



**“Park Note – Conto Fire Information”**

The Fire Facts: Between the 6th and 8th of April 2006, a wildfire occurred in the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park around 12km south west of Margaret River. The fire, which escaped from a prescribed burn, affected 1500ha of jarrah forest, peppermint woodland, coastal heath and some karri forest.”

– Quote from post fire publication Dept Conservation & Land Management.

So what happened next?

## THE MAMMOTH CAVE FIRE RECOVERY

- Pete Bell

The *CaveWorks* resource team responded quickly in efforts to restore operation of the Mammoth Cave, albeit in a reduced capacity after the wildfire which swept through the site on 7 April 2006.



Burnt boardwalks at Mammoth Cave

After being closed for a period of seven days the site was brought back on line with 70% of the cave accessible to visitors just in time for the beginning of the Easter holidays, traditionally one of the busiest periods of activity for the Mammoth cave site.

Visitor access to the back exit of the cave and the full operation of the self guided tour and associated walk trails is not expected to be available until October 2006 although every effort will be made to achieve an earlier outcome.

Operational changes to facilitate the tour requires all visitors to enter and leave the cave via the front entrance. The installation of appropriate visitor information signage, physical barriers and re-programming of lighting systems has addressed potential difficulties with visitor traffic flow associated with the modified tour structure.

Operational procedures affecting the commencement of repairs and replacement of infrastructure in the exit doline and walk trails are currently in progress these include structural



engineering reports, geotechnical reports and insurance claim documentation and assessment.

Minor damage to infrastructure was mostly confined to essential visitor servicing areas, including the cave entrance boardwalks, ticket sales, waste management irrigation systems and water supply plumbing. Repairs and/or replacement to associated infrastructure have been carried out by *CaveWorks* resource staff.

Post fire tree hazard reduction addressing immediate high risk access areas has been carried out by CALM, further hazard reduction, including the removal of tree falls within the exit doline and clearing of the Marri walk trails has also been carried out by *CaveWorks* resources staff and CALM personnel.

Repairs and restoration of the Marri Trail have commenced, the reinstating of the trail is seen as an essential component to the recovery of the Mammoth Cave experience.

Planning is also underway to regain access to the exit doline for viewing only, clients will still have to return though the main cave, this will add significantly to the cave tour currently available. Complete recovery of the cave tour is not expected before October 2006.



Burnt signage near Mammoth Cave



Robyn McBeath, pictured with the fire burning in the background

