

USING FIRE AS A RESTORATION TOOL

North Head

Nature
Conservation
Council
of NSW

OVERVIEW OF WORKSHOP

Using Fire as a Restoration Tool was held on Tuesday 4th March 2014 at North Head. Presentations from Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, Fire and Rescue New South Wales, Willoughby City Council and a tour of the restoration work within Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS) by Drs Judy and Geoff Lambert stimulated great discussion amongst the 55 participants.

The key messages of the day were to

- 1) demonstrate the role of fire in degraded ecological systems by showcasing its use in degraded ESBS,
- 2) explain the challenges of re-introducing fire into bushland at the urban interface and managing for ecological outcomes and
- 3) identify ways forward and being to build an information exchange network of fire and restoration techniques.

It was identified that there is a need for a central point where information can be shared amongst all land managers. The Nature Conservation Council will be looking for funding opportunities to establish an information portal. If you wish to be involved in this process, please contact us.



Workshop participants discuss North Head's fire plan. Photo: Kate Nicolson.

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

Introduction

Mr Peter Jensen

Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

Peter Jensen began the morning's presentations with an overview of the history, geology and ecology of the North Head site. He provided an introduction to the ecology and management of ESBS at North Head, the largest remaining patch of ESBS. He concluded with examples of different types of fire management works that are undertaken at North Head.



A packed room- *Using Fire as a Restoration Tool* generated a lot of interest. Photo: Kate Nicolson.

Prescribed Burning- Operations and Logistics Overview

Mr Robert Strauch

Fire and Rescue New South Wales

Robert provided an excellent overview of the burn operations of the day. He detailed the operational considerations, such as fuel characteristics, control lines and water sources as well as the logistical considerations, such as notification of residents and the breeding seasons of the little penguins and



Touring North Heads ESBS. Photo: Kate Nicolson

long-nosed bandicoots. He then provided us with more detailed planning considerations specific to each burn site, before briefly discussing the management of ESBS at smaller sites away from North Head. He concluded with some great videos of the burns, taken from the PolAir and Fire Brigades helicopters.

Fire as a Restoration Tool in Willoughby Council's Bushland

Mr Taos Bartlett and Mr Philip Sarkies
Willoughby City Council

Taos and Philip co-delivered an excellent presentation that showcased the restoration work that Willoughby Council has undertaken. They presented on the pre-burn considerations that are necessary to implement ecological/hazard reduction burns in urban bushland and the on-ground preparation methods that they used. Following the burn, there was a dramatic increase

in native species diversity and richness in, what was previously, an *Allocasuarina* monoculture.

Restoration of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub

Dr Judy Lambert and Dr Geoff Lambert

North Head Sanctuary Foundation/ Community Solutions

The highlight of the day was a tour through Sydney's largest remaining patch of ESBS. Judy and Geoff explained the different age classes and fire history of the site and contrasted senescent and healthy ESBS. The results of the experiment showed a significantly greater amount of regeneration in the burnt patches, compared to the thinned (and no fire) patches, and a significantly greater amount of regeneration in rabbit fenced plots.

THANKS TO...

Thanks to the North Head Sanctuary Foundation, The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, Drs Judy and Geoff Lambert, Mr Rob Strauch, Mr Taos Bartlett, Mr Philip Sarkies and Mr Neil Evers.

Cover Banner photo: *Banksia aemula*, a characteristic species of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub. Kate Nicolson.

Banner photos below: Left: ESBS Pre-fire. Middle: ESBS immediately after fire. Right: Fenced ESBS 12 months after burn. Judy and Geoff Lambert.

