



Media Release

Friday, November 8th, 2013

Launch of New Tools to Assist Landholders with Planned Burning

A new manual and other tools are now available to assist landholders to safely undertake ecological and fuel reduction burns.

The manual was launched at a field day at Campbell Town today by Senator Richard Colbeck and Police and Emergency Management Minister David O'Byrne.

It is part of the Planned Burning Pilot Project funded by NRM North through the Australian Government and delivered by Macquarie Franklin.

Leanne Sherriff from Macquarie Franklin said fire was an important aspect of the Australian landscape and could be both a threat and a land management tool for a range of purposes from fuel reduction, ecological regeneration and weed management.

"The aim of the Planned Burning Pilot Project was to up-skill private landholders in the safe and effective use of fire as a management tool on their properties. The project has been running since April 2012 and wraps up this month."

NRM North Chief Executive Officer, James McKee, recognised the significance of this project in light of the current discussion around fire management.

"This project is a practical approach to supporting private landholders with fire management on their properties. It is about exploring the complexities of fire management on private land, with issues from biodiversity and natural resource impacts to fuel loads and fire protection to consider.

"We are hoping this partnership project will support an increased opportunity for ecologically sound and practical fire management to become part of day to day management on private land."

The first step in the project was to survey private landholders to find out their level of fire knowledge and experience and what were the barriers (if any) stopping them from performing planned burning.

The project team then worked with a group of 10 pilot farmers to develop and test tools and processes designed to overcome the major barriers to performing planned burning, which were identified as risk of escapes and lack of resources (labour and equipment).

Pilot farmer, John Atkinson said the planned burning project gave him logistical support to undertake burning on his property.

“My father and I have wanted to burn the bush block to encourage biodiversity for quite some time. Before the project, the overall risks of lighting a fire, such as fire escaping to a neighbouring property, were greater than the potential benefits of burning.”

The skills of experts from Tasmania Fire Service, Parks & Wildlife Service, Forestry Tasmania, DPIPW, and TFGA were also utilised during the delivery of the project.

Planned burns were done on some of the properties of participating farmers to put the theory learned during the project into practice. These burns have been written up into short case studies highlighting the process that was followed and key learnings.

Pilot farmer, Anne Williams, wanted to use fire as a tool to help regenerate native vegetation.

“The project has given us the confidence to undertake burning on our property. It has shown us that it is possible to control fire - such as the back burning we undertook to secure boundaries.”

Fire Management Consultant on the project, Jon Marsden-Smedley, enjoyed working with the farmers.

“Their enthusiasm for the values in their bush blocks and their desire to see them appropriately managed so that fire risks are minimised and ecological values are maintained was great to see.”

The manual and case studies were launched today by Senator Richard Colbeck and Minister David O’Byrne at a field day which included a visit to one of the case study planned burn sites, and hearing from both participating farmers and fire management experts.

The manual and case studies will be available on the websites of the project partners.

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