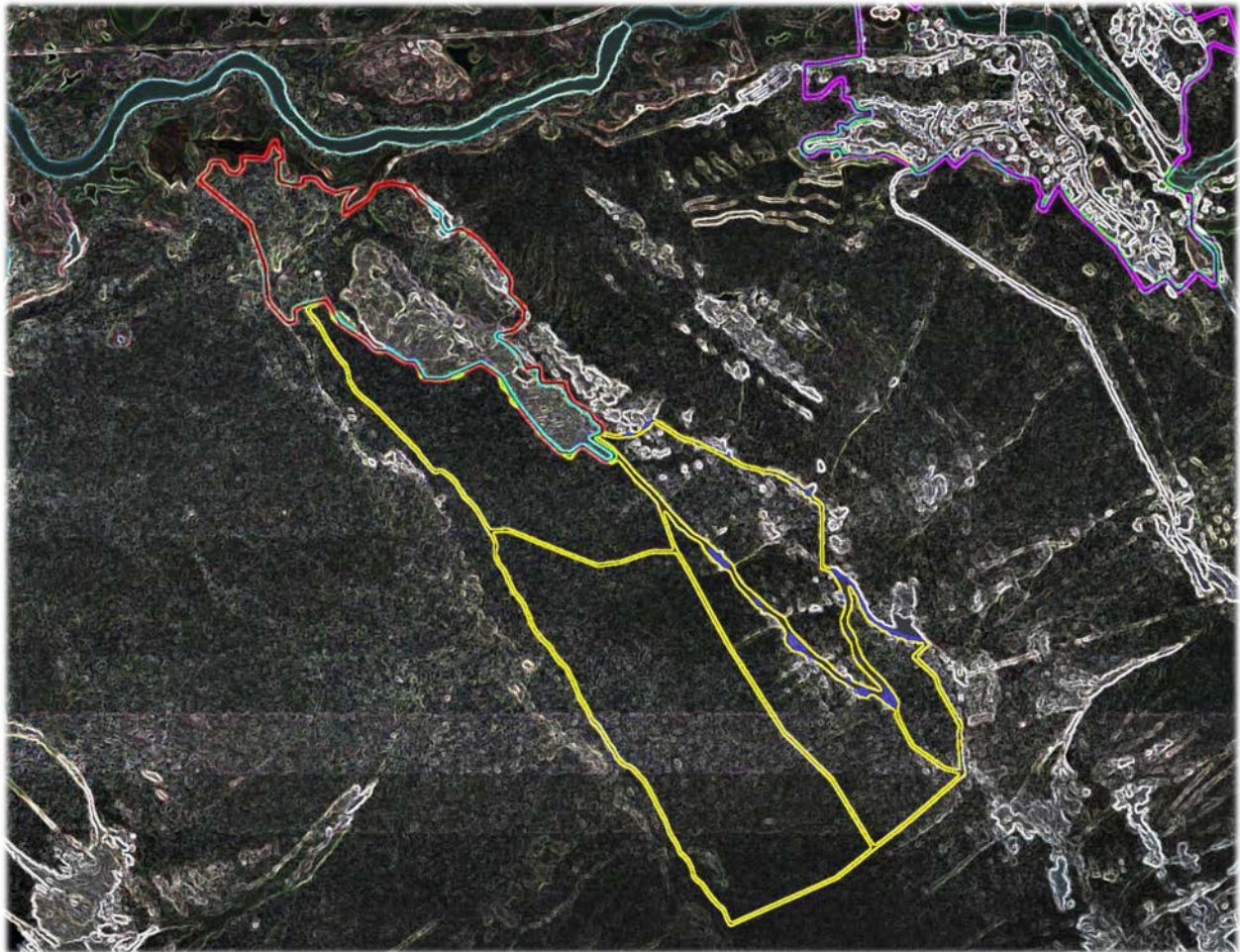


West Sulphur Wildfire Risk Reduction Plan

Frequently Asked Questions
May 4, 2018



Q1: What is Parks Canada planning on doing?

A1: As part of the ongoing fire management program for the Bow Valley, Parks Canada is planning to thin forest fuels on the west side of Sulphur Mountain. This Wildfire Risk Reduction project will include limbing/pruning branches, removing trees and woody debris from approximately 349 hectares of forest. When finished, the project will complete Parks Canada's work on a landscape-level fire guard that will help protect the community and surrounding areas from a fire moving down the Bow Valley.

Q2: When does Parks Canada plan to do this work?

A2: The work for the Wildfire Risk Reduction project is scheduled to take place over multiple years, beginning the late fall/winter 2018. The work will only take place when the soil is frozen, to reduce potential ground and wildlife disturbances.

Q3: Why is this work necessary?

A3: Up until the late 20th century, protection from wildfire centered on fire suppression. As understanding of the negative impacts of fire suppression evolved in the 1970s and 80s, Parks Canada's fire management also evolved to focus on the use of prescribed fire and forest fuel reduction to decrease the risk of wildfire and improve park ecology. However, the previous decades of fire suppression resulted in large tracts of continuous, dense forest with significant amounts of woody debris. These conditions, along with prevailing westerly winds, increase the risk of wildfire to the town of Banff and outlying facilities. Consequently, Parks Canada has been working continuously over the last 30 years on forest fuel management in and around the townsite. This project is just one part of that ongoing work.

Q4: What will the work look like?

A4: Generally, forests are thinned by removing smaller diameter trees (less than 25cm) and limbing/pruning larger trees. The work will be done using a combination of ground crews cutting and pruning trees and removing woody debris, as well as mechanical tree removal.

Once completed, there will be a noticeable difference in the area compared to what it looked like before, with the forest being thinner and more open. This will allow more sunlight in, which over time, will allow for more grass and shrubs to flourish, improving the biodiversity of the area.

Any wood suitable for firewood or other uses will be kept, with the remainder left on site as residual woody debris to be burned or kept as habitat for small mammals.

Q5: How will this work impact the views/visitor experience in the area?

A5: The project has been designed to leave small clusters of trees, mimicking natural disturbances such as fire and avalanches, which will reduce the visual impact of the work, creating landscape features that would have been common prior to human intervention. As well, trees will be cut at ground level to reduce stumps. Thought the human activity will be evident in

the first year after tree removal, it will not take long for the forest ground cover to grow back and make the work much less noticeable.

Parks Canada will decide which trees to remove based on viewpoints, trails, and wildlife habitat requirements.

Q6: If fire is such a big risk, why hasn't this been done already?

A6: Parks Canada has been working to reduce the risk of wildfire for over 30 years. So far, Parks Canada has reduced the amount of forest fuels in over 1500 hectares in strategic locations throughout Banff National Park. This includes smaller projects adjacent to the town of Banff, large forest fuel reduction projects (Sulphur Mountain, Carrot Creek, Moose Meadows) and prescribed fires (Fairholme, Sawback). This project will greatly expand the forest fuel thinning that has already been completed on the west side of Sulphur Mountain.

Q7: How will this project impact the wildlife?

A7: Trees that provide important habitat for wildlife, such as Species-at-Risk Act listed bats, will be identified and protected. The project will be implemented in the late fall/winter, avoiding the primary breeding season for wildlife. Parks Canada fire management staff will also work closely with wildlife specialists so that the project will result in a net benefit to the wildlife in the form of improved habitat for other species, such as grizzly bears, who will benefit from the creation of improved foraging habitat.

Using prescribed fire and/or forest fuel reduction to enhance grizzly bear habitat in areas away from transportation corridors (roads and rails) was one of the two key priority actions identified in the joint Parks Canada/CP Rail Grizzly Bear Study. With the project area located away from the railway tracks, implementation of the project will support the goal of improved, secure habitat for this species.

Q8: Are all the trees going to be removed? What happens to the trees that are cut down?

A8: No, the overall goal for fuel management projects is to reduce the density of the forest by selectively pruning and removing smaller diameter trees and shrubs that can act as kindling. Given that it is primarily smaller trees that will be removed, the majority of the wood will not be merchantable. Any wood that is useable (i.e. firewood) will be salvaged, with the remainder being burned on site or kept as habitat for small animals.

Q9: If Parks Canada is already going to do the project, why engage the public?

A9: An integral part of any project is the identification and mitigation, where necessary, of all potential impacts. A key method of ensuring that the necessary information has been captured is to speak with interested key stakeholders, local businesses, residents and Indigenous people.

Through the engagement process, it is hoped that these groups will help Parks Canada identify impacts that may have been missed or not fully considered.

Q9: How can I get more information or comment on the plan?

A9: Parks Canada is inviting comments on plan impacts from May 9 – June 25, 2018. For more details about the project please visit www.pc.gc.ca/banff. Comments can be submitted to opinion@pc.gc.ca or

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Q10: What happens next?

A10: At the close of the public comment period, Parks Canada will carefully review and analyze all feedback received. This information gathered in the engagement process will be used to refine the plan prior to a final review and approval by the Superintendent.

A summary of the public comments received will be posted on the Banff National Park website.