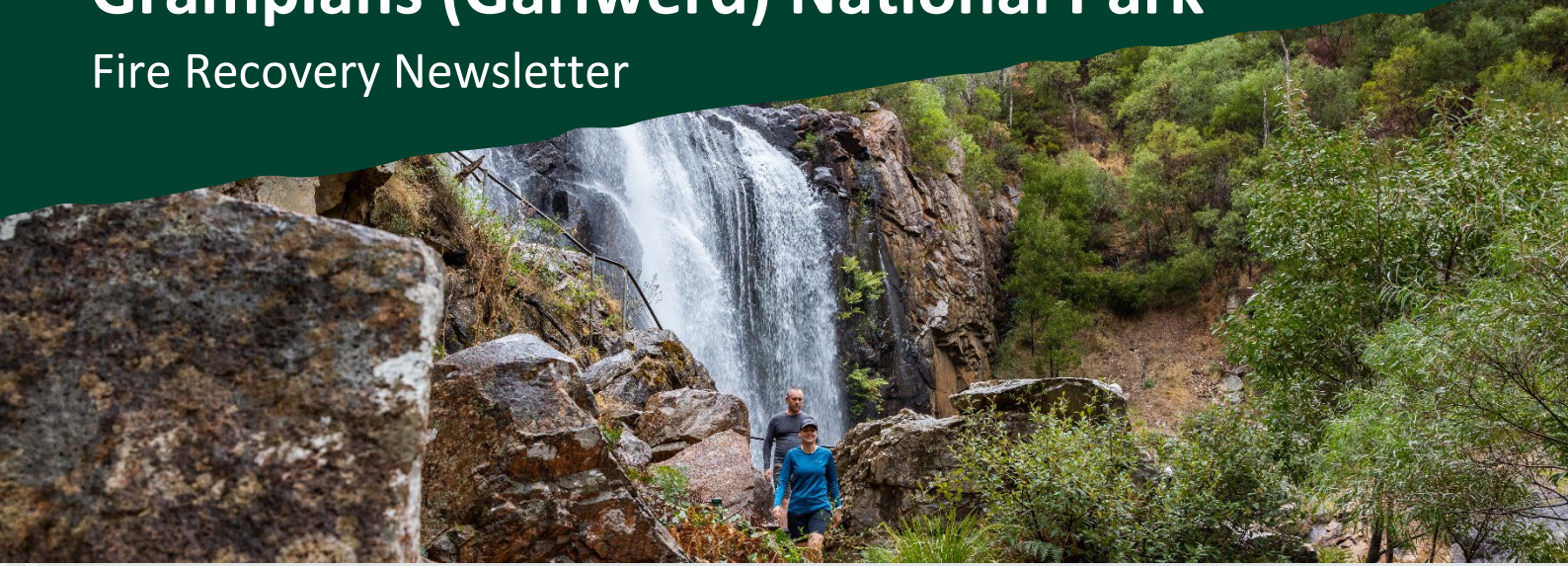


Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park

Fire Recovery Newsletter



April 2025

Background

The Grampians-Yarram Gap bushfire ignited in the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park on 17 December 2024, due to a large band of dry lightning in the south. Extreme weather and dry vegetation caused the fire to spread quickly, affecting both the park and adjacent private land. In late January, additional fires ignited from another lightning band on the western side of the park, burning across a large area, including Victoria Range, Victoria Point and the Victoria Valley.

In total, the fires burned 135,000 hectares—nearly 80% of the park. Biodiversity, cultural sites and park assets were severely impacted, and the fires also caused significant revenue loss for tourism businesses and impacts to agriculture and private land.

Initial works

Once the fire area was safe, Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) and Parks Victoria worked on impact assessments and stabilisation works, collaborating with Emergency Recovery Victoria, local government, and other agencies. Environmental recovery efforts also began early, including emergency feed drops, predator control, habitat monitoring (Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby), and Blackfish relocation.

During the fire, Traditional Owners implemented strategic fire management to protect key cultural sites which also assisted with initial assessment works at key sites.

The Recovery Project

Parks Victoria is leading a fire recovery project, working with, Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation and other government agencies as part of the whole of government recovery response.

Activities and timelines

The recovery project includes impact assessments, hazard removal, clearing debris from visitor areas, roads and tracks, and planning, scoping and rebuilding of park infrastructure. Local staff have completed initial risk and damage assessments for most of the impacted areas. Cultural heritage sites will continue to be assessed, and a cultural heritage recovery program will be developed.

Over the next three months Parks Victoria is delivering \$1.9 million of initial recovery works, focusing on critical biodiversity and urgent visitor site recovery in the Yarram Gap fire area. Fire recovery projects are complex and can take time in a large complex landscape. A staged re-opening will commence during 2025, subject to the completion of critical works, assessments of the landscape, on-ground conditions and weather events.



Image: Epicormic Growth

Environmental Programs

Biodiversity recovery programs commenced during the fire and will continue, to ensure the long-term recovery process for the landscape, wildlife and water.

An aerial shooting program was undertaken in January, February and March, targeting deer and other invasive species including goats and foxes.

This program is part of an ongoing joint effort by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), and Parks Victoria to help protect the impacts of invasive animals within the natural environment after fire.

During the fires, strategies were put in place by Parks Victoria, DECCA and the Horsham Incident Control Centre to help protect the critically endangered southern brush-tailed rock wallabies in a remote area of the Serra Range. Remote cameras were used to monitor the animals and an emergency feeding operation was put in place to support their survival, including food drops from helicopters and drones. This work will continue until habitats have re-established.

Local Grampians rangers, DEECA and Deakin University have established a trial testing small cardboard habitat pods as a method of a temporary cover for small mammals to protect them from risk of predation from foxes and feral cats. These pods will gradually compost as native vegetation recovers. The pods were placed in high conservation areas and Southern Brown Bandicoots have recently been captured by remote cameras showing activity and survival.



Image: Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby

What is open in the park?

There are many areas open for visitors to enjoy. This includes Mt Sturgeon, Mt Abrupt and Baingug (Piccaninny) near Dunkeld, favourite walking tracks surrounding Halls Gap, including the Pinnacle, Grand Canyon, Venus Baths and Chataqua Peak, also MacKenzie Falls, Boroka and Reed lookouts, Mt Stapylton, Hollow Mountain, Beehive Falls and Mt Difficult in the north. For further information on openings visit parks.vic.gov.au.

Stay Safe and Help Recovery

To help this special place to recover and for visitor safety, please do not enter closed fire affected areas of the park:

- Fire impacted areas are fragile and unsafe, with unstable rocks, soils and trees. Trees will continue to move and impact roads and walking tracks, especially after rain
- Roads and tracks are unsafe, due to unstable ground, missing bridges, debris and hidden holes from burnt underground roots.

Life After Fire

Bushfires have occurred in this landscape for thousands of years. Throughout time, these diverse cycles of fire have slowly influenced the lifecycles and adaptations of many plants and animals. In the months and years following a bushfire there are many fascinating displays of recovery. Look out for epicormic shoots on eucalyptus trees. These temporary shoots line the tree until a new canopy of leaves can be restored in the near future. The effects of this fire has created a fragile, regenerating landscape.

Many plants and animals are recovering. Minimising visitor impacts now means a healthier future for them all.



Image: Grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea*) are pyrophytic plants – they are adapted to survive in fire-prone habitats.

Animals and Fire

Like plants, animals have varying ways to survive the impact of fire and recover afterwards. After fire, as plants begin to regenerate, food sources for animals also improve and re-colonisation begins. There may be mass breeding that occurs due to new vegetation growth. Post fire, higher populations of animals may share patches of unburnt vegetation for food, shelter and re-colonisation. Over time these populations will plateau.

Further Information

Come and support local communities like Halls Gap, Pomonal, Dunkeld and Wartook who are welcoming visitors back. Your visit will contribute to a stronger recovery for the area. Visit a local Visitor Information Centre or visitgrampians.com.au for ideas on where to stay, what to see and do in the Region.

To keep up to date with the Grampians National Park Recovery Project or more information on 'what to see and do' in the park, visit parks.vic.gov.au or Brambuk the National Park and Cultural Centre in Halls Gap.