

Bushfire research to be conducted in Hambidge Wilderness Area

The Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) is preparing to conduct a prescribed burn in the Hambidge Wilderness Protection Area on the Eyre Peninsula.

Joe Tilley, DEH Fire Management Officer for the West Region, said the prescribed burn was part of a joint research project with the SA Country Fire Service (CFS) to learn more about how plants and animals respond to bushfires.

"The burn will be conducted when suitable weather conditions occur, sometime between now and the end of May," Mr Tilley said.

"Local residents will be notified of the exact date as soon as weather conditions allow us to go ahead with the burn.

"The information we obtain from the burn will help us answer some of the questions we have about bushfires, such as how areas recover after fire, the times required for different plants to reach reproductive maturity, and the times required for different animals to recolonise areas.

"This will help us to better manage areas affected by bushfires, such as the recent fires on Kangaroo Island," he said.

"Different plant and animal species have different habitat requirements.

"Conserving a diversity of habitat ages in reserves is crucial, and infrequent or too frequent fires may have negative consequences for species we are trying to conserve.

"Our challenge is to achieve an appropriate mosaic of habitat ages.

"We can create such a mosaic by controlling the location, frequency and size of prescribed burns in parks," Mr Tilley said.

The burn is planned for a 330-hectare area of mallee woodland in the south-west corner of the Hambidge Wilderness Protection Area.

The fire will be directed into an area of bushland burnt during 1999, which has low, discontinuous fuel loads, enabling crews to extinguish the fire more easily.

No public access to the southern boundary of Hambidge Wilderness Protection Area will be available during the burn, which is expected to begin at about 10 am.

DEH will extinguish the fire in the evening and patrol the area over the following days.

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