



MEDIA RELEASE

Bushfire Outlook for NT

A North Australian Seasonal Bushfire Assessment workshop held recently in Darwin has identified a large area in the central portion of the Northern Territory with an above-normal fire potential.

Bushfires NT scientific officer Grant Allan said the area includes the Tanami Desert and the pastoral areas extending east from the Tanami Desert through the Sandover and Plenty regions to the Queensland border south of the Barkly Tablelands.

“In the north, the Top End and Barkly region have average fire potential, whereas the area south of Alice Springs has a below-normal fire potential,” Mr Allan said.

“Normal to above-normal fire potential is expected for the remainder of the dry season over much of QLD and the NT, along with significant portions of WA.”

The workshop, supported by the Bushfire CRC, brought fire managers, severe weather meteorologists and climatologists together to evaluate the fire potential for the upcoming season for the NT, Qld and the northern portion of WA.

“Fire potential depends on many factors including weather and climate, fuel abundance and availability and fire-fighting resources available in an area,” Mr Allan said.

“The challenge is to deal with the fuel loads before the annual period of high fire danger begins in September.

“The current winter conditions, which typically last until early to mid-August, provide an opportunity for controlled burning for fuel management during cool days and cold nights.

“Currently the fuel loads are well cured, so considerable care may be required to restrict fires from burning into areas where fires should be excluded.”

Mr Allan said some of the recommendations for land managers in areas with above-normal fire potential are to:

- Identify areas of risk, and reduce fuel loads around infrastructure and assets;
- Contact your neighbours to coordinate clearing of firebreaks or fence lines, planned burning and wildfire response strategies;
- Strategically use cattle to reduce fuel loads through managed grazing pressure in high risk areas;
- Manage fuel loads along major roads and access tracks to reduce potential problems from roadside ignitions; and
- Plan your response to wildfires and identify areas where hot fires for management of shrubs may be desirable later in the year.

Mr Allan said people should contact the Bushfires NT Regional Fire Control Officers for advice and assistance with burning.

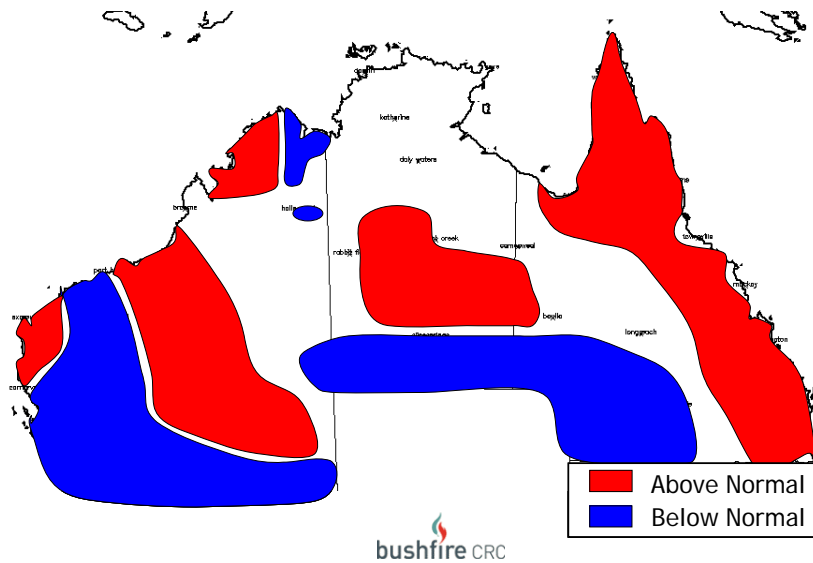
He said the Central Land Council (CLC) with support of Bushfires NT, has been working with remote Aboriginal communities to implement best practice fire management strategies on Aboriginal land in central Australia.

An initiative funded by the Natural Heritage Trust and the Natural Disaster Mitigation Programme provides a number of communities with the opportunity of training, skills enhancement and the basic resources needed for proactive wildfire mitigation work.

CLC director David Ross said the CLC is working with Traditional Owners and Indigenous ranger groups towards best practice fire management of Aboriginal land in central Australia.

“The rangers are out there burning in the cooler weather to protect important cultural sites and threatened species populations by creating a fine scale mosaic of fuel ages,” Mr Ross said.

North Australian Seasonal Fire Potential Outlook - 2007-8



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Media Note – For more information contact Grant Allan on 8952 3066

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