



National Parks Association of the ACT Inc.

conservation education protection

Fire Management Plan
Parks and Conservation Service
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601
Via EPSDDComms@act.gov.au

Submission on the Regional Fire Management Plan 2019-28 Draft

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Regional Fire Management Plan 2019-28 Draft (the RFMP).

The National Parks Association of the ACT ("NPA ACT") is a community-based conservation organisation with more than 60 years of experience in helping to protect our natural environment. Given the potential positive and negative impacts that bushfires and bushfire mitigation actions can have on the environment, this is an area that the NPA ACT has always maintained interest in. As part of this interest, it has actively contributed to bushfire management consultation and has also sought to raise community awareness of bushfire management issues through active public engagement.

The NPA ACT would like to recognise the importance of the development of this RFMP in light of the significant impacts of the 2019-20 Orroral bushfire. With so much significant fire damage to Namadgi National Park and the resultant change to the fire risk profile to the ACT modification of the existing RMFP was needed. The NPA ACT therefore commends the decision to exclude prescribed burns from the area affected by the Orroral bushfire up to 2023.

However, given the severity of the Orroral bushfire on the ecological values of Namadgi National Park, this reprieve from prescribed burns makes up only a minor component of the time required for Namadgi to fully recover and therefore any prescribed burns in the bushfire affected areas post 2023 should only proceed if they contribute to the ecological value of the areas. The RFMP outlines a number of other techniques for bushfire hazard reduction and these alternatives should be considered before re-introducing fire back into the Orroral bushfire area.

The RFMP adopts a residual risk approach to fire management and the NPA ACT recognises that this is a significant improvement in bushfire management. The NPA ACT believes that it could be further improved through the greater incorporation of a two tier approach to fire management in bushland: with 1) smaller, more manageable burns on a local scale which take into account the nature of the vegetation, topography and weather over the period beyond the actual burn and which leaves the canopy intact to prevent weeds and fire obligate species returning; and 2) more concentrated activities in areas close to key assets.

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It is noted that the RMFP does appear to adopt a greater emphasis on low intensity burns and incorporates mosaics of fuel level across the landscape and this strategy is consistent with the 2 tier approach. It has the potential of reducing fire hazards while also achieving ecological outcomes. Such an approach is becoming more practical as large scale burns become increasingly difficult to schedule, risky to execute and subject to extreme changes of weather over a relatively short period.

The NPA ACT notes that the updated RFMP maintains the previously identified areas of prescribed burning outside of the Orroral affected area as well as the existing optional areas for prescribed burning. The NPA ACT has no objections to these areas as long as the amount of prescribed burning is consistent with maintaining the RFMP's specified range of residual risk, the long term ecological values of the areas are not compromised and the prescribed burning will maintain a mosaic of fire ages within the identified areas. As always, the NPA ACT expects that prescribed burning is only conducted in accordance with scientific ecological advice.

It is noted that the RFMP does not address detection and response mechanisms to bushfires. The NPA ACT would strongly support greater investment in early detection methods and technology and the continuing expansion of rapid response teams. These developments would assist in limiting the impact of fires when they do occur.

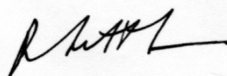
The NPA ACT recognises the updating of fire management zones across the ACT. It supports continued public education of the implications of the zonings and the need for land managers to actively involved in the fire protection of their key assets. In particular, focused fire protection needs to be a key component of all new urban developments with fire protection zones incorporated into the development footprint.

Should you require any further information on our comments or our organisation, please do not hesitate to contact the NPA ACT office, attention of Mr Rod Griffiths, convener, NPA ACT Environment Sub-committee.

Yours sincerely



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