

BUSHFIRE IMPACT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS JAN 2020

Section A: For landholders with agreements including Conservation Agreements, Trust Agreements, Registered Property Agreements, Wildlife Refuges

I have an agreement which has been impacted by bushfire in the conservation area. How can the BCT assist me?

The BCT can be a touch point for discussing with you the impact of the fire on your property and, in particular, your Conservation Area. We have staff in regional locations that can assist with technical advice regarding the ecological impact of the fire and restoration actions which may be needed for your conservation area.

If you have an agreement without annual payments (including Conservation Agreements, Trust Agreements, Registered Property Agreements, Wildlife Refuges), then you may be eligible for Conservation Partners Grants for activities such as weed control, fencing or assisted revegetation.

I have an agreement which has been impacted by bushfire. Will I still be required to comply with the management plan under my agreement?

If you have a Conservation Agreement (under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*) then you are not required to meet the obligations under the agreement if you are prevented from doing so because of a natural disaster (such as fire). This applies for so long as the event continues to prevent you from complying. This relates to Clause 21 of the Conservation Agreement which refers to Force Majeure Events.

There is a similar clause in most other agreements such as Conservation Agreements established under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, Trust Agreements under the *Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001*, and Registered Property Agreements under the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997*).

If your conservation area is impacted by fire, the BCT can provide advice on adaptive management following the impact, and which management actions can be undertaken to assist your area regenerate.

Do I need to let the BCT know about the bushfire impact?

If you have a Conservation Agreement (under *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*) then you are required to notify the BCT as soon as practicable if an event will (or is likely to) affect your ability to meet the obligations under the agreement.

You are encouraged to notify the BCT about the bushfire impact if you have another type of agreement (such as Conservation Agreements established under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, Trust Agreements under the *Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001*, and Registered Property Agreements under the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997*).

Notifying the BCT means we can assist you with dealing with the impact of the bushfire on your conservation area.



You can advise the BCT by sending an email message to info@bct.nsw.gov.au or calling 1300 992 688 or contacting your regional BCT office.

How can I help wildlife affected by the fire?

Information is available on how you can help wildlife in an emergency such as fire.
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/native-animals/helping-wildlife-in-emergencies>

This includes how to provide short term help to some native animals by providing access to water, food or shelter until their natural environment recovers.

Will there be on-ground monitoring to see how sites recover from bushfires?

The BCT will be initiating an ecological monitoring program in 2020, with monitoring of sites commencing in Autumn. We will look at opportunities to incorporate monitoring of how sites are recovering from the bushfires.

Please discuss with your BCT regional ecologist if you are interested in learning more about our upcoming monitoring program and potential participation.

Conservation Partners Grants

Who is eligible for Conservation Partners Grants?

If you have one of the following types of agreements, you may be eligible to apply for a BCT Conservation Partners Grant:

- Conservation Agreement
- Trust Agreement
- Registered Property Agreement
- Wildlife Refuge or Wildlife Refuge Agreement
- participation in the CEN (Community Environment Network) Land for Wildlife or HSI (Humane Society International) Wildlife Land Trust programs

You are eligible for these grants at any time, not just when impacted by bushfire.

What can I receive funding from the BCT for?

Conservation Partners Grants are available for the following activities at any time (not just following bushfires):

- weed control
- fencing
- introduced pest animal control
- revegetation (supplementary planting)
- habitat restoration
- other maintenance (such as tracks or erosion control needed to maintain conservation value)

More detail is available on the BCT website (<https://www.bct.nsw.gov.au/cards/apply-conservation-partners-grant>).

Following emergencies such as the recent fires, grant funding will also be considered for:

- providing support to wildlife such as watering points and shelter
- additional weed control so that native vegetation can recover
- additional or higher frequency introduced pest animal control where prey cover has been removed by fire (this should be coordinated through Local Land Services, or NPWS when adjacent to a reserve)
- other site-specific activities to restore conservation values.

Please contact the BCT so we can discuss how to assist you with your funding needs.

How much funding can I get under Conservation Partners Grants?

Under Conservation Partners Grants, there are three levels of funding available depending on the type of agreement, the highest level being for in-perpetuity agreements:

- Up to \$15,000 per annum for three years for landholders with: in-perpetuity Conservation Agreements, Trust Agreements and, Registered Property Agreements.
- Up to \$8,000 per annum for three years for landholders with a term Registered Property Agreement.
- Up to \$2,000 per annum for three years for landholders with: Wildlife Refuge, Wildlife Refuge Agreement or who are members of Land for Wildlife or Wildlife Land Trust.

The BCT will consider the following adjustments to assist landholders with agreements impacted by bushfires:

- allowing higher payments in initial years for essential conservation infrastructure such as fencing, and erosion control works
- paying for works which have previously been implemented but need to be undertaken again because they have been impacted by the fires.

Landholders are encouraged to also use other sources of funding where possible including any insurance claims, disaster assistance and contributions from neighbours for boundary fences. This will allow the BCT to assist as many landholders as possible. You will be asked to declare any other funding you have or can access that could otherwise be funded by the BCT.

Please contact the BCT so we can discuss how to assist you with your funding needs.

How do I apply for funding from the BCT?

Details on how to apply for a grant (if you do not have one yet) are available on the BCT website (<https://www.bct.nsw.gov.au/cards/apply-conservation-partners-grant>).

If you already have a Conservation Partners Grant with the BCT, then we can look at varying that grant to meet your changed circumstances.

Please contact the BCT so we can assist you to vary or apply for a grant by sending an email message to info@bct.nsw.gov.au or calling 1300 992 688 or contacting your regional BCT office.

I have already done some works on the conservation area as they were urgently needed following the fires. Can I apply to the BCT to get the money back?

The BCT will consider paying for works that have already been completed, if they were urgently needed to protect the conservation area.

Please contact the BCT to discuss your situation.

I am applying for a Conservation Agreement with the BCT, and my property is impacted by bushfire. What should I do?

The BCT can talk with you about how the fire may have affected on the conservation values of your property and options for restoring and protecting those values. Please contact the BCT to discuss your situation.

How can I contact the BCT?

You can contact the BCT by sending an email message to info@bct.nsw.gov.au or calling 1300 992 688 or contacting your regional BCT office.

Potential future bushfires

I'm interested in entering into a Conservation Agreement with the BCT and would like to manage bushfire risk. What can I do on my property?

There are a number of ways that Conservation Agreements can take potential for bushfires into account including:

- designing conservation areas to exclude managed areas adjacent to assets and excluding areas to establish fire breaks
- providing for emergency bushfire work and hazard reduction (as outlined below)
- inclusion of access and management tracks
- considering local bushfire risk management plans
- in some cases, preparing a fire management plan for the conservation area.

I have a Conservation Agreement with the BCT and am concerned about whether bushfires will impact the site in the future. What can I do on my property to protect infrastructure?

Where there is an emergency, or where there is imminent risk of serious personal injury and or irreparable serious damage to property, the landholders are to act in accordance with relevant requirements under the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* (NSW) and the *Rural Fires Act 1997* (NSW). This may include emergency bush fire hazard reduction work to protect from existing or imminent danger arising out of a fire.



Generally, all agreements managed by the BCT allow for work to be undertaken for general fire protection works. This includes hazard reduction burns carried out in accordance with a relevant notice from NSW Rural Fire Service.

Landholders should read their agreement to understand the bushfire management activities which are able to be undertaken in relation to managing bushfire risk to protect infrastructure. Contact BCT's regional staff if you require further information.

Where landholders with established agreements want to develop fire management activities not covered under their agreement, the BCT will work with individual landholders to work through this process on a case by case basis. The BCT will support landholders as they work with the RFS to ensure where fire management activities are necessary, that they are developed and implemented appropriately.

You should note that some activities may require a variation to a Conservation Agreement, for example, if an additional Asset Protection Zone is being established. The process required to vary a Conservation Agreement can be discussed with regional staff where necessary.

I have a Conservation Agreement with the BCT and want to undertake native vegetation clearing or earthworks in the conservation area. Can I do this?

Generally, in agreements managed by the BCT, clearing and earthworks may only be undertaken in the Conservation Area to the minimum extent necessary to maintain the infrastructure (for example, fencing) and, in any case, to the maximum distances set out in the agreement.

Landholders are recommended to read their agreement to understand what is allowed. Contact BCT's regional staff if you require further information.

Other support

Where can I get other assistance from?

Further information on disaster assistance is available at www.disasterassist.gov.au and the NSW emergency information and response website at www.emergency.nsw.gov.au

Disaster recovery grants of up to \$15,000 are available to primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations in local government areas affected by the NSW bushfires that have occurred from 31 August 2019. To find out if you are eligible see www.raa.nsw.gov.au/grants/disaster-recovery-grants

Conservation Volunteers Australia have been selected by the Australian Government to coordinate the national **environmental volunteering response** to the bushfire crisis. More information is available at [Conservation Volunteers](http://ConservationVolunteers) website.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) offers assistance under certain conditions to repair or replace **fences bordering national parks** in accordance with the NPWS [boundary fencing policy](#). Information is available at [Assistance for fire damaged fences](#)

If you or someone you know needs **extra support**, the following services are available:



- Disaster Welfare Assistance Line 1800 018 444
- Rural Fire Service Bush Fire Info Line 1800 679 737
- Mental Health Line 1800 011 511
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Mensline 1300 789 978
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
- Beyondblue 1300 22 463

Section B: For BSA agreement holders

I have a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement which has been impacted by bushfire in the Biodiversity Stewardship site. How can the BCT assist me?

The BCT can assist with technical advice on the best way to restore your Biodiversity Stewardship site where fire has severely impacted biodiversity values.

This may include an adaptive management approach and reallocation of Total Fund Deposit funds to undertake management actions which will assist in regenerating your BSA.

I have an agreement which has been impacted by bushfire. Will I still be required to comply with the management plan under my agreement?

If you have a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (including a former BioBanking Agreement) then you are not required to meet the obligations under the agreement if you are prevented from doing so because of a natural disaster (such as fire). This applies for so long as the event continues to prevent you from complying.

The BCT can talk to individual landholders about how the fire has impacted their site and if changes are required to their management plan. If you are prevented from undertaking some or all of your management actions because of a natural disaster, your annual management payment can still be released. In this circumstance, the BCT will guide the landholder on how these funds should be reallocated.

Do I need to let the BCT know about the bushfire impact?

If you have a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (including a former BioBanking Agreement) then you are required to notify the BCT as soon as practicable if an event will (or is likely to) affect your ability to meet the obligations under the agreement.

Notifying the BCT means we can assist you with dealing with the impact of the bushfire on your Biodiversity Stewardship site.

You can advise the BCT by sending an email message to info@bct.nsw.gov.au or calling 1300 992 688 or contacting your regional BCT office.

I am applying for Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement with the BCT, and my site is impacted by bushfire. What should I do?

The BCT is discussing this issue with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (who manage the Biodiversity Assessment Method). More information will be available shortly.

Please contact the BCT to discuss your situation.

I have a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement and am concerned about whether bushfires will impact the site in the future. What can I do on my property to protect infrastructure?

Where there is an emergency, or where there is imminent risk of serious personal injury and or irreparable serious damage to property, landholders can act in accordance with relevant requirements under the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*

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Landholders should read their agreement to understand the bushfire management activities which are able to be undertaken in relation to managing bushfire risk to protect infrastructure. Contact your regional staff if you require further information.

I have a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement and want to undertake native vegetation clearing in the biodiversity stewardship site. Can I do this?

Native vegetation clearing may only be undertaken in the biodiversity stewardship site where it is specifically permitted or required within the agreement. Landholders should read their agreement to understand what is allowed. Contact your regional staff if you require further information.

How can I help wildlife affected by the fire?

Information is available on how you can help wildlife in an emergency such as fire.
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