

Parks and Wildlife Service - Albany District Report: Plantagenet BFAC Meeting 8th May 2024

Fire Season Summary:

It has been a busy season this year, among the driest and warmest on record. DBCA Albany District have attended 25 fires within its District this season. The Albany District have also provided support for numerous fires elsewhere around Western Australia throughout the season. There have been no fires on CALM Act estate within the Shire of Plantagenet this year, however support has been provided through several water bomber activations within the Shire.

Concerningly, a number of fires attended this year, particularly around the Albany area have been deliberately lit, a situation being monitored by DFES and the WA Police Arson Squad.

DBCA Staffing Levels:

We are currently at full staffing capacity, with numerous seasonal staff now made permanent, however thanks to State Government investment in fire capability, this looks to be enhanced further for next fire season.

Government Investment in Capacity:

Recently, the State Government announced a \$30 million dollar investment into fire capability for DBCA in the southwest of WA. From that funding, the South Coast Region is set to secure a further 4 Conservation Employees, with 3 of those being based in Albany, in addition to a heavy duty “gang truck” fire appliance, a D6 bulldozer, a low loader and prime mover. This investment is a welcome addition to the District’s capacity, and will assist greatly in the conduct of our business.

Projects Planned/Completed:

A number of projects have been underway or are planned within CALM Act estate within the Plantagenet Shire. Between tractor slashing in the Porongurup National Park, spraying of fire breaks within various Nature Reserves and the Stirling Range National Park, or upcoming grader works, the team have been busy in the maintenance of its strategic fire access tracks.

Prescribed Burning:

The prescribed burn ALB_066 within Porongurup National Park in spring was a great success, and thanks again to the crew from Porongurup South Bushfire Brigade for giving up their time and providing assistance throughout the duration of the burn. Other burns planned within the Shire are ALB_088 and ALB_065, however, within the current climate, the service is reluctant to apply fire to the landscape until further rain has fallen.

Soil Dryness and Ecosystem Health:

Soil dryness has been a significant driver of the forest drought deaths which has been observed these last few months. Our Nature Conservation team are monitoring this situation closely. Please see SDI measurements for Albany and Rocky Gully. With soil and vegetation dryness remaining high, we still regard potential for volatile fire behavior as an ongoing risk.

All in all, the DBCA are operations normal.

Nathan Ramage
Fire Operations Officer