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Parks Canada's

National Fire Management Program

Annual Report 2024



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Parks Canada's National Fire Management Program

Parks Canada's National Fire Management Program is a team of professional, highly trained wildland fire management specialists committed to public safety and the stewardship of Parks Canada administered places.

With 88 highly trained, professional Type 1 wildland firefighters who are able to respond to high complexity wildfires; approximately 100 qualified Type 2 firefighters who can respond to low-to moderate-complexity fires; 100 incident management specialists who coordinate the response to wildfires and other types of emergencies; as well as mutual aid resource-sharing agreements with other jurisdictions, Parks Canada has the capacity to respond to wildfires across the country.



Message from Darlene Upton

Vice President, Protected Areas Establishment and Conservation



For the second year in a row, Parks Canada administered places, like many regions across Canada, were significantly impacted by the wildfire season. Many of our friends, family, and colleagues faced the evacuation of Jasper, several receiving the devastating news that their homes had been lost in the fire.

I'm proud of the work of Parks Canada's Fire Management Program, the teams from Jasper National Park, and our colleagues with the Municipality of Jasper. They have shown incredible leadership and courage under exceptionally challenging professional and personal conditions.

There are many people and teams to thank. The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, provincial and territorial wildfire agencies, structural firefighters from Jasper and other communities, the RCMP, the Department of National Defence, and numerous other first responder agencies.

I would also like to again express my gratitude to the family, friends, and communities of the Parks Canada Fire Management teams. I continue to be moved by the support systems that our employees have. We know our teams wouldn't be able to do their work without these supports.

Parks Canada continues to honour wildland firefighter Morgan Kitchen from Alberta Wildfire who lost his life while fighting the Jasper Wildfire. Parks Canada will continue to remember his name, commitment, and service.

This year highlighted the continuing need to focus on risk reduction work at Parks Canada administered places. Throughout 2024, Parks Canada's Fire Management Program worked on several wildfire risk reduction projects, including the construction of fireguards. A number of prescribed fire projects were completed in 2024, not only helping to reduce the risk of wildfire, but also helping to restore ecological integrity and biodiversity to Parks Canada administered places.

As we reflect on the work of 2024, the Parks Canada National Fire Management Program 2024 Annual Report gives a window into the important work of the program and the people.

2024 Fire Season by the Numbers

108,000 Hectares, 93 Wildfires, 18 National Parks

Over 108,000 hectares burned in 93 fires at 18 Parks Canada administered places.

33,500 Hectares of Jasper National Park Impacted

In 2024, 33,500 hectares burned in Jasper National Park.

23 Wildfire Deployments, 264 Employees, 4,927 Days

The 2024 fire season was exceptionally challenging for Parks Canada. Over the 2024 fire season, Parks Canada fire management personnel deployed to 23 wildfires. 264 Parks Canada staff from 35 Parks Canada administered places and National Office were deployed to assist wildfire management efforts throughout Canada, for a total of 4,927 days of work.

13 Prescribed Fires, 7 Parks Canada Sites, 1,022 Hectares

In 2024-25, Parks Canada conducted 13 prescribed fires in 7 Parks Canada administered places. A total of 1,022 hectares were burned for restoration and risk reduction projects.

37 Risk Reduction Initiatives, 20 Parks Canada Sites

In 2024-25, Parks Canada conducted 37 wildfire risk reduction vegetation management initiatives at 20 sites. These initiatives included the creation of fire guards around communities in fire-prone areas and maintenance of previously treated areas for a total of 412 hectares. This work included 89 hectares in Jasper, 70 hectares in Banff and the completion of a 70-hectare fire guard providing protection to the community of Lake Louise.

\$88 Million and \$163.2 Million

Parks Canada estimates that the cost of wildfire suppression and response is approximately \$88M for the 2024 season. Parks Canada's overall fire management program costs for fiscal year 2024-2025 totalled \$163.2M.

Jasper National Park

By mid-July 2024, Jasper National Park and the surrounding region were experiencing prolonged periods of extreme heat and dryness. Record-setting fuel dryness—the driest conditions since records began in 1962—combined with 21 consecutive days of hot, windy weather created an elevated fire risk. On July 10, the fire danger rating in the park rose to "extreme", prompting the implementation of a fire ban on July 12.

Before the four wildfires that would eventually impact the community ignited on July 22, wildfire resources in Jasper National Park were already engaged. A Type 1 crew and two Type 2 crews from the park, along with two additional crews from other national parks, were actively working on the Utopia and Needle Peak wildfires. Initial Attack crews were conducting daily patrols to monitor for smoke and illegal fires.



Wildland firefighters on the move

Preparation

Parks Canada implemented extensive wildfire risk reduction measures in the years prior to the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and has been active partners with the Municipality of Jasper in the “FireSmart” community protection program since 2003. As part of this program, we work together to thin the forest near the community, which keeps a wildfire on the ground rather than in the treetops, which limits fire intensity, reduces windblown embers, and makes it easier for responders to control.

Since the 1980s, Parks Canada has used prescribed fires in Jasper to manage fuel loads, create natural firebreaks and restore fire-adapted ecosystems. Between 1994 and 2024, 45 prescribed fires were conducted, treating over 4,600 hectares in Jasper National Park. For reference, one hectare is approximately the size of two football fields. Crews and contractors work every year to manage vegetation and to ensure the park is prepared for wildfire risk in all seasons. Since 2003, over 2,000 hectares around the Jasper townsite have been treated with mechanical thinning and removal of dead vegetation, including logging operations to respond to the impacts of Mountain Pine Beetle near the community and surrounding facilities. In 2023 and 2024, Parks Canada reinforced the community fireguard and established a new fireguard at Signal Mountain.

Fireguards act as a line of defence for communities by slowing the progression of a wildfire, and they also provide a safe space for firefighters to carry out suppression activities to protect the community.

The Wildfires Start - July 22, 2024

On the evening of July 22, a fire started 5 kilometres north of the community of Jasper beneath a power pole. Just minutes later, a lightning storm sparked three additional wildfires south of the town of Jasper. That evening and overnight, recorded wind gusts up to 85 kilometres an hour merged the three wildfires south of the town of Jasper into one.

Within the first 4 hours, the combined area of the south wildfires grew to over 3,000 hectares. With a wall of flames 30-50 metres high in the south and new fires from falling embers starting spot fires up to 500 metres ahead of the main wall of flames the fire's growth was accelerated, making containment impossible.

As these fires grew and merged over the next 48 hours, they became the Jasper Wildfire Complex.

Extreme Wildfire Behaviour

On July 24, as the wildfires responded to the extreme burning conditions, portions of the fire developed into strong convective smoke columns that generated internal winds exceeding 180 kilometres an hour, further accelerating wildfire growth.



Jasper Wildfire and
Jasper National Park
Gates on July 24

The strength of these convective, fire-generated winds uprooted wide swaths of healthy, mature trees, including the entire root systems from deep-rooted trees over 300 years old.

Aerial retardant drops were called to suppress the fire's lateral growth, but the conditions soon became unsafe for these large planes due to the high winds, fire-generated turbulence, and very poor visibility through smoke created by the fire.

The intensity of even the flanking fire was so severe that any applied water or retardant evaporated or burned over before it could have any suppressive effect.



Evacuation Briefing

Evacuation - Immediate Action Saved Lives

Within an hour of the wildfire starting, several facilities, including five campgrounds outside the town, had been evacuated. Two hours later, some of these areas, including Whirlpool and Kerkeslin campgrounds, had been burned over.

At 8:00 p.m. that evening, an evacuation alert was issued and at 10:00 p.m., an evacuation order was issued for Jasper National Park and the town of Jasper.

The quick actions taken by Parks Canada employees, the Municipality of Jasper, and the RCMP saved lives. In a few hours, over 20,000 people had been evacuated from the town and the national park without incident.

Within 47 hours of the lightning strikes, the wildfire reached town.

The Town of Jasper - July 24, 2024

At approximately 5:45 p.m. on July 24, the wildfire reached the town of Jasper.

As the fire intensified, by 10:00 p.m. nearly one third of Jasper's structures had been lost. Critical infrastructure and vital facilities, including the wastewater treatment plant, police station, fire services, hospitals, schools, grocery stores, fuel stations, telecommunications, transportation systems, and two thirds of Jasper's homes were saved. These facilities had been identified as values at risk and tactics to save them were deployed.

Under Control - September 7, 2024

The 2024 Jasper Wildfire was classified "Under Control" on September 7, 2024. This meant that the wildfire had received sufficient suppression work to ensure there would be no further spread.

A Coordinated Response

Recognizing the impact on both the national park and the municipality and the need to coordinate and join efforts, Parks Canada worked with the Municipality of Jasper under Unified Command. Over the course of the incident, more than 3,000 personnel from different organizations worked on the Jasper Wildfire Complex, with support from other wildland fire management agencies coordinated through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre.

Within minutes of the wildfire starting, helicopters and crews were deployed. Hundreds of wildland and structural firefighters and specialized equipment, including state-of-the-art structure protection equipment for the town were in place or enroute. Within 24 hours of ignition, over 250 personnel were actively responding to the wildfires and helping protect the community and critical infrastructure.

First responder reinforcements quickly arrived. These included hundreds of wildland firefighters from Parks Canada, Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Northwest Territories, and Nova Scotia.



Firefighters Rock!
Messages of support
from local children

At the peak of the firefighting efforts, approximately 850 personnel from agencies from across Canada were on the ground, along with helicopters, air tankers, and firefighting equipment.

This large-scale mobilization was critical in slowing the wildfire's progression and safeguarding the majority of Jasper's structures as well as facilitating re-entry into town.



Parks Canada Incident Commanders brief executives

Reopening Jasper National Park

Reopening Jasper National Park after the wildfire was a major achievement—made possible by weeks of focused, collaborative work. Only a handful of sites remain closed for public safety and further assessment. When the wildfire was declared *Under Control* on September 7, 2024, large sections of the park had been burned or affected by fire operations. Trails and campgrounds were covered in debris, fallen and weakened trees required hazard tree assessments and removal, and infrastructure required urgent inspection and repair.

Throughout recovery, safety has remained the top priority. Parks Canada led a phased reopening strategy, beginning as soon as fire conditions allowed. Engineers and external contractors worked alongside Parks Canada staff to remove hazardous trees, assess structures, clear debris, and restore safe access to park facilities and trails. Eighty percent of Parks Canada sites have reopened.

After Action Reviews

Parks Canada is committed to continuous improvement. Several after-action reviews of the 2024 fire season and the Jasper Wildfire in particular are underway, and we look forward to learning from them.

Mental Health Supports in Jasper

2024 was a challenging year for Parks Canada's fire management personnel with the multi-fire complex that impacted the town of Jasper and the surrounding area. The trauma of witnessing destruction of homes and communities; balancing operational responsibilities with personal impact; and the emotional toll of losing a firefighter added to the cumulative mental and emotional strain from previous challenging years.

Through a service agreement with Health Canada, specialized Mental Health Professionals (MHP) were deployed to work on-site with the Parks Canada National Incident Management Team as soon as it became evident that Jasper had a high complexity fire situation. These MHP are specialized members of the Health Canada Psychosocial Response and Extended Counselling (PREC) Team and have experience in emergency and crisis management. From July 23 until October 23, fifteen different MHP were deployed for more than 360 person days to support the over 2000-person team of Parks Canada employees and assisting agency personnel in the Unified Command, Recovery, and Jasper Field Unit teams.



Primarily deployed as 2 to 4-person teams, they were able to expand to 6-person teams during critical times.

As Parks Canada personnel return from the incident, this PREC support continues with virtual Post Deployment, Post-Season and Pre-Season Check-ins.

Overall, the support has been greatly appreciated, with Health Canada reporting that there was great uptake in the on-site group and one-on-one anonymous sessions as well as with the virtual check-ins.



Focus on: Wildfire Risk Reduction and Conservation Work

Parks Canada uses several tools to help protect communities and infrastructure from wildfire. These tools include vegetation management, the creation of community fire guards, and prescribed fires.

Prince Albert National Park

The Waskesiu Community Fuel Break was developed in 2001-2002, when about 300 hectares of forest was harvested to help reduce the risk of potential wildfires to the townsite of Waskesiu.

The park conducts an annual prescribed fire in the southern portion of the fuel break every spring to burn off 40 to 50 hectares of highly flammable dead grass and renew the fuel break before peak wildfire season.

Fresh green grass grows in the days following the prescribed fire to create a green belt that helps slow fire spread by bringing a potential wildfire from the treetops to the ground. This area also provides a strategic line to defend the community or evacuate if required.

Prescribed fire is part of a larger maintenance plan that keeps the fuel break effective. Prince Albert National Park also removes dead or fallen trees and young coniferous trees from specific areas in winter months to reduce the types of trees that fuel wildfires. The fuel break will expand in future years to increase the fuel break around the community.

Kluane National Park and Reserve

After years of planning and preparation, Kluane National Park and Reserve (KNPR) started prescribed fire operations in September 2024. The Alder Creek prescribed fire is the result of the multi-year Conservation and Restoration project called *Dákeyi ukaanathìjè* (All of you watch over our country with your heart) aimed at restoring forest ecosystems. Working with First Nation co-operative management partners, Parks Canada is integrating traditional knowledge into fire operations, as Elders and Guardians work alongside Parks Canada fire crews on the ground in Kluane National Park and Reserve.

The Alder Creek Incident Management Team included personnel from Parks Canada, Yukon Wildland Fire Management, Canadian Forest Service, and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. Local fire crews prepared the 37-hectare prescribed fire site in the southwest region of KNPR. Conditions were wetter than desired, so the planned operations didn't proceed beyond test fire. The collaborative work putting fire on the ground has set a precedent for restoring fire in KNPR, building local capacity and community support.

Riding Mountain National Park

In the spring of 2024, staff at Riding Mountain National Park successfully carried out a prescribed fire covering 770 hectares within the Jackfish Creek Prescribed Fire unit. The majority of the prescribed fire occurred in grassland areas in the bison enclosure, as well as in the Strathclair and Kinnis meadows. This prescribed fire was done to mitigate the encroachment of trees and shrubs into these ecologically significant grasslands, and to support their maintenance and restoration.

Fire has been used as a management tool within the Jackfish Creek Prescribed Fire unit since 1980, when park wardens conducted a prescribed fire in the bison enclosure. Since the formalization of the Jackfish Creek Prescribed Fire plan in 1995, the unit has undergone prescribed fires on seven occasions, contributing to the ongoing stewardship of this critical habitat.



Jackfish Creek Riding Mountain National Park

Kootenay National Park

This winter, FireSmart efforts in Kootenay National Park focused on the Dry Gulch Douglas fir forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction project. This has been a multi-year project to reduce Douglas fir forest encroachment on grassland ecosystems.

This year's work was done by an Indigenous contract fire crew. The crew worked for a total of two weeks and treated approximately 4.0 hectares of the total 88-hectare unit.

The thinning of dense vegetation helps to reduce wildfire risk to homes and infrastructure in the land adjacent to Kootenay National Park and supports habitat restoration for a variety of wildlife species, including Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

Yoho National Park

In Yoho National Park wildfire risk reduction projects included work at Emerald Lake and restoration on the newly created Ross Lake Fire Guard.



FireSmart work was completed around Emerald Lake Lodge. Parks Canada fire crews focused around the lodge and adjacent cabins to reduce vegetation following FireSmart techniques. The treatment area was approximately 3.5 hectares.

The 49 hectares Ross Lake Fire Guard was created between November 2023 and March 2024. Once the heavy equipment was done working on the guard, the LLYK vegetation crews worked hard on restoring the constructed

road and landing areas. Work occurred spring, summer and fall 2024. Restoration work included the placement of organics, seeding, and willow/poplar staking on the Ross Lake Fire Guard.

Ross Lake Fire Guard

Banff National Park

Guided by the 2020 Fire Management Plan for Banff, Yoho, and Kootenay National Parks, Parks Canada continues to take proactive steps to prepare for wildfire season and reduce the risk wildfire poses to Banff National Park and surrounding communities.

Over the winter of 2024-25, Parks Canada made significant progress on a fire guard adjacent to the Banff townsite, successfully completing 80.3 hectares of wildfire risk reduction work the Tunnel Toe Wildfire Risk Reduction project. The full 211-hectare project is being phased over two years, with work planned to continue again over the winter of 2025-26. Additionally, Parks Canada completed 70.1 of the 165.4 hectares of thinning on the Lake Louise Fire Guard to reduce the threat of wildfire to the community of Lake Louise and surrounding areas and improve fire resilience in the Bow Valley. Once complete, the fire guard will stretch almost 5 km across the Bow Valley from Mount St. Piran behind the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, to the Lake Louise Ski Resort parking lot and will be an important strategic fire management feature on the landscape.



Tunnel Toe Wildfire Risk Reduction Project

Between 2019 and 2024, Parks Canada completed two large, landscape-level fire guards in Banff National Park. One on the west side of Sulphur Mountain, adjacent to the Town of Banff. The West Sulphur fuel break, completed between 2019 and 2023, helps protect the Town of Banff in the event of a wildfire. Through the removal of large sections of trees, this fuel break will slow the speed at which a wildfire can spread, greatly reducing how fast a wildfire could reach the Town of Banff. The second is located on Highway 1A north of Castle Junction. This 32.8-hectare Protection Mountain Fire Guard was completed in winter 2022 and 2023, now reducing the risk of wildfire to the Bow Valley, the community of Lake Louise (AB) and the surrounding area.

Parks Canada works year-round with partners through the established Bow Valley Interagency Wildfire Committee—including the Town of Banff, Town of Canmore, Improvement District 9, the Municipal District of Bighorn, Kananaskis Improvement District, and the Province of Alberta—to reduce the risk of wildfires in the Bow Valley. These collaborative efforts include prescribed fire, vegetation management, and strategic fuel reduction. These actions aim to create healthier, more fire-resilient landscapes, while also protecting nearby communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems. Public safety remains our top priority, and through cross-jurisdictional cooperation, we are improving preparedness and resilience in the face of longer, hotter fire seasons driven by climate change.

The National Fire Cache

Supporting Parks Canada Fire Operations



Located in Banff National Park, the Parks Canada National Fire Cache is a storage and maintenance facility for all equipment needed in fire operations. This equipment is available for deployment to all Parks Canada administered places, and for loan to other wildfire management agencies, when the need exceeds the capacity of local equipment resources or special equipment is requested.

Standard fire line items such as water pumps, hose, nozzles and hand tools used by fire crews are stored and maintained at the Cache. Additionally, weather stations, laptops, communications equipment, and remote cameras, essential tools in managing a fire, are part of the equipment available. Personal protective equipment, such as Nomex (fire-resistant) clothing, hard hats, gloves, and face masks – essential gear for keeping fire crews safe - are also stocked in the Cache.



Water pumps ready to be deployed to a wildfire

Much of the equipment is stored in a fleet of trailers that can be quickly delivered to fire incidents when needed. This fleet includes: two 53-foot Fire Equipment Trailers; two 25-foot Facility Protection Trailers; one 30-foot Mobile Incident Command Post/Office trailer; one Ignitions Operations Trailer, and a cargo trailer for transporting additional equipment.

How the National Cache Supported the 2024 Jasper Wildfire

Two facility protection trailers, two fire equipment trailers, and the Mobile Incident Command Post were deployed to Jasper National Park in 2024.

The facility protection trailers had pumps, hose and various types of sprinklers to be set up on or around buildings to protect them from an approaching fire. The fire equipment trailers were stocked with water pumps, hose, hand tools, chainsaws and personal protective equipment.

The Jasper Wildfire was the first deployment for Parks Canada's Mobile Incident Command Post which was purchased and outfitted in 2023. This trailer contains a dispatch room and a meeting/conference room. It is a self-supported unit with a generator which provides power to the onboard radio and satellite communications systems.

Daily supply runs were made from the Cache to Jasper. New equipment was transferred to support the incident and out-of-service gear was returned to the National Cache for repair and readied for redeployment.

Fire Cache Following the Fire Season

As the fire operation slows down and staff are released from the incident there is still lots of work for the National Fire Cache employees. All the trailers and equipment that were deployed throughout the season are returned to the National Fire Cache to be sorted, repaired and tested to be readied for service for the next fire season.

Any equipment that has been lost or damaged beyond repair must be replaced to ensure that equipment stock levels are in place and the National Fire Cache is ready to respond in the upcoming fire season.

Indigenous Fire Stewardship

An Indigenous Lens to Fire Management

Parks Canada hired a new national Indigenous Fire Specialist in 2024. This Specialist joined the team to help apply Indigenous views and values to the Fire Program, and to assist in relationship building between both the Fire Program and the Indigenous Communities. The Indigenous Fire Specialist is focusing on identifying current barriers between Parks Canada's Fire Management Program and Indigenous Communities and suggesting ways to improve the Program.

In 2024, the Indigenous Fire Specialist spent time working with national parks across the country, and learning more about Parks Canada's Indigenous engagement related to fire management and the strength of the relationships between the national parks and local Indigenous communities. The Specialist joined various circles and groups to capture a collective idea of what Indigenous Fire Stewardship means and what Parks Canada can do to assist and reinforce that vision at Parks Canada administered places.

A New Role on National Incident Management Teams

Because of Jasper National Park's connection and importance to Local Indigenous communities, during the Jasper Wildfire, an Indigenous Liaison position was created to be part of the Park Canada National Incident Management Team. The Indigenous Liaison role was important in assessing the wildfire's impact on culturally significant areas within the national park boundaries and to provide culturally significant information to assist a long-term recovery plan for the national park.

Throughout 2024, Parks Canada hosted the Indigenous Fire Circle, a meeting that includes Indigenous Parks Canada employees and external Indigenous members. The Fire Circle is to share ideas on how to advance the Fire Management Program at Parks Canada with an Indigenous-led/two-eyed seeing approach.

The Science of Fire

A recent collaboration between Parks Canada and the Canadian Forest Service resulted in a significantly improved knowledge base about the role of vegetation, climate and wildfire in Nahanni National Park Reserve and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve in the Northwest Territories.

Baseline ecological information is critical to be able to identify environmental change and help project ecological sensitivity to future disruptions. Identifying change in this area is particularly important because it is the region of North America that has experienced the highest rate of climatic change over the last century and where projected change in the future is the greatest.

To investigate the dynamics of vegetation, climate, and fire, researchers used various sources of information, including historical air photo analysis, satellite remote sensing, and field-based observations. This helped the team to measure climate-induced change over the past century for several specific components: wildfire activity and severity; post wildfire vegetation recovery; and tree growth.

Results showed varying degrees of post-wildfire resilience in these northern forests, ranging from persistence of existing vegetation to a change in dominant tree species, to tree regeneration failure.

Encouragingly, over 90% of surveyed stands showed evidence of forest recovery after fire, with potential shifts in composition toward more fire-adapted or mixed conifer–broadleaf stands. In terms of tree growth, despite regional variability in climate trends, coniferous trees have exhibited stable or increasing growth over the past century. This may be because of longer growing seasons associated with warming temperatures and sufficient moisture in the area.

The team is in the process of completing a written report of these results. A second report, focused on the sensitivity to future landscape-level changes, is also in the works.



Meet the Team

In the Parks Canada National Fire Management Program, the team is represented by several, yet equally important groups. These are some of their stories.

National Duty Officers

Often working in the shadows, the National Duty Officer (NDO) plays a crucial role in Parks Canada's Fire Management Program.

The NDO is the single point of contact for fire management operations at Parks Canada. The role of the NDO is critical to coordinating and managing Parks Canada's efforts in the management of wildfires, prescribed fires, or any other incident that requires Fire Management personnel and resources.

NDOs are responsible for national situational awareness and reports; overview of the weather around the country; overview of fire danger across the Parks Canada system; assessing available resources such as personnel, aircraft, and equipment; and overseeing the preparedness of response teams, ensuring that all personnel and resources are ready for rapid deployment.

Additionally, the NDO is the single point of contact with the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre and the rest of the Canada wildfire community and is responsible for the exchange (import or export) of resources through CIFFC.

NDOs must possess a combination of skills and expertise, including Strong Analytical Skills, Effective Communication, Leadership and Coordination, and Experience in Fire/Emergency Management.

Wildfire Crews

Wildfires are managed in two primary phases:

- *Initial Attack* is the initial suppression actions to either contain or extinguish a new wildfire before the next day.
- *Sustained Action* phase continuing until the fire is extinguished.

Initial Attack crews typically have 4 Parks Canada wildland firefighters, and Sustained Action crews (also known as Unit Crews) have 20 members.



Wood Buffalo National
Park

Type 1 Wildland Fire Crews are the primary wildfire response force, capable of being deployed to wildfires threatening life, property or other high priority values. They are certified personnel with the highest level of training and fitness so they can safely and effectively perform both initial attack and sustained action work in high-risk, dynamic and remote environments. Parks Canada has 22 dedicated 4-person Type 1 Initial Attack Crews based at 12 different locations across the country.

Type 2 Wildland Fire crews have qualified Parks Canada personnel brought together generally from outside of Parks Canada's Fire Management Program. They primarily work on sustained action on low to moderate-complexity wildfires and prescribed fire operations. Parks Canada has over 100 Type 2 firefighters across the country.

2024 Deployments

United States - Red Rock Fire, Idaho

In October 2024, 17 Parks Canada Type 1 firefighters and one Agency Representative travelled to Salmon, Idaho. Once the crew received their briefing, fire shelter training, and radios, they began their assignment on the Red Rock Fire.

Parks Canada crew members on deployment to Idaho came from Jasper, Lake Louise/Yoho/Kootenay, Banff, Pukaskwa and Prince Albert national parks.

When the crew arrived, the fire was largely uncontained and threatening the community of Salmon, a large cobalt mine, and power transmission lines. The crew set to work on control line improvement and the potential support of a hand ignition operation.

Hand Ignition: This technique uses a drip torch to ignite vegetation along a control line. Control lines are created by clearing away vegetation and other combustible materials down to the mineral soil, forming a barrier that stops the fire from spreading. The fire is set to reinforce the control line by burning the vegetation, increasing the distance an ember must travel to cross the control line.

After five days of working on control lines, snow and colder weather arrived in the area. Following a couple of frigid camp days and nights while the Incident Management Team transitioned and reassessed priorities, the Parks Canada crew was reassigned to demobilization and reclamation activities which are essential for restoring the affected area and preventing further damage like soil erosion.

With the fire being significantly subdued by the weather the incident quickly downsized and went into a full demobilization phase. After a few days of reclamation work and demobilizing firefighting equipment, the Parks Canada crew was released and sent to Boise, Idaho for a debrief and after-action review.

Taking the opportunity to learn more about American colleagues' operations, the crew were able to take a tour of the National Interagency Coordination Center, the Smokejumper Base, and were able to spend some thoughtful time at the Wildland Firefighters Monument, which pays tribute to those who work on the fireline.



Parks Canada Wildland Firefighters at the National Interagency Coordination Center Smokejumper Base

Province of Alberta – Semo Lake Fire Complex

In July, Parks Canada assisted the Province of Alberta with multiple fires on Little Red River Nation lands, located at the south-west of Wood Buffalo National Park. The fire was approximately 92,000 hectares and was in an area that included three communities with a total population of approximately 6,000 people.

On the second day of their deployment, the Parks Canada Incident Management Team (IMT) supported Chief and Council on community evacuations based on significant growth of the fire and the forecasted weather conditions that would push the fire south towards all three communities.

A Fire Guardian was imbedded with the IMT, providing valuable local knowledge and perspectives and Parks Canada established positive relationships with the local Indigenous communities.

The Parks Canada team worked with international resources, including crews from Australia, New Zealand, USA and Mexico and during Parks Canada's IMT deployment, Semo Complex had over 400 staff working on the incident.

The hard work of the Parks Canada IMT and all the fire crews was reflected as community re-entry occurred soon after the Parks Canada IMT left.

Stories from the Fireline

Fat Bikes: A New Firefighting Tool?

In early August, a lightning bolt sparked a small fire in Glacier National Park's Beaver Valley. The geography of the park can make it difficult to land a helicopter. Fortunately, there was a bikeable trail nearby and firefighters used an unconventional wildland firefighting tool to access it - the fat bike!

Fat bikes made accessing the fire easier and faster for the Type 2 Fire Crew. They actioned the fire until sunset and pedalled out. The next morning, they biked in again to fully extinguish the fire.

Fast and forest-friendly. Fat bikes might just be the coolest new way to fight wildfires!



Parks Canada Wildland Firefighters getting creative with their transportation!

King Charles III's Coronation Medals: Celebrating Team Members



Dean MacDonald
receives his King
Charles III Coronation
Medal

Three members of Parks Canada's National Fire Management Program received King Charles III's Coronation Medals in 2024. Nominated by the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs in recognition of work done under Unified Command with the Municipality of Jasper and all the other partners in response to the Jasper Complex wildfires.

Dean MacDonald, Program Advisor, National Fire Management Program and Incident Commander; Landon Shepherd, Fire and Vegetation Specialist, Jasper National Park and Incident Commander; and Scott Murphy, National Fire Management Officer, Parks Canada's National Fire Management Program and Operations Section Chief were awarded medals.

Parks Canada is proud our team members were recognized for their work and dedication.

Congratulations on this incredible honour!

In Memoriam

Morgan Kitchen, Alberta Wildfire

During the Jasper Wildfire, Parks Canada had support from many wildland fire and first responder agencies including our colleagues at Alberta Wildfire.

Morgan Kitchen, who was working as an Alberta Wildfire employee from Rocky Mountain House, lost his life fighting the Jasper Wildfire. Morgan and the Rocky Mountain House unit crew were performing critical work on the Jasper wildfire and this tragic accident was devastating for everyone in fire management, Parks Canada and the Jasper community.

Morgan's family, friends, and colleagues are regularly in our thoughts, and we continue to honour him, his life and his work.

Photos

Cover – Wood Buffalo, Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks

Page 2 – Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks

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