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Fire Lessons—Big and Small

When large fires, like the Okanagan Park Fire or the Garnett Fire occur they may lead to public review. The resulting public document with a number of suggestions for change may be taken by the public as indictment of how the Wildfire Management Branch conducts business, but for those within the WMB it is seen as a valuable tool.

Since big fires often get the most attention and are often publicly reviewed the public may be under the mistaken belief that we learn the most from the big fires. This, however, is not the case. In the WMB, every fire is reviewed from the small Initial Attack targets to the larger project fires (expanded attack).

Today there is a formal checklist that is filled out where every aspect of fighting a fire is addressed on a fire including: Dispatch, Safety, Fire Action, Mop-Up and Air Operations. Larger fires (ones expected to be bigger than 10 hectares

or to take longer than 4 days to control) will often have Fire Analysis developed that will outline different options and outcomes. After the fire is dealt with this plan will be reviewed to see if targets were met. Smaller fires use crew debriefs to record and document resources used and are valuable learning opportunities for staff to discuss alternatives and other options, including interim monitoring especially in larger fuels. This helps share knowledge and wisdom that senior officers have acquired in their years in the program and allow crews to brainstorm why certain strategies work better for certain fires.

Final fire reports are another document used when conducting a fire review. Tactics can be reviewed and dissected including resource allocation, mistakes made and lessons learned. The WMB is an organization that works hard to continually improve its operation, its delivery and its effectiveness.

Tay Fire 1967

The Tay Fire, near Port Alberni on Vancouver Island, was among the first fires where helicopters

were used to observe and report conditions to Operations. It was so successful as an operational tool that today it would almost be unthinkable to consider fighting fire without helicopters either scouting, patrolling, transporting crews, equipment or bucketing.

Another tool found to be effective during this period were the fine fuel moisture sticks. The Moisture Sticks were being tested just prior to the outbreak of the Tay Fire and although they are no longer used today, their digital equivalent is. These sticks were exposed to local weather situations, then were analyzed to identify moisture levels in fuels.

Bloedel Fire 1938

The Bloedel Fire of 1938 (near Campbell River) is often referred to as the Sayward fire because of this devastating fires' location, but the fire was originally named for the company of Bloedel, Stewart and Welch from whose operation the fire emanated. The name 'Sayward Fire' refers to the Sayward forest, where much was learned by foresters as one of the largest rehabilitation forests of its kind was undertaken.

On August 9, A. Well Gray, Minister of Lands, stated that the area affected by the Bloedel Fire 'constituting some of the best growing sites of the Pacific Northwest, have been denuded for generations to come unless some active steps are taken to replace them by planting.'

Up to the time of the Sayward fire, reforestation was accomplished mainly through natural regeneration but it was realized that only a massive reforestation project could regenerate the area after such a devastating fire. In 1939, the largest planting project of its kind in BC began. Over 760,000 seedlings were planted in an area of more than 400 hectares.

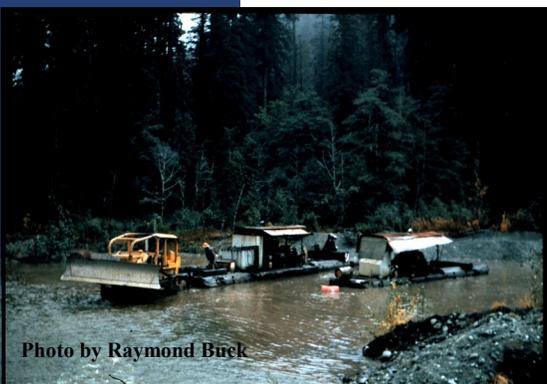


Photo by Raymond Buck

To Report a
Wildfire:
1.800.663.5555
Or *5555 on
your cell

Coastal Fire Centre

wildfire News

To Date
in Coastal

Fires to Date

Person
Caused 88

Lightning
Caused 118

Total
Number
of Fires 206

Fire Danger
Rating today



Current Prohibitions
(within WMB
jurisdictional area)

Category 2 Open Fire

Fireworks, sky lanterns
and burn barrels ex-
cept in Haida Gwaii
and the 'Fog Zone'.

Go to:
www.bcwildfire.ca
for more information

WMB Strategic Plan– Optimum Organizational Structure and Resources

One of the goals when reviewing a fire is to determine the optimum organizational structure and number of resources required by a fire. It is ongoing and is part of the WMB's goal to maximize efficiency by optimizing service delivery, and maximizing resources and support tools.

Fighting fires of the type and in the numbers undertaken by the Wildfire Management Branch requires a system that helps determine the number and types of resources that would potentially be required dependent on the size and complexity of the fire.

Analysis of a variety of fires that includes historical data, helps to maintain an

At Coastal

On August 26, 2013, the campfire and Category 3 open fire prohibitions were lifted throughout the Coastal Fire Centre's jurisdictional area. Please go to: bcwildfire.ca for more information about the current prohibitions.

In Coastal many of our crews are leaving to return to school today. While much of WMB's workforce is made up of students, we also have a large contingent of employees who are contracted until the end of September or longer as required.

While the weather has certainly reduced the number of fire starts in Coastal, it has not eliminated the amount of work for crews. Crews will focus on fuels management projects, complete fire files, continue to patrol fires not yet declared out and monitor Modified Response fires. As time allows, crews will also complete any training or certification they require and maintain their fitness. All of this while remaining 'fire ready'.

Ten of the Heatseekers Unit Crew from the Pemberton Zone were deployed to Idaho on August 22 and are expected to return September 6.

With the weather expected to rebound by Sunday we ask everyone to be cautious with their campfires and familiarize themselves with their obligations for building and maintaining a campfire.

inventory of resources, equipment and other assets held for allocation to fires. As well as holding assets, a replacement strategy is necessary to maintain current inventory in good order. Then a plan for their distribution according to identified models can help allocate resources in anticipation of current and forecasted wildfire needs. This applies not only to allocating fireline equipment and personnel, but resources situated at a fire centre or at headquarters; any resources within the organization as a whole. Knowing that you have what you need, when you need it is invaluable.

http://BCWildfire.ca/Strategic_Planning

Weather

SYNOPSIS: Plenty of residual low level moisture from recent rains results in mainly cloudy skies this morning that partially clear in many areas through the afternoon while isolated showers linger over each zone (favouring upslope areas in a southwesterly flow). Clearing skies and good overnight recoveries likely lead to patchy fog in many areas Saturday morning. A more noticeable warming and drying trend begins across all but the far north on Saturday as the upper ridge continues to build over the Coast.

OUTLOOK: Weak outflow conditions Saturday night combined with ridging over the majority of the region allow temperatures in some mainland valleys to approach 30° Sunday afternoon while afternoon humidities dip below 25%. The upper flow pivots to more of a south-southwesterly flow Saturday night and Sunday, allowing for the potential for isolated showers or thunderstorms to track into the region, favouring the mainland zones south of Bute Inlet (but lightning over the Mid and South Island zones shouldn't be completely ruled out). An upper low advances slowly towards the Coast Monday and Tuesday, with bands of moisture and instability rotating northwards around the feature bringing variable cloud and a chance of showers or thundershowers, favouring the Island zones for generally more unsettled conditions while the Mainland could remain warmer and drier than average for the first week of September.

Have a safe weekend!