

Case study: Is the management plan achieving its objectives?

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When the first management plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area was being developed, an insistent question kept emerging: 'How would we know if management under the plan was actually achieving its objectives?' To address this question, the Parks and Wildlife Service set out to develop a practical system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the management plan. The result was a management evaluation system that integrates monitoring, evaluation and reporting into the overall management cycle for the area. This system is operating successfully in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) and provides informed feedback that enables managers and stakeholders to see how management is progressing in relation to the area's objectives. This feedback helps guide adaptive management and continuous improvement in management performance, consistent with international environmental management system standards such as ISO 14004. The management evaluation system is simple and flexible, and can be scaled up or down to suit a broad range of management contexts.

When evaluation of management effectiveness was first recognised as an essential—but missing—component of the Parks and Wildlife Service's management process, a consultant with expertise in evaluation (Dr Helen Dunn) was engaged to work with departmental staff to develop an evaluation framework for the 1992 TWWHA management plan. An important associated aim of the project was to enhance the capacity of the managing agency to undertake effectiveness evaluation to allow progress in management of the area to be reported. The experience and lessons learnt in establishing an evaluative approach to management are described in Jones & Dunn (2000) and Jones (2000).

By the time the first management plan for the TWWHA was due for revision, planning staff within the managing agency were well-positioned to integrate a structured approach to evaluation into the new (1999) management plan (Parks and Wildlife Service 1999). This management plan was awarded the Planning Institute of Australia's State and National Awards of Excellence in the category for Environmental Planning or Conservation, and the Planning Minister's Award for overall winner across all categories.

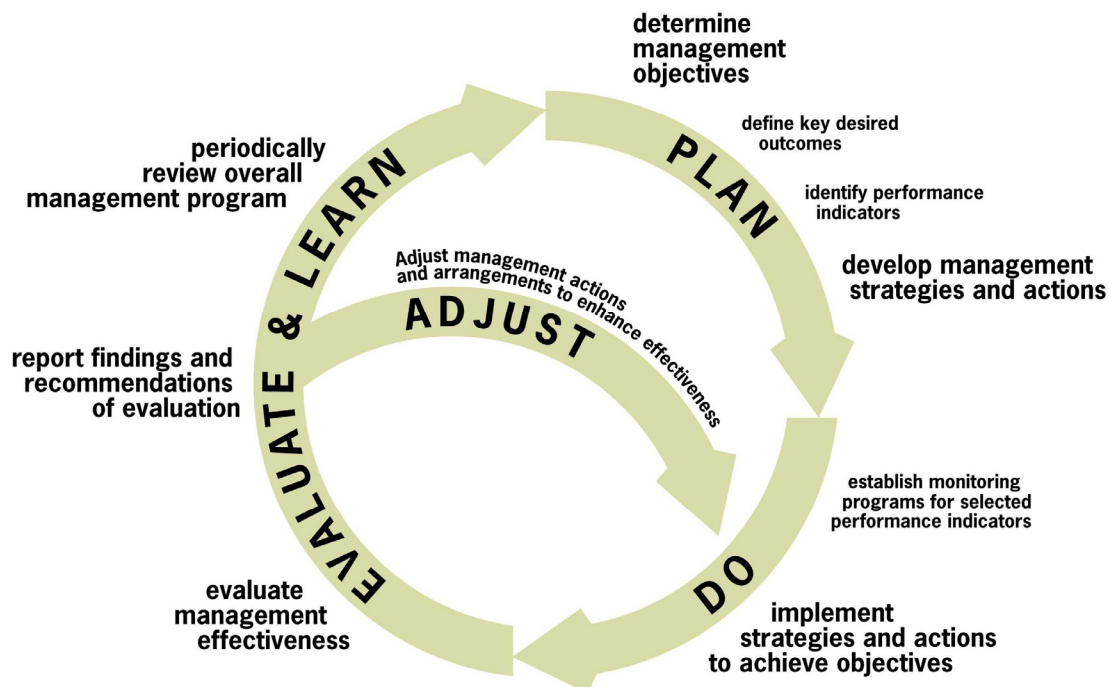


Figure 1 Management cycle for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

The management evaluation system for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is illustrated in Figure 1. The integration of performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting into the management cycle for the protected area generates informed feedback that enables managers to learn from and improve on past management approaches, and so progressively improve management performance.

Two key documents support the management evaluation system: the management plan and a linked 'State of the Park Report', which evaluates the effectiveness of management under the plan (Parks and Wildlife Service, in press). The contents of the management plan include:

- management objectives
- clear statements of key desired outcomes from each objective (that is, statements of the on-ground results that would be expected if the objective were fully realised)
- prescriptions for management strategies and actions to achieve the objectives
- requirements for performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- requirements for review of the management plan.

The contents of the State of the Park Report include evidence of management effectiveness; stakeholders' assessments of management performance; and proposed actions for enhancing management performance.

A number of key messages emerge from our experience with the evaluation process.

Integrate evaluation into the management system

- Ensure that evaluation of management effectiveness is integrated into the overall management plan or program.
- Minimise problems associated with 'shifting goal posts' by aligning management and evaluation programs to stable long-term mandates such as the obligations of legislation, the World Heritage Convention, or long-term funding arrangements.
- Facilitate continuity and consistency in evaluation programs through the use of long-term tenured positions for key staffing roles.

Monitoring performance indicators

- For each management objective ask 'how would we know if management was working well?' and just as importantly 'how would we know if management was failing?' The answers to these questions assist in developing meaningful statements of key desired outcomes, and suggest the types of performance indicators that should be monitored for evidence of management effectiveness.
- Use the in-depth knowledge of those with management responsibility and/or expertise in particular fields to assist in identifying appropriate and practical performance indicators and monitoring methodologies.
- Make sure your indicators are monitoring effectiveness in achieving the key desired outcomes, not just activities or processes.
- Remember, you can't monitor everything! Prioritise monitoring needs so that they will compete realistically alongside other demands on the total management budget.
- Start monitoring programs simply, with a core set of essential performance indicators. Expand the program as time and experience dictate.
- Where possible, integrate monitoring programs for performance indicators into the relevant operational management program.
- Ensure that data used in the evaluation are scientifically valid and/or from reliable sources. Identify all sources of data for the evaluation.
- Get baseline or reference data on performance indicators as early as possible so that changes over the management period can be detected.

Assessments of performance and feedback into ongoing management

- In addition to measured performance data, invite assessment and critical comment on management performance from those who can best provide legitimate and credible assessments for each objective or area of management responsibility. The inclusion of external sources for assessments increases the credibility of the evaluation.
- Ask assessors to identify the key factors that contributed positively to, and that hindered or threatened, management performance over the management period.
- Ensure that the findings of evaluation feed back into and inform ongoing management decisions and budget processes.
- Celebrate successes! Use the findings of evaluation to give recognition to management programs that have been demonstrated to be effective, and to acknowledge the people behind those programs.

Fostering adoption of evaluation

- Encourage agency adoption of an evaluative approach to management through the influence of appropriate stakeholders, advisory forums, or the establishment of formal requirements for performance reporting.
- ‘Sell’ the advantages of evaluation as a means of providing sound information that equips managers and other decision-makers to make the best use of resources; increasing transparency in management; improving on-ground management results; and reducing community conflicts.
- Foster agency learning in evaluation by working with staff who are receptive to new ideas and who can take the lead in establishing evaluation programs and so become role models for others to follow.
- Foster internal and external support networks for the evaluation program. Stakeholder support can provide a protective buffer for the program during periods of potentially destabilising change such as agency restructures, personnel changes or changes in government.
- Develop community expectations for transparency and accountability in management through performance evaluation and reporting in regular ‘State of the Parks Reports’.

Further Information

Jones, G, & Dunn (Hocking), H, 2000, ‘Experience in outcomes-based evaluation of management for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area’, Australia. Case study 1, in *Evaluating Effectiveness: A Framework for Assessing the Management of Protected Areas*. Hocking, M, Stolton, S and Dudley, N, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. Also available on the Parks and Wildlife Service website at: <www.parks.tas.gov.au> under ‘Publications’.

Jones, G, 2000, ‘Outcomes-based evaluation of management for protected areas—a methodology for incorporating evaluation into management plans’, in *The Design and Management of Forest Protected Areas*, Papers presented at the Beyond the Trees Conference 8–11 May 2000, Bangkok, Thailand. Also available on the Parks and Wildlife Service website at: <www.parks.tas.gov.au> under ‘Publications’.

Jones, G, in prep, ‘A user’s guide to evaluating management of protected areas—lessons from the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area’. Draft paper presented to the IUCN Vth World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa, 8–17 September, 2003. Available on the Parks and Wildlife Service website at: <www.parks.tas.gov.au> under ‘Publications’.

Parks and Wildlife Service, 1999, *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999*, Hobart Tasmania. Available on the Parks and Wildlife Service website at: <www.parks.tas.gov.au> under ‘Publications’.

Parks and Wildlife Service, in press, *State of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area—an evaluation of management effectiveness*, Report No. 1, Department of Tourism Parks Heritage and the Arts, Hobart, Tasmania.