



ACT Bushfire Council Meeting

Wednesday, 3rd December 2014

Room 2
ESA Training Centre
Hume

Chair: Cathy Parsons

Secretariat: Vanessa Althorp

Attendees: Steve Angus, Member
Christine Goonrey, Member
Marion Leiba, Member
Michael Lonergan, Member
Tony Bartlett, Member

Dominic Lane, ESA Commissioner
Brian Murphy, Representing the Chief Officer,
Rural Fire Service
Nick Lhuede, Group Manager, Emergency
Management, Risk and Spatial Services, ESA
Tony Hanson, A/g Manager, Bushfire Planning
& Coordination, ESA
Conrad Barr, A/g Chief Officer, Fire & Rescue
Rick McRae, ESA Risk Analyst

Meeting commencement: 16:10hrs

Meeting concluded: 17:30hrs

Minutes

Agenda item:	1.a - Welcome 1.b – Apologies 1.c - Disclosure of “Conflict of Interests” 1.d – Confirmation of meeting times	Presenter:	Chair
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The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

- Kevin Jeffery, Bushfire Council Chair who was currently overseas.
- Andrew Stark, CO ACTRFS who was in Melbourne chairing a national meeting.
- Andrew Joyce, Council member who was interstate.
- Scott Farquhar, Senior Fire Management Officer
- Kaylee Rutland, A/g ESA Community Manager

No conflicts of interest were registered by participants.

Agenda item:	2.0 – Acceptance of previous minutes	Presenter:	Chair
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Discussion: Tony Bartlett and Cathy Parsons noted they made minor revisions to the August minutes and it was agreed that Cathy Parsons and Tony Bartlett would resend revised minutes to Tony Hanson to finalise and then circulate for approval.

Decisions:
The minutes of meetings held on November 2014 **were accepted** as a true and accurate record of the meeting. **Moved:** Marion Leiba - **Seconded:** Michael Lonergan

The minutes of meetings held on May 2014 **were accepted** as a true and accurate record of the meeting. **Moved:** Michael Lonergan **Seconded:** Marion Leiba

Agenda item: **3.0 – Update on action items arising from previous meetings** **Presenter:** **Chair**

Discussion:

In summary

- Council agreed on the draft letter to Commissioner regarding RFMP's
- Council agreed that the Land Use paper was no longer required by Nick Lhuede as he would feed issues back to Council. (Note: Land use planning was identified as being on the February Council agenda)
- The Bushfire Pre- Suppression Resource Atlas would be held over to February due to Scott Farquhar's absence
- Tony Hanson to continue researching a suitable process regarding finding suitable candidates that could be considered by the Minister to fulfil the statutory role of a Council Member with experience in Indigenous land management
- Council was happy for Steve Angus to provide advice to RFS on the Rural fact sheet being prepared for Leaseholders

Agenda item: **4.0 – Correspondence** **Presenter:** **Chair**

Annual Preparedness Report
Blue Range Field Visit – Council's Report

Discussion:

The meeting noted the Council's Annual Preparedness Report had been sent to the Minister.

The meeting discussed a Blue Range report prepared by Tony Bartlett provided below.

Background

On 27 September 2014, members of the ACT Bushfire Council visited the Blue Range area in the Lower Cotter to inspect and discuss issues associated with the development of a management plan to deal with fire hazard issues associated with plantation and wildling pines.

The Blue Range area contains areas of pine plantation re-established after the 2003 fire, including some areas with both planted and wildling pines, and areas of dense pine wildlings mixed with regenerating native trees. Some of these areas fall within the Lower Cotter Water Catchment, where maintenance of water quality is of the utmost importance. There are varying degrees of fire hazard associated with the former plantation areas. The very high densities of wildling pines in some locations are a significant problem from a fire management perspective and these risks need to be managed in a strategic way that balances risks with costs and protects important environmental values. A detailed block by block analysis will be necessary and may conclude that additional block access is needed.

Council endorsed the following underpinning principles in developing a management plan for the area:

- A well managed pine plantation generally does not represent a higher fire hazard than natural forest, however the situation can be complicated by the presence of extensive areas of blackberry and the impact of thinning operations.
- The existence of an appropriate network of roads in plantation areas is an important component of plantation fire management as it enables rapid response and provides suppression options that often don't exist in native forests.
- Some of the regenerating natural forests that contain wildling pines contain species which have not yet reached the stage where prescribed fire could be undertaken without killing the regeneration.
- No single treatment will be appropriate for every site and the potential treatments for some sites will be expensive and difficult to implement.
- A strategic approach to management of the risks in the area is likely to give the most

cost effective way of reducing fire hazards.

- Areas of replanted pine should be subject to high quality management through to commercial final harvesting, including thinning and strategic pruning and efforts made to reduce the incidence of wildling pines in these areas.
- Areas of dense wildling pines will need to be managed on a case by case basis in a way that balances the desire to strategically reduce the fire hazard while protecting the regenerating natural forest.

Following the field visit and discussion **Council resolved:**

Council supports the intent of the draft management plan for the Blue Range area and recommends the urgent need for both ground assessment of the status of each block and piloting of a range of possible treatments to lessen the fire hazard risks in this area, noting that as part of the assessment additional block access may be required.

Moved: Tony Bartlett - **Seconded:** Michael Lonergan

Council further resolved to thank the Commissioner, ESA and TAMS for arranging the field visit and providing recent briefings.

Agenda item:	5.0 – Canberra Bushfire Ready Campaign	Presenter:	Kaylee Rutland
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Discussion: The planned CBR presentation was held over until 2015 given Kaylee Rutland was unavailable. Council noted that ESA was aware of the importance of evaluating the campaign.

Agenda item:	6.0 – Fuel Loads in ACT	Presenter:	Rick McRae
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Discussion: Rick McRae, Risk Analyst, Emergency Management Risk and Spatial Services, gave a presentation on the 2014 Bushfire Fuel Survey for the Act. The presentation detailed the dynamics of the recovery of bushfire fuel in the wake of the 2003 wildfires. This work has been coordinated with efforts by TAMS, CSIRO and NSW NPWS.

Key outcomes of the field observations are the identification of issues on the fire affected landscape of (i) fallen timber; (ii) dense regenerating shrub layers; and (iii) fuels complexes that are not described in existing fire behavior models. A detailed ESA internal report on fuel loads in the ACT was distributed to Council Members for information.

Rick also gave a presentation on his research with the NSW Rural Fire Service on identifying conditions conducive to the development of a blow-up fire event and arrangements in place for Fire Behaviour Analysis (FBAN) over the coming summer. The challenge facing the ACT of these highly specialist roles has been met by working with the NSW FBAN Group under the auspices of the ACT/NSW RFS Memorandum of Understanding. Rick outlined that given the highly specialist roles that more formalized arrangements were developing nationally as well.

Council thanked Rick for his presentation and invited him back to the May meeting on National Research Focus. Tony Hanson suggested Rick could assist in coordinating the presentations for that meeting. Tony Hanson would follow up with Rick in relation to a panel of speakers.

Agenda item:	7.0 – Bushfire Prone Areas	Presenter:	Nick Lhuede Conrad Barr
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Discussion: **Bushfire Prone Areas**

Nick Lhuede and Conrad Barr briefed the Bushfire Council on Bushfire Prone Areas in the ACT. Council welcomed the briefing on the approach being undertaken to identifying BPA's noting that the Government would be considering these issues shortly. Following the

Government's consideration of the issues, Council would welcome the issue being discussed at a future meeting.

Agenda item: 8.0 – Other Business

Other Business National Parks Association

The council thanked the National Parks Association for supplying copies of the Namadji National Parks Book to Council Members.

RFS Rural Leaseholders Forum

Council Members participated in the annual RFS Rural Leaseholders Forum at the Hume RFS Helibase.

**The next meeting is scheduled for 4th February 2015,
Black Mountain Meeting Rooms 1 & 2 ESA Headquarters**