

National Veld and Forest Fire Protection Advisory Forum established for South Africa

By Dale Nortje, chairperson, National Veld and Forest Fire Protection Advisory Forum

Provincial umbrella fire protection associations (UFPAs) have been established and recognised in terms of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998 (NVFFA), Chapter 2 sections 9 and 10, to facilitate and coordinate fire prevention, control and suppression measures and related risks, within the respective provinces as well as within South Africa.

In order to realise this facilitation and coordination function, an advisory forum, the National Veld and Forest Fire Protection Advisory Forum (NVFFPAF), was established to ensure a coordinated approach to fire risk management in respect of integrated fire management practice throughout South Africa, in turn ensuring provincial UFPAs achieve common standards with regard to overall suppression operations, awareness, training, prevention and control. The forum will work closely with national and provincial Government structures, as well as other fire related service providers and stakeholders.

The National Veld and Forest Fire Protection Advisory Forum will also assist the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), the custodians of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act (NVFFA) No 101 of 1998, in the implementation and fulfilment of the Act, to enable effective implementation of integrated fire management through the formal structures of registered fire protection associations (FPAs) for the benefit of landowner members.

The forum is made up of two nominated representatives from each of the recognised provincial

UFPAs, preferably the chair and vice chairpersons, as well as two representatives from the DFFE national office, as they are custodians of the Act 101. The forum elects from its members a chairperson and vice-chairperson and co-opt a secretary to become office bearers of the forum.

Main purpose and aims

The main purpose of the forum is to provide a platform for UFPA discussion and participation in integrated fire management issues that pertain to FPAs within South Africa. Some of the typical points are:

- To evaluate and monitor impacts of fire on land use and facilitate the development of appropriate measures to reduce such impacts
- Assist in the compilation of documents that provide proposals and strategic plans in respect of integrated fire management
- Share ideas and innovations that could benefit UFPAs and their member FPAs, such as evaluating and guiding implementation of veld and forest fire information and management systems and operating procedures, relative to their duties and obligation.
- Facilitate the overall strategic direction and planning in respect of UFPAs.

Some of the aims of the forum are to:

- To facilitate guiding principles with common FPA stakeholders at provincial and national levels
- To align advocacy and awareness programmes nationally
- To support and contribute to continuous development of national competencies and training
- To take a leading role in influencing all public and private entities,

whose decision making processes affect the risk to life and property, as a result of veld and forest fires

- To develop trust amongst all UFPAs, FPAs and all the role players and stakeholders and to promote cooperative governance by stakeholders and relevant authorities
- To lobby for funding for the implementation of integrated fire management by UFPAs and their affiliated FPAs.

Members of the forum also serve on the National Fire Workgroup of DFFE, where common issues relating to integrated fire management are discussed and actions implemented to try resolve such issues.

The forum's chairperson is Dale Nortje, manager at Winelands FPA and vice chair of the Western Cape UFPA and the vice chair is Simon Thomas, operations manager at the KwaZulu-Natal Umbrella FPA. Both serve on the Working on Fire (WoF) Oversight Committee. Secretary of the forum is Maritza Swanepoel of Letaba FPA. ▲



Some members of the recently formed NVFFPAF in Stellenbosch in 2020