



Media Release

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Right-way burns stem Kimberley wildfire, carbon impacts

Uunguu Rangers in the far north Kimberley have measured major reductions in wildfire impact since ramping up traditional burning methods four years ago, a Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation fire-planning meeting has heard.

By undertaking burning in the early dry season, Uunguu Rangers have been able to contain the large-scale hot-burn wildfires that have threatened visitors, cultural sites, plants and animals in the past. Single wildfire events once ravaged up to half the 800,000 ha project area and caused major carbon pollution. In the managed period, fires have been contained to within 10,000 ha in size.

Registered under the Federal Government's carbon farming initiative, the WGAC fire project has so far mitigated approximately 75,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases – the equivalent of running 17,442 mid-sized cars for a year. i

Wunambal Gaambera traditional owners recently met in Kalumburu to plan annual "right-way" burns on their country over the imminent early dry season. The Kimberley Land Council and WA Department of Parks and Wildlife also attended.

"Fire has a spiritual importance in our culture and traditional owners welcome the opportunity to be involved in managing fire on their country," Uunguu Head Ranger Neil Waina said.

From 2000 to 2009, Early Dry Season (EDS) burning covered an average of 5% of the project area, while Late Dry Season (LDS) wildfires affected an average of 22% of the area each year.

"Since the Wunambal Gaambera Uunguu Fire Project has been in operation, EDS burning has increased to around 16% of the project area and LDS wildfires are restricted to less than 10% of the area," Mr Waina said.



Wunambal Gaambera Country

KIMBERLEY COAST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



The remarkable transformation in fire regime is based on a return to traditional owners lighting fires while walking – as their ancestors have done for thousands of years - combined with helicopter burning in less accessible areas. Each family group makes decisions about how and when they will burn on their own country, or “graa”.

Five Uunguu Rangers recently qualified as “bombardiers”, after completing an aerial burning workshop in Kununurra. Mr Waina and rangers Desmond Williams, Maggie Captain, Leonie Cheinmora and Ernie Boona trained in operating incendiary burning equipment from helicopters and light aircraft. Incendiary machines drop capsules which ignite on the ground contact.

To ensure visitor safety during the burn period, remote bushwalking is not permitted on Wunambal Gaambera country until after June 30.

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ⁱ Medium sized cars, travelling average annual kms, emitting 4.3 tonnes ghg/car. (Australian Greenhouse Calculator, Victorian EP website).