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ABSTRACT SPECIFICATIONS

Title:

Rapid assessment for monitoring heritage sites of international significance

Author: Angela Wardell-Johnson

Organisation: Centre for Human Rights Education, Curtin University

Country:Australia

Email:A.Wardell-Johnson@outlook.com

Author: J. Guy Castley

Organisation: Environmental Futures Research Institute, Griffith University

Country:Australia

Email: g.castley@griffith.edu.au

Author: Grant Wardell-Johnson

Organisation: Department of Environment and Agriculture, School of Science,
Curtin University

Country:Australia

Email:G.Wardell-Johnson@curtin.edu.au

Abstract:

K'gari-Fraser Island is recognised internationally as significant through World Heritage Listing. The unique characteristics that define this island landscape as iconic enable conservation of biophysical environments, emblematic fauna and cultural heritage. These World Heritage landscapes also provide unique opportunities for people to engage with nature. The values that define this iconic status and the dynamic ecosystems processes will be impacted both by climate change and changing social values with potentially far-reaching consequences.

This paper identifies the range of values defining iconic status that require monitoring to meet World Heritage objectives. Monitoring the impacts on these values through global environmental change and an increasing social interest in 'wild' areas by resident and visitor communities present special challenges. Future investment in managing these heritage values is constrained by political frameworks, resourcing and unpredictable change. Here we apply a preliminary test of a monitoring framework based on measurable variables that critically evaluates the state of heritage sites. The values included provide a cross section of

ecological, environmental and social site assessment that are cross-referenced both with world heritage listing values for each site, as well as a means of reporting against previous records.

This monitoring approach is in the tradition of widely applied rapid appraisals conducted when resources are scarce and the need is great. It is possible for measurable and rigorous monitoring data to be collected efficiently and effectively. This monitoring framework provides longitudinal heritage appraisal using a combination of technological support and minimal ecological knowledge to ensure that Australia's global citizenship responsibilities can be effectively met. This monitoring will also ensure that world heritage listing will continue to inspire and conserve.