

BC FireSmart Conference - 2021 Wildfires: Route and Reflect

2021 Wildfire Environment Context:

- Multiple periods of high lightning activity produced a large amount of lightning-caused fire starts across the province:
 - o Between June 27 and July 4, over 200 new starts
 - o Between July 4 and July 11, over 240 new starts
 - o Between July 10 and July 17, over 160 new starts
- Some of these lightning starts became large wildfires with a large impact to surrounding communities and highway systems, such as July Mountain, White Rock Lake and Tremont Creek, which all started on July 13.
- Multiple extreme wind events occurred while these fires were actively burning. Fire spread fueled by wind was tracked close to 2km per hour, which may seem slow compared to driving a vehicle or running but imagine a fire moving 2000 meters in an hour. That is approximately 33m or 100ft in one minute. A fire fueled by wind can cover the length of one football field in less than four minutes.

All sizes in hectares are estimates and may have changed or been reduced once a final track was completed at the end of season. List illustrates extreme growth in short time periods

White Rock Lake K61884

- Detected July 13, 2021, suspected lightning caused
- Upon discovery, this fire was already beyond initial response capacity for a three-person crew due to size and aggressive fire behavior. Personnel then directed their response to tactically evacuate homes immediately adjacent to the wildfire. Air tanker support was requested within 90 minutes of the initial fire report
- Estimated growth timeline July 13: 10ha,
- On August 5, this wildfire grew to the northeast and crossed Highway 97 near Monte Lake. This fire behavior closed Highway 97 until August 16.
- This wildfire was being managed by the same Incident Management Team as other fires in the Okanagan, such as Thomas Creek and Brenda Creek, before it was passed to its own management team for more focused resources and control.

Tremont Creek K21849

- Detected July 13, 2021, suspected lightning caused
- Estimated growth timeline July 21: 11,000ha, July 29: 19,700ha, Aug 1: 26,000ha, Aug 5: 30,000ha, Aug 13: 38,000, Aug 14: 41,000ha, Aug 16: 62,000ha
- This wildfire was initially managed by the same Incident Management Team as Lytton Creek and McKay Creek, but as the fire grew more towards the east, management of the fire was shifted to the Sparks Lake Complex. This meant it would now share the same resources and management with the largest wildfire in BC.
- The Tremont Creek wildfire challenged the community of Logan lake on the weekend of August 14 and 15. The efforts of structural protection and air attack prevented any major losses in this community.
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July Mountain

- Detected July 13, 2021, suspected lightning caused
- Estimated growth timeline July 17 185ha, July 24 1200ha, July 31 2000ha, Aug 9 6000ha, Aug 14 7500ha, Aug 15 8000ha (combined with Brook Creek), Aug 16 19,000ha
- This fire did not initially display the aggressive, fast growing fire behavior of other fires in the Kamloops Fire Centre, which is illustrated by the growth timeline
- By July 23, this wildfire was within 1km of the Coquihalla Highway (Hwy 5). By August 6, it had begun spotting across Highway 5, and on August 15, an extreme wind event pushed this wildfire across the highway and displayed aggressive fire behavior. This wind event also merged the July Mountain wildfire with the Brook Creek wildfire, which had started on August 14 on the east side of Highway 5, north of the community of Brookmere. This fire behavior caused the closure of Coquihalla on August 15, which would remain closed until August 17 when fire behavior was no longer threatening the highway.
- During and after this wind event, the fire grew to nearly 20,000 hectares in size
- The impact of this fire remains highly visible along the Coquihalla corridor

Sparks Lake K21001

- Detected June 28, 2021, suspected human caused
- Initial days on this fire showed extreme fire behavior and fast growth
- Estimated growth timeline July 1: 20,000ha, July 2: 31,000ha, July 13: 40,200ha, July 22: 55,800ha, July 29: 65,400ha, Aug 6: 77,100ha, Aug 16: 90,550ha
- An Area Restriction was implemented for this fire on July 1 and remained in effect until October 15, 2021
- By July 1, an estimated 115 personnel were working on this incident. This number increased to 203 by July 4, 2021.

McKay Creek K71030

- Detected June 29, 2021, suspected human caused
- This fire saw significant growth in the first few days after detection
- Estimated growth timeline July 1: 15,000ha, July 2: 22,000ha
- This fire also had an Incident Management team deployed within the first 48 hours to manage the wildfire
- By July 4, over 100 personnel were working on this fire
- An Area Restriction Order was implemented for this wildfire area on July 3

Lytton Creek K71086

- Detected June 30, 2021, suspected human caused
- An Incident Management Team was deployed to manage this wildfire immediately
- By July 1, the Lytton Creek wildfire had merged with the George Road wildfire (K70804) that started June 16 near Lytton.
- Estimated growth timeline July 1: 6400ha, July 3, 8700ha
- An Area Restriction was implemented for this fire on July 3 and remained in effect until October 15, 2021. Highways 12 and 1 were both closed while an evacuation order was in place.

Flat Lake C41602

- Detected July 8, 2021, suspected lightning caused
- Estimated growth timeline July 12: 300ha, July 13: 1000ha, July 14: 2000 ha, July 15: 8,725 ha, July 16: 10,000ha, July 17: 14,000ha
- An Incident Management Team assumed control of this fire by July 14, 2021