Coastal Fire Centre

ISSUE 10 | 11.09.2020

IN THIS ISSUE

CURRENT STATISTICS

Fires to-date: 119

Hectares burned: 900

Human-caused: 73

Lightning-caused: 46

BANS AND PROHIBITIONS

Campfire: No Ban

Category 2: In Effect

Category 3: In Effect

Forest Use Restrictions: No Ban

Prohibitions section of bcwildfire.ca for full details.

The Pemberton Complex


Mount Miller

On August 16, 2020, a band of lightning ran through the Coastal Fire Centre. This was the second of the 2020 fire season. The lightning storm was centred over southern Vancouver Island working its way north dropping strikes across the Pemberton Zone.

Thirteen fires were detected at high elevation, in steep and difficult terrain. Eight of those 13 fires were extinguished at less than 4 hectares. However, low humidity, increased wind, and poor access in the overnight period on August 17th resulted in 4 of the fires in the Pemberton and Lillooet Lake area to grow beyond initial attack size. As a result, additional fire crews and resources were assigned to these fires.

The Pemberton Complex was created allowing for the establishment of a small incident management group to be put in place to support crews working on the fires. Incident Command positions were identified and filled, and with the support of the Coastal Fire Centre the fires were managed from the Zone office.

By September 1, 2020, all fires were contained within a perimeter and deemed 'Under Control' or 'Being Held'. Some, if not all of these fires, are expected to continue to burn within their perimeters and are being monitored in case additional action needs to be taken to hold the fires at their current size.

Fire Number	Name/Location	Size in Hectares	Status
V31176	Lillooet Lake	34.2 ha	Being Held
V31179	Lillooet Lake #2	367.5 ha	Being Held
V31182	Lillooet Lake #3	16.2 ha	Under Control
V31198	Mount Miller	46.9 ha	Under Control
V31309	Mount Delilah	22.4 ha	Under Control

Above: Status of Fires as of September 8, 2020.

Wildfire NEWS

Danger Trees

Walking through the worksite of a wildfire it is not unusual to see flagging tape with large block lettering 'DANGER TREES'. Danger Tree Assessors use this tape to signal to crews that there is a very specific danger they must take note of.

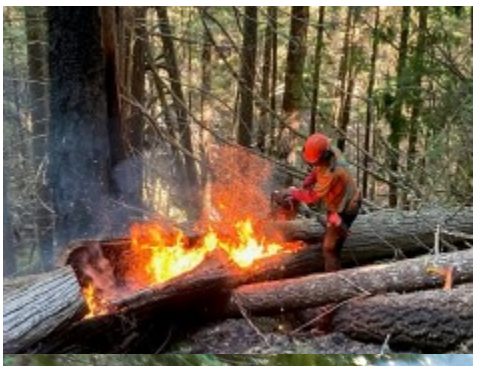
A Danger Tree is a tree that starts burning from the ground up, generally in the rotten interior of large diameter trees. Then, when the fire hits a break in the outer shell of the tree (such as a crack or a broken or rotten branch), the oxygen accelerates the fire and flames may often shoot from the tree, acting like a funnel or a chute. These trees are extremely dangerous as they are not visible until the fire comes out of the core of the tree, having already weakened it and the tree falls, often without warning. In some cases, just the top of a tree will burn, break off and fall to the ground. That is why crews must be very situationally aware as the only sound may be a crack or a whoosh as the tree falls to the ground. The unpredictability of these trees falling is just one of the many dangers that can be found on a wildfire worksite. This is also why it is so important for the public to adhere to Area Restrictions.

In some cases, where these trees have broken tops, trees that are burning internally may look and act like chimneys with smoke and/or fire funnelling out of the top of the tree or out of cracks in the trunk.

Crews have several options once a killer tree is identified:

- As they are noticed, crews will fall them and extinguish them with hand tools and water if available.
- If they are too dangerous to fall, crews will ensure they are safely clear and wait for them to burn to a point where they fall naturally before they approach.
- In extreme cases, large pockets of trees of this sort are targeted with a helicopter buckets and/or a sprinkler system may be set up to control the fire spread and ember transfer, and reduce the risk to workers.
- No work zones are often established and marked on a map so that crews know that there is a likelihood of falling trees.

Discussing this topic one firefighter also mentioned the fact that when a tree has all its branches, foliage and needles burned off, you often do not hear the tree falling. Wind blowing through the branches and leaves is what makes the noise as a tree falls but once they have been burned away a tree can drop and only the sound of it striking the ground, a low whistle, or the tree hitting other obstacles as it falls will signify its descent.



Picture at Top and in the Middle: Coastal Fire - V31179 - Lillooet Lake #2.
Bottom Picture: Danger Tree Flagging Tape.

A fire can create many hazards and Danger Trees are just one, and it is why Danger Tree Assessors and Fallers are an essential part of any wildland fire team.

Video Link to two videos from the Christie Mountain fire near Penticton.
\\forwebfiles.nrs.bcgov\ftp\HPR\external\!publish\Photos for Media\Newsletter Videos\Danger Trees

Prescribed Fire

Prescribed fire is when a burn is planned, ignited and managed by people. This article will explore the history and benefits of using fire on the landscape and how and when prescribed fire is used safely.

WHY USE PRESCRIBED FIRE?

British Columbia has a long history of using prescribed fire with a variety of purposes, including cultural and traditional uses, public safety, forest and rangeland stewardship, habitat enhancement, and environmental stewardship.

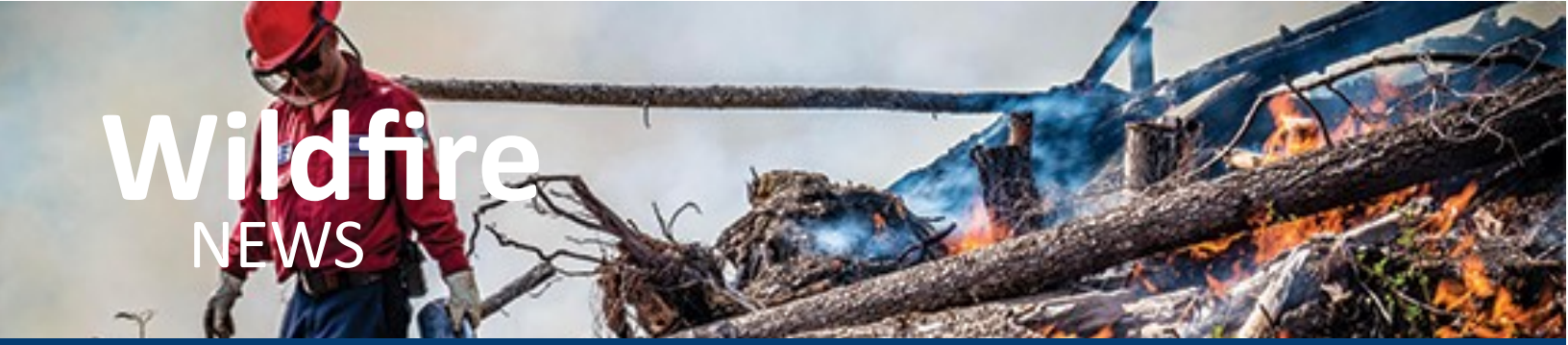
Fire is a normal and natural process in many of B.C.'s ecosystems. Many species of plants, birds, insects and other animals depend on fire for its regenerative properties. Fire helps control insects and the spread of disease in forests. A forest with trees of various ages and species helps create biodiversity.

Prescribed fires help achieve land management objectives as described in fire management plans. These objectives may include:

- Fuel management (to reduce the buildup of forest fuels);
- Pest management (such as the mountain pine beetle infestation);
- Ecological restoration (promoting the growth of a variety of tree species and other vegetation after a prescribed fire has occurred);
- Wildlife habitat enhancement (improving forage and habitat for large mammals, such as ungulates, bears and wolves);
- First Nations traditional use;
- Agriculture (land and crop management) .

In B.C., wildfire seasons have been starting earlier and lasting longer as a result of pronounced droughts, climate change and increased forest fuel accumulation due to fire suppression activities.

As seen during the 2017 wildfire season, mega-fires can result in tremendous social, ecological and economic impacts. To help reduce wildfire severity and related threats to communities, the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS), along with land managers, undertake fuel management activities, including the use of prescribed fire.



Wildfire NEWS

Prescribed Fire

A HISTORY OF PRESCRIBED FIRE

Anthropogenic and natural fires once shaped the North American landscape. Throughout history these fires were caused by lightning and Indigenous Peoples' millennia-long practice of prescribed fire. The proliferation of settlements in the wildland-urban interface and 20th-century fire suppression practices drastically changed this historic fire regime. However, many ecosystems are dependent on periodic fire and the resulting excessive fuel load coupled with climate change creates conditions for precedent-setting wildfires. The 2017 and 2018 wildfire seasons and the release of the report Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia highlighted the importance of re-integrating prescribed fire and Indigenous knowledge into fire management practices.

Reducing the risk to life from wildfire is paramount but changing ecological and social landscapes further drives the need for a more integrated approach to determining when the use of prescribed fire is the proper tool to create the best short- and long-term benefits. Climate change, increasing urbanization, commitments for reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and the evolving socio-economic needs of rural communities are just a few of the considerations pushing the Government of B.C. to renew its focus to the use of prescribed fire.

HOW IS A PRESCRIPTION (BURN PLAN) WRITTEN?

When preparing a fire prescription, the plan author considers vegetation type, terrain, fire behaviour, temperature, humidity, wind conditions, and the venting index. The size and intensity of prescribed burns are carefully planned and controlled to meet land management objectives. Prescribed fires are only ignited when weather conditions are favourable and when the fire will not create excessive smoke. A prescribed fire is ignited and continuously monitored by trained firefighters to ensure that the fire stays within the prescribed parameters and is still meeting the plan's objectives. These burns are often conducted during the winter and spring months, when fires burn at lower intensities and produce less smoke than unplanned wildfires occurring during the summer.

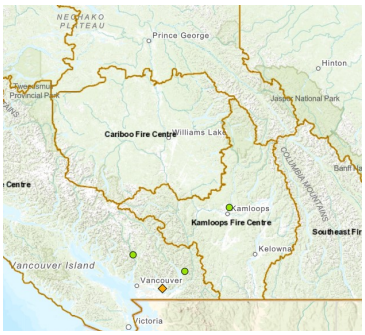
Other factors that must be considered when planning a prescribed fire include the expanding wildland-urban interface (where urban development borders on grasslands and forested areas), critical infrastructure and land management objectives related to wildlife habitat and watersheds. Given the complexity of prescribed fire projects, planning for them can take six months to many years.

Learn more about how prescribed fires are planned in B.C.

BC Wildfire Service Mobile App

The official BC Wildfire Service mobile app provides timely wildfire information, notifications and an interactive map that users can customize to display a variety of fire related data. It is available for free download in the App Store and Google Play.

Visit the online Reference Guide to learn more about the app



B.C. Wildfire Dashboard

The B.C. Wildfire Dashboard is designed to provide consistent, accurate and timely wildfire information to the public, media and stakeholders, and includes an interactive map which can be used to view the location and details of all active wildfires in B.C.

Visit the online Reference Guide to learn more about the Dashboard.

Firewood Permits and Collecting Firewood

With cooler seasons approaching, B.C. residents may be looking to collect firewood. Using a chainsaw in our forests is only considered a high-risk activity if operations are carried out in a cutblock. Operating a chainsaw on a road, landing or roadside work area is not considered a high-risk activity. However, Section 8 of the Wildfire Regulation dictates that necessary precautions must be taken to ensure that the operation of the engine (the chainsaw) does not cause a fire.

Members of the public who wish to cut firewood on Crown land for personal use must have a "Free Use Permit for Firewood" from each Natural Resource District where they intend to cut, signed by the appropriate district manager or designate. There is no charge for this privilege, only a commitment to abide by a number of simple rules that are outlined in the permit. Each permitee must:

- carry the permit at all times;
- read and understand the conditions of the permit prior to signing it;
- provide permit to a Natural Resource Officer, Conservation Officer or Peace Officer if requested.

Cutting firewood on Crown land without this permit may result in confiscation of the wood and charges. It is up to the permit holder to determine whether they are cutting on "vacant Crown land" and not private land or First Nations reserves. Please note that no cutting of live, standing trees is allowed.

A Free Use Permit for Firewood costs nothing and allows an individual to collect and transport firewood from eligible Crown land for their personal use. This permit is available at local natural resource district offices or online here.

Wildfire NEWS

Coastal Fire Centre

Fire Weather Forecast

SYNOPSIS: (Today-tomorrow) A weakening ridge brings another sunny warm day with light winds. The air mass is quite stable and local smoke accumulations may be a problem. Extensive low clouds and smoke have piled up along the west coast of Vancouver Island and smoke layers have wrapped around the island past Victoria and into the Lower Mainland. The smoke may be slow to clear or not clear at all in some places. A weak outflow gradient last night brought light east or northeast winds to most areas but humidity still managed to make a full recovery in the valleys while mountain stations saw no recovery with the humidity remaining in the 30 to 40 per cent range day and night. Afternoon humidity drops to 20 to 30 percent in the valleys today. The ridge weakens slightly again Saturday but no weather moves in, just a few degrees fall in temperatures. Humidity falls off to the 25 to 35 per cent range.

OUTLOOK: (Sunday-Tuesday) An offshore low approaches Sunday afternoon bringing mostly high cloudiness but cooler temperatures and rising humidity. Afternoon winds will show a slight increase. Monday turns cloudy as the systems nears the coast and showers reach the outer coast in the morning and filter into the outer coast inlets during the day. The new forecast arriving this morning does not bring rain into the inner south coast on Tuesday at all.

6 TO 10 DAY: (next week) The new long range keeps most areas cloudy but dry most of next week with rain holding off until the weekend due to an offshore low remaining nearly stationary well away from the BC coast. Of course this forecast will be subject to change.

Smokey skies are due to fires south of the border.
For more information go to:
http://firesmoke.ca/

At Coastal

The Coastal Fire Centre has had an increase in fire starts in the last week, mostly on the south part of Vancouver Island and the southern Mainland. Most of these fires have been person caused.

Fire Dangers are continuing to climb and will continue to do so until significant rainfall occurs.

Much of the activity in the Coastal Fire Centre continues to take place in the Pemberton Zone. Recent aerial scanning on these fires have enabled fire fighters to extinguish hot spots on this fire, where they can access safely. Many of these fires have areas that are inaccessible due to steep, rugged terrain. Lillooet Lake #2 has been active recently, but has not grown beyond the perimeter of the fire. The fire is burning fuels in the centre of the fire. Crews have worked the perimeter to keep the fire within the edge of the fire, and helicopters have been used to cool hotspots and prevent the fire from moving from the ground to the crowns of trees.

On the island, crews have been dealing with fires on the southern part of Vancouver Island. The fire in the Woodley Range Ecological Reserve, in the Yellow Point area south of Nanaimo, is now considered Under Control. It was suspected to be person-caused.

The fire at Icewall Creek, 20 kilometres east of Bute Inlet is currently more active and as of the date of this publication is undergoing further assessment. There is a remote camera monitoring this lightning-caused fire.

Contact Information

Report a Wildfire: *5555 on a cell or 1 800 663-5555

Wildfire Information Line: 1 888 3FOREST

Burn Registration Number: 1 888 797-1717

Information Officer Phone Number: 250 951-4209

Information Officer Email:
BCWS.COFCInformationOfficer@gov.bc.ca