

Wednesday 9 May 2012

Neighbours working together to prepare for fire

An innovative training program has recently been delivered to landowners in the Lansdowne area. Referred to as *The Hotspots Fire Project*, this is a two day training course that provides the knowledge, planning tools and on-ground skills to develop and implement an ecologically sensitive fire management plan.

Participants who finish the training program develop an understanding of the legal framework and processes, a grounding in fire behaviour and management and are able to feed into their fire plan the environmental attributes of the land and their own experiences in managing it.

The Hotspots Fire Project is delivered through the coordinated efforts of the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) and delivered locally with support from the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA), National Parks and Wildlife Service and Forests NSW.

A number of course participants were landowners who also have Property Vegetation Plans (PVP) registered with the CMA. Fire management is an important tool for not only hazard reduction but also in managing the ecological values of native vegetation. One good example given was how an iconic species such as the Powerful Owl, which needs a huge territory to hunt in, can really benefit from a planned and strategic approach to fire management.

Local RFS Community Safety Officer Terry Kitching was enthusiastic about the community benefits of the course. 'This course is not just about individuals gaining skills, through this process we are helping neighbours and communities to do fire planning together without boundaries and draw on the local skills and resources to put the burning regimes into action,' said Mr Kitching. Another key message was that government agencies are there to assist and, along with their regulatory and administrative roles, have a wealth of expertise and experience to offer.

For further information on the Hotspots Fire Project contact Terry Kitching of the Rural Fire Service at Taree on 02 6591 2900. For more information on Property Vegetation Plans contact Andrew Paget from the CMA on 02 6551 8994 or at andrew.paget@cma.nsw.gov.au.

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For more information contact the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority:

- Catchment Coordinator, Community and Education - Liane Corocher on (02) 4930 1030
- Lower North Coast Education Project Officer Derek Monks on (02) 6551 8994