



Australian Committee



9 May 2003

The Secretary
House Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By fax: (02) 6277 4424 - 17 pages (original in post)

Submission No.201

Dear Secretary

The Australian Committee for IUCN (ACIUCN) is an association of Australian-based government agency (Federal and State) and non-government organisation members of IUCN-The World Conservation Union. The mission of IUCN is

To influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

Clearly, the 2002-2003 fires have had significant environmental, social and economic impacts. At the most recent meeting of ACIUCN (April 2003), members present were informed on the impacts to the environment of the recent Canberra bushfires and the recovery planning process. In the discussion that followed members stressed the importance of a science-based response to the recent fires and the adoption of a strategic and scientific approach in future planning, post-fire reconstruction and rehabilitation. In addition, the desirability of a coordinated approach across the alpine and high country of Australia was recommended. This was expressed in the adoption of a formal resolution, *Australian Bushfires 2002-2003*, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 1.)

ACIUCN also wishes to draw to the attention of the Inquiry and its members the attached publication *Future Fires: Perpetuating Problems of the Past* (Attachment 1). This is a special supplement to *arborvitae*, the joint IUCN/WWF Forest Conservation Newsletter. In 1998, IUCN and WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) joined forces to develop a Global FireFight Programme to strengthen national, regional and international networks for forest fire prevention and management, world-wide. This supplement looks at the sources of man-made fire and at the range of solutions available from community fire management initiatives to the wider economic and legislative issues, which are often the underlying cause of fire. It highlights work that the Global FireFight Programme has undertaken and looks towards the initiatives which still need to be developed to further this work and help move the debate forward on how to reduce the ever growing number of harmful forest fires. Whilst work to date has centred in south-east Asia, the lessons learnt and approaches suggested, have a more global application.

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ACIUCN trusts that this information provided will help to guide and inform the Committee in its considerations.

Any inquiries concerning this submission should be directed to Pam Eiser, Executive Officer, direct phone 02-8202 1207.

Yours sincerely



Pam Eiser
Executive Officer

Attachments:

- (1) ACIUCN Resolution on *Australian Bushfires 2002-2003*
Annex to Attachment 1 - the IUCN Protected Areas Categories
- (2) *arborvitae* special supplement *Future Fires: Perpetuating Problems of the Past*, published 2003
- (3) IUCN World Conservation Congress (1996) Resolution 1.24 Impacts of Human-Induced Fire Events on Biodiversity Conservation

(ACIUCN)

AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES 2002-2003

RECOGNISING that the recent 2002-2003 Australian bushfires had significant environmental, social and economic impacts;

EXPRESSING great sympathy for individuals and communities adversely affected by the extensive 2002-2003 bushfires;

The Australian Committee for IUCN, at its 47th Ordinary Meeting, 10-11 April 2003:

SUPPORTS the use of a scientifically informed approach that takes into account the ecological parameters of fire in the Australian environment in future strategic planning, post fire reconstruction and rehabilitation;

URGES coordination of management approaches, including through the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, across the alpine and high country of Australia; in particular management of protected areas should be coordinated and consistent with their IUCN category status;

CALLS for an ongoing commitment at all levels of government to the protection of national parks and reserves (IUCN Categories I-IV) as a critical element in the protection of Australia's biodiversity;

ENCOURAGES ACIUCN member groups to reflect these considerations in any submissions they may be making following the recent bushfire season.