

Bedford Fire Protection Association (FPA)**Veldfire Management Strategy (VMS)****Contents**

1. Background
2. Objectives
3. Fire Risk Assessment
4. Veldfire Management Role Players
5. Compartmentalization of FPA
6. Use of Strategic Firebreaks
7. Rules, Policies & Recommendations of the Bedford FPA
8. Fire Prohibition Periods
9. Communication & Coordination
10. Burning Permit System

1. Background

The Bedford Fire Protection Association (FPA) is registered in terms of Section 4(2) of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act (Act No. 101 of 1998). The registration number is 1021/01 and is dated 19 August 2004.

The FPA operates in the magisterial district of Bedford, Eastern Cape. Broadly this is bound to the west by the N10 National Road and the Baviaans River Mountains, to the north by the Winterberg Mountains, to the east by the Mankazana Mountains, and to the south by the Fish River (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Bedford magisterial district and Bedford Fire Protection Association (FPA) boundary (blue line), and divisions of the FPA

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Veldfire Management Strategy (VMS) include the following:

- Managing planned fires in order that they can be conducted safely;
- Quickly respond to and minimise the losses caused by unwanted veldfires;
- Identifying fire hazards and risks in the FPA's operational areas;
- Where possible, integrate fire management in the control of alien or problem plants; and
- Identify relevant role players and encourage their readiness and awareness of fire management practices.

3. Fire Risk Assessment

The area encompassed by the Bedford FPA has varying topography and vegetation, such that the fire risk is varied. The following areas can broadly be identified:

1. **The Baviaans River.** This is mountainous and dry and largely dominated by low bush (in lower lying areas) and grass (in higher lying area). Many of the high lying grass

areas are subject to regular planned burning. Farms are large and far apart and communication is challenging owing to the paucity of mobile phone coverage, although two-way radios are widely used. Farmers in this area are accustomed to fires and are generally well equipped to deal with them, although access to many mountainous parts is difficult. Overall, the Baviaans River is considered a **medium fire risk** area.

2. **West Flats, East Flats & Cowie.** The Bedford flats are largely flat, dominated by grass and generally well vegetated. Planned burning does take place but is less common than in mountainous area. The area is traversed by several public roads as well as a railway line and has the town of Bedford located in the centre of it. Most areas are accessible by vehicle. The flats and Cowie are considered a **high fire risk** area.

4. Veldfire Management Role Players

The following role players are involved in the management of veldfires in the Bedford FPA's operational area:

- Agricultural landowners
- Conservancies (Baviaansrivier Conservancy)
- State entities (SANRAL and Transnet)
- Users of the Bedford Commonage (communal grazing area)
- Wind farms
- Municipal Fire Services

5. Compartmentalization of FPA Area

The Bedford FPA will be divided into fire management units (FMUs). The FPA will encourage the FMUs to appoint a leader who will liaise with the FPA Executive Committee (Exco). Cooperation will be encouraged between FMUs

6. Use of Strategic Firebreaks

The FPA will make use of strategic fire breaks as the primary protection measure against fires. These strategic fire breaks will be used as a point of attack and to pinch fires that have crossed multiple fire breaks. The FPA may develop a Fire Management Plan. Pre-fire season meetings may be arranged by the FPA to review strategic fire breaks and, if needed, any changes will be added as addenda to any Fire Management Plan. The FPA may advocate for fuel load and risk reduction through controlled burns where applicable.

7. Rules, Policies & Recommendations of the Bedford FPA

The Bedford FPA will develop rules, policies and/or recommendations that will be made available to all members. The FPA will enforce these rules, policies and recommendations - which will be binding on the members of the FPA – in the FPA management area. Cognisance will be given to other by-laws applicable to the area.

8. Fire Prohibition Periods

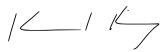
The Bedford FPA shall communicate to members any fire prohibition periods declared by umbrella organisations such as ECUFPA which are relevant to its members. The Bedford FPA may itself declare a fire prohibition period should the conditions and risks in its operational area warrant it. Such declarations shall be made by the FPO or Chairman and communicated to members. Permission to burn during the Fire Prohibition Period may be granted at the discretion of the FPO but shall be subject to rules including, but not limited to, those of the FPA.

10. Communication & Coordination

The Bedford FPA will ensure that reasonable efforts are made to put agreements in place with neighbouring FPAs in order to facilitate communication and coordination in the event of a fire crossing the FPA boundaries. The Chairman or FPO of the Bedford FPA will promote awareness of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act amongst its members through sharing of relevant information. This may include but will not be limited to the FPA's constitution, its rules and regulations, fire prohibition notices etc.

11. Burning Permit System

The Bedford FPA will issue burning permits according to the FPA Rules, Polices and Recommendations. The holders of such permits shall be bound to the rules attached to it.



K. King
Chairman: Bedford FPA



R. Pringle
Fire Protection Officer: Bedford FPA