

The Mt Wilson Community Fire Forum

10.30 – 12.30, Saturday 26 September 2009
Mt Wilson Community Hall



Funding: Mt Wilson Progress Association (\$2,000)

Speakers:

- Dr Joe Landsberg (Forum Chair), ex-CSIRO scientist and Mt Wilson resident
- Dr Rosalie Chapple, Executive Director and Research Director, Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute - a background on the Institute and current projects.
- Professor Ross Bradstock, Director of the Centre for Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires at the University of Wollongong - a scientific approach to predicting and managing the risk of bushfire.
- Mr Glenn Meade, Regional Operations Coordinator Blue Mountains, NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water - the many facets of bushfire risk management and the role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- Dr Tanya Strevens, Senior Project Manager, Management Effectiveness Unit, Parks and Wildlife Group, NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Overview

As part of its role in bringing together communities, universities and government agencies, the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute organised a community fire forum for residents of the Mt Wilson region on Saturday 26 September at the Mt Wilson Community Hall. About 35 local residents attended the two-hour forum that shared information about bushfire ecology and management, with a focus on:

- regeneration of ecosystems after fire
- how fire sensitivity is influenced by fuel load, weather and terrain
- climate change implications for fire behaviour



Professor Ross Bradstock, renowned fire ecologist and Director of the Centre for Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires at the University of Wollongong, is part of a research team focused on understanding and managing bushfire risk to key management values (i.e. people, property, biodiversity and ecosystem functions). In particular, this work seeks to measure risk and the degree it can be altered by management activities. The research involves an integration of fire history analyses, remote sensing, simulation modeling and empirical field research. Much of his research is directed at understanding implications of climate change for fire regimes and fire management.

Both the occurrence (ignition) and behaviour (spread rate and severity) of fires in Australian landscapes, including the Blue Mountains, are highly influenced by the nature of weather and vegetation growth (fuel). Both drivers of fire are likely to change in the immediate future as a consequence of global warming and other effects. For example, increased severity of fire weather, as a result of warming, is predicted to significantly increase the area burned by unplanned fires in the Sydney Region and the Blue Mountains.



Glenn Meade, National Parks Regional Operations Coordinator, Blue Mountains region, asked the forum attendees how they would allocate \$1 million across the five areas of fire risk management:

- community fire awareness and preparedness
- asset protection
- strategic fuel reduction
- prevention of ignition and early response
- combat

Of these five, community fire-awareness and preparedness, and strategic fuel reduction received the highest priority.

This site is © Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute 2009