

## Controlled fires to create fire-breaks

GEORGE NEWS - The controlled veld fire started by the George Fire Department on Monday to the east of Denneoord, and the Municipal Waterworks, had homeowners peering anxiously as it spread further eastward, to the north of Bergsig. On Tuesday at 17:00, Bergsig residents looking northwards could see flames flaring up to the treetops in the far distance.

The George Fire Brigade, joined by a Working on Fire (WOF) team, were at hand to keep the fire under control. They were observed (from Denneoord) constantly hosing the flames down. Neels Barnard, George Municipality's acting head of Emergency Services, said on Tuesday, "It is precisely because we want to prevent a runaway fire that we started burning fire-breaks specifically in the region where there had been a high fuel-loading build-up over the past years. We want to do this before any windstorms occur again and are aiming to be done before the end of the week."

The fire brigade kept a close watch as gum trees, black wattle trees and veld areas burnt, causing thick smoke layers to hang over the eastern suburbs.

Quite recently, local authorities have come up with a joint operation plan for minimising fire risk in areas where there is an uncontrolled spread of invasive alien vegetation. "Through the Southern Cape Landowners Initiative (SCLI) George landowners are increasingly becoming sensitised as to the problems caused by invasive alien plants on their properties." So said Cobus Meiring this week (see report elsewhere). He added, "In an alliance with the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (SCFPA), George Landowners arranged a high level partnership with Eskom Distribution and Eskom Transmission, with the aim of determining high (fire) risk areas which can detrimentally effect regional energy security."

*\* Die George Brandweer het die week 'n moeilike taak gehad om brandstrokke te brand ten noorde van Denneoord en Bergsig, om die moontlike gevare van toekomstige wegholbrande te minimiseer. Die wind het op Maandag en Dinsdag darem saamgespeel. Terwyl die beheerde brande aan die gang was het 'n dik rooklaag oor die oostelike voorstede gehang. Waarnemende brandweerhoof Neels Barnard het aangedui dat die brand-voorkomingsoefening teen die einde van die week voltooi behoort te wees.*

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