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Below: The Monarch Mountain wildfire (V91119) was part of the Tweedsmuir Complex (see page 2)

## Coastal Fire Centre: season review

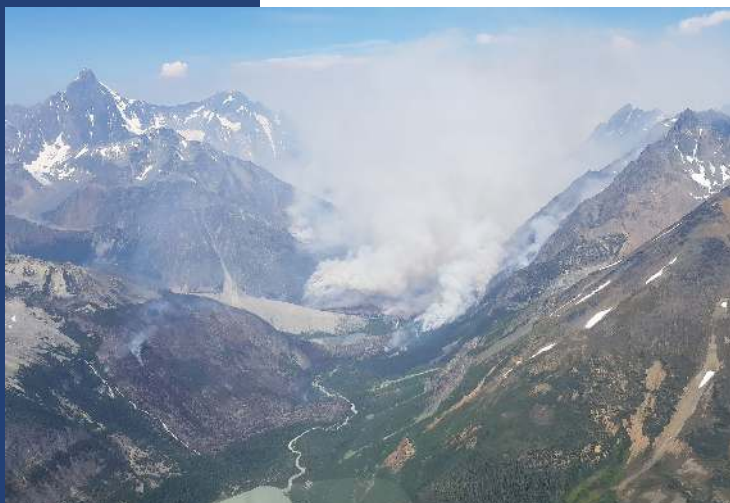
Hot and dry conditions throughout much of the late spring and summer of 2018 led to high (and, in some cases, record-breaking) fire weather and fire behaviour indices in the Coastal Fire Centre. These conditions, combined with a high number of lightning strikes, led to an above-average wildfire season in terms of the total number of fires and the number of hectares burned.

The number of wildfires this season is significantly higher than the 10-year average, due to a higher-than-average number of lightning-caused wildfires. However, the number of human-caused wildfires this season is in line with the 10-year average.

<i>*As of Oct. 4 for each year</i>	2018	2017	10-year average
Total number of wildfires	292	113	219
Total hectares burned	174,943	7,807	4,853
Human-caused wildfires	133 (46%)	99 (88%)	138 (63%)
Lightning-caused wildfires	159 (54%)	9 (8%)	81 (37%)

The most notable thing about the 2018 wildfire season in the Coastal Fire Centre has been the total number of hectares burned. It's about 36 times higher than the 10-year average.

Keep in mind that the total number of hectares burned, as reported in the chart above and on [www.bcwildfire.ca](http://www.bcwildfire.ca) for the Coastal Fire Centre (174,943 hectares), represents the area burned by wildfires that originated within the Coastal Fire Centre. This year, four fires in the northeastern portion of the Coastal Fire Centre crossed into adjacent fire centres, and one fire that originated in the Northwest Fire Centre crossed over into the Coastal Fire Centre. Therefore, the total area that has actually burned within the Coastal Fire Centre's boundaries this season amounts to 203,412 hectares.



Wildfires that cross fire centre boundaries can be more difficult to manage in a number of ways, since such a fire can affect areas, stakeholders and communities that are more familiar to one of the fire centres involved. If there are significantly more values at risk in one of the fire centres, that fire centre may retain or assume command of the wildfire. In other cases, large fires that cross fire centre boundaries and threaten values are sometimes most effectively managed by an incident management team, which takes much of the fire management workload off of the fire centres and fire zones in that region. Regardless of how cross-border fires are managed, a high level of co-ordination is required between the relevant fire centres.

### Coastal Fire Centre: season review cont.

Lightning-caused wildfires that burned in remote areas accounted for the vast majority of hectares burned in the Coastal Fire Centre this season:

- **Tweedsmuir Complex:** a number of modified response fires in and around Tweedsmuir Provincial Park that burned over **150,000** hectares
- **Silver Skagit wildfire (V12167):** a nearly **6,000**-hectare modified response wildfire in Skagit Valley Provincial Park, east of Chilliwack
- **Bishop River wildfire (V52153):** a **2,900**-hectare modified response wildfire that partly burned in Ts'il?os Provincial Park, in the northeastern Sunshine Coast area
- **Southgate River wildfire (V52370):** an **1,100**-hectare modified response wildfire near the head of Bute Inlet, on the Sunshine Coast

All of the wildfires in the above list were caused by lightning.



V52153-Bishop River wildfire



V12167-Silver Skagit wildfire



V52370-Southgate River wildfire

### Coastal Fire Centre: season review cont.

A number of other wildfires this season were notable due to a variety of factors:

- Lightning on Aug. 11 sparked over 60 wildfires on northern Vancouver Island, including:
  - \***Gold Valley Main wildfire** (V82441, **168** hectares): Located near the Village of Zeballos, this wildfire prompted an evacuation order and an evacuation alert, and created slope stability issues.
  - \***Pinder Creek wildfire** (V92443, **260** hectares) and **Larry Lake wildfire** (V92442, **20** hectares): These wildfires were notable due to their proximity to critical transportation corridors on northern Vancouver Island.
- **Nanaimo Lakes wildfire** (V62214, **182** hectares): This human-caused wildfire occurred west of Nanaimo and prompted an evacuation order and an evacuation alert.
- **Mount Hicks wildfire** (V12311, **427** hectares): Located adjacent to Highway 7 between Hope and Agassiz, this human-caused wildfire prompted an evacuation alert and impacted highway traffic.
- **Pendrell Sound wildfire** (V52889, **658** hectares) on East Redonda Island, **Tugwell Creek wildfire** (V60998, **84** hectares) northwest of Sooke, and **Arbutus Summit wildfire** (V72388, **30** hectares) in the Port Alberni area were all notable due to their location and visibility. All were human-caused.



Above: V62214–  
Nanaimo Lakes  
wildfire



Above: V12311–  
Mount Hicks  
wildfire



V52889-Pendrell Sound wildfire



V92443-Pinder Creek wildfire

### Provincial season review

The 2018 B.C. wildfire season is considered to be the worst on record, in terms of the amount of land that was burned. Hot and dry weather persisted in the province for much of the season and many areas received high numbers of lightning strikes. A provincial state of emergency was declared this summer, as it was during the summer of 2017.

Until this year, 2017 had been the worst fire season on record in terms of the amount of land burned. Although the totals for the 2017 and 2018 wildfire seasons are similar (over 1.2 million hectares burned in 2017 and over 1.3 million hectares in 2018), each of these fire seasons had unique characteristics.

In 2017, most of the wildfire activity was concentrated in the Cariboo Fire Centre, Kamloops Fire Centre and Southeast Fire Centre. Many of 2017's largest wildfires were sparked by lightning strikes that occurred in a single afternoon (July 7) in the Cariboo Fire Centre. Most burned areas were confined to a relatively small portion of the province.

During the 2018 wildfire season, however, all six regional fire centres experienced high levels of fire activity, and significant amounts of land were burned within each fire centre. Instead of most of the year's significant fires starting in a single day, they started over a period of weeks.

#### 2018 by the numbers:

Total wildfires	2,068
Lightning-caused wildfires	1,528 (74%)
Human-caused wildfires	497 (24%)
Area burned	1,349,730 hectares
Fires of Note	113

#### At its peak capacity, BCWS was utilizing:

Total personnel	4,756
Out-of-province personnel	961
Contract personnel	1,719
Aircraft	270

### Deployments and assistance

A relatively slow start to the 2018 season allowed the BC Wildfire Service to deploy some of its personnel to assist with flood response efforts in B.C. and also help with wildfire suppression efforts in Ontario and Quebec.

Once the B.C. wildfire season picked up, however, these types of deployments ceased. The BC Wildfire Service then received help from wildfire response agencies from elsewhere in Canada and from around the world, including:

- all Canadian provinces and territories except Manitoba and Nunavut
- United States of America (Washington state)
- Mexico
- Australia
- New Zealand

Canadian Armed Forces personnel also assisted the BC Wildfire Service during the 2018 wildfire season.

Fire Danger  
Rating today



Current  
Prohibitions  
(within BCWS  
jurisdictional  
area)

The Coastal Fire Centre no longer has any prohibitions in place. Local governments may still have their own burning restrictions in place, so always check with local authorities before lighting a fire of any size.

## What are Coastal Fire Centre crews doing now?

Many BC Wildfire Service firefighters are post-secondary students and have now returned to school. Our remaining firefighters are currently kept busy with a number of activities, including working on fuel management projects, assisting with prescribed burning, preparing vehicles and equipment for winter storage, and participating in debriefing sessions that discuss the successes, challenges and lessons learned from the 2018 fire season.

Although the fire danger rating is now “low” throughout the Coastal Fire Centre, firefighters may still need to respond to a new wildfire or a mishap related to Category 2 or Category 3 open burning. Crew leaders are completing their fire reports and ensuring that all paperwork from the current fire season is completed. In addition, BC Wildfire Service firefighters sometimes assist with landscape rehabilitation work related to wildfire activity.

## Fires without borders

Submitted by Kirsten Rowley

*Kirsten Rowley was one of the firefighters deployed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources in 2018 to assist with fire suppression in B.C. Her crew was sent to the Fraser Fire Zone and worked out of the Haig Fire Base near Hope.*

Our crew was extremely grateful to have the opportunity to represent the Washington State Department of Natural Resources in Canada and to be a part of the partnership with the BC Wildfire Service. We were welcomed by positive attitudes at the Haig Fire Base upon our arrival and were thankful for the outstanding hospitality provided by the community of Hope. Each member of our crew was impressed by our engagement with BC Wildfire Service crew members, who acted as great leaders, teachers and partners. They kept communications, tasks and objectives clear, while enjoying a few memorable laughs

here and there. Teamwork between the two agencies was successful on multiple levels — from boots on the ground to a voice on the radio. We were all enlightened and challenged by new Canadian fire terminology and excited to share new tactics and approaches with our home units in Washington. We recognized that the BC Wildfire Service holds safety as a top priority and employs a methodical approach to fighting wildfires that considers long-term consequences and includes the idea that “slow is smooth and smooth is fast.” A highlight of our time in B.C. was the use of helicopters, since many of us had never been in one and never thought we’d get the chance. We saw that they were highly efficient in getting gear and firefighters on and off the fireline and recognized the importance of their availability for medical emergencies from multiple, prebuilt landing sites constructed around wildfires. Smiles were a hot commodity when flying to and from a fire. We were excited to have the opportunity to be in B.C. and to be a part of the partnership between the BC Wildfire Service and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. We’d like to extend our appreciation to the community of Hope, the team of individuals who hosted us at the Haig Fire Base and the entire BC Wildfire Service for making this opportunity possible.



Above: BCWS and Washington Department of Natural Resource firefighters working on the Mount Hicks wildfire