

Christchurch Port Hills Fire Recovery Report

Coordination Facility:

Christchurch City Council Recovery Office

Event Name:

(Description of the type and/or name of the event)

Port Hills Fires

Recovery Report No:

5

Recovery Status:

Recovery Transition period ended 29th March 2017

Effective As At:

(Effective date and time of the report)

5 May 2017

1200hrs

Summary of Event:

(Summary of what has happened, and any critical issues/decisions made.)

Overview

The Port Hill fires on the boundary between Selwyn District Council and Christchurch City Council started on 13 February 2017. The Early Valley and Marleys Hill fires merged into one following the significant escalation of the fire during the afternoon and evening of Wednesday 15 February 2017.

The Early Valley Road fire started in the Selwyn District Council area, therefore the management/response for this fire was the responsibility of the Selwyn District Rural Fire Authority. The Marleys Hill fire started within the Department of Conservation fire safety margin, therefore the management/response for this fire was the responsibility of the Department of Conservation. However it was agreed that the fire would be treated as one with the Selwyn District Rural Fire Authority having overall management of the two fires. The cost of the fires will be shared between the Department of Conservation and Selwyn District Council, even though the majority of the fire was within the Christchurch City Council area.

The area of the fire is 1,645 hectares with a perimeter of 51 kilometres. The fire is now confirmed as contained and controlled. The land management within the fire boundary has been handed back to landowners.

Primary damage included 9 completely destroyed houses, 2 partially damaged (2 of these destroyed homes were within Selwyn area).

The decision to introduce a transition period under the Act was to provide the Local Recovery Managers with the powers under the CDEM Act for directing, coordinating to require information, direct evacuation, entry on premises and places, closing roads, giving directions.

Recovery Manager's overview (Murray Sinclair)

A single Recovery Management Team was established for Christchurch City and Selwyn District Councils. The Recovery Management Team meets twice weekly to ensure that all members are working in an informed, effective and coordinate manner.

Four Task Groups have been established (Social, Natural, Built and Economic Environments). These generally meet once per week to identify recovery issues, meet with various stakeholders and residents affected by the fire.

A key goal of the Recovery Management Team is to develop separate Port Hills Fires Recovery Plan for Christchurch City and Selwyn District Councils which will identify immediate actions taken, medium and long terms issues that will need to be addressed as part of business as usual or for consideration as part of within the 2017/18 Annual Plan and 2018-28 Long Term Plan processes.

The two Port Hills Fires Recovery Plans are currently in the final stages of development. It is proposed to present the CCC Port Hills Fires Recovery Plan to the City Councillors at their meeting to be held on Thursday, 8 June 2017.

The terms of reference for 'operational fire review' have been released this week. The purpose of this review is to recommend any actions to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency with which the Fire Agencies carried out their respective statutory duties and include the following objectives:

- Assess the Fire Authorities' readiness for the Port Hills Fire;
- Assess the effectiveness of the Fire Agencies' response to the fires;
- Assess the effectiveness of communication, coordination, and collaboration between the Fire Agencies in the course of the response to the fires; and
- Assess the Fire Agencies' provisions of safe working environments for workers.

The following matters are outside the scope of the review:

- The origin and cause of the fires;
- The circumstances of the helicopter accident that occurred on 14 February 2017;
- Any aspects of the civil defence response to the fires that are subject of review or investigation by the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management.

It is proposed that feedback, received at the various community recovery meetings, in relation to the response to the fires be forwarded to the 'Operational Fire Review Team' for their consideration.

It is unclear from the terms of reference whether it is proposed to meet with those significantly affected by the fires. I am proposing that Council write to the 'Operational Fire Review Team' requesting that they meet with those residents who lost their homes and the largest commercial operators affected by the fires to hear their concerns/issues in relation to the response to the fire.

Social Environment

Issues:

Arohanui Grace, Task Group Leader

Community Recovery

- Ongoing liaison maintained with people who lost their homes or with special circumstances.
- Clean up of fire damage being undertaken by property owners – some owners are struggling with scale of work ahead of them, particularly around removal of fire damaged trees.
- Skips still in place on Worsleys Road to assistance property owner with the removal of green waste.
- Volunteer groups have assisted some residents with the clearing of vegetation.
- Feedback received at the various community meetings is being included in the Port Hills Fire Recovery Plan.
- Regular updates being distributed on recovery activities occurring.

Natural Environment

Issues:

Kay Holder, Task Group Leader

Revegetation/Sediment Control

- ECAN has prepared information on Consenting and Erosion Control for landowners - this information is available on the Port Hills fire page on the City Council website.
- Volunteers will be picking up roadside rubbish exposed by the fires, between Sugarloaf and Cass Peak, on Saturday (6 May).
- A programme has been developed for 'volunteers' planting days over the winter months (winter planting days commence 25 May and runs through to 5 August).
- A helicopter will drop seed has commenced today (Friday) on pockets of privately owned land. Seed will be dropped on about 60 hectares of private land around Cashmere Valley, Worsleys Spur, Hoon Hay Valley and Early Valley Road, as part of an approach coordinated by the Council to reduce sediment getting into streams. The seed is being dropped on areas where there has been limited natural regrowth.
- Land Drainage team continue to monitor and investigate sediment control issues.

Built Environment

Issues:

Terry Howes – Task Group Leader

Life lines

- Dyers Pass Rd speed restrictions remain in place until further rock fall risk assessment are undertaken (limit 50kph with no stopping for top part of Dyers Pass Rd).
- Worsleys Road fenced cordon remains in place on each side of Port Hills where the sealed road finishes – residents are still reporting ongoing problems with 4WD vehicles using Worsleys Track.
- Additional signage to restrict access to residents only to be located near 323 Worsleys Road.
- Kennedy's Bush Road fenced cordon at each end restricting access to track, plan to be established for the future opening of the track or part of the track.
- Logging activities to commence shortly, discussions commenced re: resource consent conditions required for this activity are occurring between the forestry owner, Council, and ECan. Logging trucks will need to use Worsleys Road – a meeting was held this week with the forestry owner and residents of Worsleys Rd and Westmoreland. Community Board chairs were briefed today (Friday) on the proposed logging activities.

Natural hazards

- At-risk rocks above the Harry Ell walking track and Dyers Pass Road were removed during the week.
- Rock fall hazard report completed for Early Valley, properties in CCC area not impacted
- Rock fall hazard assessments within CCC area do not indicate any immediate risks to private properties.
- Investigations on the options for the management of sedimentation control within the five catchment areas has continued this week.

Economic Environment

Issues:

Russell Cull, CDC Task Group Leader

- Now know that all seven destroyed houses in the city area had current insurance cover, however their insurance is unlikely to cover all of the losses.
- One property lost its garage, which is believed not to be covered by a current insurance policy.
- We continue to work through the key economic issues that the fires have created.
- Met with the two largest commercial operators impacted by the fires to establish the key issues they are facing - will continue offer support where possible.
- Overall in the context of the Christchurch economy, the impact of the fires is envisaged to be relatively small.

Report Prepared By:

Murray Sinclair

Next Recovery Report:

4/05/2017

12:00 hrs