



# agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Agriculture, forestry & fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## **FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2009/10**

**2010**

Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	Fire Protection Association Annual Report for the financial year 2009/10	Submission date 30 June 2010
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**DAFF Fire Protection Association Annual Report: 2009/10**

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<b>HONOURABLE MINISTER: TINA JOEMAT-PETTERSSON, MP</b>	Signed:
<b>MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES</b>	Date:01/09/2010

## **FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATIONS ANNUAL REPORT 2009/2010**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) is the custodian of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act, 1998 (Act No. 101 of 1998) (NVFFA), henceforth referred to as the Act. The main purpose of this Act is to prevent and combat veld, forest and mountain fires throughout the Republic. In this regard, the Act is gearing for the promotion of Integrated Fire Management in the country, through the creation and promotion of an enabling regulatory environment for the prevention and management of veld and forest fire to support local and rural socio-economic development.

The Act further provides explicitly for compliance with environmental requirements, as well as for management of risk to life and property. It links natural resource management by property owners collectively or individually to the integrated veldfire system which caters for ecological fire management; fire prevention; preparedness and response. It is as such a piece of environmental management legislation.

To achieve the implementation of the Act, the Department has identified various strategic objectives which include the effective registration and operation of Fire Protection Associations (FPAs); management of developed systems and strategies for effective and efficient implementation of the Act; promotion of integrated veldfire management within the SADC region; establishment of sufficient competence for monitoring compliance and enforcement of the Act; and promotion of fire awareness among stakeholders and the public.

To ensure effective operation of FPAs, the Department, must in terms of Section 5(1) (i) of the Act and schedule 17(1) of FPA Regulations requests registered FPAs to submit Annual Reports to the Minister by 30 June on their activities, achievements of their objectives, and on any matter related to the Act. The FPAs are better positioned and are very crucial in providing this information because they have first hand information due to the nature of their operation.

It is in line with this legal requirement that the Directorate: Forestry Regulation is submitting to the Minister, a consolidated Annual Report on registered FPAs' activities as outlined in their Business Plans.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 2.1.** To provide the Minister with a summary of the Annual Report of FPAs on their activities, their achievements of objectives and on any matter as related to the Act.
- 2.2.** To give statistical summary of the causes, extent and socio-economic impact of veldfires in the Republic of South Africa.
- 2.3.** To report on the challenges and constraints encountered by FPAs in the implementation of the Act.
- 2.4.** To provide the Minister with recommendations on how identified FPA challenges can be addressed.

## **3. BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION**

Fire Protection Associations (FPAs) are voluntary organisations established in terms of Chapter 2 of the Act and the Fire Protection Association Regulations supporting the chapter as published in Government Gazette No 24870, volume No 455 on 16 May 2003.

In order to obtain registration from the Minister, FPAs have to develop their veldfire management strategies for veldfire prevention and management as well as rules which are only binding to their members [Section 5 (1)].

The Act further intends that FPAs should be voluntary, not only because of the Constitutional right to freedom of association, but also because landowners themselves need to make firm commitments to cooperate by their own joint initiatives. This implies that FPAs are thus voluntary, non-profit community-based natural resource management organisations for collective management of veldfires

using local knowledge within the framework provided by the Act. However, it is mandatory for all state landowners to join FPAs where they exist in their areas.

FPAs must be registered if they are to qualify for assistance and receive powers and duties as contemplated in the Act. Section 4(2) requires the Minister to register and issue a certificate to a FPA if it meets the following requirements:

- (i) that the FPA must be capable of performing its duties, and*
- (ii) that the FPA must be representative of the owners in its area (noting also that all landowners within the area covered must be free to join the FPA).*

Furthermore, FPAs need to meet certain requirements for them to obtain registration from the Department. These requirements are contained in the FPA Business Plans and include the FPA constitution, a veldfire management strategy, appointment of the Fire Protection Officer (FPO) and rules that members commit to comply with. In their Business Plans, FPAs must set and/or develop their strategic objectives in respect of managing veldfires in their area of jurisdiction.

The entire Act places a 'duty of care' responsibility upon all landowners (public and private) on whose land a veldfire may start or spread. The Act supports the implementation of Integrated Fire Management as the methodology to bring about a reduction of damaging veldfires and encourages improved land management techniques, including that of using fire as a beneficial land management tool.

Section 5(1) (i) of the Act and schedule 17(1) of FPA Regulations require registered FPAs that are one year old or more to submit annual reports to the Minister by 30 June on their activities and achievements of their objectives, provided that the Minister may at any time request registered FPAs to report on any matter as related to the Act.

The Act does not prescribe the format that the report should take but the Department recommends that the report about veldfire management should be as concise as possible without leaving out important/useful information. The Minister must however make available within a reasonable time this report to any interested party, in accordance with the requirements of Promotion of Access to Information

Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000). The report should then be a brief narration and must include at least the following:

- Statistical summary of fires, their causes and consequences
- Summary of offences committed in terms of the Act and any relevant by-laws prosecutions and convictions
- Report on compliance with the Act as per section 6(e)
- Any other matter relating to successes in or challenges with veldfire management.
- Report on whether or not other Organs of State are complying with the Act and the FPA rules
- A summary of changes in membership and reasons for terminations thereof, if any
- Explanation of any drastic changes to the Business Plan meant for improvement of the veldfire management
- Any other aspect the FPA strongly feels worth reporting

#### **4. PROGRESS WITH ATTAINMENT OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES AS OUTLINED IN FPA BUSINESS PLANS**

Since the promulgation of the Act in 1998 (November), the Department has up to this reporting period, (June 2010) managed to register one hundred and ninety six (196) FPAs countrywide, covering **50 158 504** hectares (ha) of the total **121 974 972.58** ha of land area coverage in the country (excluding marine reserves). One hundred and eighty five (**185**) of these FPAs are registered in high to extreme veldfire risk areas in terms of the National Veldfire Risk Classification (Profile) of the country that has been updated and finalised in April 2010. Hundred and fifty seven (**157**) of these FPAs have been operating for a period of more than twelve months, thus making them eligible to submit annual reports.

The table below gives an indication of the number of registered FPAs per Province and the size of the land area covered.

**TABLE 4.1. NUMBERS OF FPAs REGISTERED IN HIGH TO EXTREME VELD FIRE RISK AREAS**

Province	Number of FPAs	Area size/Fire risk	
		High-Extreme	Low-medium
Eastern Cape	34	4 332 994	-
Free State	58	9 712 311	-
Gauteng	18	2 186 100	-
KZN	15	3 855 232	-
Limpopo	20	6 364 093	-
Mpumalanga	10	5 657 454	-
Northern Cape	11	-	2 579 676
North West	12	9 899 908	
Western Cape	18	5 570 736	
<b>Total registered in 2009/10</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>11 887 442</b>	
<b>Total registered to date</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>47 578 828</b>	<b>2 579 676</b>

Notwithstanding the commitments made by all FPAs in their Business Plans that they will submit Annual Reports to the Minister, as well as constant reminders sent to them (FPAs) through DAFF Fire Advisors in the regions, the compliance level in terms of submission of Annual Reports by FPAs has remained very poor. As a result, not all FPAs that are eligible for submission of Annual Reports have

submitted. This report is therefore a consolidation and summary of only forty four (44) reports submitted by FPAs and twenty six (26) reports obtained through FPA assessments conducted by the Directorate: Forestry Regulation in the year 2009/10 as indicated on the table below.

**TABLE 4.2. LIST OF FPAS ASSESSED AND THOSE THAT SUBMITTED ANNUAL REPORTS IN 2009/10 RESPECTIVELY**

<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>FPA ASSESSED</b>	<b>FPA ANNUAL REPORTS</b>
Eastern Cape	Adelaide, Clanville, Cradock, Emalahleni, Knaapdaar, Steynsberg and Winterberg	Jamestown, Lady Grey, Knapdaar, Cullenswood, Sakhisizwe, Clanville, Aliwal North, Bonthoek, Stutterheim, Bedford, Table Hill,
Kwazulu Natal	Richmond and Kwa Sani	Umshwati, Mooi River, East Griqualand, Umtshezi, Zululand Inland, Zululand
Limpopo	None	Thabazimbi, Kruger National Park
Northern Cape	Mac Mac, Vaalharts, Aansluit,	Dwaalhoek, Lehating, Vaalharts, Grens, Suid Roggeveld, Seven Brandskermig
North West	Ramotshere Moiloa and Madibeng	Ramotshere Moiloa, Ditsobotla, Kgetlengrivier, Madibeng
Free State	None	One Provincial report for 58 FPAs prepared by DAFF regional office
Gauteng	Hartebeestfontein, Doornhoek, Orient-Weltevrede and Magaliesburg	Rodora, Orient / Weltevrede, Westonnaria, Hartebeestfontein, Doornhoek and Sector 5
Mpumalanga	Greater Witbank, Lekwa Msukaligwa and Highveld	Lowveld Escarpment, Mpumalanga Umbrella
Western Cape	Napier, Southern Cape, Thee Water and Tulbagh-Wolsley	Cape Peninsula, Cape West Coast, Napier, Ceres Witzenberg Landbouvereniging, Sondagskloof
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>44</b>



#### **4.1 Statistical summary of fires in all the Provinces from April 2009 to March 2010, their causes and consequences**

As the custodian of the Act, the Department is responsible for the collection of veldfire statistics across the country. Reports from FPAs indicate that rural communities and their livelihoods are increasingly exposed to the risk of veldfires which also threatens their food security.

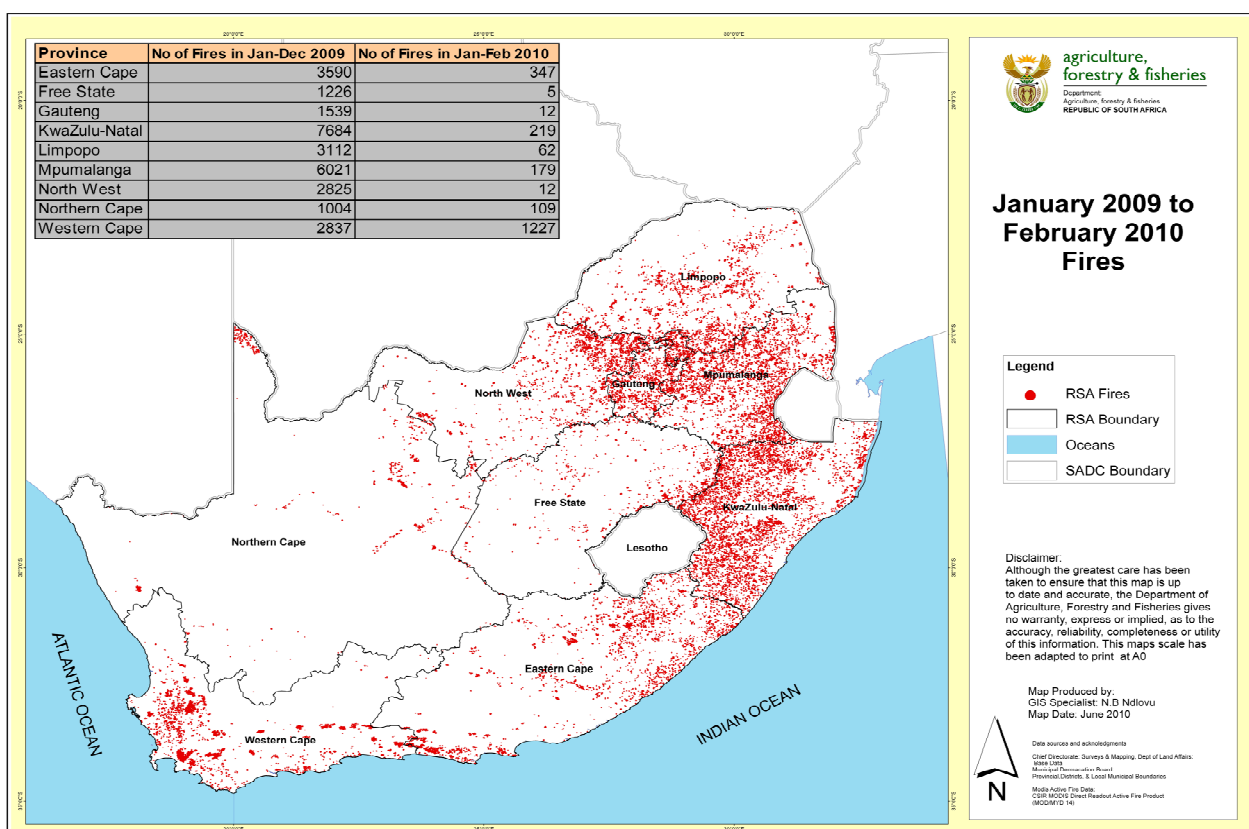
Though most of the FPA reports received do not clearly outline the socio-economic impacts of veldfires in their respective areas thus enabling the Department to have a total national picture, it should also be acknowledged that there is a few of FPA reports that clearly indicate the extent of the hectares burned, cost of fire fighting, lives lost, etc, in their respective areas.

Furthermore, the reports indicate that large fires that occur in most areas are as a result of human activities such as poaching, suspected arson, veld management burn that goes out of control, fire originating from refuge dumps, etc. Lack of education and awareness and lack of infrastructure for fire fighting in certain areas are also major contributing factors to the occurrence of these veldfires. However, much of the veldfire destruction that was experienced in the recent past, especially in 2007/08 and 2008/09 was not experienced during the 2009/10 as this year had a quite fire season and as result, FPAs had to respond and attend to just a few number of veldfire calls.

The Department is currently engaged in a process of streamlining the fire reporting by using various systems to collect veldfire statistics. This includes providing input on National Veldfire Information System (NVFIS) and spatial data captured through satellite Advance Fire Information System (AFIS) owned by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Working on Fire (WoF) and other role players such as Disaster Management Centres at all spheres of government and FPAs also keep veldfire statistics. This information is always available for the utilization of the Department in order to understand challenges posed by veldfires to the entire country.

Through the partnership that the Department is having with CSIR, the Department has been nominated to receive an AFIS Field Terminal that will also be used to increase the ability of the Department to gather veldfire statistics. The Terminal will also be a useful tool to assist the Department in verifying veldfire incidences with FPAs and other role players on the ground. The map below indicates the fire reports for the country captured by AFIS for the reporting period: January 2009 to February 2010.

***A BREAKDOWN OF FIRES FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 2009 TO FEBRUARY 2010 PER PROVINCE:***



## **4.2 Report on compliance and enforcement with the NVFFA**

According to the FPA reports, the following challenges have been identified.

- Non-compliance by state landowners- There is growing concerns from both FPAs and other stakeholders involved in veldfire management about the non-compliance of Government Departments, Municipalities and other State-Owned Entities, for example Eskom SANRAL, Spoornet, Telkom, etc. The Department has already written letters to the Head of Departments of these organisations reminding them of their responsibilities in terms of the Act.
- Unfamiliarity of the Act within the Judiciary and the South African Police Service (SAPS) - Prosecuting Environmental crimes in South Africa is fairly a new field and this hinders successful convictions for violation in this regard. The Department is continuously interacting with the Judiciary and the SAPS to build awareness through information sessions.
- Capacity of the FPOs to enforce the Act - FPOs need to be fully trained as Peace Officers in order to be able to effectively discharge their enforcement duties as required by the Act.

## **4.3 Any other matter relating to successes in or challenges with veldfire management.**

The actual FPA assessments the Department conducted in 2009 and 2010 respectively revealed that there are some well capacitated and effective FPAs like the Cape Peninsula FPA in the Western Cape, the Kwa-Sani and Richmond FPAs both in the KZN, the Msukaligwa FPA in the Mpumalanga, etc, that can be used as model FPAs in the country.

These FPAs offered good lessons, attributed to the fact that some of them have been adopted by and enjoy the support of the WoF in line with the FPA financial assistance policy that WoF is implementing, as well as the fact that some are located within the commercial forestry areas and receive support from these forestry companies.

Experience has also shown that in areas where there is good working relationship between the FPAs, local Municipalities and other stakeholders, FPAs are better positioned to discharge their duties. These FPAs do have good communication and veldfires detection systems and the majority of their members have radio communication systems and members of communities are able to receive short message services (SMS) on any fire detected in the area.

Their communication of the Fire Danger Index (FDI) is very good, especially for the KZN FPAs who receive this information three (3) or four (4) times a day from the Umbrella FPA (KZN-UFPA). These model FPAs indicated the need for FPAs to have full time Extension Officers or Fire Protection Officers (FPOs) who can assist in the sustenance of FPAs by fostering good relations between communities and FPA members.

The FPAs further reiterated that while they have the support of WoF who also fund and provide “Communities FireWise Training” to local communities, it was going to work far better if Extension Officers’ positions could at least be filled annually, on a 12 month contract.

The duties of the Extension Officers of FPAs include the following:

- To encourage private landowners within the FPA jurisdiction, especially those with bigger properties to join the association.
- To complete on behalf of FPAs, signage projects.
- To update the FPA Business Plans and other relevant documents when and where necessary.
- To submit the necessary FPA plans and reports to the Department as required by the Act, e.g. fire incident reports.

Added to these successes, FPAs also commended the Department for its 2009/10 contribution in managing to secure and implement with the Forestry Industries Education and Training Authority (FIETA) an agreement to fund FPA Training. It was through this agreement that WoF was appointed as a training Service Provider and three hundred and thirty three (333) FPA members from across the country were trained in Basic Fire fighting.

Contrary to these success stories, are challenges faced by FPAs like the Greater Witbank FPA in the Mpumalanga Province, the Ramotshere Moiloa FPA, Madibeng FPA, and Ditsobotla FPA, all in the North West Province. These FPAs do have full support of the municipalities and the Fire Departments in their respective municipal areas. The FPAs operate on a zero budget because their members cannot afford to pay their membership fees.

As a result, landowners belonging to these FPAs do not have firebreaks around their properties as the preparation and maintenance thereof is way above their means, they do not have trained personnel and only rely on the municipality for fire fighting equipments that are also very limited, they do not have any communication and detection systems and the worst is that they cannot hold their quarterly meetings, and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) due to lack of budget to handle the logistical arrangements for such a meeting to take place.

There was a common challenge highlighted by most FPAs across the country, regarding the management of properties (in terms of preparation and maintenance of firebreaks) within the communal areas as no one seem to be claiming responsibility and ownership of these areas. In the KZN specifically, the FPAs focused their concern in this regard to the Ingonyama Trust who should be looking after communal areas and accordingly assume the landowner responsibility of being part of the FPAs on behalf of communities.

However, the Ingonyama Trust does not seem to be keen on discharging this responsibility, claiming to be just the Administrator of these areas and not the owner, who according to them should be the municipality. As the confusion about who between the Ingonyama Trust and the Municipality should assume the responsibility for veldfire management within communal areas, the FPAs adjoining these areas are then forced to stretch their limited resources in an attempt to also manage these communal areas as they pose a risk to their properties.

#### **4.4 A summary of changes in membership and reasons for terminations, if any**

Only a few of FPAs highlighted changes in their executive committee membership, however, there is a general increase of membership in most FPAs as more people become aware of the benefits of being a member of an FPA.

#### **4.5 Explanation of any drastic changes to the Business Plans meant for improvement of the veldfire Management**

Most FPA Business Plan still remain as were when the registration of the FPAs was approved by the Director-General of the Department

#### **4.6 Any other aspect the FPA strongly feels worth reporting - Challenges**

Private landowners are reported to be reluctant to assist FPAs with veldfire fighting on their (FPA members) properties because of high associated costs and risks to their (Private landowner's) staff and equipment. It has been reported that this attitude contributes to the reduction of the overall efficiency of an integrated veldfire fighting approach and increases the burden on the local authority and Fire Departments who are ultimately responsible for fire fighting across the country.

In general, most FPAs have operational plans as required. The majority of municipalities do assist FPAs in their areas by rendering basic fire fighting training and supply these (FPAs) with fire fighting equipment. There are however some challenges still in implementing veldfire management plans because of the following reasons:

- Lack of funding for fire prevention operations (maintenance of firebreaks, training and purchasing of equipment). As a result, FPAs put more effort in fire suppression than in prevention to mitigate damage and costs caused by veldfires
- FPOs who are not Chief Fire Officers, irrespective of them having the powers, still don't have the capacity and skills to enforce the Act
- Government Departments not being keen to join FPAs as required by the Act

- Non-FPA members and absentee landowners (week-end farmers) not complying with the requirements of the Act
- Communication of the FDI still being a challenge for most of the FPAs and their respective municipalities due to lack of financial capacity to fund the required system

## **5. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO ADDRESS VELDFIRE CHALLENGES**

- The Directorate: Forestry Regulation has resolved to engage all FPAs through nine (9) Provincial FPA Indabas planned for the current financial year. The purpose of these Indabas will be among others to deal with all FPA-related matters including the importance of FPA Annual Reports and streamlining of FPA reporting through the introduction of a standard reporting format.
- Improve and enhance coordination of veldfire management efforts in the regions with all veldfire management agencies including Working on Fire, Municipalities (Disaster Management and Fire Brigade Services), Sector Departments, Conservation Agencies, etc in line with the Veldfire Disaster Management Plan that the Department has recently developed.
- Encourage the establishment of provincial veldfire management committees in line with the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No.57 of 2002).
- Strengthen the relationship with FIETA to ensure continued provision of training to FPAs especially those in resource poor areas.
- Importantly, the FPA financial policy when approved will assist the FPAs to achieve their objectives.