

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Fire Centre Update: Dry conditions continue
- Crew fire operations
- Keeping up with the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre
- Harnessing technology: Developing a drone strategy
- Fire Weather Forecast
- At Coastal

### CURRENT STATISTICS

Fires to-date: 121

Human-caused: 106

Lightning-caused: 15

### BANS AND PROHIBITIONS

**Campfire:** In Effect

**Category 2:** In Effect

**Category 3:** In Effect

**Forest Use Restrictions:** No Ban

[Prohibitions section of bcwildfire.ca for full details.](#)

## Fire Centre Update

### Dry conditions continue

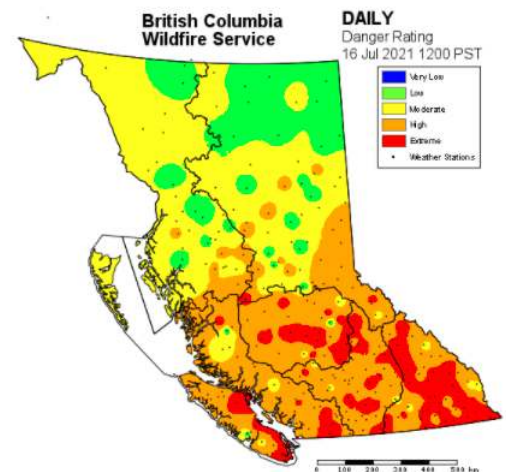
BC Wildfire Service moves crews, personnel and equipment where needed, while taking into account the resource requirements of each fire centre throughout the province. The Coastal Fire Centre has deployed a total of 118 personnel to areas of the province hardest hit with wildfires. These include a combination of BC Wildfire and other government employees, while ensuring Coastal has retained enough personnel to manage current and new incidents as they occur.

While the Coastal Fire Centre is experiencing cooler temperatures, this weekend it is not an indicator of overall forest health. The area remains largely in High/Extreme fire danger. With the minimal amount of showers expected, it will not decrease the fire danger for more than a day.

We are asking all residents and visitors within the Coastal Fire Centre in to help the rest of the Province by:

- Abiding by all prohibitions—no open fires are currently allowed.
- Using a propane device instead of an open fire or briquettes, both of which are not currently allowed.
- Being cautious when doing any outdoor work or activities.

Wildfire prevention is a shared responsibility and all human-caused fires are not only preventable but divert critical resources away from naturally caused fires such as lightning fires. We appreciate every effort made by the public to prevent human-caused fires and to report any wildfires immediately to: 1-888-663-5555 or \*5555 on your cell phone.





### Crew fire operations

The BC Wildfire Service employs more than 1,100 Type 1 firefighters who annually respond to nearly 1,600 wildfires on behalf of the Province of B.C.

All BC Wildfire Service firefighters are trained to Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) standards and are required to complete the Canadian Performance Exchange Standard for Type 1 Wildland Firefighters (the WFX-FIT Test). Given their high level of skills and experience, Type 1 firefighters can be deployed or imported nationally or internationally through mutual aid agreements. The majority of wildfires in British Columbia are responded to by three-person initial attack crews. When a wildfire grows beyond initial attack resources, 20-person unit crews perform sustained action.

The type(s) of initial attack crew deployed to fight a wildfire depend on a variety of factors, including location, terrain, size and fire behavior. The BC Wildfire Service has two types of specialized initial attack crews: parattack (parachute attack) crews and rapattack (rappel attack) crews.

#### Initial attack crews

Initial attack firefighters operate as part of a three-person crew and are usually the first on scene of a new wildfire. Once there, the initial attack crew works quickly to set up water pumps, remove fuel from the fire's path and dig fire guards to control or extinguish the blaze. There are about 450 BC Wildfire



Service initial attack firefighters stationed throughout the province, strategically

placed in areas of high fire danger or high fire activity. Initial attack crews are highly mobile and are often relocated to help fight wildfires throughout the province.

#### Unit crews

Unit crews operate in 20-person packs and are specialized to perform sustained action when a fire has grown beyond initial attack resources. Unit crews establish pump and hose lines, dig fire guards, burn off fuel from the fire's path, and use chainsaws to cut fuel breaks and remove danger trees. There are 30 unit crews throughout the province of B.C.; and like their initial attack counterparts, unit crews are highly mobile and can be called away to work in areas of high fire activity. For wildfires in remote locations, or those which require a high level of response for an



extended period of time, unit crew personnel may live in a temporary fire camp and work for 14 days in a row.

## Crew fire operations continued



### Parattack crews

Parattack crews parachute to fires in hard to access locations from fixed-wing aircraft. Fixed-wing aircraft can transport more personnel and equipment, faster and over greater distances than other modes of transport. Based out of the Prince George Fire

Centre in Fort St. John and Mackenzie, parattack crews can respond anywhere in the province within two hours.



### Rapattack crews

Rapattack crews rappel and/or hoist from rotary-wing aircraft (i.e. helicopters) in order to perform initial attack fire suppression on often otherwise inaccessible wildfires. The Rapattack Program is based out of the Kamloops Fire Centre in Salmon Arm, which is centrally located for the majority of wild-

fires that require Rapattack response.

### Get to know a fire fighter

We had a chance to interview firefighter, Nolan Wallace, within the Kamloops Fire Centre.

### How many years have you worked for BC Wildfire Service?

I have worked with the BC Wildfire Service since 2016, so this will be my 6<sup>th</sup> season.

### What crews have you worked on?

I started as a crew member on a unit crew in the Merritt fire zone but also worked a season as an initial attack crew member in the Kamloops fire zone. This season I am back in the Kamloops fire zone as an initial attack crew leader.

### After being on both a unit crew and an initial attack crew, which one do you prefer and why?

I think I will always be partial to being on a unit crew. In my experience on unit crews, crew members are often able to learn from more experienced firefighters on their crew and are exposed to numerous training opportunities that can help them improve both operationally as a firefighter and grow on a personal level. . However, I do like the variability of work tasks that comes with smaller initial attack targets.

### What is the main difference between the two types of crews?

With 20 people on a unit crew they can get a lot of work done in a short amount of time, so they typically end up on larger sustained action fires. Where as initial attack is about getting to the fire early before the fire grows beyond the capabilities of a three-person crew. They are more frequently dispatched in helicopter to reduce response time to the incident.



Nolan Wallace 2020

## Keeping up with the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre

The BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) employs approximately 1,000 seasonal firefighters each year and is internationally recognised as a leader in wildfire management. Most wildfires in British Columbia are quickly contained and extinguished by BCWS staff; however, at times where wildfire activity is beyond manageable, additional support from other jurisdictions may be called upon. Conversely, if fire activity is low, BCWS may provide resources and assistance to other agencies, be it in Canada or internationally. These arrangements are made possible by the [Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre](#) (CIFFC).

CIFFC, a not-for-profit corporation owned and operated by federal, provincial and territorial wildland fire management agencies, coordinates requests for assistance and provides operational forest fire management services to its member agencies. Members are made up of the provincial, territorial and federal (Parks Canada and the Canadian Forest Service) agencies responsible for wildfire management in Canada. Through Mutual Aid Resource Sharing Agreements, additional national and international resources are available as needed to ensure the BC Wildfire Service and other wildfire management organizations in Canada have the capacity to manage their respective wildfire situations. CIFFC and its members have arrangements with the United States, Australia, Mexico, New Zealand and South Africa to receive or provide wildfire support.



CIFFC Members at a briefing for a deployment to Australia in 2019.

If BCWS experiences a period of heightened wildfire activity and requests assistance, the cost is covered by the B.C. government. Should BCWS staff be called to aid another agency, the receiving jurisdiction is responsible for the cost. Any CIFFC member or partner agency must be trained to CIFFC standards, be committed to safety and go through a briefing prior to activation.

Beyond resource sharing, CIFFC also facilitates wildland fire cooperation between partner agencies. BCWS participates on several working groups and management committees supporting the collaboration and integration of wildland fire in Canada. Through exchanges and experiences with other organizations, knowledge is shared on topics such as fire management planning, program delivery, human resource strategies, innovation, research, aviation, fire sciences, prevention, training, meteorology and geospatial services. The opportunities that arise from interacting with other agencies help individuals develop new skills and help our organization learn new strategies to effectively manage wildfire in a constantly changing environment.

## Harnessing technology: Developing a drone strategy

In Canada, drones or other unmanned aerial vehicles are officially called Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS). Drones are regulated by Transport Canada and require a valid pilot certificate to be able to fly them. In the provincial government, the RPAS program is managed by GeoBC within the Natural Resource Ministries (NRM). There are around 300 pilots in this group that manage 150+ drones of various sizes. The program has an operations manual that guides all operations and contains information on controls, procedures for legal and safe operations, and support for productive operations. This group is how the BC Wildfire Service accesses drone pilots for use in a wildfire setting.

There are many restrictions that the average user must follow when flying a drone including keeping the aircraft in line of sight, under 400 feet of elevation, and away from all emergency operations such as floods or wildfires. However, pilots in the NRM RPAS program have advanced authorizations that allow them to fly out of line-of-sight and up to 2000 feet of elevation, and in emergency response areas. Due to the additional complexities of active wildfires, and the increased probability of encountering crewed aircraft, there is currently no allowance to fly RPAS on active wildfires. The BC Wildfire Service is trialling new procedures to allow RPAS use while a wildfire is actively being responded to.

Currently, the provincial government has a few main applications for RPAS use including situational awareness, photography, videography and surveying/mapping. There are many other uses that RPAS can offer including lifting equipment, any type of sensor or camera, access to remote locations, etc. Creativity is the limit when it comes to drone applications. The BC Wildfire Service has a few specific uses for drones that are regularly used on wildfires. These include hotspot detection for enhanced mapping products, perimeter mapping, and image capture. This is all made possible through infrared scanning on fires overnight. Additional uses for RPAS are being researched and trialled by the BC Wildfire Service.

## Fire Weather Forecast

**Issued: 1130PDT Friday July 16, 2021.**

**SYNOPSIS:** (Today-tomorrow) Difficult forecast today as a major change in the pattern takes place. Low clouds invaded all zones overnight flowing inland ahead of an approaching upper trough. The trough or front itself is now lying from Tweedsmuir Park, south between Bute and Toba Inlets, to the upper Strait of Georgia and across Vancouver Island over Port Alberni to south of Tofino. Its drifting slowly east over northern sections and gradually southeast over Vancouver Island. Radar returns show only spotty shower activity associated and some stations, where it has already passed, have had no rain and others only one or two millimetres so far. The forecast charts show the front washing out in the next few hours with no rainfalls reaching east of Whistler or south of Nanaimo. The front is wrapped around an upper low pressure centre lying west of Haida Gwaii (Honna has only recorded 0.6 mm so far) and will be followed by another surge or front tonight. The second band of rain looks no heavier than the first but may penetrate further into the interior valleys tomorrow and a bit more south along the island. Amounts will remain slight. Both today and tomorrow sees little significant instability over Coastal zones while the interior plateau becomes marginally unstable. There could be an isolated thunderstorm over eastern Tweedsmuir Park both today and tomorrow. The main effect on the weather is the cooler temperatures and higher humidity today and tomorrow. Also, the pressure gradient is forecast to pack up this afternoon, especially over the eastern Fraser zone, and local winds reach 20-25 km/h for a few hours.

**OUTLOOK:** (Sunday-Tuesday) Although the low near Haida Gwaii remains stationary, the clouds and rain rotating around it appear to shift further north on Sunday. Southern areas see extensive sunny periods and warmer temperatures, a few showers continue over the north. Monday looks mostly sunny and warm as well but the low pressure centre starts shifting southward. This brings the beginning of a sub-tropical flow. The most active part of the convective flow will be over the southeast BC interior but Coastal could see some activity in the Manning Park area. Little change in the pattern Tuesday with a weak southwest flow and only marginal instability expected.

**6 TO 10 DAY:** (next week) Sooner or later the low will cross the coast and migrate to Alberta and that may be Wednesday or Thursday, allowing a weak ridge to redevelop in its wake. As the system moves east a deep trough crosses the coast and this brings a convective pattern late next week. The following ridge will not bring the kind of dry heat we have seen for the last few weeks but only a return to typical summer weather, a mix of cloud and sun and slightly warmer than normal temperatures.

### Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP)

The Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) hotline should be used to report wildlife-human interactions where public safety may be at risk.

The RAPP program is a toll free tip line and online service that also allows you to report known or suspected violations of fisheries, wildlife, or environmental protection laws anonymously and without risk of confronting the offender. Available 24/7, RAPP is simple, safe and effective.

Go to: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/natural-resource-law-enforcement/conservation-officer-service/cos-rapp>

**Or call: 1-877-952-7277**

## Contact Information

**Report a Wildfire: \*5555 on a cell or 1 800 663-5555**

**Wildfire Information Line: 1 888 3FOREST**

**Burn Registration Number: 1 888 797-1717**

**Information Officer Phone Number: 250-951-4209**

**Information Officer Email:**

[BCWS.CoFCInformationOfficer@gov.bc.ca](mailto:BCWS.CoFCInformationOfficer@gov.bc.ca)