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IUCN is the world's largest environmental knowledge network and has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. IUCN is a multicultural, multilingual organization with 1000 staff located in 62 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.

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## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

# WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE TAKES YELLOWSTONE OFF DANGER LIST

## World Heritage Committee takes park off List of World Heritage in Danger

**Paris, France, 4 July 2003 (IUCN)** – The UNESCO World Heritage Committee decided this week to take Yellowstone, the world's first national park, off the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Established by Congress in 1872, Yellowstone, in Wyoming, USA, became a World Heritage site in 1978. Further to proposed mining operations close to the parks boundaries, the World Heritage Committee placed it on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1995. The Committee also identified a number of other serious management problems which threatened native trout populations and herds of North American bison. Other reasons for inscription on the List included degraded water quality caused by poor sewerage treatment, pressures from visitor numbers, and disturbances caused by the use of snowmobiles.

Reacting to the listing, the US Government quickly bought out the mining rights and made good progress with the other issues. In April this year, the government reported on progress made and asked the World Heritage Committee to remove Yellowstone from the 'In Danger' list at its 27th session in Paris.

As advisor to the Committee, IUCN assessed the report from the US. Though impressed by the US report on progress made in dealing with the management problems at Yellowstone, it also received a number of representations from eminent individuals and NGOs in the US. These submissions, which arrived only a few days before the meeting, directly contradicted the report from the US Government, and urged the Committee to keep the site on the 'In Danger' list. IUCN did not have enough time to assess the accuracy of these claims before the meeting and provide objective technical advice to the Committee.

The Committee decided that sufficient progress had been made to allow it to remove Yellowstone from the 'In Danger' list. However, it also accepted IUCN's guidance that the US Government should be asked to continue to work on the outstanding management problems, monitor progress and report to the Committee on this work. It also asked the US to include independent experts, NGOs and other stakeholders in preparing these reports.

IUCN believes that the US Government is to be congratulated on the progress made in addressing the issues that face Yellowstone and especially its action over the mine. But problems remain at Yellowstone. IUCN welcomes the willingness of the US to submit progress reports as long as the Committee requests them. It also welcomes the decision of the Committee to continue to exercise a role in receiving and assessing these reports from the US.

### For more information contact:

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