



**Sarah Baartman West
Fire Protection Association**

DAFF Registration number: 3150/2

VELDFIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

for the

SARAH BAARTMAN WEST FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

In terms of Section 5 (1) (a) of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act, No 101
of 1998

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2. Sarah Baartman West FPA Background

The Sarah Baartman West Fire Protection Association was established in May 2016 after the former Thornhill, Zuuranys and Baviaans FPA's reached an agreement to amalgamate and form the Sarah Baartman West FPA. The formation was influenced by a recommendation from the Fynbos Fire Project motivated by the belief that a larger FPA will be financially more viable and effective compared to a number of smaller FPA's. The SBWFPA is affiliated with the Eastern Cape Umbrella Fire Protection Association and registered at DAFF with registration no 3150/02

The aim of the amalgamation is also to contribute to the development of communities by eliminating loss of life and human injuries during veldfires and progressively reducing impacts on property and environmental values while promoting the useful role of veldfires. The Association, therefore, aims to always manage all high risks as soon as possible and intends on continuing to educate and assist its members about better fire management.

The Sarah Baartman West Fire Protection Association falls within the Sarah Baartman District Municipality and covers local municipal areas such as Kouga, Koukamma and partly in Dr Beyers Naude Local Municipality and partly in the Sundays River Local Municipality and is 806 255 hectares in extent.

The area covered by SBWFPA has an all-year fire risk as well as an all-year rainfall season. This area falls within the Cape Floristic Kingdom and together with commercial forestry plantations and indigenous forests provides a habitat for various vegetation pockets. Land users vary in this regard from state-owned conservation to private agricultural practices and it is very important that this veldfire management strategy accommodates various needs and risk profiles in the area.

The Sarah Baartman West Fire Protection Association is divided into management blocks, referred to as fire management units (FMU's). Out of these fire management units, they are divided into smaller cells to make the management and distribution of resources and the deployment of resources into an area affected by a veldfire easier.

2.1 South Coast Fire Management Unit

Situated on the southern portion of the Tsitsikamma Mountains and stretches towards the Tsitsikamma coastline, this section covers the area west of the Bloukrans River on the N2 and extends eastward towards the Kareedouw-Humansdorp turn-off, east of Trifolia interchange abutting the N2/R102/R62. This FMU is situated in an area classified as “extreme high risk” due to high densities of fynbos and commercial plantations. The community compositions such as Clarkson, Woodlands, Thornham, Koomansbos and Eerstervier-Kruis in this FMU are also regarded as “hotspots” due to the regular occurrence of veldfires on communal land. These areas should be prioritized in terms of awareness and information sharing as well as liaising with community structures to sensitize them about veldfire safety and risk reduction/mitigation strategies. Situated in this FMU are also three sawmills providing employment many people in the area, either directly or indirectly. The forestry sector remains a very important local economic driver for the area and provides multiple employment opportunities.

2.2 Kareedouw Fire Management Unit

The Kareedouw FMU Area is North of the Tsitsikamma Mountains and extends to the Baviaans Wilderness area. The R62 abuts the area in a north-south boundary, starting from The Heights in the west and towards the Kareedouw/Trifolia turn-off. This area can be regarded as an extremely high risk area because of the high concentration of mountain Fynbos on the northern slopes and the presence of commercial pine plantations situated at the foothills of the Tsitsikamma. Residential areas in Kareedouw such as Mountain View, Uitkyk and Vergenoeg are regarded as “hotspots” due to regular outbreaks of uncontrolled fires due to illegal hunting on municipal land and children frequenting the veld. Livestock farmers in the area also must burn their veld on a regular basis for grazing. The river/streams are heavily infested with invasive alien vegetation, and this poses a serious threat with wildfires. Property under the management of the ECPTA is also infested with large quantities of black wattle and hakea and the same can be said of the Assegaaibos Railway Station area (Transnet).

2.3 Humansdorp Fire Management Unit

This FMU forms the largest out of the four fire management units under the Sarah Baartman West FPA. The area can be regarded as an extremely high-risk region because of the high prevalence of fynbos. The area of St Francis Bay/Sea Vista within close proximity of the coast is also an extremely high-risk cell within the Humansdorp FMU due to high densities of fynbos, invasive alien species such as Port Jackson Willow, thatch-roof houses and accessibility challenges with some of the properties situated on gated estates. Kouga Local Municipal fire brigade services plays a very important role with regard to fire management in the area, covering vast management areas but have satellite stations in St Francis Bay that are able to respond to possible challenges with regard to fire management in the wildland-urban interface area.

2.4 Gamtoos Fire Management Unit

The Gamtoos region is situated in an extremely high risk are because of the high presence of fynbos and commercial plantations. Settlements such as Thornhill and Loerie is regarded as hotspots for wildfires and community awareness programmes in these areas needs to be conducted on an ongoing basis. The forestry, citrus and vegetable farming sector provides most of the employment opportunities. The Gamtoos is also part of the Baviaanskloof World Heritage Site and is a mega reserve contributing to biodiversity and conservation in the area. This is a vast outlying area but can be accessed via the N2 travelling to Port Elizabeth as well as the R102/R331.

3. Objective

The objective of the Sarah Baartman West FPA Veldfire Management Strategy aims to ensure greater understanding and appreciation of the natural biodiversity, catchment area preservation, risk reduction from fires in communities and where possible effective fire management systems within its area of operation.

This will be achieved through initiatives such as:

- Assist in reducing the number of fire hazards and risks in and around hot-spot communities that has an adverse effect on high-value areas such as commercial plantations.
- Assist in and implementing ongoing fire awareness campaigns in communities with strategic and critical role-players.
- Participate in risk reduction strategies with stakeholders such as prescribed/block-burns and render the necessary assistance where needed and where reasonably able to.
- Implement and update fire management plans within the respective FMU's to assist with the management effectiveness seeking to reduce and control alien invasive vegetation.
- The provision of information and communication services through various platforms and methods to ensure that members and non-members alike receive regular updates about fires, weather, fire danger indices.
- Maintain high level of professionalism in promoting the work and conduct of the Sarah Baartman West FPA at various levels. Strive to conduct regular risk assessments to members where needed and to provide sound advice about fire management and risk reduction. This is to also address and single out high fire risk areas and ensure that particular emphasis are placed on those areas regarding monitoring, resource deployment and awareness.

4. Sarah Baartman West FPA Veldfire Management Strategy

1. Compartmentalized management of the FPA area through fire management units (FMU's):

- Work towards the appointment of FMU leaders
- Develop and determine needs for equipment, training and other resources per FMU and to schedule, distribute and allocate accordingly when the FPA is able to.
- Conduct regular information sessions with the respective FMU leaders and Fire Advisors to determine how to improve veldfire management objectives and support for members where practically feasible and possible.
- Encourage cooperation between members in the FMU's.

2. FPA will utilize strategic firebreaks as the primary protection measure against fires:

- The development of fire management plans for landowners and members at their request, prioritising high risk and to conduct joint inspections in terms of where to establish strategic firebreaks in the identified areas
- Participate in pre-fire season readiness meetings and information sessions to review strategic fire break effectiveness and to highlight additional risks and risk mitigation measures.
- Advise on mutual firebreak agreements between landowners regarding strategic firebreak maintenance and schedules.

- Provide guidelines for the implementation of strategic firebreaks
- Promote fuel load reduction and risk by promoting controlled burns where applicable (i.e. burn or get burnt!)

3. The FPA Rules, Policies and Recommendations will be binding on all landowners in the FPA management area:

- Make available the FPA rules and regulations to all landowners in the FPA area by making use of various platforms, such as social media.
- Strive to ensure that the FPA rules, policies and recommendations within the FPA management area is enforced in conjunction with relevant municipal by-laws and to workshop such with fire advisors and FMU Leaders together with designated fire brigade officials and FPO.
- Promote risk reduction strategies and possible cost-saving methods to landowners regarding clearing of invasive alien and reducing the spread of wildfires in identified areas.
- Render the necessary support function as FPA to members making use of a controlled burn as well as seasonal burning system.

4. The conditions of Section 12 (4) of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act will apply to all burning operations within the FPA management area:

- The FPA Rules, Policies, and Recommendations will apply for burning operations undertaken within the FPA management area.
- All vegetation-related burns, e.g., camp burns, conservation burns, and high-intensity burns will be managed under Section 12(4).

5. The FPA will implement a Fire Prohibition Period as and when required:

- The SBWFPA will provide and communicate through its various platforms the fire prohibition period to its members prior to the commencement of the fire prohibition period.
- Landowners will be sensitized via the necessary platforms of communication to report smoke in their areas, reporting of uncontrolled fires and to work closely with the relevant authorities to curb unsafe fire practises.
- FPA may grant special permission for burning to be undertaken during the fire prohibition period as per the FPA Rules, Policies, and Recommendations.

6. Ensure reasonable efforts are made to put agreements in place with neighbouring FPA's in the event of a fire crossing:

- Implementation of a communication plan/updated contact list and share with adjoining FPA's in the event of a fire crossing the FPA boundary to ensure smooth and effective communication amongst stakeholders.
- Promote and endeavour planning meeting with neighbouring FPA to have a basic written agreement and action plan in place between neighbouring FPA's.

7. The FPA will enforce and maintain a Burning Permit System:

- The FPA will promote in as far as practically possible the existing burn permit system of the local municipalities within its area.
- The SBWFPA will maintain a record of permits issued and authorizations issued to landowners and endeavour to render the support service around obtaining these.
- Ensure that information pertaining to authorizations is communicated to the necessary officials and stakeholders.

- Work closely with agencies, such as the ECUFPA, to assist with regards to best practise industry technologies in terms of burn permit and block burn monitoring.

8. Promote awareness and enforcement of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act, 1998:

- The SBWFPA will ensure awareness of the NVFFA through various platforms and interactions in its area of operations.
- Pamphlets, brochures and other forms of information sharing will be used to distribute information in an effort to create awareness about the NVFFA.
- Share information regarding invasive alien plants and its effect on veldfires to sensitize landowners to reduce such risks safely and in compliance with the NVFFA, FPA Rules and Regulations.

9. Develop and implement tools for effective veldfire management and compliance within the FPA area:

- Make available by means of printed and electronic media, the rules, and policies of the FPA as well as recommendations for risk reduction and compliance for landowners together with other role-players.
- Striving towards minimum compliance for landowners regarding the SBWFPA policies, rules and recommendations in the management area.

10. Ensure ongoing compliance of the FPA with the NVFFA:

- Strive towards meeting the organizational goals and targets set out for the FPA.
- Strive towards sharing and distributing weather information, fire danger index information to members as well as non-members using various information platforms.
- The FPA will share high forecasted FDI warnings to members and non-members, as well as the restriction that is imposed to burn on such forecasted days.
- Ensure that the FPA status remain legal regarding the legal appointment of the Fire Protection Officer.