



Established in 1998, the South East Queensland Fire and Biodiversity Consortium (SEQ Fire and Biodiversity Consortium) is a network of land managers and stakeholders devoted to providing a coordinated response and best-practice recommendations for fire management, fire ecology and the conservation of biodiversity in the South East Queensland region through education, community engagement and applied research.

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND Roadside Burning Project

Project Background and Stakeholder Consultation

In 2011, in response to community concern and lack of an identified process, SEQ Catchments¹, considered a proposed policy paper on the issue of fuel load management on roadside reserves (Dale, 2011). Specifically, the paper dealt with the issue of private landholders wishing to burn council or state managed roadsides (adjoining their properties), for hazard reduction purposes.

In recognizing that this was a critical community, fire and biodiversity issue, SEQ Catchments asked the SEQ Fire and Biodiversity Consortium to manage the project. The objectives of the project are to:

- (1) Engage with land manager stakeholders to identify the main issues and any existing procedures; and
- (2) Outline existing procedures, how they may be utilised and encourage adoption.

NB: Any proposed procedures must

align with Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) 'Permit to Light Fire' system.

Two major stakeholder consultation workshops were undertaken:

- (1) A land manager workshop, organized by the SEQ Fire and Biodiversity Consortium. It was agreed that the four key issues facing land managers are: (1) biodiversity values; (2) responsibility and funding; (3) insurance; and (4) local laws. This workshop featured a successful program underway at South Burnett Regional Council, called the South Burnett Model.
- (2) A road corridor management workshop, organized by the Upper Brisbane Region Catchment Network (UBRCN). This workshop identified that a successful coordinated agency approach existed in the Toowoomba Regional Council area, the Coordinated Agency Model.

¹ SEQ Catchments is the natural resource management body for South East Queensland.



Roadside hazard reduction burn, conducted by Brisbane City Council, Mt Coot-tha (photo courtesy of Brisbane City Council).

The South Burnett Model

The process underway at South Burnett Regional Council (RC) requires landholders to complete an application form, council assess the application and dependent upon various restrictions (e.g. biodiversity values described below) may grant permission, with a set of strict conditions. The landholder must obtain a valid 'Permit to Light Fire' from the QFRS for their land and South Burnett RC obtain one for the roadside verge. As part of this process, landholders are covered by council insurance.

South Burnett RC used various mapping resources (e.g. Regional

Ecosystem mapping) and ecological burning guidelines to identify areas of potentially high conservation value. This process identified six nationally and state listed species and communities in their region. Council then commissioned a study to map these species and communities and they also assessed all roads with a medium to very high fire risk. This information was used to develop a list of roads that do not contain high biodiversity values. These areas have preapproval for fuel load reduction burning for 12 months. All other roads are deemed to contain a high biodiversity value and require assessment by Council.



Inter-agency onsite meeting, prior to roadside hazard reduction burn, as part of the Coordinated Agency Model process (photo courtesy of Julian Selke).



Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service roadside hazard reduction burn, Samford (photo courtesy of David Gilmour).

The Coordinated Agency Model

The Coordinated Agency Model for roadside burning was developed through collaboration between key officers from the QFRS, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) and Toowoomba Regional Council (RC). Initially officers met through their participation in the Regional Inter-departmental Committee (RIDC) on Bushfire for the QFRS Southwest Region and ongoing interaction saw relationships develop over time.

Requests to conduct a burn are received by the QFRS via local Rural Fire Brigades and/or are assessed as a result of predetermined regional priorities. Importantly, this process allows private landholders to make a request via their Rural Fire Brigades. The

Coordinated Agency Model addresses the issue of biodiversity by including QPWS in the assessment phase. It also deals with insurance concerns by having QFRS staff and volunteers conduct burns (see below).

This process has only been operating at its present level since September 2011, but in this short time has demonstrated enormous success. In theory, it can be applied to all local government areas across SEQ, provided key staff can be identified and there is a willingness to work together. It provides an excellent opportunity for local governments to achieve efficient and safe roadside corridor hazard reduction burns, whilst maintaining community trust and biodiversity values.

Coordinated Agency Model Flow Chart: Summary of Process

Application

Private landholders contact their Rural Fire Brigade & request roadside burn.

Rural Fire Brigade request permission to conduct a burn (via regional/brigade priorities or landholder).

QFRS issue a 'Permit to Light Fire', allowing a burn to be conducted.

Assessment

QPWS assess the Plan for biodiversity priorities (e.g. threatened species & Endangered Ecological Communities).

DTMR assess the Plan for road safety/traffic control issues & provide a Traffic Management Plan if needed.

QFRS assess requests & prepare a Fire Management Plan (the Plan). The Plan is sent to QPWS (biodiversity assessment) & to DTMR (assessment of road safety/traffic control issues).

QFRS send the Plan to Toowoomba RC with 72hrs notice of an intention to burn. Toowoomba RC contact QFRS if there are any issues.

Enabling Process

DTMR issue an annual permit to QFRS to undertake burning operations within their corridor.

Regional roadside priorities help determine roadside burning works via RIDC.

Toowoomba RC issues an annual permit to QFRS to "Undertake works within the road reserve".

Where to from here?

The SEQ Fire and Biodiversity Consortium have provided the project report to all local governments, relevant state agencies, Powerlink Queensland and the SEQ Catchments Members Association and are currently liaising with interested councils. The report will also be promoted through various other

networks (e.g. Fire Management Groups). It is hoped that this project will encourage land managers to assess their situation and make informed decisions regarding roadside burning. Interested land managers are encouraged to contact the SEQ Fire and Biodiversity Consortium.

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Authorship: This document was prepared by Dr Samantha Lloyd, Manager of the SEQ Fire and Biodiversity Consortium. The information in this document has been prepared with due diligence and is based on the best available information at the time of publication. It does not constitute professional legal or legislative advice and land managers are advised to seek legal advice on this issue if required. All planned burning should be conducted in accordance with relevant laws and with a valid QFRS 'Permit to Light Fire'. The views presented in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of our supporting organisations.

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References: Dale, J. (2011) *Proposed Roadside Burning Protocol*, SEQ Catchments Members Association Policy Proposal.