

A PLAN TO RECOVER FROM THE 2020 BUSHFIRES

Over the 2019-20 bushfire season, two of the ACT's most cherished natural icons – Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve – were impacted by devastating bushfire and flood events. The Orroral Valley and Beard bushfires burnt about 88,000 hectares of ACT rural land, Commonwealth land, and ACT parks and reserves.

The ACT Government is working to restore impacted areas and has developed a long-term Bushfire Recovery Plan (the Plan) to guide recovery efforts. The Plan responds directly to the risks identified immediately after the bushfire and flood events and builds on actions completed in the initial six months following these extreme events.

RECOVERY PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide the response to the recovery of bushfire and flood affected areas:

- » Traditional Custodians, the Ngunnawal people, Representative Aboriginal Organisations, and the Government will heal Country and walk the journey to recovery together.
- » Environmental integrity and ecosystem functions will be restored through assisting natural processes.
- » Heritage values will be conserved through collaboration and contemporary and traditional practices.
- » Canberra's communities of recreational, conservation and interest groups will be meaningfully engaged throughout the recovery process.
- » Recovery actions will consider ecosystem drivers and be underpinned by sound science, credible research and best practice techniques.
- » Damaged infrastructure will be built back better and more resilient to future disasters.

Why do we need an ACT Bushfire Recovery Plan?

The 2020 bushfire and flood events have changed the landscape, threatening native animals and plants, impacting European and Aboriginal cultural heritage, damaging infrastructure and placing the ACT's primary water supply at risk.

While our natural environment will recover over time without intervention, there is a real danger that some of the things that make ACT parks and reserves such special places will be lost if we do not take action.

Actions under the ACT Bushfire Recovery Plan

While the Plan considers Namadgi, Tidbinbilla and Beard, most of the Plan's actions occur in Namadgi where 80% of the park was burnt.

ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

Namadgi's rich and complex ecosystems are home to threatened and vulnerable plants and animals. Namadgi also plays a critical role in providing Canberra and Queanbeyan with safe drinking water.

The ACT Government will deliver projects to support natural regenerative processes throughout Namadgi, Tidbinbilla and Beard where relevant, including:

- » restoring and protecting the ACT's Alpine Sphagnum Bogs and Associated Fens ecological communities
- » protecting native ecosystems from weeds post-fire
- » understanding the effect of fire on predator diet composition
- » frog survival and recovery in the ACT
- » protecting the endangered Broad-toothed Rat
- » post-fire protection of high priority threatened plant species
- » developing and implementing a catchment-scale hydrological monitoring framework
- » developing assessment methods and undertaking field work to assess hillslope erosion, road drainage and riparian areas
- » implementing erosion management actions
- » research and monitoring to model catchment responses to a range of fire scenarios.

HERITAGE

All impacted areas are rich in both Aboriginal and European history. Ongoing projects will continue to assess fire and flood impacts on heritage sites. Recovery actions will be based on the outcomes of these assessments and are likely to include:

- » management of vegetation around Aboriginal cultural sites, to reduce the risk to the sites from future bushfires
- » re-establishment of the Aboriginal Rock Art Monitoring Group
- » investigation of other partnership-based approaches to the custodianship of Aboriginal heritage, including through the Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee
- » relocation of disturbed artefacts to a safe location on-Country, as close as possible to the location where they were discovered

- » work with Kosciusko Huts Association to agree on and implement restoration or commemorative work for historic huts destroyed in the fire.

BUILT ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Assets and infrastructure that are used for community recreation and management purposes will be replaced and repaired throughout impacted areas where relevant. Repair of visitor infrastructure is essential for the reopening of the remaining closed areas in Namadgi and Tidbinbilla, and is a key priority for Government. Infrastructure identified as needing repairs and replacement includes:

- » boundary fencing
- » walking trails and steps
- » erosion bars
- » signs and wayfinding markers
- » retaining walls
- » engineered walkways, boardwalks and bridges.

Working with partners, neighbours and community

Bushfire recovery will be a collective effort, and effective coordination of the skills and experience of the ACT's volunteers, community groups, industry, universities and other research institutions will be central to the recovery program. The ACT Government will work with key stakeholders to explore meaningful opportunities for community involvement in recovery efforts.

How does the Plan consider climate change?

Namadgi and other impacted areas are dynamic landscapes, and bushfire is just one of the threats facing the ACT region's complex ecosystems. Climate change response and adaptation will be considered in all recovery actions.

More information

For more information on the ACT Bushfire Recovery Plan, call Access Canberra on **13 22 81** or visit www.environment.act.gov.au/bushfire-recovery-2020.