

FIRE UPDATE

BUSHFIRE CRC NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2010

QUICK GUIDE FOR FIRE IN MALLEE COUNTRY



MALLEE TALKS

Bushfire CRC researcher Dr Miguel Cruz (above left), a scientist with the CSIRO's Bushfire Dynamics and Applications group in Canberra, has been leading seminars and field trips of fire managers to demonstrate his new Quick Guide for predicting fire behaviour in semi-arid Mallee country. Three seminars have been held to date as part of the Research Adoption program for the Bushfire CRC: in Adelaide and Berri in South Australia and Mildura in Victoria.

The plastic coated, fold-out guide is aimed at fire managers needing to plan controlled burns in the difficult Mallee lands. It has a four-step set of calculations that quickly predict the probability of a burn being successful under the conditions of any given day.

During the Bushfire CRC-funded research that led to the guide's production, Dr Cruz, in

conjunction with South Australia's Department of Environment and Natural Resources, conducted 67 separate test burns in Ngarkat Conservation Park at different times of the year, in many types of vegetation, from Mallee shrubs to pure heath.

Fire behaviour in the sparse mallee lands is different to that in forests and grasslands, creating a problem in deciding the best conditions for controlled burns that will get under way productively but not go out of control.

"The guide allows you to predict the time of the day when a fire will be a goer," says Dr Cruz. "It lets you know the best time of the day to light a fire to get sustained burning. It will also show the time of the day the fire will stop spreading."

The guide is available from the Bushfire CRC website at: www.bushfirecrc.com/products

CEO'S BLOG GARY MORGAN



AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON BUSHFIRE RESEARCH

Bushfire CRC partners may have noted that the Attorney-General released an important Ministerial Statement to the House of Representatives this week – *The Commonwealth Response to the final report of the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission*. The Attorney-General said the Commonwealth "strongly supports" the five recommendations related to its jurisdiction, including the recommendation to establish a national centre for bushfire research.

There has been some interpretation in the media and other places about what the Attorney-General meant regarding the structure and organisation of such a centre. However, in my personal discussions with the Attorney-General's office in recent days, it is clear that the Australian Government and the Bushfire CRC are in agreement on the progress towards a national centre for bushfire research.

This will be a priority area for discussion at our Stakeholder Council meeting in Sydney on 9 November so I urge all partners to ensure their representatives attend. A formal notification of the Stakeholder Council meeting has been sent – please confirm your attendance with Beth Whelan asap: beth.whelan@bushfirecrc.com

BUSTING BUSHFIRE MYTHS

Three Bushfire CRC researchers featured at a public science forum in Adelaide in November. The forum, organised through RiAust (Royal Institute of Australia), attracted more than 120 people to the new Science Exchange building to hear about how science has attacked common myths about bushfires.

The Bushfire CRC speakers were Kevin Tolhurst, Justin Leonard and Drew Dawson.

In this interactive and entertaining session, ABC TV *Catalyst* presenter Graham Phillips and a panel of Bushfire CRC scientists discussed some common and dangerous bushfire scenarios. The audience was prompted to consider - would you know what to do in a real-life situation? Can you distinguish the myths from the truth? The premise for the evening was that by understanding the basic scientific principles of bushfire behaviour people will be better prepared to plan for and survive bushfires.

The day following the public forum, the same three researchers addressed a lunchtime



▲ Kevin Tolhurst at the forum.

gathering of about 100 fire and land agency staff from the Country Fire Service and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in South Australia. The forum is online at: <http://riausondemand.org.au/event/busting-bushfire-myths/>

RESEARCH BLOG

RICHARD THORNTON



NEW PROGRAMS AND NEW STUDENTS

Welcome to the fire Research Director's Blog. This comes at an exciting time for the Bushfire CRC with the beginnings of a new research program and new students coming on board. I know that many of you have committed substantial work in getting us to this point, and finally we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and I thank you all for this. Personally for me this is a major step forward in the evolution of the Bushfire CRC. We have successfully reshaped and redesigned our research agenda, while bringing along the existing partners and building on this to make our total number of partners now to around 40: a clear endorsement of the critical role the Bushfire CRC plays in the sector.

In recent times we have had an exciting workshop with many of the social scientists hosted by the University of South Australia, and if the level of enthusiasm and debate which took place among the collected 11 professors, new researchers and end-users is anything to go by we are in for a great and fruitful ride over the next three years. There was a similar meeting held at the University of Wollongong, which was similarly charged with expectation and discourse.

Now with the Commonwealth Agreement signed and the finalisation of the Participant's Agreement, we are now in the position to press the accelerator and get started with the exciting new research program.

I particularly would like to welcome all the new PhD students who have been coming on board over the last few months. You will be the lifeblood of research in the future years and are critical to the sector. I am sure you will find the Bushfire CRC and the sector an exciting place to be working.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the Bushfire CRC/AFAC Conference in Darwin. Don't forget to drop in at our booth in the exhibition hall.

BUSHFIRE CRC TO SURVEY END USERS

RESEARCH UTILISATION BLOG

NOREEN KRUSEL



The experience of the first seven-year program of the Bushfire CRC has provided an opportunity to create, develop and implement a range of mechanisms and tools to support research utilisation. Now, with the three-year extension to the program, there is an opportunity to leverage from and build on this work and also to ensure it is valid for other research engagement opportunities.

In order to assist us to determine what else is needed, it would be helpful to know the take-up of research within agencies and what other assistance is needed to get the new knowledge where it can be put to best use.

So, we intend to conduct a survey of all end user agencies of the Bushfire CRC. This questionnaire will have the benefit of providing an initial benchmark for agencies to assess their current capability, as well as test and inform future utilisation strategies.

The results of the questionnaire will assist us in validating which tools work best and to explore barriers that may exist.

We will contact all Stakeholder Council Representatives to co-ordinate this survey, which will be conducted over the next couple of months and reported on early in 2011.

THREE-YEAR EXTENSION PROGRAM – LEAD END USERS AND RESEARCH UTILISATION

From a utilisation perspective three critical success factors have been identified:

- Utilisation must start now and be built into projects.
- The incorporation of utilisation milestones into project plans is critical.
- The Lead End Users have a significant role to ensure appropriate milestones are factored into project plans.

Lead End Users have been identified for each of the projects within the three year extension program. The strategic opportunity now exists for the Lead End Users to be effectively engaged in improving the capability of our sector to deal with new research.