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Western Lakes campouts – sustainable eco-tourism into the future

June 21st, 2010 by **Daniel**

Season 2010/2011 will again see RiverFly Tasmania running our Western Lakes Campouts. In 2009, RiverFly became the first fly fishing business licenced by Parks and Wildlife Tasmania to operate in the Western Lakes. This is something we are very proud of.

This licensing ensures that our guides operate to environmental, operational and safety management plans. Key features of these plans include:

- Minimising environmental impacts.
- Alleviating any conflict with other anglers – part of our Operational Plan was created to ensure that we bypass any waters being fished by other anglers, as a measure of courtesy.
- As a key requirement of our Safety Management Plan, all campouts are run with two guides.

In addition to these rigorous management plans, our formal licencing requires a small payment back to Parks and Wildlife Tasmania for administration and park management costs.

RiverFly Tasmania are proud to be leading the way in sustainable, licenced fly fishing operations in the World Heritage Area / Western Lakes.

How are our current camps run?

Our current camps depart from Lake Ada, where we commence on foot to Talinah Lagoon, and onwards into the greater Christys Creek Area. The greater Christys Creek area, along with the Pillans / Julians are the only two areas within the Western Lakes that licenced commercial operators are allowed to camp (as per the World Heritage Area Management Plan).

Our campsite was chosen after weeks of exploration and site assessments in 08/09, followed by on-site consultation with Parks and Wildlife managers. We did not take this process lightly, and it was worth the effort: our site is visually hidden from other anglers, and away from popular waters and foot traffic. This ensures privacy for all anglers in the area.

Our typical camps consist of 3-4 traditional hiking tents, with Trangia and gas burners used for cooking. All of our food is fresh, and carried in for the trip. Of course, all waste is carried back out, along with any other rubbish found during our tips. To date we have also carried out nearly a dozen additional cans and bottles left as litter over the years by other careless users.

As per the regulations of the World Heritage Management Plan, all of our camps are restricted to a maximum of 6 anglers. However, RiverFly goes one step further and restricts its campouts to a maximum of 4 customers.

During season 09-10 we were fortunate to spend more than 35 nights camping-out in the Western Lakes. We only encountered seven other anglers (whom by coincidence were all found fishing the same lake at various times!), two of whom were lost and re-orientated by our guides. In addition, we were able to organise help for one elderly bushwalker who was injured on the track between Christys Lagoon and Lake Antimony, with a storm front approaching.

Environmental Best Practice and managing our Environmental Impact into the future

Whether its commercial or recreational, two of the possible impacts from any camping relates to the trampling of delicate flora around campsites (particularly under tents), and issues relating to the disposal of human and washing-up kitchen waste. These are both areas that RiverFly Tasmania is looking to minimise, and manage to World's Best Practice.

To do its part, RiverFly Tasmania is planning to build four tent-sized platforms, each built to hold a two-man, canvas tent. These platforms will be on-site only for the season, and would mean that our tents don't sit-on or smother any plant life in the area. Such platforms are already used by Parks Tasmania to minimize impacts on the Overland Track and Walls of Jerusalem National Parks, and by private operators in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, South West WHA and Maria Island National Park.

To manage human waste, and any contaminated water from dish-washing, RiverFly is also applying to install a small toilet-pod at the secluded campsite. This would mean that all human waste and contaminated water would be flown-out and disposed of outside of the World Heritage Area, ensuring that we are protecting our delicate water courses into the future. It is planned that the toilet-pod would be emptied each May, after the close of the fishing season. This prevents any possible or perceived conflict between other users of the area and the short (30min) use of the helicopter.

As a final element of our proposal, RiverFly will be limiting the number of fly fishing campouts we run each season. From our plans we will be spending a realistic maximum of 60-70 days per season in the Western Lakes. Considering that literally thousands of nights are currently spent by anglers in the Western Lakes, our real impact on visitation numbers in the area will be tiny. What this minimal-impact camp will provide though is jobs for Tasmanian's, increased awareness of the value of recreational fishing in the Western Lakes, and the opportunity for anglers to learn more about the fishing, flora, fauna and history of the Western Lakes.

The camp approval process

Our application is currently with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, and is being assessed through a process called the Reserve Activity Assessment. This assessment ensures that all aspects of the World Heritage Management Plan are met by the proposal. As part of this formal process, public consultation will occur, which will be run in partnership between Parks and Wildlife Tasmania, and RiverFly Tasmania.

Upon a successful final approval, RiverFly will enter into a contract with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. This would see our business pay a commercial lease back to Parks and Wildlife Tasmania (and the Tasmanian people), which will then be used to manage our great National Parks and World Heritage Areas. This is a great example of how our small business can contribute directly back to the management of the Western Lakes for the future.

Re-enforcing the World Heritage Area values

As we work towards environmental best practice, there are a few things that we definitely won't be doing:

1. We will not be applying to fly customers into the Western Lakes. We believe that one of the greatest parts of the Western Lakes fishery is the remoteness, and the need to use your own energy and initiative to get there. This remoteness and solitude is further protected by the WHA Management Plan, which actually prohibits the use of helicopters to take anglers in/out of the WHA.
2. We will not be building a private hut or lodge! One of the great enjoyments of our Western Lakes campouts is indeed the camping. In a world full of stuffy-office blocks and hotel rooms filled with recycled air, we can see the value and appeal of sleeping under the canvas. As such, our camp will remain as just that – a tent camp utilizing 2-3 man canvas tents for accommodation. To ensure these values are protected in the Western Lakes, the WHA actually prohibits the building of private huts or lodges in the World Heritage Area.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to [contact](#) Daniel Hackett at RiverFly Tasmania. You can read testimonials, including those from campouts customers [here](#)

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2 Responses to "Western Lakes campouts – sustainable eco-tourism into the future"

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◦ *Daniel* says:

[June 24, 2010 at 9:13 am](#)

Thanks guys, have a great season in 2010 / 2011!

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