THE KARRI REGENERATION BURNING PROGRAMME

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During the 1975/6 summer, personnel in the karri area carried out a record regeneration burning programme. Over 2,000 ha were burnt, mainly in the North Walpole, Quinninup and Shannon areas. The coupes involved were those resulting from karri sawlog cutting since the last general seed year in 1972, although some chipwood was also removed from two coupes south of Quinninup. A total of 35 burns were involved, varying in size from 28 to 400 ha.

The task in preparing, burning, mop-up and control of this operation was a large and difficult one. The fact that eventually the programme was completed well inside the target deadline and with only one minor mishap (a small escape into flats in the Keystone area) was a credit to the officers and men involved.

Notable achievements and developments included:

1. The introduction of regional planning and operations, the resources of all three divisions being co-ordinated on a day-to-day and "job" basis rather than a territorial basis as in the past. This ensured tighter control and more efficient use of manpower than ever before.

2. The use of new techniques, notably Ric Sneeuwjagt's Moisture Prediction Tables and Paul Jones' electrical ignition system, both of which were outstandingly successful, allowing very accurate prediction of optimum time to burn and optimum use to be made of 'safe" days when a moisture differential existed between the cutover and surrounding forest fuels.

3. Introduction of the concept of "advance mop-up" (dozing scrub and logs 20 m in from burn perimeter before the day of the burn) which revolutionized edge control and comfort and safety for troops.

4. The use of aerial ignition for burns at Boorara and Swarbrick, giving rapid and effective ignition without the necessity for men to walk through slash and debris.

5. Completion of the entire programme without the occurrence of a single disabling injury.

These factors have generated confidence in the regeneration burning operation and represent, in my opinion, a classical demonstration of the successful co-operation of Research and Field staff producing effective, useful and interesting developments.

Regeneration surveys of the burnt areas are now virtually completed and indicate that the normal 80-90% success rate was achieved. Seedling stockings in most areas (e.g. Keystone, Weld, Dombakup and Grey) are magnificent. In the three main areas where results were poor, hand planting and some direct seeding has been programmed and will be completed by early August.

A similarly large programme of regeneration burning is proposed for 1976/7 summer. In most of these areas woodchip logs will have also been removed. This is expected to make the burns cheaper and easier to prepare (scrub-rolling will be no longer necessary in most of these areas) and burn (due to relative absence of large logs and cull trees which provide most of the problems of control and mop-up).

With an annual regeneration burning task of about 3,000 ha per annum forecast for the next few years the developments and innovations introduced last summer must stand us in good stead.