



all Fired up

Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association Newsletter

Issue 52 May 2020

Greetings,



A global pandemic has proved a universal leveller and kept billions of people and entire countries locked down for weeks on end. It's difficult to 'keep calm and carry on' while we feel as if we are playing walk-on parts in an apocalyptic movie but time and nature waits for no man and the fire season has begun. Keep calm and gear up is our mantra for May; have you performed your housekeeping and equipment checks? Is your team trained and fit? If you aren't, it's not too late but it must be done now.

Operating by remote control is a new business model for many and LEFPA is no exception. The office team are doing a fine job under lockdown, taking full advantage of technology. Stay safe and keep social distancing even after lockdown ends, we ain't seen the end of this yet. Until next time.

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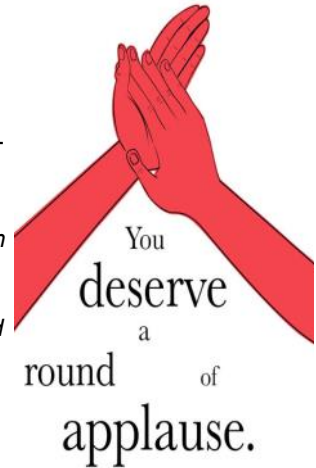
Hey there, thanks LEFPA!

The LEFPA team are always appreciative when people find the time to send in a 'thank you' note for services rendered and the recent letter received from Mrs Thando Kobese of the Department of Environment, Fisheries and Forestry. We reported in last month's issue that LEFPA were invited to form a guard of honour for the opening of the 22nd Session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission at Skukuza in March. The letter reads:

"The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries would like to thank you for your support during the hosting of the Twenty-Second Session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC22) and the Sixth African Forestry and Wildlife Week (AFWW6), in Skukuza, from 9 to 13 March 2020. The feedback we got from participants was positive in all respects due to your involvement in planning and ensuring that we hosted a successful event. This has made us proud to showcase South Africa to our international guests.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude towards your efforts in collaborating with the Department and other role-players. The Department hopes to collaborate with your organisation in future should the need arise. Thank you again for your presence which led to the success of both events."

A big round of applause from all of us to the LEFPA Mbombela team representing the Association throughout the Session. We're so proud of you!



Breaking Through Barriers - Juliet Crew on the Fireline



Towards the end of 2019 SA's first all-female fire crew stood proudly at attention - trained, equipped and raring to meet their first fire season. Stationed at WoF Newlands, Juliet Crew played a significant role in suppressing the January Noordhoek fires. Way to go, ladies. Be safe out there.

Queen Khoza, perhaps you can recruit more members and set up a woman-powered team in Mbombela?

www.sowetanlive.co.za/sebenza-live/2020-03-25-all-woman-firefighting-team-makes-history/
[m.news24.com/Video/SouthAfrica/News/watch-this-team-is-lit-meet-sas-very-first-all-female-firefighting-crew-](http://m.news24.com/Video/SouthAfrica/News/watch-this-team-is-lit-meet-sas-very-first-all-female-firefighting-crew-20200219)

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COVID 19 Forces a LEFPA First Event

These are desperate times, folks, and 'business unusual' for LEFPA as for everyone else. For the first time in the history of LEFPA we were unable to form a quorum for a SGM to continue and approve the budget for 2020. Members sought help from the LEFPA Constitution and the Directors had to approve the budget for the next financial year which began 1st April 2020.

Passing Forward

Some time ago we reported a donation of supplies that LEFPA received from Mpumalanga Disaster Management and what better time than now to put these to good use?



Andre Scheepers heeded a call on social media during the COVID 19 lockdown by the Nelspruit Community Forum for assistance with their lockdown shelter. LEFPA was only too pleased to help and supplied them with 5 gel stoves, 40 litres of gel burning fluid and 20 mattresses.



Sharing our bounty with those in need

Knowing that some vulnerable people have a little bit of comfort in their much-needed shelter helps us to sleep a little easier at night.

And The Show Goes On...

Oom Andre Scheepers loves his technology and has blossomed while locked down in his lapa office. He's very chuffed to have taken part in the first remote aviation meeting ever held by LEFPA. Sien oom, tegnologie is goed vir n mens!

Not content to knock that ten pin over, his monthly Saturday Radio Lowveld talk on 100.5 FM with Robin Jansma also took advantage of technology and Andre joined in from the comfort of his home office. This month's topic was preparing for the coming winter fire season and how time in lockdown is a blessing to be used for servicing equipment and getting firebreak agreements in place. Unleashing their inner chefs, a baking and brewing recipe or two were shared by Robin and Andre as a lockdown bonus for listeners!



Concentrating like a boss - Andre managing LEFPA by remote control

Service your firefighting equipment now!



www.lefpa.co.za
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Rambling Brambles



There is something fruity in our alien invasive species feature this month as Johan Louw tells us about American bramble blackberry. Luscious though the berries are, sadly, this invasive is not our friend and must be removed.

IAP Species: *Rubus*

Nemba Category: 1b

Alternative common names: American bramble Blackberry, Gozard's curse, sand bramble; sandbraam, Amerikaanse braambos; ijingijoye.

Description: An erect to sprawling thorny shrub with deeply ridged stems that grow up to 2m high. Green, finely serrated leaves sometimes densely grey-downy below. White flowers with petals that are much longer than the sepals and appear from September to January. The edible fruits are red turning black.

Where does this species come from? North America

Where in South Africa is it a problem? KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces.

How does it spread? Seeds

Does the plant have any uses? Bears edible fruits (berries)

Why is it a problem? Competes with and replaces indigenous woody and grassland species. Dense stands are impenetrable and restrict access to forestry plantations and access to grazing and water by domestic and wild animals.

Control: The aim of all control measures are to kill the dormant buds on the extensive root system because half of the stems above ground die naturally each year. These buds are prevented from growing into new stems either by being starved of nutrients or killed with herbicide. Three separate operations may be required:

- Pre-treatment: this depends upon the extent, height and density of the bramble growth. Burning, slashing and/or flattening can be used as pre-treatments before spraying with herbicide.

• Treat dense growth by:

i) treating to starve the roots. New stems obtain their nutrients from the roots, and if growing well divert these nutrients to the roots to replace those used. Cut off stems stimulates new stem growth, requiring more nutrients and by repeating this cycle of cutting stem growth the nutrient reserves in the roots are greatly reduced. Allow stems to grow to a height of 30cm then cut off as low as possible, ground level if you can. Cutting should be done twice or even three times a year; set tractor-mounted equipment as low as possible and if hand slashing, be aware that as cutters get tired (it's tough work) the tendency is to cut higher and higher. Veld burns are less effective and additional cutting treatments must be included between fires.

ii) grazing and browsing by livestock. Goats do the most damage as they browse young stems and leaves on older stems. Wildlife browse new bramble stems in spring but then change to other plants so aren't a reliable control method.

iii) insects and leaf diseases. Local insects and diseases do damage to the leaves but the damage is insufficient to have any permanent effect on the plant. Strains of a systemic rust fungus, *Gymnoconia nitens*, from the U.S.A. were tested by PPRI on local bramble weeds but to date have only affected one type which is found in Natal.

• **Treatments to kill buds on the roots:** Herbicides which move to growth points throughout the plant must be used. Spray systemic products onto the leaves and stems. Registered herbicides are listed in the table below. There is no need to cut down or burn the dead stems and dying stems that remain after spraying. They disintegrate and don't interfere with regrowth spraying. If dead stems are considered unsightly, wait until after the leaves have dropped before cutting or burning.

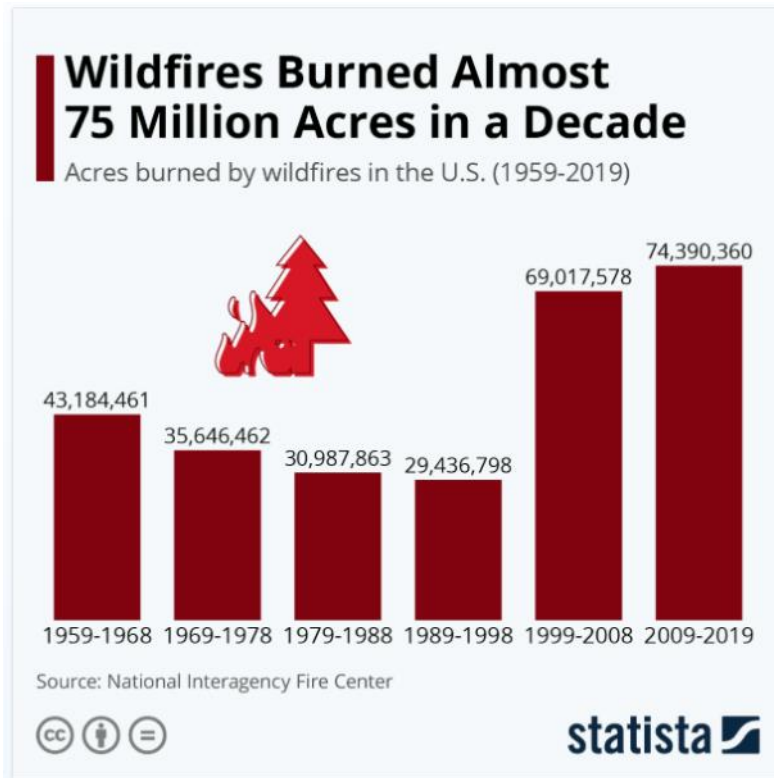
• **Treatment of regrowth and scattered stems:** use the same treatment as for dense growth. The best follow up treatment is to spray with herbicide. American bramble will continue to spread if diligent follow up is not carried out.

Trade name and effect on plants	Active ingredient	Herbicide mixture	Concentration	Remarks
Round -up	Glyphosate	300ml Roundup for 10l	3%	Apply 200l/ha to give 6l/ha of herbicide.
Muster	Trimesium	300ml Muster for 10l water	3%	Apply 200l/ha to give 6l/ha Muster.
Garlon	Triclopyr	50ml Garlon for 10l water	0,5%	Add 50 ml Agripon wetter. Apply 400l/ha.
BrushOff	Metsulfuron	2.5g for 10l water		Add 20 ml Armoblen 650 wetter. Apply 500l/ha January to May.
Access	Picloram	44ml Tordon for 10l water	0.44%	Use low pressure spray. Do not apply near crops or plantations.
Krenite	Fosamine	200ml Krenite for 10l water	2%	Add 10ml G49 wetter. Full cover spray late summer.

References

Henderson, L. 2001. Alien Weeds and Invasive Plants. ARC. Paarl Printers, Cape Town.
 Control of American bramble www.midlandsconservancies.org.za/documents/problemplants/control%20of%20bramble.pdf
 Invasive Species of South Africa. *Rubus cuneifolius*. Invasives.co.za.

USA Wildfires by Decade - Graphing the Figures

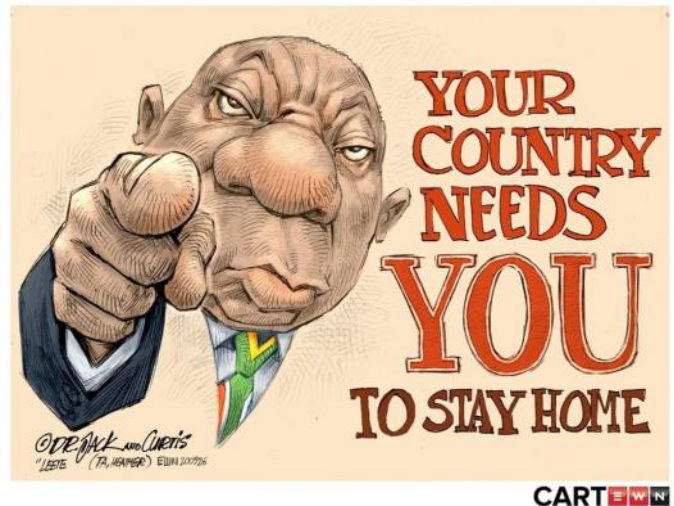


Sometimes, words are superfluous. Statista has neatly captured acreage burned in US wildfires by decade. Any thoughts on what trend a similar graph of South African wildfires would reveal?



Activities for the Month - May

- Get airstrips operational.
- Activate manual lookouts.
- Start using readiness checklist.
- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Prepare firebreaks around homesteads.
- Ensure all fire-related training is completed.
- Ensure all your roads are graded or slashed.
- Develop an all-risk prevention plan for each risk.
- Ensure that all-risk action plan is fully implemented.
- Burn open areas on rotational burning programmes.
- Issue Personal Protective Equipment to all your fire crews.
- Ensure your fire-fighting vehicles comply with LEFPA standards.
- Make sure that all staff are familiar with LEFPA's response plan.
- Remind all your staff of the dangers of warming fires, smoking, etc.
- Commence firebreak burning (ensure Eskom servitudes are burnt).
- Make sure that all your fire crews have been for their annual medical check-up.



Important Note:

- 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!



2020 BURNING PROHIBITION NOTICE

IN TERMS OF CHAPTER 7 OF THE NATIONAL VELD AND FOREST FIRE ACT, ACT 101 OF 1998
LOWVELD AND ESCARPMENT FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION
DAFF REGISTRATION NUMBER 871/01/October 2004

1. The **Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association (LEFPA)** in compliance with the Veldfire Management strategy developed in terms of section 5(1)(a) of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act, Act 101 of 1998 for the Lowveld and Escarpment Fire Protection Association, Ehlanzeni District Municipality boundary, part of Emakhazeni Local Municipality MP314 and part of Albert Luthuli Local Municipality MP30 boundary's, hereby announces a burning Prohibition within the boundaries of the Lowveld and Escarpment Fire Protection Association area, Ehlanzeni District Municipality boundary, part of Emakhazeni Local Municipality MP314 and part of Albert Luthuli Local Municipality MP30 boundary's and prohibits any burning without a valid burning permit having been issued by LEFPA. Accordingly, no person shall within the Lowveld and Escarpment Fire Protection Association area, Ehlanzeni District Municipality boundary, part of Emakhazeni Local Municipality MP314 and part of Albert Luthuli Local Municipality MP301 boundary's, during the period **1 June 2020 up to and including 31 October 2020 (weather permitting the prohibition period can be extended)** without the afore-mentioned burning permit have been obtained;

1.1 make a fire in the open air, or, if such a fire has been made, allow it to continue to burn or add fuel thereto, otherwise than:

1.1 a) fires made within a demarcated picnic or camping area or caravan park, or holiday resort, but only at places within such an area which have been specifically prepared and maintained for that purpose; provided that such fires are properly extinguished with water and/or sand;

1.1 b) fires for the preparation of food on residential stands;

1.1 c) fires made on residential and industrial stands in proclaimed townships;

1.1 d) fires made for initiation school purposes, but only at places which have been specially prepared and maintained for that purpose to prevent fires from spreading.

1.2 Destroy by burning slash originating from any timber plantation or self-sown exotic trees and or alien invasive plants;

1.3 Destroy by burning residue, cultivated crop fields and veld, clear or maintain a fire belt by burning or execute block burns. It should be noted that LEFPA specifically objects, as envisaged in 12(4)(a) of the Act, to the burning of the afore-mentioned fire belt/s during the prohibition period without a valid Burning Permit obtained from LEFPA;

2. Accordingly, as envisaged in Section 24 and 25 of the Act, persons found guilty of the offences as set out in section 25 of the Act shall be subject to a minimum fine of **R 5000.00 (five thousand Rands)**;

3. Burning Permits are subject to LEFPA Rules & Minimum Requirements (Version 2020) and any other relevant By-Laws issued by Local Municipalities within the boundaries of the Lowveld and Escarpment Fire Protection Associations area, Ehlanzeni District Municipality boundary, part of Emakhazeni Local Municipality MP314 and part of Albert Luthuli Municipality MP30 boundaries;

4. LEFPA requests that all fire belt burning operations be completed by **1 August 2020**.

5. Contact detail for requesting daily Burning Permits: **0860 66 3473**

Mr P Mthiyane

CITY OF MBOMBELA CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

LEFPA FPO 871/01/02

TEL: 013 759 9111

Mrs HTM Nkosi

EHLANZENI DISASTER MANAGEMENT CENTRE

TEL: 013 759 8500



EHLANZENI
DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY