

Dear AFAC Review,

This submission addresses actual and future potential fire impacts on Tasmania's most important natural heritage - the paleo-endemic Gondwanan plant communities.

These vegetation associations are ancient, globally unique, critically vulnerable to fire, and irreplaceable. They are at the heart of what makes natural Tasmania special. Yet, after tens of thousands of years of existence these rainforest and highland ecosystems, characterised by pencil pine, King Billy pine, deciduous beech, other native pines, myrtle and Huon pine, are imminently and directly threatened by climate change in the form of exponentially increasing dry lightning strikes and record dry weather in Western Tasmania.

It is far from inconceivable that, in the absence of radical human fire-fighting intervention, these vegetation types could be largely eliminated within years or a couple of decades.

This submission has two components.

The first is a pdf of text and photographs that document fire damage within just one area of the total area of the 2019 fires. Whilst not catastrophic on a large scale, the 2019 fires were in some areas locally catastrophic, and will give rise to regenerating pyrogenic vegetation that further heightens the risk of fire.

It is understood that a familiarisation flight was undertaken in March this year, but a direct focus on the ancient Gondwanan vegetation that is at risk would allow for a finer appreciation of the importance of these places. To that end the second component of this submission is an invitation extended to the AFAC Commissioners to personally visit and land at several of the key Gondwanan vegetation sites within the TWWHA in coming weeks, via helicopter, hosted by environmental NGOs. These are extraordinary places and there is no substitute for first hand experience to gain direct experience of this.

If such a flight might be possible for the the Commissioners early notice would be useful so that logistics and timing can be organised.

Sincerely,

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Rob Blakers