



BANFF NATIONAL PARK

FIRE & VEGETATION MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

No. 7 April 2009



Photo: Simon Hunt

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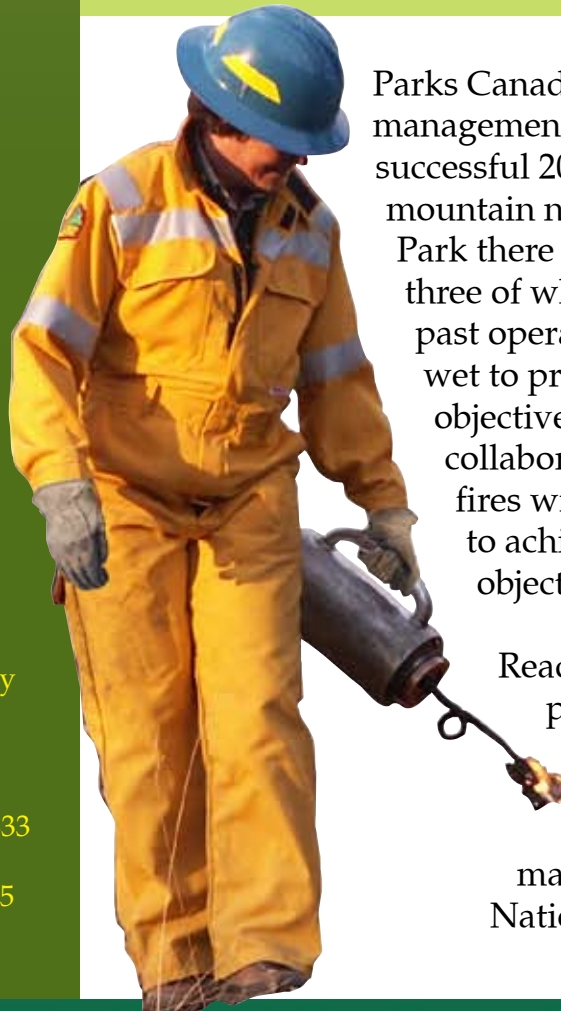
Park Websites:

www.pc.gc.ca/banff
www.pc.gc.ca/yoho
www.pc.gc.ca/kootenay

Information Centres

Banff (403) 762-1550
Lake Louise (403) 522-3833
Yoho (250) 343-6783
Kootenay (250) 347-9615

SPRING 2009 FIRE & VEG PROJECTS



Parks Canada's fire and vegetation management specialists are preparing for a successful 2009 prescribed fire season in the mountain national parks. For Banff National Park there are four prescribed fires planned, three of which are carrying over from past operational seasons that proved too wet to previously reach fire restoration objectives. Parks Canada is pleased to be collaborating on three of these prescribed fires with the Province of Alberta to achieve strategic and ecological objectives at a landscape level.

Read on to learn more about these prescribed fires as well as to find information on the upcoming wildfire season and an update on the mountain pine beetle management program in Banff National Park.



PRESCRIBED FIRES

Banff Field Unit

YA HA TINDA PRESCRIBED FIRE

As part of a long term strategy for management of the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch, a series of prescribed fires have been planned for areas in and around this federally-managed ranch and pasture lands. The Ya Ha Tinda Prescribed Fire is a collaborative effort between Parks Canada and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (AB SRD) and is a continuation of previous prescribed fire activities that began in 2007 with the interagency Hat Mountain Prescribed Fire.

The Ya Ha Tinda Prescribed Fire encompasses 5030 hectares (ha) of federal and provincial lands that is divided into nine subunits that are planned to receive fire restoration work during the next few years; this season's work will focus on units within federal lands. The objectives of this prescribed fire are to restore key vegetation types characteristic of pre-suppression landscapes, reduce the amount of susceptible mountain pine beetle habitat and contribute to a landscape-level firebreak that would help slow the spread of wildfire onto provincial lands. Backcountry trail riders will be impacted by trail closures on Ranch lands but every effort will be made to minimize the duration of closures and smoke (see the *Important Bulletins* section at www.pc.gc.ca/banff for information on current closures). Fire restoration work is scheduled to begin this spring.



MT. NESTOR PRESCRIBED FIRE

Parks Canada, AB SRD and AB Tourism Parks and Recreation (AB TPR) are entering their third year on this interagency prescribed fire west of the Spray Lakes Reservoir within Banff National Park and Spray Valley Provincial Park. Last summer a 1000-ha area of the Bryant Creek drainage was added to this prescribed fire for the management of mountain pine beetle populations. Fire activity in the Bryant Creek area of the prescribed



fire unit will occur after the August long weekend as conditions permit and will result in short term closures to the Bryant Creek campgrounds, shelter and trail. For information regarding closures in this area please refer to the *Important Bulletins* section of the Banff National Park website: www.pc.gc.ca/banff. For all other inquiries, contact Rod Gow, Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation at (403) 673-3663.

Lake Louise Field Unit

BAKER CREEK PRESCRIBED FIRE

This 800 ha prescribed fire is, once again, planned this fall for the Baker Creek Valley, two km east of highway 1A. Since 2007, due to unfavourable weather conditions, only 12 ha of the fireguard has been burned.

This project will serve to assist with restoration of grizzly bear habitat in upper Baker Creek, reduce mountain pine beetle populations in the upper Bow Valley, enhance natural fire barriers in this area and help restore the historic fire cycle in Banff National Park.

It will also provide some great opportunities to see a prescribed fire in progress. Park interpreters, with spotting scopes and fire information, will be stationed at key viewpoints during peak burn periods.

For more information contact Fire Communications at (250) 347-6174.



Photo: Simon Hunt

UPPER SASKATCHEWAN

A 2550 ha prescribed fire is planned for the Saskatchewan Crossing area of Banff National Park this season. This project is part of a larger prescribed fire being planned jointly with the Province of Alberta. The total project targets 7900 ha of forest along the north side of Highway 11 from the Icefields Parkway to the western edge of Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve and ignition could begin as early as May, weather permitting. Burning will help maintain and restore fire as an ecological process in this fire-adapted ecosystem. It will also reduce the potential threat of large wildfire in the area, and help limit the spread of mountain pine beetle into new habitat in Alberta.

For more information contact: Maria Sharpe, Fire Communications Officer, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development at (403) 845-8278 or Fire Communications, Parks Canada at (250) 347-6174.



Photo: Simon Hunt

If you or a member of your family has a smoke sensitivity and would like to receive advance notice of burning days, please contact Kathy Burden, Fire Communications Officer, 403-762-1447 or kathy.burden@pc.gc.ca, to be put on Parks Canada's Smoke Notification List



WILDFIRE SEASON 2009

With the thaw of spring our minds turn to thoughts of camping, hiking and the enjoyment of warmer weather. The thoughts of fire managers turn to the wildfire season - maintaining equipment, hiring fire crew personnel and monitoring our forest conditions to determine the potential for wildfire starts. While Parks Canada recognizes the importance of fire on the landscape, our first priority is the safety of people and property and it is the responsibility of all park users to be cautious with fire. To have a safe and enjoyable parks experience please:

- Be cautious with all sources of open flame;
- Keep campfires to designated areas and extinguish campfires completely before leaving;
- Dispose of cigarettes in the appropriate receptacles;
- Observe any posted fire restrictions and;
- Report any suspicious smoke or fire to Banff Dispatch at 403-762-4506.

MOUNTAIN PINE BEETLE

Natural Resource Canada's Canadian Forest Service has just released its annual Forest Conditions report for Banff National Park. The report summarizes the findings from the past season's aerial and ground surveys for forest insects and disease. The activity of mountain pine beetle in Banff National Park expanded in 2008 with over 7000 newly discoloured trees mapped throughout the park. Results from last season's overwinter mortality surveys indicate that the success of mountain pine beetle populations is variable across the park with some populations continuing to thrive (e.g. in the Fairholme area) while others are in decline (e.g. in the Turbulent Creek area). The report also indicates that mountain pine beetle populations are experiencing multi-year life cycles and delayed flights to new host trees.

Parks Canada's primary tool for the management of mountain pine beetle populations is prescribed fire, as it helps to manage for both current and future outbreaks while mimicking a natural ecosystem process. Prescribed fire helps to reduce the amount of susceptible mountain pine beetle habitat and promotes forest diversity, encouraging the growth of tree species not targeted by the mountain pine beetle (e.g. Douglas fir). Parks Canada will continue to work with federal, provincial and municipal governments as well as the forest industry in Alberta and British Columbia to manage mountain pine beetle populations for the future.

Did you know...

Mountain pine beetles are extremely well-adapted to cold temperatures. By developing a type of antifreeze in their systems and taking advantage of the insulatory properties of snow and bark, the beetles can withstand mid-winter temperatures of -40°C . The effect of the cold snaps experienced this winter will be determined during over-winter mortality surveys that are conducted annually in the spring.



For More Information:

Kathy Burden Fire Communications Officer

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e: kathy.burden@pc.gc.ca