



North West Parks Board

North West Province

Republic of South Africa

Stand 3031 Heritage
House, Cookes Lake,
Mafikeng
P.O. Box 4488
MMABATHO
2735

PR AND COMMUNICATION UNIT

Tel: +27(18) 397 1507
Fax: +27 (18) 397 1660
Email:
drangaka@nwpb.org.za

3rd September 2018

1/2

MEDIA STATEMENT

RUN AWAY FIRES IN PILANESBERG NATIONAL PARK

The Pilanesberg National Park is fighting runaway fires that started in the morning of 1st September 2018, the fire started from the North side of the reserve after being fueled by a strong wind which picked up over the weekend. The fire has burnt central parts of the reserve towards the Southern and Eastern boundaries intensely burning the well-known and very popular Mankwe hide and the wilderness area have been completely destroyed.

The fires burnt about 15 000 and 18 000ha land as from the morning of the 3rd September seen from the helicopter view used to do an extensive assessment of the extent of the fire and possible damage to infrastructure. Even though a large area was burnt, large pockets of vegetation inside these areas did not burn as anticipated. Thanks to the huge support from Pilanesberg Lodges, fire teams from as far as Buffelspoort near Mooinooi who also came to assist the reserve staff.

It is worth noting that Ivory tree and Bakgatla Fish-Eagle picnic site did not suffer any damage during the fire. This is due to the reserve's fire policy aimed at managing fuel levels, and early block burns conducted in the past 2 months that assisted in reducing the intensity of the fire in certain areas. Little damage was done to park infrastructure.

2/2

Piet Nel, the Chief Conservation Officer confirmed that “there were no injured animals seen during the helicopter inspection this morning including those that might be in immediate danger of the fire”. Confirming that some animals had already moved into the burnt areas to feast on the roast twigs. We also saw some zebra and kudu close to the fire not very perturb by the fire, leisurely grazing away, said Nel.

The fire was stopped in areas with low fuels and along roads sides, and due to changing wind direction, the fire fizzled out in these areas. This left large areas inside the bigger fire unburnt, allowing animals to escape the fire. It needs to be emphasized that animals on the continent have been living with fire for thousands of years, and that they know the dangers caused by fires and how to avoid getting caught in the blaze. The fire-fighting teams are now focusing on containing the fire along some of the roads. The fire should be contained by the end of the day including follow up monitoring and search for possible injured animals that has already started and will continue throughout the day.

Park management doesn't foresee any feed problems since there is still ample vegetation to feed on as previously mentioned. Large areas inside the burnt area did not burn, thus providing enough feeding reserves for the animals until well into the growing season. The total areas burnt to date including the block burns is approximately 50% of the park. The veld in the blocks where the fire started burning are already greening up” said Nel.

The North-West Parks Board and in particular Pilanesberg Park management would like to thank everyone involved in fighting the fire. Certain organizations offered the staff and equipment, numerous people helped with beating fires, and some people to assist the fire teams with water and other support. Their support was overwhelming and greatly reduced the danger to the animals and the reserve buildings.

Messages of support from the public through social media is also acknowledged and greatly appreciated. Media is welcome to contact the reserve management **Mr. J. Maoka at 082 325 2372** for any updates regarding the fire. More updates will be posted on North West Parks Board social media platforms as well.

END.

ISSUED BY

**DINAH RANGAKA FOR NORTH WEST PARKS BOARD
PR MANAGER**

TEL : 018 397 1506

CEL : 084 374 7935

EMAIL : drangaka@nwpb.org.za