compromises between wilderness activists and the forestry industry.

I originally tried to get the conceptions of wilderness of a few Tasmanian Aboriginal land rights activists, since they have a crucial voice in Tasmanian wilderness issues. Unfortunately I was unable to carry out interviews with Michael Mansell or Jim Everett, two renowned Aboriginal professionals, in the time allotted because they were too busy and/or out of town. Despite this limitation, my study narrowed to focus solely on those intimately involved in the wilderness conservation versus forestry debate. Figure M2 displays whom I interviewed and his or her affiliation or occupation.

**Figure M2. List of Interviewees in Order Interviewed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Home</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Amy Edwards/ Perth, Western Australia</td>
<td>Upper Florentine Blockade Camp Activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Jamie Kirkpatrick/ Hobart, Tasmania</td>
<td>UTAS Professor, Env. Studies and Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Pete Hay, Hobart/ Tasmania</td>
<td>UTAS Reader, Env. Studies and Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) David Bowman/ Hobart, Tasmania</td>
<td>UTAS Professor, Forest Ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Barry Chipman/ Campania, Tasmania</td>
<td>Tasmania State Coordinator, Timber Communities Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Benny Walter/ Hobart, Tasmania</td>
<td>Writer, Fullers Bookshop/Inscrutable Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Geoff Mosley/ Hurstbridge, Victoria</td>
<td>Director, Center for the Advancement of the Steady-State Economy/ Project Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Lee Edwards/ Hobart, Tasmania</td>
<td>Old Growth Ecologist, Forestry Tasmania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Scott Thompson/ Hobart, Tasmania</td>
<td>Campaign Administrator, The Wilderness Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Rex Flakemore/ Brighton, Tasmania</td>
<td>Retired Forestry Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Tim O’Laughlin/ Hobart, Tasmania</td>
<td>WHA Planning Officer, National Parks and Wildlife Tasmania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I recorded data by hand in my field journal during interviews. This allowed me to interpret data while on site and review my notes with my interviewees occasionally. I
used Douglas Ezzy’s techniques of constant comparison and ongoing interpretation to review my notes with previous research.\(^28\) I followed a strict schedule of interviews that averaged around an interview per day over 4 weeks of primary data collection as well as follow up conversations throughout the study period. Appendix A charts my schedule during the ISP period between April and May 2008 in and around Hobart.

In order to fulfill my stated goal of bringing all sides of the forestry debate together, I have agreed to distribute my report to everyone involved with it upon its completion. I sincerely hope that this study can contribute to a universal understanding of wilderness that will lead everyone involved in the debate to see through their differences and work together for a sustainable forest industry and one of a kind wilderness protection in Tasmania.

### 2.3 Analysis

Once I had collected my interview data I looked for similarities and differences in conceptions of wilderness depending on the interviewee. I focused on how one relates to wilderness through occupation or experiences. I also considered what factors people valued in wilderness. How did the stated virtues of wilderness differ for individuals and what were some overriding commonalities? Did everyone prize wilderness?

I tried to avoid what Douglas Ezzy calls “scientific” techniques of content analysis leaning towards objectivity and focused on qualitative procedures to reveal the structures of understanding of my interviewees’ conceptions of wilderness.\(^29\) I was, however, able to quantify why wilderness is important by tallying reasons mentioned in interviews.

\(^{28}\) Douglas Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis: Practice and Innovation*, (Crows Nest NSW: Allen And Unwin, 2002.) 84.

\(^{29}\) Douglas Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis*, 81.
I mainly wanted to understand what wilderness personally meant to each subject, so my analysis took the form of comparisons and differences of individual wilderness conceptions based on experience, which I condensed into some conclusions I could draw about the nature of wilderness conceptions and how humans relate to the natural world.

3.0 Results

The following are the synthesized notes I collected from my interviews. A brief background explains who the interviewee is and why their conception of wilderness is valuable to my study.

3.1 Amy Edwards, Florentine Blockade Activist

Background

Amy comes from Perth, Western Australia. She spent heaps of time in wilderness growing up camping and exploring. Amy grew up reading books such as *The Earth Children* series by Isabel Carmody and the works of J.R.R Tolkien. Wilderness ideas and values were very prominent in these texts, and these books, along with her years of camping and outdoor exploring, inculcated in her the value of wilderness. Amy was involved with The Wilderness Society in Perth and then decided she should come to Tasmania to live in threatened forests. Amy has been a forest activist living in the Upper Florentine Valley blockade camp in Southern Tasmania for about 2 months.

Conception of Wilderness
Amy says wilderness is pristine and massive. It should be big enough to get lost in. It is a great unknown that does not represent human domain.

She feels the idea of wilderness has changed over time. Wilderness used to simply mean the “rest of the world” and was seemingly never-ending whereas humans only occupied small parts of the land. This has changed and now the greater percentage of land and sea is human-dominated and no longer mostly wilderness. With the growth of human populations and industrialization, humans have expanded which has led to the loss of areas of wilderness.

Amy feels wilderness is important on many levels. It brings joy. It also holds scientific value by fostering biodiversity and acting as a seed bank for the seeds of flora and the genes of fauna. She feels the wilderness is Life. It has great educational value and can teach humans about us, the natural world, and our place in it. Wilderness is important because it is nature on its own terms. It is something we cannot recreate. Parks and cities and everything else of the human world is false. Only wilderness is real.

Amy reiterated that wilderness is threatened. It has intense spiritual value and time spent in wilderness is a very spiritual and precious experience. Amy enjoys interacting with energies that she does not understand. She feels we are all of the earth and the wilderness helps her to see the connections between herself and the rest of life. She knows she is part of the infinitely complex, interesting, and awe-inspiring landscape of the earth that she will never fully understand. She feels very privileged to experience wilderness, which she feels is ageless and outside the realm of humanity. Wilderness is beautiful and very wise, more so than humans.
3.2 Jamie Kirkpatrick, Professor of Geog. and Env. Studies, UTAS

Background

Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick Ph.D. has been a lecturer and writer in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania in Hobart for 3 decades. Jamie has written dozens of journal articles, papers, essays and books and is distinguished in the field of conservation biology in Tasmania. Jamie is considered an expert in wilderness issues and helped draw criteria for the Regional Forest Agreement. Jamie’s love for wild places is as old as he is. He has spent lots of time in the bush his entire life. He has dedicated his life to preserving and maintaining nature, and everything he does works towards this goal. Jamie is perhaps one of the foremost and most outspoken of wilderness thinkers in Tasmania.

Conception of Wilderness

Jamie defines wilderness as remote from mechanized access and natural. The more remote an area is the more he considers it wilderness. He insists that in a wilderness in Australia, ecosystems must be dominated by pre-European invasion species and cycles.

Jamie does not think the concept of wilderness has changed. He relates Alpha Centauri to St. David’s Park to illustrate his idea that there is a spectrum of wilderness. Jamie knows wilderness to be a huge issue in Tasmania, from the damming of Lake Pedder and the Gordon River, to the popularity of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. He thinks that wilderness conceptions have changed in Tasmania as people have jumped on the opportunities to promote Tasmania as wilderness for tourism.
to cash in on its clean and green image. He laments how opportunists trying to make money have smeared the concept of wilderness by calling nearly all of Tasmania “wilderness.” People have also tried to insist that wilderness is anti-indigenous or anti-people. Jamie argues that no one has regarded the presence of Aborigines as violating any wilderness definition. The definition speaks of a pre-industrial landscape. He concedes that most of the planet has been human habitat and “wilderness” areas now are simply not good habitat. He feels that, although the idea of wilderness is problematic, it can be a good way to approach nature conservation. Wilderness was a very powerful tool in the 1970s, when his career began. It has since lost power due to recent Aboriginal rights issues.

Jamie feels wilderness is important on many different levels. He cites natural vegetation cover as an ecological boon of wilderness. He also highlights how wilderness has intense spiritual and emotional power and can help us to see the interconnectedness of all things. Further, he admits that wilderness brings in money through eco tourism through national parks and the World Heritage Area and is therefore a valuable industry in Tasmania. Wilderness also provides ecosystem services such as clean air and water, and acts as a carbon sink. Jamie points to the need to restore wilderness so it covers larger areas of Earth. Tasmania has 70% natural vegetation cover and 50% of its land is “wilderness,” so it provides a good model for the world in restoring wilderness and native flora and fauna.

Jamie traced our obsession with the idea of wilderness to our human origins. Humans are just animals really and therefore have an atavistic attachment to their original habitat.
3.3 Pete Hay, Reader in Geog. and Env. Studies, UTAS

Background

Dr. Peter Hay is a distinguished reader in the University of Tasmania’s School of Geography and Environmental Studies. Pete is considered an expert in wilderness issues in Tasmania and has written dozens of articles and given many speeches on wilderness and place. Pete has had an intimate interest with wilderness his entire life, starting with the wilderness in his own backyard. He immerses himself in wilderness, trying to spend lots of time in it. Pete has been interested academically in wilderness for nearly 3 decades. He is planning to write a book in which he defends his definition of wilderness.

Conception of Wilderness

Pete’s definition of wilderness includes any tract of land or sea where the balance of natural processes outweighs the cultural. Artifacts and culture can coexist with nature in wilderness. Primal people live in wilderness. He acknowledges fire stick farming (Aboriginal technique of land clearing) as a cultural practice and cites the button grass plains of Southwest Tasmania as a cultural artifact that is still wilderness. Restored landscapes can be wilderness once people no longer primarily influence the landscape.

Pete definitely thinks the concept of wilderness has changed over time. He believes the original concept is no longer tenable because nowhere is absent from the human hand. Humans have influenced everywhere and it is insulting to natives to discount their presence. Pete is critical of wilderness photography that hide human presence because people cannot be apart from nature and human absence in nature is bollocks.
Pete stresses the importance of wilderness but recognizes the need for a new definition of wilderness that does not insult native peoples. For most, wilderness is a nice view, while in common parlance it means an area untamed by humans. The term needs a new definition and must stay. The word wilderness is a button to push. It is politically powerful and it energizes and rallies people. Pete rebukes using cost-benefit analyses to defend wilderness. He argues wilderness has intrinsic justification. Wilderness is its own justification, although it does have importance for humans too by promoting species diversity and ecosystem services.

3.4 David Bowman, Forest Ecologist, UTAS

Background

Dr. David Bowman is a professor of forest ecology in the School of Plant Science at the University of Tasmania. He specializes in global environmental change, natural climate variability and the cessation of Aboriginal landscape burning on bushfire activity and landscape change. As such, he is deeply involved in land issues in Tasmania, which he feels is a great ecological research location. David loves nature and is fascinated by evolution and species and especially trees. David feels moved by nature to the point of subordination. He enjoys sea kayaking and spending time in the bush with his family. As a forest ecologist in the natural laboratory of Tasmania, David offers a pragmatic and scientific understanding to the idea of wilderness.

Conception of Wilderness

David recognizes that wilderness is a cultural conception that has huge political implications. It can also have negative implications, such as racist undertones. Wilderness
has a double meaning to David, as anything that means “outdoors” and an absurdity as land that has never been touched by human influence. He finds this idea racist and offensive to Aboriginal people of Tasmania, and the “wilderness” of Southwest Tasmania is now recognized as a cultural landscape. He admits Tasmania has a wild edge to it. One can kayak for 5 minutes and find themselves off the continental shelf—that’s wilderness, he explains.

David has spent much time in nature and recently developed a mantra when studying a melaleuca in the Northern Territory that puts him at odds with what he calls the “wilderness orthodoxy.” He feels there is no authenticity in nature. Old growth forests and weeds sprouting up through a sidewalk amaze him just the same. For him no real true/false or human/nature dichotomy exists. With global climate change, humans are experiencing the power of nature and realizing their part in it. David is at odds with the western paradigm of wilderness. He sees the concept as an illusory cultural contrivance. What is real is everywhere and it is all natural. He values wilderness as a call to arms and credits the work of the Wilderness Society with setting up great reserves and fostering Tasmania’s “nature state” image. He feels a limit exists and land cannot all be locked up as wilderness reserves.

David feels access to and reverence for nature are important. He sees problems with labeling nature and categorizing it into dualities. David brings up botanical gardens and agricultural landscapes to point out that any nature is incredible and beautiful—just wilderness. Wilderness areas are very important but they are not all there is.

David recognizes that his view is not the classical wilderness orthodoxy in Tasmania. Hiking Mt. Wellington puts him in awe as much as remoteness, which is a
great service society provides. David stresses that Tasmania cannot all become one big national park because we need an economy too.

3.5 Barry Chipman, Tasmania State Coordinator, Timber Communities Australia

Background
Barry Chipman is a long time logger and has held many positions within the logging industry. He is currently the Tasmanian state coordinator for Timber Communities Australia (TCA), an organization dedicated to ensuring access to natural resources to generate employment and benefit the economy of regional communities in Australia. TCA began in 1987 when the timber communities needed a voice in the “forest debate.” Barry has visited many special places in his life but has never had what he calls a “wilderness experience.” As a spokesperson for the Timber industry and an insider for many years in Tasmania, Barry provides a vital understanding of our understanding of wilderness in Tasmania.

Conception of Wilderness
Barry thinks the term wilderness has been bastardized. He feels it is now a label that is thrown on any patch of forest in order to protect it, since forests with human activity is called wilderness. Barry thinks wilderness is pristine, scenic and remote land, such as the deep Southwest of Tasmania, although he sticks by the Janis agreement’s definition of wilderness, from the Tasmania Community Forest Agreement, which is:

“Land that, together with its plant and animal communities, is in a state that has not been substantially modified by, and is remote from, the influences of European settlement or is capable of being restored to such a state; is of sufficient size to make its maintenance in such a state feasible; and is capable of providing opportunities for solitude and self-reliant recreation.”

30 Nationally Agreed Criteria for the Establishment of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System for Forests in Australia, Joint ANZECC / MCFFA
Barry questions the looseness of the definition of wilderness.

Barry feels that wilderness is a relatively new designation for a piece of land and sees the ever-increasing misuse of the term “wilderness.” He says political advantage is gained by deeming forests “wilderness” even though they have been assessed to not have the stated wilderness values. He cites the Valley of the Giants and Beech Creek as areas in Tasmania that are high in timber and wilderness values where the lesser wilderness values have won out. He calls wilderness a “greens war-cry” and says they greens can never get enough forest reserves and always want more. The Styx valley has been harvested since the 1930s but it is called wilderness now, which shows that forestry does not kill forests because they regenerate into beautiful areas.

Barry thinks wilderness is important as part of our landscape. He feels Tasmania has achieved what is required of it. 95% of its “wilderness” is protected according to the National Forest Policy Statement, which shows it is important. He cautions that Mother Nature will have her way. Rainforest species are usually equated with wilderness such as myrtle and eucalypt. The Aboriginal use of fire has created eucalypt forests because the forests were too dense as wilderness and no one could live there so they have not been developed.

Barry mentions how The Wilderness Society is an $11,000,000 industry that fights to save forests to keep themselves in business. Barry finds it hard to believe that the 1992 Rio Earth Summit stated that countries should have 10% of its forests reserved where as Tasmania alone has over 30% reserved for no productive value. He feels Tasmania

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should be rewarded and yet The Wilderness Society is not satisfied. Barry further cited the National Forest Policy Statement, which both parties agreed upon, which established criteria for evaluating old growth, biodiversity, and wilderness and set up non-mandatory benchmarks to achieve 90% wilderness. Over 200 environmental scientists were commissioned to write the report and only one social scientist to study the impact of the agreement on communities. He says species are easy to quantify but economic and social aspects are harder to quantify. He says foresters depend on forests for their livelihoods and forests are for human use. The Regional Forestry Agreement was set up to minimize social impacts and is a big step forward, however the greens cannot accept a balance because it puts them out of business. He chided the greens for blaming forestry for the fires occurring around Hobart as part of a single-minded effort to destroy the forestry industry when he says actually they were the result of the Hobart City Council.

3.6 Benny Walter, Writer

Background

Benny spent a lot of time in wilderness growing up and the bush was always very important and prominent in his life. His family looked towards the bush for recreation and saw it as a place to appreciate and enjoy, much like most Tasmanians. Benny studied Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. Since then he has been interested in wilderness academically as well as recreationally. He recently completed a book entitled Below Tree Level, which is a reflection on different experiences of wilderness that are not always transcendent or positive. Benny is an emerging artist with a keen interest in the concept of wilderness.

Conception of Wilderness
Benny admitted that he does not know a good definition for wilderness nor does he
know exactly what it means to him. He feels there are infinite associations with the term
and it can never have one explicit definition. He has many associations with wilderness
including forests, untouched areas, an intense wilderness experiences. He thinks
wilderness has many problematic associations, such as being apart from humans. Benny
believes wilderness is not external to humans. In fact, it is the human experience with
wilderness that defines it, so it means different things for different people.

Benny thinks the concept of wilderness has changed as far as studies of the term go.
Wilderness used to be a wildness to be tamed whereas now it represents freedom in
nature and the untouched. Subtle relations of dominance by humans have remained, he
feels, manifested either through developing areas or simply “conquering” a mountain by
reaching its peak. Benny says the eco-centric view that wilderness has intrinsic value is a
good recent shift for the concept of wilderness.

Wilderness in and of itself is important to Benny, however he thinks it is very
important to ask to whom wilderness is important because it is the varied individual
experience that creates its meaning and value. He believes there are numerous inherited
values of wilderness such as the Judeo-Christian concept of environmental stewardship
and nature as useful to humans both as resources and refreshing recreation, both of which
are important.

Benny believes wilderness cannot be an “other” because humans have constructed
it out of human experience. It is not an objective idea and does not exist outside human
conceptions of it.

3.7 Geoff Mosley, Australian Director, Center for Ad. of the
Steady-State Economy
Background

Geoff Mosley has been intimately involved with wilderness since his teen-age years. He roamed around the Peak District in the UK as a child and visited wilderness in Scandinavia, Scotland, Canada, and New Zealand before falling in love with Tasmania. He moved to Australia and did his PhD thesis in Tasmania, focusing on environmental requirements for different recreational groups. Geoff got involved with national parks, helping with the creation of Kosciuszko National Park. He went on to coordinate 5 wilderness conferences and has been instrumental in the effort to create protected wilderness areas across Australia. Geoff was the director of the Australian Conservation Foundation for many years, through which he pushed for large-scale national parks with wilderness sections in them. He has written extensively on wilderness and is considered an expert on wilderness issues in Tasmania.

Conception of Wilderness

Geoff defines wilderness technically as a land or sea area relatively unaffected by human imprint or that still has a reasonable chance of being a place where natural forces of climate, geomorphology, and catastrophe such as fire are dominant forces that shape its evolution. Humans visit wilderness for its own sake, yet a wilderness area is large, remote, and far from human influence. Remoteness, condition, and size are the three main determinants of wilderness according to Geoff.

Geoff feels wilderness has been refined as a concept and especially as a category of protected area. In 1992 wilderness became a separate category of land classification, so the idea has been clarified a little. For instance, he thinks aboriginal activity now fits into the definition of wilderness, according to the International Union for the Conservation of
Geoff regards wilderness as having utmost importance for the future of the world. Wilderness as a concept is a useful way to think about the future and is an inspirational way to move towards what he calls a steady-state economy, which exists without growth. Wilderness adds a layer of value to life beyond materialism and implies common ownership because wilderness is available to all. Wilderness is also important because it helps us grasp the intrinsic value of all life and understand that there is space for all species.

Geoff laments that the environmental movement is very fractured and a division of labor has surfaced. The wilderness aspect in Australia is now either the kind championed by the Wilderness Society or the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, but at the federal level, Geoff feels wilderness is a passé term that no longer carries the potency it once had. Now wilderness is either only about science and conservation and the wilderness dimension is unimportant. The wilderness concept no longer implies the value of experiencing wilderness.

### 3.8 Lee Edwards, Forest Ecologist, Forestry Tasmania

#### Background

Lee has spent lots of time in spectacular bush and he especially likes Northeast Tasmania. He enjoys time in awe-inspiring places such as Roses Tier and Evercreek Forest. Lee feels he has never spent time in real wilderness. He only goes to places with car access and has never stayed overnight. Nevertheless he loves the bush and has experienced a feeling of being next to God as well as communing with nature and realizing how small he is in the world. Lee has spent his entire 30-year career as a forest
ecologist with Forestry Tasmania. Lee specializes in old growth forests and has a deep understanding of forest succession and forestry politics in Tasmania.

**Conception of Wilderness**

Lee defines wilderness as “out there.” It is un-roaded, undeveloped, and has never been accessed, harvested or mined. It has no value to humans; it is just there. There are no signs of humans and if two or more people are in an area it ceases to be considered wilderness. The only purpose of wilderness is there is no purpose.

Lee does not think the concept of wilderness has changed, although society wants it more now. We are becoming increasingly separated from nature and some want to keep wilderness locked up forever. The value of wilderness has gone up as a reaction to urban society, which uses resources like wood from their environments. Wilderness is seen as a natural escape from society but we cannot escape it.

Lee feels that from a pragmatic perspective, wilderness is not important, because wilderness has no use. Wilderness is not important for its own sake. It does not matter whether we have wilderness or not, it is important how we manage it. Lee wishes to manage and harvest wilderness with rotating reserves. He feels it is more important to have a mosaic of landscapes managed to our ends than wilderness in and of itself.

Lee understands that wilderness is very personal and that everyone has different and equally appropriate conceptions of it. He feels scale and age are very important in determining wilderness because a human on foot or in a helicopter have different notions of wilderness just as an ant or a bird would. Also, forests mature and die according to what species they contain. Lee does not see the forestry industry as “wilderness busters” because they only log areas with access and roads, which cannot be considered
wilderness. Lee understands that wilderness ideas change and wishes to strike a compromise between loggers and those who think we have no right to log forests.

3.9 Scott Thompson, Campaign Administrator, Wilderness Society

Background

Scott spent lots of time bushwalking in his early childhood and always had a keen interest in animals. He grew up surfing in Noosa heads and became worried about fragile coastal environments. He also spent a lot of time in Southwest Tasmania, witnessed the damming of Lake Pedder, and became interested in wilderness protection. Scott studied under Jaime Kirkpatrick at university and then got involved with Greenpeace. The Wilderness Society then approached him and asked him to administrate their campaigns, a position he has held ever since. Scott has become one of Tasmania’s foremost wilderness advocates and has written on and campaigned extensively for the protection of Tasmania’s wilderness.

Conception of Wilderness

Scott defines wilderness using Bob Brown’s definition to mean a place at least a day and a half’s walk from human intrusion of any kind. He admits there is not too much real wilderness left according to this definition.

Scott believes that the concept of wilderness has changed a lot in Tasmania. Tourists nowadays want to experience wilderness and most people see wilderness as accessible to the general public. Many national parks do a great job of making land easily accessible just as Cradle Mountain and Freycinet, yet the public remain frustrated and want to experience more wildernesses even in sensitive areas. Scott views wilderness as a priceless resource that is hard to quantify in economic, social, or environmental terms. He
believes government only considers it fiscally while conservationists value it in emotional and complex ways. Scott foresees wilderness as a concept changing in 20 or 50 years, as resources scarcity increases.

Scott thinks wilderness is definitely important. We must preserve it for the survival of earth and all species, including humans. Humans must adapt to a changing world that puts increasing pressure on its land. Wilderness areas ensure that humans strike a balance and start to live minimally, which is a scary concept. He knows the earth will win and adapt, as it must no matter what, even if that means the loss of human life.

Scott stresses the importance of collaboration in protecting wilderness. One organization such as the Wilderness Society cannot do it all. Instead they must link more closely with communities and invest in education to train the next generations to care about wilderness. School curriculums must contain wilderness. Finally he thinks that the Wilderness Society must develop with industry and help show them the way. They can work together to change because resource extraction cannot go on forever. He also wants the Wilderness Society to coordinate nationally and work together to have a larger impact.

3.10 Rex Flakemore, Retired Forestry Manager

Background

Rex grew up in the forestry industry. His father was a logger and he got involved in logging at an early age. He recalls how no one around his home in Northern Tasmania talked about wilderness until the 1960s and 1970s when conservation became a big issue. He first really became aware of wilderness as an issue around the time of the designation of the World Heritage Area. Since then he has understood its beauty and importance. As
a life-long logger and forestry manager with Australian Newsprint Reels, Rex has 60 years of understanding of forestry practices and how they have improved in recent years. He gave input into how and what should be forested in Tasmania. Rex wishes all Tasmanians could see forests for themselves to see the realities of the timber industry to better understand it.

**Conception of Wilderness**

Rex defines wilderness as a place completely left alone by humans so that plant and animal life can flourish undisturbed. Humans should never invade wilderness areas so that they remain natural and untouched for future generations forever.

Rex feels the concept of wilderness has changed a lot, mostly due to its portrayal through the media. The media in Tasmania shows those in Hobart one side of the story and gives the public a misconception of what the timber industry is like on the ground. Rex feels Tasmania has room for great wilderness in national parks and the World Heritage Area as well as a responsible timber industry. He thinks the perception that so much of Tasmania is wilderness that needs protection is selfish and instead Rex calls for responsible logging and re-growth.

Rex feels strongly that wilderness is important for future generations. He says we cannot cut down and re-grow all the trees in Tasmania. Wilderness in existing national parks should remain protected forevermore. He is annoyed greens are always trying to move the boundaries of wilderness areas and parks and thinks that a good balance exists that should remain.

Rex thinks that Gunns Ltd. has too much power in Tasmania and too strong a say in Tasmanian forestry. He says Gunns is dictating to the Forestry Commission to do what it
pleases. He questions Forestry Tasmania’s expertise in forestry practices, and thinks they only control Tasmania’s forests on paper. They should have more input because Gunns has a monopoly over Tasmania’s forests. Forestry Tasmania is doing as good as they can, and at times, even spending too much money to protect habitat. Rex wants anyone interested, especially conservationists, to experience re-growth in forests so they can see that forests regenerate and after 60 years are replenished.

3.11 Tim O’Loughlin, WHA Planning Officer, NPWS

Background

Tim has been personally interested in wilderness since studying geography and biology at university. He loves kayaking, which led him to river and wilderness conservation issues. He campaigned in the Victorian Alps before coming to Tasmania and campaigning to protect the Gordon River. He got involved with the Wilderness Society and Bob Brown, and then became co-director of the Conservation Trust before he settled with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Tim is the World Heritage Area planning officer, where he oversees the designation and protection of wilderness in the World Heritage Area.

Conception of Wilderness

Wilderness for Tim is wonderfully and spiritually reviving land where one is steeped in nature. It can contain cultural relics as long as nature and natural processes prevail.

From a WHA planning perspective, Tim feels the concept of wilderness is constantly evolving. There has been a broader acceptance of wilderness over the last 30 years in Tasmania and many people now prize it for its existence, as well as economic
and tourism benefits. The WHA1992 management plan’s main focus sought to maintain and enhance wilderness, whereas in the most recent 1999 plan wilderness is one goal among many. A National Wilderness Index (NWI) has been established to determine wilderness and recently began to include topography, which recognizes that remoteness is a function of elevation. Also, 30 years ago, the concept of wilderness had less emphasis on Aboriginal presence, but now the concept accepts and includes Aborigines in its idea of wilderness.

Tim feels wilderness is very important, especially in the management of the WHA. Protecting wilderness is a good way to maintain the integrity of the WHA, which is a primary goal. Wilderness comprises 90% of the WHA, however wilderness is not all that the WHA is about. On a broad scale, wilderness is growing increasingly important as it becomes more rare. It is important to protect for biodiversity, potential for medicines, and to fight climate change. Wilderness will become more important and harder to manage in the future, though we must continue to protect it and assess it.
4.0 Discussion

My results show that for the most part, everyone values wilderness and enjoys their experiences in the outdoors. While personal conceptions of what defines wilderness differ greatly, all interviewees agreed that wilderness is important for various reasons.

4.1 Value of Wilderness

Figure D.1 tallies some but not all of the ways subjects value wilderness. Below is a tally of the sum of responses to the open-ended questions. I did not prompt subjects to answer any particular way so the answers reflect a subject’s thoughts at the time, although not necessarily his or her complete view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Biodiversity</th>
<th>Intrinsic Value</th>
<th>Climate Change</th>
<th>Recreation/tourism</th>
<th>Ecosystem Services</th>
<th>Communion with Nature</th>
<th>Spiritual Rejuvenation</th>
<th>Future Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Geoff M.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamie Lee</td>
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<td>Pete Scott</td>
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<td>Scott</td>
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</table>
Colin Michael Hall, in his history of protected lands writes, that “the value of wilderness is not static: it alters over time in accordance with changes in the needs and attitudes of society.” As figure D.1 indicates, subjects share many common values of wilderness, no matter who they are or what they do. This shows that wilderness has nearly universal appeal in Tasmania across the wilderness advocacy and timber industry spectrum. No doubt this has something to do with the fact that Tasmania is Australia’s “natural state” and 20% of its land is protected and cherished as World Heritage Area, of which 90% constitutes wilderness according to the WHA 1999 Management Plan.

Appendix E illustrates the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area boundaries. The light gray is zoned as “wilderness”. Tasmania has a special relationship to wilderness because they have so much in their back yard.

Tasmanians value wilderness for three main reasons, above others, as evidenced by the number of responses. All but two interviewees mentioned the importance of wilderness for maintaining biodiversity. Most subjects understood wilderness as prime habitat for threatened species as well as species in general by providing ideal habitat free from too much human interference. My subjects generally agreed that promotion of biodiversity is important, which wilderness facilitates. Wilderness seemed intuitively obvious to my subjects as a place that harnesses plant and animal life. To be sure, Jamie Kirkpatrick has shown that the remoteness quality of wilderness areas makes them vital

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for the conservation of biological diversity.\(^{33}\)

Nearly everyone I interviewed also highlighted wilderness’ powers of spiritual rejuvenation. Peter Wright discusses the intangible but no less important spiritual value of wilderness areas. He argues that since so many people express feelings of emotional and spiritual awakening in wilderness, wilderness should be presented using this as justification for its value.\(^{34}\) Wilderness literature, from Thoreau onwards speaks of the spiritual and religious experience that wilderness provides. Thoreau called wilderness an “inexhaustible fertilizer of the intellect, a source of vigour, inspiration, and strength.”\(^{35}\)

All but two of my subjects spoke of spiritual feelings that wilderness experience brings. The only subjects that did not mention this in some way or another were Barry Chipman of Timber Communities Australia and Rex Flakemore, a retired forestry manger. Both come from the forestry industry and relate to forests and wilderness on a more personal and daily level. It makes sense that the workplace should not necessarily provide spiritual rejuvenation, even if that workplace is Tasmania’s forests. Foresters interact with trees and wildlife by working outdoors. They harvest trees instead of going on walks and earn a living in areas others only see when on vacation, so it makes sense how the forests might not provide the same spiritual fulfillment or sense of escape from the trappings of civilization for them.

A difference in ideologies most likely causes the difference in spiritual experience of wilderness. The forestry industry, as with any extractive industry, operates under a


\(^{34}\) Peter Wright, The Multiple Values of Wilderness, in Wilderness-The Future, ed. By Will Barton, (Sydney: Envirobook 1994), 151.

utilitarian belief system that sees the world as resources available for human use.\textsuperscript{36} Lee Edwards of Forestry Tasmania sees wilderness not as important in and of itself but only in regards to how we manage it and says the only purpose of wilderness is it has no purpose.\textsuperscript{37} Wilderness for Lee paradoxically only has value once humans enter it and harvest it, at which point it ceases to be wilderness. Many wilderness advocates recognize the need for paper and timber products, yet take issue with the fact that forestry uses beautiful native and old growth forests and not just plantations. Areas such as these often comprise wilderness or have near wilderness qualities. The complete absence of humans and the idea of nature on its own terms, or self-willed land, draws outdoor enthusiasts to wilderness, who feel it has an intrinsic right to exist undisturbed by humans and industry.\textsuperscript{38} Indeed, although it has no quantifiable economic value as a resource, the spiritual fulfillment that accompanies immersion in a self-willed land holds no less value.

It remains unlikely that these two philosophies will ever merge. They may always exist as two separate and equally valid positions. Instead the two belief systems must find a compromise over logging practices and wilderness protection on the ground in Tasmania. The Southern forests of Tasmania such as the Styx and Florentine remain contested battlegrounds where wilderness advocates and forestry dispute operations. Environmentalists, including Amy Edwards, have set up and live in elaborate camps to blockade partially constructed logging roads in these areas, just beyond the World Heritage Area, to physically prevent loggers from entering and felling the area. The contested areas of Tasmania provide a tangible face to the utilitarian versus conservation

\textsuperscript{36} Rex Flakemore, Retired Forestry Manager, in personal interview May 6 2008. 
\textsuperscript{37} Lee Edwards, Forestry Tasmania, in personal interview May 2, 2008. 
\textsuperscript{38} Amy Edwards, Forest Activist, in personal interview April 20 2008.
argument.

All 11 subjects regarded recreation/tourism as a primary value of wilderness. Not only does wilderness tourism bring in millions of dollars into Tasmania’s economy each year, but it also provides thousands of jobs. In 2004 tourism provided 22,000 jobs for Tasmanians and tourism accounts for 20% of Tasmania’s workforce. The fastest growing sector of tourism is eco tourism, followed closely by adventure tourism; both of which thrive on wilderness or near wilderness areas and values. Additionally, many of the Tasmanians interviewed spoke of formative wilderness experiences in their youth as well as today (See section 3). Wilderness clearly offers vast opportunities for recreational tourism that many people treasure.

Tasmanian tourism presents an interesting case study on wilderness, not least because Tasmania boasts of having so many wilderness areas. Through personal experience I can say the word “Wilderness” greets visitors upon arrival in Tasmania in brochures, maps, lodges, national parks, souvenirs, etc. and does not let up. The tourism industry certainly bases Tasmania’s “clean green” persona on fact. No other state or territory in Australia can claim it has 20% of its land protected as World Heritage Area, much of that of wilderness quality. Nevertheless Tasmania’s tourism industry is guilty

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of shape shifting the concept of wilderness. Recognizing the amount of money to be made, tour operators have besieged the land of Tasmania by hastily throwing a “wilderness” label on it, in response to Scott Thompson’s observation that “tourists nowadays want to experience wilderness and most people see wilderness as accessible to the general public.”

Rather than abiding by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s framework for wilderness, or even the World Heritage definition used by Parks and Wildlife, tourist promotions use the word “wilderness” to simply mean nature and wilderness becomes a quality describing anything natural. Thus conceptions of wilderness, at least in the public mind, have become muddled. The IUCN, WH, and other “official” wilderness designators usually contain degrees of remoteness and lack of development at the core of their concepts of wilderness. Tourist enterprises have forgone these criteria to exploit Tasmania’s wilderness image. Appendix C provides an example of “wilderness” advertising found in a youth hostel in central Hobart.

The tourism industry represents only one of many parties in Tasmania that define wilderness a certain way in order to fulfill certain ends. My research shows that it does not stop there.

4.2 Experiential Wilderness

It was almost universally agreed that the concept of wilderness has changed and is ever changing, relative, and nebulous. This corresponds to the established idea that the

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42 Scott Thompson, Campaign Administrator, The Wilderness Society, in personal interview May 6 2008.

43 Ibid.

44 Geoff Mosley, Australian Director, Center for the Advancement of the Steady-State Economy, in personal communication May 11 2008.
human concept of wild nature has changed as a reflection of our relation to it. Max Oelschlaeger argues that the idea of wilderness is a product of the existence and experience of humans at the time.\textsuperscript{45} Below is a brief summary of some major events he feels changed the relationship humans had with the natural world to eventually place humans outside the realm of nature. Paleolithic ideas about wilderness did not exist, since humans did not live apart from nature and natural processes. Agriculture represented the first unhinging of humans from nature because humans no longer depended on hunting for their survival and could grow and store food. This led to a distinct separation between humans and nature. The ancient traditions of Hellenism and later Judeo-Christianity introduced the concept that nature held no value until put to human use. The rise of industry and the growth of capitalism further reduced nature to its component parts and resources, to the point where humans now view nature as “the other” and wilderness as its ultimate manifestation.\textsuperscript{46} This follows what Marx called the materialist conception of history. He explained that economy, made up of the interaction between humans and their environment, shapes society, culture, philosophy, and religion.\textsuperscript{47} We can add conceptions of wilderness to that list.

Indeed I found that one’s conception of wilderness directly correlates to how he or she experiences it. Benny Walter, the writer, experiences wilderness only with his family as a vacation from day to day life. For him wilderness is revitalizing and refreshing. Benny himself agreed that conceptions of wilderness do not exist outside human

\textsuperscript{46} Max Oelschlaeger, \textit{The Idea of Wilderness}, xi.
experience because it is the very experience that informs how we construct wilderness.48

This central tenet informed his novel Below Tree Level, which examines different people’s interactions with wilderness. The novel explores the idea that not every wilderness experience proves transcendental or lives up to the romantic imagery that Thoreau made popular.49

Barry Chipman, of Timber Communities Australia, works in the forest daily as a forester. He claims he has never had a true wilderness experience even though he is awe struck at the beauty of being out on the bush and concedes that wilderness exists in Tasmania.50 While he prizes wilderness, he relates to what many would call disputed wilderness areas such as the Styx and Florentine valleys of Southern Tasmania as potential timber to be harvested. As member of the timber industry, Barry knows that these areas have been subject to selective logging in the past and therefore should not constitute wilderness, especially because roads traverse the area. Barry’s utilitarian relationship with nature narrows his definition of wilderness. A Sydneysider coming to Tasmania might call the entire island wilderness compared to the metropolis from whence he or she came. A lifelong logger, such as Rex Flakemore, knows areas that have been harvested and regrown into beautiful forests that anyone might call wilderness without the explicit knowledge that the forest has seen the impact of the human hand.51 Rex sees wilderness as a place that should be left alone. Rex will gladly take anyone out to the forests to show them that what forestry harvested 60 years ago is now so beautiful

48 Benny Walter, Author of Below Tree Level, in personal interview April 30 2008.
49 Benny Walter and Leigh Rigozzi, Below Tree Level, (Sydney: Inscrutable Press 2008)
50 Barry Chipman, Tasmanian State Coordinator, Timber Communities Australia, in personal interview April 29 2008.
51 Rex Flakemore, Retired Forestry Manager, in personal interview May 6 2008.
and lively that no one except those involved with the logging would know the difference between a past logging coupe and pristine wilderness. Wilderness advocates quick to condemn the timber industry often do not realize that forests they call wilderness, though they contain wilderness qualities such as rare species and self realization more recently, have been subject to harvesting for timber.

Experience proves vital to delineating wilderness, as does scale. Lee Edwards, of Forestry Tasmania, further narrows the definition of wilderness, by insisting it does not exist as part of human life. Wilderness is the “out there” and as soon as humans enter or harvest wilderness it loses its wilderness character. This view by definition starkly separates humans and wilderness so that any area in Tasmania that more than one human at a time steps foot on no longer qualifies as wilderness. This view allows for logging in areas of contention over its wilderness qualities, such as the Styx and the Florentine valleys, where Amy actively protests logging. Amy does not see the point in arguing over specific definitions but rather sees all the forests as beautiful and deserving of their own free will to flourish. Amy’s conception of wilderness broadens the scope immensely. She sees herself as part of the landscape even though she thinks wilderness is above the realm of humanity. For her, as well as those with ecological understandings of wilderness, the concept does not preclude any historical human presence. An area of Antarctica that no eye has ever seen or foot ever traversed constitutes wilderness just the same as an area of rehabilitated protected forest in Tasmania that experienced Aboriginal burning. The underlying key is that nature and ecological systems and processes dominate the area and

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it remains relatively unaffected by human influence.\textsuperscript{54}

Indeed the supposition that wilderness precludes any historical human presence not only means that Tasmania literally has no wilderness, but also offends traditional indigenous caretakers of land that European invaders call wilderness, literally stripping them of their humanity with a pen’s designation. In reality very few tracts of Earth have escaped the impact of humans. Pete Hay, a prominent UTAS professor on wilderness issues contends that wilderness designations in Tasmania that ignore historical Aboriginal occupation of an area are racist and insensitive.\textsuperscript{55} The book \textit{Celebrating Wilderness}, a collection of contemporary wilderness thought, highlights the more recent effort to include Aborigines in the protection of wilderness areas, since they lay historical claim to them and their cultures contain intimate understandings of particular areas, adapted over thousands of years. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), perhaps the world’s preeminent wilderness conservation body, recognizes co-management of protected lands with local Aborigines in their definitive wilderness statement. The IUCN admits that:

\begin{quote}
“Wilderness areas, especially in northern and central Australia, are on Aboriginal land, and an increasing number of national parks with wilderness are coming under joint management with traditional Indigenous custodians. There is a growing recognition that all people and cultures have a mutual interest and obligation to protect large natural areas in their healthiest ecological state, and that working together can be the best way forward.”\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{54} Geoff Mosley, Australian Director, Center for the Advancement of the Steady-State Economy, in personal communication, May 2 2008.

\textsuperscript{55} Pete Hay, Reader in Geog. And Env. Studies, University of Tasmania, in personal interview, April 24 2008.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 2.
It remains widely accepted that Aboriginal Tasmanians were instrumental in forming the button grass plains of central Tasmania through their use of fire to clear large areas of land.\textsuperscript{57} Wilderness experts now consider the plains wilderness because in more recent time they have grown unaffected by human presence and natural ecological processes still shape the climate, geomorphology, and evolution of the area.\textsuperscript{58}

All of these conceptions of wilderness fall into what Jamie Kirkpatrick from the University of Tasmania calls a spectrum of wilderness, from far-off Alpha Centauri in space, the ultimate non-human wilderness, to the wilderness of Mt. Wellington, nestled behind Hobart.\textsuperscript{59} Any personal conception of wilderness falls somewhere in the endless spectrum of wilderness, that personal human experience determines. Operating under the mantra that wilderness is in the eye of the beholder, David Bowman from the University of Tasmania represents a unique paradigm shift in how humans think about wilderness. He holds that there is no authenticity in nature and sees the dangers inherent in categorizing humans and nature into dichotomies. David protests against the western wilderness orthodoxy in his belief that society completely contrives the concept of wilderness, which he sees as an unreal cultural manifestation.\textsuperscript{60} The real is everywhere and entirely natural. This view does not rely on majestic and inaccessible wilderness areas to find beauty and awe in nature’s wisdom, and instead sees infinite natural wonder in a weed growing through a crack in the sidewalk.

I have demonstrated that wilderness is not some finite truth, but instead a cultural


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} Jamie Kirkpatrick, University of Tasmania, in personal interview April 24 2008.

\textsuperscript{60} David Bowman, Ecologist, University of Tasmania, in personal communication, April 28 2008.
response to human experience. Given the perpetual advance of society and enormous growth rate of humans on the planet, what will wilderness mean as humans spread and further diminish those rare instances of wilderness still left? The population of Earth exceeds 7 billion people and will only continue to rise. As with all natural resources, wilderness areas will grow increasingly few and far between. Scott Thompson of the Wilderness Society wonders what we will call wilderness in 20 or 50 years as human values shift in response to changing conditions. How will the reduction of Earth’s resources shape human conceptions of wilderness? Will conceptions of wilderness exist even if what we now call wilderness no longer does? My research shows that even if all of the land and sea of Earth know the imprint of the human species, the wilderness concept will continue to evolve and remain vitally important to many.

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5.0 Conclusion

No one can fully quantify wilderness or ever comprehend all the values connected to it. My goal has been to allow those involved with wilderness issues to understand the other side to move forward through shared understanding and concern. My study has shown that all sides of the forestry versus wilderness debate in Tasmania share similarities in their conceptions and values of wilderness, and also some major differences.

5.1 Wilderness Values

Nearly everyone values wilderness for various reasons, which justifies its ongoing protection and enjoyment in the face of timber harvesting. Some of the main values I found people connected to wilderness include:

- Maintaining biodiversity
- Climate change mitigation
- Ecosystem services
- Intrinsic value
- Recreational/tourism opportunities
- Securing for future generations
- Spiritual Rejuvenation
- Communion with nature
Recreation and tourism, spiritual rejuvenation, and biodiversity stood out as values that almost everyone prized in wilderness.

A difference of philosophical ideology underlies how certain people value wilderness. Lee Edwards, of Forestry Tasmania, Rex Flakemore, a retired forestry manager, and Barry Chipman all value wilderness. They enjoy time in the outdoors experiencing nature. However, they work in the forestry industry under a utilitarian paradigm that sees the forest as not only an enjoyable place to spend time, but also as valuable timber to make all sorts of wood and paper products. This necessary industry creates jobs and wealth for Tasmanian communities and the state at large, as well as provides the world with quality timber products. While they values wilderness, they universally agree that Tasmanian has achieved a good mix of forestry land and protected wilderness areas.

Those within the forestry industry tend to define wilderness more narrowly than wilderness defenders. As foresters, they know the histories of areas such as the Weld, Styx, and Florentine forests, often because they or their families or organizations were involved with harvesting these areas in the past. As such, these areas do not represent wilderness, despite claims by environmental activists. Wilderness advocates counter the narrow definition of what constitutes wilderness by arguing that areas can be rehabilitated back to near wilderness and often contain rare species and ecosystems that give them World Heritage value. They also argue that these special and beautiful forests have intrinsic rights to exist, since Tasmania has many other areas appropriate for logging.
5.2 The Relativity of Wilderness

Wilderness is a changing concept, according to our relationship to it and experiences with it. Many people I interviewed pointed out transformations of the wilderness concept with regards to tourism, Aboriginal inclusion, topography, and remoteness. Benny Walter, David Bowman, and others identified how wilderness remains a relative concept that gains meaning through individual and collected experiences with it. Barry Chipman recognizes that wilderness is in the eye of the beholder. Each subject’s personal conceptions of wilderness closely relate to how they experienced it in their youth. Society at large also presents a cultural representation of wilderness based on collective human experience through history, beginning as far back as the Bible.

Tasmania’s tourist industry has purposely exploited the concept of wilderness to attract visitors, drawn by Tasmania’s clean green image. They equate wilderness with natural, and neglect notions of remoteness or primitiveness. In response to influxes of tourists and the growing popularity of eco tourism and adventure tourism, operators have hastily applied a “wilderness” label to much of Tasmania, regardless of its wilderness quality according to the IUCN or WHA. Wilderness is a quality applicable to any land or sea based on experience. Urban visitors interpret natural landscapes as wilderness while foresters, wilderness advocates, NGOs and government bodies define wilderness more narrowly. While the tourism industry’s injudicious designation of wilderness continues to cause problems for wilderness academics and others closely involved with the concept of wilderness, this view is no less valid than any other interpretation of wilderness. All wilderness is relative.
Recent efforts to include Aborigines in wilderness designation and management of protected areas exemplify the evolving nature of the concept of wilderness. Once understood as areas free from any human influence, wilderness now means areas that may have seen human settlement and activity, sometime even drastically altering the landscape. The importance in determining wilderness along these lines contemporarily involves assessing whether nature and ecological processes now dominate these areas and chiefly influence its climate, geomorphology, and evolution. Scientists agree that humans can rehabilitate land by removing roads and other human imprints back to wilderness quality.

5.3 Tasmanian Wilderness Now and Into the Future

The cutting edge of the wilderness concept in Tasmania takes place in the field of topography and view fields. The Parks and Wildlife Service, through management of the World Heritage Area is assessing topography as it determines remoteness to characterize wilderness areas. The National Wilderness Inventory is using geographic information systems understand view fields from certain points within wilderness areas.

Meanwhile the debate on the battlefields of Southern Tasmania in the Styx, Weld, and Florentine forests rages on between the forestry industry and wilderness activists blockading forestry roads to physically prevent timber harvesting. It is beyond the scope of this paper to give advised, technical solutions as to what should constitute wilderness and forestry areas on the ground in Tasmania. Nevertheless, my research shows that both sides of this ongoing debate value wilderness and find it important to protect it. With a shared understanding of wilderness conceptions and values, wilderness advocates and the forestry industry can begin to thoughtfully move forward in cooperation and mutual
appreciation of the special wilderness areas and timber potential of Tasmania. The issue will not lay to rest until both parties are satisfied with adequate protection of areas with wilderness, near wilderness, or World Heritage value and the forestry has access to enough land to maintain a prosperous, responsible, and sustainable timber industry. I sincerely hope that this study has and will continue to help bring all sides of the debate together, for Tasmania’s land, wildlife, economy, and citizens.

Sigurd Olson, a prominent American wilderness advocate gave a speech at the hearings leading up to the passage of the US Wilderness Act of 1964. He said:

“In days to come, the wilderness concept must be clear and shining enough to capture imaginations. It must take its place as a cultural force, with all the expressions of [human’s] deepest yearnings and noblest achievements in the realm of the mind. It must be powerful enough to withstand everywhere in the world, the coming and enormous pressures of industry and population.”

5.4 Future Research

In undertaking this project, I encountered many leads and avenues for future research. Talking with Barry Chipman and Rex Flakemore encouraged me to do an in-depth study of the disputed conservation areas subject to logging in Southern Tasmania including the Styx, and Florentine forests. Ultimately, investigating this fell beyond the scope of this project. I could work with the forest industry and the Parks and Wildlife Service planning members such as Tim O’Loughlin. I believe this would be a worthwhile investigation that could help settle the fate of Tasmania’s forests.

Researching how wilderness conceptions change into the future is an area of ongoing project that interests me. If I came back to Tasmania in 40 years to carry out a

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similar project, I would be sure to get some interesting results, given that wilderness is a vanishing and finite resource.

Over my time in Tasmania, I have become strongly attached to the chronicles of the forests, met some amazing people, and made some great friends. At any rate, I will keep informed and try to stay in touch with contacts I have made in Tasmania and periodically check up on progress. I would love to return in the near future.

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Tim O’Loughlin, WHA Planning Officer, NPWS, in personal interview, May 7 2008.


Appendix A

Glossary of Acronyms

ACF - Australian Conservation Foundation

CSIRO - Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization

ISP - Independent Study Project

IUCN - International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Janis - Joint ANZECC / MCFFA National Forest Policy Statement Implementation Subcommittee

NPWS - National Parks and Wildlife Service

NWI - National Wilderness Inventory

PWS - Parks and Wildlife Service

TCA - Timber Communities Australia

TCFA - Tasmania Community Forest Agreement

TWS - The Wilderness Society

TWWHA - Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

UTAS - University of Tasmania

WH - World Heritage

WHA - World Heritage Area
## Appendix B

### Calendar of Research: April/May

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<th>Sunday</th>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Flight from Melbourne to Hobart</td>
<td>15 Meet with Vica Bayley from The Wilderness Society</td>
<td>16 Settle into space at TWS</td>
<td>17 Research at TWS library</td>
<td>18 Research at TWS archives, go to Florentine Camp</td>
<td>19 Meet activists at camp</td>
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<td>Central City Backpackers</td>
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<td>Camp Florentine</td>
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<td>20 Interview Amy and Morton Camp Florentine</td>
<td>21 Interview Miranda, Leave for Hobart South Hobart</td>
<td>22 Volunteered at and attended healthy democracy town meeting South Hobart</td>
<td>23 Attended Environment Tasmania panel discussion South Hobart</td>
<td>24 Interview Pete Hay and Jaime Kirkpatrick, UTAS South Hobart</td>
<td>25 Anzac Day Tasman Peninsula</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>28 Research and envelope addressing at TWS South Hobart</td>
<td>29 Interview Barry Chipman, TCA South Hobart</td>
<td>30 Interview Benny Walter, writer South Hobart</td>
<td>1 Research at state library South Hobart</td>
<td>2 Interview Geoff Mosley and Lee Edwards, ForestryTas South Hobart</td>
<td>3 State library research South Hobart</td>
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<td>Start writing up results</td>
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<td><strong>6</strong> Interview Scott THompson, TWS and Rex Flakemore, forester South Hobart</td>
<td><strong>7</strong> Interview Tim O’Loughlin, NPWS South Hobart</td>
<td><strong>8</strong> Synthesis and analysis South Hobart</td>
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<td><strong>9</strong> Analysis/ writing South Hobart</td>
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