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More Burning, Less Fire

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Many Australian ecosystems are fire-maintained, having evolved traits that enable them to persist with, and depend upon a variety of fire regimes. Diverse regimes are essential for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health, but bushfires can also threaten communities so fire management, especially prescribed burning, is essential to conserve biodiversity and to mitigate negative impacts of bushfires. Managers face at least two fundamental challenges to implementing an effective prescribed burning program. Firstly, knowing the most appropriate fire regime to implement to achieve conservation and community protection goals, and secondly, being able to effectively implement the program at meaningful spatial and temporal scales. With regard to knowledge, there exists a substantial body of fire ecology science but this often complex and sometimes contradictory plethora of information needs to be synthesised and presented as practical fire management paradigms, policies and prescriptions. A variety of ecologically-based approaches can be taken to help plan fire regimes to conserve biodiversity and protect communities. In a fast changing world, there are strategic challenges to implementing prescribed burning programs, including climate variability, population geography, land use changes and management capacity. The south-west Australian forest region is presented as an example of how these changes have influenced the prescribed burning program over the last 60 years.

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Diverse country. Common ground.

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