

Influences on Community-Agency Trust-Building in Fire-Affected Communities: Lessons Learned in the United States and Australia

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Introduction

- Trust is key to acceptance of management practices and community-agency relationships
- Few multi-country studies
- 3 years, 3 countries, funded by JFSP
- Build explanatory framework with multi-country perspective and ground-truthing
- Report on step one – US and AUS

Study Areas

- Oregon, United States
 - Biscuit Fire (2002)
 - B&B Fires (2003)
- Victoria, Australia
 - King Valley Fires (2006/07)
- Studies in two countries independent, but with similar objectives

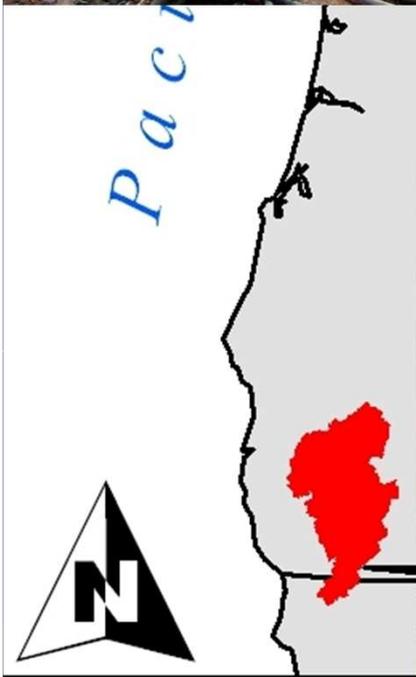


Forest Service

B&B Fire



★ Bend

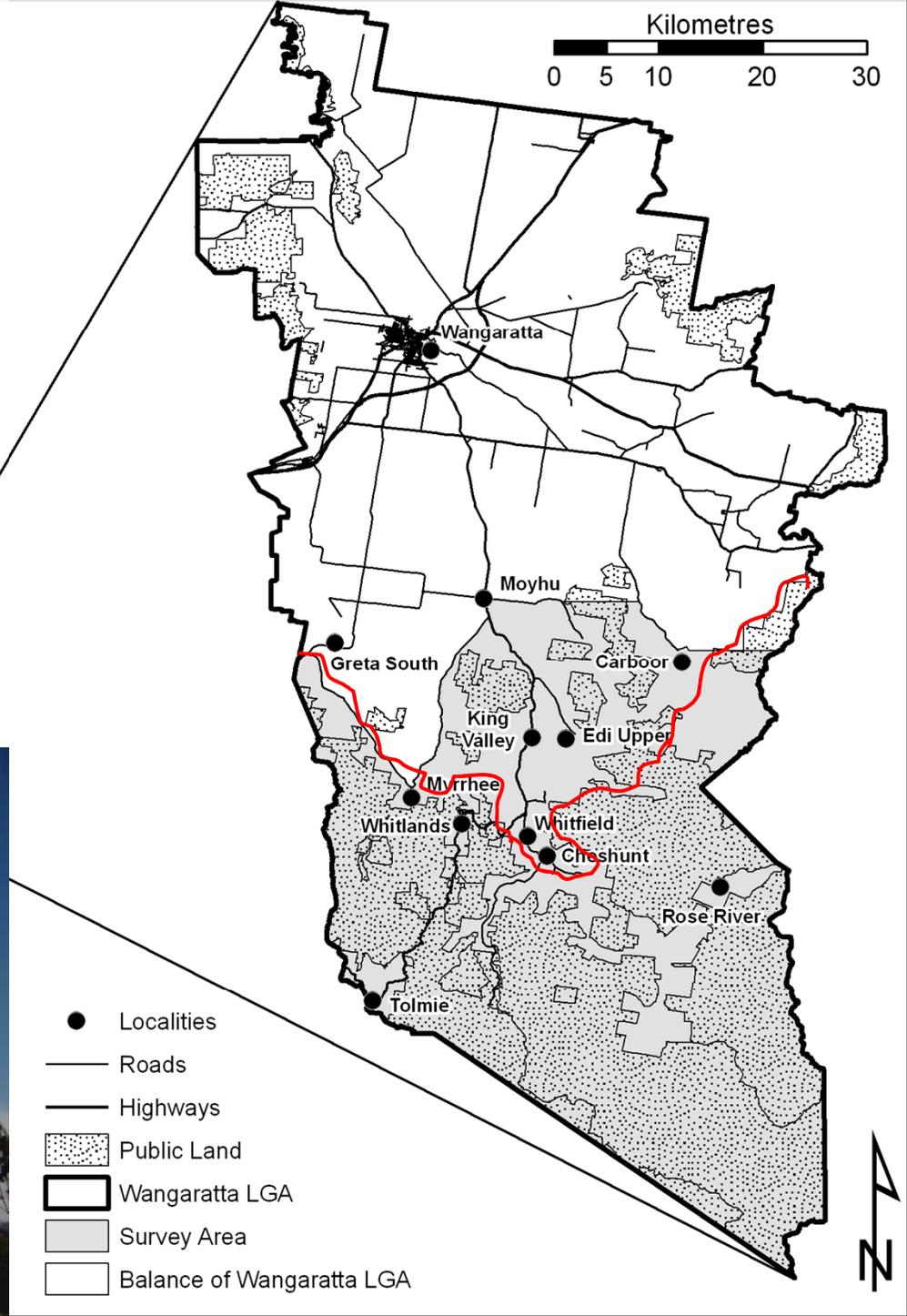


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Study Areas

Characteristic	Biscuit Fire (OR - 2002)	B&B Fires (OR - 2003)	King Valley Fires (VIC – 2006/07)
Size of fires	200,000 ha	37,250 ha	1.03 million ha
Size of local communities	~ 100,000	~ 100,000	< 2,000
Predominant land managing agency	U.S. Forest Service	U.S. Forest Service	Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE)
Private land burned	< 0.01%	1.2%	~ 2.5% locally
Ignition source	Lightning	Lightning	Lightning

Methods

	Biscuit Fire (OR)	B&B Fires (OR)	King Valley Fires (VIC)
Interviews	14	12	38
Surveys	n = 261 61% response	n = 250 70% response	n = 329 68% response

- Data combined, discussion of ‘what worked to build trust’
- Eleven themes, refined and combined down to five themes, supportive data

Results

Interpersonal Relationship Level

1. Demonstrate trustworthiness
2. Consider content and process when communicating
3. Demonstrate the use of science

Institutional Level

4. Interaction/outreach activities must be meaningful
5. Develop flexible policies to allow locally-appropriate management

1. Demonstrate trustworthiness

	Biscuit Fire (OR)	B&B Fires (OR)	King Valley Fires (VIC)
Federal forest managers have effectively built trust.	13%	40%	
Residents find local agency staff trustworthy.	15%	45%	
CFA/DSE acts in the best interest of community members.			86% (CFA) 30% (DSE)
CFA/DSE follows through with what is says before a fire.			50% (CFA) 13% (DSE)

- Personnel viewed as “*part of the community*” were viewed as more trustworthy.

2. Content and process

	Biscuit Fire (OR)	B&B Fires (OR)	King Valley Fires (VIC)
Federal forest managers did a good job explaining...	32%	46%	
The CFA/DSE provided a satisfactory explanation...			66% (CFA) 33% (DSE)

- Explanations: *“This is why...”*
- Talk about big issues.
- Be open, honest, and recognize emotions.

3. Demonstrate use of science

	Biscuit Fire (OR)	B&B Fires (OR)	King Valley Fires (VIC)
Decisions were based on scientific information.	17%	38%	
Scientists play a role in reviewing alternatives.	69%	79%	

- Perceptions of “*bad science*” and controlling influences.
- Don’t wait to act when science says time is critical.

4. Meaningful outreach

	Biscuit Fire (OR)	B&B Fires (OR)	King Valley Fires (VIC)
Federal managers used public input in decision-making.	24%	45%	
Local public concerns were incorporated into mgmt plans.	20%	38%	
The bushfire mgmt planning process addresses community needs and concerns.			50%
The bushfire mgmt planning process provides meaningful opportunities for participation.			48%

4. Meaningful outreach

- Field trip participation and speaking directly with personnel rated more worthwhile than attending public meetings or submitting written comments.
- Strong desire from public to see how input is used.
- Sentiment that input is ignored.

5. Flexible policies

	Biscuit Fire (OR)	B&B Fires (OR)	King Valley Fires (VIC)
Local agency staff are constrained from doing their jobs by govt restrictions at the national/state level.	73%	57%	50% (DSE) 62% (CFA)
Local personnel are effective at planning and managing lands.	13%	38%	

- *“Red tape prevents management.”*
- Not effective because hands are tied.

Summary

- Trust can be built at both interpersonal and institutional levels – and can reinforce each other if done well.
- Importance of developing long-term relationships and commitment to trust-building.

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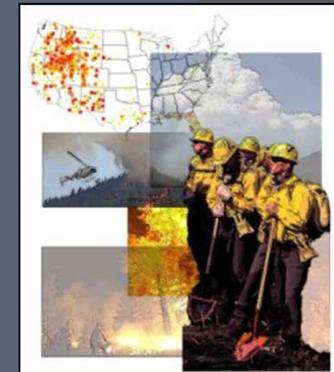
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