

Community Update

Plenty Gorge Parklands Fire

4 January 2020
Issue 1

A fire started in Plenty Gorge Parklands on 30 December 2019, originating from the Tanunda Wetlands area of the park before heading south east as a result of very strong winds. The fire was contained by 8.00pm on 30 December, with a total of approximately 58 hectares of parkland impacted.

The fire was attended by Forest Fire Management Victoria, including Parks Victoria the CFA and MFB. Embers were carried outside the park onto council land and into residential areas up to five streets away, which triggered the issue of warnings (including an Emergency Warning) for local residents.

What caused the fire?

Victoria Police is investigating the cause of the fire. The exact circumstances are unknown at this stage and the investigation remains ongoing.

The fire occurred on an Extreme Fire Danger Rating day which means if a fire starts it can be fast moving, unpredictable and largely uncontrollable by emergency services. These weather conditions also mean any fires that start are much harder to control.

Park closures and illegal entry

To protect people from unsafe conditions including falling hazardous trees, and give the environment the best chance to recover, the area of Plenty Gorge Parklands south of Gorge Road has been closed until further notice.

The length of the closure will depend on a range of factors, from the weather to the way the environment recovers after the fire. The closure will be assessed regularly to determine if areas can be reopened.

Rangers continue to work closely with Victoria Police to patrol and issue fines to those caught committing offences. If you observe any suspicious or illegal activity within the park, notify Victoria Police on 000 and Parks Victoria on 13 1963.

Park management of fire risk

Around 56 kilometres of fuel breaks are maintained across the park, mostly through slashing and mulching and removal of hazardous trees. This slashing and mulching work was most recently completed between 25 November and 10 December 2019. In addition to fuel break management, in April 2019 an 11-hectare

planned burn reduced fuels in the south east of the parklands near Wanbanna Avenue.

What is a fuel break?

Fuel breaks are designed to protect communities by creating a break in the fuel available for fires, for example between trees and shrubs in the park and residential areas. They help firefighters by providing access for vehicles and machinery. Fuel breaks are not intended to stop the spread of fire, but they can help reduce the intensity and speed of a fire moving across the landscape. Fuel breaks alone do not guarantee the safety of nearby assets.

Grass is cut along fuel breaks based on its dryness, or 'curing', not grass height. Grass slashing occurs at different times, depending on local weather conditions in individual suburbs. Particularly in urban areas, like Plenty Gorge, roads are considered as fuel breaks between remnant bushland and residential areas adjacent to parks.

For more information about fuel management on public and private land, please visit:

ffm.vic.gov.au/jfmp



