BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

Coastal Fire Centre wildfire News

- hot topics in Wildfire on the Coast

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In this Issue:

See detailed weather forecast—page 2

Types of Fires

Subsurface or ground fires burn on or beneath the forest floor. Fuels consist of duff (topsoil, partially decayed leaves, peat and tree needles) and decayed woody material at a depth that may vary from 8-10 cm (3-4") in dry areas to 1 m (3') in wet areas. Because these types of combustible material (ground fuels) are compact, have limited oxygen supply and are protected from wind, a persistent slow burning fire is produced and both fire suppression and mop-up become difficult.

Surface fires burn on and above the forest floor, but not in the crowns of trees. Fuels include ground debris, grasses, vegetation, windfalls, brush, slash, young trees and lower branches of standing timber. Forest growth up to 7.5 m (25') may be affected. The spread rate of fires depends on the density of these fuels, continuity and size of trees and underbrush, the slope of the terrain and the weather. With surface fires, fire suppression usually includes burning off fuels in front of the fire. Mop-up may vary from easy to difficult depending on the terrain and fuel types.

Crown Fires burn in the upper foliage and the crowns of standing timber in conjunction with surface fires. In some cases, a running crown fire may develop. This is a fire that travels through the tops of the trees ahead of the surface fire, and generally travels as fast as the wind pushing it.

Intermittent crown fires burn up towards the tops of trees as a result of intense heat from the burning material below. This "candling" effect occurs in light timber stands where the canopy is not continuous; and in open stands where the trunks of trees are covered with dead limbs, mosses or lichens that provide a ladder for the fire to climb. Candling will also occur in isolation where only the crown of one tree will burn. "Spotting," where embers are thrown ahead of the fire, also causes intermittent crown fires.To report a wildfire or unattended campfire call **1-800-663-5555 or *5555** on most cellular networks.

Fire Wardens

Despite the cooler weather, now is not the time to let your guard down. The Coastal Fire Centre is using every resource to combat the threat of wildfires. Fire Wardens are an important resource for detecting fires in areas that have a high fire risk.

There are approximately 300 fire wardens across British Columbia who are hired by the B.C. Forest Service on an "as-needed" basis where required. They are scattered across the province similar to an auxiliary police force.

Fire Wardens complement existing fire crews and fire zones by participating in initial attack operations, mop-up,surface patrol and other specialized roles.

Fire wardens have the authority of a fire official and may enter private land to put out fires. Fire wardens may be hired for specific roles or put on stand-by during busy fire periods.

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Vernon Lake Fire—August 2, 2009

Photo taken by: Kara Palangio

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wildfire News

To Date in Coastal	
Fires to Date	
Person Caused	158
Lighting Caused	339
Total Number of Fires Actioned	501
Hectares burnt	6608
Number of Incidents Responded To this year	1475
Fire Danger Rating	
High	
Be Safe!	

Smoke

Smoke from a wildfire is comprised of small particles, gases, and water vapour. Water vapour makes up the majority of smoke. The remainder includes carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and very small particles.

Prolonged exposure to smoke from wildfires can cause short-term effects such as stinging/watery eyes, coughing, and runny noses. BC Forest Service fire fighters must be in good physical condition, which helps to offset adverse effects of smoke inhalation in personnel.

If smoke from a wildfire spreads into an interface area, members of the public can protect themselves from smoke inhalation by adhering to the following rules of thumb:

- Use common sense. If it looks smoky outside, it is most likely a good time to remain indoors.
- If you are advised to remain indoors, keep your windows and doors closed.
- Run your air conditioner, if you have one. Keep the fresh air intake closed and the filter clean.
- Help keep particle levels inside lower by avoiding using anything that burns, such as wood stoves and gas stoves – even candles.
- Do not smoke. If you have asthma, be vigilant about taking your medication, as prescribed by your doctor. If you have been directed to monitor your peak flows, do so. Call your doctor if symptoms worsen.

Effects of smoke are not permanent. Healthy adults typically find that their symptoms (runny noses, coughing, etc.) disappear after the smoke has dispersed.

For more information go to:

www.airhealthbc.ca

Today at Coastal

In the coastal region of British Columbia, there have been a total of 501 fires in the 2009 fire season to date. 339 of those fires were started by lightning, 158 were human-caused, collectively burning a total of 6608 hectares to date. This figure represents approximately 2000% more hectares than the eight year average, and this fire season is not over.

Given the significant wildfire threat, campfire bans remain in place in the Coastal Fire Centre. In order to reconsider this policy an average 50mm of rain must fall over the entire region. There is a zero tolerance policy and those who ignore the campfire ban will be ticketed.

The public can help by staying out of the backcountry, obeying all burn bylaws and reporting any fires. This critical situation is not over and all citizens need to remain vigilant. Human-caused fires are preventable!!

Observe, Record, Report

Weather Forecast

SYNOPSIS—As an upper low that brought extensive showers and thunderstorms to Coastal zones yesterday slowly exits eastward the wettest place on our map is Allison Pass, normally one of the driest stations, where 35 mm has fallen so far. Elsewhere widespread sea fog or marine stratus shrouds the coast and inlets. Clearing will come this afternoon but may be very slow in some places. The clearing will be generated by a building upper ridge and this ridge will really push up over the next three days to bring another spell of hot summer weather. The stable moist layers under the ridge will still see extensive marine clouds tomorrow but then the clearing comes again, likely sooner than today, and all regions end up sunny and reasonably warm.

OUTLOOK.—The strong upper ridge brings the warmth and also helps deepen an inverted thermal trough along the west coast by Monday or Tuesday and this allows low afternoon humidity and poor overnight recovery which really dries the forest fuels quickly. Ridge continues to strengthen through the early part of next week.

LONG TERM TREND—Current projections show the ridge peaking around Thursday and then flattening and weakening slightly. Some models show it rebuilding next weekend while others show an upper low migrating up the coast. Take your pick, more heat and dry or maybe a threat of thunderstorms.