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Shark Bay

World Heritage Notes

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FIRE MANAGEMENT IN FRANCOIS PERON NATIONAL PARK

The Francois Peron National Park, like almost all bushland in Western Australia, is prone to bushfires. The region's scrubby vegetation and hot, windy weather make it particularly susceptible to fire which can be triggered by anything, from lightning to the action of a careless camper.

For thousands of years before European settlement, the Peninsula experienced infrequent bushfires started by lightning and by Aborigines. The Aborigines fired the vegetation for hunting purposes, and to encourage fresh new growth of food and medicine plants. Consequently, the vegetation developed a range of adaptations to survive or regenerate after the occasional bushfire, including the ability to resprout and regenerate from seeds stored either in the soil or in woody capsules on the plant.

While small bushfires occurred in the Park when it was a pastoral lease, heavy

grazing of the vegetation by sheep and goats reduced the threat of large bushfires. With the recent removal of these animals, the bush is regenerating vigorously. While this is good for the native wildlife, it increases the potential for large bushfires that could threaten human life and property and damage habitat.

A bushfire could seriously disrupt Project Eden, CALM's unique program to control introduced predators on the Peninsula and, if successful, reintroduce native mammals which are now locally extinct.

In an effort to minimise the impact of bushfires in the Park, CALM is establishing fuel reduced buffers at strategic points. These fuel reduced buffers, or areas of sparse vegetation, will not prevent bushfires, but they will restrict their size, impact and severity.

The first stage of constructing a fuel reduced buffer is to mechanically modify or 'scrub roll' a narrow strip



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