

Desert Fire



What is the project about?

Fire has been a feature of Australian desert landscapes for millennia. In the past, it is believed that desert Aborigines promoted fire in a way that increased the frequency but reduced the size of fires. These days, fires covering many thousands of square kilometres are common in Australia's deserts. Such fires rarely receive the attention of the Australian public as the areas in which they occur are remote, sparsely populated and contain little infrastructure. Nevertheless, there is concern that the current regime of fire, which is characterised by very large, very hot fires over the warmer months, is having a profound detrimental effect on the well being, livelihoods and environments of desert peoples.

Research

The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) is attempting to address some of the key issues in managing fire in desert Australia through an initiative called "Desert Fire". Desert Fire is a collaboration involving the Biodiversity Conservation unit and key partners of the CRC (including other NT government agencies, the Central Land Council, Charles Darwin University, Adelaide University and the Australian National University) and key stakeholder groups.

Desert Fire is made up of eight sub-projects:

1. Fire regimes of the desert regions at a continental scale
2. Fire regimes of the desert regions at a regional scale: overview
 - a. Identify priority areas for fire management research
 - b. Review of current scientific knowledge relating to impacts and management of fire in desert areas
3. Fire regimes of the desert regions at a regional scale: case studies
 - a. Managing fire in the southern Tanami desert
 - b. Economic assessment of fire on pastoral lands of the southern NT in 2000-2002
 - c. Review of fire management planning and implementation on parks and reserves in central Australia and development of best practice protocols
 - d. Using Acacia shrublands landscape change as an indicator of ecosystem health
 - e. Impacts of fire on biodiversity in central Australia

Together these meet the common goal of Desert Fire which is to:

"Adapt and maintain appropriate fire regimes and their management based on robust research, planning, review and communication to support the diverse users and managers of desert lands to achieve a balance of their ecological, social and economic priorities."

