

DEH plans 34 prescribed burns to help manage SA bushfire risk

Weather conditions permitting, in the next few months the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) plans to stage 34 controlled burns in parks and reserves it manages across SA, covering more than 7600 hectares in its Autumn prescribed burns program.

DEH manages a quarter of South Australia's land, including more than 300 parks and reserves.

The Adelaide Region, including Northern and Southern Lofty and the Fleurieu Peninsula, will have the highest number of individual burns in the Autumn program – 11, encompassing 235 hectares in parks including Black Hill, Horsnell Gully, Para Wirra, Warren, Belair, Cleland and Deep Creek.

The largest amount of land to be burnt in this Autumn's programs will be within Ngarkat CP in the Murraylands Region where five burns are planned, encompassing 5179 hectares.

"Fire is a natural part of the South Australian landscape, and even the best fire prevention activities cannot stop bushfires from occurring," said DEH's Chief Executive, Allan Holmes.

"But we can reduce the impact that bushfires may have on the parks we manage and the surrounding communities through careful planning and strategic fire management activities.

"There is conclusive evidence both nationally and internationally that prescribed burns reduce the impact wildfires would otherwise have on built and natural assets and on communities," he said.

Mr Holmes said using prescribed burns to reduce fuel loads in parks and reserves:

- provides safer access for firefighters in the event of a bushfire
- makes it easier to control a bushfire
- helps prevent bushfires spreading to residential areas
- reduces the risk of a bushfire damaging public and private assets, and
- increases the patchiness of the vegetation, thereby reducing the possibility of a conservation area burning in a single bushfire.

Prescribed burns can only be conducted during favourable weather conditions, usually in spring and Autumn, when it is not too hot and dry, and not too damp.

"In Spring 2007, unseasonably hot and dry weather made it impossible for DEH to complete the planned fuel reduction program. On Kangaroo Island, for example, we planned five burns but because of the prevailing conditions we were able to complete only one," Mr Holmes said.

Joining Mr Holmes today at a press conference to announce DEH's Autumn prescribed burns program, SA Country Fire Service's Chief Executive Officer, Euan Ferguson, said DEH had to carefully manage fire risk in conservation reserves such as national parks.

Media contacts

Charles Maddison

Media & PR Manager
DEH Corporate Communications
Phone 8204 2123
Mobile 0423 827 613

Kate Husband

Public Affairs Manager
SAFECOM
Phone 8463 3710
Mobile 0403 332 701

www.environment.sa.gov.au



Government
of South Australia
Department for
Environment and Heritage



"That is not only because DEH has to conserve native plants and wildlife and help protect assets, but because the reserves experience high visitor numbers, particularly during the fire season.

"Similarly, private landholders are responsible for reducing their properties' vulnerability to bushfires. They need to ensure they follow CFS guidelines when clearing fuel from their land," Mr Ferguson said.

Every prescribed burn also allows DEH to learn more about the behaviour of fire, which helps DEH to plan and implement more effective bushfire management strategies for the future.

Working in partnership with the CFS, DEH will ensure appropriate back-up resources and fall-back positions are available at each prescribed burn in the event a fire crosses containment lines.

During the fire season, DEH has 391 trained staff available for deployment to bushfires across SA including 38 seasonal firefighters.

"In 2007-08 DEH will spend more than \$7 million on bushfire management," Mr Holmes said.

"We'll continue to invest in developing our bushfire management expertise to ensure we're better prepared for the increasing fire risk and longer bushfire seasons associated with climate change."



**Government
of South Australia**