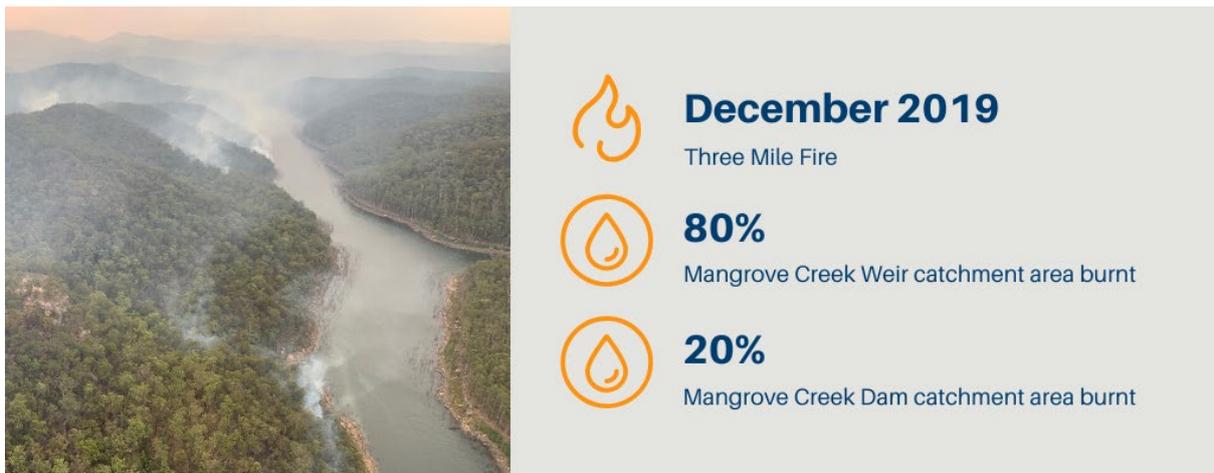




GETTING STARTED ON BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

Central Coast Council is implementing post bushfire catchment protection measures in two drinking water supply catchments. In this case study simple and practical considerations are shared.



Mangrove Creek Dam bushfire 2019 (Shane Geerin, NSW RFS)

The Mangrove Creek Weir and Mangrove Creek Dam catchments were significantly affected by the Three Mile Fire in December 2019, with NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) mapping indicating that 80% and 20% respectively of the catchment areas have been burnt.

The extent and assumed severity of the burn, poses a significant risk to drinking water quality. Erosion and sediment controls are proposed to be rapidly installed to mitigate the risk before any notable rainfall is received in the catchment areas.

The response is currently underway.

Learnings: A work in progress

Access into the catchment may not be possible for a considerable time.

This may delay inspection, assessment, planning and implementation of recovery works.

Access to the Mangrove Weir Catchment occurred approximately one month after the fire burnt through the catchments. While the Christmas period slowed down access (due to unavailability of resources), the most time-consuming issue was trees.

- Fallen trees take a long time to clear off tracks – consider early sourcing of resources so they can get started as soon as the areas is safe from the fire threat.
- Hazardous tree assessment is a slow process – with large areas to cover, the assessment, identification and management of hazardous trees takes a long time. Further assessments may be needed a couple of months after the event and/or following rain to identify new risks that may become apparent.
- Fallen trees may provide valuable mulch – when removing trees, keep any mulched material onsite and spray onto nearby burnt slopes to provide some ground cover to mitigate erosion.

Given access limitations, consider where else you might be able to source information about burn extent and severity. Central Coast Council is purchasing satellite imagery and seeking to obtain aerial footage collected by an RFS pilot. Are there fire fighters in your community or workplace that can provide details of how the fire behaved in your catchment?

Access restriction management will continue to be as annoying as usual:

- Consider checking your stock of locks as some may have been broken during fire operations and require replacement.
- Consider checking your stock of keys to ensure there are enough available for issue to contractors and other temporary resources. Ensure that personnel unfamiliar with locking protocols are given clear instructions e.g. maintain ‘daisy chains’ where multiple locks are used for one gate.

There is more support out there than you may realise:

- Your organisation may carry far more stock in the store(s) than you had ever imagined (e.g. Central Coast Council had 3km of silt fencing). Speak with them first when sourcing erosion and sediment control materials.
- The Council has received helpful and generous advice from other utilities who have dealt with similar situations in the past. Consider reaching out to others if you are unsure.

More information

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