

FORESTRY ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN THE WORLD HERITAGE AREA

by Scott Poynton

Forestry Commission, 199 Macquarie Street, Hobart, Tasmania 7001

The State forests of the Australian Newsprint Mills (ANM) Concession in the Derwent Valley and the Huon Valley produce about 50% of Tasmania's Crown resource of veneer, sawlog and pulp-grade timber. The two areas, although in close proximity, are geographically separated by the mountain ranges which extend west from Mt Wellington into the World Heritage Area. Currently the only transport route for wood from one area to the other is via Hobart. A link road over the dividing range would enable the two areas to be effectively managed and marketed as a single forest unit.

Since the mid 1980s, the Tasmanian Government has been trying to encourage new forest industry development based on the available resources from these forests, following the closure of APM's Huon pulp mill and ANM's changed pulpwood requirements. In 1991 expressions of interest were sought for the utilisation of this resource. A short list of project proponents are preparing more detailed proposals for the Government. Some of the proposals rely on access to the forest resources of both the ANM Concession and the Huon Valley. A forest road link has been proposed as part of the proposal to enable wood to be transported from the ANM Concession to new processing facilities likely to be developed in the Port Huon area. It is estimated that up to 430,000 tonnes of wood per annum could be transported from the ANM Concession to the Huon. This is the equivalent of 20,000 truck loads.

Options for the location of a link road over the mountains were first seriously evaluated when Huon Forest Products (HFP) expressed an interest in establishing an integrated wood processing facility at Port Huon in the 1980's. Forest engineers investigated a number of potential routes and judged them against three criteria. A road must be:

- feasible to construct within required design standards
- justified on a cost-benefit basis
- environmentally and socially acceptable.

A road through a saddle between the Snowy Range and Mt Styx (the Snowy divide), connecting the Styx and Russell river valleys, was identified as the best option. Other options investigated are less favourable for the transport of logs from north to south. These options included routes connecting Geeveston with the Scotts Peak road which cannot be justified on a cost-benefit basis, Crabtree with Lachlan which has difficult terrain and steep grades and New Norfolk with

Judbury which has difficult terrain on the southern end of the route.

The Snowy divide was subsequently included in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (WHA) in December 1989. The boundary in this vicinity was decided with the full knowledge that construction of a link road was likely to be required. No known specific values were attributed to this particular location, other than it approximates the eastern boundary of the Snowy Range, which has values related to alpine flora and glacial geomorphology. When the divide was included in the WHA nomination, the State Government sought and received a specific commitment from the Commonwealth Government to allow the construction of the road if required.

A road through the Snowy divide would link existing forestry roads on either side of the WHA. A road location has been identified that would traverse about two kilometres of the WHA resulting in the disturbance of less than five ha. A possible alternative route through a higher saddle just to the east of the WHA has also been identified. While a road on this route would avoid the WHA (except perhaps for a small intrusion), it would cost an additional \$1.6 million to construct. Transport costs would be \$0.25 million per year more due to the longer distance and greater height traversed. If constructed, the road would be paid for by forest industry to a logging road standard. The multimillion dollar construction cost would be recouped over time through transport cost savings. While the road would be a forestry road, it undoubtedly would also be utilised by tourist and inter-regional traffic, providing an alternative round trip to the Huon.

FLORA MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE WORLD HERITAGE AREA

by Jennie Whinam and Jayne Balmer

Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, 134 Macquarie Street, Hobart,
Tasmania 7000

INTRODUCTION

The WHA contains many of the vegetation communities which occur within Tasmania. Cool temperate rainforest, alpine moorland and upland freshwater communities are rich in groups with Gondwanan affinities, and include many Tasmanian endemics. The vegetation of the WHA demonstrates a variety of responses to fire and may be divided into 'fire sensitive' communities (dominated by conifers and deciduous beech (*Nothofagus gunnii*), rainforest and alpine communities); 'fire adapted' types that require fire for their perpetuation but