

FIRE-SCAPE

Where Red meets Green



Fires are a natural part of the Australian landscape. In Victoria they can be devastating so appropriate fire regimes are necessary for many native plants and animals to survive. Fire-Scape is one CFA response to finding a balance between fire safety and fire ecology.

For many years CFA has been conducting burns to reduce the fire threat to communities in high-risk areas across the state. In the past natural values have always been respected, but have not always been a focus of planned burns.

The Fire-Scape program explores the challenge to integrate fire ecology principles into fire mitigation planning processes. This is similar to the approach used by Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) and Parks Victoria (PV). DEPI and PV manage about 30 per cent of Victoria's land area; the remaining 70 per cent rests with CFA. This is why it is important for CFA to work with landholders, land managers, community groups and all other agencies to provide an integrated approach to burn planning.

Preparing for fire in an environmentally sustainable way can be achieved on a regional, local and property scale.

What is Fire Ecology?

A healthy environment is where soil, water, air, flora and fauna work together in a mutually beneficial and sustainable way. When fire impacts on an environment, native plants and animals respond in different ways to recover from, or take advantage of, the changing conditions. This will also influence the qualities of soil, water and air locally and further afield.

Whether these impacts are environmentally destructive or beneficial to the ecosystem will depend on the season, the intensity of the fire, its extent and how long it has been since the last fire. Too much or too little fire may cause some species to take over, while others may disappear completely.

What is Fire-Scape?

This program is a CFA initiative that allows community and other land managers to work together across a local community 'fire landscape'. The benefits include a better protection for life and property and the environment.

The Fire-Scape program aims to:

Plan strategically for fire

- Address fire management from both an asset protection and biodiversity conservation perspective using the best available science and operational knowledge.
- Develop a community fire management plan at a local and property scale involving all stakeholders.
- Bring together neighbours in a local area to interact with the CFA, public land managers and local environmental interests

Improve local knowledge

- The increased understanding of the role of fire by landholders will enable a more collaborative approach to manage healthy landscapes.
- Pre and post-fire monitoring of sites will add to the understanding of fire ecology.

Enable sustainable land management

- All stakeholders and community members can enjoy healthy landscapes which support a mosaic of burnt patches, refuges, niches and habitats that improve biodiversity.
- Landholders successfully manage fire for a mixture of outcomes.

Two free one-day workshops will provide opportunities for all stakeholders and program participants to become involved in understanding, planning and experiencing planned burning. Participants attend both days.



Taking the time to relocate a ringtail possum before a recent ecological burn. Photo Ian Morrison CFA

The one-day workshops will include:

Understanding Fire

(fire ecology and risk management)

- Landholders will gain a better understanding of fire ecology and risk management by talking with ecologists, local fire authorities, land managers and agency personnel.
- There will be opportunities to build relationships and networks with neighbours and agencies.
- Participants will better understand issues relating to risk planning, legislation, fire history, the protection of threatened species, vegetation types and animals, and their response to fire and different fire regimes.

Developing a Fire Management Plan

(a landholder property plan)

- Landholders develop both a community and their own property fire management plans in cooperation with their neighbours (both public and private landholdings). The end result is a map-based 12-month fire management action plan.

Demonstration Burn – weather permitting

(Participate in a planned burn – Workshop 2)

- Stakeholders participate in a field day focused on how to implement actions from their management plans. Aspects of planning and implementing a burn in a safe environment are covered. This day brings together all the knowledge and planning from the previous workshop 1.
- The field day provides a hands-on experience in preparing a burn site, estimating fuel loads, considering weather factors, reviewing fire behaviour and undertaking a risk assessment. Landholders then observe a demonstration burn conducted by agencies.

To find out more about the Fire-Scape project: