

**IFA/AFG – ACT and Region Field Trip**  
**Namadgi National Park, ACT**  
**19 September 2020**

On Saturday 19 September 2020, the IFA/AFG in collaboration with the ACT Parks & Conservation Service took advantage of Canberra remaining free of COVID-19 to run a highly successful field trip through the Namadgi National Park, with a focus on the 2020 Orroral bushfire impacts & recovery.

There was a strong attendance of about 50 participants, representing a mix of forestry professionals from a variety of fields and about 20 students, mostly from the ANU. It was fascinating to hear first-hand experiences from ACT Parks & Conservation Service staff who were involved in the 2020 fire-fighting campaign, and lessons learnt from the experience. We travelled for about 4 hours on fire trails from near Corin Dam, which was impacted by the fire, to the Orroral Valley, where the fire had started.

The field trip offered some valuable insights into the effectiveness of prescribed burning and the impacts of fuel reduction on the severity of the 2020 bushfires in Namadgi. It also offered the opportunity to discuss the 2003 bushfires and the comparison between the two events, and the combined impacts of the 2003 and 2020 bushfires on the forests. There were some good discussions around the competing priorities and policies of both fuel and forest management regimes. A picture can tell a thousand words; the landscape picture here shows, on the left (lower) side of the Smokers Trail, an area that lost all understorey and canopy in the 2020 fire; and a contrasting section to the right of(above) the road, that had been prescribed burnt 9 months before the 2020 fire. In the area that had been fuel-reduced, the 2020 bushfire impact was greatly reduced and the canopy remains healthy.

You can learn more about the interaction between the Orroral Fire and the ACT Parks and Conservation prescribed burning program from Adam Leavesley of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, one of our hosts on the field trip, who discusses this in an Australian Academy of Science/Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC *National Fire Fuels Science* Webinar: <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/firefuelswebinar/3> (from 10:35 mins).

Many thanks to staff of ACT Parks and Conservation Service for making the field trip possible, in particular:

- Neil Cooper (Senior Director, Fire Forests and Roads; and the 2020 recipient of the International Association of Wildland Fire “Firebreak” Award for Excellence in Wildland Fire Management;
- Jack Corrigan, Field Officer;
- Adam Leavesley (Manager, Bushfire Research Utilisation; also lead co-editor of the recently published *Prescribed Burning In Australasia* (see

<https://www.afac.com.au/auxiliary/publications/newsletter/article/new-book-evolves-prescribed-burning-discussion>);

- Peter Langdon (Assistant Director, Forestry; and ACT & Region Committee Member);
- Tony Scherl (Manager Regional Fire Planning)

Matt de Jongh, Paris Capell and Peter Kanowski