



Kimberley Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

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Indigenous fire management program gets underway

The Kimberley Ranger Network will begin its annual fire management program across the region this month.

Facilitated by the Kimberley Land Council, the program is undertaken by 13 different ranger groups and is based on the traditional fire methods of Indigenous people.

The program is one of the most effective ways of reducing the destructive impacts of wildfires late in the dry season.

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter said high rainfall over the wet season has led to an increase in fuel loads, creating ideal conditions for wildfires later in the year.

“From March to July Indigenous rangers will be conducting strategic fire operations in key areas throughout the Kimberley to reduce high fuel loads,” Mr Hunter said.

“The program involves the use of traditional fire methods and knowledge, combined with modern science and technology, to create cool burns which leave patches of burnt and unburnt country.

“The burnt patches of land create fire breaks which prevent the spread of uncontrolled fires and can be used to slow down or stop fires that occur late in the dry season.

“Kimberley Land Council staff and rangers have undergone nationally accredited fire operations training to undertake this work.

“We also liaise closely with shires, pastoralists and other property owners to advise of any planned burning activities, and ensure that people, stock and property are protected.”

Wunggurr ranger Robin Dann said fire management is one of the most important tasks rangers undertake to look after country.

“With high rainfall occurring across Willinggin country, the rangers will be targeting older fuel loads early in the dry season, making fire breaks through country as part of the aerial burning operations in 2017,” Mr Dann said.

“Without rangers doing this important work, late season fires can devastate our country, causing damage to important cultural places and biodiversity.”

Other organisations and government departments also work on fire management in the Kimberley, including the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Australian Wildlife Conservancy and pastoralists.

Anyone with concerns about a fire in their area should check the www.emergency.wa.gov.au website for more information or in an emergency situation call triple zero immediately.

For more information about Indigenous fire management please visit <http://www.klc.org.au/land-sea/indigenous-fire-management>

Fast facts:

- Kimberley Ranger Network rangers manage fire across almost 200,000 square kilometres. This equates to about half the total land mass of the Kimberley and approximately three times the size of Tasmania (refer to attached map).
- It is expected that the Karajarri, Gooniyandi and Balanggarra ranger groups will be the first to commence fire operations.
- Rangers conduct more than 80 days of burning each season.
- Indigenous fire management is crucial in protecting threatened species in the Kimberley, including Gouldian finches, Black Footed Rock wallabies, the Purple crowned fairywren, the Golden bandicoot and bilbies.