Bush Fire
Risk
Management
Plan

—

Planning
together

Approval

In accordance with the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, this Bush Fire Risk Management Plan has been prepared by the Hunter Valley Bush Fire Management Committee and has been endorsed at the BFMC meeting on 21st June 2023 for submission to the Bush Fire Coordinating Committe

Recommended

Chair
Hunter Valley Bush Fire Management Committee
Date: 14th August 2023

Approved

Chair
Bush Fire Coordinating Committee
Date:

Contents page

—

Chapter 1

Introduction
—

1.1 Acknowledgement to Country

The Hunter Valley Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work, and the lands we travel through. We also acknowledge our Elders – past, present and emerging.

1.2 Introduction

A Bush Fire Risk Management Plan (BFRMP) provides information on the bush fire risks within your community. It also outlines how land managers along with fire authorities are going to effectively manage those risks through implementing various treatment strategies.

The development of a BFRMP is a legal requirement under Section 52 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997 (*NSW) (the Act*)*. The BFRMP, including the accompanying appendices and spatial data, is prepared by the BFMC for the Hunter Valley BFMC area and is approved by the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC).

A BFRMP is a strategic document that identifies community assets and values that may be at risk from bush fire and identifies coordinated multi-agency objectives and associated treatment strategies to reduce the risk. Treatment strategies may include such actions as hazard reduction burning, mechanical clearing, targeted community engagement programs and ignition prevention activities. The treatment strategies are implemented by the member agencies / organisation of the BFMC and are monitored and reported on an ongoing basis.

This document (including its appendices) and the accompanying maps form the BFRMP for the Hunter Valley BFMC area. It covers both public and private land and is to be reviewed and monitored annually.

This BFRMP is applied in conjunction with the BFMC's Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) Plan and Operations Coordination Plan to provide a comprehensive approach to risk mitigation and operational preparedness.

1.3 Aim and objectives

The aim of this BFRMP is to reduce the risk of adverse impacts of bush fires on life, property, infrastructure and environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and community assets.

The objectives of this BFRMP are to:

Objective 1: Reduce the number of human-induced bush fire ignitions and their potential to cause damage to life, property, infrastructure and environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and community assets.

Objective 2: Manage fuel to reduce the rate of spread, intensity and impact of bush fires on life and assets while minimising damage to environmental and cultural values.

Objective 3: Increase the community's resilience to bush fires by improving its preparedness, response and recovery.

Objective 4: Provide advice and strategies to plan, prepare and implement activities to effectively contain fires with the potential to cause damage to life, property, infrastructure and environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and community assets.

1.4 The Planning Process

The Australia/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 31000: 2018 Risk Management was used to guide the bush fire risk assessment process. This is outlined in Figure 1 below.
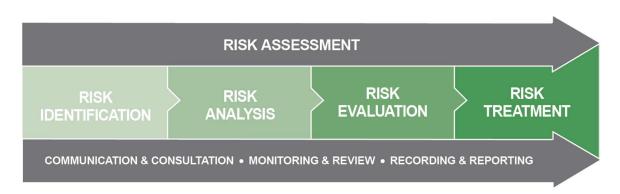

Figure 1: Overview of the risk assessment process

Chapter 2

Risk Assessment

—

2.1 Assets

An asset is something that is valued by the community. There are four main categories of assets considered in the BFRMP, each with subcategories.

2.1.1 Human settlement

- Residential areas including urban-bushland interface areas and rural properties; and

- Special Fire Protection areas including schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and tourist facilities.

2.1.2 Economic

- Agricultural – includes crops, bulk grain storage, grazing, horticulture, intensive animal production, livestock, fencing and major machinery sheds;

- Commercial – includes commercial services, Defence facilities, research facilities and ports and water transport;

- Electrical including transmission lines, substations and electricity generation plants;

- Forestry assets – native forests, hardwood and softwood plantations;

- Industrial – includes general purpose factories, food processing factories, major industrial complexes, abattoirs, oil refineries and sawmills;

- Infrastructure – airports, communication towers, roads, railways, waste treatment plants, water treatment plants;

- Mining – combustible, non-combustible and underground;

- Recreational - community recreation facilities and major sporting and recreation complexes; and

- Water catchments.

2.1.3 Environmental

- Threatened Flora and Fauna – includes iconic species such as koalas and the Wollemi pine, threatened species, threatened ecological communities (TECs), and threatened populations at risk of extinction in NSW;

- Fire sensitive vegetation communities – includes regulated wetlands, RAMSAR wetlands and rainforests vegetation communities;

- Land covered by statutory conservation and biodiversity agreements;

- World Heritage and national and state heritage listed areas;

- Land with geological significance – including land with high erosion potential, or geotechnical risk, karst landscapes and sand dunes;

- Environmentally significant land identified by an Environmental Planning Instrument - including Local Environment Plans (LEPs) and State Environmental Planning Polices (SEPPs); and

- Other locally important assets – including vegetation identified as bush fire refugia, bush regeneration areas, Assets of Intergenerational Significance (AIS).

Note: not all of these assets have quantitative risk assessment methodologies.

2.1.4 Cultural

- Aboriginal heritage – including items recorded in the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System and predictive site locations from the Aboriginal Sites Decision Support Tool (ASDST);

- Non-Indigenous cultural heritage – items and places from the State Heritage Inventory, Section 170 Heritage and Conservation registers and Historic Heritage Information Management System.

Assets across all four categories have been identified using geographic information system (GIS) data including land use classifications and cadastre (Lot boundaries), as well as local knowledge.

2.2 Neighbourhood Safer Places

A Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP) is defined by section 62C of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* as "land or a building designated as a neighbourhood safer place". NSPs provide a place of last resort for people during a bush fire. All designated NSP locations for NSW are available at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.

The Hunter Valley BFMC considered the number and location of Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) within the BFMC area. All NSPs in Hunter Valley BFMC area require ongoing treatment by the applicable land owner to ensure that the asset remains viable as a place of last resort for people during a bush fire. Therefore, all NSPs within the BFMC area are required to be treated and have been included in the Fuel Management Register.

2.3 Risk Identification and Analysis

This BFRMP is underpinned by a risk quantification methodology based on fire behaviour modelling (Phoenix RapidFire). The fire simulation process applies an ignition model, local historical weather and historical fire information to determine where fires are most likely to occur in the landscape. A

Bayesian Decision Network model is used to quantify the bush fire risk to each asset in the landscape based on relevant vulnerability criteria.

Bush fire risks may also be identified during the process from qualitative assessment methodologies. For example where expert local knowledge identifies a significant area of concern, challenges in firefighting or locally significant values.

The Risk maps for each asset category are provided in Appendix 3.

For a detailed description of the methodology used for assessing bush fire risk, please see BFCC Policy 01/2023 - Bush Fire Risk Management and supporting documents, available on the NSW RFS website: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

Chapter 3

Treating Risk

—

3.1 Treatments

The purpose of risk treatment is to reduce the likelihood and/or harmful consequences of bush fire to the community and environment, through a process of selecting and implementing risk treatment options that modify the characteristics of the hazard, the community or the environment. There are three types of treatments considered in the BFRMP:

1. BFMC Wide Treatments;

2. Focus Area Treatments; and

3. Fuel Management Treatments.

BFMC members and land managers routinely implement risk treatment strategies in accordance with legislative requirements, policy and asset management. For example, vegetation management, restrictions on development in bush fire prone areas, bush fire education and fire suppression activities. We refer to these as BFMC Wide Treatments. These activities occur outside the BFRMP and reduce the bush fire risk to assets and communities throughout the BFMC area.

The risk assessment process applied in this BFRMP assists BFMCs in identifying strategic Fuel Management Treatments and Focus Area Treatments.

Fuel Management Treatments include hazard reduction burns and vegetation clearing. These are designed to protect life, property and the environment from intense bush fires. While they will not completely stop bush fires from starting and spreading, these treatments can help protect firefighters, assist with containment strategies and reduce the potential damage to community assets and environmental values.

Focus Areas are groups of assets in the landscape that the BFMC has identified as having significant or unacceptable risk. The BFMC has specifically identified Focus Area Treatments for these areas and they prioritise these treatments over all others.

3.1.1 BFMC Wide Treatments

BFMC wide treatments are activities which are undertaken to reduce the overall bush fire risk within the BFMC area.

The following table identifies the BFMC wide treatments applicable to the Hunter Valley BFMC area.

TREATMENT	DESCRIPTION
Plan of Operations	Under Part 3 Division 4 Sections 52 and 53 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, BFMCs are required to prepare and submit to the BFCC a Plan of Operations and must review the Plan every two years. The Plan of Operations details the co-ordinated firefighting arrangements and fire management practices and ensures that each BFMC member is able to execute its role and specific responsibilities.
Treatments in the Fire Access and Fire Trail Plan Treatment Register	Under section 52 of the Act, BFMCs must develop a Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) Plan for their area and must review the FAFT Plan every five years.
	Fire trails are an important part of ensuring firefighters can access fires and safely contain them. Fire trails may also be used as fire control lines for hazard reduction burns, however this is not their primary purpose.
	In accordance with the NSW RFS Fire Trail Standards the BFMC may prepare a Treatment Register which sets out a schedule of works for the construction and maintenance of fire trails. The Standards provide that the Treatment Register is updated annually and typically forms part of a FAFT Plan.
	Treatments contained within the FAFT Plan Treatment Register (as amended from time to time) are BFMC Wide Treatments under this BFRMP.
Ignition Prevention Plan	The BFMC will develop an Ignition Prevention Plan (IPP). The purpose of the IPP is to provide firefighting authorities, NSW Police and Local Authorities with localised strategies to prevent ignitions. In particular, deliberate or careless ignitions and illegal fires.
Land & Asset Management	There are organisational plans, standard policies, Regulations and procedures for the management of assets and/or land managed by BFMC members. For example vegetation clearance around power lines, maintenance of public land, and agency-specific fire management plans.
Local Environmental Plans	Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) guide planning decisions for local government areas. They do this through zoning and development controls, which provide a framework for the way land can be used.
	LEPs can be used to exclude development in significant bush fire risk areas or in areas where bush fire protection measures cannot be incorporated.
Environmental Approval for all Hazard Reduction	Land management agencies will obtain environmental approval (through the Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code, or other approval process) to undertake any activities that have the potential to impact the environment e.g. hazard reduction burning or vegetation removal. The environmental assessment process considers flora, fauna, threatened species, cultural assets, soil erosion, riparian areas, biodiversity fire regimes, weeds and air pollution (smoke).
Bush Fire Prone Land Mapping and *Planning for Bush Fire Protection*	Section 10.3 of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* requires the land subject to a BFRMP to be mapped in accordance with Guide for Bush Fire Prone Land Mapping. Bush Fire Prone Land Maps are used as a trigger mechanism to ensure that new development is approved in accordance with Planning for Bush Fire Protection (PBP).
	PBP sets planning specifications which aim to increase the likelihood of structures surviving a bush fire, and in combination with Australian Standard 3959 Building in Bush Fire Prone Areas which specifies building standards.
	All new development on Bush Fire Prone Land will be assessed in accordance with PBP.

Hazard complaints	It is the duty of land owners to prevent the occurrence of bush fires on, and to minimise the danger of the spread of bush fires on or from, their land. Under section 66 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Notice can be issued, directing a hazard be removed. This Notice can be issued to private and public landowners. If the Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Notice is not complied with, the NSW RFS will remove the hazard, and may pursue the cost from the landowner. Under Section 73 and Section 74E of the Act, the NSW RFS Commissioner may direct hazard reduction works to be undertaken.
Community engagement	This includes state-wide public awareness initiatives as well as local community interactions between fire agencies, land managers and local communities.
BFMC Bush Fire Danger Period	The Rural Fires Act 1997 sets the statutory Bush Fire Danger Period. A Fire Permit is required for burning activities during the Bush Fire Danger Period in Rural Fire districts and at all times in Fire and Rescue (FRNSW) districts around the state. Fire Permits help ensure fire is used safely during the Bush Fire Danger Period. A permit imposes conditions on the way a fire is lit and maintained, and can only be issued by authorised Permit Issuing Officers. The permit provides landholders who intend to burn, with the conditions they are to adhere with to ensure adequate and appropriate measures are in place, and that fires remain under control.
Firefighting response	All firefighting authorities in NSW have legislation, regulations, policies and procedures for responding to bush fire events within their area of jurisdiction.
Prosecution of arsonists / offenders	Under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* persons may be prosecuted for a range of offences. These offences include: • deliberately setting fire to the land of another person without consent; • lighting a fire without notifying the relevant authority; • breaching the conditions on a fire permit; • lighting a fire during a Total Fire Ban; • allowing fire to escape their property; or • other breaches of the Act.

Table 1: BFMC Wide Treatments

3.1.2 Fuel Management Treatments

Hazard Reduction is an important component of managing bush fire risk. Hazard Reduction involves removing or reducing the fuel (vegetation) in order to modify the potential fire behaviour; to reduce extreme bush fire behaviour and associated impact to firefighters, community assets and values; to assist in fire suppression; and to enable appropriate fire regimes to be implemented.

The BFRMP Fuel Management Register is a list of hazard reduction activities that the Hunter Valley BFMC has identified as strategic treatments in the BFRMP. The fuel management treatments include prescribed burns, vegetation removal in BFMC-managed asset protection zones and the development or maintenance of fire breaks.

All hazard reduction activities listed in the Fuel Management Register are proposed to be completed within the five-year term of the BFRMP, however, those activities that are linked to a Focus Area will be treated as a priority. The occurrence of bush fires will necessitate annual revision and reprioritisation of the treatment schedules.

See Appendix 2 for the Hunter Valley BFMC Fuel Management Register.

3.1.3 Focus Area Treatments

The management of bush fire risk involves a coordinated approach from fire authorities, landowners, land managers, planning authorities, local councils and the community. Even with the combined resources of these stakeholders, it is still not possible or practical to actively treat all bush fire risks across the landscape. It is therefore important for communities and BFMCs to determine what areas will form the focus for the application of specific treatment strategies in this BFRMP.

Focus Areas were determined through an analysis of the quantitative risk assessment data, but also consider factors such as the social vulnerability of the community, access and egress and local significance.

There are four Focus Areas within the Hunter Valley BFRMP. These are:

- Bimbadeen;
- Singleton North;
- Putty and Howes Valley; and
- Jerrys Plains.

These are areas that have been specifically identified as having an unacceptable risk and require additional, targeted Treatment Strategies within the five-year BFRMP.

There are four key objectives available to manage the bush fire risk to Focus Areas and each objective has a number of associated treatment strategies (Table 2). The BFMC has identified the most appropriate objectives and treatment strategies for each Focus Area. The Focus Area treatment strategies selected by the BFMC will be addressed annually as part of the BFMC Annual Works Program.

KEY OBJECTIVE	FOCUS AREA TREATMENT STRATEGY
Fuel Management Reduction or modification of bush fire fuel with the intent of slowing the spread of bush fire and aiding firefighting operations.	Asset Protection Zone
	Ignition Management Zone
	Strategic Fire Advantage Zone
	Land Management Zone
	Fire Break; Linear
	Fire Break; Transport Corridor
	Grazing Program
Ignition Prevention Prevention or reduction of bush fire ignitions (arson & accidental).	Community Engagement; Risk Awareness
	Fire Break; Linear
	Fire Break; Transport Corridor
	Access Restriction; addressed in BFMC Ignition Prevention Plan
	Patrol; addressed in BFMC Ignition Prevention Plan
Community Preparedness Measures to enhance community preparedness for bush fire in order to reduce risk to life and assets.	Community Engagement; Risk Awareness
	Community Engagement; Planning
	Community Engagement; Preparation
	Community Engagement; Community Resilience
	Community Engagement; Community Response
Response Area specific response requirements in addition to standard procedures.	Operational Readiness Arrangements; addressed in BFMC Plan of Operations
	Neighbourhood Safer Place; addressed in BFMC Plan of Operations
	Pre-Incident Plan; addressed in BFMC Plan of Operations
	Fire Access or Fire Trail; addressed in BFMC FAFT Plan

Table 2: Key Objectives for Treatment Strategies.

Note: In addition to the four Focus Areas, significant environmental and cultural assets were identified in the Gungal/ Manobalai/ Wybong/ Denman area. These have been specifically assessed by the BFMC and will be managed through BFMC wide Treatments (NPWS asset management and S52 Plan of Operations).

For more information on Treatment Strategies see Annexure B of BFCC Policy 01/2023 BFRMP Guidelines.

See Appendix 1 for the Hunter Valley Focus Area descriptions, Key Objectives and Treatment Strategies.

3.2 Bush Fire Management Zones

Bush Fire Management Zones identified within the Hunter Valley BFMC area have been mapped as part of the Fuel Management Register. These zones identify the fire management intent for a specific area. The five categories of Bush Fire Management Zones are:

- Asset Protection Zone (APZ);

- Strategic Fire Advantage Zone (SFAZ);

- Ignition Management Zone (IMZ)

- Land Management Zone (LMZ); and

- Fire Exclusion Zone (FEZ).

See Annexure C BFRMP Guidelines of BFCC Policy 01/2023 for further information on bush fire management zones including a description of the zones and their purposes.

3.3 Relationship with other Plans

Under section 52 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, each BFMC must prepare and submit to the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee a draft of each of the following:

- A bush fire management plan (defined to be both a BFRMP and FAFT Plan); and

- A Plan of Operations.

These BFMC planning documents should complement each other, however, a FAFT Plan prevails over the BFRMP to the extent of any inconsistency in accordance with section 59A(4) of the Act.

Treatments contained within the FAFT Plan Treatment Register (as amended from time to time) are BFMC Wide Treatments under this BFRMP.

Additionally, an Ignition Prevention Plan will be prepared for the BFMC. Other plans such as Community Protection Plans, agency specific Fire Management Strategies, or private property fire plans may be prepared, however as this BFRMP has been prepared in accordance with the Act, all other plans are subordinate to it.

Chapter 4

Communication and Consultation

―

4.1 Communication and Consultation

Community participation is an integral part of risk management. The BFMC undertook consultation with the community during the development phase of the BFRMP as outlined in Appendix 4. The Communication Strategy involved developing and implementing a process to address the needs, issues and concerns of stakeholders within the BFMC area in regards to the BFRMP. This involved member agencies engaging with their stakeholders to ensure their views are represented in the BFRMP and that they understand their own responsibility in risk management.

In accordance with section 57 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, the draft BFRMP was placed on public exhibition to provide an opportunity for the community to have formal input, and that input has been taken into account and reflected in the BFRMP.

This plan will be available from the RFS web site and must also be available for public inspection at, and be able to be obtained free of charge from, the office of the local authority for the area to which it relates during ordinary office hours.

Chapter 5

Performance Monitoring and Review

—

5.1 Monitoring and Review

This BFRMP must be reviewed and updated within each successive five-year period from the constitution of the BFMC. The Hunter Valley BFMC will also review this BFRMP as necessary to account for any changes in context or risk on account of changes to the BFMC area, organisational responsibilities or legislation; changes to the bush fire risk in the area; changes to the Treatment Register; or following a major fire event.

The BFMC is required to monitor progress towards the completion of treatment works listed in the BFRMP, and the timeliness of the works. This is done through an Annual Works Program and also an Annual Report. The BFRMP may also be audited at the request of the NSW RFS Commissioner or the BFCC.

Appendices

This BFRMP is supported by a number of appendices:

1. Focus Areas and BFRMP Treatments

2. Fuel Management Register (List)

3. Maps:

    3.1   Residential and Special Fire Protection Purpose Risk Current

    3.2   Economic Risk Current

    3.3   Aboriginal Predicted Sites Risk Current

    3.4   Environmental Risk Current

    3.5   Fuel Management Register & Focus Areas

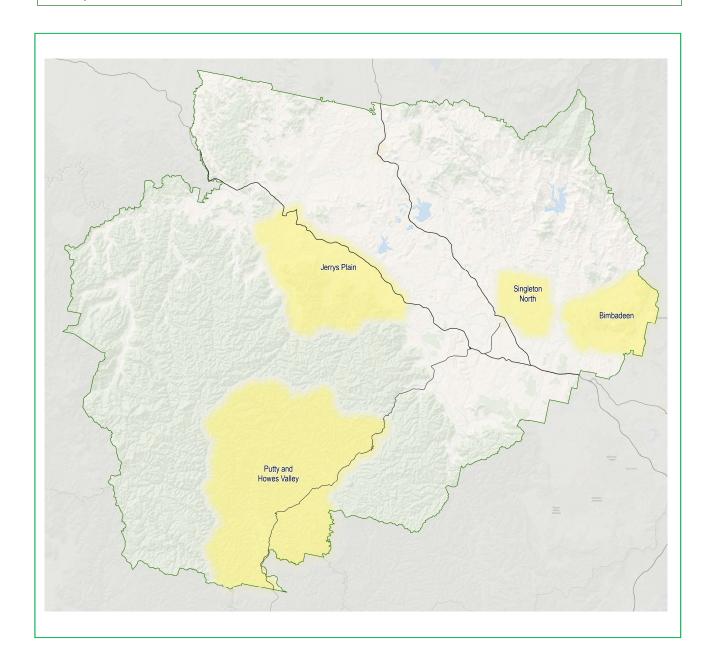4. Communication Strategy

Appendix 1

Focus Areas

FOCUS AREAS
1.1 Bimbadeen
1.2 Singleton North
1.3 Putty and Howes Valley
1.4 Jerrys Plains

1.1 Bimbadeen

Risk Profile

The Hunter Valley Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) has assessed the risk to residential, special fire protection (schools, health facilities, childcare etc), economic, environmental and cultural assets and has identified Bimbadeen as a Focus Area.

Bimbadeen is an isolated rural residential community in the Singleton Local Government Area. The majority of homes and properties are located on ridgelines and are in the high bush fire risk category. There is also a moderate risk to economic assets in the area, particularly agricultural assets.

The vegetation (grassland and wet sclerophyll forest) and steep slopes in this area contribute to the bush fire risk and the potential for significant fire development. The last significant bush fire was in 2013.

Access and egress for residents is limited.

Bush fire is a key threatening process for many environmental assets. There is a risk that another bush fire event in this area would negatively impact two Threatened Ecological Communities, 17 species of threatened fauna, four species of threatened flora and land under private property conservation agreements.

There is also a risk that a bush fire could harm the cultural value of the 59 Aboriginal sites that are known to occur within this area.

A key BFMC objective in Bimbadeen is to improve Community Preparedness. In particular, the maintenance of private property Asset Protection Zones & the preparation of Bush Fire Survival Plans. This will be achieved through the provision of resources and the implementation of programs that will help residents better understand their risk and prepare for bush fire.

As identified in the Fuel Management Register, the BFMC will implement a number of hazard reduction burns to achieve an Ignition Management Zone and Strategic Fire Advantage Zone.

To increase resilience within the Focus Area the BFMC will identify specific operational response strategies for the assets/ areas of concern. The BFMC fire access and fire trail network will be reviewed and maintained.

The key Bush Fire Risk Management Plan Objectives and Treatment Strategies for Bimbadeen are listed in Table 1.

Table 1		
BFMC OBJECTIVE	**TREATMENT STRATEGY**	**REFERENCE**
Community Preparedness	Community Engagement; Planning	BB.PL
	Community Engagement; Preparation	BB.PR
	Community Engagement; Resilience	BB.CR
Fuel Management	Strategic Fire Advantage Zone; prescribed burn	BB.SF
	Ignition Management Zone: prescribed burn	BB.IM
Response	Pre-Incident Plan; to be addressed in BFMC Plan of Operations	BB.PI
	Fire Trails; to be addressed in BFMC Fire Access and Fire Trail Plan	BB.FA

1.2   Singleton North

Risk Profile

The Hunter Valley Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) has assessed the risk to residential, special fire protection (schools, health facilities, childcare etc), economic, environmental and cultural assets and has identified Singleton North as a Focus Area. This includes areas in and around Obanvale, Wattleponds & Dyrring, Sedgefield and Mitchells Flat.

The area has a history of deliberate and accidental bush fire ignition and there is potential for rapid fire development.

A number of residential homes and properties have been identified in the high risk category and a number of economic assets are in the moderate risk category (agriculture). There are also social and demographic factors (population growth) that may make the community more vulnerable to the impacts of bush fire.

Within this Focus Area there is a risk that a high severity bush fire could directly impact and cause serious damage or irreversible loss of four vulnerable Aboriginal sites (carved or scar trees). There is also a risk that a bush fire could harm the cultural value of 217 other sites.

A key BFMC objective in Singleton North is to improve community preparedness. In particular, the maintenance of private property Asset Protection Zones, the preparation of Bush Fire Survival Plans and the reduction of deliberate and accidental ignitions. This will be achieved through the provision of information and resources and the implementation of programs that will help residents better understand their risk and prepare for bush fire.

To increase resilience within the Focus Area, the BFMC will identify specific operational response strategies for the environmental assets and other assets of concern. The BFMC fire access and fire trail network will be reviewed and maintained. The BFMC will address the high number of deliberate and accidental bush fire ignitions with specific strategies in the BFMC Ignition Prevention Plan.

The key Bush Fire Risk Management Plan Objectives and Treatment Strategies for Singleton North are listed in Table 2.

Table 2		
BFMC OBJECTIVE	**TREATMENT STRATEGY**	**REFERENCE**
Community Preparedness	Community Engagement; Risk Awareness	SN.RA
	Community Engagement; Preparation	SN.PR
	Community Engagement; Planning	SN.PL
Ignition prevention	Patrol; addressed in BFMC Ignition Prevention Plan	SN.IP
	Community Engagement; Risk Awareness	SN.RA
Response	Pre-Incident Plan; to be addressed in BFMC Plan of Operations	SN.PI
	Fire Trails; to be addressed in BFMC Fire Access and Fire Trail Plan	SN.FA

1.3 Putty and Howes Valley

Risk Profile

The Hunter Valley Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) has assessed the risk to residential, special fire protection (schools, health facilities, childcare etc), economic, environmental and cultural assets and has identified the Putty and Howes Valley as a Focus Area.

The Putty and Howes Valley area was impacted by a significant bush fire in the 2019/2020 bush fire season. As a result, the fuel load in Wollemi National Park is low and the bush fire risk to homes and properties is currently low to moderate, however this risk will increase significantly over the next 5 years each year as the vegetation recovers.

There are social and demographic factors (unoccupied dwellings and household income) that may make the community more vulnerable to the impacts of bush fire. Isolated homes and properties are also a factor due to limited access and egress options.

The Putty Road is a commonly used tourist route into the Hunter Valley area and smoke impact on this road is a significant concern.

Bush fire is a key threatening process for many environmental assets. There is a risk that another bush fire event in this area would negatively impact a Threatened Ecological Community, 39 species of threatened fauna, four species of threatened flora, ecosystem services provided to the community from a Declared Wilderness Area, and the function of a Forestry Corporation flora reserve.

Within this Focus Area there is a risk that a high severity bush fire could directly impact and cause serious damage or irreversible loss of vulnerable Aboriginal sites (2 burial sites and 1 carved or scar tree) and values within a World Heritage Area. There is also a risk that a bush fire could harm the cultural value of 86 other Aboriginal sites.

A key BFMC objective in Putty and Howes Valley is to improve community preparedness. In particular, the maintenance of private property Asset Protection Zones & the preparation of Bush Fire Survival Plans. This will be achieved through the provision of resources and the implementation of programs that will help residents better understand their risk, understand the consequences of deliberate ignitions and prepare for bush fire.

As identified in the Fuel Management Register, the BFMC will maintain Asset Protection Zones and implement a number of hazard reduction burns to achieve Ignition Management Zones and a Strategic Fire Advantage Zone.

The BFMC will address the high number of deliberate and accidental bush fire ignitions with specific strategies in the BFMC Ignition Prevention Plan.

The key Bush Fire Risk Management Plan Objectives and Treatment Strategies for Putty and Howes Valley are listed in Table 3.

Table 3		
BFMC OBJECTIVE	**TREATMENT STRATEGY**	**REFERENCE**
Community Preparedness	Community Engagement; Planning	PH.PL
	Community Engagement; Preparation	PH.PR
Fuel Management	Asset Protection Zone	PH.AP
	Ignition Management Zone; prescribed burn	PH.IM
	Strategic Fire Advantage Zone; prescribed burn	PH.SF
Response	Fire Trails; to be addressed in BFMC Fire Access and Fire Trail Plan	PH.FA

1.4 Jerrys Plains

Risk Profile

The Hunter Valley Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) has assessed the risk to residential, special fire protection (schools, health facilities, childcare etc), economic, environmental and cultural assets and has identified the Jerrys Plain as a focus area. The Jerrys Plain Focus Area includes the village and surrounding rural properties along the Golden Highway in the Singleton and Muswellbrook Local Government Areas.

A number of residential homes and properties have been identified in the high bush fire risk category. There is also a very high bush fire risk to economic assets particularly, equine and agriculture.

The Golden Highway is a major transport corridor and any disruptions to this road may have a significant regional impacts.

Bush fire is a key threatening process for many environmental assets. There is a risk that another bush fire event in this area would negatively impact a Threatened Ecological Community, 36 species of threatened fauna, five species of threatened flora and ecosystems services provided to the community from a Declared Wilderness Area.

Within this Focus Area there is a risk that a high severity bush fire could directly impact and cause serious damage or irreversible loss of vulnerable Aboriginal sites (2 burial sites and 1 carved or scar tree) and values within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (Wollemi National Park). There is also a risk that a bush fire could harm the cultural value of 247 other Aboriginal sites.

There is a risk that bush fires, fire suppression operations and hazard reduction strategies could negatively impact a Save our Species (SoS) program site and cause negative outcomes for threatened species conservation.

A key BFMC objective in Jerrys Plain is to improve community preparedness. In particular, the maintenance of private property Asset Protection Zones & the preparation of Bush Fire Survival Plans. This will be achieved through the provision of resources and the implementation of programs that will help residents better understand their risk and prepare for bush fire.

As identified in the Fuel Management Register, a number of prescribed burns in Wollemi National Park will provide strategic areas of fire protection that aim to reduce the speed, intensity and potential impacts of bush fire in this area.

The key Bush Fire Risk Management Plan Objectives and Treatment Strategies for Jerrys Plain are listed in Table 4.

Table 4		
BFMC OBJECTIVE	**TREATMENT STRATEGY**	**REFERENCE**
Fuel Management	Strategic Fire Advantage Zone; prescribed burn	JP.SF
Community Preparedness	Community Engagement; Planning	JP.PL
	Community Engagement; Preparation	JP.PR

Appendix 2

Fuel Management Register

Table 2.1 Asset Protection Zones				
ID	Asset Protection Zone Name	Focus Area	Priority	Responsible Agency
AP.1	Long Weeney Hut APZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
AP.2	Mount Poppong Radio Repeater APZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
AP.3	Sheepskin Hut APZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
AP.4	California Hut APZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
AP.5	Denman Common APZ		2	Crown Lands
AP.6	Denman Water Treatment Plant APZ		2	Crown Lands
AP.7	Phipps Cutting APZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
AP.8	RTA Radio Repeater Howes Mountain APZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Table 2.2 Prescribed Burns					
ID	Name	Strategy[1]	Focus Area	Priority	Responsible Agency
IM.9	Glendonbrook Road IMZ	IMZ	Bimbadeen	1	NSW Rural Fire Service
IM.10	Bakers Road - Putty State Forest IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	Forestry Corporation of NSW
IM.11	Box Gap Road IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW Rural Fire Service
IM.12	Bunjim Valley Drive North IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW Rural Fire Service
IM.13	Girribung IMZ (Hunter Valley BFMC portion)	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
IM.14	Glen Roy Trail South IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW Rural Fire Service
IM.15	Gospers IMZ (Hunter Valley BFMC portion)	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
IM.16	Howes Valley Trail - South IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW Rural Fire Service
IM.17	Howes Valley Trail - West IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW Rural Fire Service
IM.18	Hunter Main Trail South - Putty State Forest - North IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	Forestry Corporation of NSW
IM.19	Hunter Main Trail South - Putty State Forest - South IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	Forestry Corporation of NSW
IM.20	Hunter Range South IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
IM.21	Kekeelbon IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Table 2.2 Prescribed Burns					
ID	Name	Strategy[1]	Focus Area	Priority	Responsible Agency
IM.22	MacDonald River South - Putty State forest IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	Forestry Corporation of NSW
IM.23	Wilderness East IMZ	IMZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
IM.24	Broke Road IMZ	IMZ		2	NSW Rural Fire Service
IM.25	Mirannie IMZ	IMZ		2	NSW Rural Fire Service
IM.26	Muswellbrook Common IMZ	IMZ		2	NSW Rural Fire Service
LM.27	Defence Sector 2 Stage 1 LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.28	Defence Sector 2 Stage 2 LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.29	Defence Sector 2 Stage 3 LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.30	Defence Sector 2 Stage 4 LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.31	Defence Sector 2A LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.32	Defence Sector 3D LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.33	Defence Sector 3E LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.34	Defence Sector 4N LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.35	Defence Sector 6A LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.36	Defence Sector 6B LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.37	Defence Sector 6C LMZ (Hunter Valley BFMC portion)	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.38	Defence Sector 8 LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.39	Defence Sector Vere LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.40	Eckfords Creek HR - Eckfords Creek LMZ (Hunter Valley BFMC portion)	LMZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
LM.41	Eckfords Creek HR - Wombat Station LMZ (Hunter Valley BFMC portion)	LMZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
LM.42	Redgroves HR - North LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
LM.43	Redgroves HR - South LMZ	LMZ		2	Department of Defence
SF.44	Bimbadeen South SFAZ	SFAZ	Bimbadeen	1	NSW Rural Fire Service
SF.45	Ararat SFAZ	SFAZ	Jerrys Plains	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.46	Dural SFAZ	SFAZ	Jerrys Plains	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.47	Horse Shoe East SFAZ	SFAZ	Jerrys Plains	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.48	Mount Neilson SFAZ	SFAZ	Jerrys Plains	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.49	Rock View SFAZ	SFAZ	Jerrys Plains	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Table 2.2 Prescribed Burns					
ID	Name	Strategy[1]	Focus Area	Priority	Responsible Agency
SF.50	Spring Creek SFAZ	SFAZ	Jerrys Plains	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.51	Woodlands SFAZ	SFAZ	Jerrys Plains	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.52	Sheep Trig SFAZ	SFAZ	Putty and Howes Valley	1	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.53	Belford West - Compartment ID 277 SFAZ	SFAZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.54	Belford West SFAZ - Compartment ID 270	SFAZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.55	Black Creek SFAZ (Hunter Valley BFMC portion)	SFAZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.56	Eckfords Creek SFAZ - Eckfords Creek South	SFAZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.57	Eckfords Creek SFAZ - Thunderbolts Gully (Hunter Valley BFMC portion)	SFAZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.58	Kurranulla Creek SFAZ	SFAZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
SF.59	Wilpen North SFAZ	SFAZ		2	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

[1]Strategy: IMZ (Ignition Management Zone), LMZ (Land Management Zone), SFAZ (Strategic Fire Advantage Zone). See Annex C BFCC Policy 01/2023 for further information on bush fire management zones including a description of the zones and their purposes.

Table 2.3 Neighbourhood Safer Places*			
Title	Type	Location	LGA
School House	Building	670 Martindale Road, Martindale	Muswellbrook
Baerami Hall	Building	1361 Bylong Valley Way, Baerami	Muswellbrook
Scotts Flat RFS Station and School House	Building	Cnr of Glendon Road and Roughit Lane, Glendon	Singleton
Mitchells Flat Hall	Building	Mitchells Flat Road, Mitchells Flat	Singleton
Mirannie Hall	Building	Mirannie Road, Mirannie	Singleton
Kirkton Public School	Open Space	797 Standen Drive, Lower Belford	Singleton
Jerrys Plains Community Hall	Building	Wambo Street, Jerrys Plains	Singleton
Lake St Clair Recreation Area	Open Space	Carrowbrook Road, Carrowbrook	Singleton
Allan Bull Reserve	Open Space	Cnr Bridgman Road and Acacia Circuit, Hunterview	Singleton

*This list is current at the date of BFRMP approval. Visit the NSW RFS website for live, up to date information on Neighbourhood Safer Place locations: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

Appendix 3

Maps

Known Aboriginal site and Historic Heritage data was also assessed in the development of this BFRMP, however due to the sensitive nature of the data bush fire risk maps for these assets are not being shared for public exhibition at this time.

Appendix 4
Communication Strategy

—

Date	Target Audience	Method of communication	Method of notification	Key message/Purpose	Resources Required	Responsibility
Commencing May / June 2021	BFMC Members Senior Volunteers	Workshops	Email	- Introduction to BFRMP - methodology; - Data validation; - Analyse risk maps; - Develop draft focus areas and treatment strategies; - Change in risk analysis; and confirm treatment strategies.	- Venue - Facilitator(s) - PowerPoint presentation - Maps	NSW RFS Area Command Head Office (Bush Fire Risk Planning)
Dec 2022	General Public	NSW Department of Customer Service – Have your say	website	Advise of exhibition of BFRMP via NSW Department of Customer Service – Have your Say	Template	Head Office (Bush Fire Risk Planning)
Dec 2022	BFMC Members	Email	Email	Notification to BFMC members of public exhibition	Annex A	XO
Dec 2022	General Public	Local media	Email	Advise of exhibition, where to get copies and how to submit feedback	- Annex B - Press release template	District Office

Date	Target Audience	Method of communication	Method of notification	Key message/Purpose	Resources Required	Responsibility
Dec 2022	Members	District Brigades	Email	• Advise of exhibition, where to get copies and how to submit feedback • Share social media schedule and encourage sharing of posts	Social media schedule links	District Office
Dec 2022	General Public	BFMC website Social Media	Social Media	Invite / remind community to provide feedback on the draft plan and maps throughout the public exhibition period.	• Social media package distributed by agencies • BFMC website.	BFMC Members
December 2022 to February 2023	General Public	Print Media	Hardcopy notices	• Notification of public exhibition of BFRMP • How to get a copy of plan • How to make a submission	• Public Notice • Hardcopies displayed in Council Chambers and RFS FCC • Website available at Council chambers and NSW RFS FCC/ FRNSW station(s)	NSW RFS Area Command

Planning together

Hunter Valley

Bush Fire Management Committee