



ACT Bushfire Council

6th April 2011

1600-1900

ESA Headquarters

Chair:	Tony Fearnside (acting)	Note taker:	Amy McLenaghan
Attendees:	Christine Goonrey, Member Simon Katz, Member Marion Leiba, Member Tony Fearnside, Member		Andrew Stark, Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service Paul Swain, Chief Officer ACT Fire Brigade Michael Joyce, Deputy Chief Officer ACT Rural Fire Service Neil Cooper, Manager ACT Parks and Land Conservation
Meeting commencement:	1615	Meeting concluded:	1730

Minutes

Agenda item: 1.0 - Apologies

Tony Bartlett, Deputy Chair/Member
Cathy Parsons, Member
Kevin Jeffery, Chair/Member
Michael Lonergan, Member

Agenda item: 2.0 – Minutes of previous meeting

Presenter: Tony Fearnside

Discussion:

The March minutes contained a few spelling mistakes that were pointed out with discussion

Conclusions / Decisions:

Minutes were approved with minor changes

Action items

Amended minutes to be posted on website

Agenda item: 3.0 – Actions running sheet

Presenter: Tony Fearnside

Discussion:

BFC Minutes on website (1)

Andrew Stark advised council that minutes will be placed on the website when it has been finished and council agreed

BFC Abstracts on website (2)

Members were reminded to send their abstracts through to Tony Bartlett and Amy McLenaghan to collate and upload onto the website.

Website Portal (3)

Andrew advised that ESA is in the process of updating the website and early indications are that there will be password protected portals that people will be able to use to access certain documents. It will take some time to figure out as the website is reformed. It was confirmed that JACS currently have the software so it already exists.

Letter to Minister re: Endorsement of BOP (4)

In Kevin's absence, Tony Fearnside confirmed that the letter had been drafted but not sent.

Horse Agistment (5)

Andrew advised that the draft report was sent to Neil Cooper, Simon Katz and Will Andrews for and comments have been sent back. He advised that due to high interest in the report, RFS is going to print 200 copies and distribute to internal and external stakeholders. The report separates people who agist horses and people who have their horses agisted and recommendations point to RFS having to prepare separate information for the Agistment industry and clients who have their horses agisted. Council commended RFS for its initiative with this project.

Agenda item: 4.0 – *Correspondence*

Presenter: Tony Fearnside

Incoming:

Nil

Outgoing:

Nil

Action items

Nil

Agenda item: 5.0 – *Season Review*

Presenter: Andrew Stark
Paul Swain

Discussion:

Andrew Stark advised Council that this has been one of the quietest fire seasons as far as fire activity was concerned. There were still a significant number of small incidents but the conditions were as such that they were kept within metres in size. Conditions allowed hazard reductions to occur more frequently than usual. The helicopter was used once for a fire in the Googong catchment but was tasked to flood work for most of the season.

The Rural Fire Service will be observing the grass growth throughout winter and are waiting to see what the six month weather outlook will be as they have been accurate in the past.

Paul Swain advised Council that the ACT Fire Brigade had a record number of USAH deployments with 81 days of deployment and 62 of those being overseas deployments. Council were advised that SES had 2800 jobs reported and there is concern that this could be due to less resilience or higher expectations from the community. Christine Goonrey queried as to whether there was an increase in arson and Andrew advised that there was a lower occurrence in nuisance areas.

Tony Fearnside queried Paul and Andrew about the disaster management experience and skills gained from the deployments and Paul advised that there will be a forum held to discuss this and he will distribute final reports.

Action items

Agenda item: 6.0 – *State of Trails adjoining ACT Western Boundaries*

Presenter:

Discussion:

Neil Cooper advised that if a trail is closed off it is because there is better access elsewhere. Paul Swain and Christine Goonrey commended Neil for his interview on the matter with The Canberra Times. Andrew Stark advised that unfortunately due to behaviour of people, the gates are now locked but Neil confirmed that all fire suppression agencies have keys. Neil confirmed that no road will be closed if it has strategic fire advantage. Andrew advised that often closing the road means that when it needs to be used it is usually in a better condition and is therefore a

beneficial to fire management to lock the gates.

Conclusions / Decisions:

Andrew advised that he is willing to correspond with Dave Darlington to ensure that the trail network is identified in park management plan.

Agenda item: 7.0 – Other Business

Presenter:

Discussion: 7.1

Neil Cooper advised Council that the past season has been challenging for fuel management and they are 73% through the bushfire operational plan. They have had difficulty implementing the burns as they are mainly through grassland that is currently green. He advised they will be focusing on native forest burns in Boolem, Googong and Cowen. There is a small window of opportunity to light and pending possible rain, the burns may be unable to go ahead. Tony Fearnside commended Parks for their good ideas of planning undertaken.

Conclusions / Decisions:

Neil confirmed that they have had varying degrees of success; from an ecological point of view they feel they have had success but there has been some difficulty managing fuel loads.

Discussion: 7.2

Christine Goonrey advised Council that there will be a launch for the NPA Namadgi Book on the 15th April and members are invited to come along. Christine was also seeking advice on who may benefit from complimentary copies. Marion Leiba suggested that SES Units could benefit from the Namadgi Book as they could be subject to search and rescue operations in the area. Council decided that the RFS and SES volunteer Brigades would be sent a copy.

Conclusions / Decisions:

Christine will liaise with Amy McLenaghan to get the addresses for the brigades and units so they can receive their books.

Discussion: 7.3

Simon Katz raised an issue regarding fire management heading into spring with the rural landholders. He advised that we need to be aware that the landholders could be having trouble managing the fuel loads on their lands. He predicts there may be issues with grazing licences and suggested that due to the large grass growth on the landholder's properties, there is little interest to relocate their cattle outside their lease.

Neil advised that they will enter into a media campaign where a message will be broadcasted monthly about the hazard reduction that is taking place. He suggested that they may have to look at arrangements where leaseholders are paid for grazing licences.

Discussion: 7.4

Christine Goonrey requested an update from Andrew regarding any further development with LDA and Molongolo. Andrew advised that ACT Emergency Services has not endorsed any plan. He stated that they have not seen any plan that protects asset protection zoning and they are continuing to make clear to LDA what the requirements are. Neil confirmed that Parks and ESA are working closely together and no plan will be endorsed until the requirements are met.

Conclusions / Decisions:

Christine advised that Bushfire Council supports the environmental protection of the area and will continue to source updates on the development.

Discussion: 7.5

Neil Cooper advised that civil litigation has recommenced as of the 4th April, and parks have had a few expert witnesses called to give testimony. He advised Phil Kopparberg will be called to the stand and there are numerous ACT witnesses about to be called. Andrew advised that it is predicted to go to the High Court and the appeal has already been booked there.

Discussion: 7.6

Christine Goonrey also congratulated Phil Zylstra whose doctoral thesis has been accepted without revision and will contribute to a greater understanding of fire in our pine regions.

Agenda item: 8.0 – Outstanding Items/Issues

Presenter: Insert Position Title

Discussion:

Nil

Action items

Nil

Other Information

Next Meeting: 1600 4th May 2011, ESA Headquarters.