

ESSENTIAL ROLE Why carefully planned fires are vital for both forests and communities

Sustaining healthy forests into future

COMMENT

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FIRE plays an essential role in regenerating Tasmania's eucalypt forests, shaping species diversity and supporting resilient landscapes.

At Sustainable Timber Tasmania, we understand that working with fire, carefully and responsibly, is an important part of sustaining healthy forests into the future. Tasmania's forests are dynamic living systems. Many eucalypt species have evolved to respond to fire, with heat and ash helping create the conditions needed for seeds to germinate and a new generation of trees to establish.

After fire moves through a forest, the landscape quickly shows signs of renewal as fresh growth emerges, and the next forest cycle begins.

Controlled regeneration burns aim to carefully replicate this natural process. Following harvesting, fire

helps prepare the forest floor so seeds can establish and grow. The result is young, vigorous stands of forest that will continue to provide habitat for wildlife, store carbon, support biodiversity and underpin regional jobs for decades to come.

Sustainable Timber Tasmania manages around 800,000 hectares of public production forest.

All operations, including planned burns, are conducted under Tasmania's internationally recognised Forest Practices System.

These plans balance timber production with environmental protection, soil and water conservation, cultural heritage values and safeguards for threatened species. Fire is only applied under strict prescriptions and when weather and safety conditions are suitable.

Planned fire also plays an

important role in reducing fuel loads across the landscape. By carefully managing the build-up of combustible material, these burns help lower the risk of severe bushfires. In a warming climate, with longer and more intense fire seasons, this preventative work is increasingly important for protecting communities, ecosystems and firefighters.

Managing smoke is also a key part of planned burning. Burn programs operate within Tasmania's Coordinated Smoke Management System, which helps guide decisions based on forecast weather and air quality conditions.

Sustainable Timber Tasmania also goes further by considering local weather patterns, nearby events and community activities to minimise disruption wherever possible. Planned burning is a visible part of

modern forest management, but it is also one of the most effective tools we have for supporting regeneration, reducing risk and maintaining healthy forests.

As we move into the seasonal window suitable for planned burns, we want to reassure the community that this work is carefully planned and professionally managed. Our focus remains on reducing risk, supporting forest renewal and ensuring Tasmania's forests remain resilient for generations to come.

|| Dean Sheehan is Fire Management Manager at Sustainable Timber Tasmania and has more than 35 years' experience in forest and fire management.