Recommendations & proposals for a fire management control programme for the Beekeepers' Reserves and areas of adjacent Crown land

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"RECOMMENDATIONS & PROPOSALS FOR A FIRE MANAGEMENT CONTROL PROGRAMME FOR THE BEEEKEPERS' RESERVES AND AREAS OF ADJACENT CROWN LAND"

PRESENTED TO A PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT THE CARNAMAH SHIRE COUNCIL 28TH MARCH, 1984.

COMPiled BY:
R.C. BURKING
(SECRETARY)

MARCH, 1984
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"RECOMMENDATIONS & PROPOSALS FOR A FIRE MANAGEMENT CONTROL PROGRAMME FOR THE BEEKEEPERS' RESERVES AND AREAS OF ADJACENT CROWN LAND."

COMPILED BY: R.C. BURKING (SECRETARY)
BEEKEEPERS' RESERVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MARCH 1984.

1. Introduction:

During the period January 16th - 21st, 1984, a large wildfire devastated large areas of The Beekeepers' Reserve, Proposed Fisheries & Wildlife Reserves and adjacent Crown Land. The area affected is essential to the Beekeeping Industry of Western Australia and loss to the industry following the wildfire has been estimated at upto $1 million per year for a period of 5 years until the regeneration of vegetation has occurred.

As experienced by local Shires, The Bush Fires Board, Beekeepers and local volunteers, the area due to its topography presents numerous problems in fire control. Such obstacle such as lack of firebreaks, access tracks and standard communications greatly reduce efforts to bring a large wildfire under control.

At the request of the Bush Fires Board of W.A. the Beekeepers' Reserve Management Committee was requested to submit proposals and recommendations for a Fire Management Committee Control Programme for presentation and discussion at a public meeting at Carnamah on the 28th March, 1984.

The following proposals and recommendations are the result of a Beekeepers' Reserve Management Committee meeting held 26th March, 1984.

2. Proposals and Recommendations:

2.1 Area Survey

The area at present is devoid of thick heavy vegetation (which in the past has presented survey problems). Large areas of burned country now exist and it is possible to survey specific locations to assess the possibility of access road and firebreak construction.

This can be undertaken with the assistance of aerial photos and mosaics available from the Apiculture Section - W.A. Department of Agriculture.

It is appreciated that problems will be experienced by the survey parties but it is essential that a survey be undertaken as soon as possible before regeneration occurs following winter rains increasing the problems of travel.

Some assistance can be provided by the Apiculture Section - W.A. Department of Agriculture if required.

2.2 Access Tracks

With the exception of a few major roads such as the Coolimba Road, Coorow-Green Head Road., Cliff Head - Coolimba Road, and the Brand Highway, the area in general lacks suitable tracks for access or fire control. Beekeepers in many locations have constructed tracks for the transportation of bees etc., and these are evident south of
the Coolimba Road. However, to the north of the Coolimba Road, access tracks are limited due to the topography of the area. Large limestone ridges run North-South creating obstructions to firebreaks and access roads construction on an East-West basis. A number of Exploration seismic lines cross the Reserve E-W and could provide vehicle access if upgraded. On the whole, the tracks are suitable for 4-wheel drive usage but extremely rough conditions are experienced when crossing the ridges.

Upgrading of these rough limestone outcrops would provide complete access E-W at specific locations, such as Beekeepers' Road and Seismic line A3 (Arrowsmith). Upgrading can be undertaken using sand to fill in the large holes and then covered with gravel to ensure against erosion. An estimated cost to upgrade specific tracks is in the vicinity of $4000 per kilometre.

Careful selection of existing tracks should be undertaken to ensure the maximum usage of available finance.

It may be possible to gain access in specific locations if track directions were altered at various points to avoid "ridge" situations and may be realigned on an angle basis which may provide easier and less costly track upgrading. This would need to be studied closely during the initial survey work.

2.3 Land Area-Grid Network System

Due to the large expanse of country, any wildfire at present can destroy large area due to the lack of suitable firebreaks, roads or access tracks. This is particularly obvious in the area of Reserve 24496 together with the vacant Crown Land - north of the Coolimba Road.

Recommendations are to construct a series of grid line firebreak/access roads at various intervals in specific locations of the land area, depending on topographical features.

Proposals are:

South of the Coolimba Road - a 5km grid system due to the availability of existing tracks and Beekeeper firebreaks.

North of the Coolimba Road, due to the topography of the country, a 10 km grid system utilising known tracks such as Beekeepers' Road and seismic line A3 and A9 (Arrowsmith Area) etc.

Within these 5 or 10 km grid lines, smaller access tracks/firebreaks could be constructed by beekeepers tying in to an overall network system.

These may best be classified under the system at present used by the National Parks Authority.

Access Track - 4-wheel drive use limited use as firebreak.

2nd class Firebreak - Light vehicle duty usage may provide limited use for fire control in a burn-back situation.

1st Class Firebreak Track - Upto 4m wide allowing usage by heavy duty fire fighting equipment, two way traffic and turning areas. These may be used as a major fire control line system to undertake a large burn-back situation. This would be the mainstay of the 5 or 10 km grid network.
3.

Depending on the topography of the location these main grid line systems would need to be adjusted to avoid the rough limestone ridge situations to the Western Edge of the Land area.

It may be necessary to install the grid systems on each side of specific ridge situations.

2.4 Beekeeper Involvement:

As the area under discussion is used primarily by Beekeepers for Honey and Pollen production, it is essential that they should be involved with any fire control management programme.

Recommendations are as follows in this regard:

- A list of Beekeeper's Names, Address and Telephone numbers be lodged with the local Fire Control Officer and the applicable Shire;

- An inventory of manpower and equipment available for fire control in specific areas. This should be lodged with both the Fire Control Officer and the local Shire;

- Beekeepers should be encouraged to join the local Bush Fire Brigade associated with his specific area and attend local fire Advisory Committee meetings to formulate fire management policy and planning.

In a number of cases, this is being undertaken, and during the recent wildfire, many Beekeepers assisted in fire fighting operations, particularly in the Green Head - Coolimba sections.

The Bush Fires Board of W.A. should encourage involvement by Beekeepers and regularly advise them of Seminars and fire fighting demonstrations which are conducted by the B.F.B. at regular intervals.

Beekeepers to liaise with each other and with locals in specific areas to discuss specific problems in fire control.

2.5 Cartography:

Following investigations, it is obvious that the lack of upto date accurate maps of the Land area under discussion are not available.

Present map usage includes, 1" to the mile Lithos, 1:50,000 topographical in some areas, line complications based on 1976 aerial photographs and 1:60 chains to the inch lithos, create a complicated system for use during fire fighting operations.

It is considered essential that up to date, accurate maps be made available through the Department of Lands and Surveys at a suitable scale i.e. 1:50,000 utilising track names as installed by the Apiculture Branch, Western Australia Department of Agriculture.

(Some assistance in this regard can be provided by the Department of Agriculture).
4. Distribution of maps to Local Fire Control Officers, Local Shires and other associated Government Departments is essential and distribution and display of such maps is important during operations.

The latest aerial photography for map compilation available is October 1982 from the Department of Lands and Surveys. It is from this data that the Apiculture Branch has produced a track inventory.

It should be appreciated that these proposals and recommendations are extremely broad and at this stage do not provide the fire detail which is ultimately required. For the purpose of this public meeting, a summary is provided.

3. Conclusions:

The land area discussed is a very important area to Beekeepers, Tourists and Wildlife and Conservation Authorities. In many ways, it is unique in such fields as vegetation soil types and topography. To ensure its preservation it is important that a Fire Control Management Programme is instigated as soon as possible.

4. References:

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March 27, 1984