

AFRIFIRENET CIRCULAR

22 May 2003

Dear Colleagues,

General

This time of the year the fire seasons change in many African regions south of the Sahara desert. Another dry summer season ended in the Western Cape province of South Africa, with its fair share of wildfires. One burned for ten days on both sides of the Langeberg Mountain range, near Riversdale. Another few swept through a holiday resort, and through some vineyard farms, causing lots of damage.

In the summer rainfall area of Southern Africa, some welcome rains have delayed the grassland curing in some areas, making it difficult for the prescribed-burners to get their fire lines going. In other areas, unfortunately, the scars of drought resulted in immediate curing of all the grassland biomass, and the fire season has started in earnest. Fire fighters are getting their equipment ready for another fire season, and firebreaks are being prepared everywhere in an attempt to reduce fire damage in the dry season to come.

Internationally there was also no reduction in wildfire occurrence, and particularly Australia was badly hit, as well as countries such as Guatemala. Please keep a "global eye" on new wildfires through our GFMC web.

GFMC and AFRIFIRENET

Welcome to all the newcomers to AFRIFIRENET! I hope that you may find our network stimulating and worth your while! To all firenetters: Any suggestions, sharing of your fire experience, comments or articles, will be more than welcome. Send all information through to me please, so that I can channel it though to our website.

AFRIFIRENET is still growing exponentially, and our regional Network now has a membership of 80. Good progress was also made with the other regional Networks under the GFMC umbrella. For the latest developments within our Global Fire Monitoring Center's family, please visit:

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Africa/Afrifirenet.html>

A special word of thanks to Mike Jurvelius, FAO, Rome, for his continued assistance to explore further African country representation on our network, sometimes where there is little or no communication at all. Let all of us remember that one of our objectives of AFRIFIRENET is to get links to all of Africa south of the Sahara. Your continued support in reaching this goal will be highly appreciated.

Meetings and Conferences

As a result of work commitments I was unable to attend the March 2003 ILC meeting in preparation of the 3rd IWFC, which is to be held in Sydney, Australia, 3-6 October 2003. However, the GFMC Director, Johann Goldammer, and Brian van Wilgen, from South Africa, did attend this meeting. It was announced that an International Wildland Fire Summit is also to be held in Sydney, on the 8th of October 2003. The latter will be attended by invited representatives of countries and other international agencies most able to assist (or having an interest) in the global status of wildland fire problems. During this summit a strategy will be developed to improve wildland fire management, and to seek agreement for the implementation of a five-year wildland fire strategy.

The 3rd IWFC website www.wildlandfire03.com should be visited for more information about the Sydney conference, and the registration documents and preliminary program, can be found there. This is indeed going to be the biggest wildland fire conference, the third in a series of conferences (the First and the Second International Wildland Fire Conferences were held in Boston 1989 and in Vancouver 1997). Participation is strongly recommended. Several invited conference contributors from Africa will be funded through international programmes. The central funding sources have been depleted. Thus, those who wish to attend the conference should explore sources of support individually.

Then there is also an expert meeting on “Low to Medium Resolution Satellite Sensors and Disaster Monitoring” to be held at the CSI, Pretoria, in South Africa, 5-6 June 2003. I will be attending this meeting to represent AFRIFIRENET, and I will report back to you about these activities.

Another important meeting to take note of, will be the SAFNet Meeting, which is to be held in the Kruger National Park of South Africa 17-23 August 2003. This meeting will be sponsored by the USAID Africa Bureau and START-NASA, in affiliation with GOFM/GOLD and AFRIFIRENET. The main theme of this meeting will be the use of remote sensing to support fire management in Southern Africa. Unfortunately funds to sponsor participation at this SAFNet workshop have not yet been secured. However, I will attend this venue to represent AFRIFIRENET, and will report back in time to AFRIFIRENET members.

Please see the workshop announcement at:

<http://safnet.umd.edu/>

and go to “Announcement: SAFNet Workshop 2003 - Fourth Annual Meeting”.

Fire Management Training

I want to draw your attention again to all the fire management courses that will be presented in South Africa, by the Wildland Fire Management Training Center Africa. Please see the AFRIFIRENET website at:

http://www.fire.freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Africa/Afrifirenet_1.html

Look under the “Wildland Fire Capacity Building” section for all information about training matters. Quite a few new courses are now being offered.

During 7-9 May 2003 the first wildfire investigation course of the year was held, which will be followed by similar courses later during 2003. The first conservation fire management course was also held in the Kruger National Park, South Africa.

We have NOT given up on seeking sponsorship for our intended African Fire Management Course, but it now appears that funding for this venue will not be available before 2004. Be ensured that we continue to fight for money for this intended 2-3 week course, which is so important for many of our members.

Job opportunities

Please visit:

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/course/jobs/jobs.htm>

for an exciting opportunity.

General

I realise that one of the biggest problems confronting Africa, with regard to wildland fire management, is funding for African delegates to attend suitable training and to attend conferences and other fire-related meetings, which can lay a sound platform for improved fire management in many African countries. There are people (such as Johann Goldammer and his GFMC organization) that are fighting for this cause on a continuous basis, and I am positive that these efforts will be rewarded in the not too distant future. AFRIFIRENET will support these supportive ideas wholeheartedly.

For those now attending to their prescribed burning programs: Enjoy dragging your drip torches around!

Best regards,

Neels