# Metro Vancouver Wildfire Workshop

MAY 8, 2026 (9:00 – 12:00)

Welcome! We will start the workshop momentarily.

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# Agenda

9AM - Noon

Part 1: 2026 Seasonal Update

Part 2: From Insight to Action: What Coexisting with Wildfire means in B.C.

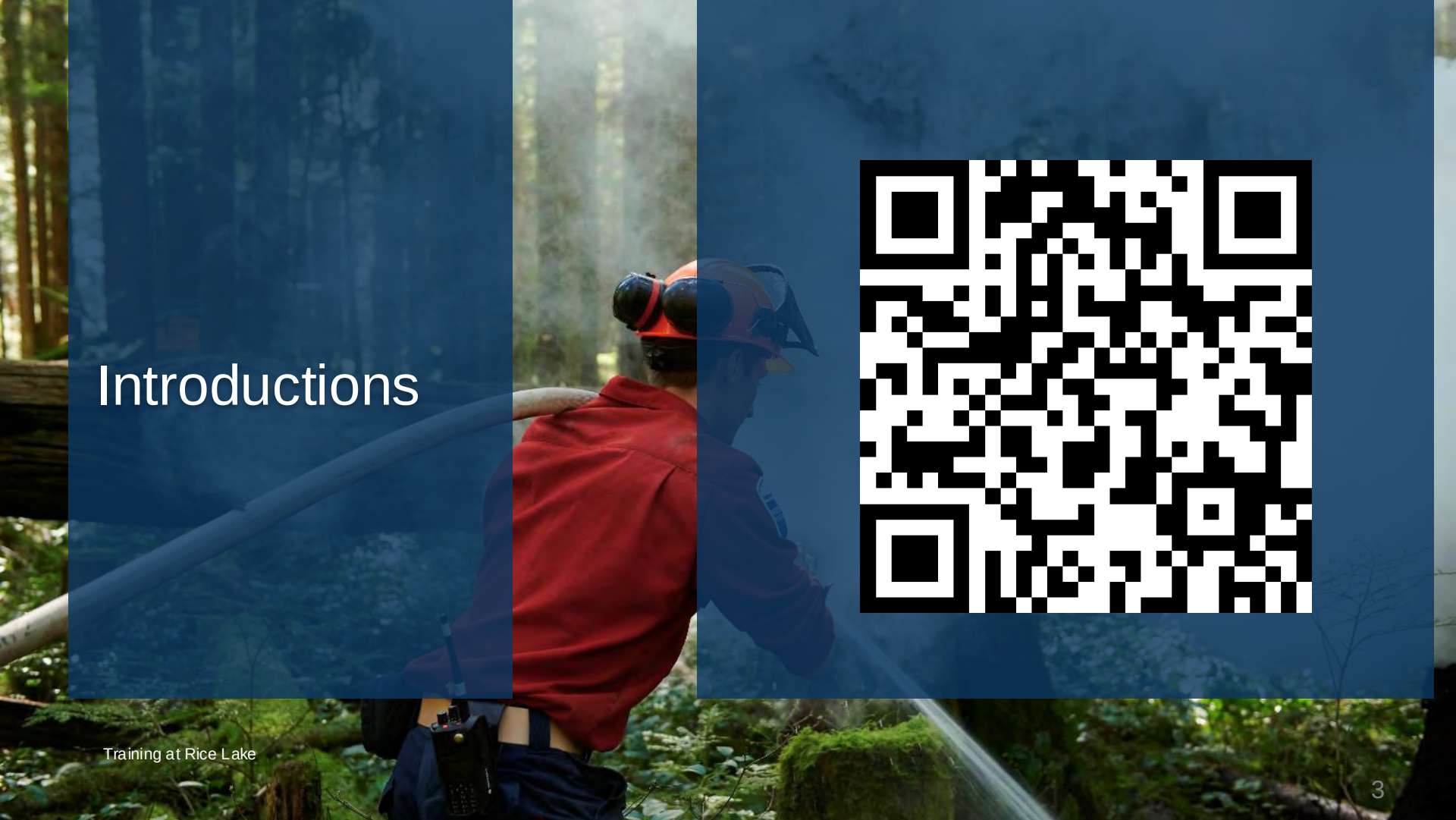
Part 3: Lessons from the Frontlines: 2025 Wesley Ridge and Mount Underwood Wildfires

BREAK (10 min)

Part 4: Advancing Cultural and Prescribed Fire: Building Capacity for Resilience

Part 5: Mental Health and Resilience Among Wildland Firefighters

# Introductions



# Part 1:

## 2026 Seasonal Update

Greg Boyachuck, Senior Officer – Operations, BC Wildfire Service

Collin Ko, Superintendent, Watershed Protection, Watersheds & Environment, Metro Vancouver

# Coastal Fire Centre

## Season Outlook 2026

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC Wildfire Service

# BCWS Headquarters & Fire Centres

Headquarters
(Victoria and Kamloops)
6 Fire Centres
33 Fire Zones

Provincial Depots
(Chilliwack and Prince George)

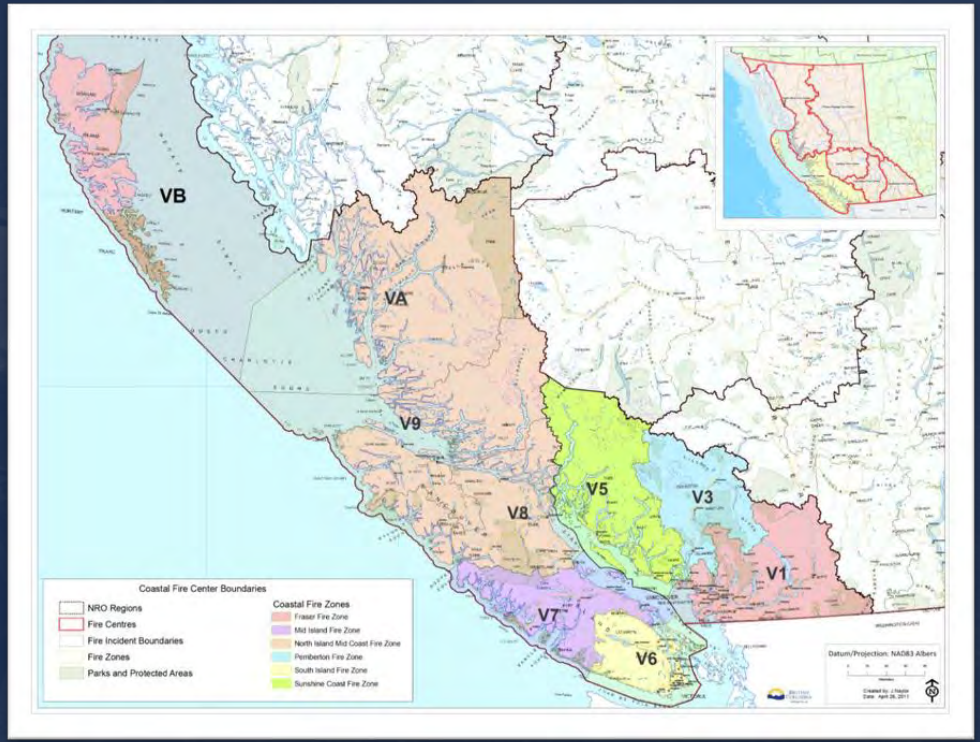
# Coastal Fire Centre
# Staff Resources & Locations

# CoFC Jurisdiction

Approximately 16.9 million hectares:

West of the height of land on the Coast Mountain range from the U.S./Canada border at Manning Park to the northern border of Tweedsmuir Park South, including the lower mainland, Sunshine Coast, Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Haida Gwaii.

*EMCR regions: Vancouver Island Coastal and Southwest region.



# Zone Offices & Bases


**Fraser Zone(V1, VB)**

- Cultus Lake Zone Office
  - Haig Base (Hope)
  - Boston Bar - seasonal
  - Haida Gwaii – seasonal

**Pemberton Zone (V3)**

- Pemberton Zone Office
  - Squamish Base

**Sunshine Coast Zone (V5)**

- Powell River Zone Office
  - Sechelt Base

**SouthIsland Zone (V6) •**

CobbleHill Zone Office

**Mid Island Zone (V7)**

- Errington Zone Office
  - Port Alberni Base

**North Island/Mid Coast Zone (V8, V9, VA)**

- Quinsam Fire Zone Office
  - Mid CoastBase (Bella Coola) - seasonal

# 2025 Season Statistics

# How does 2025 compare to other significant wildfire seasons?

| Province-wide Statistics | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total wildfires** | 2,245 | 1,683 | 1,374 |
| **Hectares burned** | 2,840,420 | 1,074,238 | 886,348 |
| **Evacuation orders** | 208 | 51 | 42 |
| **Evacuation alerts** | 386 | 112 | 91 |
| **Suppression costs** | ~$817 million | ~$621 million | ~$510 million |
| **Total days on provincial state of emergency** | 28 (Aug 18 to Sep 14) | 0 | 0 |

All values are approximate and subject to change

# 2025 Season CoFC Statistics

Total number of fires:
**229**
Total human-caused:
**137**
Total lightning-caused:
**92**

# CoFC Fires of Note 2025

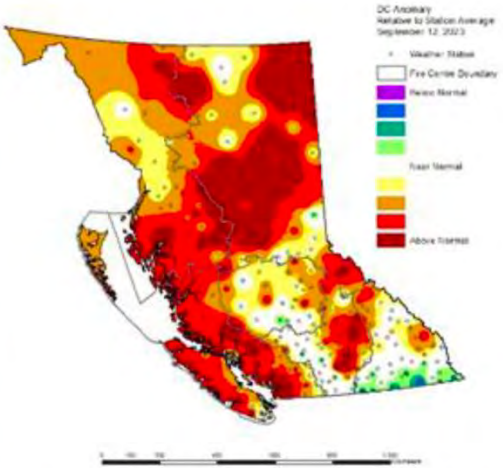
- **V30558 Dryden Creek**
- **V71498 Mt. Underwood**
- **V71145 Wesley Ridge**
- **V11110 Bear Creek**

*Fires of Note are significant and generally highly visible and/or a threat or potential threat to structures & critical infrastructure.*

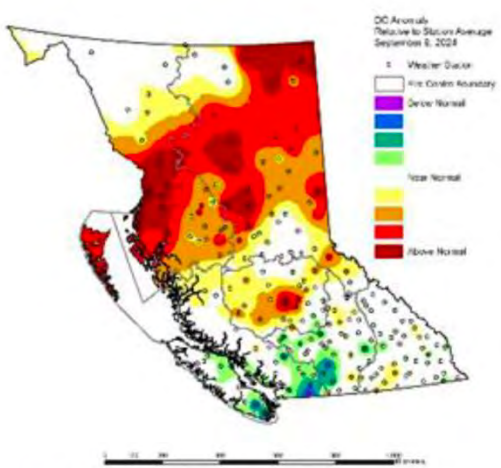
# 2026 Seasonal Wildfire Outlook

# Fuel Conditions and Weather Events

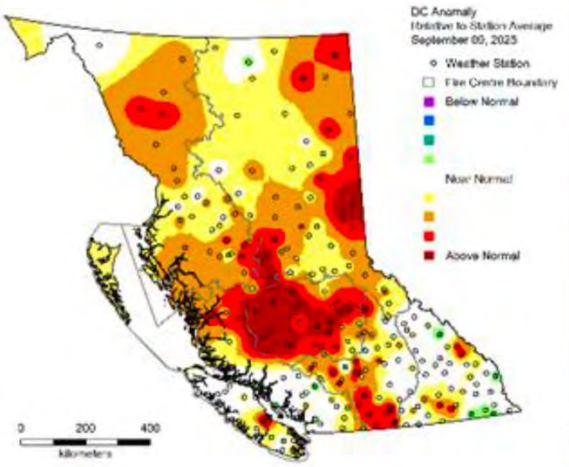
Drought conditions have created challenges in the last three years.




Drought Condition Anomaly
2023



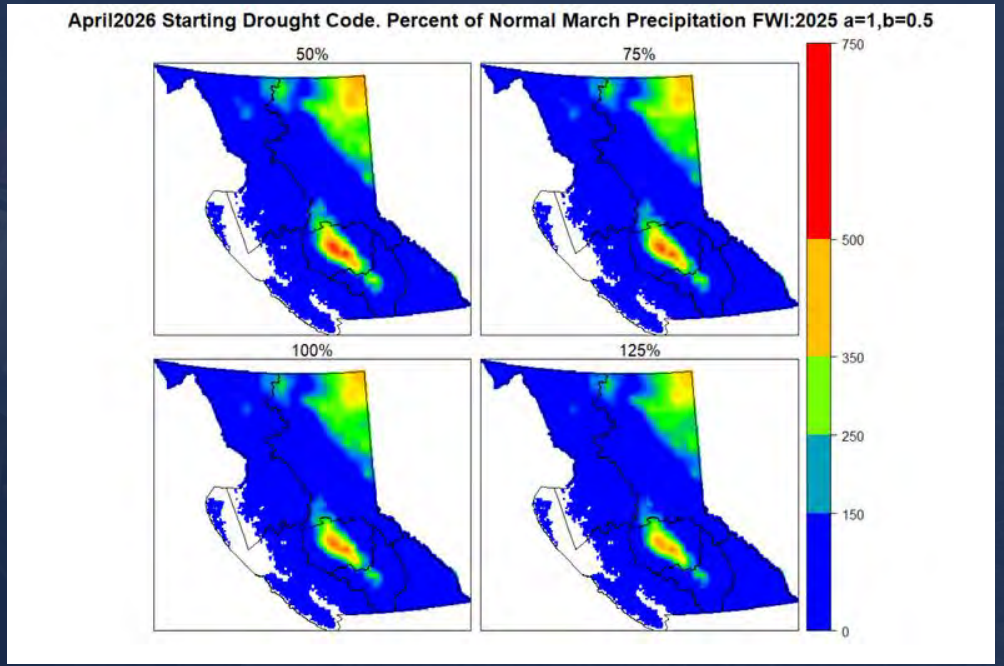

Drought Condition Anomaly
2024




Drought Condition Anomaly
2025

# Start-up conditions spring 2026

- High Drought Code values can indicate extreme fire behaviour potential and difficult to control wildfires.
- Even with normal spring precipitation, we anticipate that the Northeast, the Chilcotin, and the South Thompson will carry elevated Drought Code values into spring 2026.

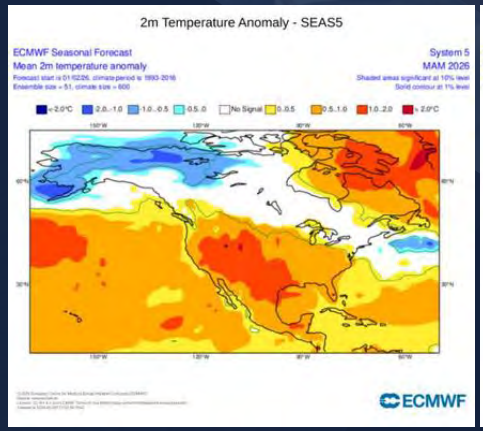



Projected April 1, 2026, Drought Code start up values under various spring precipitation scenarios

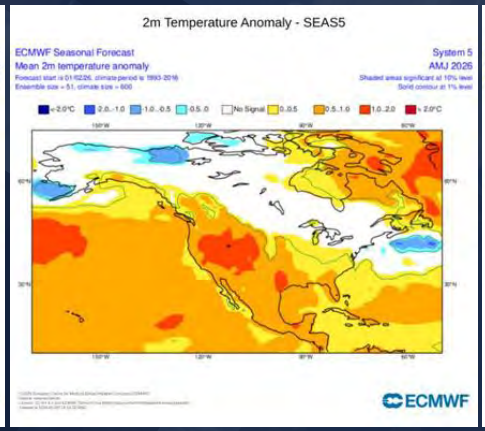
# Spring-summer temperature outlook

- Long-term guidance favours warmer-than-normal temperatures into the spring and summer
- Forecast temperature anomalies of 0.5 to 1.0 C above average for April to July 2026

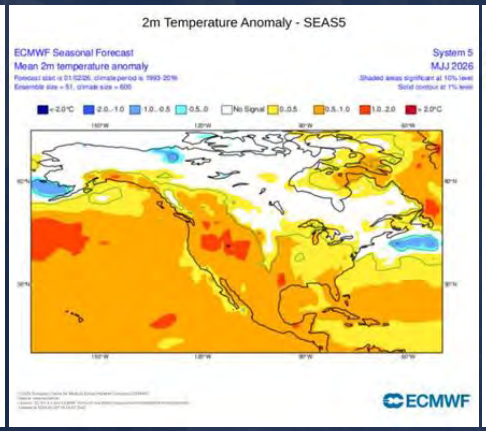
**April 2026**



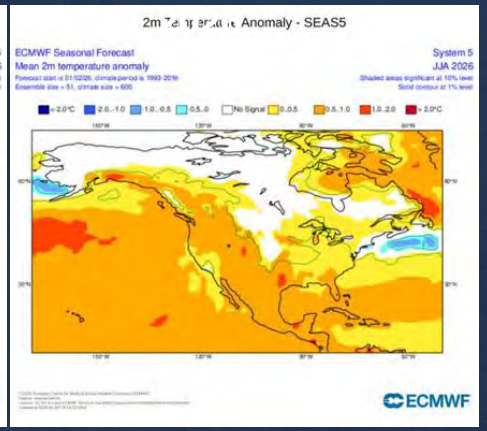

**May 2026**



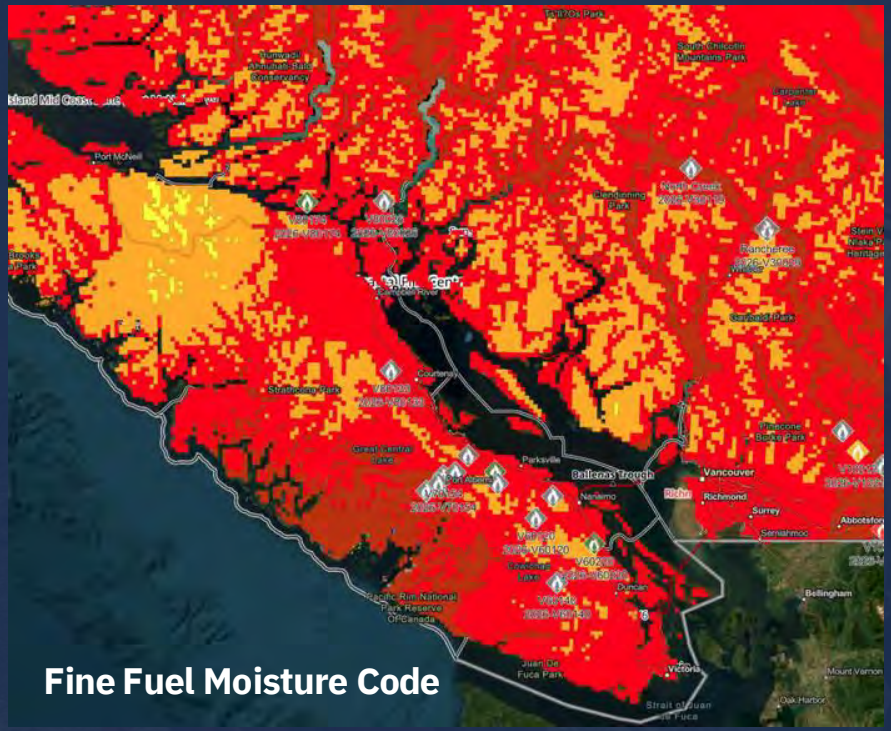

**June 2026**

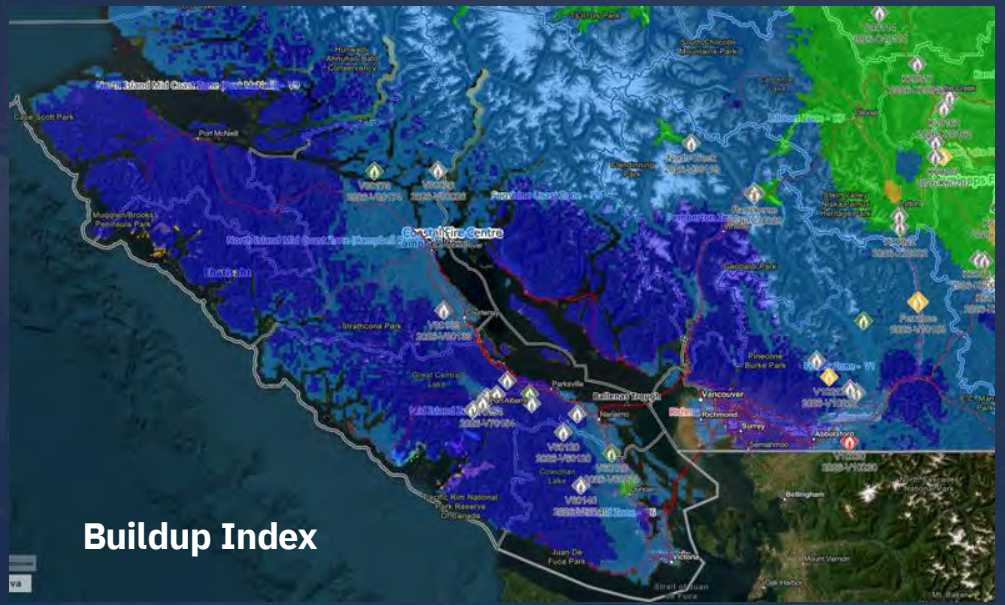



**July**



# Current Conditions (May 2026)



# 2026 Spring Outlook Key Points

- Wetter-than-normal conditions recorded for B.C. in December prior to freeze-up alleviated drought conditions for the majority of B.C. including the Coast and the Southeast.
- Moderate drought conditions exist in western parts of the Cariboo Fire Centre (Chilcotin) and the Kamloops Fire Centre.
- Higher-than-normal winter freezing levels have resulted in record low snow at valley bottom. This increases the likelihood of early season grass fires in Interior valleys.
- The severity of the 2026 wildfire season will depend on the spring (May and June) precipitation.

## 2026 COFC Wildfires:

30+ Fires

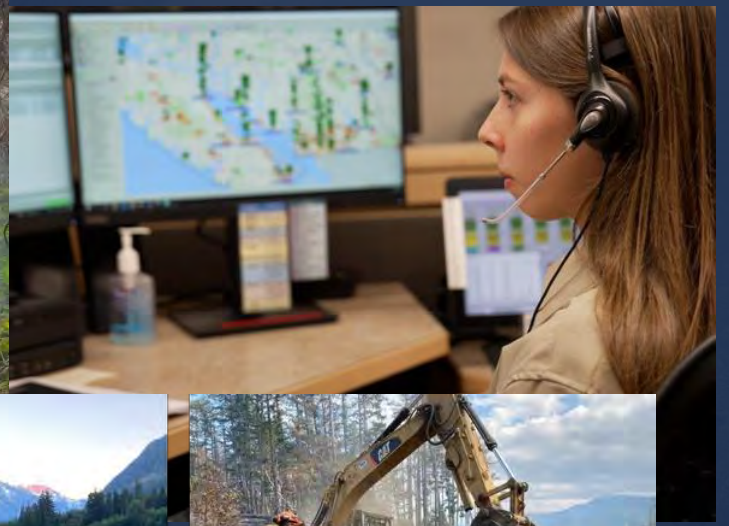
150+ Ha

Double the 10 year average for April

# 2026 Coastal Fire Centre Preparedness

# Weekly Resource Planning is based on:

- Current/forecasted weather and fire behaviour conditions
- Number of wildfire starts - current and forecasted given weather and other factors
- Requests for assistance by other areas of province. BCWS is a Provincial organization and is mobilized where most needed.
- Substantial Resources Available;
  - 26 Initial Attack Crews
  - 5 Unit Crews
  - Officers and Support Staff
  - Contracted Resources
  - Aviation Assets



# Open Fire Prohibitions

Why does the Coastal Fire Centre implement open fire prohibitions?

-Implemented to limit risk of a wildfire or a public safety concern.

-Typically implemented:

- ➢ When forest fuels dry out to the point where deep burning is expected for an extended period
- ➢ When the BC Wildfire Service cannot affordtoriskhavinghuman-causedfires

THANK YOU.

# Questions?

BRITISH COLUMBIA | BC Wildfire Service

# Metro Vancouver – 2026 Seasonal Update

Collin Ko
Superintendent, Watershed Protection
MV Regional Wildfire Forum

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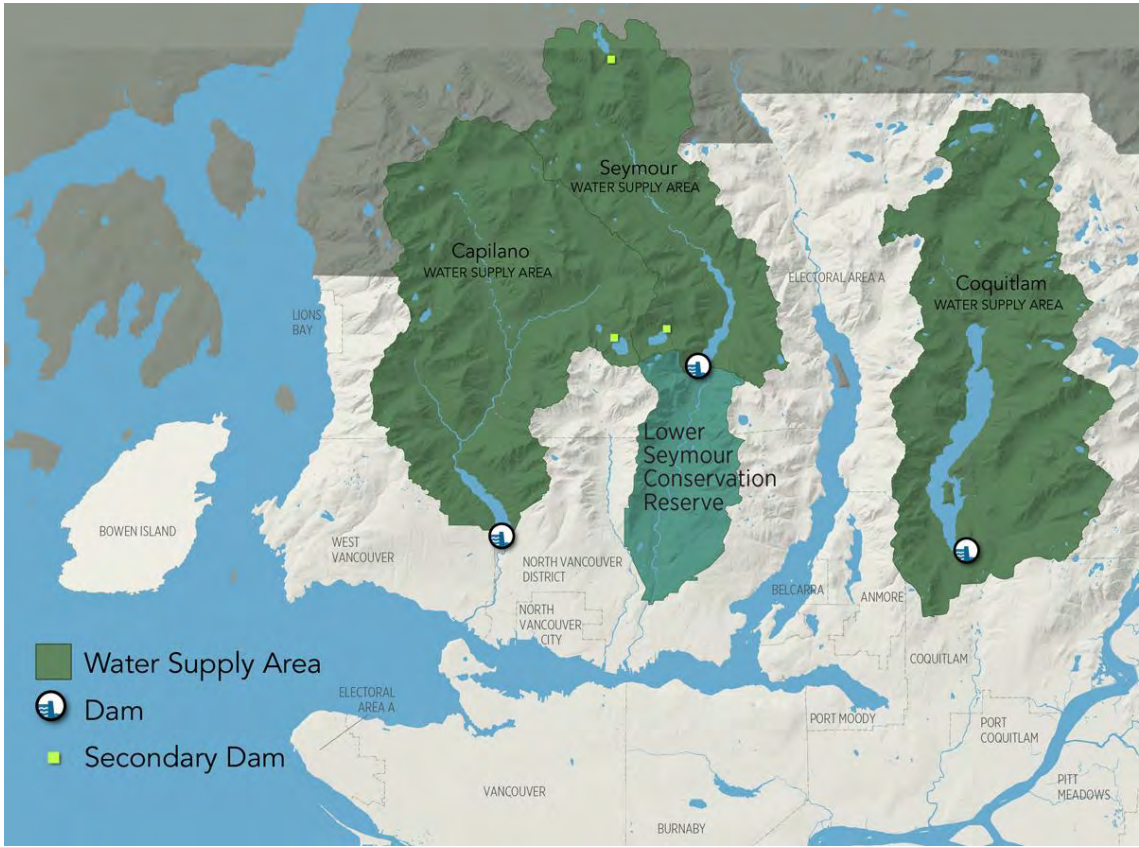
# METRO VANCOUVER WATER SUPPLY AREAS

## Watershed Protection

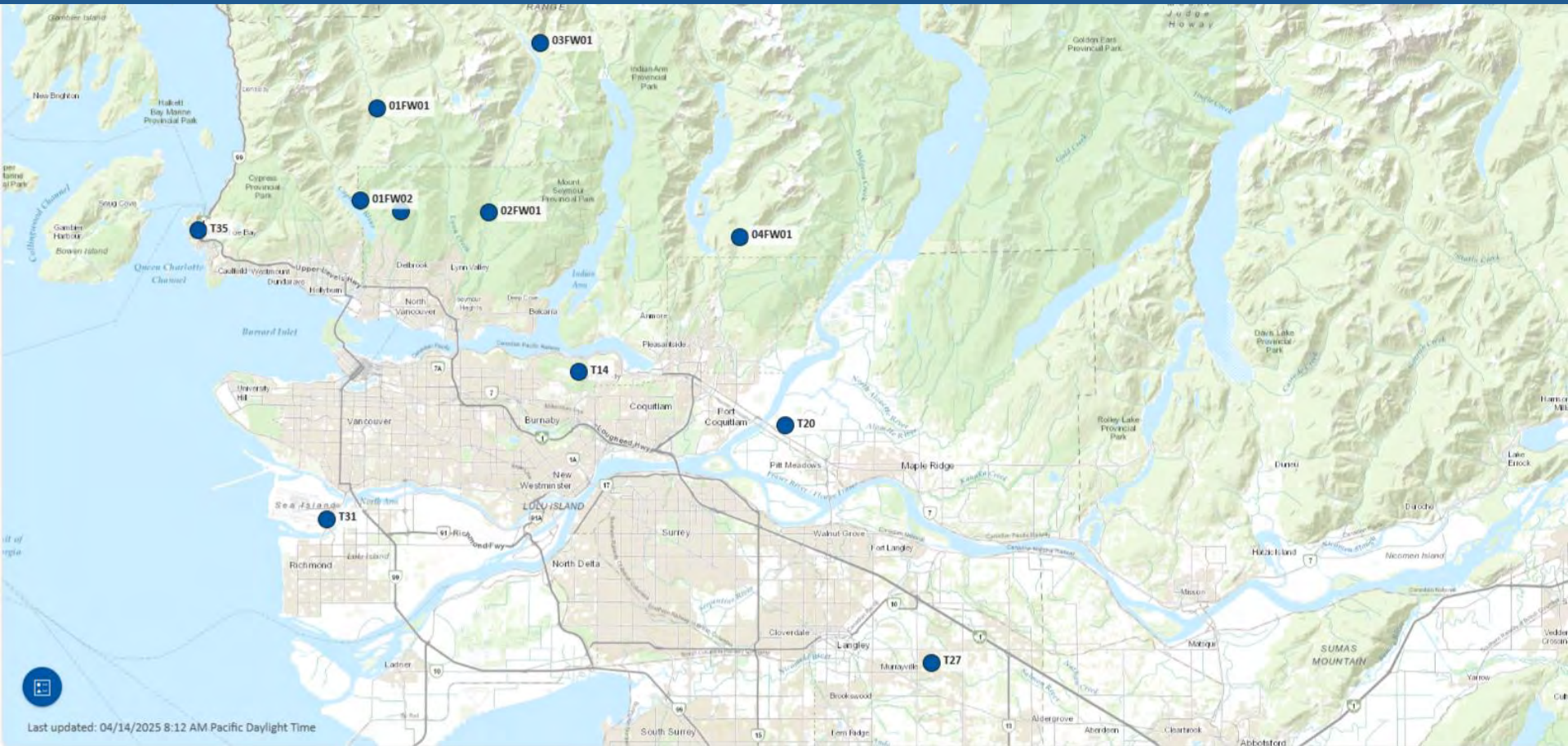
60,000 Hectares Total

- 19,545 Capilano
- 12,735 Seymour
- 20,451 Coquitlam
- 5,668 Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve



# CREW & RESOURCES

# WEATHER MONITORING STATIONS:



# KEY REGIONAL RISKS – 2026 SEASON

## Low Snowpack

## Early Drying

## Hot/Dry Summer

## Human Ignition

# SNOWPACK

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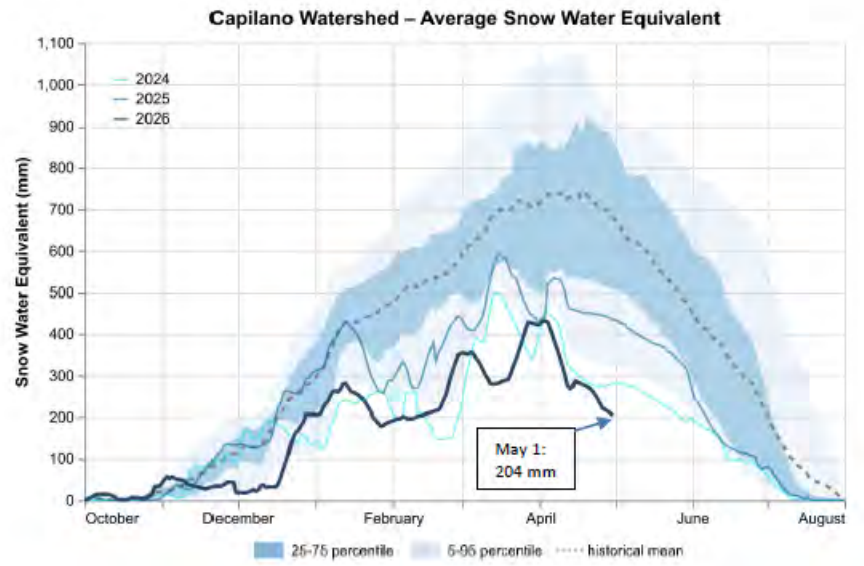
# 2026 SNOWPACK ANALYSIS:




| Snow Course | Elev. | Survey Date | Current SWE (mm) | Historical Avg. SWE (mm) | Percent of Normal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Palisade Lake | 900m | Apr 30 | 411 | 1417 | 29% |
| Dog Mountain | 1040m | Apr 30 | 408 | 1102 | 37% |
| Disappointment Lk | 1050m | Apr 30 | 872 | 1478 | 59% |
| Grouse Mountain | 1100m | Apr 30 | 432 | 1270 | 34% |
| Orchid Lake | 1180m | Apr 30 | 857 | 1863 | 46% |

## Update:

## May 1 - 2026

Watershed snowpack abnormally low

***2026*** – 44% of historical average

***2025*** – 73% of historical average

Lowest snowpack since 2015

# LOCAL SEASONAL OUTLOOK

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# LOCAL SEASONAL OUTLOOK?

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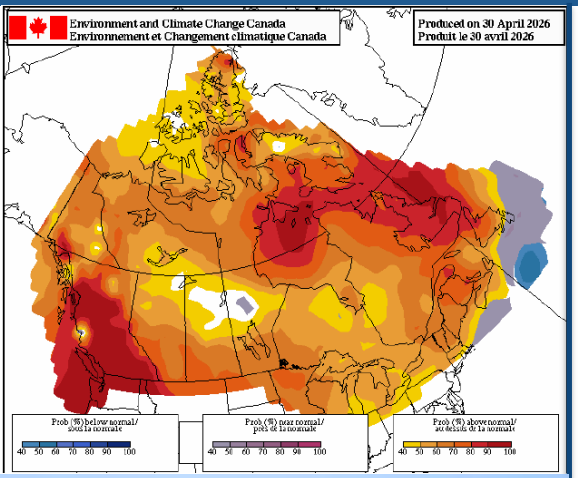
# SEASONAL FORECAST:




## Spring Weather

Warm Early-Season

*May - Heat Wave*

## Summer Outlook

El Niño

Persistent Ridging

Warmer and Drier Summer

*Not guaranteed*

## HOW ARE LOCAL CONDITIONS SHAPING PREPARDNESS?

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# RESPONSIBLE WATER USE:


**Residential**

**Lawn watering is prohibited**

**Watering trees, shrubs, and flowers** is permitted any day from 5:00 am to 9:00 am if using an automatic or manual sprinkler, or any time if hand watering or using drip irrigation. Hoses must have an automatic shut-off nozzle.

**Vegetable gardens** can be watered any time.

**Stage 3 water restrictions are expected to begin in early June**

# PREPAREDNESS & MITIGATION

Inter-Agency Coordination

Training & Exercising

Hazard Mitigation Projects

Managing Projects & Public Behavior

# INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION





Public Messaging & Behavior Coordination

Fire Conditions Meetings

Strategic Partners Working Group

Participation in Municipal Meetings

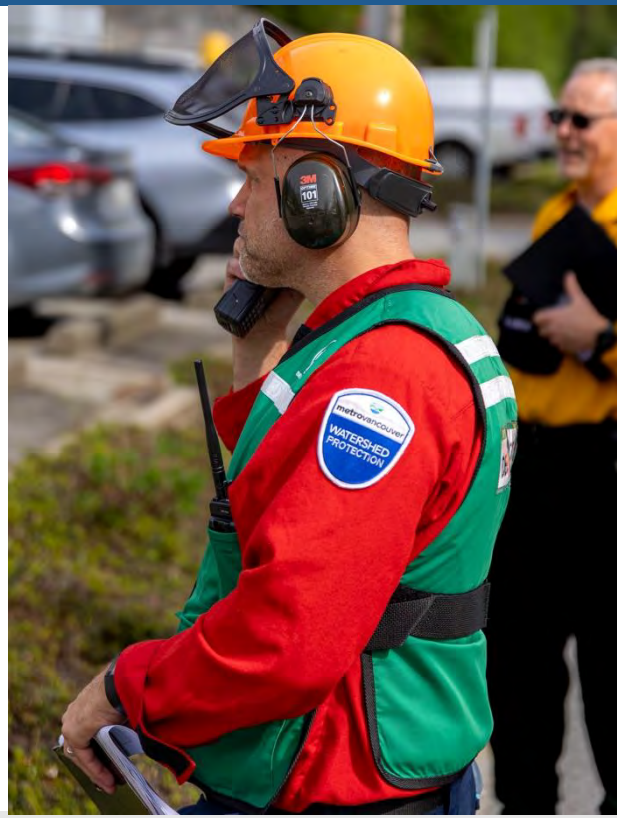
BCWS Resource Sharing

# TRAINING

S100 – Wildland Fire Suppression Training

Watersheds & Regional Parks

Wildfire Incident Management Team (WIMT)



# EXERCISES


**DNV-FD**

Operation Wolf

**MV - MRFD**

Kanaka Creek Wildfire Exercise

# PUBLIC BEHAVIOUR & PROJECT WORK


## Public Messaging & Guidance

Synchronized Messaging

Smoking, Fire & BBQ Restrictions

## Project Guidance

Regulation of Work Practices in WSAs

Fire Suppression Equipment

Shift Management

Project Shutdowns

# HAZARD MITIGATION PROJECTS - FUEL MANAGEMENT

Capilano / 69kV

Fuel Management Project

Hemlock Looper Moth

Fuel Reduction

# QUESTIONS?

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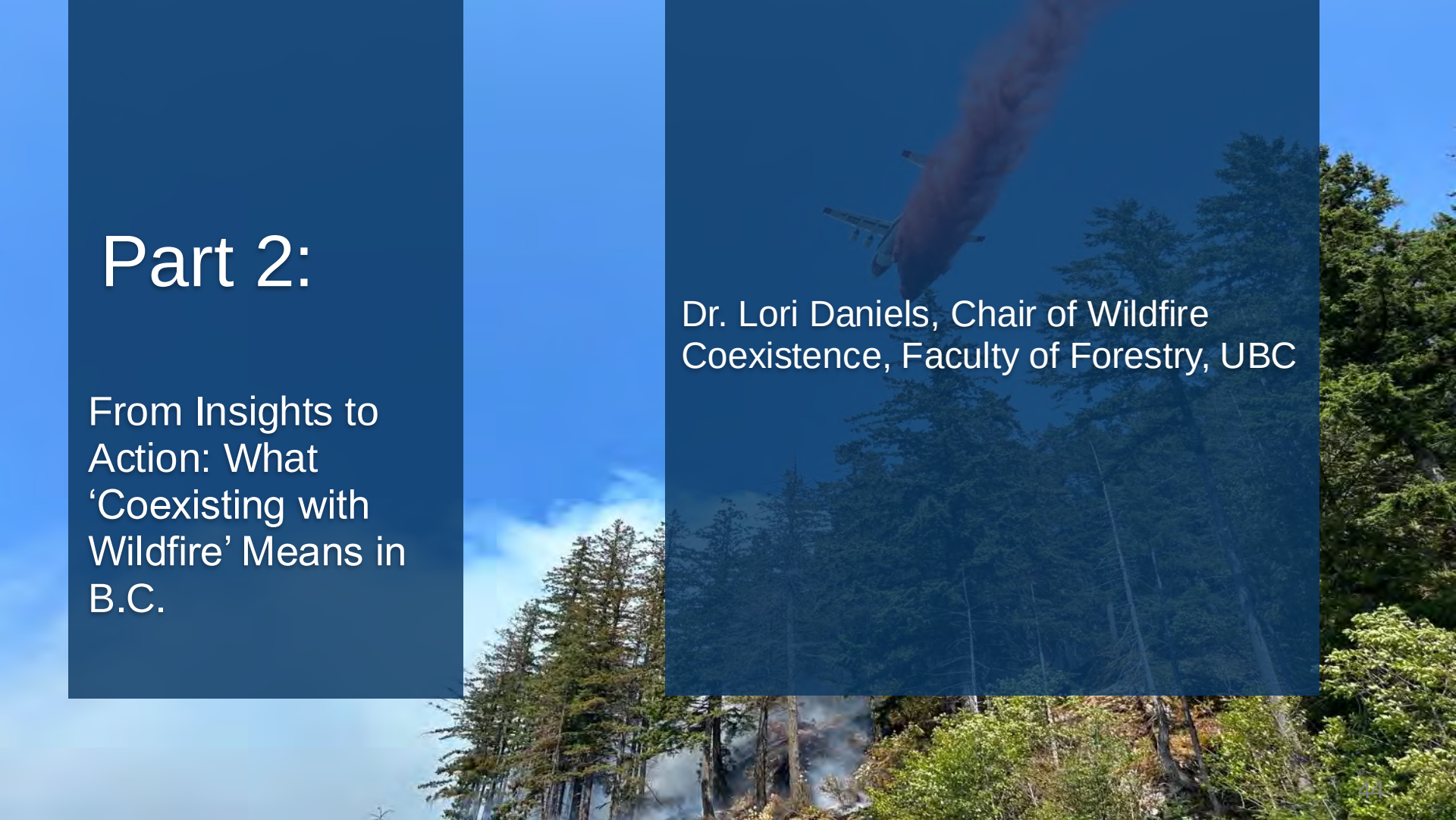
# Part 2:

From Insights to Action: What ‘Coexisting with Wildfire’ Means in B.C.

Dr. Lori Daniels, Chair of Wildfire Coexistence, Faculty of Forestry, UBC



# From Insight to Action: What Coexisting with Wildfire Means in BC


Centre for Wildfire Coexistence
University of British Columbia

**Dr. Lori Daniels, Koerner Chair in Wildfire Coexistence**

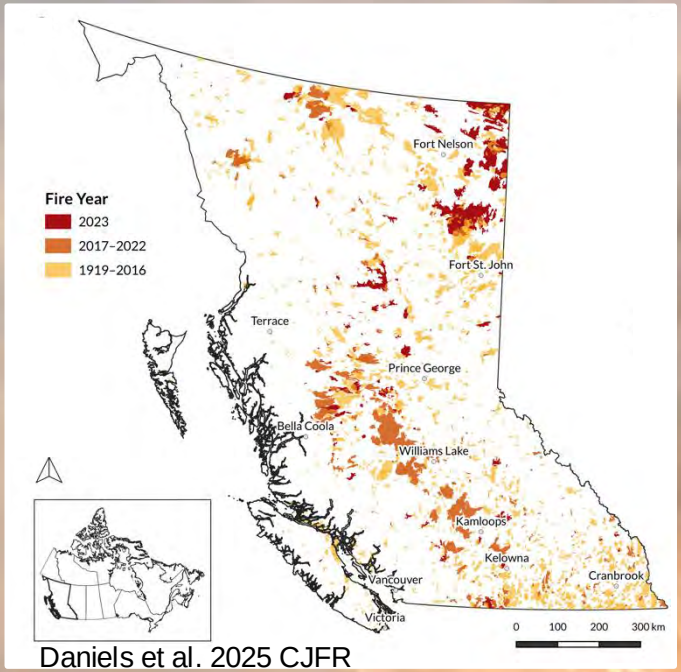
**Faculty of Forestry, University of British Columbia, Vancouver**


**UBC is on the Ancestral Lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm sḵwx̱wú7mesh & səlilwətaɬ**

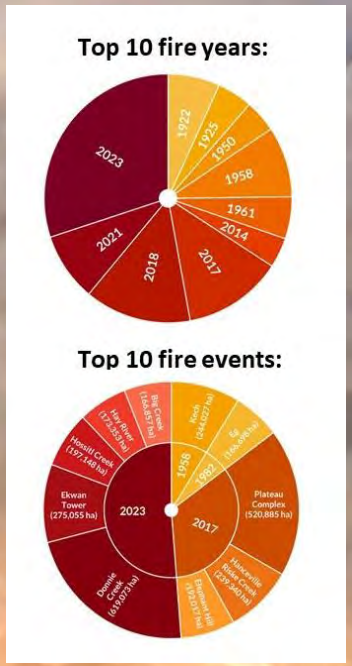
**Metro Vancouver 2026 Wildfire Workshop , May 2026**

**Photo: BC Wildfire Service**

# Escalating Wildfires in British Columbia

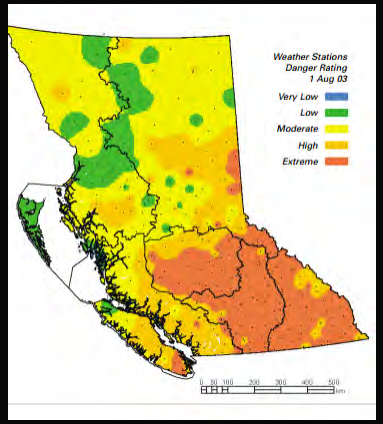



Daniels et al. 2025 CJFR



# Weather and wildfires in BC keep setting new records
# Fire Danger maps show High to Extreme conditions

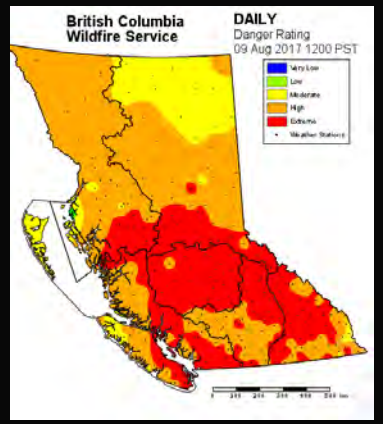
**Firestorm 2003**
(old benchmark)
August 2003




2500 fires
265,000 ha burned
$371M to suppress

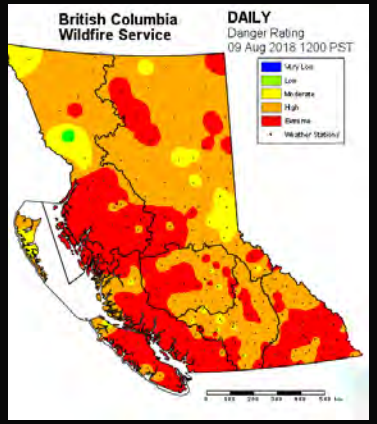
**States of Emergency 2017 + 2018 + 2021 + 2023 – Our New Reality**

August 2017



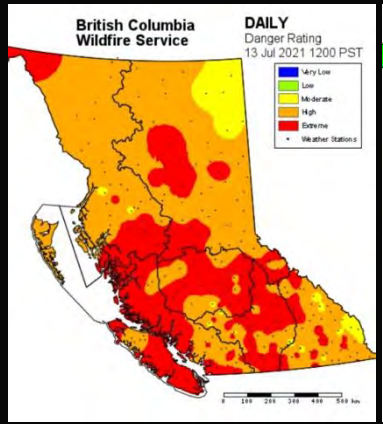

1353 fires
1,216,053 ha burned
$649M to suppress

August 2018



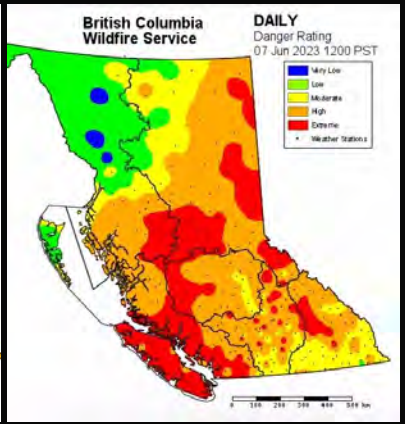

2117 fires
1,354,284 ha burned
$615M to suppress

July 2021




1642 fires
868,203 ha burned
$719M to suppress

June 2023




2245 fires
2,840,545 ha burned
$1B to suppress

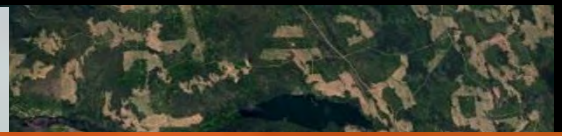
# Condition of Forests & Landscapes

Cumulative effects of forest and fire management across individual trees, stands, and landscapes

# Landscape Condition & Climate Change

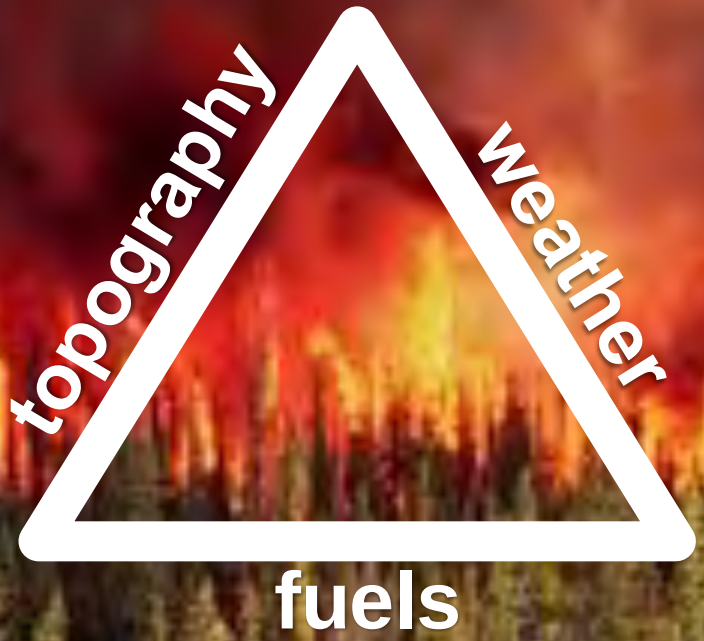
Cumulative effects of forest and fire management
disturbance cascades and ecological surprises






# “Wildfire Behaviour Triangle”

## fire type, intensity, rate of spread, severity, effects



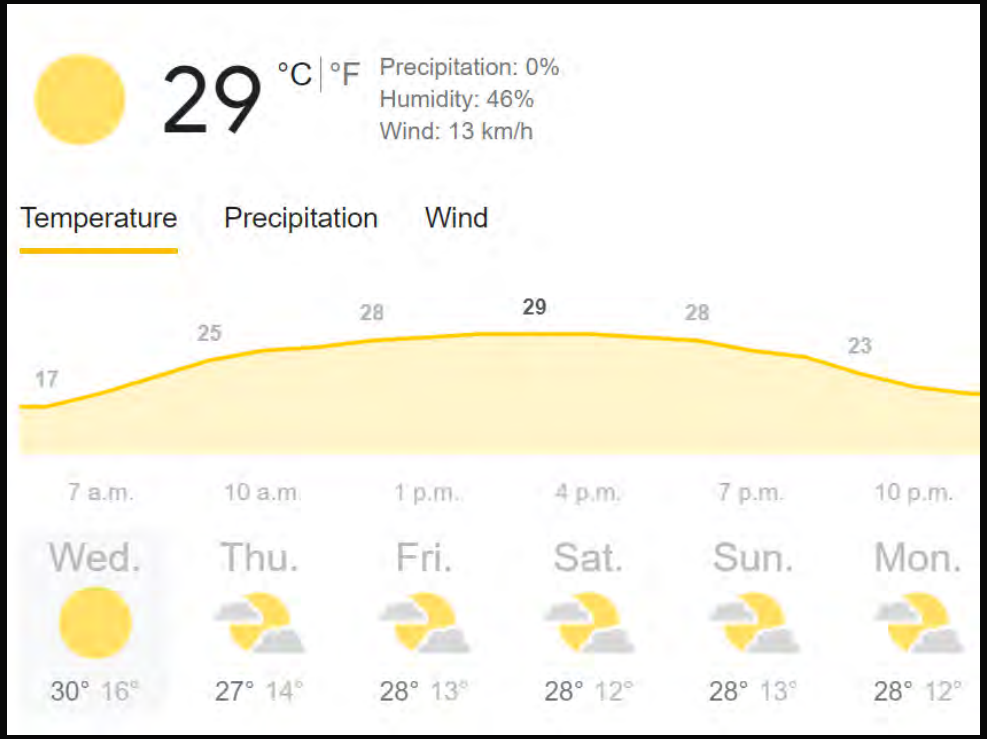
# “Wildfire Behaviour Triangle”

Topography includes elevation, steepness + aspect of slopes.

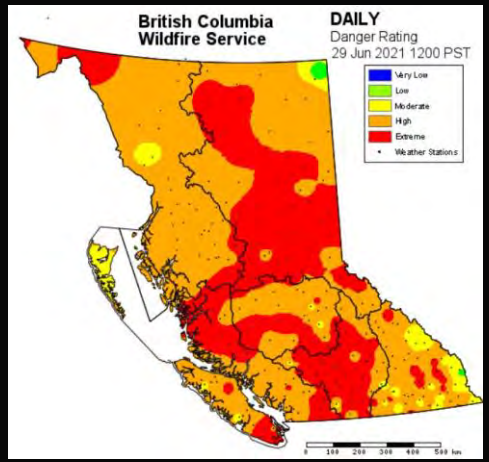

Of the three axes, topography is most stable in space and time.

# “Wildfire Behaviour Triangle”

Weather varies continually, influencing fire danger

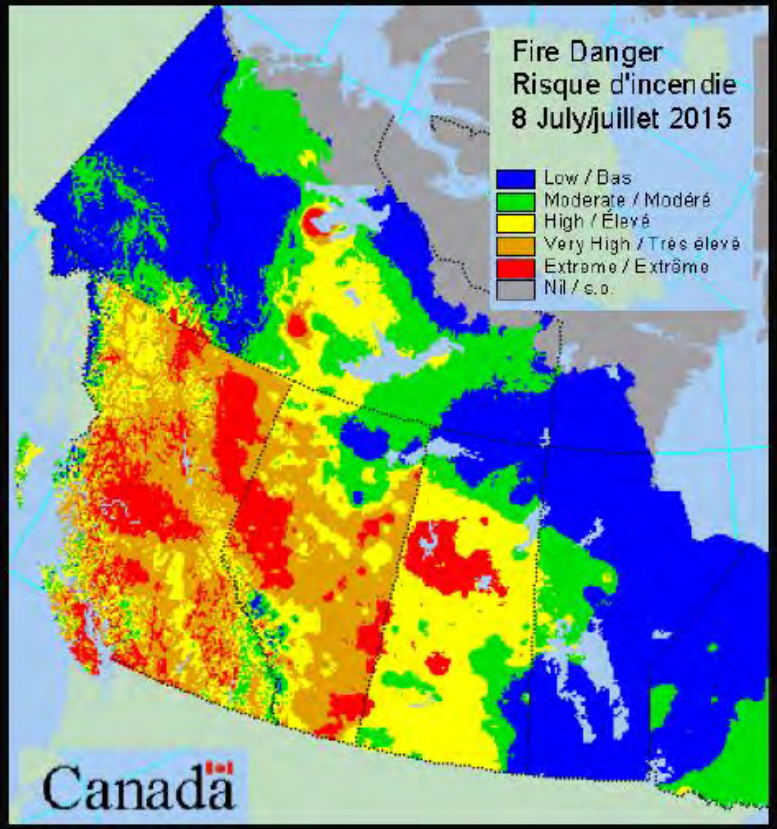



The Weather Channel

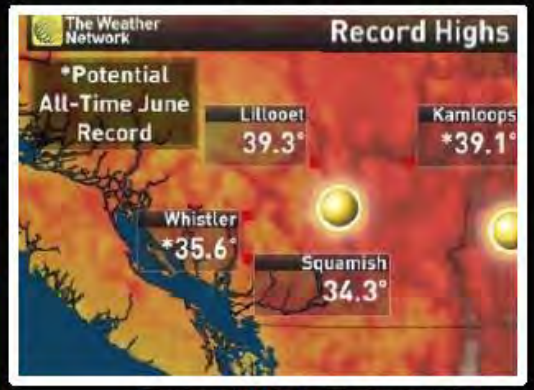




BC Wildfire Service

# 2015: Extreme Weather in Coastal BC




Record Low Snowpack

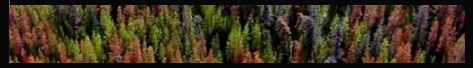



Record High Temperatures


# “Wildfire Behaviour Triangle”

Fuels vary among forests  and change through time as trees grow and forests change after disturbance


Of the three axes, we have the greatest control over fuels.



# “Wildfire Behaviour Triangle”

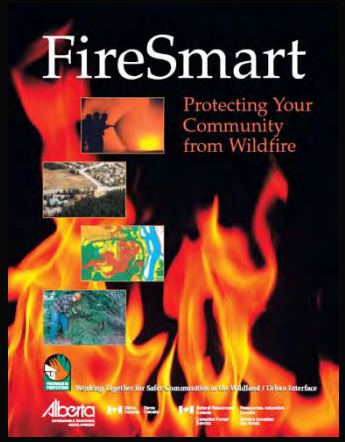
Wildland-urban interface is expanding as neighbourhoods grow into fire-prone environments

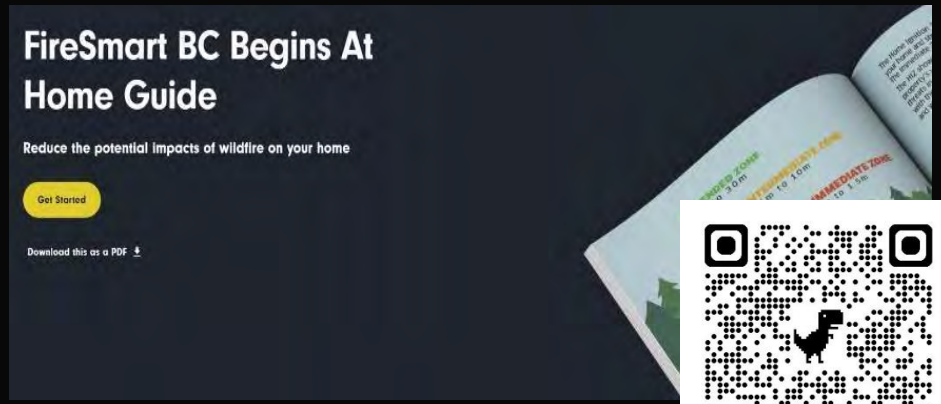
**Wildfire Risk in Coastal BC:**
**Steep terrain + summer drought**
**2nd growth forests = fuel hazard**
**Extensive wildland urban interface**
**Moderate risk + high consequence**

Whyte Lake Fire, June 2023 (BCWildfire Service)

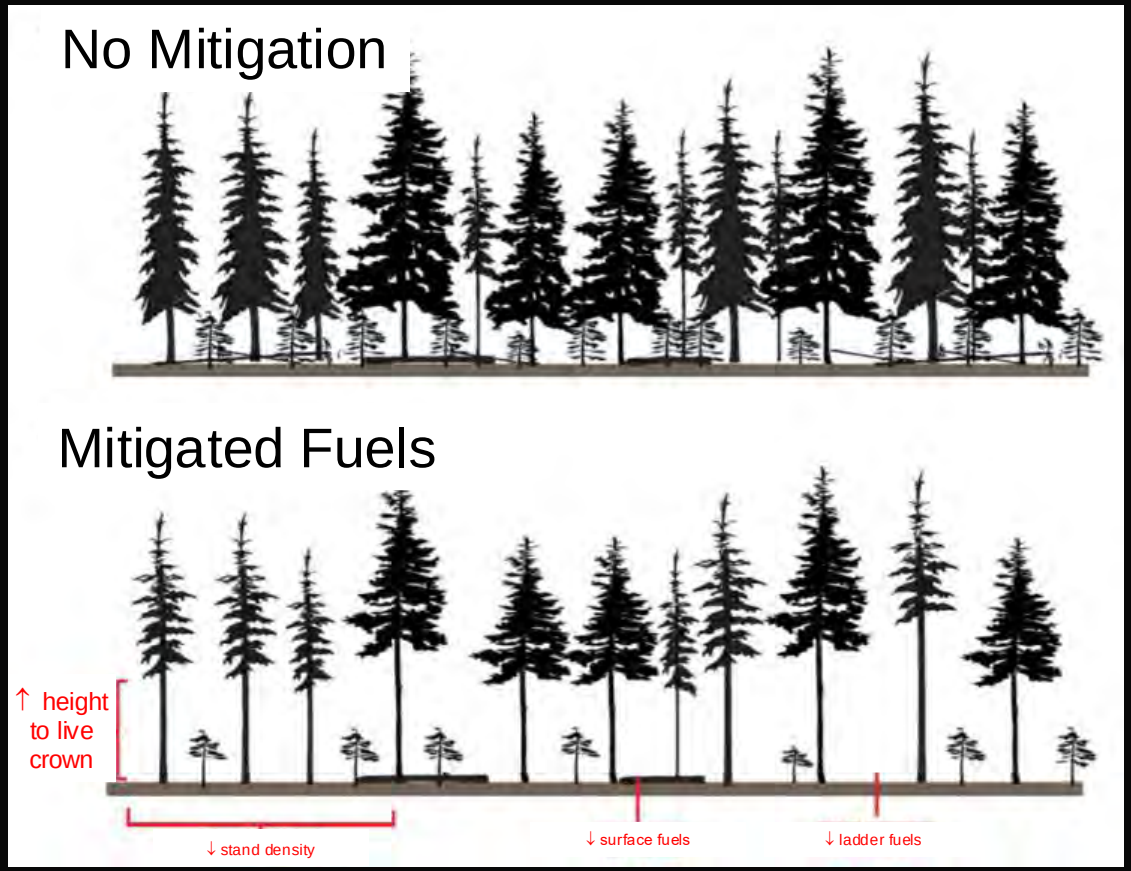

# FireSmart Actions: Create Defensible Space



# Proactive Fuel Treatments: Mitigate Fire Risk




**Treatment goals:**

↓ surface fire intensity
↓ active crown fire
↑ fire resilience

**Fuels mitigation:**

↓ tree density
↓ surface fuels
↑ height to live crown

**Assessing efficacy:**

Field measures +
Fire behaviour models

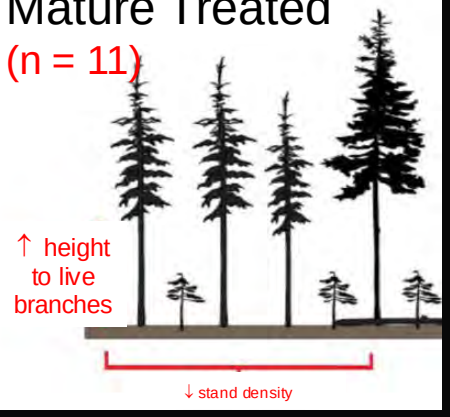
Control plots
Treatment plots
Whistler

# Proactive Treatments Mitigate Fuel Loads

Young Untreated
(n = 7)

| | |
|---|---|
| Tree cover | 90 % |
| **Tree density** | 1243 per ha |
| **Branch height** | 3.7 m |
| **Canopy fuel** | 0.33 kg/m$^2$ |
| Surface fuel | 1.8 kg/m$^2$ |

Mature Treated
(n = 11)




| | |
|---|---|
| Tree cover | 82 % |
| **Tree density** | 564 per ha |
| **Branch height** | 8.2 m |
| **Canopy fuel** | 0.15 kg/m$^2$ |
| Surface fuel | 1.6 kg/m$^2$ |

**Bold** = statistically different (α = 0.05)

# Proactive Treatments Reduce Predicted Fire Behaviour

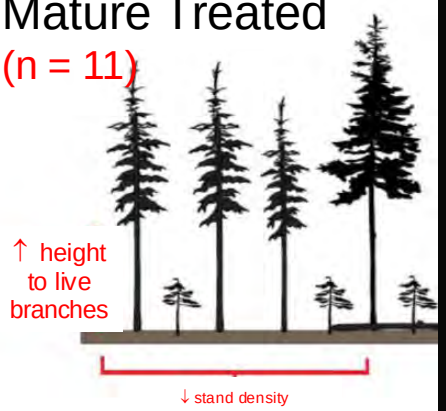
Young Untreated
(n = 7)

**Probability**
(crown fire > 50%)

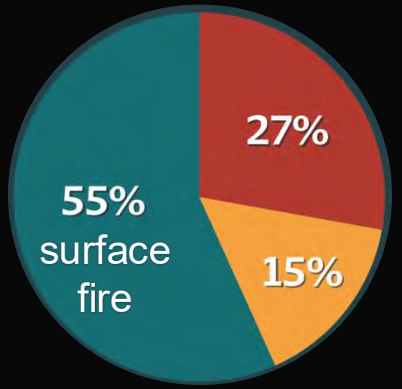
**87 ± 6%**

**Fire type**


Mature Treated
(n = 11)




**40 ± 10%**



# Proactive Treatments Emulate Forest Development

Mature Untreated
(n = 5)

| | |
|---|---|
| Tree cover | 67 % |
| Tree density | 540 per ha |
| Branch height | 5.3 m |
| Canopy fuel | 0.16 kg/m$^2$ |
| Surface fuel | 2.0 kg/m$^2$ |

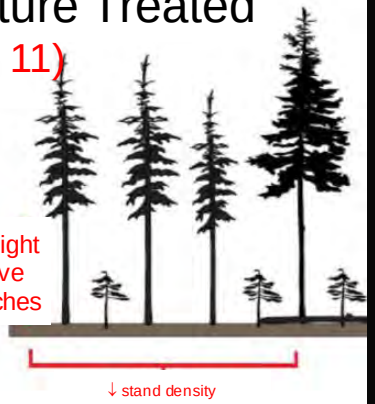
Mature Treated
(n = 11)


| | |
|---|---|
| Tree cover | 82 % |
| Tree density | 564 per ha |
| Branch height | 8.2 m |
| Canopy fuel | 0.15 kg/m$^2$ |
| Surface fuel | 1.6 kg/m$^2$ |

# Proactive Treatments Reduce Predicted Fire Behaviour

Mature Untreated
(n = 5)

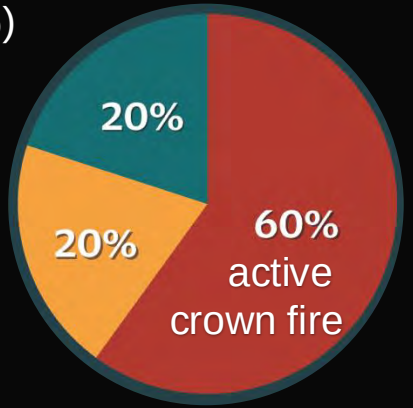
Mature Treated
(n = 11)



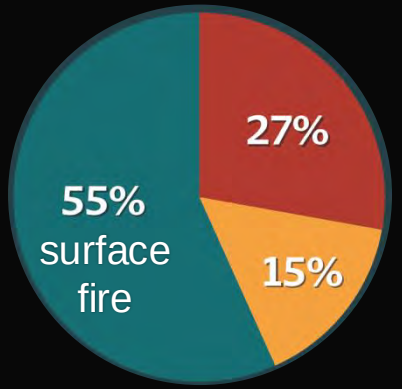

**Probability**
(crown fire > 50%)

**67 ± 19%**

**Fire type**




**40 ± 10%**



# Key Findings

## How do proactive treatments work?

- Transform young dense forests toward mature forests
- Mitigate ladder and crown fuels, reduce chance of crown fire
- Shift predicted fire behaviour from crown to surface fire
- Increase resilience by reducing potential severe crown fire

# Urgent Need for Transformative Change

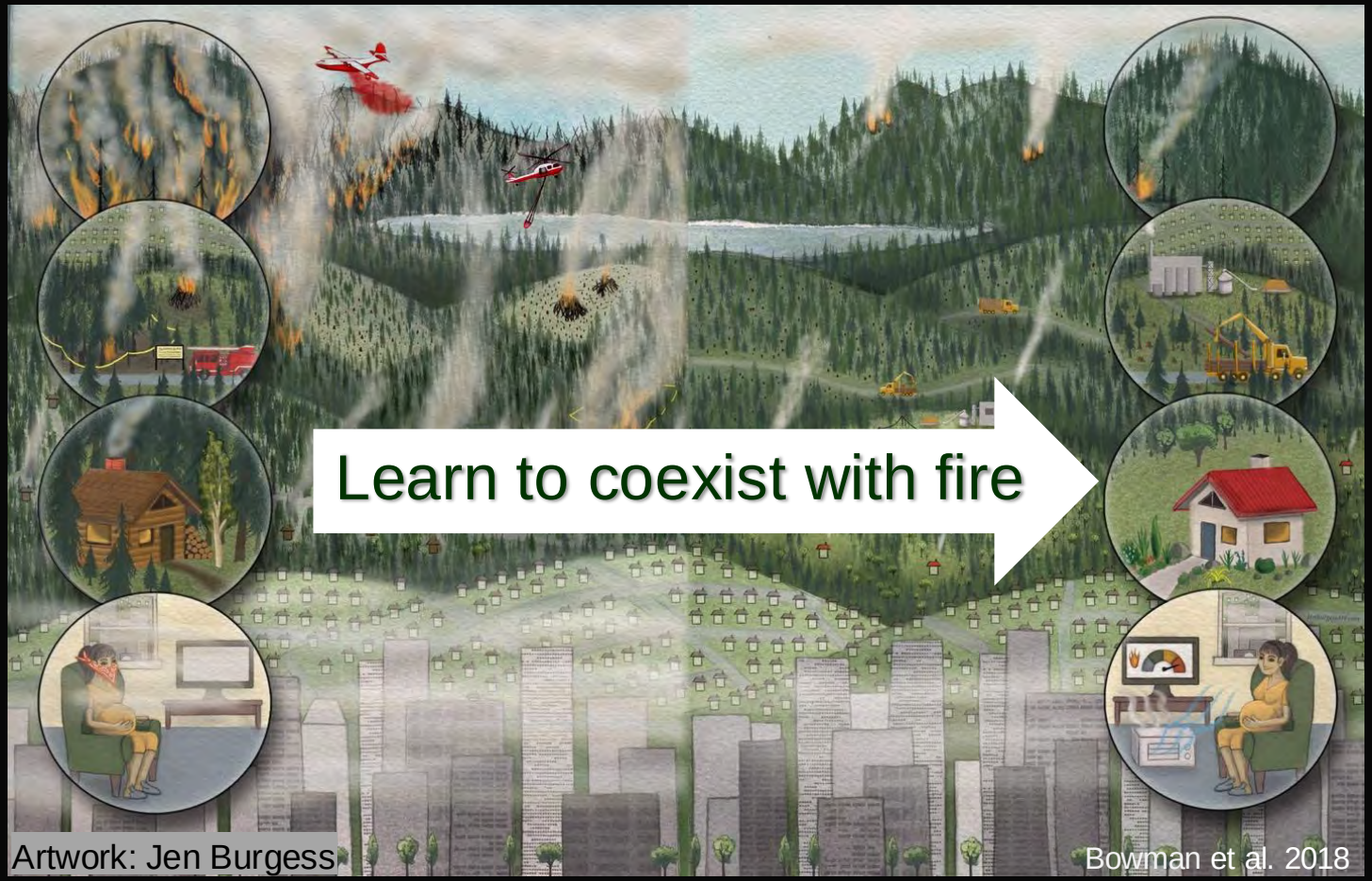

## Era of Megafires

Large, severe fires
Exceed suppression

Traditional fire paradigm
Timber + stand-level focus
Homogenized landscapes

Low resilience
Vulnerable communities

# All-of-Society Transformative Change



# Transformative Change to Achieve Resilience

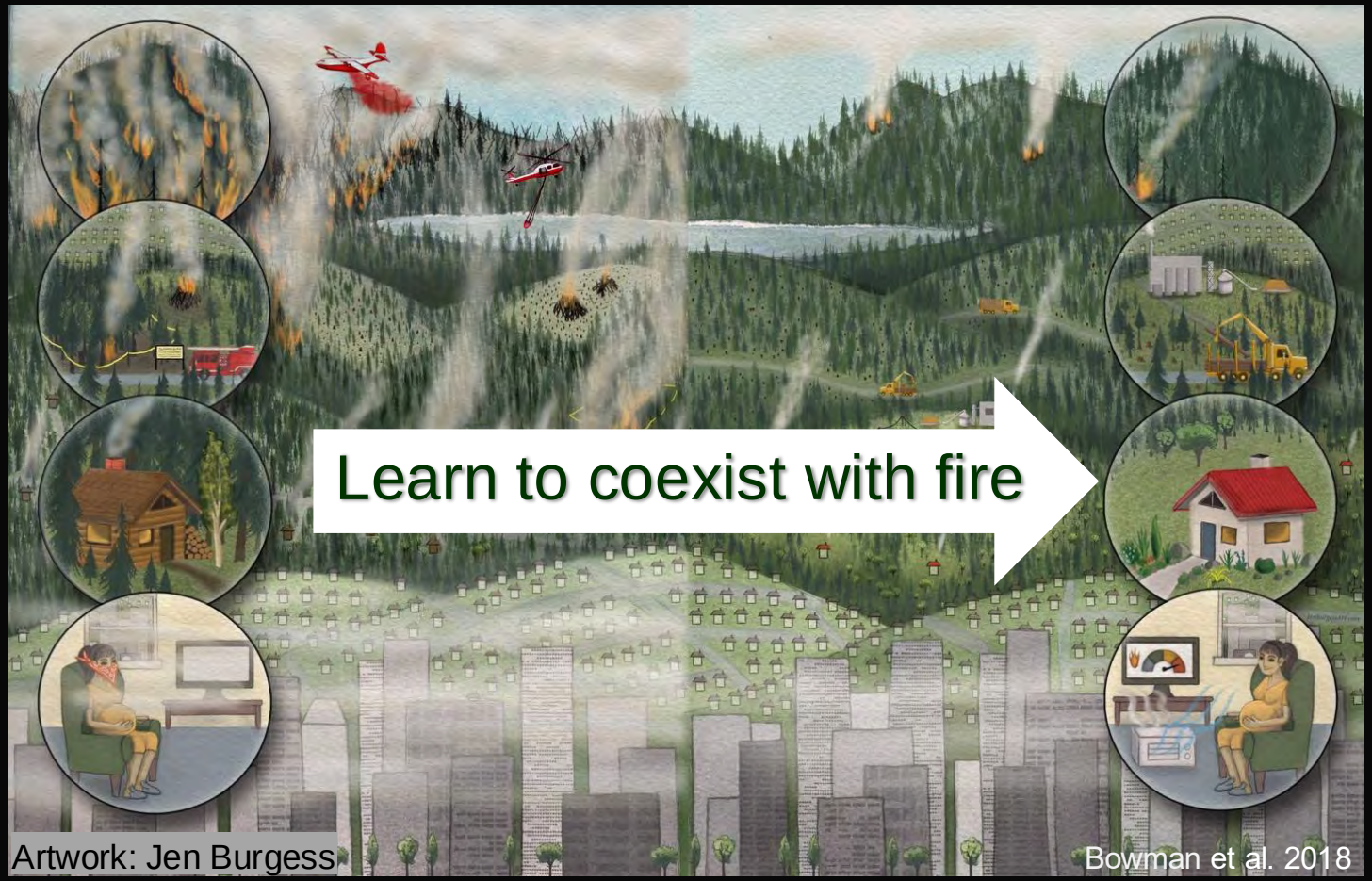
## Coexist with Wildfire

Diversify management
Science + Indigenous Knowledge

Evidence-based, adaptive, proactive landscape + community fuels management

Educate + engage citizens
FireSmart + community protection

# Questions and discussion are welcome!



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# Thanks to our collaborators and the organizations that fund our research

The Koerner Foundation

intact

Peter WALL Institute for Advanced Studies

PICS Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions

NSERC CRSNG

BCWF BC Wildlife Federation

UBC The University of British Columbia

forestry university of british columbia

UBCM Union of BC Municipalities

British Columbia Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Wildfire Service

First Nations Emergency Services Society Forest Fuel Management

Tsʔewepemcúlʔecw Restoration and Stewardship Society

Stʼuxwtéws Bonaparte First Nation

Williams Lake First Nation

Stswecem'c Xgat'tem

Skeetchestn Indian Band

Cheslatta Carrier Nation

British Columbia Community Forest Association

PAUL G. ALLEN FAMILY FOUNDATION

co-operators

Canada Wildfire

# Part 3:

Lessons From the Frontlines: 2025 Wesley Ridge and Mount Underwood Wildfires

Douglas Holmes, CAO, Regional District of Nanaimo

Daniel Sailland, CAO, Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot

# Wesley Ridge Wildfire
# V71145
# July 30, 2025

**Regional District of Nanaimo**

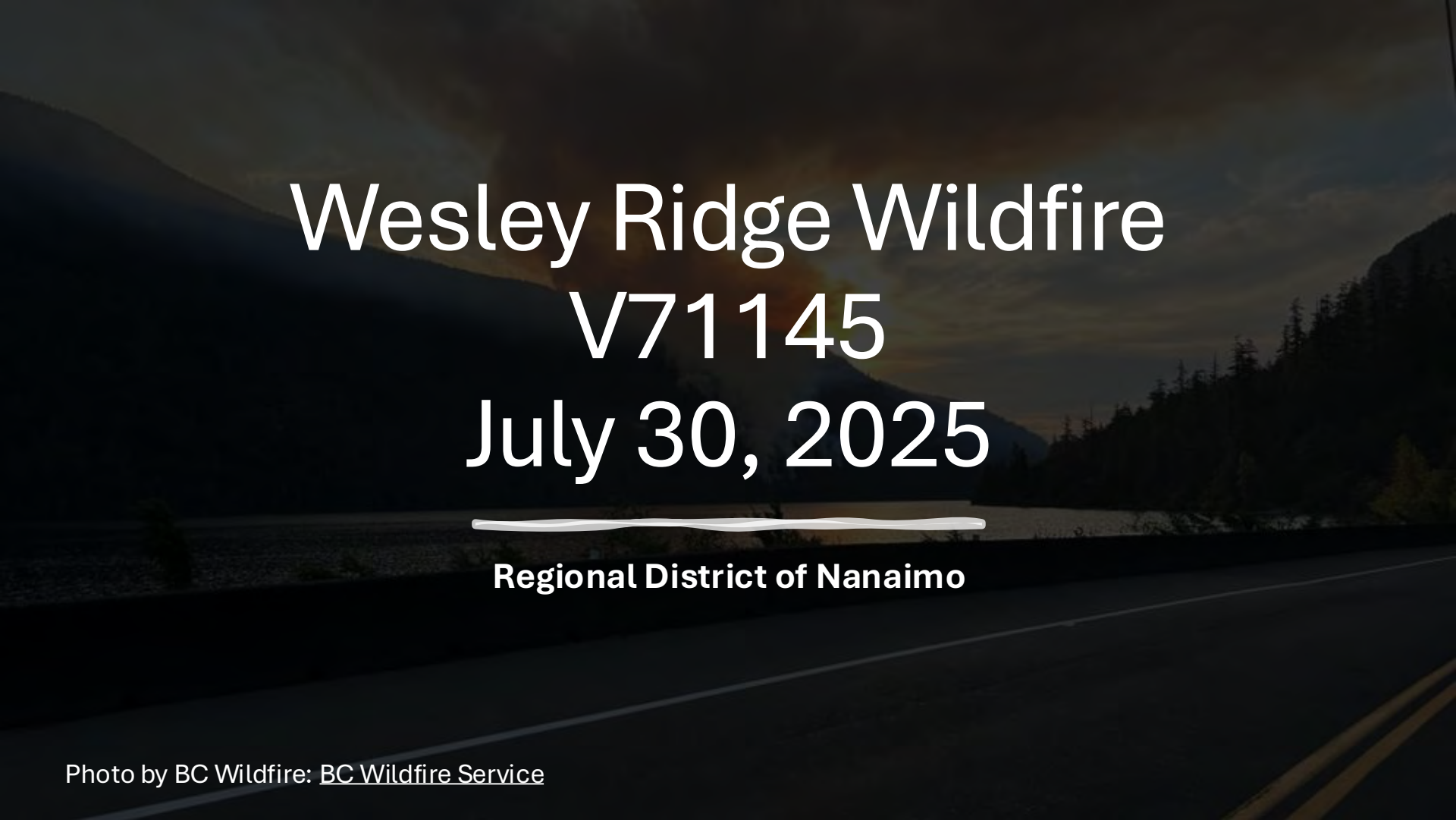


Photo by BC Wildfire: BC Wildfire Service

# Timeline

**July 30–31**

- Fire detected just before midnight by Dashwood Volunteer Fire Department
- Fire spreads rapidly overnight
- Level 3 EOC activated by 8:00 AM (July 31)
- State of Local Emergency declared; Reception Centre opened
- First Evacuation Order and Alert issued by noon

**August 1–2**

- Fire continues rapid growth under extreme heat and wind
- Evacuation Orders and Alerts expanded
- Lake access restricted for BC Wildfire bucketing
- Little Qualicum Provincial Campground evacuated

**August 3–10**

- Fire advances toward Horne Lake and Spider Lake communities
- Evacuation Alerts issued for affected properties
- Weather conditions begin to improve
- Focus shifts toward containment and re-entry planning
- First evacuation rescind issued (August 6)
- Rapid Damage Assessment (RDA) deployed

**August 11–16**

- Phased re-entry begins
- Resiliency Centre opens
- Power and water system issues delay re-entry for parts of Strata Village
- Parks and trails reopen
- **August 16: Final Evacuation Orders and Alerts removed; recovery begins**

https://rdn.bc.ca/wesleyridgewildfire

# Key Decisions

Policy Group Updates

Utilizations of External Resources

Requests for Local Government Personnel

Consistent Community Communications

## Evacuations

Cameron Lake Evacuations

Little Qualicum Provincial Campground

Highway 4 Closure

Horne and Spider Lake

Agriculture

## Re-entry

Little Qualicum River Village  Water Supply

Slope Stability and Geotechnical Risk

Refrigerator Disposal

Photo by BC Wildfire : BC Wildfire Service

# Effective Collaboration and Coordination

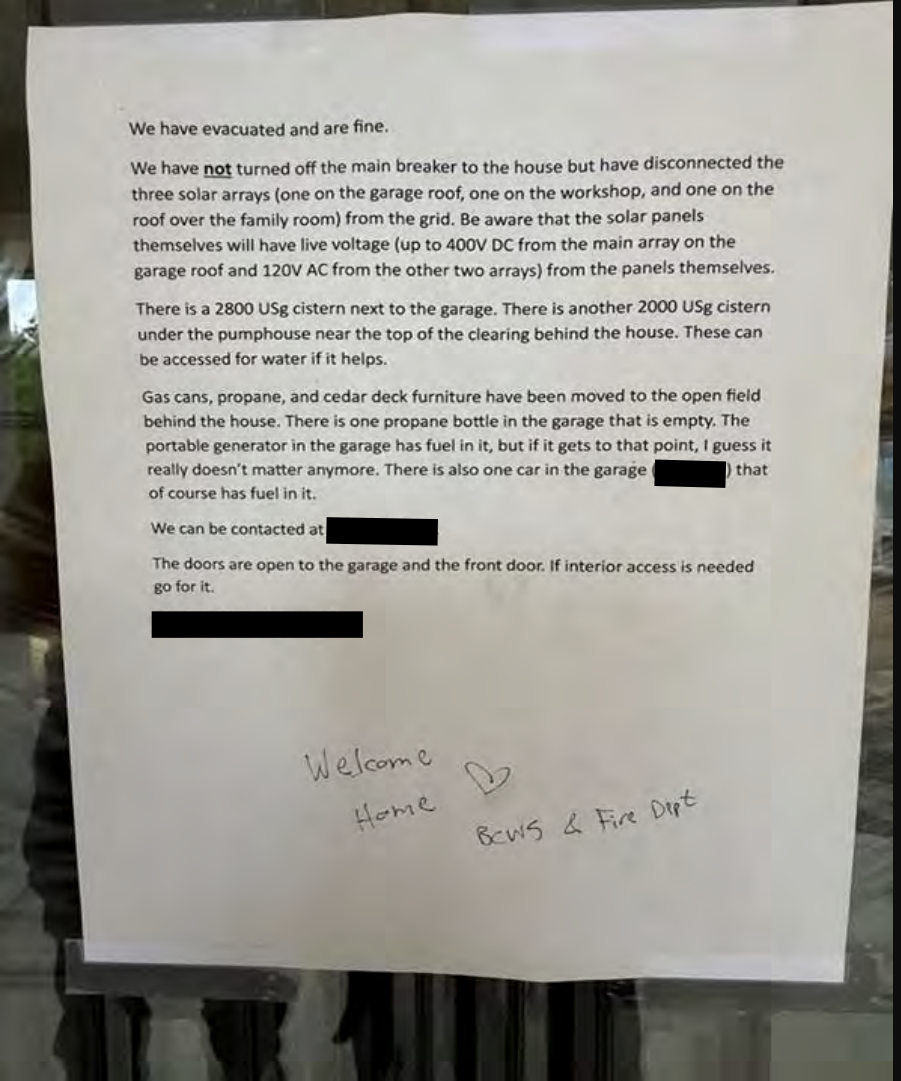
Staff from 10  local governments integrated into RDN EOC

Vancouver Island CAO's shadowed EOC Director

Unified Communications

Field Liaison

Photo by BC Wildfire: BC Wildfire Service




# Preparedness

- FireSmart program by the Dashwood Volunteer Fire Department
- Historical EOC activations
- Strong local knowledge from Dashwood Volunteer Fire Department
- RDN training and exercises


# Challenges and Gaps

**EOC Activation and Staffing Capacity**

**Business Continuity**

**Enhancing Inter-agency Role Clarity**

**Authority with Decision Making**

**Ensuring Accessible EOC Systems for External Support**

**Elected Officials**

# Lessons Learned

**Staff Training and Capacity**

**Business Continuity Planning**

**Communication and Information Management**

**Regional Partnerships and Mutual Support**

**Community Preparedness and Risk Reduction**

**Culture!**

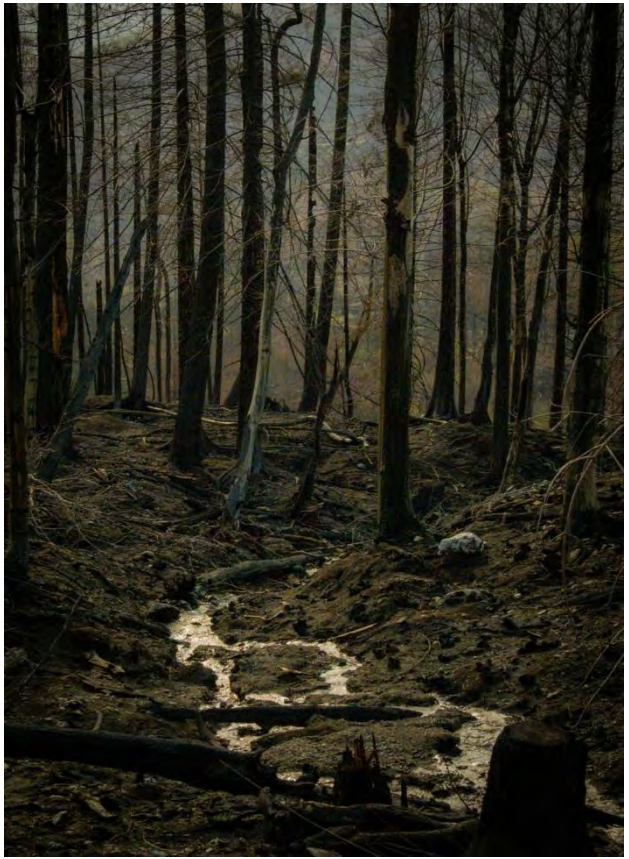
Photos by BC Wildfire: BC Wildfire Service

# Mount Underwood Wildfire

## Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot

# Fire Facts – Review

- Fire began on August 11, 2025
- Power restored August 23, 2025
- Bamfield Main was closed between August 11 and October 24, 2025 for a total of 74 days
- Fire was officially declared out on December 8, 2025, and burned a total of approximately 3500 hectares
- Recovery period initiated September 2025



# Impacts





- Utility failure
- Power outage
- d

- Food losses
- Generator fuel
- Travel

- Air quality
- Access to health services
- Psychosoci

- Soil erosion
- Ecosystem
- Biodiversit y

# Inter-Governmental Collaboration

# Reflection & Lessons Learned

Identify local reps who can understand community needs and liaise with EOC.

Coordinating and unifying communication and key messages across agencies is important.

Designate a location in the community as an information hub for updates.

Inter-agency and multi-jurisdictional collaboration is the best practice; most effective ≠ most efficient.

Pre-existing relationships and pre-established trust improve collaboration and response efforts.

Business continuity! Emergencies impact annual work plans, operations, and workplace stress.

Good food, humour, and spaces for casual interaction = better team building. Close loops!

Having in-person community town hall meetings is effective and appreciated.

ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

# Questions?

BREAK

# Part 4:

Advancing Cultural and Prescribed Fire in BC: Building Capacity for Resilience

Tribal Chief Tyronne McNeil, Stó:lō Nation and Chair, Emergency Planning Secretariat (EPS)

Attila Nelson, Cultural and Prescribed Fire Program, First Nations Emergency Services Society

Dr. Mathieu Bourbonnais, Director, Canadian Prescribed Fire Training Program; Co-Director, UBC Centre for Wildfire Coexistence

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

# Canadian Prescribed Fire Training Program

# Programme canadien de formation en brûlage dirigé

# Affordable and accessible fire weather information


CPFTP | UBC

# Specialized and accessible prescribed fire training

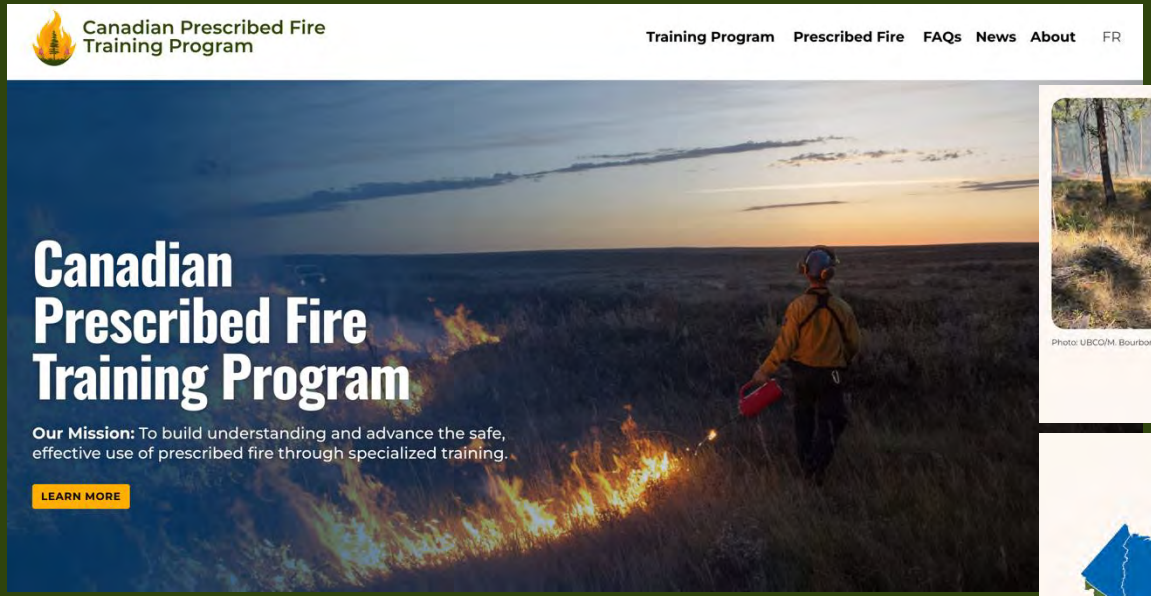



Photo: UBCO/M. Bourbonnais

## Who Does Our Training Support?

CPFTP training will be designed for practitioners involved in prescribed fire planning and implementation, including:

- Wildfire agencies
- Fire departments
- Land managers
- Indigenous Nations and communities
- NGOs
- Industry
- Landowners

Clear pathways will support learners in different roles and contexts, with consistent expectations and experience-informed learning.


## CPFTP Regions

To reflect Canada's diverse ecosystems and fire regimes, CPFTP's work is organized across five regions. This structure ensures training is informed by local ecological conditions while aligned through shared national standards.

**Western:** British Columbia and Alberta
**Central:** Saskatchewan and Manitoba
**Eastern:** Ontario and Québec
**Atlantic:** New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador
**Northern:** Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut

Regional Leads and partners help ensure training is grounded in place, while contributing to a nationally coordinated approach to prescribed fire training in Canada.

CPFTP | UBC

# CONTACT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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

# Part 5:

## Mental Health and Resilience Among Wildland Firefighters

Dr. Laurie Pearce, Associate Faculty, Disaster and Emergency Management Program, Royal Roads University and Justice Institute of BC

# Mental Health and Resilience Among Firefighters

Laurie Pearce
John Hill
May 8 2026

# Land Acknowledgement

I respectfully acknowledge that I am on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the *Tsleil-Waututh* and pay respect to their Elders past and present.

I make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we are on today.

[Home - Tsleil-Waututh Nation]

# Background


- 100 peer-reviewed, investigative articles and books were reviewed and analyzed
- Findings were compared and contrasted with the experience of psychosocial responders providing on-site and virtual support (Zoom and phone) to wildland firefighters in Canada
- Recommendations are based on evidence and practical experience

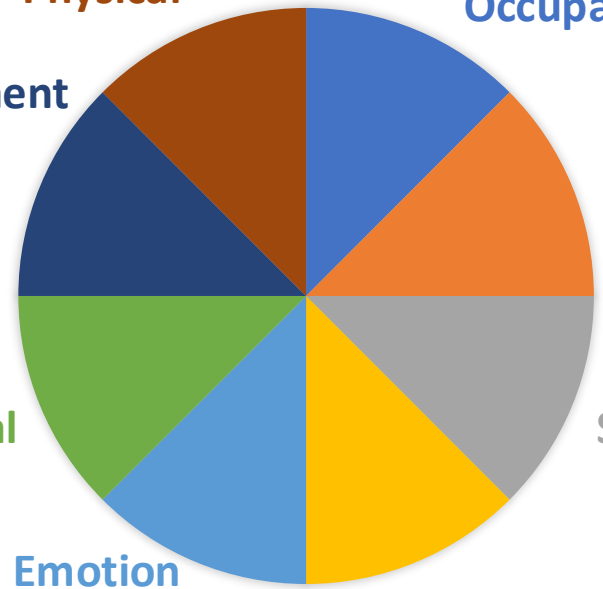
# WELLNESS WHEEL

**Physical**
Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods & sleep

**Occupati…**
Creating personal satisfaction & enrichment from one's work

**Environmental**
Occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support wellbeing

**Intellect…**
Recognizing creative ability and finding ways to expand knowledge & skills



**Social**
Developing a sense of connection, belonging and a well-developed support system

**Spiritual**
Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life

**Emotional**
Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships

**Financial**
Feeling satisfied with current and future financial situations

# Key Findings

- **WORKPLACE STRESS IS SIGNIFICANT IN THE FIRE SERVICE**
  - excessive demands & exposure to traumatic events
  - relationships with senior managers
  - changing roles
- **REPORT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURIES**:
  - males (8%) females (24%) 3x higher!
  - 13.7% of US respondents reported unwanted sexual touching or sexual assault/violence
- **PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORTS ARE NOT UNIVERSAL**
  - Mental health professionals generally have a poor understanding of wildfire culture & support services are farmed out to EAP providers; reactionary rather than proactive regarding mental health

# Key Findings

## THE IMPACT OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURIES MAY INCLUDE:

- a reduction in the quality of performance
- increased absenteeism
- sleep difficulties
- a negative impact on relationships
- burnout
- physical or psychological illnesses
- disability & early mortality

## WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS' FINANCIAL STRESSORS INCLUDE:

- seasonal employment (majority)
- high overtime pay (not going towards pension) & low wages

# Key Findings

**MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES AND PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACTS ON BC WILDFIRE SERVICE FIREFIGHTERS & SUPPORT STAFF DURING THE 2023 FIRE SEASON INCLUDE:**

- high caffeine use (83%)
- moderate- to-high tobacco use (40%)
- high suicide risk (34%)
- cannabis (33%)
- major depressive disorder (30%)
- generalized anxiety disorder (30%)
- high stress (27%)
- PTSD (26%)
- high rates of alcohol use (23%)

Alex Lane Mental Health Outcomes And Psychosocial Risk Factors In Wildland Firefighters And Support Staff (2024)

# Key Findings

**INDICATORS OF HIGH RISK FOR SUICIDE (202 assessed):**

- 34.19% met the criteria for high suicide risk (total SBQ-R score equal to or greater than seven)
- 57.55% had thought about or attempted suicide at least once in their lives
- 37.32% experienced suicidal ideation at least once within the past year
- 23.08% considered or expressed to someone else a plan to attempt suicide at least once in their lives
- 33.33% are at risk of future suicide attempts

# Key Findings

## INDIGENOUS WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS

- face elevated suicide risk & understanding the factors contributing to this risk is crucial

## WILDLAND FIRE RESPONSE DISPATCHERS

- dispatchers identified significant indicators of anxiety, depression, binge/restrictive eating, PTSD, & suicidal thoughts and ideation

## PARTNERS OF WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS REPORT:

- significant stress due to their partner's absence (78.1%)
- their partner is engaged in work activities while at home (56.5%)
- feel secondary to the commitments of their partner's job
- Intimate partner violence is of concern

# Key Findings

**TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS:**

- share a clear organizational vision
- inspire employees through establishing connections
- understand employees' needs
- give personal attention to subordinates
- treat each employee as an individual
- take an interest in the long-term development of each employee
- help employees reach their potential
- promote collaboration, contributing to good outcomes for the organization

**Job satisfaction is enhanced & productivity is increased**

# Our Recommendations


## For Self

1. **Wear your mask!** half-face respirator masks with replaceable filters, block about 99% of toxic particles in smoke; N95 masks are nearly as effective
2. Set personal and professional limits
3. Stay physically fit & socially active in the off-season – be as deployable as possible
4. Stay in touch with your team off-season

# Our Recommendations


## For Self

5. Nurture family & close relationships; emotional support from family, friends, & coworkers offer protective benefits against undue stress
6. Stay engaged with your community
7. Take responsibility to actively recover from a fire incident - use time between deployment to regroup & refresh
8. **Insist on psychosocial support**
9. Stay informed & self-advocate

# Our Recommendations


## For Organizations

1. Management needs to show-up on site & give recognition of the work done
2. Provide adequate time to decompress between deployments
3. Identify & support Peer CISM teams able to provide Psychological First Aid, Defusings & assist in Critical Incident Debriefings – they are valuable!
4. Consider onsite mental health support for deployments
5. Review policies to encourage recruitment & retention

# Our Recommendations


## For Organizations

6. Provide for Spiritual Support and integration of Indigenous Healing practices
7. Mental health initiatives to date have not noticeably reduced negative mental health outcomes (suicide risk, PTSD, depression, anxiety, & substance use) **Additional research is needed & better communication & access to existing supports is required**

# Our Recommendations


## What we Know

The most effective strategies are to promote in oneself, and others:

1. A sense of safety
2. Calming
3. A sense of self– and community efficacy (ability to achieve a positive result)
4. Connectedness and
5. Hope

# Questions & Answers (hopefully ☺)


thanks


Minnekhada Regional Park

# CLOSING

metrovancouver