

Dear member,

Although we have a whole year fire season, summer is upon us and we can expect some high risk days to follow.

The previous fire season was accompanied by several wild fires. Most of these fires were the result of negligent actions by landowners or their labours, mostly non-SCFPA members. What is also important is the fact that during our “winter season” many wild fires occurred which was the result of natural causes namely lightning strikes and some occurred due to negligent actions.

For this reason, it is very important that all our members must always be prepared and ensure that preventative work is done all year round.

We regard most of the areas within the Southern Cape to have an all year fire risk.



Bellvidere Fire, Knysna – April 2013

Some of the actions (human and natural) which resulted in wild veld fires before, during and after the 2012/2013 fire season:

- Landowners and/or their labourers burning waste material without ensuring that the area where the burn took place is safe. They did not have the proper and/or no firefighting equipment or personnel on standby to fight the fire should it spread to the surrounding area.
- Landowners and or their labours doing pre-scribed burns on days, which were declared as a high fire danger day, thus it was not safe to do the pre-scribed burn.
- Lightning strikes
- Sparks from rocks, which fell down from steep cliffs caused by buck or baboons moving on the edges of the cliffs.
- Vehicle accidents whereby the vehicle started to burn and the flames set the surrounding veld alight.
- Well planned and approved pre-scribed burns, which still got out of control.
- Arson
- Faulty electrical equipment

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE DECEMBER 2012?

TRAINING - One-Day Basic Fire Fighting Course

The SCFPA, in conjunction with Eden District Municipality, facilitated training for 133 members and or their personnel. This is apart from the 55 people, which received training in the Uniondale area during November 2012.

Other training was also facilitated for its members and SCFPA personnel (Incident Action Planning, Extended Fire Attack Simulations and Incident Command System – Intermediate and Advanced). We would like to thank all the partners who were instrumental in either funding or hosting these training sessions namely Eden District Fire Service, Bitou Fire Service, Knysna Fire Service, Cape Pine, SANParks, the GEF FynbosFire Project and Ben Potgieter from Forestry Solutions.

In total **237** people received training during 2013, which was either initiated or facilitated by the SCFPA.



Attendees looking at practical demonstration



SCFPA members at Eden District Fire Station



Eric Bosch at Kurland (Eden DM Fire Service)



WoF Fire Fighters demonstrating the use of a fire beater

Educational Field Day
Saasveld Campus

Tiaan Pool (Lecturer Forestry) from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), requested the SCFPA to assist them with an Educational Field Day on 07 May 2013.

The aim of this excursion was to bring the classroom closer to the in-field situation in order to give students an understanding of the reality of the tasks they have to perform as qualified individuals concerning Veldfire Management.

Left: "Japie Hendrikz (Goudveld Fire Base Manager) showing the different types of fire breaks"



Above: "Students listening to Paul Gerber (SCFPA Managing Director)"

From Left to right:

Marius Strydom (Saasveld Forestry Technical Advisor), Japie Hendrikz (Goudveld Base Manager), Danie Grabe (Fynbos Fire- Extention Officer)



AWARENESS PROJECTS

FynbosFire project -

FireWise Communities

Two FireWise Communities have recently been established within the SCFPA area of responsibility. One at Krantzhoek which is situated just outside Plettenberg Bay and the other one in the Clarkson area, which is situated in the Tsitsikamma region. The programme aims to help the above mentioned communities to take responsibility of their own protection from fires through training, awareness raising and technical assistance. These two communities have participated in the initial stages of the programme and are currently undergoing the next stages that consist of receiving awareness training and compiling risk assessment plans for their community.

The FynbosFire project has recently posted various awareness articles which promote FPA's. Two articles concerning the SCFPA was also published in the Fire & Rescue magazine.

Awareness Boards

The SCFPA, with the cooperation of strategic partners (Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency, Cape Pine, SANRAL, WoF, SANParks and Cacadu District Municipality), designed and placed four new awareness boards at strategic places alongside the N2 route running through the Tsitsikamma area. Again we would like to thank everybody who were involved in this project from getting the approval from SANRAL to place the boards on the N2 route to the Cape Pine (MTO) plantation managers who erected the boards.

Fire Management Unit Boards

Almost all of the FMU boards that were produced, have been distributed and erected in the specific areas.

Newspapers Articles

The SCFPA has posted several articles in local newspapers (Knysna Plett Herald, George Herald, Die Burger – Suid Kaap, Suid-Kaap Forum and the Agri Eco) with the aim to create a higher state of awareness. During the past few months 11 wild fire related articles were posted.

Our aim is to do this on a regular basis throughout the year. The SCFPA would like to thank the editorial teams of the different newspapers who supported us with the placement of these articles.

Herold Agricultural Show

On 31 August 2013 we manned a stall at the show to create awareness amongst the local community.

We would like to thank the Herold Farmers Union for the invitation as well as Bayteck Fire (George) for making some of their equipment available for the show.



BUILDING OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

Transportation

The SCFPA recently acquired four new KIA trucks and trailers to transport fire fighters and equipment to and from wild fires. This will ensure faster reaction time to fires and better our operational capacity.

We would like to thank Etienne Jacobs, owner of **Sign World** in George, for supplying the signage for the vehicles at no cost to the SCFPA. Etienne and his team, have in the past, constantly provided very good service to the SCFPA. Etienne can be contacted on the following cell-phone number: **079 202 5419**.



One of the four new KIA trucks acquired by the SCFPA

Communication at Wild Fires

The SCFPA acquired 12 hand held radios (Mid-Band, High Band and Ground to Air), 7 x base stations, one mobile repeater, one fixed repeater and 3 vehicle mounted radios. Should the funding be made available, we will also acquire additional radios to better communication at wild fires.

Currently most of the role-players (WoF, SANParks, Cape Nature, District Fire Services, local municipal fire services, Cape Pine and PG Bison) who are involved with fighting wild veld and forest fires, utilize different air bands and frequencies. This does create a problem when you need a combined effort at wild fires. Until all these role-players one day utilizes the same air bands and have access to the different frequencies, there will always be problems with radio communication at wild fires. Presently, the only option to communicate with everybody is to have all the different types of radios with the correct air bands and frequencies at hand.

The SCFPA now has the capability to take these radios to a wild fire and distribute it amongst the different role-players who are fighting the fire to ensure that everybody can communicate effectively. We have programmed the different radios with most of the strategic partner's frequencies.

This project has already made a positive impact at a recent wild fire at Belvidere. The SCFPA made these radios available to the firefighting teams and senior personnel who were managing the fire. The local municipal fire services had the capability to talk to their own personnel, but could not communicate with the WoF teams who were assisting them. Because the radios were made available, better communication was established and the fire was managed much more efficiently than what would have been the case should the radios not have been made available.

In addition, Eden District Municipality Fire Service is currently looking to move some of their repeaters to other locations to better their reception and service area.

The SCFPA also handed over 3 x Base Stations to Eden District Fire Service to be installed in their Mobile Incident Command Trailer.

AFIS

The SCFPA has acquired an AFIS (Advanced Fire Information System) terminal through funding provided by die GEF FynbosFire project. This new technology will provide the SCFPA with means to spot fires within a 15min time frame as well as map burn scars, view accurate weather for a specific location, map high risk areas and much more.



AFIS Field Terminal at Knysna Office



AFIS Satellite Dish mounted at Knysna

New George WoF Team

The SCFPA acquired another Working on Fire team, which is based in George at the Eden District Fire Station. The extension of the SCFPA firefighting force will prove beneficial to all parties involved as well as to our members.



WoF George Team at the Base Opening

New SCFPA Personnel Appointments



Philip Wilken: Extension Officer Western Region



Elske le Roux: Operational Support Officer



James de Kella: Riversdale Base Manager



Malvory Jacobs: George Base Manager

Please visit us our website at www.scfpa.co.za

Facebook page: "Southern Cape Fire Protection Association"

❖ For any further information, please feel free to contact:

- **Dirk Smit: Area Manager Eastern Region**
- **Charl Wade: Area Manager Western Region**
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From the SCFPA, we wish you a very joyful festive season, a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

