

# MINUTES



## ***ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL (BFC)***

**5 August 2009**

***ACTRFS HEADQUARTERS***

***4 POINT COOK AVENUE***

***FAIRBAIRN ACT***

**Wednesday 5th August 2009**

**AGENDA**

- 1. Opening and Introduction by Chairman**
- 2. Attendees/ Apologies**
- 3. Minutes of previous meeting**
- 4. Actions running sheet**
- 5. Correspondence**
  - Incoming
  - Outgoing
- 6. Agenda Items**
  - 6.1 TAMS BOP Presentation
  - 6.2 ESA Restructure
- 7. Other Business**
- 8. Outstanding Items/Issues**
- 9. Confirmation of next meeting**

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**DATE:** 5<sup>th</sup> August 2009 1600-1900 Hrs

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**LOCATION:** ASOC Fairbairn

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**Meeting Opened** Time: 4.20pm **Close:** 7.40pm

**1. Welcome by Chairman**

Kevin Jeffery opened the Meeting at 4.20pm

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**2. Attendees/Apologies:**

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|-------------------|---|
| Kevin Jeffery     | (KJ) Chair Member                         |
| Michael Lonergan  | (MIL) Member                              |
| Christine Goonrey | (CG) Member                               |
| Tony Fearnside    | (TF) Member                               |
| Simon Katz        | (SK) Member                               |
| Cathy Parsons     | (CP) Member                               |
| Marion Leiba      | (ML) Member                               |
| David Foot        | (DF) A/G Commissioner                     |
| Conrad Barr       | (CB) A/gDeputy Commissioner Fire & Rescue |
| Tim McGuffog      | (TM) Deputy Chief Officer ACTRFS          |
| Michelle Fleming  | (MF) Secretariat                          |
| Neil Cooper       | TAMS, visitor                             |
| James Ryan        | JACS, visitor                             |
| Michael           | JACS, visitor                             |

**Apologies:**

- |                |                           |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Tony Bartlett  | (TB) Deputy Chair /Member |
| Ken Batt       | (KB) Member               |
| Peter Kanowski | (PK) Member               |

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**3. Minutes Of the Previous Meeting:**

Minutes of the 8th July 2009 meeting tabled.

Changes to the minutes to be updated:

7. (CG) Concluded all of the SBMP consultations and mapping. She thinks this was a good opportunity to get people in the same room including some who hadn't participated before.  
(CG) Glenburn precinct – important because it is environmental heritage. Conservation Council is committed to the process – unknown to the community – reassure conservator – regardless of land tenure there is agreement on fire management.

The minutes have been changed to read:

(CG) Concluded all of the SBMP consultations and mapping. She thinks this was a good opportunity to get people in the same room including some who hadn't participated before.  
Conservation Council is committed to the process – regardless of land tenure there is agreement on fire management.

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Minutes Accepted

**Moved:** CG **Seconded:** MIL

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**4. Actions Running Sheet:**

Action Required:

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**5. Correspondence In/Out**

<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>6.1</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> August 2009</b>
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>ASOC Fairbairn</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Presentation of 2009/10 Bushfire Operations Plan PCL</b>

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**BACKGROUND:** The Fire Management Branch of TAMS provides the Bushfire Council with an account of its previous years Bushfire Operational Plan and presents its program for the coming year for the Bushfire Councils Consideration. (Summary attached with meeting papers)

The BFC has an opportunity to evaluate the plan and suggest additional works if it has concerns in any area relative to bushfire management in the ACT.

The annual Bushfire Operational plan is a comprehensive table of works that TAMS proposes to manage, prevent, and mitigate against bushfires on TAMS controlled lands across the ACT. It also identifies their financial commitment against all of these programs.

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**CURRENT SITUATION:** Bushfire Council annually evaluates the plan and provides recommendation to the Commissioner ESA for its approval or amendment. Members should be aware that the plan fully commits the budgetary allocation for the financial year and recommended inclusions or alterations will mean reprioritisation of other proposed works.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Council consider the plan and presentation by the Manager of the TAMS Fire Management Branch and provide their recommendations for approval or otherwise.

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**SOURCE:** Neil Cooper

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RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION: (NC) We will do this in two parts. Hopefully the Council members have or will go through the attached minute.

## **Part A – Results of 2008/2009 BOP**

### **1. Fuel Management activities**

Chemical application (100%)

Grazing (98%)

The reason it was only 98% is that, we didn't meet the Grass Fuel Hazard (GFH). This area was along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor where the presence of extensive swathes of the unpalatable African Lovegrass resulted in a less than ideal outcome. We will wait until it gets some shoots on it to be able to graze or to spray it.

Physical Removal (96%)

The only project not completed was the reshaping of the verges on the Googong Fire Trail. This has been rolled over to the coming year and is pending heritage surveys.

(KJ) The only thing that seems like an addition to that, may be a report on the priority of the things that didn't get done and if they were important or not.

(NC) That would be pretty hard to do as we have a lot of things to do and they don't fall into a priority list, they fall into what we achieve and resources that are allocated.

Prescribed Burning (100%)

Commenced or completed – One prescribed burn for research purposes at Gorooyaroo NR was not required due to lack of fuel. The second burn at Mount Clear could not be implemented (despite several attempts) due to high fuel moisture contents and wet conditions.

Slashing (100%)

An extensive fuel reduction programme through slashing/mowing was conducted throughout Canberra. These operations focus on areas adjacent to houses, and along roadside verges where there is a higher potential for the ignition of unplanned fires.

(KJ) It would be beneficial to have the levels of fuel management shown in two numbers – the forested as one figure and grassland as a separate figure, as they have different requirements and timeframes for hazard management.

### **2. Access Management**

2008/09, 976km of fire trails were identified for routine maintenance, upgrade or construction.

Routine maintenance (89%)

A total of 41 out of the 46 areas identified in the Bush Operations Plan (BOP) as requiring routine maintenance were completed. The remaining areas required more extensive work than routine maintenance and have been rolled over into the next year BOP.

Vegetation Management (80%)

The one task that was carried over to next year was the slashing of the track in the River Corridor, near the Huntly pump station – this project needs further investigation and clarification before proceeding.

New trail construction (100%) and trail upgrade (89%)

A total of 4 out of 5 fire trails were done. The Spencer's fire trail has received planning approval and will be completed next year.

A total of 16 of the 18 upgrades were commenced /completed. The remaining two upgrades have been carried over to next year, including the Bendora Break and Naas Fire Trail.

### **3. Infrastructure (91%)**

A total of 11 items were identified in the BOP covering the signposting of main fire trails, maintaining existing helipads and water points and installing fuel management grazing infrastructure including fencing and water points.

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The one project not completed or commenced is the setting up of the Namadgi Visitors Centre as an Incident Control centre – this is been carried over to next year.

(ML) I notice that they mention the maintaining of the helipads, did you find that they need a lot of work on them?

(NC) We had two or three days where they flew over all of them. A lot of the helipads are natural ones so they didn't need a lot of work, the ones that did were cleared as part of a training exercise.

(TM) They completed some of it as part of Remote Area Fire Team (RAFT) Training.

(MIL) Do you still use the Tennant helipad?

(NC) Dylan is going through the Regional Plans to have a look as we have quite few helipads close together and we don't need so many. There are two up there and I'm not sure which one you are talking about.

#### **4. Equipment acquisitions (100%)**

Two significant items were purchased this year; a trailer mounted weed washer for vehicles & machinery entering the National Park for fire activities and a flame thrower to assist in planned burns throughout the ACT.

#### **5. Training (87%)**

The training programme was ambitious and always going to be hard to achieve as it proposed presenting 30 separate courses to over 700 staff. Unfortunately several of our courses, that had been planned to be delivered by Victorian Agencies, had to be cancelled due to the Victorian fires in February.

(CG) I have to say that the level of training is very impressive.

(NC) It is fair to say that we have an extremely high level of focus on training. That is why we have three staff going to Canada tomorrow.

#### **6. Auditing Monitoring (84%)**

A total of 16 projects (out of the 19 identified in the BOP) were either completed or commenced by the end of June. The remaining three will be rolled over into next years BOP - they include the key audit, identifying staging areas and audit access from East O'Malley into Mugga Mugga fire trail.

#### **8. Seasonal Crew and Plant (100%)**

TAMS employed 12 seasonal fire fighters from mid November, 2 fast attack dozers and 1 grader for a period of 26 weeks. The seasonal resources are used to assist in fuel and access management activities and are available to the Rural Fire Service for fire readiness and response.

(MIL) This is a good report.

(CG) You are to be congratulated on the report as we could easily read and understand it.

(ML) It was understandable and you all have worked hard on it.

(KJ) Can I make a motion that we accepted the report from last year's BOP?

### **Part B - 2009/10 Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP)**

#### **Identification of 2009/10 BOP Activities**

- Fuel hazard and other field assessments.
- Rolled over from previous BOP.
- Dropped from previous BOP.
- Identified in other plans.
- Public/political commitment.
- Agreement with other agencies.
- SRFMP (activities that can be implemented with current resources)
- Inquiry recommendations.
- Training Needs Analysis.

Activities reviewed by:

- Research and Monitoring (TAMS)
- Heritage (TAMS)
- Environment Protection Agency (TAMS)
- Lower Cotter Advisory Committee
- ACTEW/AGL (in the case of Googong)

#### **Summary of 2008/10 BOP Activities**

- Slashing – 6506 ha (6202 ha)
- Prescribed burning – 3432 ha (667 ha)
- Fuel reduction grazing – 4532 ha (3983 ha)
- Physical removal – 287 ha (309 ha)

- Maintain 434 km of fire trail (478 km)
- Upgrade 143 km of fire trail (8 km)
- Construct 14 km of fire trail (11 km)
- Feasibility assessments for 17 major trail works
- 1160 training days

Of the 172,000 ha of PCL estate:

- 8.5% will be subject to some form of fuel management.
- 85% of the PCL estate has fuels =< 8 years old.

## ACTIVITIES IN KEY STRATEGIC LOCATIONS

Key strategic locations:

- The western urban edge of Canberra
- Major fuel wicks through the urban area
- Areas identified through the Sub-Regional Fire Management Plan (SRFMP) process

Risk in these locations is managed by activities that:

- Reduce fuel hazard, and
- Maintain/improve access for fire suppression

Planned activities to reduce fuel hazard include a combination of:

- Prescribed burning
- Slashing
- Intensive short term grazing
- Physical removal of fuels
- Chemical control of regrowth

Planned activities to maintain/improve access include:

- Cyclic maintenance of hundreds of kilometres of existing fire trail
- Upgrade works such as sheeting, installation of drainage structures and widening of corners
- Construction of new trails
- Feasibility investigations for 17 major upgrade and construction works

## PRESCRIBED BURNING IN NAMADGI NP

Current BOP identifies 6 burns in Namadgi NP:

- Clear Range
- Brandy Flat
- Brindabella Rd
- Long Flat
- Asset protection burns at Corin and Bendora ranger residences
- SRFMPs identify mosaic of prescribed burns

(KJ) Do you need a tick from us today or can we go through it.

(NC) No. Realise that we have started to implement the plans as we are into the first month of the financial year and the BOP is basically our budget for the year.

MOTION MOVED:

MOTION SECONDED

KEVIN JEFFERY

MARION LEIBA

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Endorsement of the BOP by the BFC and sign off by the Commissioner

**AGENDA ITEM:** 6.2

**DATE:** 5<sup>th</sup> August 2009

**LOCATION:** ASOC Fairbairn

**SUBJECT:** **ESA Restructure and recent events.**

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**BACKGROUND:** The former Commissioner of ESA resigned from the position on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2009. This followed an announcement from the ACT Minister for Emergency Services, Simon Corbell, that each of the Chief Officers would be reinstated to the ACT's four emergency Services.

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**CURRENT SITUATION:** The Chairman and Senior officers of ESA and JACS will provide members with information and detail on how the new structure and positions will be re established and progress to date.

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**RECOMMENDATION :**

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**SOURCE** Kevin Jeffery

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**RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:** A lengthy discussion was held between Mr. James Ryan, Ag/DCO JACS and Members. Council was proactive in this discussion and made a range of recommendations and proposals towards the way in which the future organisation should be directed. As this report is still being formulated and the Minister is yet to see and decide on the outcome.

Some of the main focus areas of the discussion were:

- That the Chief Officer of a service must be the highest ranking officer, and thus the structure outside/above the service should be non-operational;
- The current South Australian model, utilising Chief Officers, a Chief Executive of the support agencies, and a Board of those heads, was extensively discussed and recommended;
- Mr Ryan discussed the potential to streamline the budget process by streamlining the layers of management above the Chief Officers;
- The need for strong operational leadership was emphasised;

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**MOTION MOVED:**

**MOTION SECONDED:**

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**ACTION REQUIRED:**

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**AGENDA ITEM:**

7

**DATE:**5<sup>th</sup> August 2009**LOCATION:**

ASOC Fairbairn

**SUBJECT:**

Other Business

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1. RFS Gala Dinner, 22 August 2009  
(TM) The Gala Dinner is on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August and you all are invited with your partners. At the dinner we present the five and ten year internal awards.

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  2. RFS Field Day Competition 19<sup>th</sup> September  
(TM) If you would like to be a judge or to be a part of the event it can be organised.

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  3. Pre Season Briefing 29<sup>th</sup> September  
(TM) It will be held at the AIS again this year. We will run through the operational agreements which may or may not have changed.

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  4. High Fire Presentation next meeting, Mark Adams from Sydney University  
(TM) He will be at the next meeting
  5. Hot Spots Project Update  
(TM) It didn't get off the ground at all.
  6. BFC Membership Status

(TM) Tony Bartlett, Tony Fearnside and Kevin Jeffery's appointments expire in December. We need to commence the paperwork to send to the Minister. Currently there is a Council position vacant – would we like to advertise it, any suggestions?

(MIL) My suggestion is that all three positions should be renewed and Brian Parry be considered as the fourth member.

(CB) Brian is going to be based in Canberra and if he was approached he would be favourable to the idea.

(TM) Would you like me to initiate the process?

(CG) I would like to say right at this time, Council needs to keep continuity.

(TM) Is everyone happy to remain on Council?

(KJ) Yes, I am happy to.

(TF) No, not really due to health reasons. Let me get back to you about it.

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**RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:**

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**MOTION MOVED:****MOTION SECONDED:**

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ACTION REQUIRED:

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**AGENDA ITEM:**

**8**

**DATE:**

**5<sup>th</sup> August 2009**

**LOCATION:**

**ASOC Fairbairn**

**SUBJECT:**

**Outstanding Items/ Issues**

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**RESOLUTION &/OR DECISION:**

**MOTION MOVED:**

**MOTION SECONDED:**

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

**Time and Date Next Meeting:**

**2<sup>nd</sup> September 2009 1600 Hours Fairbairn**