Executive Summary

Southern Fire Management Area

Fire Protection Plan

This report summarises the findings contained in the Fire Protection Plan for the Southern Fire Management Area 2016-17.

The purpose of Fire Protection Plans is to identify and prioritise bushfire risks in the landscape and strategically identify work that can be done to mitigate that risk.

Fire Protection Plans have been prepared for each of the ten fire management areas in Tasmania in accordance with the requirements of the Fire Service Act 1979. These plans were developed for the first time in 2014 in a collaborative effort by members of Fire Management Area Committees made up of local stakeholders.

The objective of the Fire Protection Plan is to effectively manage bushfire related risk within the Southern Fire Management Area in order to protect people, assets and other things valuable to the community.

In preparing the Fire Protection Plan, a tenure blind approach to strategic fuel management was taken. The identification of areas and communities at risk from bushfire together with the identification of areas of potential strategic value for undertaking risk mitigation activities was undertaken by Fire Management Area Committee members without regard to land tenure/ownership.

In taking this approach, Fire Management Area Committees have recognised that strategic fuel management needs to occur across public and private property boundaries in order to be effective.

The management of bushfire related risk is not the sole responsibility of any one land manager or agency. It is a shared responsibility of the whole community.

The tenure blind approach to bushfire risk mitigation planning as undertaken by Fire Management Area Committees creates opportunities for collaboration between public and private land managers and owners and promotes the development of a centrally coordinated bushfire risk mitigation program.

Southern Fire Management Area Background

- The SFMA is approximately 1,037,000 ha in size and covers three local government areas (Derwent Valley, Kingborough and Huon Valley).
- Much of the area is uninhabited and forms part of the South West National Park.
- The majority of the population in the SFMA are found in the southern settlements of Hobart, the Huon Valley and along the D'Entrecasteaux Channel.
- Significant populations are located around New Norfolk with smaller populations located in the Tyenna Valley.

Key findings for the Southern Fire Management Area

- Within the SFMA approximately 14% of land is private/freehold, 73% is public/crown land 11% is Forestry Tasmania managed land.
- The major vegetation types within the SFMA are; Wet Eucalypt forest (28%), Moorland species (18%), Rainforest (13%) and Dry Eucalypt forest (9%).
- In terms of area suitable for fuel reduction burning within the SFMA, 30% (311,100 ha) of the area has been categorised as treatable while 70% (725,900 ha) of the area has been classified as untreatable. These are very broad figures and are based on TasVeg mapping and flammability attributes. Actual areas suitable for fuel reduction burning will need to be determined by field inspection.

Bushfire threat in the Southern Fire Management Area

- The Southern Fire Management Area contains some of the wettest and driest locations in Tasmania. Because of this the length of the fire season can vary considerably with drier locations having fire seasons that run from October to April while areas of higher rainfall and wetter vegetation types limited to the period December to March.
- The majority (84%) of the Southern Fire Management Area has been untouched by fire since records began. 16% of the Fire Management Area is noted as having been subject to fire at least once. Approximately 2% of the Fire Management Area has been subject to more than 2 fires at the same location.
- Within the Southern Fire Management Area the main causes of fire are; undetermined or unknown (40%), Arson (18%), Lightening (15%), recreation (13%) and escapes from planned burns (11%).

Bushfire risk analysis for the Southern Fire Management Area

Computer modelling was used to conduct an initial broad scale assessment across the Southern Fire Management Area to identify communities vulnerable to bushfire. A more detailed assessment using more locally specific processes was then conducted by members of the Fire Management Area Committee.

Tools that were used by the Fire Management Area Committee to identify communities vulnerable to bushfire include:

- Consultation of Local Government and Emergency Services risk registers
- Local knowledge from Tasmania Fire Service District Officers and Brigades
- Consultation with Tasmania Fire Service Community Protection Planners and Community Development Officers
- Expert opinion of fire practitioners
- Identification and consideration of existing and past fire management actions, plans and incidents

High risk areas for bushfire

Computer modelling results indicate that areas of highest bushfire risk identified for the Southern Fire Management Area under current fuel loads are evenly scattered throughout the eastern portion of the area, generally due to the higher population densities and critical infrastructure found in this area.

High risk ignition point locations

Computer modelling indicates that within the Southern Fire Management Area bushfire ignition points of potential concern under current fuel loads are located:

- In the Tyenna Valley
- Areas north and west of New Norfolk
- Along the length of the Wellington Range
- North and west of Huonville, including the upper Huon near Lonnavale and Judbury
- Large areas in the vicinity of Snug Tiers
- In the vicinity of Geeveston

Community Risk Assessment

Following group analysis and discussion of the preliminary risk assessment results (detailed above), together with input gathered from local knowledge, 'at risk' communities were then prioritised by members of the Southern Fire Management Area Committee in terms of requiring mitigation actions.

Mitigation activities may include:

- Fuel reduction burning
- Fire trail and fire break construction/maintenance
- Mechanical fuel reduction through slashing, trittering and mulching
- Community education
- Other prescribed activities specific to community needs

Some of these activities can be implemented in a relatively short time frame whilst others will need careful planning and consultation with the relevant stakeholders which will need to be done over a longer time frame.

Community Risk Assessment results

The following communities were identified during the strategic assessment process as being at high risk and as having priority for mitigation actions:

- Pelverata
- Lucaston
- Grove
- Oyster Cove
- Nicholls Rivulet
- Glendevie
- Middleton
- Maydena

Areas of strategic importance within the Southern Fire Management Area

In addition to the above communities, areas of potential strategic importance for bushfire risk mitigation within the Southern Fire Management Area were identified through a process that utilised and combined local knowledge with computer modelling. Fire Management Area Committee members with specific fire expertise and knowledge across the area contributed to the identification of both the communities at risk and the broader strategic areas for potential mitigation actions.

The following areas were identified during a desktop exercise as having potential strategic importance for bushfire risk mitigation treatment within the Southern Fire Management Area:

- Judds Creek/Judbury
- Glen Huon
- Lonnavale
- Snug Tiers (including Grey Mt)
- Glenfern/Plenty Valley
- Coningham
- Lune River

These potential strategic areas will require further detailed investigation and ground truthing in the field to more accurately determine their potential for use as treatment areas with strategic value.

Maps showing the location of communities at high risk from bushfires, together with a map showing areas of potential strategic importance within the Southern Fire Management Area are shown below in Map 1 - Areas identified in the Southern Fire Protection Plan for mitigation activities.

For further information please contact
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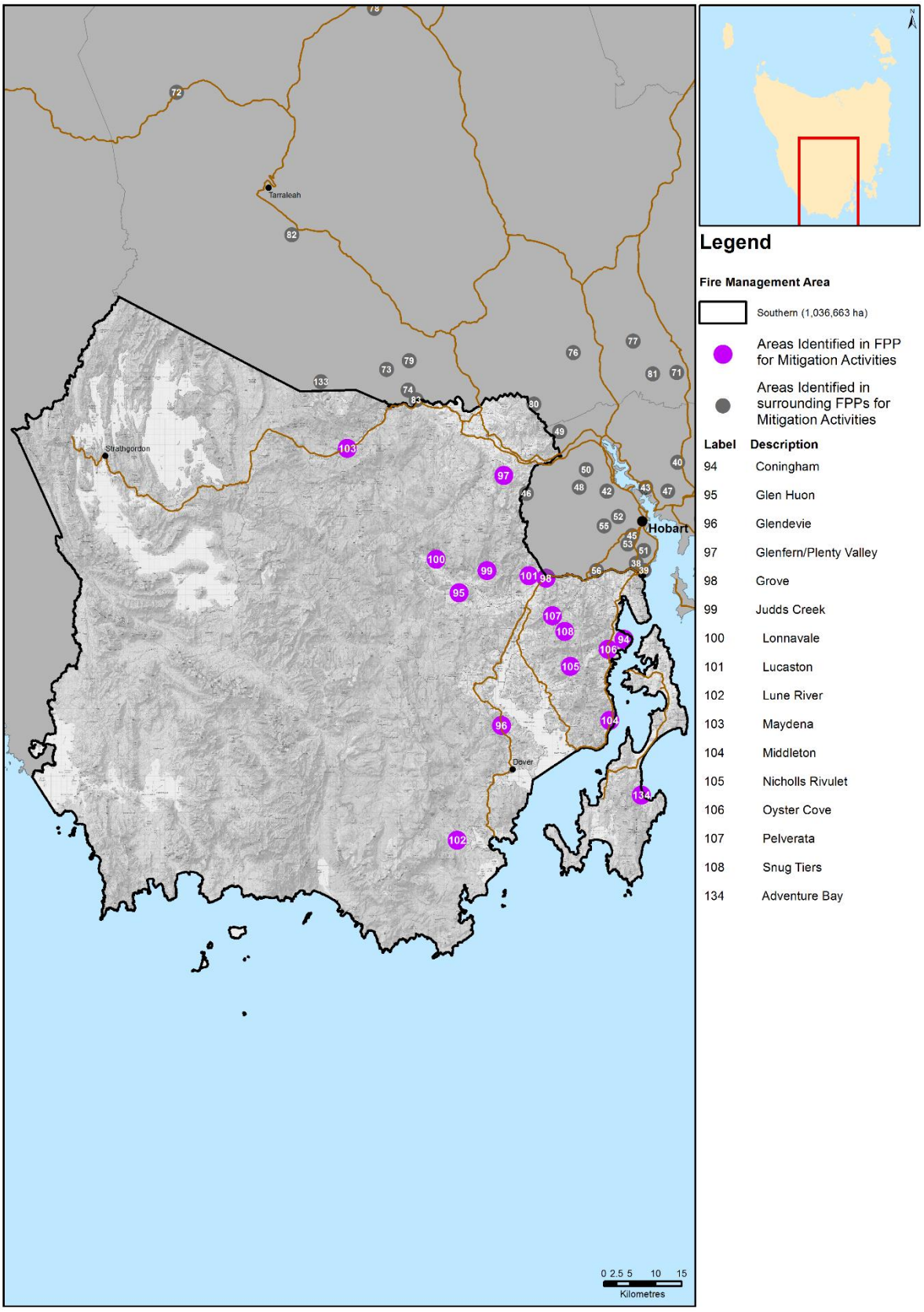
Map 1 - Areas identified in the Southern Fire Protection Plan for mitigation activities