



### Greetings,

It didn't take long before record breaking June and July summer temperatures in Europe burst into raging wildfires in Spain and Portugal. Again. Winds which refused to blow from a single direction frustrated the suppression efforts and the region's worst fires in 20 years wreaked havoc and loss. "When carelessness turns to catastrophe," one Spanish fire chief was quoted as saying and that's a key phrase to remember. Carelessness during fire season DOES breed catastrophe, so BE CAREFUL and diligently perform all fire prevention duties. Until next time.



#### Contact Us

**LEFPA Nelspruit**

Ivina

Office: 013 752 6419

Cell: 082 566 2728

Fax: 086 515 3755

admin@lefpa.co.za

#### Permit Requests

Office: 013 752 6419

0860 66 34 73

permit@lefpa.co.za

### Follow Us On Facebook!



It took us a while, but we'll look back on 2019 as the year LEFPA embraced social media and smart phone technology with enthusiasm. Hot on the heels of Telegram (introduced in the August issue), LEFPA now has an active and interesting Facebook page delivering up to date information about weather conditions and wildfires. <https://www.facebook.com/LEFPAMPU/>

### Dis Lekker Om Te Lag!

Bokkie en sy maat Bomber het die kinders van Lekker Lag Land vermaak. Marike Freeman skryf "Baie dankie LEFPA vir die Bokkie demonstrasie en 'goodie bags'. Die kinders het die uitstappie baie geniet." Dit lyk so, Marike, kyk na daardie groot grimlaggies.



### More Madiba Magic



The bright and beautiful beanies knitted for the LEFPA Boven Team by Magdarien Nel for Madiba Day have warmed hearts as well as heads.

What a thoughtful gesture, Magdarien, which is much appreciated by the lucky recipients. Thank you so much for your lovely work and donation.



## Keeping Up With Technology Tools - FireWeb Launches



When the technology wheel turns at LEFPA, it's full steam ahead so if you've mastered Telegram and Facebook here is another technology tool available on both desktop and App for you to get to grips with.

FireWeb is an online, web-based operational management reporting and communication tool designed to assist LEFPA and members with Integrated Fire Management in our operational area.

The platform has been accepted by LEFPA and four corporate members. LEFPA is busy with plans to develop and integrate more options as highlighted in last month's feature about Telegram.

FireWeb will be used by UFPA and other FPAs as it supports and integrates the electronic detection function and can be operated on different privacy levels or on open platforms. Oom Andre freely admits that "hy krap al weer sy kop oor die tegnologie" presented at the training session held in the LEFPA Board Room by Noel Harrison, Managing Director of FireWeb. Never mind, Andre, old dogs can learn new tricks and we are sure that you'll be a dab hand in no time! <http://syw.io/fireweb.html>

## July Kept LEFPA Teams Busy

You may have read the article in the Lowvelder newspaper on 3rd August about how active firefighting crews and pilots were in July due to hot, dry and windy weather conditions lasting weeks. The Fire Danger Index sat firmly in the yellow and orange zone with only 5 green days in July. Resources were strained from sunrise to sunset over 2 or 3 days at times while crews continued working after dark to keep fires contained and to mop up in an area stretching from Barberton, north of Sabie, Machadodorp and Malelane.

And this is only the start of the season, with 4299ha already reported lost in the agricultural and commercial forestry sectors as well as conservation areas.

The Lowveld is not alone - at time of writing in August, savage wildfires in Alaska, Siberia, Catalonia, Gran Canaria, Greece and Portugal challenged firefighters while the Californian fire season got into full swing as well. The world is burning with changing climate conditions while fire suppression resources battle to keep up.

Which is why it's critical for landowners to take extra precautions during the current extreme conditions and to NOT make ANY unnecessary fires in the open. **THE FIRE PROHIBITION IS STILL IN PLACE** and no burning operations may take place in the Ehlanzeni District without a valid burning permit which can be obtained from LEFPA on 0860 66 3473



## LEFPA Monthly Fire Stats

Monthly fire statistics with 2019 season figures in red, and 2018 in black. The 2019 fire season is a stark reminder that when it comes to nature, we can't ever truly control it. Well done to the fire crews and pilots who are working so hard this season.

Month	Ground Fires	Air Support	A & G	Monthly Fires	Monthly Hours 2019	Monthly Hours 2018	Seasonal Hours	Seasonal Fires	Total Ha Lost
Aug 2019	14	4	0	18	56,2	X	499,99	98	975
Aug 2018	13	7	3	23	X	133,9	203	46	2643,5
July 2019	30	31	2	64	377,7		443,7	80	4299
July 2018	5	5	1	11		33,3	69,1	23	109,2
June 2019	3	9	2	14	57,4		66	16	1099
June 2018	5	6	1	12		35,8	35,8	12	116
May 2019	0	2	0	2	8,6		8,6	2	18

# Reed Invader

Johan Louw continues his interesting and informative series on the many Alien Invasive Plants living amongst us. *Arundo Donax* is a common sight in and around the Lowveld wherever a wetland, river or stream is found.



**IAP Species:** *Arundo donax* (Scientific name)

**Common names:** Giant reed, Bamboo reed; Spanish reed (English); Spaanse riet (Afrikaans)

**Nemba Category:** 1b

**Description:** A tall and robust reed reaching a height of 2 - 6m with pale green, long slender leaves. *Leaves:* Pale green to bluish green leaves long and slender in profile and evenly spaced along the stem. *Flowers:* Cream or brown, compact, erect, spear-shaped silky inflorescences appear throughout the year. *Fruit/seeds:* None.

**Where does this species come from?**

From the Mediterranean.

**Where in South Africa is it a problem?**

In wetlands throughout South Africa.

**How does it spread?**

Horizontally from rootstocks.

**Why is it a problem?**

It competes with and replaces indigenous species, forming dense stands on riverbanks and in riverbeds. This causes increased siltation, the narrowing of water channels and the exclusion of smaller and less vigorous riverbank species.

**What is the plant used for?**

*Arundo donax* is used as an ornamental for screening, ceilings and musical instruments.

**Alternatives to plant**

Common reed (*Phragmites australis*), East Coast Broomgrass (*Miscanthus capensis*), Wireleaf Broomgrass (*Miscanthus junceus*), Bulrush (*Typha capensis*).

**Control**

Remedies such as mechanical force have been successfully employed. Outside of its native range *Arundo donax* doesn't reproduce by seeds so removing the root structure can be effective at controlling it. Preventing it from getting sunlight will deplete the plant of its resources and eventually kill it (*Mackenzie 2004*). Systemic herbicides and glyphosate are also used as chemical remedies.

**Mechanical Removal and Fire**

Mechanical removal involves collecting and destroying the stems and all below-ground rhizomes, which is labour and machinery intensive. Any rhizomes or pieces of stems that are missed may re-sprout, reducing the effectiveness of the approach (*Boland 2008*). Unfortunately, mechanical removal is prohibitively expensive except in small areas. In cases where natural vegetation conservation or the potential for erosion are of concern, it is often desirable to leave the ground undisturbed.

Fire alone cannot be used to control giant reed because it has little effect on the below-ground rhizomes and may have adverse effects on the native vegetation which would give fast-growing *Arundo* an advantage as the site re-vegetates (*Bell 1997*). However, fire may play a useful role as a cost-effective means to remove accumulated above-ground mass and promote new growth in advance of herbicide treatment.



**Herbicides**

Operational experience in direct control of giant reed with herbicides dictates that established stands require multiple treatments and continued monitoring for sprouting rhizomes. Herbicide treatments following mechanical cutting are the most effective way of eradicating it. The action of herbicides is improved by first cutting the stems near ground line and then spraying the re-sprouting stems when they are about three to four feet tall. When treating individual reed clumps, amounts of spray solution applied per acre will vary by rootstock density. For spot-spraying scattered giant reed clumps, mixtures using 3–5% glyphosate product (containing 41% active ingredient) in water provide effective control (*Bell 1997*).

**Bio-control**

No bio control agents have been released on *Arundo donax* in South Africa yet although research is ongoing.

**References**

Bell, G. P. 1997. "Ecology and management of *Arundo donax*, and approaches to riparian habitat restoration in Southern California." In: *Plant Invasion: Studies from North America and Europe*. J.H. Brock, M. Wade, P. Pysek and D. Green, eds. Leiden, the Netherlands: Backhuys, pp. 104–114.

Invasive Species of South Africa. *Arundo donax* <http://invasives.org.za/component/k2/item/235-giant-reed-arundo-donax>

Boland, J. M. 2008. "The roles of floods and bulldozers in the break-up and dispersal of *Arundo donax* (giant reed)." *Madroño* 55(3), 216–222.

## Training Law Enforcement To Enforce The NVFF Act

Thaba Chweu Municipality recently published their updated bylaws and LEFPA saw this as an opportunity to train and assist law enforcement officers to enforce the National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998.

Fifteen law enforcement officers from Sabie, Lydenburg and Graskop attended a workshop held at Tweefontein in Sabie on 15 August where Andre Scheepers, assisted by Warrant Officer Nortje from the SAPS Provincial Disaster Risk Management Unit (featured in *All Fired Up* August 2018) went through the Act in great detail with the officers.

Andre believes that this is a step in the right direction towards the effective enforcement of the NVFF Act. He is preparing to hold a workshop for law enforcement officials in Mbombela when the City publishes its updated bylaws.



## News Snippets

**In August**, LEFPA Mbombela crew and management attended Hinterland Lydenburg's 6th birthday celebrations but it wasn't all party for them. LEFPA presented a talk on Radio Laeveld about the high fire danger during July and August and also shared fire awareness info with Hinterland guests.



Andre (L) hands over a big surprise gift to Duncan (R)

**At the first** LEFPA General Meeting led by the new board on 25th July, Chairman Vaughan Lascelles and Manager Andre Scheepers took time to present Duncan Ballantyne with a gift in appreciation for more than 10 years' service to LEFPA. Duncan was first appointed Chairman in 2009 and his long tenure at the helm was key in firmly placing LEFPA on the solid path it now enjoys. Thank you Duncan.

**LEFPA responded** to an urgent request from Cochy Bhondu for assistance to burn firebreaks around their dwellings adjacent to Schoonwater Farm. Timing is everything as the firebreaks were burnt just before two fires broke out and burnt most of Schoonwater, where the absence of firebreaks has placed Cochy Bhondu at risk every dry season. The partners of Cochy Bhondu are going to persuade their neighbours to join LEFPA and use our services in future, for the benefit of all parties. Happy members are the best promoters; you are well aware of the important role LEFPA plays in the education of landowners and prevention of wildfires.

We've said it before and it bears repeating - a neighbourhood standing shoulder to shoulder as LEFPA members is the best preventative measure you can take for the safety of your property.

## Activities for the Month - September

- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Check airstrips on a weekly basis.
- Distribute your standby rosters to all neighbours.
- Advise all staff of call-out and dispatch protocols.
- Obtain FDI forecast on a daily basis from LEFPA.
- Study weather systems and check forecasts on the internet.
- Perform daily and weekly checks of all equipment, using checklists.



### Important Note:

- Please take part in our survey! [www.surveymonkey.com/r/GY8GDYZ](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GY8GDYZ).
- Basic Firefighting Training is available to LEFPA members. Interested parties can contact the LEFPA office.
- FDI weather emails and SMSs are available to LEFPA members, contact Ivina for more information.
- **SUCCESS cannot be spelt without U. Attend and participate - we need your contribution!**