

The Advisory Committee for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA) met at the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Katoomba office in November 2007. The Committee was updated on the major wildfires that swept across over 12% of the GBMWA in October and November. The Committee congratulated NPWS staff on their efforts during the firefighting campaign.

The Committee resolved that in view of the recent major fires across the GBMWA and the unknown effects on biodiversity, comprehensive and long term monitoring of the biodiversity of the GBMWA should be established.

Alison Foster, from the Office of Environment and Heritage gave an informative presentation on the annual [WildCount](#) fauna monitoring program intended to run over ten years. WildCount is a broad-scale fauna (common and widespread) monitoring program at 200 sites on-park across eastern NSW with a focus on the use of cameras designed to target medium-sized mammals.

The Committee received an update on progress of the Blue Mountains draft LEP (Local Environment Plan) and agreed to prepare a submission to the Blue Mountains City Council recommending an additional aim for the Plan: "to ensure that development does not lead to adverse impacts on the values of the GBMWA".

The Committee is working on the thematic essays about the heritage values of the GBMWA for submission to the Australian Heritage Council.

Greater Blue Mountains and Fire

For millions of years fire has been a major driving force in the evolution of the distinctive and diverse flora and fauna of the Greater Blue Mountains. Fire management is significant factor affecting biodiversity conservation and uncontrolled or inappropriate use of fire is a management challenge identified in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value. Since listing in 2000, major bushfires across the Greater Blue Mountains in the summers of 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2006-07 have affected approximately 25%, 19% and 10% of the GBMWA reserves, respectively (source *Vegetation, Fire and Climate Change in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area*, 2010, Tasker and Hamill

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/protectedareas/DECCW20100941.pdf>

From 10 September 2013 to 12 November 2013, 25 fires have affected the reserves that make up the GBMWA and areas immediately adjacent.

Over 12% of the GBMWA was affected by fire with 128,542ha of reserved lands. An additional 29,177ha of adjacent lands (ie private land, State Forests, Council reserves etc) was also affected. Nearly 200 homes were lost in the City of the Blue Mountains adjacent to the GBMWA.

All the major fires started outside the GBMWA. Multiple causes are identified including strong winds causing powerline damage, Military operations and the use of explosive devices and suspected arson. Dry windy conditions and dry fuels promote the rapid spread of fires through built up areas.

Reserve Fire Management Strategies are in place for the reserves that make up the GBMWA. NPWS fire management is integrated with fire management and disaster planning at agency, state and national levels. NPWS has cooperative firefighting arrangements which have been ratified through multi-agency policies and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). NPWS works in close partnership with other NSW fire authorities including the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), Fire and Rescue NSW, and Forestry Corporation of NSW.

The GBMWA Advisory Committee is made up of scientific, technical, Aboriginal and community members appointed by the State and Commonwealth Environment Ministers. The Strategic Plan for the Area is used by the Committee to guide its operations and in providing advice to those Ministers regarding issues relevant to the Area.

The Advisory Committee meets quarterly in different locations around the million hectares of spectacular national parks and reserves that comprise the GBMWA, recognised and protected for its outstanding universal values.

For more information contact the World Heritage Executive Officer
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