



March 22, 2010

EAST KOOTENAY PRESCRIBED BURNS PLANNED IN APRIL

The Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program is planning to conduct three prescribed burns in the East Kootenay in the month of April, weather conditions permitting.

The controlled fires will cover a total of about 455 hectares (ha) and take place in the vicinity of Wasa, Skookumchuck and Jaffray, as follows:

- 138 ha on Gina Pasture near Premier Ridge, about 7 km northeast of Wasa
- 30 ha in the northwest corner of Premier Lake Provincial Park, east of Skookumchuck
- 287 ha on Clear Lake Pasture, 10 km south of Jaffray.

Ecosystem restoration work has been ongoing on all three sites for several years.

Timber harvesting and thinning treatments on the sites have reduced forest stands to the point where fire can be introduced safely and effectively.

The fires will be managed to achieve specific objectives and controlled so they burn with limited intensity and within defined boundaries.

Prescribed burning is carried out by trained crews who follow detailed plans prepared by certified burn bosses and approved by the Ministry of Forests and Range.

Fires can be ignited, however, only when weather conditions meet BC's smoke control regulations. Weather will be monitored daily beginning April 1 to determine the optimum day for light-up. The public will be advised on the day a fire is ignited via local radio announcements.

Prescribed fires mimic the low-intensity ground fires that historically burned at low elevations in the East Kootenay. These frequent fires removed tree regeneration and re-invigorated native grasses and shrubs, leaving a mosaic of grasslands and open forests between Radium Hot Springs and the US border.

Fire suppression in recent decades has eliminated frequent low-intensity fire from the landscape, allowing dense forest ingrowth to fill in open forests and trees to invade grasslands.

The resulting impacts are all negative: heightened risk of more intense and damaging fires; overall deterioration in wildlife habitat; decline in natural forage for cattle and wild ungulates; and forests more susceptible to insects and disease.

The Trench ecosystem restoration program, a coalition of stakeholders representing government, industry and the public, has been working since 1998 to restore grasslands and open forests by removing excess trees and re-introducing fire to the landscape.

The goal is to restore about 107,000 hectares over a 30-year period.

Visit www.trenchsociety.com for more information on fire-maintained ecosystem restoration in the Rocky Mountain Trench.

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PRESCRIBED BURN PHOTOS

Aerial view after an April 2008 prescribed fire on Lost Springs Pasture near the old Kimberley airport on Hwy 95A. Prescribed fires are planned and managed to stay within defined boundaries. Burn plans for these controlled fires often use existing roads as fireguards.

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An April 2009 prescribed fire on Big Hill Pasture, an ecosystem restoration site just north of Lakit Lake near Fort Steele. Fire intensity is controlled in part by logging and thinning before burning.



Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program

Restoring Nature's Balance.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

- BC Parks & Protected Areas
- BC Timber Sales
- East Kootenay Wildlife Association
- Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program (Columbia Basin)
- Galloway Lumber Co. Ltd.
- Kootenay Livestock Association
- Ministry of Agriculture & Lands
- Ministry of Environment
- Ministry of Forests & Range
- Nature Trust of BC
- Parks Canada
- Range Advisory Group
- Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society (Trench Society)
- Tembec