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Fire Response on Crown Land

The Coastal Fire Centre responds to wildfires within an area of approximately 12.8 million hectares, of which approximately 10.5 million hectares are Crown land.

Fire response, however, is not confined to Crown land. The Coastal Fire Centre has entered into a series of agreements with local governments, businesses, First Nations and the federal government to provide fire prevention, detection, control and extinguishment services.

According to the *Dictionary of Natural Resource Management*, Crown land is defined as “any land deemed to be the property of the Crown.”

Federal Crown land includes national parks and national historic parks and sites, land governed by the *Indian Act*, and (in general) public lands held by and administered by the federal government. The Wildfire Management Branch responds to fire on federal Crown land as part of a Wildfire Co-operative Agreement.

Provincial Crown land “is any land owned and under the administration of a provincial government”, which may include land within

municipal boundaries or regional district boundaries. The Wildfire Management Branch responds to all wildfires on provincial Crown land and also supports wildfire suppression on other public and private lands through a series of service and cost-sharing agreements.

The Wildfire Management Branch is the first responder for wildfires on any land owned or administered by the provincial government, but the jurisdiction of a fire site may not always be clear when the fire is first reported.

Due to a series of inter-agency agreements, however, a fire department and/or the Wildfire Management Branch may respond before the question of jurisdiction is clarified. Having predefined agreements in place helps determine each agency’s role and responsibilities before its crews reach the site of an emergency.

The Coastal Fire Centre has significant fire management expertise and considerable firefighting responsibilities on Crown land. The centre makes use of several agreements (some of which are described below) to prevent, detect, control and — where feasible — extinguish wildfires.

Fire Response on Local Gov’t Lands

In a document entitled *Wildfire Suppression with Local Governments* (produced as a Wildfire Management Branch Standard Operating Guideline), the responsibilities of both the WMB and local governments in suppressing wildfires are laid out in detail.

For example, when a wildfire occurs within a local fire department’s area of responsibility but that fire department requests assistance from the Wildfire Management Branch, WMB will make every reasonable effort to support and assist the fire department.

Conversely, when a wildfire occurs on Crown land and a local fire department responds, the fire department is entitled to receive compensation from the provincial government, provided the action was approved by the region’s fire centre.

Having established mutually advantageous working relationships with over 180 fire departments within the Coastal Fire Centre, the centre’s staff are able to respond to or assist with any wildfire emergency.

Cost-Sharing Agreements—Agreements between agencies or jurisdictions to share designated costs related to incidents. Cost-sharing agreements are normally written but may also be oral between an authorized agency or jurisdictional representatives at the incident.

- WMB Strategic Plan 2012-2017

Fire Response on Private Forested Lands

The scope of wildfire response on privately owned forested lands (i.e. land owned or leased by private companies, such as logging companies) is largely determined by Wildfire Response Agreements.

This type of agreement is reached between the relevant fire centre and an individual private corporation or company, or (in some cases) a local government that owns forested lands within its jurisdiction.

The party that enters into a Wildfire Response Agreement with the Wildfire Management Branch must provide a 24-hour contact number and a list of available firefighting resources. A site representative must be assigned to act as a liaison with the company’s management during a fire event. For larger organizations, a Fire Preparedness Plan also must be submitted.

To Date in Coastal	
Fires to Date	
Person Caused	15
Lighting Caused	0
Total Number of Fires	15
Number of Incidents Responded to	82
Fire Danger Rating as of June 7 2013	
	
Current Prohibitions (within WMB jurisdictional area)	
none	

Prescription—A written statement defining the objectives to be attained and the factors involved in aspects such as prescribed fire and silviculture treatments.

Effective Business Practices

One of the Strategic Goals identified in the *Wildfire Management Branch Strategic Plan 2012-2017* is to use effective business practices while carrying out the business of managing wildfires on the land.

As a part of this goal, two priorities are to use modern business practices and establish consistent business planning processes. Both of these priorities are important for maintaining organizational consistency and effectiveness. By identifying specific actions to improve the effectiveness of WMB’s business practices, the organization hopes to improve its performance in all areas. These business practices are defined in broad terms and they include staffing, financial and reporting procedures, as well as processes that provide consistency and meet high standards in all of the organization’s day-to-day business practices.

Developing business planning protocols that

tie together the *Wildfire Management Branch Strategic Plan 2012-2017*, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations’ service plan, employee performance plans and resource allocation mapping (all while maintaining cost-effective business processes) helps WMB reach its targets for organizational consistency and effectiveness.

Establishing solid business practices and then assessing and reporting on their effectiveness helps develop a standard that can serve as a model for all of that organization’s activities. Creating a benchmark and continually striving to improve on previous results is part of the framework adopted by the Wildfire Management Branch as it protects communities and natural resource values throughout British Columbia.

http://BCWildfire.ca/Strategic_Planning

At Coastal

Oh, what a difference a week makes! Last week at this time the Fire Danger Rating in the Coastal Fire Centre was predominantly very low. Today the ratings are low to moderate with a spot of high hovering over Pemberton.

Training is starting to wind down and project work is filling more of the crew’s time. Fuels management projects are currently underway in: Nymph Falls Regional Park, Oakdowne Regional Park, Gowlland Todd Provincial Park, Signal Hill, and Manning Provincial Park. Derek Lefler, Coastal Fire Centre’s Fuels Management Specialist tells us that in total 30 ha of land is, or has been identified, for prescription.



Weather

SYNOPSIS: Isolated showers associated with the tail end of last night’s frontal passage linger throughout parts of the fire centre this morning while a relatively strong westerly flow maintains control aloft. Isolated showers should continue to pop up through the afternoon (favouring the mainland) under a mix of sun and cloud, with somewhat more widespread precipitation expected for Haida Gwaii and upslope sections of the Mid Coast.

OUTLOOK: Little change in the pattern for Sunday as the slowly approaching upper low becomes centered over Haida Gwaii to maintain cool, cloudy, and potentially showery conditions for the northern reaches of the fire centre while areas to the south continue to see partly sunny skies, near or slightly above seasonal temperatures (low to mid twenties), and moderate afternoon humidity’s (30% or higher for the most part). As the upper low continues to track southeastwards Monday and Tuesday, bands of moisture and instability rotating around the feature will produce scattered showers and a good chance of thundershowers while other areas see mainly sunny skies.

6 TO 10 DAY: An upper trough should maintain generally cool and unsettled conditions over the majority of the region on Wednesday. A pacific ridge may approach from the west by Thursday or Friday bringing warmer and sunnier conditions, with recent guidance hinting at another upper low approaching from the northwest next weekend.