

Fuel stove only areas

Background

Managing campfires in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) is particularly problematic due to the extreme fire-sensitivity of the vegetation, which means that any escaped campfire could have devastating consequences. On top of that, the peat soils that are common across much of the TWWHA are able to smoulder underground, meaning that it can be very difficult to tell whether a campfire has been properly extinguished. For those reasons, the introduction of the Fuel Stove Only policy in the 1990s has proven very successful at reducing the number of accidental bushfires caused by campfires.

Currently the vast majority of the TWWHA is a fuel stove only area, with campfires totally banned. There are a few areas where campfires have historically been permitted, such as Little Deadmans Bay on the South Coast Track, and areas included in the 2013 TWWHA boundary extension.

Fuel stove only areas are generally well accepted today, but there can be problems when visitors are not aware of the rules around campfire use.

High-use sites (visitor service sites) accessible by road have areas well suited for the use of campfires. These sites are managed and include constructed campfire places, allowing people to enjoy campfires while minimising the risk of fire escaping.



Fuel stoves are mandatory in much of the TWWHA

Challenges

Allowing campfires can cause environmental damage. People bringing their own firewood into the TWWHA can inadvertently transport and introduce new pests into natural environments. Also, collecting firewood on site can result in local destruction of vegetation, particularly when insufficient fallen limbs and twigs are available.

The demographics of people visiting the TWWHA have changed, with many people who now use the area not familiar with the principles of remote-area recreation. Messaging therefore needs to be clear and simple. Having exceptions to the rules makes it difficult to simplify messages and encourage compliance.

Allowing people to light campfires in remote areas of the TWWHA poses the risk of a fire escaping – this risk will rise as the impacts of climate change increase. The two sites along the South Coast Track where campfires are allowed are adjacent to vegetation that is often dry during the summer months. In these remote sites there is no one around to ensure that campfires are properly extinguished.

Much of the signage related to campfire bans and fuel stove only areas needs to be updated. Up-to-date signage and messaging are important ways to reinforce the reasons for a campfire ban in the TWWHA. However, in an area as vast as the TWWHA it can be difficult to keep this information current.

The way forward

Only allow campfires in purpose-built fireplaces at visitor service sites within the TWWHA where the environmental risks and bushfire risks are low.

Due to the environmental impact and increased bushfire risks associated with campfires, make the entire South Coast Track a fuel stove only area.

On new signage, utilise symbols that clearly show where campfires are not permitted and fuel stoves are permitted.

The Parks and Wildlife Service should reinvigorate the Leave No Trace campaign and employ seasonal rangers to encourage compliance.



Fire damage caused by an escaped campfire

OTHER ISSUES SHEETS THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST

11 Organic (peat soil) fires

