



Quarterly Newsletter – September 2021, Volume 2

Pre-Fire Season Preparation Leading up to the 2021/22 Fire Season

In the March newsletter we discussed, the meaning of Integrated Fire Management, and all its aspects. By now summer is rapidly approaching and landowners ideally need to be well into preparation for summer fire season. Winter and spring are the most suitable times to do this. Before the busy harvesting and holiday season, and of course the fire season..



Annual Veld Fire Planning Cycle: Western Cape.

What landowners should be focusing on in this period:

A) Stakeholder mobilisation and communication

The Greater Overberg Fire Protection Association (goFPA) is divided into Fire Management Units (FMU's), each with a leader. The role of the FMU's and its leaders are to locally organize and lead fire management efforts, under the goFPA. Landowners should start communicating plans to respond to and mitigate fires and related risks as well as sharing contact details of all surrounding properties and properties in the FMU. Everyone should know the contact details of members in the FMU and the resources available from local services and fellow landowners, to enable early reporting and initial response.

Action Item:

Should you not yet have joined the goFPA or are not linked with your FMU engage with your FMU leader. Should a landowner not have the above information they are advised to contact:

The goFPA at:

Tel: +27 (0) 28 425 1690

Fax: +27 (0) 86 585 2348

Email: info@overbergfpa.co.za

Address: Fire Station, Long Street, Bredasdorp



B) Risk assessment

Several tools are used by the veld fire fraternity to determine veld fire risk. Usually, a framework for assessing and quantifying veld fire risks is based on the area's vegetation type and age, (i.e. the fuels) the vegetation fire ecology, history of fire, weather, and the likely impact of fires on lives, social and economic activities.

The goFPA has created a basic self-audit for landowners to determine their fire readiness and legal compliance to The National veld and Forest Fire Act (Act 101 of 1998). During the winter planning period, ideally, the self-audit should be completed by landowners as the tool assists landowners to determine and address their shortcomings, prior to the fire season. The completion of and keeping record of the self-assessment and mitigated shortcomings, should reduce the risk to landowners for litigation as well as losses.

Link to goFPA self-audit: <https://overbergfpa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Rules-Checklist.pdf>

Additionally, the goFPA, Overberg District Municipality and Overstrand and its partners annually map hot spots and high-risk areas for rapid response. Landowners are encouraged to engage with FMU leaders in reporting the risks to authorities.

C) Protection, prevention, and planning

Protection – Structures:

It is a common perception that the fire services can protect any structure. In the veld fire scenario structures are often exceedingly difficult to protect due to limited access. It is important to ensure access routes are open, wide enough, and safe for fire fighters to enter as well as escape from should they become entrapped. It is important to create a defensible space around structures before the fire season.

Useful links: Structure veld fire risk assessment: <http://landworksnpc.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Veld-and-Fire-Risk-Assessment-Form.docx>

Useful links: Protecting your home from wildfire.

<https://overbergfpa.co.za/15-tips-to-better-protect-your-home-against-wildfires>

<http://landworksnpc.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Wildfire-Defensible-Space-A4.pdf>



Wild fires burning plantations and threatening houses.



Protection - Fire breaks:

All fire breaks should be completed by November and must comply to the FPA rules as required by the National Veld and Forest fire Act. FPA rules containing Fire break standards: <https://overbergfpa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/goFPA-Rules-May16-AGM-approved.pdf>

Fuel loads: (Vegetation and Alien Invasive plants)

- Fuel-load reduction should ideally be carried out in the winter months.
- Burn or remove alien vegetation and debris from clearing operations.
- remove all burnable debris from risk areas such as structures.
- Should natural veldt be over 17 years on private property a landowner will have to consider a block burn.
- Don't forget to get a permit to burn.

Prevention: Activities to reduce or mitigate fire risks including:

- In the Kogelberg Biosphere area most fires are manmade and often occur by accident during daily activities.
- Ensure that relevant staff are trained for fire suppression
- Fire danger index - ensure that staff are daily made aware of the fire danger index and what activities are not allowed and how to respond.



Fire break prepared in Fynbos.



Wildfire in Fynbos.

The Palmiet River – Catchment to Coast

The Palmiet river is 74 km long and starts in the Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve (Grabouw), runs through the Elgin Valley and flows into the ocean at Kleinmond. It has a catchment area of 500 km² and provide water for agricultural and industrial usage.

The river is named after the plant known as Palmiet (*Prionium serratum*). Palmiet plants have an important function in rivers – providing a microhabitat for insects, fish and birds. It also performs a filtration function, improving the quality of water. Palmiet also limits water loss and evaporation due to less water surface being exposed and therefore Palmiet should not be removed from rivers.

The Palmiet river catchment has been transformed by plantations and agriculture, with a small portion of fynbos remaining. There are five major in-stream dams on the Palmiet River:

- ❖ Arieskraal Dam,
- ❖ Eikenhof Dam,
- ❖ Kogelberg Dam,
- ❖ Rockview Dam and
- ❖ Transpalmiet Dam.



Palmiet growing on river bank.

When the Palmiet river flows through the Kogelberg Nature Reserve (the core of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve) the ecological condition of the river improves significantly due to the inflow from the unimpacted Dwars and Louwsriver tributaries.



Palmiet Estuary.

The Palmiet River Estuary is an important breeding area for marine fish species and it is also highly valued for its scenic beauty. There are 25 fish species found in the Palmiet River Estuary with no alien fish species present. The longfin eel (*Anguilla mossambica*) uses the estuary as a waterway between the sea and river.



Longfin eel (*Anguilla mossambica*).

Hiking in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

With the start of Spring it is time to get out and start hiking!! Residents of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve have a variety of hiking trails to choose from, deep in the mountains or down at the coast.

The Kogelberg Nature Reserve (core of the Biosphere) as the heart of the Cape Floral Kingdom have 1600 plant species of which 150 are endemic. It also has 3 patches of relic indigenous forest. The Kogelberg Trail (24 km, 7-8 hours) is graded moderate and takes you through the heart of the reserve. Hangklip Trail (7 km, 4 hours) starts at Pringle Bay and provides a beautiful view of the False Bay coast and mountain peaks.



View from Hangklip peak.

On your way to Kogelberg Nature Reserve, be sure to visit Stony Point penguin colony at Bettys Bay, home to the endangered African penguin. Contact the Kogelberg Nature Reserve for more information and to obtain a hiking permit – 087



Coastal fynbos species.

You can walk from the Kleinmond estuary to Palmiet estuary. The trail is about 5 km and rated as easy. Along this trail which meanders through coastal fynbos, you might be fortunate to see whales or dolphins. No permits required.

Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve in Grabouw is known for its rugged mountain terrain with altitudes ranging from 500 to 1590 m. The reserve is a hikers' paradise with day hikes and overnight routes as well as the famous kloofing routes.

There are 2 kloofing trails to choose from: Riviersonderend Gorge (24 km, 7 hours) and Suicide Gorge (17km, 5 hours). During this adventure you will need to jump from a height of 14 m into a pool of deep, dark, icy water. Some say it is an extreme sport, a different way to experience nature!



Riviersonderend Gorge.

The role of Bees in the Ecosystem

Pollinators provide a wide range of benefits to humans. Our well-being depends on ecosystems and their functions. To a large extent, pollinators drive and maintain the good health of these ecosystems. Most fruit, seed and berry crops are dependent on insects, especially honeybees, to ensure fruit or seeds are set through pollination. Honey bees are globally regarded as the most important insect pollinator.

In South Africa, over 50 crops are dependent on bee pollination. Bees ensure a reliable and diverse seed and fruit supply through pollination. Data shows that the use of honey bees for pollination improves fruit set, fruit weight and quality. Bees also indirectly contribute to job creation and employment, both at beekeeping and farm level.



Fruit crops in the Elgin Valley.

By cultivating plants for bees in your garden you add to an environment that supports biodiversity. Bees use scent to find flowers, so choose sweetly scented, nectar-rich plants. They can only see the color of plants when they get closer to them. Bees are attracted to yellow, blue, white, and violet flowers with violet being their top choice.



Cape Honey Bee.

It is more beneficial to plant a variety of flowers in larger groups rather than one or two here or there. Bees need to have the following:

- ❖ Nectar – the sugar content provide them with energy.
- ❖ Pollen – their source of proteins and fats.
- ❖ Fresh water – provide in a shallow source like a birdbath or shallow pond.

Also avoid using harmful pesticides and chemicals.

For more information:

Contact Corlie Hugo at admin@kbrc.org.za

Website: www.kbrc.org.za

Facebook: Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve Company