

WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR THE FREE STATE PROVINCE

Background

The National Veld and Forest Fire Act, Act 101 of 1998 (NVFFA) makes landowners responsible to prevent and extinguish veld, forest and mountain fires (veldfires/wildfires) on their own properties while recognizing that the effective management of veldfires remains a common concern needing an integrated and co-operative approach to ensure sustainability of effort. The NVFFA provides for the collective management of veldfire risks on a local level by providing for the formation of FPA's with the intent to predict, prevent, manage, and extinguish wildfires using local knowledge within the framework provided by the Act.

Veldfires often become emergencies that threaten life and assets of the community at large and requires collective co-operation to prevent and control under the various conditions that they occur in. Effective management of wildfires requires organisational structure, strategy, plans, information, networks, skills, and equipment that cannot adequately be provided by any one organisation alone and requires an integrated approach. Integrated Wildfire Management (IFM) by nature requires close collaboration and coordination between various role players and stakeholders. Within the Free State province an operational structure has been created to facilitate the effective implementation of IFM in a sustainable, transparent and accountable manner on a local, regional and provincial level.

The FS Provincial Veldfire Management Structure with the accompanying SOP's and BOP's was developed by the Provincial Wildfire Advisory Forum between 18 March 2019 and 22 September 2021 and endorsed by the Provincial Fire Services Advisory Committee (ProFSAC) between 22 May 2019 and 29 September 2021.

National Disaster Management Framework Level 2: Provincial Structures

The Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC)

- Ensure implementation of a national strategic agenda for fire services
- Establishment of provincial oversight mechanisms;
- Ensure provincial coordination of fire services activities in the province;
- Establishment of institutional arrangements to support cooperation between fire services in the province
- Establishment of a Fire Services Coordination Directorate to oversee the administration and implementation of the fire services legislation and the performance of duties alluded to above.

The Provincial Fire Services Advisory Committee (ProFSAC)

- Provincial Forum established to discharge the directive to, and duties of the PDMC in terms of the coordination, standardisation, capacitation, monitoring and evaluation and oversight of fire services in the province.
- Category of Authorised Persons (CAPS) Section 13, of the Fire Brigade Services Act, 1987 (Act No. 99 of 1987)

The Provincial Wildfire Advisory Forum (FSPWAF)

The FSPWAF was established in conjunction with the PDMC to facilitate the development of unified Integrated Veldfire Management (IFM) operational standards, structures, and practices in the province. Common standards will enable Municipal Fire Services, Fire Protection Associations, Working on Fire and other provincial and regional role-players to effectively cooperate on all IFM operations in the province. The forum is chaired by The Free State Umbrella Fire Protection Association (FSUFPA) under oversight of the Free State PDMC through ProFSAC.

The Free State Umbrella Fire Protection Association (FSUFPA)

FSUFPA is representative of various fire protection associations, the provincial disaster management centre and regionally represented landowner organisations who wish to organise for the purpose of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act. FSUFPA is the primary operational structure that provides support to its members and the provincial disaster management structures relating to IFM in the Province. FSUFPA is recognised as a Provincial Umbrella FPA by Department Forestry Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and mandated by the PDMC to fulfil certain functions and provide certain services to the PDMC that includes:

- Provision of relevant training
- Development of Operational Standards and best practice guidelines
- Investigate and advise on new equipment and techniques that can assist with wildfire management
- Resource coordination
- Provide operational information to relevant stakeholders during fire season
- Liaise and engage with all relevant stakeholders pertaining to integrated wildfire management
- Provide the PDMC advisory forum with information regarding wildfire incidents and developments in the province.
- Advise Disaster Management structures on a local district and provincial level on matters pertaining IFM.

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National Disaster Management Framework Level 3: District and Regional Fire Protection Associations

The National Veld and Forest Fire Act makes provision for Fire Protection Associations (FPA's), who are community-based natural resource management organisations established for the collective management of veldfires, using local knowledge within the framework provided by the Act. Once a FPA has been registered as is prescribed in the Regulations in Terms of Chapter 2 of the NVFFA the State in effect delegates limited statutory responsibilities to an independent juristic person, placing a statutory obligation on the FPA to provide certain minimum services to the local community.

The statutory mandate given to an FPA in terms of the NVFFA places a social and legal responsibility on FPA's to function as an inclusive community-based organisation enabling various categories of land users, including municipalities and state land users, to implement integrated veldfire management practices on a local, district and provincial level. The degree of FPA functionality determines the extent of local community resilience to wildfire risks. Section 5(1) of the NFFA sets out the statutory obligations and duties of fire protection associations and reads as follows:

“A fire protection association must at least—

- a) develop and apply a veldfire management strategy for its area;*
- b) provide in the strategy for agreed mechanisms for the coordination of actions with adjoining fire protection associations in the event of a fire crossing boundaries;*
- c) make rules which bind its members;*
- d) identify the ecological conditions that affect the fire danger;*
- b) regularly communicate the fire danger rating referred to in sections 9 and 10 to its members;*
- c) organise and train its members in firefighting, management, and prevention;*
- d) inform its members of equipment and technology available for preventing and fighting veldfires;*
- e) provide management services, training, and support for communities in their efforts to manage and control veldfires;*
- f) supply the Minister at least once every 12 months with statistics about veldfires in its area;*
- g) furnish any information requested by the Minister in order to prepare or maintain the fire danger rating system;*
- h) exercise the powers and perform the duties delegated to it by the Minister; and*
- i) appoint a fire protection officer, unless a municipality is a member.”*

This delegation places a statutory obligation on the FPA to provide certain services, discharge certain duties and perform certain functions in its area of operations. Five of these are a direct responsibility to the community at large, three are obligations to the Minister, while only four is for the exclusive benefit of FPA members.

A key component of the success regarding the integrated management of uncontrolled wildland fires (veldfires) is the realignment of FPA's to correspond with district municipality borders thus establishing 4 District and 3 regional FPA's. The amalgamation and transformation of FPA structures enables various categories of land users including municipalities and state land users to participate in and contribute to FPA's in a meaningful and sustainable manner. This strategy has been officially supported by Working on Fire since March 2018, accepted as the official ProFSAC strategy and endorsed by the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) Directorate Fire Services on 10 July 2018, and officially accepted by the Free State PDMC Advisory Forum (FSPDMCAF) on 20 February 2019.

District or Regional Fire Protection Association

An FPA that is officially recognized as one of the 7 planned regional/district FPA's and has both the organizational and functional capacity to effectively maintain and improve compliance and functionality while providing an integrated fire management service on a district or regional level.

Northeastern Free State FPA (NEFSFPA)

Area of Operations

Phumelela and Maluti-A-Phufong Local Municipalities

Mangaung Fire Protection Association (MAFPA)

Area of Operations

Mangaung Metro Municipality

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Regional FPA Development Centre

A local FPA that is identified as compliant and functional to such a degree that the FPA will be able to successfully expand its borders by integration of local FPA's with the intent to establish a DAFF sanctioned regional or district FPA. The status of Regional FPA Development Centre can only be obtained when the management structure of said FPA is fully committed to participate in the FPA amalgamation process.

Imperani FPA (IFPA)

Area of Operations

Setsotho Masilonyana and mantsopa Local Municipalities

Bethlehem FPA

Area of Operations

Nketoana and Dihlabeng Local Municipalities

Vaal Eden FPA

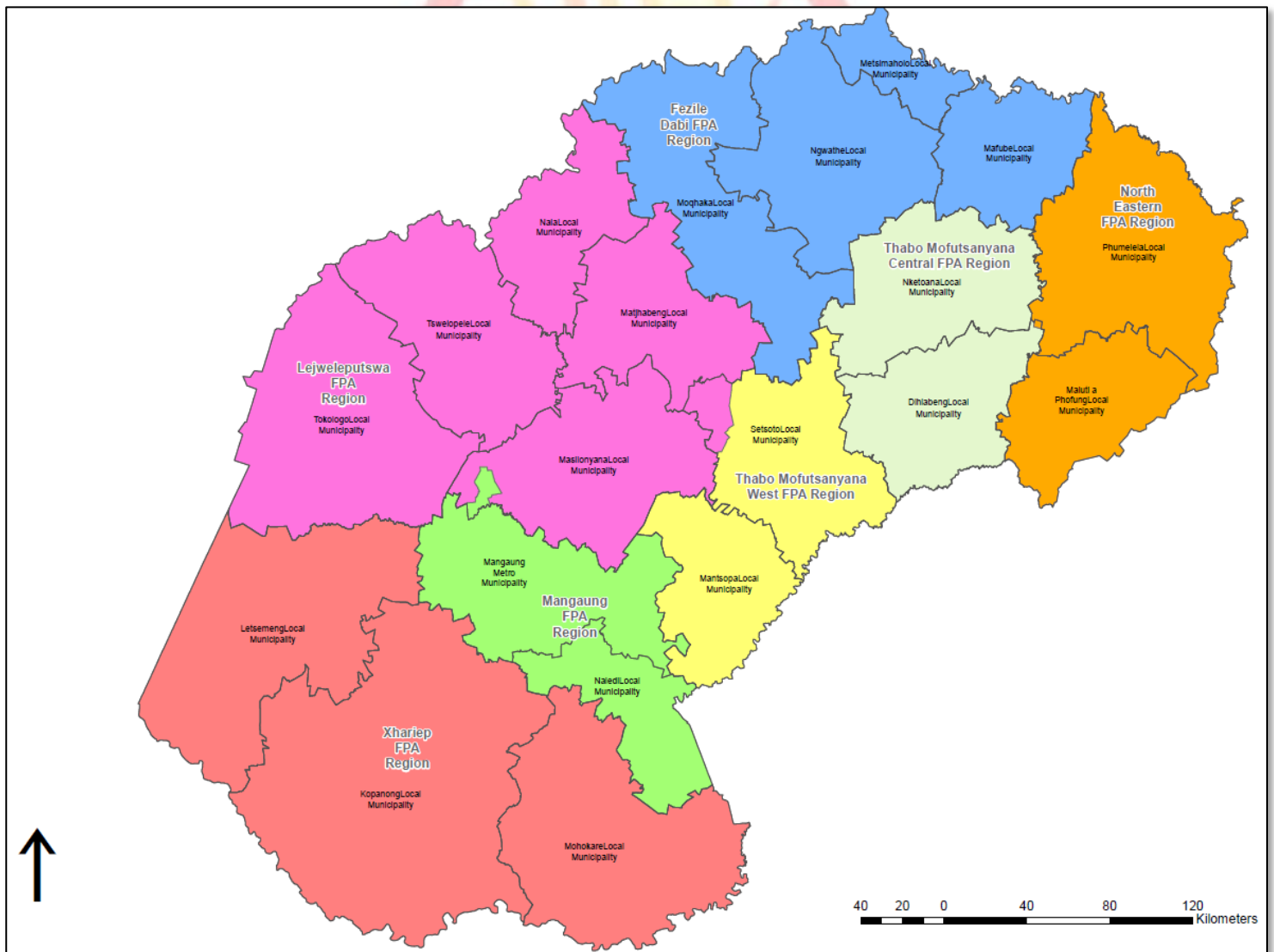
Area of Operations

Fezile Dabi District Municipality

Interim FPA Management Structures

Due to a lack of available local FPA capability and capacity interim management structures is established in Lejweleputswa and Xhariep Districts to assist with the establishment of District FPA's.

Map: District and Regional FPA Areas of Operation.



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National Disaster Management Framework Level 3.1: Fire Management Area (FMA)

A Fire Management Area is a localised area that may correspond with local Municipal or other jurisdictional borders and consists of multiple sectors. FMA's are managed by an FMA Coordinator.

FMA Coordinator Official Delegation of Powers

The FMA Coordinator must be officially mandated by the Fire Protection Officer to perform his or her tasks and duties and where possible, also be a member of the Fire Services Reserve Force as per Section 6A of the Fire Brigade Services Act. Such appointment will provide the FMA Coordinator with the legal powers as per Section 8 of the Fire Brigade Services Act enabling the FMA Coordinator to better perform his or her tasks or duties.

The following actions must take place on FMA level:

Scope of Actions: Fire Management Area (FMA)	Scope of Responsibilities: FMA Coordinator
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submission of Annual Sector Risk and Resource Maps 2. Planning of Controlled burning projects like Fire Belt Production and Fuel Load Management Projects 3. Implementation of Fire Incident Action Plans 4. Local Resource Management and Dispatching 5. Reporting of Fire Incidents to CFO/FPO and or FPA Manager 6. Initiating Escalation Protocols and External Resource Requesting 7. Managing Expanding Incidents 8. Official Fire Incident Reporting 9. FDI Notifications 10. Burn Permit Recommendations 11. Sector Leader Liaising 12. NVFFA compliance monitoring 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervise Submission of Sector Risk Maps 2. Coordination of Controlled Burn Projects 3. Initiate Extended Attack Protocols 4. Requisition of External Resources 5. Expanding Incident IC 6. Dispatching of Local Area Resources 7. Submission of Fire Incident Reports 8. Fire Incident Notification to CFO/FPO or FPA Manager 9. Distribution of FDI Notifications and Prohibitions 10. Burn Permit Recommendation 11. Issuance of Compliance Notices

National Disaster Management Framework Level 3.2: Sector

A Sector is the smallest geographical area where Community Based Wildfire Management can take place and is managed by a Sector Leader.

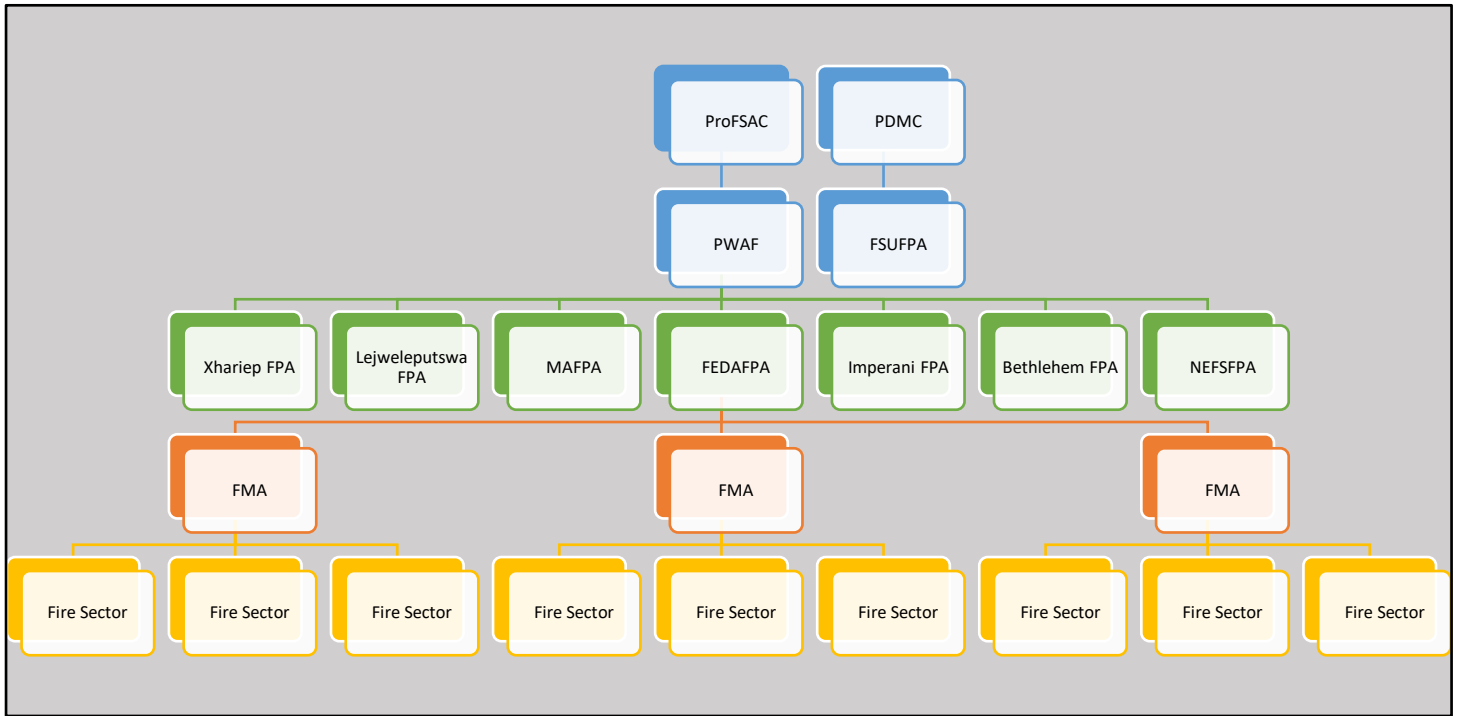
Sector Leader Official Delegation of Powers

The Sector leader must be officially mandated by the Fire Protection Officer to perform his or her tasks and duties and where possible, also be a member of the Fire Services Reserve Force as per Section 6A of the Fire Brigade Services Act. Such appointment will provide the Sector Leader with the legal powers as per Section 8 of the Fire Brigade Services Act enabling the FMA Coordinator to better perform his or her tasks or duties.

Scope of Actions: Fire Sector	Scope of Responsibilities: Sector Leader
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual Sector Risk and Resource Mapping 2. Making of Communal Fire Belts 3. Coordination of Prescribed Burns (Fuel Load Management) 4. Detection and Reporting of Fires 5. Initial Fire Suppression Actions 6. Incident Assessment and Reporting 7. FPA Liaison with Land Users 8. Non-Compliance Reporting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compiling annual sector risk and resource map 2. Coordinating the construction of communal Fire Belts 3. Initiation of Fire Response Plan 4. Reporting all fire incidents to the FMA Coordinator 5. Initial Attack IC 6. Assessment of incident severity and initiation of escalation protocols. 7. Fire Management Communications to/from Land Users 8. Compliance Evaluations

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Schematic: Provincial Integrated Veldfire Management Structure



Volunteer Wildland Firefighters

Section 17 (1) of the NVFFA makes landowners responsible to have available equipment and trained personnel to extinguish any veldfire that may start or spread from their land while Section 18(1)(b) also compels landowners to actively prevent the spread of fires from land under their control. Should the owner not be able to prevent the spreading of the fire additional resources must be dispatched to assist the landowner.

Establishment of a specialised Volunteer Wildland Firefighter Component as per Section 58(5)(b) of the National Disaster Management Act will accomplish the following:

- Improve Incident Safety Standards
- Increased Personal Safety
- Injury on Duty (IOD) and Equipment Insurance for Volunteers
- Enable Effective Resource Management
- Improve Quality of Response
- Capacitate ICS Implementation
- Improve Suppression Operation Effectiveness
- Decrease Operational Costs