

FACT SHEET

Fire Season in Vancouver's Urban Forest 2004

Vancouver Park Board • Greater Vancouver Regional District • Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services

Last year's dry summer and wildfires in B.C.'s Interior have heightened awareness of fire risks associated with natural and remnant woodland park areas in the City. With an anticipated trend to warmer, drier summers, Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS), the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) and the Vancouver Park Board (VPB) are working together to enhance levels of readiness in case of a fire outbreak. An inter-agency, coordinated approach to fire prevention, suppression, preparation and protection for Vancouver's urban forest builds on protocols that have been in place for many years. The strategy includes regular meetings, shared resources, training, short and long-term planning, public education and communication along with monitoring and response. The goal is to ensure that we protect our parks, and keep them open and safe for the public.

The nature of urban forests

Unlike rural forests, our forested urban parks are managed by trained staff with special equipment, have good access roads and water supply and detailed mapping, and are serviced by local professional firefighters. Park maintenance staff and rangers regularly patrol the parks.

Areas of Responsibility

Managing Parks and Forests

Park Board

- City • 200 parks and 18 km of beaches
- Primary areas of fire protection: Stanley, Everett Crowley and Jericho Parks
- Other smaller parks or portions of parks that have forested areas, including Captain Cook Park, Malkin Park, Musqueam Park, Renfrew Ravine, Ravine Park, Fraserview Golf Course

Greater Vancouver Regional Parks

- City and Region • 30 parks and greenways comprised of more than 12,500 hectares
- Primary area of fire protection in Vancouver: Pacific Spirit Regional Park
- Park staff are S100 trained and available to respond to fires within the park with initial attack equipment

Fire Protection and Response and Resources

Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services

Supported by Park Board, GVRD (Pacific Spirit Regional Park & Watershed Protection), BC Forest Service (BCFS)

- Planning and simulations—inter-agency committee holds regular meetings
- Professional firefighters—some fire stations designated as "wildland firehalls," Forestry S100 and S125 Courses; tactical inspections to familiarize themselves with access and potential problems
- Training of Park Board forestry staff – fire prevention & suppression methods
- Special vehicles and trucks—wildland vehicles purchased two years ago
- Hydrants in parks, fire stations adjacent to parks
- Helicopters, planes available from BCFS on request from VFRS—one hour response

Fire Preparation and Parks • Major Parks

Equipment and Training

- Rapid response protocols in place
- Appropriate fire suppression equipment at optimal locations to parks (Firehalls #19, 10, 5, 8 and 6)
- Designated "wildland firehalls" receive special training
- Tactical inspections of park sites ensure rapid response & identify local risks
- Provision of training for Park staff
- Purchase of 8 hand held thermal imaging cameras to assist in locating reported fires

Inter-agency Co-operation

- Improved and regular communications
- Development of coordinated plan involving all local organizations and BC Forest Service

Communication/Public Education

Inter-Agency

- Inter-agency committee has developed signage, to be used during high risk periods, with contact numbers for prompt reporting
- Improved communication links between Parks, Police, GVRD Parks, Forest Service and VFRS

- Forest fire hazard rating signs based on provincial design are to be installed at park entrances
- Review of Province's Filmon Report on B.C. fires in 2003, adoption of key recommendations related to urban forest

The Public

Target audiences: residents, tourists, stakeholders, such as tour bus operators, restaurant owners, and transients

• Key messages for the public are:

- Fire prevention and safety is everyone's responsibility
- Do your part—respect signage, regulations
- Direct fire concerns or questions to park staff
- Report all fires to 911
- **Signage**—inter-agency committee developed signage that is ready for use during high fire risk periods, with emergency contact number
- **Web site and news releases**—will be used to keep the public updated on any change in fire risks or prohibitions
- **Information flyers**—will be made available to the public visiting these parks if fire hazard escalates

Other Park-Specific Protocols

Pacific Spirit Regional Park

- Many of the park trails are accessible by fire trucks, 4X4 trucks, ATVs to deliver water, crews and equipment
- The park is also well serviced by fire hydrants
- Staff and VFRS conduct tactical drive-throughs within the park with firefighting vehicles
- Park staff are S 100 trained with initial attack gear to respond to fires within the park
- Staff meet regularly with VFRS to review fire preparedness in the park
- With over one million park visitors annually, the public assist staff in patrolling the park trails daily
- Staff use progressive measures to prepare for fire hazard conditions starting April 1 until October 31
- Starting April 1 or in moderate fire hazard conditions, whichever comes first, park vehicles are equipped with basic firefighting gear
- In high fire hazard conditions, extra precautions are taken to alert the public including prohibiting all fires, using propane or briquette BBQs only in approved areas
- In extreme fire hazard conditions, all BBQs are prohibited and signs are posted at park entrances with "no smoking on trails", extra fire patrols may be organized
- New fire hazard danger rating signs like those in provincial parks will be posted on the main entrance signs to Pacific Spirit Regional Park and will be updated regularly
- Trained forestry staff regularly remove and reduce fire fuel loading in the park
- Park rangers and forestry staff receive fire suppression training
- Air surveillance of the park is provided through protocols with airlines using Vancouver Harbour; 100 incoming and 100 outgoing flights each day
- In extreme conditions, evening security will be initiated in the park
- Water main replacement will continue for additional fire flow capacity to the park
- GPS co-ordinate maps have been developed and are shared by all agencies including ECOMM
- New hydrants are being installed at each trail head along Park Drive (there are 12 hydrants currently in the forest, plus on the perimeter of the park)
- Park staff and VFRS regularly conduct tactical drive-throughs with wildland vehicles
- BBQs are permitted in designated grassy areas only; they must be 30 inches above the ground
- No campfires are permitted in parks or on beaches
- If deemed necessary, the Park Board will ask the public to refrain from smoking in the park

Everett Crowley Park

- Park attendant is stationed in the park
- Park staff receive fire training
- Park staff and VFRS regularly conduct tactical drive-throughs with wildland vehicles
- No campfires are permitted on parks or beaches
- If deemed necessary, the Park Board will ask the public to refrain from smoking in the park

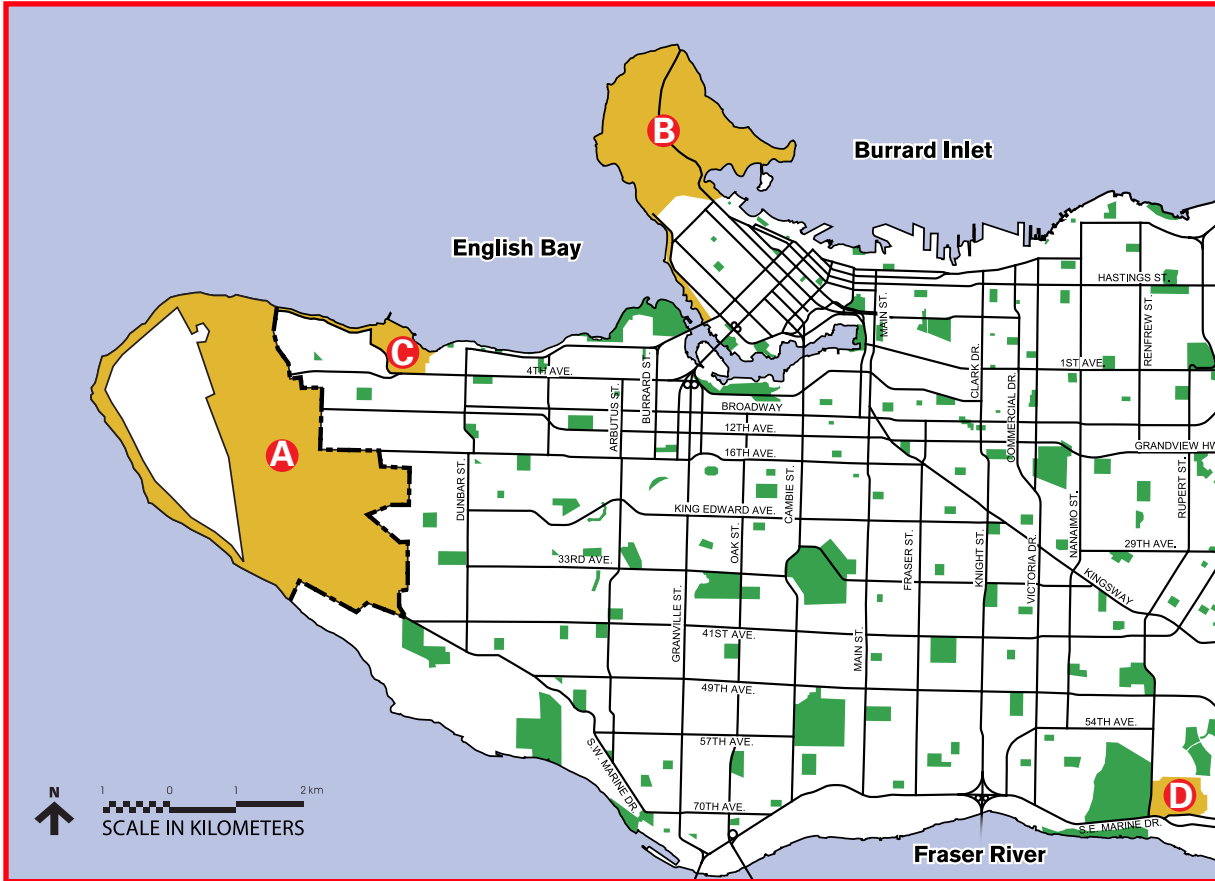
Jericho Beach Park

- Staff patrols to be implemented if increased risk warrant
- No campfires are permitted in parks or on beaches

Stanley Park

- A major fire simulation was conducted in Stanley Park in 1993
- Fire access is provided by a perimeter seawall, extensive paved road and vehicle-accessible trail system
- With over 8 million visitors yearly, the public assist staff in fire hazard monitoring
- An outfitted fire trailer is available for park staff to monitor fires extinguished by VFRS

Major Parks • Fire Readiness



A) Pacific Spirit Regional Park • 809 hectares (2,000 acres) • Adjacent to UBC in Electoral Area A

Primarily mixed second growth coniferous and deciduous forest 75 km of multi-purpose trails including 7.5 km of foreshore. The park contains a number of environmentally sensitive areas including the Ecological Reserve, Camosun Bog, small fish-bearing streams and Fraser River marshlands.

B) Stanley Park • 404 hectares (1,000 acres) • Adjacent to West End

600 acres of park is managed west coast forest comprised of cedar, Douglas fir and hemlock. 400 acres is landscaped, recreational land and gardens and includes a 5.5 mile seawall walk. Habitat for songbirds, water fowl, raptors and herons, small mammals including coyotes, raccoons, skunks, squirrels and rodents.

C) Jericho Beach Park • 54 hectares (133 acres) • Trimble St. and 4th Ave, west of Wallace St.

70% is wild, left to nature—meadows, broom and other scrub. Forest cover is about 40%-- mixed deciduous and coniferous forest, alder cottonwood, maple, cedar, and hemlock. Habitat for songbirds, raptors, water fowl and small mammals, including coyotes, raccoons, skunks, squirrels and rodents.

D) Everett Crowley Park • 40 hectares (99 acres) • Kerr Rd. and S.E. Marine Drive

Former city landfill site, natural reclamation of site, largely blackberry bushes with pockets of mixed deciduous forest of alder, cottonwood, wild cherry. Habitat for songbirds, raptors and small mammals including coyotes, squirrels, skunks, raccoons and rodents.

Relevant By-Laws

Parks Control By-Laws

- 5. Prohibits discharge of any combustible material, or starting a fire or disposal of a lighted match or other burning material within any parks limits.
- 14.j Prohibits lighting a fire or placing fuel on a fire in or on any park or beach.
- 24. The General Manager shall post within parks for the purpose of prohibiting, restricting or regulating any activity with the area posted and has the right to enforce all sections of the Parks Control By-Law
- 28. Every person who commits an offence against this by-law is punishable on conviction by a fine of not less than **\$50.00** and not more than **\$2,000** for each offence.

Vancouver Fire By-Laws

- 1.4.2.2.(1) Where an emergency arises from a fire hazard (risk) that causes the Fire Chief to be apprehensive of imminent and serious danger to life or property, the Fire Chief may take reasonable and necessary steps to remove or lessen the risk.

1.4.4. ORDERS

- 1.4.4.4. (1) Where in the opinion of the Fire Chief a condition exists which endangers life or poses a risk of injury or loss by fire, the Fire Chief may take reasonable and necessary steps, including the issuing of orders, to lessen or remove the risk or hazard.

- 1.4.4.2. (1) Following an inspection the Fire Chief may in writing order: g) the owner or occupant to take such other precautions as necessary to reduce the danger of fire or danger of persons

2.4.51 OPEN AIR FIRES

- 2.4.51. (1) No person shall light or maintain a fire in the open air for any reason without first obtaining a PERMIT from the Fire Chief.

8.2.1.1.OFFENCES

- 8.2.1.1. (1)Every person is guilty of an offence against the By-Law who:
 - a)violates a provision of this By-Law or
 - d)does an act which violates a provision of this By-Law or
 - e)fails to comply with an order or direction given under this By-Law

8.3.1.1. FINES & PENALTIES

- 8.3.1.1. (1) Every person who commits an offence against this By-Law is liable to a fine of not more than **\$2,000** and not less than **\$100** for each offence

Media Contacts



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