
INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
2014FLNR0034-000404
April 1, 2014

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource
Operations
Cariboo Fire Centre

Prescribed burns to help restore Cariboo grasslands

WILLIAMS LAKE – The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations is planning a series of ecosystem restoration burns west and south of Williams Lake between April 3 and mid-May 2014, weather conditions permitting.

These prescribed burns are managed under the Ecosystem Restoration Program within the ministry's Range Branch and will be conducted with the assistance of staff from the Wildfire Management Branch's Cariboo Fire Centre.

Sites within the following areas will be treated to help restore native grassland ecosystems:

- Beecher's Prairie (Highway 20 at the Toosey turnoff), approximately 80 hectares
- Bald Mountain (south of Riske Creek), approximately 120 hectares
- Deer Creek (Alexis Creek area), approximately 100 hectares
- Crow's Bar (Fraser River area south of Dog Creek), approximately 1,750 hectares
- Ward Creek (Fraser River area north of Gang Ranch), approximately 400 hectares

These ecosystem restoration burns were originally scheduled to take place in fall 2013, but they were not completed due to unsuitable burning conditions at the time.

Historically, grasslands in the Cariboo-Chilcotin were renewed through frequent, low-intensity ground fires. Such fires prevented tree encroachment, rejuvenated understory plants and maintained more open grasslands and forests with large trees. The reintroduction of managed, low-intensity ground fires to these grasslands is intended to restore and maintain the traditional grassland plant communities that are native to these areas.

These fires are part of an ongoing ecosystem restoration program administered by the provincial government in consultation with First Nations, local ranchers, the B.C. Wildlife Federation and the Cariboo-Chilcotin Conservation Society.

A factsheet follows.

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FACTSHEET

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Prescribed burning used as ecosystem management tool

- Fire is a normal, natural process in many of British Columbia's ecosystems. Many species of plants, birds, insects and other animals depend on fire for its regenerative properties.
- Fire helps control insects and the spread of disease in forests. It also contributes to forest succession, as younger trees replace older trees. Having trees of various ages in a forest helps create biodiversity.
- Prescribed burning is one of the tools used by forest professionals to achieve land management objectives. For example, fire can be used to enhance habitat and improve forage for cattle, deer, bighorn sheep and moose. A controlled burn also can reduce fuel loads (combustible material such as underbrush and dead wood) and reduce the risk of wildfire in interface areas (where urban development borders on rural areas).
- The size and intensity of prescribed burns are carefully planned and controlled to meet management objectives for fire-maintained ecosystems. Prescribed burns are only ignited when weather conditions are favourable and when the fire will not create excessive smoke. Important factors that are used to determine the date of a burn include the venting index, temperature, humidity and wind conditions.
- The venting index is a measure of how quickly smoke will disperse under specific conditions. Prescribed fires may only be ignited on days when the forecast for the venting index is "good."
- All prescribed burns must comply with the Environmental Management Act and the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation. This helps minimize the amount of smoke generated.
- A prescribed burn is ignited and continuously monitored by trained firefighting crews to ensure that the fire does not get out of control. The fire crew supervisor (the "burn boss") is responsible for ensuring that the initial burn conditions are favourable and that the fire is extinguished once the prescribed burn is completed.

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