Chapter 14
social values

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Introduction

This paper endeavours to describe and analyse the social dimensions and values of Kosciuszko National Park, together with the social and cultural relationships between the park and its various communities of visitors and other stakeholders. It also examines some of the assumptions made by the park managers, and in the current management plan, about the nature of these values and relationships.

We must conclude (see below, Knowledge gaps and further research):

> *'In so far as the social dimensions of park management have already been considered, this has been based primarily in the utilitarian spheres of recreation, tourism and public education. There has been little or no exploration of the spiritual, ideological, and community identity elements of the park experience; we know all too little about how people perceive or value the park experience, or what that experience really means to them.'*

The major problem in this discussion is that the social dimension of the park is not a series of sites or other tangible objects; rather it is a perspective upon each and all of the sites and other tangible phenomena. Further, the social values of the park are those values held by staff, neighbours, visitors, and others. Social values arise out of personal meanings, rather than the activity or phenomenon to which the meaning is ascribed (Hamilton- Smith 1980). They may be associated with specific components of the park - but it is of limited value to simply say, for instance, that visitors greatly value the opportunity for snow sports. This does not tell us which people subscribe to which social values; for example, whether they value the movements and skills of snow sports, the challenge of striving for greater personal competence, the companionship, entertainment and social ambience associated with a resort, the aesthetic or spiritual quality of the snow experience or the escape from everyday life. It can, however, be assumed that many snow skiers value the opportunities the park provides and, through a tradition of visiting (some for generations), ascribe a social value to the area and the park.

We can make assumptions about how communities value a place, but they can lead us dangerously wrong. In some circumstances, changing the setting or experience offered in recreation or tourism facilities or services can disenfranchise current or past user groups. Geehi camping area, previously a natural setting with minimal bush facilities and informal camping, frequented by groups that returned time after time, received a major refurbishment some years ago. Paved tracks, defined camping areas, higher standard toilets, interpretation and shelter changed the nature of the setting quite visibly. Those people who preferred the former minimal facilities moved on to look for other sites that met their needs. Geehi is still highly used, but by a different group who prefer a higher standard of facilities in a natural setting.

Many similar examples could be cited because park managers often assume that their personal values are more widely understood and shared by the public than is actually the case. We need to understand not only the physical details of people's use but also the range and depth of their values about the park. The scope of these social issues overlaps other fields such as economic, cultural, recreational and natural uses and values.

"Significant social values and dimensions are largely unknown at this stage."

[1] *Janet Mackay co-authored sections of this paper.*

The historic and cultural context

Social history

Any consideration of the social dimensions of a situation has to be based in history and the ways in which current realities have been shaped. People relate to the park in diverse ways, largely because they may have images and values, and practise activities, that are drawn from different eras of the park's history.

The social history of the Snowy Mountains region falls into three broadly defined eras:

- many centuries of Aboriginal occupation and management;
- European exploration and occupation for mining, grazing and other land uses; and
- a period of immense and rapid change, ushered in by the establishment of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme in 1949 and the Kosciusko State Park in 1944, and continuing to the present day.

The many centuries of Aboriginal occupation and their management of the environment left behind a rich heritage in the form of the landscape and its vegetation. However, few spectacular sites (to the eye of white visitors), such as stone constructions or painted sites, have been revealed. But there is a rich heritage of dreamtime stories about specific places, and some knowledge of the rightly famous summer festival season when bogong moths (*Agrotis infusa)* were harvested.

The second era was marked by:

- grazing (from the 1830s onwards), which made an immense impact upon the environment, many signs of which continue to the present day;
- mining (from the 1850s onwards), although in the Snowy Mountains it was relatively short-lived and of lesser significance than in many other regions;
- The establishment and development of skiing as a major recreational activity and hand-in-hand with this,
- the beginnings of tourism, with the construction of state hotels (from 1912 onwards) and the further development of existing local opportunities for fishing and snow sports to specifically cater for the affluent classes; and
- commitment by some scientists to enhance understandings of the high country.

During this era, one of the remarkable features of the Kosciuszko region within New South Wales (NSW) is the extent to which it was relatively ignored by the wider society until the 1940s. Thus, during the 19th century the region received only a brief mention in Garran's (1888) *Picturesque Atlas of Australia* and little or no attention in other publications of the same period. There were probably only four major nineteenth century paintings of the region, by Chevalier and Von Guerard, who had visited with Von Mueller. Only Charles Kerry photographed the region extensively, as compared with the dozens of professional and amateur photographers who helped to make the Blue Mountains justly famous. The only generally recognised poetry consists of Banjo Paterson's legendary *Man from Snowy River*, which is one of the great icons of Australian bush culture, some lyrical tributes by Charles Harpur and the work of the ill-fated Barcroft Boake. There are no well-known novels and the only music appears to be Lhotsky's obscure European notation of songs from the Aboriginal women. It is almost as if the mountains strangely terminated at the Illawarra.

Thus, there is an immense difference in the early traditions that grew up in Victoria on one side, and the Illawarra, Blue Mountains, Central West and Hawkesbury of NSW on the other. So, although there is little question that the Snowy Mountains region represents a very significant part of the cultural and natural heritage of Australia (Good 1992, Lennon 1999), it had little impact upon the national sense of cultural identity in Australia until the 1940s. Even though there was a flowering and growing self-awareness of the cultural heritage of the region in the first half of the 20th century, this was mainly exhibited within in the region and otherwise, remained marginalised. Probably the most important exception is Patrick White's first novel, *Happy Valley,* based on his experience as a jackeroo at Adaminaby, yet this seems to be rarely cited by residents of the region. I know that many lovers of the mountains disagree with my assessment, but when they turn to specific examples, they all too often draw upon the post-1945 era or upon examples which originated far from Kosciuszko.

The advent of the SMHES in the 1940s marked the beginnings of massive change in the physical, social and economic character of the region. The boom in photography, and in publications ranging from photographic collections to novels, particularly the works of Elyne Mitchell, brought about a new cultural awareness. There is an extent to which the flowering of culture after 1945 exemplifies Davison's (1998) comment that in a young country like Australia, heritage is 'not a product of tradition, but of the need to create one.'

The new awareness and opportunities created by access and accommodation fostered the continuing growth of tourism and snow industries that has occurred since. The changes not only brought a great deal of positive change to the region, but were also characterised by a great sense of loss of the mountains as they had been, particularly by many of the long-standing mountain people, some of whom had been physically displaced in towns relocated for the Scheme.

The establishment of the Kosciusko State Park resulted in positive relationships with conservationists and other visionaries, but caused a long period of antagonism with rural residents and many members of the local Snowy Mountains community that, in some cases, continues to this day. The evolution of the Kosciuszko National Park through periods of acquisition, resort

development, varied management, and the development of plans of management has impacts on the social values attributed to the park by a range of groups.

Some social heritage themes

Cultural heritage issues are dealt with more fully in Chapter 13, and will only be summarised briefly here, partly as one basis of the social context, and also in terms of the linkage between historic sites on one hand and visitor awareness and experience on the other. The intrinsic values ascribed to culturally significant sites must be recognised and significant sites preserved, but only certain of these can make a major contribution to the visitor experience of the general public (as compared with specialist visitors: students, professionals, researchers and amateurs). However, a focus on sites can give a misleading impression of the actual qualities of people's connection to a region, hence a landscape approach should be adopted.

Aboriginal culture

The coming Aboriginal heritage study is geared to provide a particularly strong input to the planning process. Therefore, this will not be further discussed in this chapter, other than to emphasise the importance of the cultural and social heritage that spread over so many centuries of Australian (pre)history. In recent years, the park has started to acknowledge and engage traditional owners of the region, with enhanced partnerships in appropriate opportunities for sharing the traditions of the region with non-indigenous visitors, but this still demands further development.

Communication and access

The Aboriginal people laid down the foundations of communication infrastructure. They took many of the European 'explorers' into the mountains. Their long-established trails became the bridle trails and stock routes of European settlers. Roughly the same routes are still used by bushwalkers and horse-riders. The pioneering role of Aboriginal people in recognising the opportunities offered by topography and hence in shaping our own infrastructure has rarely been given adequate recognition.

Exploration

The greater Monaro region, including the Snowy Mountains country, was opened up and settled by pastoralists some years before the 'explorers' arrived (Hancock 1972). Lhotsky and Strzelecki were the most notable, but although Strzelecki is highly respected for his many accomplishments, neither claimed nor achieved the heroic status commonly accorded to many of our explorers. Thus, little attention has been given to the explorer tradition, which is intermingled with the pastoralists' occupation.

Settlement, grazing and horsemen

The graziers therefore laid the main 'whitefella' foundation for a Snowy River country tradition and cultural heritage (Hueneke 1994). Today, this is celebrated by the physical evidence of the restored homesteads at Coolamine, Currango and elsewhere, together with a multitude of mountain huts (Hueneke 1982). It is indeed regrettable that so many huts have recently been destroyed by fire – hopefully at least a number will be restored. Paterson's *Man from Snowy River* established and developed the notion of the Snowy River people as horsemen and, with help from Hollywood, is probably the most widely known image of the region and may influence the way people think about it now.

Mining

The Kiandra gold field was relatively short lived and the virtual destruction of the former township leaves little evidence of interest to general visitors. When one compares the potential tourism experience of mining with other sites in Australia, it is easy to see that, as important as it might be to those specifically interested in mining history, it offers little excitement to the general tourist. More specialised visitors will find interest in the massive works done by hand from 1860-1900 to deliver water over very long distances to gold-mining claims, and many other lesser relics of the period. Other mining sites were of even less importance, and are relatively little known to any but the mountain people and some bushwalkers. But Kiandra must be recognised as the birthplace of the other great image of the park: as a place to go skiing.

The Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme

The Scheme was not just a great engineering vision, but also a great social achievement in the development of Australia, and the local region, as a multicultural society. It left a mark on both the terrain of the region and the ethos of Australian society. It also impacted heavily on the local community at the time, as towns were relocated to enable the Scheme to be developed. At the same time, the Scheme laid a social foundation for the development of skiing into a major regional industry. The Scheme not only opened up and left significant infrastructure in the mountains, but changed the population of the region, and left local towns quite reoriented in their function. It also changed the image of the mountains for a whole generation of Australians. The infrastructure established has tended to dictate our patterns of movement to and in the mountains today, as well as changing the nature of land use and settlement over a much wider area.

Kosciuszko National Park

The evolution of Kosciuszko National Park to the present day has engaged the commitment of a vast range of community groups on an array of issues. Advocacy and lobbying by groups pursuing a myriad of changes from grazing, ski resort expansion, new

developments in the maintenance of huts, has resulted in many groups and individuals that ascribe strong social values to Kosciuszko National Park.

Skiing and associated snow sports

Kiandra was the site where it all began, with the establishment of a ski club. It is sometimes claimed that this was the birthplace of skiing as a recreation, rather than as a mode of movement for work or military purposes. But for present purposes, it did provide the beginning of a significant change in land use within the alpine area. Participation in skiing and other snow sports has increased to a remarkable degree but, more importantly, snow sports have changed from a relatively informal community-managed activity to a major industry.

The industry so dominates visitor use that the alpine region now has two virtually separate identities, as a great national park and a great series of ski resorts. These two entities have an uneasy relationship to the extent to which skiing is seen by some non-skiing visitors as an undesirable or even disturbing intrusion upon their own experience.[2] On the other hand, skiers may have little awareness of the wider range of values and opportunities in the park or the extent to which the landscape is affected in summer by evidence of their use in winter. In the southern resorts, the park and its surrounds are incredibly rich in both social values and cultural heritage sites. The northern and western areas of the park, whilst receiving lower usage, are valued for their natural and cultural attributes as well as for recreational opportunities.

Another interesting question therefore arises from the difference summer and winter visitors and whether any action should be taken to bring about a greater sharing of the two different sets of perceptions and values. In fact, probably the most important thing is that the differences should be recognised more clearly and properly respected.

The basis of social management

The management of national parks in English-speaking nations suffers from a strange paradox. Although park managers are generally educated in the environmental sciences, they are not given adequate preparation for dealing with social issues. Yet, many of the major problems that they must confront are to do with human and social issues, and most of the problems in environmental management arise out of social behaviour and issues (Hamilton-Smith 1989).

This makes it particularly difficult to prepare an overview of the social context and dimensions of the park. First, there is not only the question of the overarching relationship between the park as a site and its social context, but each of the specific issues being examined by the independent scientific committee has its own social context and issues. The resource constraints upon the current examination mean that it is impossible to do justice to the topic and this chapter can only be a broadly generalised one. Second, there is an immense dearth of systematic social information with even a reasonable degree of reliability or validity.

Further, the statutory basis for this review is indeed slim. In defining the objectives of the legislation (*National Parks and Wildlife Amendment Act 2000* Section 2A), there is no specific reference to social dimensions other than references to places of social value. Similarly, even the concept of sustainability is qualified by the constraining adjective 'ecological'. This suggests a much narrower view than the prevailing concept of a dynamic and holistic tripartite sustainability across the environmental, social and economic spheres.

In dealing with national parks (NPW Act 1974, s30E), the mandate is significantly broadened to include 'opportunities for public appreciation and inspiration, and sustainable visitor use and enjoyment. Further, the enunciated principles of management include:

> *(d) the promotion of public appreciation and understanding of the national park's natural and cultural values;*
>
> *(e) provision for sustainable visitor use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values; and*
>
> *(g) provision for appropriate research and monitoring.*

Despite a recent review of the legislation, it is clear from recent events, and particularly in relation to the management of skiing, that further review is needed. The lack of adequate recognition of broad social and cultural questions also demands further review and response.

This relative lack of attention to social dimensions is carried through in the prescription for preparation of management plans (Section 72AA). In summary, within the current legislation, social dimensions are seen essentially as only providing the basis for values that may be ascribed to specific sites and for the development of visitor enjoyment and education.

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[2] *This discussion is based largely upon the views of many people involved in the tourism or snow sports industries, but also on the author's informal interviews and discussions with some 150 resort visitors.*

Similarly, although the corporate plan of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) recognises the actual and potential social responsibility in providing for public access and involvement, it remains embedded in a site-based philosophy and does not give recognition to the totality of the social values and dimensions of parks. Further, management currently focuses on defining and delimiting uses, which ignores the totality and complexity of the visitor (and non-visitor) experience.

It is important to also recognise that the Park is now in the process of coming to grips with the world-wide changes in the assumptions underlying national park management. The ecocentric philosophy and practice that has dominated Australian parks since the 1970s is being steadily replaced by a more holistic approach which aims at balancing ecological and cultural imperatives. This volume exemplifies the extent to which we are all caught in that change process, and the extent to which the Plan of Management must look forward in the directions which are now emerging.

The current crisis in public management and governance, arising out of fiscal constraints and the current managerial emphasis upon accountability and administrative trivia, also acts as a constraint upon management. It severely limits the resources available for effective and productive on-ground management of the park.

The nature of the legislation means that, perhaps inevitably, the park and its heritage values become constrained by a tyranny of cadastral and internal zoning boundaries. Holistic management of the Snowy Mountains region and the people who either live within or visit it is severely constrained by this, but there is an important opportunity to at least partly overcome this problem. The Kosciuszko area is not only a national park, but also one of the first areas in Australia to be designated (in 1977) as a biosphere reserve. However, constraining the boundaries of the biosphere reserve to coincide with those of the national park is out of step with international practice and mitigates against the effective use of biosphere reserve status. The Park Service has also failed to recognise the inherent principles of present-day biosphere reserve practice and appears to regard the biosphere reserve status more or less as an honorific rather than a tool for enhancing management.

The biosphere reserve concept should be seen as a social designation as well as an ecological one. It provides an extremely powerful tool for furthering regional inter-relationships and partnerships, for the development of sustainability in the full sense of that term, for more effective public education and consequent changes in land management, and for more holistic and thus enhanced programs in both management and research[3].

Summarising the historic and managerial context[4]

The good news is that:

- the park is a treasure house of remarkable geosystems, ecosystems and other natural features and of a wonderful cultural heritage;
- these values are held on high esteem by most Australians, both visitors and others;
- the biosphere reserve concept provides an important opportunity for overcoming some of the regional (or even wider) problems that face the park; and
- there has been improvement over time in the relationship between park stakeholders and park management.

The bad news is that:

- social dimensions of park management are given limited recognition in legislation, yet are a key component of management practice;
- the park as a place of natural and cultural heritage sits in an uneasy relationship to the park as a major center for skiing and other snow sports; and
- there are a number of significant social barriers to effective and holistic management of the park.
- the relationships between park management and the community which have improved in recent years, will need considerable effort to remain positive with some sectors of the community in the light of recent fires..

The park in contemporary social context

Regional and state relationships

The Kosciusko State Park was established in 1944, and gradually evolved, hand-in-hand with a series of other significant events. These included the establishment of the SMHES in 1949, the progressive removal of grazing, the rapid and extensive development of the ski industry, the development of the high profile and controversial 1982 Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management; and the settling of a memorandum of understanding to establish the cooperative management program for the Australian Alps national parks overseen by the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC) (Good 1992).

From the beginning, there has been a series of major problems in local relationships, and sometimes deep and long enduring resentment of the park. These primarily centred on the change in land tenure to a protected area that required cessation of

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[3] *See <www.unesco.org/mab/brfaq.htm> and associated pages*

[4] *This format is derived from the Australian State of the Environment Report 2001*

grazing and resulted in loss by the cattlemen of part of their commercial operation. In particular, although leaseholders received compensation, many of their workers lost both their job and their highly valued lifestyle. For many, the mountains and the mountain lifestyle have been their family tradition and heritage, which is valued and continued, where possible, to this day. A great deal has been done by the NPWS in recent years to build bridges with the mountain community, although a dogged minority still maintain their hatred of the park, and consider the recent bushfires further justification for their views.

At local, state and national level, it appears that the park and its staff have gained increasing community respect. This is due very largely to the commitment of the on-ground staff, who have direct responsibility for shaping visitor experience. Respect comes not only from visitors, but also from local communities including some of the earlier antagonists who see that staff are making enormous efforts to work and develop relationships with neighbours.

However, complaints about the perceived heavy-handedness of the park bureaucracy are common, which may in part be due to lack of effective communication or to deep-seated community attitudes to parks and bureaucracies in general. Some of these complaints may grow out of the Australia-wide struggles of land managers to cope with the 'new managerialism' of the public sector. 'New managerialism' is based in the ideology of the new liberalism (Bauman 2001). It includes a range of managerial changes such as regular restructuring, reductions in staffing, excessive working hours and changes to or discarding of career structures; and expectations of economic efficiency and even profitability, through the growing expectation of governments that parks should 'earn' much more of the funding needed to maintain the park and its services. A further important group of risk management and related problems arises from the heightened emphasis that park managers are forced to place upon issues of public safety as a combined result of the 1995 New Zealand Cave Creek Incident (Commission of Inquiry 1995), the increasing propensity of Australians to seek compensation for loss or injury through the courts, and the recent financial crisis of the insurance industry. Some of these are relevant to the Kosciuszko situation. There is also longstanding dissatisfaction with the underlying bases of park management, which tend to alienate the general public (eg, Moorhouse 1976, Chase 1986, Hamilton-Smith 1989, Jacoby 2001).

One of the important changes for Kosciuszko in recent years is the increased focus upon a strategic approach to tourism development in the national parks, arising partly out of the report of Worboys et al. (1997) and partly from the efforts of some tourism managers. The term 'icon' is now more commonly applied to the region than previously. However, at present this appears to be somewhat ambiguous or even problematic and brings us back to consideration of the two identities issue. This term, in modern usage, does not just imply high importance, but rather refers to a symbol of some larger entity. So, if the term 'icon' is used to describe the park, is the park an icon of its natural and cultural heritage and the resulting sense of place, or is it an icon of commercialism?

Consideration of icon status needs to be a key element of the planning process, to ensure effective management of resultant tourism.

Gateways to the park

The central meaning of icon status for the park is thrown into high relief by the very different character of the major gateway towns. Gateways to the park vary considerably in their role and relationship to the park, and in their general characteristics. The combination of these factors seems to result in differing social values attributed to the park by communities. . A shared sense of concern as many of the gateway communities were affected by the January 2003 fires, and a common perception of the role of Kosciuszko in bringing in this concern, may have strengthened the relationships between some communities. The characteristics of the gateways as well as the residential communities (see Map 14.1) within the park are an important part of the social context in which Kosciuszko National Park exists.

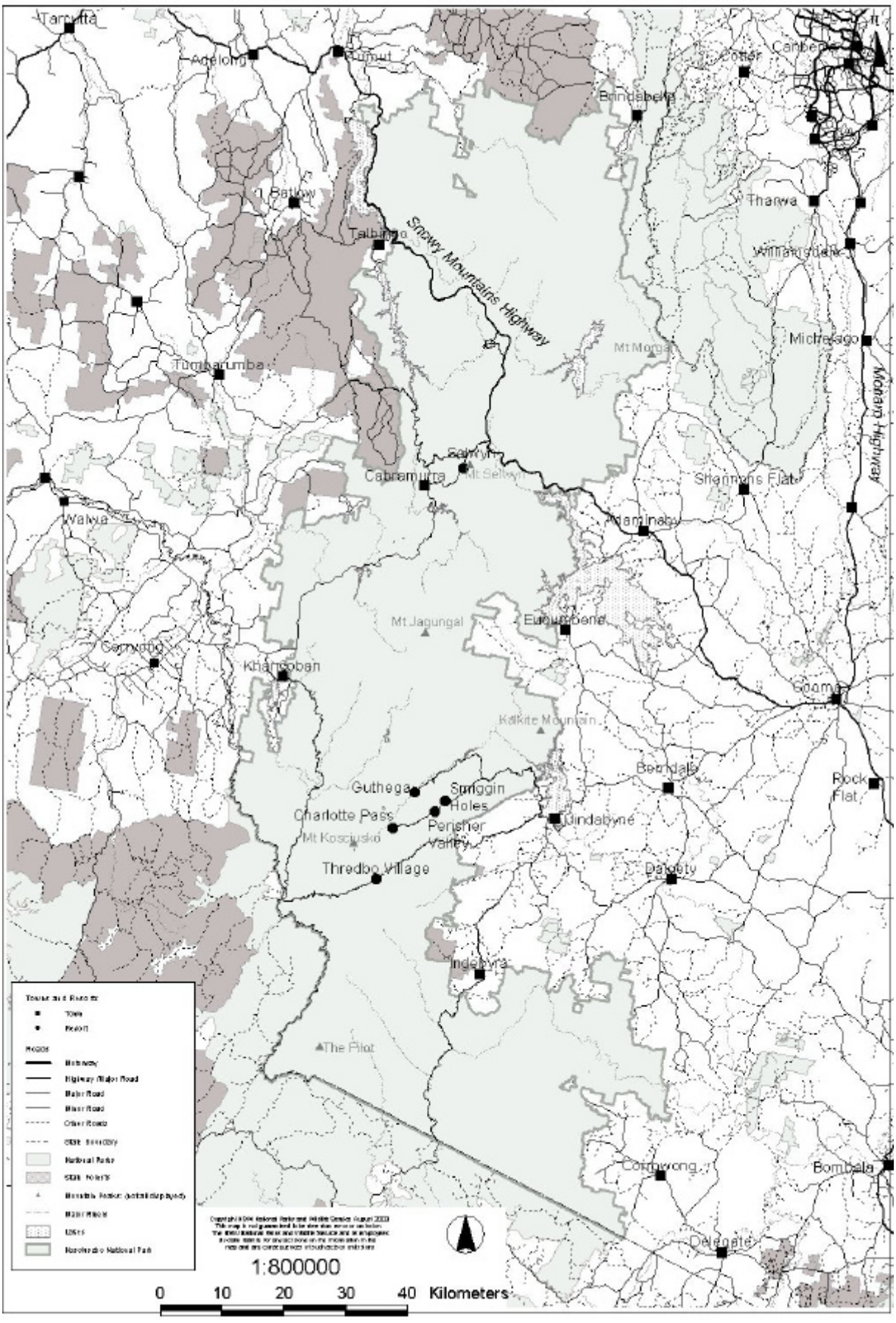
Northern gateways

Tumut

The township of Tumut was originally at the centre of a farming community with grazing, a dairy industry and cropping as the key rural activities. With the advent of forestry production some 50 years ago, the town developed a vibrant timber industry. This industry has waxed and waned, to be revived in recent years with the establishment of the Visy Mill which has provided direct employment for approximately 150 people and indirect employment through the opportunities in forests. Some 6000 people now live in Tumut, with an increase in employment of 4.8% over the period 2000–02, some 2% higher than the state average.

Tourism has gradually increased in the town as a gateway to Kosciuszko, with the greatest increase resulting from the western access to the ski fields including Selwyn snowfields as well as improved marketing of Yarrangobilly Caves. Tourism seems to be reasonably stable in the area.

Map 14.1 Residential communities within and surrounding Kosciuszko National Park



Kosciuszko National Park provides a playground for some Tumut residents who appear to predominantly value three opportunities: skiing, the water activities afforded by Blowering foreshores, and the natural horse riding opportunities available in the north of the park. For many residents, the national park is simply a backdrop that they might occasionally travel through en route to the coast. The town is still home to people who value the mountains and the previous cattlemen's lifestyle, and who have passed this tradition down through their families and continue to ride in the park and hold a deep love for the tradition and opportunities it provides.

The relationship between the NPWS and Tumut community has, like many areas, been moulded through controversy on such issues as horse riding as well as management issues such as weed control, feral animals, law enforcement and wilderness. Relationships with the tourism industry and the community have improved in recent years, with the initiation of a visitor centre managed cooperatively by Tumut Shire Council and NPWS.

Batlow

Batlow, with a population of around 1200, may be considered a gateway to Kosciuszko National Park, but has been independent in its development and really quite remote from the park.

Batlow developed through its orchard industry and the development of the Mountain Maid cannery. It has also been a key area in the timber industry. The closure of the cannery as well as relocation of the forestry office has resulted in a decline in employment, and most school leavers are moving away. To revitalise the town, a strong community, with the support of the shire, is working on new initiatives including orchard related industry.

Whilst some residents use Kosciuszko National Park in a similar way to Tumut people, there is not a strong link with the park, nor a dependence on it for attracting tourism.

Talbingo

Talbingo, geographically the closest town in Tumut Shire to the park, has declined from a population of 400 to some 220. Talbingo was established as a residential area for employees of the SMHES, and serviced a number of the Snowy installations as well as construction. Many previous residents of Talbingo reside in other parts of the region, and seem to hold memories of this settlement as a special place in their life.

The handover of the town from SMHES to Tumut Shire marked the end of its useful life as a service town. Many houses are empty, but several have been purchased as holiday and retirement homes for people seeking to use Kosciuszko National Park for skiing and, more commonly, fishing.

The relationship between Talbingo people and the park has varied and has been enhanced at times through the relationships established by NPWS families living and socialising in Talbingo. The present residents and those who are coming to live and play in the area perhaps value the park more than the SMHES residents who predominantly worked in it.

Southern Gateways

Bombala

Bombala was a major timber and agricultural service town and has suffered from the downturn in the wool industry and restructuring of the timber industry. With extensive additions to national parks in the area, NPWS is seen as a key cause of many of the issues associated with economic decline. Unlike other towns, which service tourists to Kosciuszko National Park, there is limited potential for economic gain from the park. As a result, the community is more likely to focus on negative issues. Despite efforts of park managers and improving relationships with some sectors of the community, NPWS is likely to have a difficult ongoing relationship with the people of Bombala.

The town receives limited tourism from traffic on the through routes between NSW and Victoria. NPWS has a shopfront that provides information about parks and opportunities in the area.

Delegate

Delegate is a strong and vibrant town recognised for its efforts to maintain and improve its community and services and enhance its economic development.

The surrounding rural area includes neighbours to the Byadbo area of Kosciuszko, a part of the park with a history of conflict with neighbours. The issues of feral dogs and fire are ongoing and continue to cause uneasy relationships with park management. Neighbours maintain strong links to the park and use it in the way they did before it was park. Despite this, there has been an improvement in relationships over time due to the efforts of key park managers and, to some extent, a realisation by some that the establishment of wilderness has not significantly impacted on them.

Western gateways

Tumbarumba

The shire of Tumbarumba has a population of some 3600 with the highest proportion living in the town of Tumbarumba and the balance in the rural areas as well as the settlements of Khancoban, Laurel Hill, Jingellic, Rosewood and Tooma. Tumbarumba was originally a pastoral area until softwood and hardwood forestry were established some fifty years ago. Whilst a softwood mill in the township provides some employment, and traditional agriculture continues, other innovative agricultural industries including horticulture and viticulture have been developing as alternate opportunities.

Tourism is not a high growth or yield activity for Tumbarumba, although the sealing of the Alpine Way is expected to result in some increase in through traffic on roundtrips in the mountains.

Tumbarumba is seen as one of the communities with a historical relationship with the park, although issues within the shire, where rural lands adjoin the park, have caused conflict in relation to weeds and feral animals from time to time. As with all local communities, there remain people with a strong connection and a belief in the cultural heritage they associate with past use of the park for grazing activity. Recreational use by the community is limited but, to some, the park is probably seen as something of a 'backyard.'

Khancoban

Khancoban is, like Talbingo, an SMHES settlement established to construct and service the western installations of the Scheme. The majority of employment for residents is provided by Snowy Hydro Limited, as the SMHES is now called. Khancoban is also home to some retirees, attracted by cheap housing in an attractive rural setting with opportunities for fishing and other recreational pursuits. Recreation focuses on the Khancoban pondage as well as the streams nearby and in the park.

Khancoban is the gateway for people coming from Victoria to Kosciuszko for skiing as well as for summer recreation and sightseeing. With the sealing of the Alpine Way, there has been an increase in through traffic and people staying in the town. This is expected to continue. Whilst the absence of a high profile visitor centre on the main road may reduce the numbers of people travelling through who talk with NPWS staff, the Service has a good relationship with and plays an important role in the community.

Eastern Gateways

Cooma

Cooma is the largest town in the Snowy Mountains, with a population of some 9500 people. As the first gateway to the national park, some 70 kilometres from it, Cooma is primarily a service town for tourism in the region. Cooma has been the centre for rural activity in the region and, with decline in the industry, is not experiencing growth. The establishment of a call centre that employs some 150 people, combined with the re-opening of the Cooma Jail, has seen a stabilisation in the town.

Apart from cooperative tourism effort, and liaison between government departments, there is a limited relationship between Cooma and NPWS. The exception to this has been with the establishment of recent off-park reserves, to which the Cooma community has had both positive and negative reactions.

Cooma has a good proportion of older people, including long-standing mountain people, both from the grazing era and the former Snowy Scheme workers with their direct descendents. The relationship to the high country is particularly visible and explicitly celebrated in Cooma. The visitor information centre provides a diversity of heritage-oriented publications and information, while the town park offers both the time-walk display of ceramic mosaics and the Man from Snowy River statue. Snowy Hydro Limited is also based in Cooma and operates a large visitor information centre.

Berridale

Berridale is a small community of some 950 people, many of whom are employed in the construction, service and tourism industry. Initially, the town was a rural community, which grew as a dormitory town during the 1980s when Skitube employed large numbers of people. The town now has a good proportion of holiday houses as well as a community established through the availability of cheaper housing and a quieter village atmosphere than at Jindabyne.

For many Berridale people the park is important for recreation, including summer and winter sports, as well as the destination for weekend picnics. It is a part of their life that is valued for all that it offers in terms of recreation and tourism. The community is not directly affected by the controversies of wild dogs, wilderness etc, except to the extent that it is communicated to them via the local media.

Like other local towns, Berridale is home to some of the older generation and to descendents of cattlemen who still have their concerns about the past but, more importantly, value the high country for the cultural heritage it represents. Park neighbours on the eastern boundary of Kosciuszko National Park are also linked to the Berridale community and issues of wild dogs, wilderness, weeds are of concern and cause a difficult relationship with the park. The relationship with NPWS in this area, whilst perhaps not as bad as it has at times been, is not as good as it is in other areas where similar issues exist.

Dalgety

Prior to the SMHES, Dalgety was a prosperous country town that serviced a rural based community. Dalgety is located on the Snowy River and the advent of the SMHES resulted in a significant reduction in the flows of the river. This has had a long term social and economic impact. The community has, over past years, worked effectively together to lobby for increased flows in the river, as well as to pursue a range of community development improvements. In the last six months a number of these have come to fruition and a heightened sense of optimism exists. There is a strong link and connection with the park through the Snowy River.

There are still many antagonists of NPWS in the Dalgety area, and issues such as wild dogs and weeds directly affect landholders adjoining and near the park. Despite this, some members of the community believe that, through the efforts of specific key park managers, there is a better relationship with NPWS now than there has been for decades.

Jindabyne

Jindabyne is the major town servicing the ski resorts in winter as well as summer recreation in the region. The winter population increase is the largest of any of the gateway townships. Perhaps even more importantly, the shire is one of the most rapidly growing in NSW. Whilst the town still has many mountain people, as a proportion of the population their numbers are not high. The descendants of cattlemen still value the park for the heritage it represents, and whilst they may not agree with management, they still want to be able to enjoy their traditional recreational activities.

Particularly during winter, the population largely comprises younger people, born outside the region, who are engaged in the tourism, hospitality and retail industries. But at the same time, there is a year-round growing number of the population that represents families with children who have grown up there and value the park as their 'playground' for skiing, for summer recreation and as an educational resource.

The development of the Snowy Region Visitor Centre in the mid 1990s was a positive step in the relationship between the NPWS and the community, providing a strong and visible presence in the town as well as a facility that the community valued and perceived as providing economic benefits. It also brought staff more into the community and has improved the relationship between the town community and NPWS despite ongoing issues of concern such as park use fees, feral species and wilderness.

There are many residents who have a real sense of attachment to the park, but that is not very evident to the visitor. The commercial sector and, in particular, the ski resort industry, totally dominates the townscape. Most of the shopfronts offering information are in fact sales outlets for the industry. A statue of Strzelecki on the shores of the lake is so located that very few people approach close to it and most do not even notice it.

Adaminaby

The township of Adaminaby services a community of some 600 people although only a third of these live in the town itself. Adaminaby has been a rural community in the past, and was relocated to enable the flooding of the Eucumbene River as part of the SMHES. With the downturn in the rural economy, the Adaminaby community has worked strongly to identify alternate opportunities including tourism.

The town does play a role in tourism to the northern parts of Kosciuszko and provides the primary accommodation for Selwyn Snowfields in winter. Summer and shoulder season recreation is focused on fishing, although sightseers using the Snowy Mountains Highway and people travelling to Yarrangobilly Caves also use the town.

The relationship between the Adaminaby community and NPWS has varied over time, but the general trend is not positive. Since the closure of the NPWS office in the town in 1987, there has been an ongoing feeling that not enough is being done about park issues affecting this part of the region. The values attributed to the park perhaps mirror this, with traditional users and other members of the community seeing the park as an area they can use regardless of the management policies in place.

Cabramurra

The township of Cabramurra is exclusively an SMHES town, established to house construction workers and subsequently operators on the Scheme. With increased automation of power stations and other installations, downsizing and the relocation of many staff to bigger centres, Cabramurra has some empty houses. Many of those who operate from the town live there during the working week and go to the bigger centres of Tumut or Cooma for their time off. Whilst the primary school is still operating, the demand is decreasing.

As the town is located directly within the national park, there has been a history of issues that have, to some extent, been resolved over time. As workers living in their own town, the residents have perhaps seen the park as their backyard and their 'entitlement'. Management has done most of the negotiations on residents' issues, such as domestic pets and access, so that there has been a non-relationship or a negative view of NPWS by those living there. Despite this, many have probably developed strong links with the park through their work efforts, the grandeur of the place they have lived, and the range of recreational opportunities they have been able to enjoy. More recently, with the corporatisation of SMHES, a 75-year lease was granted to Snowy Hydro Limited for the occupation and use of Cabramurra.

Thredbo

The ski resort village of Thredbo has a year-round population of some 200–300 people and a winter population capacity of 4200 beds. This village has a strong and vibrant community, almost certainly made even stronger through its efforts to recover from the landslide in 1997. Thredbo has been the single most successful ski resort in Australia, attracting high levels of summer tourism and, as a result, is active and busy virtually year round. Situated directly within the national park, there are everyday issues that impact on the relationship with NPWS, most recently the bushfires of 2003 which had the community either evacuated or on high alert for an extended period of time. Despite this, and with families that have lived in the village for three generations, there is a strong attachment to the village, the park and what it offers.

Many snow resort visitors show little or no interest in the park as a whole, and may even be unaware of its existence unless they drive into the park and pay a fee for entry to a park officer! Some of these visitors seem to believe that they are paying for admission to the resorts rather than a national park. There is little evidence that they are aware of the heritage values, or even the geographic extent of the park.

Summarising the contextual issues

The good news is that:

- the park and its management are steadily increasing the extent to which both attract widespread public recognition and respect;
- in general, new groups moving to such places for lifestyle reasons tend to be more sympathetic to nature conservation as a land use; and
- as the park gets older it becomes more significantly entrenched in people's minds as a park rather than for its former uses and status.

The bad news is that:

- there are still a number of people, particularly within the region, who continue to resent the very existence of the park, or who have extremely negative feelings about the quality of management within the park; and
- there is steadily increasing ambiguity in the minds of managers and many stakeholders about the basic nature of the park as both a site of great natural and cultural heritage values and a major tourism destination, even though both are vital in constructing the very character of the region.

The constraints within which the park will need to negotiate or reinvent its own position for future management include:

- the normal human dislike of change;
- the absence of a holistic view of national parks, which fully recognises the total social and cultural nature of the park, within the very legislation that establishes them; and
- the reality that the media in the local area plays a strong role in shaping views about the park and its management.

At the same time, there is a special opportunity to realise the potential for much more effective management and greater sustainability that is inherent in the Man and Biosphere program.

Obviously, these comments contain an implied criticism of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which is disappointing given the recent report *Visions for the New Millennium* (Steering Committee to the Minister for Environment 1998). However, this is simply because the issues raised here were not included in the terms of reference for the report's Steering Committee. Thus, their resolution within the Kosciuszko National Park demands consideration of the implications for the park service as a whole.

The people of the park communities

Current research and knowledge

There is some readily available and useful statistical information on the demography of the various regional communities, and this will not be reproduced here. The intention in this section is to discuss some of the key social characteristics or issues that have been identified as directly relevant to the future of the park. However, the limitations of available data mean that it is possible only to make generalised statements. There is no basic comparability over time, and so any comments on trends can only be impressionistic and based on professional judgment rather than hard data.

Regional residents

A study carried out as part of the Regional Forest Agreement process (Joint Commonwealth NSW RFASC 2000) found that residents of the Southern region saw a number of issues as being of concern. Table 14.1 lists these and shows how the responses of the Southern region residents compared with those of NSW as a whole.

Table 14.1 Percentages of residents reporting various issues as being of concern in the Southern region of NSW and in all of NSW in 2000

Issue	Percentage of residents reporting the issue as a concern	
	Southern region	NSW
Unemployment	44	50
Education	30	31
Health	36	29
Environment	35	23

Note: the southern region survey was undertaken within the context of the RFA study and this may have partly led to the much higher environmental concern than for the state as a whole.

Although forest-related issues were seen as the most important environmental issue, and this may have some relevance to parks, the other specific environmental issues of concern were more global, including pollution, the atmosphere, agriculture and waste disposal. Clearly, the protection of natural heritage has neither high visibility nor a high priority in the public mind, although a more detailed analysis indicated some concern bout loss of biodiversity (but this is not related to protected areas in the mind of most people). Exactly this issue is highlighted in some current international debates, and points to the need for a much higher priority being given to nature conservation awareness and understanding. The survey also confirmed that many people (36%) were unaware of the difference between state forests and national parks. This latter result is comparable with the results of a study in Tasmania (Hamilton-Smith 1998) and indicates that many people in NSW are not highly aware of the purpose or values of national parks and are not as concerned about biodiversity as they are about some other environmental issues.

Snowy River Shire residents

A public consultation was held in the Snowy River Shire to examine the preferences of residents in the development of a local environment plan (UTS 2001). The results are summarised on an area-by-area basis. For present purposes, we will look only at the relevant ideas put forward from residents of Jindabyne.

For Jindabyne, there appeared to be agreement that tourism should be further encouraged and developed. At the same time, there were demands for a more effective protection of rural character, the development of a 'village atmosphere', a restriction on foreshore development, limits on building size and tight control over sub-divisions and the provision of improved amenity infrastructure. Although all of these concerns relate to the area outside of the park, they will inevitably impact upon the experience of park visitors.

Awareness of and attitudes to the park

Several studies have been carried out, but they are based on a very small sample of the relevant populations and the first is focused upon the Canberra and Namadgi areas. So, although they are cited and described here, they can only be seen as indicative, and offer little that can be generalised to the park as a whole. The first study was carried out in 1995 by Market Attitude Research Services for the AALC. Although most of the results deal with the Australian Alps national parks as a whole, some are specific to Kosciuszko. Some key points are:

- From a national survey, 60% reported they were not aware at all of the Australian Alps national parks;
- Similarly, 58% reported that they were not aware of the natural and or historical features of Kosciuszko National Park (even 32% of Canberra residents responded in this way);
- However, 23% of the Australian sample, which was surveyed on location in Canberra, reported having visited Kosciuszko National Park in the previous 5 years; and
- Although satisfaction levels of actual visitors to the Kosciuszko National Park were high (about 80%), those satisfied with Namadgi were likely to be dissatisfied with Kosciuszko National Park: a clear example of differing preferences in recreation experience or the varying level and standard of facilities and services provided.

Those who enjoyed Namadgi expressed their concern about Kosciuszko National Park in terms of overcrowded or uncomfortable facilities, over-development, too much direction and control by management, and excessive encroachment of development. This is almost certainly based largely on a perception of the resort areas.

A somewhat similar study by Worthington Di Marzio Pty Ltd (1999), which included a specific percentage of 'neighbours' residing in settlements close to Australian Alps national parks, reported the following:

- There was a high awareness of the existence of the Kosciuszko National Park (98%);

- A majority of respondents reported that they became aware of national parks through 'word of mouth' (31%), 'residing nearby' (about 30%) or 'saw road signs on the way to another destination' (about 16%); not through mass media;
- More males than females visited national parks and related this to the parks' focus upon traditional male oriented outdoor adventure activities;
- Motivations for park visiting included 'a healthy family holiday', 'getting back to nature', and 'instilling a sense of nature and environmental values/education for the children'; again, these results are broadly in agreement with the present author's more in-depth studies in Tasmania;
- A large number associated the Australian Alps national parks with snow, snowfields and skiing;
- Approximately half of all respondents claimed they only 'knew a little' about the Australian Alps parks; in particular, they were not informed about the Aboriginal heritage, history or natural features of the parks; and
- The most frequently reported activities were bush walking and picnicking; however, the survey had multiple responses, possibly diminishing the dominance of skiing.

Outdoor recreation visitors

The AALC commissioned an evaluative study of the minimal impact brochure series (Beckmann 1999). The study established that the main constraint on effectiveness of the minimum impact program was the low level of brochure distribution. Word of mouth was identified as the major source of park information. The fact that other sources of information were largely park visitor centres or other specific information sites is not surprising, given that the sample questioned was drawn from park visitors. In spite of the poor distribution of brochures, visitors found them useful and indicated that they had changed their behaviour as a result. However, those who had not seen the brochures did not appear to differ significantly in their behaviour from those who had. This suggests the truth of general observations that the behaviour of park visitors has gradually changed for the better over the last 30 years and, obviously, this change has come from a wide range of influences, including the minimum impact educational programs.

Summarising information on the park communities

It is difficult to generalise from the above information as it is fragmented, the representativeness of the sample populations studied is often unknown and the study objectives were not necessarily comparable.

The good news is that when attitudes to the park and to the NPWS have been assessed, these appear to be generally positive.

The bad news is that there are clear gaps in awareness of the park and its values.

We just do not know how or what to characterise and communicate to the many communities that visit, or have at least a potential interest in, the park.

Assessing the social situation

The framework for assessment that was recommended and has been used in other chapters is extremely difficult to apply in the social realm, partly because it assumes a site-based discussion, which is a negation of the social perspective. Significant social values and dimensions are largely unknown at this stage. They must be recognised as distinct from, but potentially arising from, other values including recreation, aesthetics, personal and community identity, educational, spiritual, ideological, cultural and historic. The significance of these values cannot be ascertained because of the dearth of relevant and sufficiently thorough research and the time available.

It is worth endeavouring to summarise the groups that hold strong social values for Kosciuszko National Park, regardless of how these have evolved. Whilst perhaps not exhaustive, the key groups include:

- Aboriginals that lived, or whose ancestors lived in the mountains and or visited them;
- families and descendents of graziers and mountain cattlemen;
- the 'younger' local community that sees the park as its 'backyard' and children's playground;
- those people and groups that have lobbied extensively over time for their issues (e.g. ski industry, Kosciusko Huts Association, Snowy Flows);
- residents of Thredbo who have lived there for up to three generations;
- regular visitors that may have been skiing in the park for 50 years;
- outdoor recreation users, particularly summer bush walkers;
- casual visitors who may stay a very short time but whose behaviour patterns significantly affect all other users;
- tourist and recreational visitor groups, because their patterns of use affect so many of the local and community groups; and
- business people and other residents of the gateway towns.

This list is rather arbitrary and limited because it is the interactions between users with differing values that is often problematic.

The extent to which the social dimensions of the park are often, at least in part, shaped outside of the park is often overlooked. Some may even be primarily, or totally, expressed outside of the park, yet be important to the overall social context.

Turning to the question of indicators, the proper use of indicators to assess the social dimensions of the park will only be practicable if there is some baseline research (see below) to delineate the communities associated with the park, and to explore the social dimensions. This would provide a basis for the identification of appropriate indicators and their targeted application to relevant park communities. One area of social dimensions that can be explored immediately is the quality of visitor experience, and it would also be feasible to include some baseline research in visitor surveys. Indicators that should be tested in the early stages of this work include:

- expectations of park experiences;
- reality of the experiences;
- meanings ascribed to those experiences;
- secondary activities;
- quality of services;
- best and worst elements of visit; and
- non-visitors' values.

Arguably, broad measurement of these indicators should be undertaken through a household-based survey, probably using a combination of telephone and postal (and e-mail) inquiry. However, this should be supplemented by specific studies of identified park communities.

Looking forward

Knowledge gaps and further research

> *Throughout this document, it has been necessary to emphasise the extent to which there is inadequate social information upon which the social dimension of planning and management might be better grounded.*

In so far as the social dimensions of park management have already been considered, this has been based primarily in the utilitarian spheres of recreation, tourism and public education. There has been little or no exploration of the spiritual, ideological, and community identity elements of the park experience; we know all too little about how people perceive or value the park experience, or what that experience really means to them.

In fact, there are literally thousands of papers in the natural science disciplines, many of pre-eminent quality. There is only a handful in the social sciences, most of a very superficial quality. This imbalance demands urgent attention.

The present diversity of the regional park community has probably been underestimated. The park is large, and its community of users is becoming quite diverse, far beyond mountain horsemen, bush walkers, skiers and park managers. Even each of these gross categories contains at least a number of quite distinctive communities.

A possible approach is to develop and apply an adaptation of the Canadian Visitor Activity Management Process (VAMP) approach (see Parks Canada 1991, Rethink Consulting et al. 1998)) that would more clearly identify and characterise the park communities. This would provide practical data for managers and staff that could be used for development of targeted programs to cater more effectively for the various visitor communities across the whole visitor experience cycle. This could be carried out progressively, with high priority communities being the first to be investigated. It could in large part be implemented by existing park staff and local stakeholders, which would mean that the outcome would be not a series of reports sitting in the files, but a real advance in on-ground knowledge and understanding of the various visitor preferences and values.

Such a study might well be commenced as part of a regional action-research investigation and located within the process of developing an effective biosphere reserve program.

The social dimensions of park management

Park management suffers a number of constraints that provide a barrier to proper recognition of and action upon the social dimensions of the park experience. These are broad problems of the park system as a whole and not specific to the Kosciuszko National Park.

The current review of the park plan provides an opportunity to give critical consideration to some of these problems. In particular, it might explore and test new approaches, rather than pursuing the traditional search for more-of-the-same. The potential value of the biosphere reserve concept has already been emphasised. Opening up other potential strategies might well commence with an extended staff development program aimed at capacity building in more effective and holistic approaches to social management. In turn, this could be associated with an action-research program on more effective ways of furthering quality approaches to the public interface of the park.

Conclusion

Although there is much that might be criticised or changed for the better, the central reality is that an immense number of people enjoy visiting the Kosciuszko National Park. They come as individuals, as family or friendship groups and as members of organisations. They participate in an immense range of activities, some of them formal and highly organised, but probably most are informal and relatively unorganised. The park can enhance the range of activities undertaken by providing a better range of opportunities, and by encouraging visitors to experiment with new activities or interests, but should not make the mistake of relying upon more highly organised and formally managed programs. International experience is moving away from regulation and control and increasingly towards visitor management through park design, education and community involvement. Key proposals which arise from this paper include:

- consideration of full development of the biosphere reserve concept in co-operation with neighbouring authorities and the regional population;
- the need to review and develop the social capacity of the park service; and
- the need for systematic research and monitoring of social dimensions.