

Protocols to guide the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge in fire management and carbon abatement programs



Project aims

A new research project has started which looks at how Indigenous Knowledge (IK) has been incorporated into fire management programs. The project is funded by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Programme and will be undertaken by researchers from the CSIRO. The project will:

1. Look at what kind of IK is important to fire management.
2. Look at the different approaches used to share IK with western science, and to translate IK into contemporary fire management activities.
3. Share different perspectives, experiences and lessons learned from the incorporation and translation of IK into fire management.
4. Identify the institutional, social, cultural and other factors that help or limit the incorporation of IK into fire management goals and activities.

Aboriginal people have long traditions of systematically using fire to manage their customary landscapes for a range of purposes, the combined impacts of which can be seen in the defining features and health of Australia's terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystems. There is strong evidence that Aboriginal communities across the country are seeking to engage with contemporary fire management projects, but also that effective engagement requires a combination of respect for customary practices and openness to new and innovative fire knowledge. It is therefore timely to consider lessons that can be learned from existing efforts to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into fire projects that have already been established across northern Australia, and how these lessons relate to future efforts.

The research will review existing Indigenous fire management partnerships and activities across northern Australia, focusing particularly on what is meant by Indigenous knowledge and practices, how that meaning is locally interpreted into fire management activities, and how it is likely to be shared with others. Perspectives will be drawn from interviews and workshops held with key Indigenous fire managers and partners (Traditional Owners, NGOs, scientists and government agencies) across northern Australia who are actively participating in, or are interested in participating in, fire management projects.

The results from this review will be synthesised into a report summarising key existing lessons, and will inform protocols that can be used to guide the incorporation of IK in fire management and carbon abatement programs.

More information

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