

Chief Fire Weather Reporting Officer Report Summer 2023-24

The summer dry started early this last Summer with little rain recorded after November 2023. It had been wet during the Winter with the wettest June on our records for parts of the Shire. From August on the rainfall was below average for the Spring and very dry over the Summer.

Last week's rainfall recorded from 02-05-24 to the 06-05-24 has been welcome by the community as a start to the season with up to 40 mm in some places. It wasn't so much that this start was late but that last Summer arrived early.

The Summer was warmer than the last one quite markedly with a stretch of warm days in February with six harvest and movement bans (HVMB) in place from 01-02-24 until the 20-02-24. A challenging period of time. Fortunately, we didn't have any major burns during this time apart from the contained fire in Narrikup with the silage pit.

There are a lot of indicators for weather now available to the public and this is a good thing. It does assist awareness but remaining vigilant during the warmer months remains a high priority as the community changes.

I have allowed permit burns to proceed up to and including an FDI of 27 providing the issuing FCO is happy. This has worked well I believe with little additional risk to the community and allowing people to get work done on time to progress their programs. I note the advice received recently where risk mitigation comes into play and believe that the risks are minimised well under the existing system without complicating it further.

I will step down from this role at this time and look forward to other people taking this role and adjusting it as they see fit. It will remain a challenge to "get it right" and to support those who look to understand the figures and the decision-making process.

There are more resources available to the Weather Chief these days and they were well utilised by me. I welcomed the input from others and still do. It is most useful when the information comes with actual figures rather than "it's a hot day out this way".

Please support the new Weather Chief as he learns the ropes and makes sometimes difficult decisions. There will be mistakes made possibly from time to time. I made one call this past Summer. I remedied it but the initial indication was that the forecast was wrong.

The weather scheds were difficult to organise on short notice when there was no sched on a given day. A WhatsApp group for Weather Officers might be worth considering to alleviate this issue.

Thanks for all the support over the last two years I think it has been. Much appreciated.

Len Handasyde CFWRO Shire of Plantagenet.