



PRFO ANNUAL REPORT

1 JULY 2008 - 30 JUNE 2009

TO SOUTHERN RURAL FIRE COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 28 AUGUST 2009

Subject: PRFO ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SOUTHERN RURAL FIRE COMMITTEE

File No.: 160/15/3/1

Report by Mr M Grant dated 27 July 2009.

1. **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

This report summarises the main achievements recorded by the Southern Rural Fire Authority over the last year, being the sixth year of operation. Achievements are reported against Statement of Intent Key Performance Indicators (KPI). A table summary is provided in Appendix 1.

2. **REPORT**

2.1 **Readiness**

On 29 August 2008 the Board approved and adopted a reviewed Fire Response Plan. Forest and Rural Fire Regulation 40 states the Readiness and Response sections of Authorities Fire Plans adopted under Regulation 39 must be reviewed not more than two yearly. The Authority reviews the Response section annually and the Readiness Section two yearly.

Four formal agreements exist for the provision of fire and medical services. These are:

- a) Section 15 (Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977) Fire Protection Agreement between the NZ Fire Service Commission and the Authority - sets out obligations of both parties with respect to fire response, equipment use, limitations of expenditure and training.
- b) Memorandum of Understanding between NZ Fire Service Southern Region and the Authority - to facilitate enhanced cooperation for administrative and operational matters.
- c) Memorandum of Understanding between NZ Fire Service, St John and the Authority - details protocols for response to medical emergencies by VRFFs.

- d) Memorandum of Understanding between members of the Otago Southland Regional Rural Fire Committee - for mutual assistance.

Other agreements exist for the provision of administrative services with Southland District Council, training services with Telford Rural Polytechnic, building lease at Blackmount and financial loan with Community Trust of Southland.

Eight Volunteer Rural Fire Forces (VRFF) are registered to the Authority. The Milford Sound Emergency Response Team (ERT), being the newest, was registered with the NRFA as a VRFF on 3 March 2009. During the period six of these forces undertook initial medical response activities to time critical/life threatening medical incidents on behalf of St John.

Establishment of the Milford Sound ERT has filled a huge gap in being able to provide a timely, coordinated response to all emergency incidents in the Milford and Hollyford Road areas. This project would not have been completed without the assistance of all emergency services, support of local operators and organisations in Milford Sound and the 35 volunteers who make up the ERT.

Staff attended up to two training sessions with each of the VRFFs annually in addition to Annual General Meetings (AGM). Regular liaison and support was also ongoing in the areas of equipment maintenance, regional training opportunities and incidents.

In August members of the Blackmount VRFF celebrated the long service contributions of several team members who were awarded FRFANZ service medals and bars from DPRFO Elton Smith who is also a FRFANZ Committee member.

Various options were considered by the Board for the construction or renovation of a fire depot for the Blackmount VRFF. Preference and approval was given for the construction of a new fire station on a donated site provided that additional funding can be sought in the 2009-2010 year.

Southland District Council and the Authority signed an agreement for the transfer of the Waikawa VRFF land and buildings to the Authority. The Authority had spent \$45,000 renovating and re cladding the building prior to the transfer being completed in November 2008. A clause on the title gives Southland District Council first right to the property if the Authority intends selling in the future.

A register of Commercial and Industrial buildings in the District was produced at the request of the Fire Service CEO and the NRFO as part of a national project. While this created some complexities getting the information from all TLAs in a consistent format, a property approach was taken based on rate type and building WOF data. This project took longer than requested due to well over 2,000 properties included.

The PRFO has continued involvement on several committees including the Forest Owners Association Fire Committee, Telford Polytechnic Fire Rescue Advisory Committee (Chair), T-Card Review Working Group and 'Firefighter Evidence Log Book' working group. The DPRFO continued involvement on the FRFANZ Committee.

2.1.1 Finance

Draft financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2009 are provided as a separate report. These are in the process of being audited by Audit NZ as required of Council Controlled Organisations.

It is pleasing to report a net surplus for the year of \$377,524 against budget of \$17,531. Primarily this has been achieved through an increase of \$79,987 in grants received and \$204,440 in other income.

The Board approved an increase in levy contributions over the next few years to offset the capital replacement programme. The preferred option of financial forecasting produced for the next 10 years identified a levy increases of 9% for the 09-10, 10-11 and 11-12 financial years before reducing to approx. 3% per year.

Approximately \$128,000 was received by the Authority in grant assistance from the NRFA. This is a significant contribution which allowed the Authority to progress a number of initiatives, particularly the rollout of a third medium fire appliance.

2.1.2 Equipment

For the third year running the Authority was successful in obtaining national grant assistance of approximately \$80,000 from the NRFA for a new medium appliance. This vehicle replaced a much older appliance and was delivered to Athol VRRF on 20 April 2009.

Two water tankers based on the South Canterbury 6,600 litre design were rolled out as part of the fleet replacement programme. Following on from last year the HW Richardson Group allowed us to take advantage of their fleet disposal with the ability to obtain a second hand truck cab and chassis for the tanker. JK Stevenson Engineers in Invercargill produced an excellent result for the tank and locker build. As the first tanker took longer than anticipated to complete, both tankers were commissioned this year, the first going to the Invercargill Fire Station and the second to Otautau Fire Station.



New Water Tanker for Otautau

2.1.3 Training

Fifty five (55) people attended a two day training exercise at Borland Lodge in November. Thirty people attended the first day which targeted various incident management areas followed by a simulated table-top exercise.

Twenty five (25) Crew Leaders attended the second day's activities which targeted to complete 'Health and safety' and 'radio communication' unit standards, SRFA administration requirements, fire behaviour exercises and sand table scenario assessments.

All activities undertaken at Borland were designed to complement the Authority training programme for individuals target positions. An additional bonus was the interaction of people from agencies during all activities resulting in an increased level of understanding about the structure and operations of the Authority.

The PRFO was active in promoting an increased level of training for helicopter and fixed wing pilots involved in fire suppression operations. The Otago Southland Regional Rural Fire Committee is also developing a preferred aerial operator register, intending to only utilise those aircraft and operators that are rated and trained.

Hedgehope and Blackmount VRFFs entered teams in the Otago Southland Wajax firefighting competitions held in March in Berwick. Competitions provide excellent training by placing fire fighters under pressure to perform safely and consistently. Both teams performed very well with Blackmount coming fourth and Hedgehope sixth overall.

Over the year the Authority prepared for the introduction of a Firefighter Health and Fitness programme. This programme has four parts including consent to participate, self health check, doctor health check and a physical test. It was anticipated that there could be problems getting people to consent to the programme, particularly among volunteers, but this has not occurred with the majority of VRFF's first to undergo the health checks. An occupational Health Nurse is contracted to undertake the health checks with confidential records kept by the Nurse. The physical test will be carried out during normal agency training.

Over 300 people are recorded on the District training database. A comprehensive training programme was developed which identified specific training requirements necessary for each agency and individual to meet target positions. Significant progress was made in this area over the year. Telford Rural Polytechnic set a comprehensive training programme for the year. The Authority took advantage of opportunities for personnel to attend these courses and also to run in-house courses through Telford.

The following table shows the numbers of personnel holding a selection of unit standards. There was a significant increase in Firefighters receiving unit standards during the period (although these were not reported in the past), following several years training to meet the requirements. An effort was made to increase the number of personnel trained to level 4 CIMS as there has been concern for some time at the attrition from more senior and incident management positions. This training needs to continue to bring people through the system, but also requires backup with an increase in operational exposure.

	Unit Standard	No 2004	No 2005	No 2006	No 2007	No 2008	No 2009
Firefighter	3285	207	243	184	205	203	198
	3286						125
	3287						92
	3288						41
	3268 or 21417	136	146	108	99	99	114
	20386						3
	3270						100
	497	0	19	19	24	23	49
	14555	0	7	27	27	25	25
Response Driver						25	
Crew Leader	3291	43	44	43	46	51	54
	14564	23	26	44	45	41	53
	3290					7	14
	17593						29
Management	CIMS Level 4	18	21	19	19	17	21
	RFO 3302 or 20399				48	44	49
	3298 or 20396					4	4

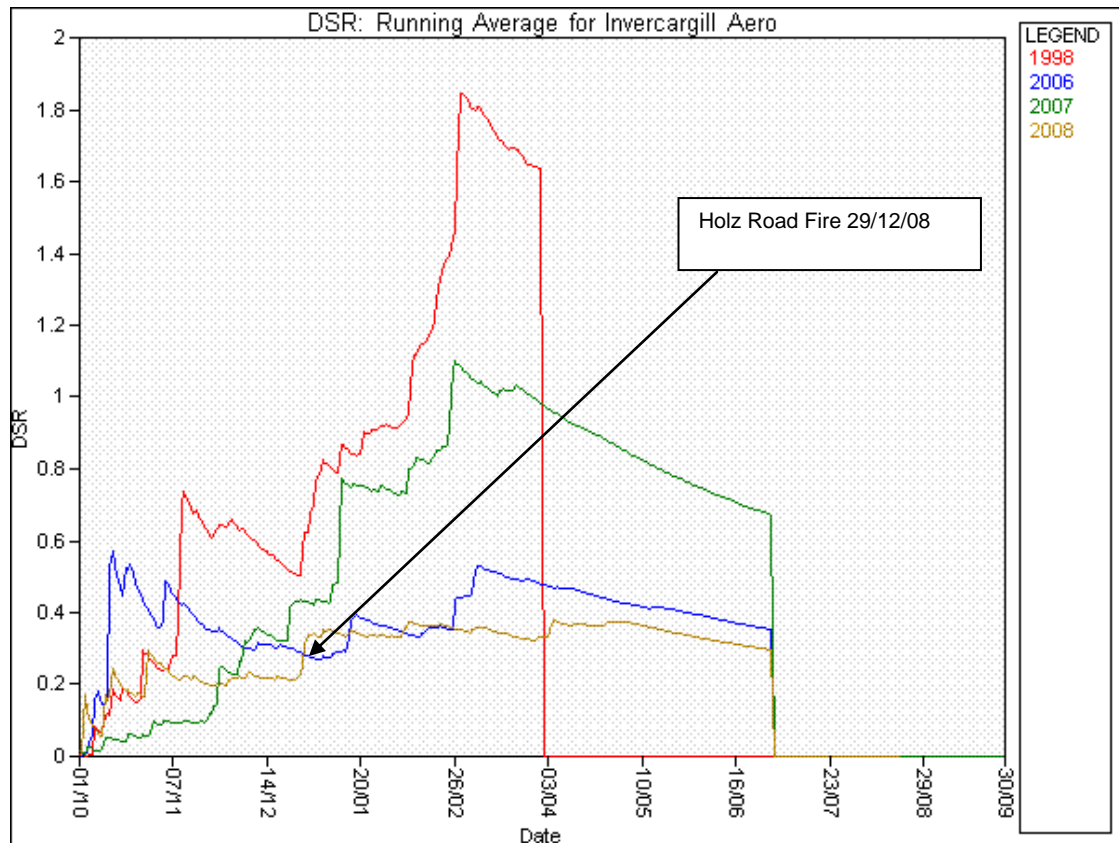
2.2 Reduction

Generally weather and fire danger conditions fluctuated consistently throughout the fire season conditions elevating up to three times prior to conditions easing. The Authority put a 'Restricted Fire Season' in place for the entire District commencing on 6 December 2008 and ending on 16 May 2009. This was the first year for some time that a Prohibited Fire Season was not imposed. A Prohibited Fire Season was imposed in conjunction with Central Otago DC and DOC Otago in the Naseby zone from January-March.

The table below illustrates the difference in the number of days in High, Very High and Extreme fire danger in grassland fuel type around Garston for the past two years with the 70 days in 2007 and 29 days last year. While all RAWS did not vary as greatly, the overall trend was similar.

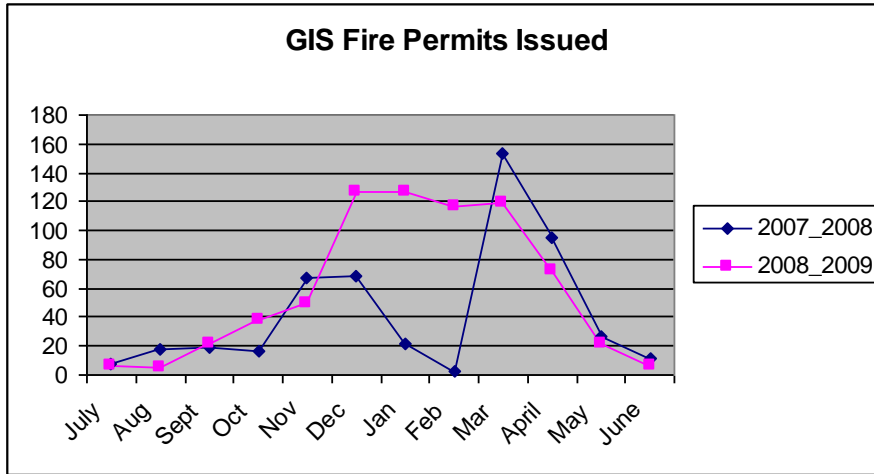
Fiscal Year	Danger Class	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total days
Garston														
Average	Extreme	0.00	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
Average	Very High	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.00	1.00	1.50	2.50	1.50	0.00	0.00	8.00
Average	High	0.00	3.00	7.00	2.50	5.00	4.00	7.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	0.00	1.00	39.50
2007	Extreme		1	1				1		1				4
	Very High				2	1		2	3	3				11
	High		6	11	2	9	6	9	5	4	2		1	55
2008	Extreme													0
	Very High									2	3			5
	High			3	3	1	2	5	3	2	4		1	24

The following table gives a very good comparison of Daily Severity Rates (DSR) for Invercargill MET weather station for the last four years. DSR is used to compare different fire seasons. The graph shows a fairly benign DSR, the lowest for the four year period. The period of the Holz Road fire on 29 December can be identified by the slight increase in DSR.



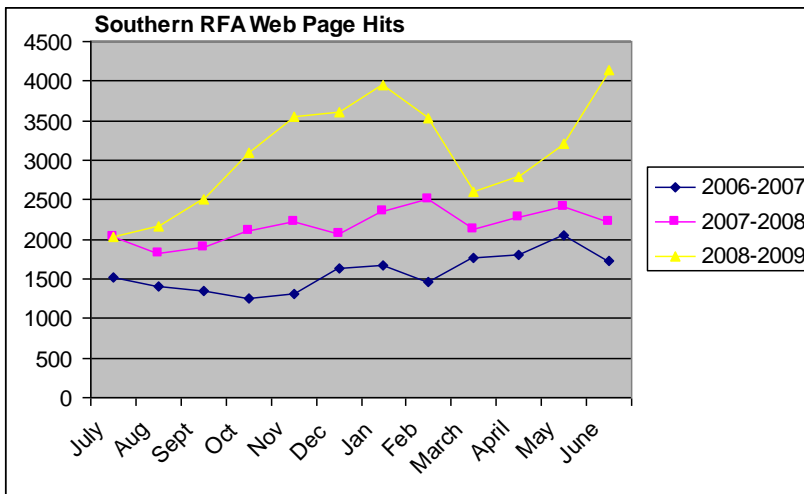
Three Fire Prevention (Vegetation) Bylaws exist for Southland DC, Gore DC and Invercargill CC respectively. These bylaws, made under the Local Government Act 2002, are for the purposes of preventing the spread of fires involving vegetation in urban areas. When Restricted and Prohibited Fire Seasons are put in place in the rural areas, the Authority manages the use of fire in all urban areas under the same rules as rural areas. Overall compliance was very good with smoke nuisance being the major complaint. Environment Southland took a firm line where smoke nuisance was reported.

There were 708 fire permits issued through the GIS permit system compared to 508 the previous year when a Prohibited Fire Season was in force for the January-February months. All remote Rural Fire Officers at Stewart Island, Te Anau, Tapanui, Naseby and Winton were brought online with the GIS system and hand written permits are now a thing of the past, resulting in better consistency across the District. Permits were issued within five (5) working days 99% of the time.

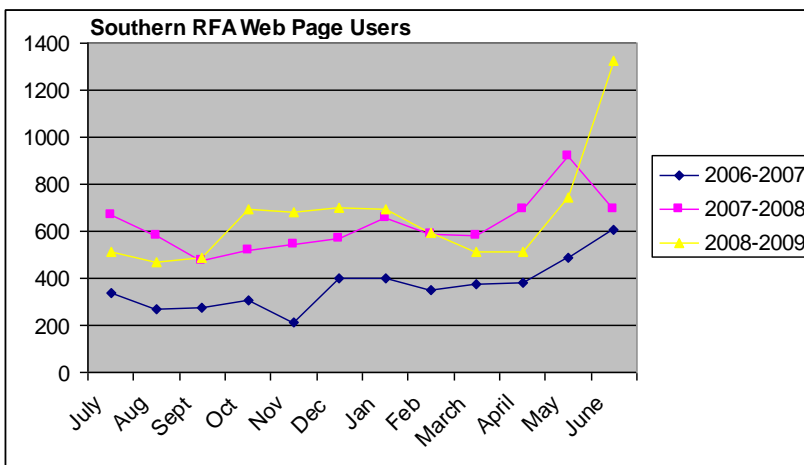


Graph: Number of fire permits issued on GIS system

The last year has seen the continuation of an upward trend in web site hits with a fluctuation in the number of users. Plans to upgrade the web site during the period did not eventuate and this is now planned for the 2009-2010 year.



Graph: SRFA web page hits



Graph: SRFA web page users

To try and reduce the number of hedge fires a brochure was produced and sent to all hedge cutting contractors requesting them to deliver a copy to their customers. In addition a significant number of radio advertising slots targeted this type of fire activity.

A project to look at the possibility of managing areas with exclusion of permitted fires was commenced. While the pilot is focusing on the greater Awarua wetland complex, further areas could be included. The project is continuing.

2.3 Response

There were (330) incidents recorded in the District or where Authority resources attended incidents within neighbouring authority's areas, down (115) from the previous year and down (52) from the 2006/07 year.

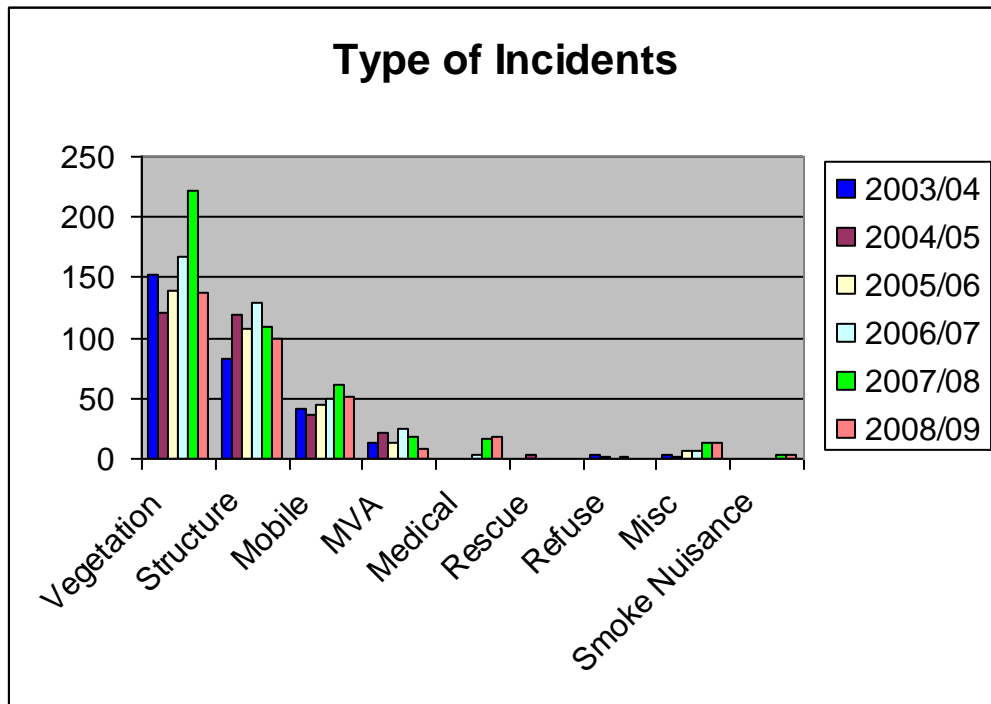
Of the 330 incidents 45% (150 incidents) were property (structure or vehicle) fires (up 12% of total incidents from last year) and 137 incidents (41.5%) were vegetation fires (down 8% of total incidents from last year). Of the vegetation fire incidents 31 (or 22%) required no suppression action as they were under control. Eight incidents or 2.4% involved our Volunteer Rural Fire Forces or resources attending MVAs (down 11 incidents from last year and 15 from the 06/07 year). Six of our VRFFs attended 18 medical incidents (5.5% of total incidents) on behalf of St John.

Two significant fires occurred in the District at Mid Dome in October and Gorge Road in December. While the Mid Dome fire which was caused by an underground power cable fault was only four hectares, there was potential for a significant incident, especially with water having to be lifted from the Mataura River to the top of the Dome. Suppression costs were \$50,450 plus GST.

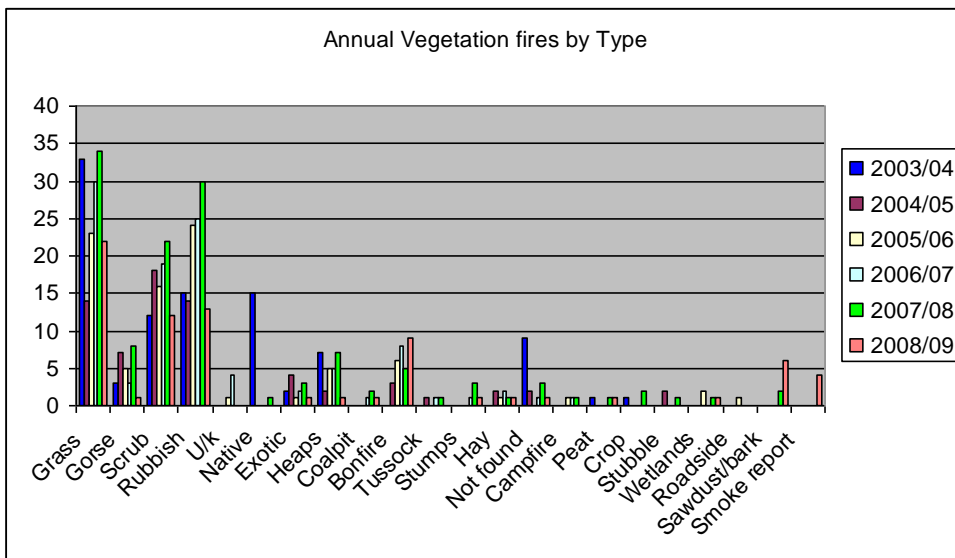
A fire at Holz Road which started on 29 December provided some suppression challenges for the IMT, burning 580 hectares before being controlled around the 10 January 2009. The fire started from an unpermitted fire escape and burnt approximately 280 hectares of the RAMSAR Awarua Wetlands complex as well as 40 hectares of plantation forest and private land. Suppression costs were \$469,326 plus GST.

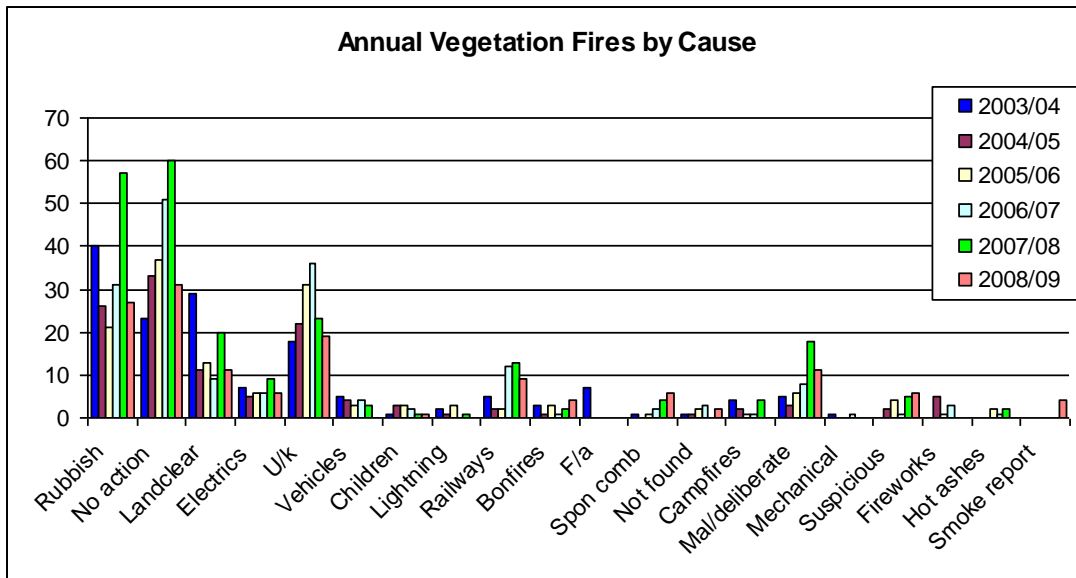
Total fire suppression costs for the year were \$489,497 and fire cost recoveries \$536,947.

The following graph shows the incident types reported for the last six years.



The following two graphs show the vegetation fires by type and cause for the last six years.

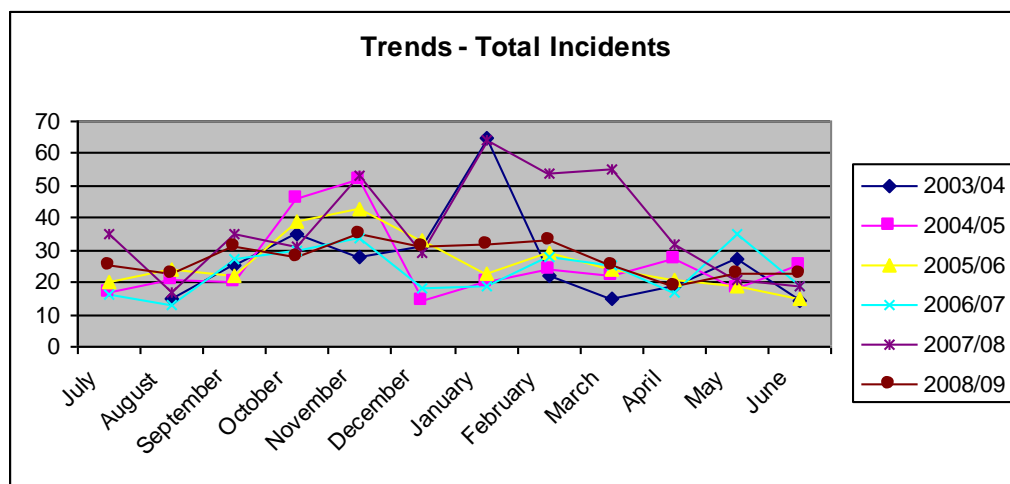




While the trend for a number of years has been an increase in the number of vegetation incidents, the last year has seen a marked reduction in the number of incidents across most causes.

The Authority initiated a process with the NZ Fire Service and NRFA to Quality Assure and close vegetation incident reports for the District. This process has provided a step whereby incident details and more particularly incident cause are moderated by Authority staff thereby ensuring more accurate data.

The following graph shows the trend lines for vegetation fires over the last six years and shows the 2008-09 year running what could be described as an average year.



Two separate requests were received by the NRFA for firefighting assistance with overseas deployments to California, USA on 11 July and Victoria, Australia after the Black Saturday fires in February. The Authority was able to get one person to California for a six week deployment and 12 people to Victoria for a four week deployment. These deployments provide firefighters with the opportunity to experience campaign fire environments not normally found in NZ

2.4 Recovery

The Authority takes health and safety issues very seriously. No significant injuries occurred to firefighters under our control. This is partly due to the robust systems in place and an improvement in training levels of personnel.

No incidents triggered the requirement to undertake an operational review while the Mid Dome and Holz Road fires were formally debriefed.

Cost recovery action was instigated for all fires where fire suppression costs could have been recovered. Claims totalling \$504,500 were lodged on the NRFA Rural Fire Fighting Fund while \$496,385 was recovered directly from responsible parties. All costs associated with the Holz Road fire were eventually recovered directly.

2.5 Summary

With the new Government elected in November came a change in direction on the previous Government's review of fire services that had lingered for some time creating uncertainty within the sector. The NRFA's Statement of Strategic Direction policy is to establish a robust framework to promote the establishment of enlarged Rural Fire Districts. After a visit from the new Minister in January the Southern RFA was touted as the preferred model. This elevation of status has brought credit on the Authority from supporters of ERFD's and at the same time there has been a 'Tall Poppy' syndrome to deal with from those less confident. The Authority was very proactive in advocating our model, offering assistance to other interested regions. I am sure we have more to offer as the ERFD initiative progresses over the next 12 months.

While not all targets were achieved, the Authority has again delivered a strong performance during the period, setting itself up for further progress in 2009-2010.

My thanks must go to the Board for providing the strategic direction, governance and support to the staff in order that we could deliver the SOI outcomes. We are a small staff managing activities over a large geographic area so we do rely on support from all our volunteers, stakeholder organisations and staff to make things happen, our appreciation goes out to all these people. Perry Fergusson has again provided excellent administrative support to the Board and PRFO which is much appreciated.

Mike Grant
PRINCIPAL RURAL FIRE OFFICER

Appendix 1: Summary of Achievement against KPI

Level of Service	Key Performance Indicator	Source	Achievement
Quantity			
Provide Rural Fire organisation and resources that are adequate to manage fire events anticipated within the SRFD.	Number of rural fire personnel.	Southern Rural Fire Authority training register.	285 personnel. Information from training database.
	Equipment resource levels meet NRFA standards.	Confirmed by NRFA audit.	NRFA standards audit in March 2008 and reported last year. No further audits undertaken.
Access			
Provide rural fire services throughout the District, except for Urban Fire Districts, via a unified but distributed organisational system.	Organisation and resources are adequate for the level of response required within the SRFD.	Confirmed by NRFA audit.	No NRFA audit undertaken.
	VRFF's are established and registered in accordance with the NRFA standards.	No of VRFFs.	Eight VRFFs are registered including Milford Sound which became operative in April 2009. Constitutions on file 160/15/4/2.
Management			
	Review present structure, review out-sourced versus in-house staffing by 31 March 2009	Date completed.	Project team established and 80% complete. Team to provide recommendation to Board in August 2009.
	Succession plan for Board and staff is developed by 31 March 2009	Date completed.	No formal plan. Board members have identified alternate reps. Staff succession dependant on structure recommendations as above.
	Design and circulate a newsletter to stakeholders and community twice a year in October 2008 and April 2009	Date completed.	First newsletter produced in May 2009. 2 x articles in Southland DC ratepayer newsletter.
	Promote the SRFA brand – with consideration given to naming, signing, clothing and more presence	Public Awareness Plan reviewed by 1 September 2008.	Plan reviewed and actions identified. New branding includes yellow fire appliances, SRFA signage, media opportunities taken.
	Review relationship with volunteers and report by 30 November 2008	Date completed.	No formal report produced. Additional opportunities provided to meet volunteers. Invitations to volunteers to attend 2009 FRFANZ conference.

Level of Service	Key Performance Indicator	Source	Achievement
Reduction			
Provide public education on fire risks, risk reduction and fire event readiness.	Number of public education initiatives completed.	File Quarterly Report.	Radio advertising during Sept – Jan. Radio & TV interviews. 1 x school visit, 3 x presentations to community groups. Public notices advertising restricted and Prohibited Fire Seasons. 2 x articles in SDC First Edition.
	Maintain SRFD web page	Web page hits.	Web page hits increased compared to last two years. Hit recorder.
	Include an education plan as part of the Public Awareness Plan by 1 September 2008	Date completed.	Plan included in Public Awareness Plan. Communications plan actions updated and implementation underway.
	Decreasing number of rural fire vegetation calls.	Quarterly Report.	Decrease in calls from 222 (07/08) to 137 (08/09). 22.6% of vegetation fire calls required no suppression action. Information from monthly reports and statistics.
Identify, assess and manage the fire risks presenting a threat in the SRFA area.	Complete an implementation plan for the RAMS project outcomes by 30 November 2008.	Date completed.	Unable to complete project due to NRFA not producing final RAMS process.
	Implement Restricted or Prohibited Fire Seasons based on current fire danger as specified in the SRFD Fire Plan.	System records.	Restricted FS implemented in all areas on 6/12/08 and taken off on 16/5/09. Prohibited FS implemented in the Naseby zone was lifted in March 2009 in conjunction with DOC and Central Otago DC.
	Develop and implement a coordinated emergency response plan / system for Milford Sound in conjunction with Civil Defence, Environment Southland and medical agencies by 1 October 2008.	Date completed.	An Emergency Response Team was established in Milford Sound and became operative in April 2009.

Level of Service	Key Performance Indicator	Source	Achievement
Manage a fire permit system.	Include relevant and appropriate information with fire permits issued.		Standard Fire Permit conditions attached to all permits issued. Educational material sent out. Brochure produced to assist with burning of hedge and tree trimmings and distributed to hedge cutting contractors.
	Make enhancements to fire permit system including partial access for the public by 30 June 2009.	Date completed.	Further enhancements undertaken to provide robustness for RFO's. Still no partial public access.
	95% of fire permits issued within five working days of application. Fire permit system developed to manage process.	% issued within five days.	99% of permit applications were processed within five working days. Applications processed through Pathways. All permits issued on GIS system. Permit issue process reviewed and changes made to system to improve robustness.
	No of legitimate calls to permitted fires reduces.	No of calls.	Decrease in calls from 222 (07/08) to 137 (08/09). 22.6% of vegetation fire calls required no suppression action. Information from monthly reports and statistics.
	Review how SRFA communicates prevention education to high risk neighbours by 1 September 2008	Date completed.	As part of Communications plan actions.
Readiness			
Ensure that Rural Fire personnel are adequately trained.	Percentage of key rural fire personnel that are trained to or training towards the appropriate Fire and Rescue Services Industry Training Organisation (FRSITO) Unit Standards for their duties. ³	Training Register.	Achieved 100%.
	4,000 man-hours training is delivered in FRSITO Unit Standards and other rural fire or related subjects per year.	Training records.	Exceeded target. Completed. Annual training plan for each agency and VRFF was produced to guide training activity. Personnel were also targeted for regional and national courses.
	PRFO holds meetings/training sessions with all VRFF's two times per year	Training records. No Hours.	Completed. AGM's attended. Training sessions organised and attended as programmed. Information from group/agency training plans and diary entries.

Level of Service	Key Performance Indicator	Source	Achievement
	Carry out one major simulated field exercises per year, with 30% of SRFA fire personnel involved, or actual incidents may substitute for simulated exercise.	Training records. No Hours.	More than 50 people attended a major training exercise at Borland. Holz Road fire in Dec-Jan provided opportunity for many personnel to become involved in extended firefighting over a two week period.
	Take advantage of the opportunities for fire fighting personnel to experience overseas firefighting assignments.	Training records. Deployment records.	One person deployed to California, USA in July 2008. 13 personnel were deployed to assist in Victoria in February/March 2009.
Ensure that Rural Fire organisation, resources and activities are properly planned and documented.	Maintain a current SRFD Fire Plan to NRFA standards. The Response section of the Plan to be reviewed and adopted by the Board annually.	Copy of SRFA Fire Plan on file. Date adopted.	The Board approved and adopted a revised Fire Response Plan on 29 August 2008.
	The entire plan to be audited five yearly by the NRFA.	NRFA audit report.	NRFA PAC audit scheduled for 2011-2012.
Maintain a state of readiness appropriate for current fire risk.	Notify Fire Danger as specified in the SRFD Plan.	Notification documentation.	Have access to a series of automatic weather stations that gather daily data. Also use NRFA and MetConnect web sites.
	Adjust Fire Suppression Response levels in the District.	Notification to NZFS Comms Centre and confirmed by audit.	Daily distribution information held by staff. No audit undertaken.
Ensure that adequate Rural Fire equipment is available.	Implement approved equipment levels strategy.	Annual Audit. Strategy document. Reports.	Ongoing disposals as new equipment comes on stream.
Ensure compliance with NRFA national standards and Performance Assessment Criteria (PAC).	Develop and implement action plans to meet Southern RFA requirements and compliance with standards and Performance Assessment Criteria by 30 September 2008.	Date completed. Confirmed by NRFA assessment.	NRFA advised PAC audit will not be undertaken until 2011. Priorities put into other key areas.

Level of Service	Key Performance Indicator	Source	Achievement
Response			
Ensure that the Rural Fire organisation responds appropriately to fire events	Percentage of initial attacks on fires commenced within 30 minutes of receiving a fire call.	Fire Log. FIRS.	Achieved – Information from ICAD reports.
	Fire suppression operations are managed in accordance with the Authority Fire Response Plan, Health and Safety Plan and NRFA standards.	Fire log. Debrief.	Achieved.
	All incidents will be managed using CIMS.	Debrief.	Achieved.
	Performance shall be examined in a Fire Debrief Report for each major fire.	Operational Review Reports. Debrief reports.	One debrief held for Holz Road fire. File 160/15/4/5
	Fire debriefs and operational reviews do not highlight inadequacies.	Operational Review Reports. Debrief reports.	No major issues arose.
Quality			
Ensure stakeholder satisfaction	Annual assessment completed by stakeholders by 30 April 2009.	Report on file.	Not completed.

Appendix 2: Agency Management Zone Incident Statistics

