

ACT Bushfire Council

Meeting Minutes

**26 October 2006
3.00pm – 6.00pm**

**Conference Room
Air Support Operations Centre
4 Point Cook Avenue Fairbairn**

Attendance

Kevin Jeffery	Acting Chair
Michael Lonergan	Member
Bruce Leaver	Member
Simon Katz	Member
Stephen Wise	Member
Geoff Butler	Member
Peter Kanowski	Member
Chris Maguire,	ex Officio (ACT FB)
Trevor Clement	ex Officio (ESA)
Michael Ross	ex Officio (RFS)

Apologies

Dee Watson	Secretariat
Tony Bartlett	Member

1. Opening

The Acting Chair, Kevin Jeffery, opened the meeting at 3pm.

2. Minutes from last meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 September 2006 were unable to be distributed due to the absence of the secretariat. The Chair agreed to pursue those minutes to be reviewed and accepted at the next meeting.

3. Business Arising

Namadgi plan

A question was asked regarding the status of the Namadgi Plan of Management. Geoff Butler provided information that it was not yet finalised, primarily due to the incorporation of further comments and a shortage of staff in the relevant areas.

Lower Cotter Catchment

It was suggested that a submission was provided by the Bush Fire Council but does not appear in the list of submissions.

Action: Geoff Butler/Dee Watson to locate a copy of the BFC submission and provide it to Sharon Lane at EACT.

4. Listing of new Agenda items

Geoff Butler asked for the Farm Fire Wise report to be discussed at this meeting.

5. Correspondence

Two magazines received: Power Equipment and Golf & Sport Turf.
A call for papers for an international conference was received.

6. General Business

6.1. Farm Fire Wise (FFW) Data Items

Geoff Butler – there is no mention of native vegetation on the worksheets provided to be provided to the landholders. This is problematic, as some landholders have endangered Yellow Box/RedGum woodland on their leases. Geoff Butler has asked Jeremy Friend how he was going to deal with this issue. Jeremy Friend had advised that there was a different mapping system in EACT to ESA, but this is not relevant as there are conversion packages between the different programs

The areas of significant vegetation need to be on the maps to prevent impacts on those areas. SK – has previously raised issue with Jeremy Friend – apparently the lessees get a separate map SK – also heritage issues are not part of the FFW mapping – is picked up by EA as part of land management agreements.

Michael Ross – this process is being undertaken as part of EACT's land management agreement

Motion – BFC notes the lack of vegetation mapping on FFW Worksheet due to different data. BFC believes that this data is fundamental to effective planning and would prefer that the mapping systems are made compatible or a conversion process is found.

Action – ACTPLA), WRMU (Mark Dunford)

6.2. FFW document

Michael Lonergan – Providing comments on a 40-page document is difficult by next Friday. An extension of time would be beneficial. Michael Ross noted that the timeframe was based on the last working day for Jeremy Friend. He said that if comments were provided after that they could go to Virginia.

The meeting agreed that the writing style not appropriate for the audience (rural lessees) – it seemed to be pointed towards a more scientific audience. Effective communication to landowners required different style. The document requires focus on the main messages. Most people agreed the content was OK.

Michael Lonergan suggested that the complete Farm Management Agreement was generally only 5-6 pages, and as such this seemed to lead to overkill in this area.

Chris Maguire noted that he wanted to add in comments from ACTFB due to some of the content that related to issues around houses and structures looking to be incorrect.

The meeting suggested that the employment of an editor would be useful to finalise the document to the audience.

Actions: members to get comments to Jeremy Friend by required date, or to RFS after that date.

6.3. Report for minister

Chair had previously provided a copy of the second draft report to members for comment. The draft report had been prepared based on previous discussions within Council, a meeting of a subcommittee to brainstorm and detail issues, and provision of comments by members on the first draft.

A number of areas of the report were proposed for discussion at this meeting:

1. The mountain fire training school – The point was made that this is a good concept in principle, but possibly too specific for this report. A suggestion was made to engage bushfire CRC and other agencies, but it was decided that this was just supposed to be a principle, and this was a specific example of the long term planning principle.
2. Recommendation 2, part C – the meeting discussed whether that was correct. The meeting agreed that it doesn't apply and it was to be deleted from the report.
3. Fleet and safety issues. This section was extensively discussed. The meeting agreed that there were not enough trucks available to meet the community protection needs if current tankers are not allowed to be used. The proposal from the BFC to be put in the report was that additional money was needed urgently to deal with the serviceability of existing vehicles, and that the tankers with petrol pump would need diesel pumps this season.

7. Reports:

7.1 Trevor Clement, Emergency Services Agency:

1. Trevor has had his first engagement with community – the Acting Commissioner and the Chief Officers held a community consultation evening at Weston. It was for information exchange, so residents could make sure they know how to be prepared, and some issues were raised by the community (future/growth of CFUs, police training re evacuation).
2. Trevor noted that the job of Commissioner ESA was not yet resolved
3. Disappointment was expressed over the minutes not having been available at the meeting.

7.2 Geoff Butler:

Geoff asked what are the details of the fire in southern Namadgi Michael Ross reported that 80 ha in ACT was burnt. The fire started as a hazard reduction on Peter

Spencer's property. There was a permit and & burn plan for the HR burn – weather conditions changed over the course of the fire. Michael Ross noted that unfortunately it is virtually impossible to blackout in the conditions (fuel/terrain), so patrol is essential for some time.

7.3 Michael Lonergan:

NSWRFS – Michael has been to a couple of Cooma meetings recently. Key issues that were discussed were:

- Tumberumba fire was very difficult to put out. It burned in similar vegetation conditions to Namadgi (as it currently is)
- There have been 2 – 3 fires so far above snow line (very rare)
- Dryness above 1200 metres – driest on record
- Serious shortage of on farm water – Monaro Canberra has 20,000 litre semi and will hire a 40,000 litre semi based in Cooma.
- All captains in Monaro have told their landowners that no permits to burn would be given.

7.4 Bruce Leaver:

Bruce asked Michael Ross what likelihood of being called to NSW – Michael Ross replied that it is possible given the conditions. It would be unlikely at that time that we would be ok as we are short on numbers and it would probably be bad here too. It will be a very calculated decision.

7.5 Chris Maguire

ACTFB are well prepared for this fire season. They have had a lot of consultation with RFS. There is a document regarding communications coming out shortly. They have run an exercise regarding integrated incident control, and have identified limitations to IMT staffing over campaign fire and are looking closely at transition arrangements in the BAS. Chris Maguire has resigned and moving back to QLD due to family commitments.

7.6 Kevin Jeffery:

No report.

7.7 Simon Katz:

No report

7.8 Michael Ross:

1. Vehicle assessments – to be completed by tomorrow – vast majority some running repairs and available.
2. Elvis is back in the building. NAFFCI put in for more resources. The Federal Government provided additional funding being allocated directly to another Skycrane. The outcome is that the Commonwealth pays for the setup costs, and any state that uses it pays for the usage charges. The helicopter will be stationed in Canberra to be a central location for NSW/Vic. In regard to the use of aerial assets for bushfire suppression, research shows that helicopters are most useful in first hour. Larger air tankers have use in larger fires with retardant especially, however we have little experience with these and the situation here may prove difficult.

7.9 Stephen Wise:

Stephen asked for an update on the issues that were causing disharmony in volunteer ranks.

1. Brigade funds – Trevor Clement replied that he had met with VBA two weeks prior to this meeting to talk through issues. The issue was still to be finalised. Trevor did not believe the volunteers had a case to keep the current situation under the current Act, and an administrative change or a change to the Act would be required. Members generally agreed that the community was donating to individual brigades when they donated funds, and therefore givers would be unhappy to have their donations classed as ‘government money’.

2. Training – A number of recent documents had defined the need for training, including the McLeod Report and an RFS Training Needs Analysis. The meeting agreed that the ACT needs more volunteers, and more training to maintain those volunteers. Both the McLeod Report and the ESA Capability Analysis showed a need for some 750 RFS volunteers. We currently have 368. The RFS would like to be able to ramp up the training and recruitment for a couple of years then simply maintain the level.

8. Confirmation of next meeting

**Next meeting to be held at ASOC on
23 November 2006. 3pm – 5.30pm**

Kevin Jeffery closed the meeting at: 6.00pm.