



VELDFIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

2023-2028

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1 BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE SAKHISIZWE FPA (SFPA)

The Sakhisizwe local Municipality is situated in the Chris Hani District Municipality in the Eastern Cape. Sakhisizwe FPA extends partway into IntsikaYethu and Engcobo municipalities, furthermore it borders the Emalahleni municipality.

The SFPA was registered in 2005. (Registration number 1341/01) The SFPA area consists of 408 803 ha. Sakhisizwe FPA borders Indwe FPA; Cullenswood FPA and Maclear FPA. Good relationships are held between the FPA's.

2 OBJECTIVES

- Achieve a community and role-players that are better educated about veldt fire management practices.
- Strive towards getting all landowners to become members of the FPA.
- Minimising the losses caused by unwanted fires.
- Reduce fire hazards and risks: -around town and especially the neighbourhoods next to farms.
- Careful utilization of controlled burning and defining the benefits of it.
- Strive towards achieving minimum standards of fire readiness among members.
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- Integration of fire management into programs that reduce and control alien invasives.
- Proper fire management practises and regimes in ecologically sensitive areas.

3 FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 VELD FIRE RISKS WITHIN THE SAKHISIZWE AREA

Lists of social assets within the area of the Sakhisizwe FPA with an analysis of the veldt fire risk for each and the level of risk assessed.

Asset Group	Hazard	Likelihood		Consequence		Risk
		Assessment	Rating	Assessment	Rating	Rating
Cala Town	Grassland fires (extreme conditions) Alien invasive trees & the town itself.	The area is not protected with effective management plans, this increases the town's risk	Likely	Loss significant high risks of property of injury during fire	Moderate	Medium
Elliot suburb (township)	Grassland fires (extreme conditions)	The area is reasonably protected and effective management plans	Likely	Loss of property is significant high risk of injury during fire Fighting	Moderate	High
Farmsteads	Grassland fires (extreme plantation forest, alien trees)	Although the extreme conditions occur every 2 years, the homesteads are well protected. Staff dwellings are sometimes not protected.	Possible	Possibility of the loss of houses and injury during fire fighting	Moderate	High
Cala surroundings & rural area	Grassland fires (extreme conditions) alien invasive trees & the town itself	The area is protected with effective management plans;	Possible	Loss of property is significant high risk of injury during fire fighting	Moderate	High
Elliot Town	Grassland fires (extreme conditions)	The town is reasonably protected with affective management plans. The Abakwethasare a Problem in that they	Likely	Loss of property is significant high risk of injury during fire fighting	Moderate	High

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	Alien invasive trees & the town itself.	sleep in the trees which boundary on the NW side of the Town.				
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3.2 FIRE REGIME AND FIRE BEHAVIOUR IN THE MAIN TYPES OF VEGETATION WITHIN THE AREA OF THE SAKHISIZWE FPA

Vegetation of cover type	Approximate cover, percent	Fire regime	Fire behavior
Mountain grassland	20	This grassland type burns mainly after the first frost in May and until the first rains in October, prescribed/controlled fires are made about once in two years. Firebreaks are made annually. Farmers and managers of protected areas apply “mosaic” burns usually at the start and end of the fire season. These are small-scale burns under mild conditions, which are allowed to continue until extinguished by high humidity.	During inversions, grass fires move slowly, with the flame front in the heading fires moving at about 1-2km per hour, with flame lengths of about 0.2 to 0.6m. During dry windy frontal conditions, grass fires move at speeds up to 6-8km per hour, with flame lengths of 1-4m
Middleveld	69.5	This mixed grass and woodland type burns mainly after the first frost in May and until the first rains in January, fires occur naturally in any patch of vegetation annually in the area.	Because the grasses are tall (up to 2m) heading fires during dry windy frontal weather move at speeds up to 6-8kmper hour, with flame lengths of 2-6m. Under inversions, fires move slowly but if the grass is dry, flames are 2-4m long.
Plantation Forests -mainly pine	5	Fires do occur regularly in the plantation forests. Fires arise in or enter the forests mainly during the winter. The big forest fires all occur during the frontal weather.	Under moderate conditions forest fires burn slowly in the litter, with flame lengths of 0.5 to 0.5m. During frontal weather, forest fires move at speeds up to 8km per hour and generate intense heat. Crown fires break out under these conditions, and spotting occurs up to 0.5 to 2km ahead of the fire front.
Annual crops mainly maize	2.5	Fires occur between May and October after the harvest when crops residues may burn under severe frontal weather	Residue fires burn slowly with low flames but could burn quickly due to flying burning residue.

Invasive alien trees	2.5	Fires in stands of alien invasive plants usually occur only during severe frontal weather	Crown fires are the rule, with intense heat
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3.3 SOCIAL , ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

a. SOCIAL IMPACTS

i. The outline of the history of veldt fires in the Sakhisizwe area highlights the social impacts:

- Recurrent loss of life and injury
- Loss of livelihoods
- Loss of assets

b. ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Positive economic impacts of veldt fires include the maintenance of pastures through maintaining an appropriate grassland fire regime.

Economic costs recorded recently include the following:

- Loss of pastures requiring expensive replacement by buying fodder
- Loss of livestock
- Loss of timber in plantation forests with disruption of downstream processing
- Closure of the Elliot airport during hazy episodes
- Interruption of power supplies on main Eskom line
- Loss of homesteads and leisure resorts
- Interruption of telecommunication

c. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Sakhisizwe FPA identifies the following environmental values that could be at risk because of veldt fires:

- Water catchments.
- Biodiversity of grasslands, wetlands
- Value to ecotourism of the landscapes and scenery
- Cranes

The second most valuable environmental asset is the store of biodiversity. The mountain grasslands of the area incorporate many rare endemic grassland species of plants and several species of animals that characterize this environment.

The third important environmental asset is the landscape and scenery of the area.

Veldt fires are an important part of the natural scene and would have been for millions of years. Most species and habitats in the area are adapted to recurrent veldt fires. Both the use of fire in management and its exclusion has environmental consequences.

4. ROLE PLAYERS IN THE VELDFIRE ENVIRONMENT

- Landowners
- PG Bison
- State Land: SANRAL; TRANSNET; DFFE
- Communities and Communal Grazing Areas
- Working on Fire Teams – PG Bison and Elliot Base

5. SFPA VELDFIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

5.1 Compartmentalized management of the SFPA area through Fire Management Units (FMU's)

- All areas will be managed through FMU's.
- Appointed FMU leaders will liaise with the SFPA team.
- Encourage cooperation between members in the FMU's.

5.2 SFPA will utilise strategic fire breaks as the primary protection measure against fires.

- Develop Fire Management plans in high-risk areas with a high membership as a priority which includes the use of strategic fire breaks.
- Strategic fire breaks will be used as a point of attack and to pinch fires that have jumped across multiple fire breaks.
- Localized fire break plans may be used in areas with limited membership.
- Make available to all landowners in the FPA area, guidelines for the implementation of strategic breaks.
- Arrange pre-fire season meetings to review the strategic fire breaks in each area and add addendums to the fire management plans.
- Promote fuel-load reduction and risk by promoting controlled burns where applicable (i.e., burn or get burnt!)

5.3 The SFPA Rules, Policies and Recommendations will be binding on ALL landowners in the SFPA

Management Area

- Make available the FPA Rules, Policies and Recommendations to all landowners in the SFPA area.
- Enforce the FPA Rules, Policies and Recommendations in the FPA Management area while remaining aware of any applicable by-laws in the area.
- The FPA Rules, Policies and Recommendations will be binding on all landowners in the SFPA management area as the *de facto* standard. (Existing or holding a specified position in fact but not necessarily by legal right).
- Promote conservation principles and policies for controlled burns in terms of seasonal and burning rotation.

5.4 The conditions of Sections 12(4) of the NVFFA will apply to all burning operations within the SFPA Management Area

- This implies that all vegetation-related burns, e.g. camp burns, conservation burns, and high-intensity burns will be managed under Section 12 (4);
- The SFPA Rules, Policies and Recommendations will apply for burning operations undertaken within the SFPA Management area.

5.5 The SFPA will implement a Fire Prohibition Period as and when required.

- Provide and communicate dates for the fire prohibition period to all landowners ahead of the Fire Prohibition Period.
- SFPA will make use of, and encourage, Smoke Reporting during the fire season and fire prohibition period as a way of gaining information about uncontrolled fires in its management area.
- SFPA may grant special permission for burning to be undertaken during the fire prohibition period as per the SFPA Rules, Policies and Recommendations.

5.6 Ensure that reasonable efforts are made to put agreements in place with neighbouring FPA's in the event of a fire crossing boundaries

5.7 SFPA will enforce and maintain a Burning Permit System

- SFPA will issue permits according to the FPA Rules, Policies and Recommendations.

5.8 Promote awareness and enforcement of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act 1998

- The SFPA will explore and where possible, implement mutually beneficial partnerships focused on community areas (i.e., Emerging Farmers – Farmer's Associations);
- Engage landowners and advise them on their compliance with the NVFFA, 1998.
- Endeavour to do Awareness at schools, neighbourhoods etc. Attend community meetings where relevant.

5.9 Develop and implement tools for effective veldfire management and compliance within the SFPA area.

- Ensure access to SFPA Policies, Rules, and Recommendations for landowners within the registered area of the SFPA.
- Work towards compliance with the FPA policies, Rules and Recommendations for landowners within the area of the SFPA.

5.10 Ensure the ongoing compliance of the FPA with the NVFFA

- The SFPA will measure itself against the Act and the regulations thereto, the SFPA Constitution, and the SFPA's Strategic plan.

- The SFPA will endeavour to distribute the weather forecast and predicted FDR to members and non – members during fire season.
- The SFPA will send out FDI warnings to members on days with a very high forecasted FDI.
- Ensure that the FPA will have a legally appointed FPO.

Signed at Elliot on _____ 2023

M de Klerk – Chairperson