



# Australia Zoo

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**9 May 2008**

## **Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve threatened by strip mining**

Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve (SIWR), a wetland conservation property and tribute to Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin, is being threatened by strip mining.

The 135,000 ha property, in Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, is home to a set of three important spring fed wetlands which provide a critical water source to threatened habitat, provide permanent flow of water to the Wenlock River, and is home to rare and vulnerable plants and wildlife.

Cape Alumina Pty Ltd has lodged mining lease applications which include approximately 12,300 ha of the Reserve.

Terri Irwin said today that SIWR was an important ecological site, which needs to be preserved in order to protect Australian habitat which is in danger of severe degradation and ruin.

"The proposed area for mining on the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve contains the head waters of irreplaceable waterways and unique biodiversity which will not recover after mining operations are finished," Terri said.

"I am a realist and I understand that mining is an important industry, however we have learned over the last 50 years of bauxite mining, it is critical to set aside the most environmentally sensitive areas, such as SIWR, and consider not mining them. Responsible mining companies are already doing this as part of developing carbon credit programs," Terri said.

Cape Alumina company documents indicate an intention to mine 50 plus million tons over a 10 year period commencing 2010. The greater part of this mine is on SIWR.

Initial surveying demonstrates that SIWR is home to rare and threatened plant and wildlife species including six plant species which are highly vulnerable and four plant species which have never been recorded on the western Cape York.

“We have also found rare birds - and that is after only initial surveys. Imagine all the treasures we will uncover after further research,” Terri said.

The Wenlock River is also the richest in fresh water fish diversity of any Australian river, and supports a critical population of endangered Spear-tooth Sharks, Saw Fish and the now vulnerable Estuarine Crocodile.

The area, which was recently inspected by the Environmental Protection Agency, was found to contain unique springs and associated biodiversity which have an important hydrological role in the local area by providing perennial flow into the Wenlock River... which has the richest freshwater fauna of any Australian river.

“The research is all there. This area is vital in maintaining water flow, and habitat to significant Australian flora and fauna. There is no argument. We need to stand as a nation, a state, a community – to protect wildlife and wild places for our children,” Terri said.

“We will continue to work together with the Federal Government and the State Government in Queensland to protect the unique flora and fauna on the 135,000 hectares of the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve.

“Through internationally recognised research projects, fire management, feral animal control and ongoing infrastructure, employment opportunities will also continue into the future. Our dedication to this property for

conservation and humanitarian benefit will far exceed the opportunity presented by ten years of mining."

**-ENDS-**