



Government of South Australia
Department for Environment
and Heritage



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Milestone achieved for managing bushfire risk on Kangaroo Island

An improved approach to bushfire mitigation and community preparedness has been adopted for Kangaroo Island, setting out a combined approach to landscape-scale, risk-based bushfire management planning.

The KI Bushfire Risk Management Plan (KI BRMP) pilot project, which commenced in February 2008, has now been endorsed by the Kangaroo Island District Bushfire Prevention Committee, together with the KI Council (KIC), the SA Country Fire Service (SA CFS), the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) and SA Water (SAW).

The plan, which aims to minimise the risk and impact of bushfire on life, property and the environment, is a strategic approach to bushfire management in similar areas of bushfire risk, based on climate, land use and population, called landscape tenures. It has been developed in consultation with the community and SA CFS Brigades, along with key stakeholders, to identify risk and proactive measures to deal with risk to improve community resilience.

KI Council mayor Jayne Bates says the plan will allow the community the opportunity to increase their level of preparedness and defensible space on both public lands and on private property.

“The change in planning approach to a risk based plan has been strongly supported by our residents, who called for a greater ability to provide protection for their homes and families following the December 2007 fires that burned almost one-third of the Island,” she said.

“This planning process was the vehicle to give the community the voice they were asking for, and to utilise their skills and knowledge. The partnerships formed in preparing this plan have been critical to its success, as no one agency could have achieved such a comprehensive plan and I thank all those involved.”

The project is a pilot for the State, based on the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) bushfire risk management planning model, with significant support from the RFS. It will be rolled out across South Australia, taking into account landscape tenures unique to bushfire risk areas.

CFS Chief Officer Euan Ferguson says the BRMP focuses on a partnership approach to bushfire mitigation and risk management, following extensive consultation with key stakeholders, CFS brigades and the community.

“The Bushfire Risk Management Plan is a major re-appraisal of approaches to native vegetation management, asset protection and community safety and preparedness, which will be implemented and moulded to specific landscape tenures right across South Australia,” he said.

“Community and brigade engagement has been essential to the planning approach of the KI Bushfire Risk management Plan, and ensures that local knowledge is combined with data, research and agency expertise to develop a thorough bushfire risk assessment for an area.

“Managing bushfire risk is a shared responsibility, so it has been pleasing to note the involvement of community and brigade members in identifying areas of concern and proposing works to address these concerns.”

A BRMP is a comprehensive, strategic project that maps and describes the level of bushfire risk across an area and the proposed treatments to minimise and mitigate the risk, including identifying who is responsible for carrying out the treatments. Treatments may include works such as hazard reduction burning, community education, fire access track maintenance and establishment of community fire safe groups.

DEH Regional Conservator, Kangaroo Island, Bill Haddrill says the coordinated approach to bushfire risk management will ensure that everyone plays their part.

“Bushfires don’t recognise land management boundaries,” he said.

“This plan is a step forward in integrating fire management strategies on both public and private land.”

The plan has been developed as a partnership between the KI community, the CFS as the State’s bushfire hazard leader, and the DEH, SAW and KIC as public land managers on the island. A Community Engagement Strategy formed an integral part of the planning process, reflecting the important role landholders play in risk management.

The plan draws on recent changes to native vegetation regulations to support the development of asset protection zones by private landholders on their properties and incorporating works across public and privately-owned and managed lands in the KI area.

SA Water Head of Regional operations Rob Dowling says he is pleased SA Water could be a part of an integrated approach to bushfire risk management for Kangaroo Island and looks forward to working with different agencies to ensure its success.

“The Kangaroo Island Bushfire Risk Management Plan is an excellent example of how a range of land managers can take a coordinated approach to fire management and prevention to ensure the safety of the wider community,” he said.

“Property owners across the Island are reliant on one-another to employ good land management practices, and by taking a coordinated approach we can ensure everyone’s requirements are met.

“In SA Water’s case, bushfire prevention and land management are vitally important to our regional operations and this coordinated planning will assist us in protecting the integrity of our catchment areas and maintaining water quality for our Kangaroo Island customers.”

For more information about the KI BRMP or to read the plan, visit www.kangarooisland.sa.gov.au and follow the links to the Bushfire Risk Management Plan.