

The Commissioner
ACT Emergency Services Agency
GPO Box 158
ACT 2601

Exposure Draft Strategic Bushfire Management Plan

Friends of the Pinnacle (FOTPIN) is a community group concerned with maintaining and improving the natural values of the Pinnacle Nature Reserve. In recent years, thousands of volunteer hours have been committed to parkcare in and adjacent to the reserve, the vast majority in weed control.

One portion of the Pinnacle that presently has high environmental value is a patch of Stringybark Forest at the western end of the reserve, known to our group as the 'Forest Block'. Despite 100 years of pastoral and urban development within metres of this forest, it remains home to a rich diversity of plants and animals and FOTPIN members would be deeply concerned if actions proposed in the Draft Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) v3 preceded, degrading this natural asset.

Surveys conducted with the ACT Government's Conservation, Planning and Research Division in late 2013 confirmed the value of the Forest Block through the presence of uncommon or rare plant species such as *Indigofera adesmifolia* and *Swainsona sericea* (all data publicly accessible via <http://canberranaturemap.org/>). The Forest is also known nesting and feeding habitat for locally threatened bird species such as the Speckled Warbler and Varied Sittella.

SBMP section 11.1.7 notes the objectives for some established suburbs is to balance fire management in Asset Protection Zones (APZ) with adjacent conservation values and outcomes. Regarding the Forest Block (with about 400 m of suburban edge running between grid locations E685035/N6096967 and E685337/N6096775), its nomination as an Outer APZ is proposed in the SBMP at the full width of 300 m. Such an OAPZ would effectively encompass the entire Forest Block, and particularly concerning would be the impact on good value areas at its southern edge if fuel hazard in the Forest Block was maintained below the moderate ranking (SBMP Table 21.5) for forest/woodland. Given that Section 11.1.7 states that SBMP assessment can be on a "case by case" basis, FOTPIN requests that this case be reconsidered.

We would also strongly request that fire be applied only at a rate consistent with the ecological community in the Forest Block, that is, about once every 12 years.

In Table 21.2, the OAPZ column shows that a 300 metre zone width is the target for primary interfaces, but also states that reduction to 200m can be countenanced, and to

100m for secondary interfaces. FOTPIN submits, since most of the interface of concern faces essentially south (except for a short length at the western end that faces the southwest), that the zone width here be reduced to 200 m, or preferably 100 m. Ideally, we consider the zone should extend no further than the existing cleared buffer zone between the houses and northern edge of the Forest Block. FOTPIN also notes that no APZ has been placed on the boundary a little further east (around grid E685620/N6096892), and suggests that the addition of a 100m APZ in this location could compensate for a reduction of width in the area of the Forest.

With regard to Objective 7, the studies listed below indicate that broadacre fuel reduction makes very little if any difference to protecting built assets. It also consumes limited public resources that could be better spent on work that will protect houses from bushfire. According to these studies, spatially targeted fuel reduction and other actions are more likely to be effective for protecting houses in Canberra.

FOTPIN can provide more detail as required, and looks forward to hearing from the Emergency Services Agency. If you have any enquiries regarding this submission please do not hesitate contacting me.

Yours sincerely

Vaughn Cox
Convenor

1. Price O.F. & Bradstock R.A. (2012): *The efficacy of fuel treatment in mitigating property loss during wildfires: Insights from analysis of the severity of the catastrophic fires in 2009 in Victoria, Australia*. J. Environ. Manage. 113:146-157.
2. Gibbons P., et al. (2012): *Land Management Practices Associated with House Loss in Wildfires*. Plos One 7(1): e29212.
3. Driscoll D.A., et al. (2010): *Resolving conflicts in fire management using decision theory; asset-protection versus biodiversity conservation*. Conservation Letters 3(4):215-223.
4. Cary G., et al. (2009): *Relative importance of fuel management, ignition management and weather for area burned: evidence from five landscape-fire-succession models*. Int. J. Wildland Fire 18:147-156.