



PO Box 762
Mossman Qld 4873
secretary@dssg.org.

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Submission - Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998 Review

Douglas Shire Sustainability Group (DSSG) is an incorporated association active in the Douglas Shire for over 10 years. We are a community based environmental advocacy group with a significant number of members. Our objects include promoting the preservation and conservation of the unique environment with the Douglas Shire and its surrounds and recognising and promoting the sustainable practices of the Traditional Owners of the Douglas Shire. Almost 80% of the Douglas Shire is World Heritage Listed and includes areas of natural beauty, ancient and complex ecosystems.

This submission refers to areas within the Douglas Shire area only.

The Wet Tropics Zoning System

1. Do you agree with incorporating recovered areas from Zone B into Zone A? Under the proposed zoning system a large amount of Zone B land will be reclassified as Zone A.

Yes. The DSSG generally supports the rezoning of recovered areas from zone B to zone A. There is concern, however, that the proposed changes do not take into consideration the proposed Return to Country aspirations of the traditional owners, the Kuku Yalanji. In addition, the proposed zoning also has the potential to prevent the establishment of new infrastructure such as the Wangetti Trail and may prevent the maintenance of existing tracks and infrastructure. There needs to be more specific clarification of the areas to be rezoned so that existing tracks, infrastructure and potential infrastructure are clearly mapped.

2. What are your views about defining Zone B as a 500m buffer around existing infrastructure?

DSSG supports defining Zone B as a 500m buffer around existing infrastructure.

3. Do you support the inclusions of some existing clearings in Zone C as potential sites for visitor infrastructure, or community services infrastructure?

DSSG supports the inclusions of some existing clearings in Zone C as potential sites for infrastructure.

Changes to Zone D Visitor Sites

4. Can you suggest any additional sites that may require a Zone D for more developed visitor facilities?

DSSG would like to see Zone D include identification of sites to accommodate future visitor facilities such as the Wangetti Trail and at China Camp.

It is proposed that the site of the Daintree Blockade be included in Zone D and that this site be added to the National Heritage List.

5. What do you think about the proposal to remove the Zone D classification from the sites listed on the map?

DSSG believes that each site needs to be further investigated and where there is potential for the site to be utilised for low impact activities such as walking, it should not be removed.

6. Do you support the addition of Zone D sites where visitor facilities may be proposed in future?

Yes.

Roads in the World Heritage Area

7. Do you agree with the proposals to change road classifications in the table (as identified in the Wet Tropics Management Plan Review document)?

Further clarification is needed on road classifications including proper definitions.

For example, the proposed mapping shows the Bump Track moving to Zone A. This indicates that there will be no management and the track would ultimately disappear to the rainforest. This is an integral track for low impact recreational activities as is frequently used by residents and visitors. This would also appear to be the case for East Black Mountain Road and Twin Bridges Track and the DSSG would recommend that these roads be classified as "Trails" for low impact activities such as walking, running and mountain biking. The definition of a Trail should allow for recreational use, for track maintenance and for sporting events.

It is recommended that the CREB remain as a 'Presentation (non restriction) road' and that the Zig Zag Track is classified as a Presentation (restricted) road'.

It is recommended that the proposed Wangetti Trail should be recognised in the proposed mapping.

8. Are there any roads you think need to be opened or closed to motor vehicles within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area?

Refer to comments Q.7

9. Do you agree that a permit should still be required for the presentation (restricted) roads listed above?

Yes.

10. Are you happy with the criteria for use of motor vehicles on management roads?

Yes. However, the criteria must allow for maintenance and sporting event requirements.

Community Services Infrastructure

11. Do you agree that all permit applications for building or upgrading community services infrastructure – not just roads – should be assessed against the requirements of section 65?

Consideration needs to be given to the need for the provision of essential services, such as water, and the ability to maintain essential community infrastructure.

12. Do you know of any future need for essential community services infrastructure within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area?

Existing water infrastructure is not mapped on the existing or proposed zoning maps correctly. Whilst water intakes are identified in Mossman, Daintree and Whyanbeel, the pipes are not currently mapped and are shown as Zone A in the proposed mapping. It is therefore recommended that the water pipe infrastructure be appropriately identified.

There may be future infrastructure requirements in areas identified under the Return to Country Plans included in the proposed Douglas Shire Planning Scheme.

13. Do you support a 500m Zone B buffer around existing community services infrastructure?

Yes.

Recognising Rainforest Aboriginal tradition

14. What are your views about the recognition of traditional Aboriginal land management practices in all zones?

DSSG is supportive of the recognition of traditional Aboriginal land management practices in all zones. The mapping should also recognise the Return to Country aspirations of Aboriginal peoples.

15. Do you support the use of management roads for cultural heritage management?

Yes.

16. What criteria should be in the guidelines for making decisions about Cooperative Management Agreements?

17. Do you have more suggestions about how the Plan can be improved to support Rainforest Aboriginal involvement in World Heritage management?

Retaining Zone B land in Douglas Shire close to Wujal Wujal is supported. Zone B land needs to be expanded to correlate with the proposed precincts in the Return to Country Local Plan, as defined in the proposed Douglas Shire Planning Scheme.

Activities Allowed Under Permit

18. Should the Plan regulate subdivision of a lot in the World Heritage Area?

The Douglas Shire Planning Scheme should regulate the subdivision of a lot in the World Heritage Area and WTMA should be a referral agency.

19. Should the Plan regulate landing of motorised aircraft or aircraft flying low?

It is unclear why the current permit system is being reviewed. Further information would be needed in order to comment.

20. If so, what criteria should be used to assess permit conditions for landing in or flying low over the Area?

Refer to Q19.

21. Should permit conditions be allowed to include offset requirements for any remaining adverse impacts?

Yes, but only as a last resort.

22. Are there other ways to deal with low risk activities that would have no

more than minor and inconsequential impacts on World Heritage values – such as thorough self-assessable guidelines?

The current plan would appear to be adequate.

23. Should the Authority seek to phase out mining licenses, permits and other mining authorities in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area?

Yes.

Undesirable Plants and Animals

24. Should the Plan regulate translocation and release of large predatory fish such as barramundi and sooty grunter into dams and waterways within the Area, outside their natural range?

Yes.

25. Should residents be able to keep a dog or cat if their house is located in a rainforest?

No. DSSG feels strongly that residents should not be able to keep dogs and cats if their house is located in a rainforest.

26. Should people be allowed to walk a dog on a lead in certain designated areas where there are no feasible alternatives for the local community?

Yes.

27. Should cattle grazing outside of rainforest be regulated under the Plan?

Yes.

28. Do you agree with prohibiting animals such as deer, goats and pigs from being kept in the World Heritage Area?

Yes.

Yours sincerely



Laurene Hull
Secretary