

ACT Bushfire Council

Meeting Minutes

Thursday 24th July

4.00pm

Conference Room
Air Support Operations Centre
4 Point Cook Avenue Fairbairn

Attendance:

Kevin Jeffery	Chair/ Member
Tony Bartlett	Member
Tony Fearnside	Member
Peter Kanowski	Member
Michael Lonergan	Member
Tim McGuffog	ex Officio (DO RFS)
Gregor Manson	ex Officio (Commissioner ESA)
Malcolm Gill	Invited Guest (CSIRO)
David Butt	Invited Guest (TAMS)
Russell Watkinson	Invited Guest (TAMS)
John Neil	Invited Guest (ACTEWAGL)
Norm Mueller	Invited Guest (ACTEWAGL)

1. Opening and Introduction by Chairman

- The Chair opened the meeting at 4:10pm

2. Apologies

Stephen Wise, Member; Simon Katz, Member; Brian Parry, ex Officio – Deputy Commissioner, ESA

3. Minutes from Previous Meetings

- Insert into previous minutes - *A question was raised in relation to the 'High Fire Report' presentation provided by Rick McCrae and how it would be adopted into the SOPs.*

ACTION: There needs to be a process within the ACT to report back on this process.

- **Item 8 (page 2) ML asked if UHF is going into all RFS Vehicles? (Commissioner) –**

Insert into previous minutes another dot point – *It is necessary for two radio sets in one vehicle.*

Minutes were moved by TB and Second by ML.

4. Business Arising

4.1 Review Actions from June Meeting -

Action Item 4.3 (Commissioner) – Invite Malcolm Gill, Norm Mueller and Jack Lavis to next meeting. – Invitations done and organised (attendance of Malcolm Gill and Norm Mueller). Invitation to Jacki Rowe, ACTPLA, needs to be followed up.

Ms Jacki Rowe was unable to attend.

The National Disaster Mitigation Fund (Commissioner) - TAMS and RFS have jointly put in for a bid from the Commonwealth for Fire Reduction and Bush Fire Mitigation (due on the 30th June). Submission was made. TMc provided council copies.

ML asked if UHF is going into all RFS Vehicles? (Commissioner) – At last meeting Jim Hewitt provided advice that currently the capability of the radios allows for another channel band to be added into the radio system. A separate setting may not be necessary. TMc provided a tabled handout. Confirmation that all RFS appliances, Command vehicles and Staff vehicles have UHF CB radios separate from UHF TRN radios.

Duress Buttons (Commissioner) –

TMc/BP/Commissioner - to advise BFC with the outcome and where it fits in with the BFC communications planning regarding the radios (TMc – RFS appliances have the CB/TRN/VHF – but he will check this) – TMc provided tabled handout on RFS Communications Plan Requirements.

4.3 Business Plan Update

The Commissioner provided a tabled handout – AFAC Environment document. The Commissioner will be discussing this with TAMS and ACTEWAGL.

ACTION: The Council to provide comments back to the Commissioner to discuss at the next meeting.

4.4 ROAG Meeting 22/7/08 Update

NIL

4.5 Consultants Update BFC Monitoring and Review

NIL

5. Listing of new Agenda Items -

5.1 Presentations on Catchments Management

- **Malcolm Gill, CSIRO**
- **David Butt/Russell Watkinson, TAMS**
- **John Neal/Norm Mueller, ACTEWAGL**
- **Malcolm Gill, CSIRO, Mixing Fire and Water**

Key Points

- Objective and problem
- High quality water coming from the catchments with lots of cover
- How cover/fuel is needed to prevent erosion
- Fire behaviour and Control
- Fuel load, slope and fire control

There was a general discussion on combining the variables of vegetation type and cover and the relationship of slope. Avoiding soil erosion and the appropriate % of patchiness and associated fire intensity is the critical relationship to work out. A 70% burnt - 30% unburnt seems to be a

reasonable standard. There is a need to sort through these problems and come up with prescriptions by working more closely together.

There was a comment made about the Strategic Bush Fire Plan and should we be identifying critical issues that lead to catastrophic outcomes that we should be aware of when planning mosaic burns or burns within the catchment.

- The mosaic issue is complex. There is an obvious issue with the whole catchment burning at high intensity.
- Position and proximity to watercourse – important point from fire management point of view.
- Establishing where and when a fire would burn i.e. ranges, northwest slopes.

There was a question regarding if there was any attention being paid to water quantity – Malcolm's presentation was primarily about water quality not quantity - which was covered in Norm Mueller's presentation.

Norm Mueller, Water Quality Post 2003.

Key Points

- Fire
- Drought
- Rain Storms
- Consequences
- Rehabilitation

General discussion on soil type, vegetation and road networks. Note, soil type is important and variable and has implications on vegetation recovery time. Need to establish fine scale management and understand regeneration issues through applied research.

Strategic planning review of hill/catchment issues is required. It was suggested that we need to develop strategies around the specific catchment and work on policy elements so it doesn't burn again under 2003 circumstances.

Fire Management – need to sort out structure and think about what sort of fire we require to produce the desired results.

First Attack – controlling the fire and not the whole catchment i.e. mosaic burns in some areas. These are underlying issues that the council needs to tease out to develop strategies to address.

Comments on inflow area regarding risks, mapping and hazard reduction – minimise risk so overall impact is manageable.

David Butt, Catchment Management, ACT Catchments.

Key Points.

- Assets

- Water Consumption
- Water Supply
- Fire Management
- Catchment Management
- Erosion
- What we need – Communications Plan
- Who – BCL, land managers, rangers, ACTWEAGL, ESA & leaseholders.

Discussion about bush fire management and the need to continually update and evaluate prescriptions on an ongoing basis.

Planning and communication with ESA along with prescribed burns in NSW to protect our assets. Comments were also made on how climate change will be an issue and will impact future catchment regimes over the next 20 years.

Russell Watkinson, Catchment and Fire Management.

Key Points,

- Strategic Bush Fire Plan
- Subregional Plans
- Bush fire operational Plan
- Ecological Fire guidelines
- Post fire monitoring

General discussion with concerns raised regarding catchment land management and the current accountability with the BOP process. It was suggested that there be a new process put in place that checks off and is easy to follow so you can see what has been achieved in that year. TAMS understand that the BOP lacks solid communication but any questions should come to TAMS.

There was also a request for additional information to be available for KJ and TB to assist in providing the annual preparedness report to the Minister – any request should go through TAMS.

ACTION: TMc to send around the sides from the presentations with the minutes.

6. Correspondence -

NIL

7. General Business -

NIL

8. Reports -

Commissioner –

NIL

RFS –

NIL

Fire Brigade –

NIL

Council Members –

NIL

9. Confirmation of Next Meeting

- The Chair closed the meeting at 7.00pm
- The next council meeting will be held at the ASOC on the 28th August 2008.