



FIRE & VEGETATION MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER



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Information

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

Fire and Vegetation Management Winter Projects 2008 - 2009



***A**s the cold winds blow, Park fire managers are wrapping up prescribed fires and looking forward to fuel reduction work and mountain pine beetle initiatives. Here's what's happening in Banff National Park this fall and winter:*

For Banff Field Unit

Ya Ha Tinda Ranch Fuel Reduction

Sixty hectares of logging slash will be ground and piled as part of the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch firebreak. The completed fuel break will act as a barrier to the spread of wildfire toward Ranch infrastructure and will also provide a containment area for prescribed fire. Grinding began October 20th and will continue for approximately two weeks. Burning slash piles will likely take place this coming spring. (Cont'd on next page)



Lower Carrot Creek and Nordic Centre Fuel Reduction

- This winter crews will begin rehabilitating burn piles from last fall's fuel reduction work on this valley bottom fire break project located near the east park gates.
- Nearly 60 hectares of forest will be thinned on the south side of the valley, connecting thinning work adjacent to the Canmore Nordic Centre.
- The main objective of this work is to link to existing fuel breaks to reduce the threat of wildfire to neighbouring communities.

Dormer Prescribed Fire: Guard Work

- This fall, if wind and weather conditions permit, park fire crews will burn rows of trees that were cut to create a two-hectare guard for the Dormer Prescribed Fire.
- A solid fire guard is essential to contain fire when the main prescribed fire is ignited, likely to occur in the next 2-3 years.

Townsite Fuel Reduction

- Crews will burn piles from previous fuel reduction work below the Rimrock Hotel Resort this winter.
- Pile burning will take place over two to three days and smoke may be visible from the Banff Townsite during this time.

Moose Meadows Fuel Reduction

- Seven hectares of pine and spruce forest have been thinned between the railroad tracks and the 1A highway at Moose Meadows. Debris from this operation will be piled this fall and burned this winter.
- This work is part of a multi-year plan to reduce forest fuels and the threat of wildfire in an 87-hectare area.

Sulphur Mountain Fuel Reduction

- Crews will continue work on the northeast shoulder of Sulphur Mountain this winter, burning piles from past thinning operations on this multi-year 155-hectare firebreak.
- Pile burning will take place this winter over two to three days. Smoke will be highly visible from the Banff Townsite during this time.

Fall 2008 Fire Management Program Banff National Park





For Lake Louise

Moraine Lake FireSmart Thinning

- FireSmart work around Moraine Lake Lodge has begun. This work includes about 5 hectares of forest thinning, limbing and brush thinning next to buildings and facilities. The work will be completed before the cross-country ski season.
- The Moraine Lake Road will be closed to vehicle, bicycle and foot traffic effective October 14th until further notice.
- Further area or trail closures may be implemented if required for public safety.

Saskatchewan Crossing FireSmart Thinning

- Seven hectares of forest has been thinned, limbed, and cleared of brush adjacent to the Crossing Resort.
- Log hauling is scheduled to occur between late October and mid November.

Upper Saskatchewan Prescribed Fire: East Guard Work

- 100 hectares of guard burning has been completed on the east boundary of this prescribed fire unit. Work to widen this guard continues as weather permits.
- This prescribed fire is a joint project between Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Parks Canada.

Prescribed Fire Summary 2008

The cool and wet weather that dominated this summer offered little opportunity for achieving prescribed fire objectives. Banff National Park fire managers took the small windows of weather available to accomplish the following:

Carrot Creek Prescribed Fire

Total area of burn unit: 200 hectares (ha)

Total area burned in 2008: 200 ha

Status: complete

Thank you to all involved parks staff as well as to the Canmore, Banff and Exshaw fire departments for their efforts!

Mount Nestor Prescribed Fire

Total area of burn unit: 3300 ha

Total area burned in 2008: 600 ha

Status: will be revisited in the coming seasons

Other agencies involved: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation



Above: Crews receive daily fire briefing during the Carrot Creek Prescribed Fire, 2008.

Below: Crews monitor fire behaviour, Carrot Creek Prescribed Fire, 2008.





Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative Update Banff National Park

What role does the mountain pine beetle play in the ecosystem?

The mountain pine beetle is a forest insect that is native to western North America. Through colonization it can kill mature lodgepole pine trees. This natural process is important to the forest ecosystem because, as a natural disturbance agent, it encourages biodiversity. However, as a result of fire suppression and unseasonably warm winters we have seen an unprecedented population growth of the beetle in western Canada. This population explosion threatens the resource economies of provincial agencies. Parks Canada is in partnership with the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia as well as industry stakeholders to provide effective, proactive beetle management.

What is the mountain pine beetle currently doing in Banff National Park?

Aerial surveys reveal great variability in mountain pine beetle populations within Banff National Park. Populations are increasing in the Lake Louise and Spray/Bryant areas while populations are stable to declining in other areas. Although mountain pine beetle usually exhibits a one-year life cycle, populations within the park are being found in a variety of life stages at the same time.

What causes this variability?

Climate varies across the park. Climate is closely linked to beetle development and as a result we see beetles in various life stages at the same time. Another factor is the immigration of beetles from other areas. This may help to explain the increasing populations in the Lake Louise and Spray/Bryant areas where it is likely that beetles are arriving there from adjacent regions that have large concentrations of mountain pine beetle.

What are we doing about the mountain

pine beetle?

For the past six years, Banff National Park fire and vegetation management specialists have been concentrating efforts in short and long-term management zones.

The Short-Term Management Zone – located in the Bow Valley next to the east park boundary – contains beetle populations with great potential to expand and disperse onto neighbouring lands. Management includes cutting and burning colonized trees as well as baiting trees with pheromone which concentrates beetles in known areas. This year 80 pheromone baits were set, drawing beetles to 1079 trees that will be cut, piled and burned this winter.

The Long-Term Management Zone encompasses the remaining areas of susceptible beetle habitat in Banff National Park. Here, prescribed fire is used to reduce the amount of potential habitat and to create greater vegetation diversity across the landscape. Since 2002, large amounts of mountain pine beetle habitat has been safely burned within Banff National Park. Prescribed fire helps stabilize insect populations by mimicking a natural process while at the same time helping to restore ecological integrity.



Above: Orange dots represent locations of pheromone baits within BNP's Short-Term Management Zone for 2008.
Insets: Pheromone bait on a lodgepole pile tree and bait tree being cut by fire personnel.

For More Information:

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