



## June 22, 2026, Issue Brief

As the Kootenay Rockies transition from spring freshet into the peak summer tourism season, current conditions remain generally favourable for travel and recreation. Snowpack levels across the Upper Columbia, East Kootenay, and West Kootenay remain near normal for mid-June, while localized drought conditions are beginning to emerge in some watersheds, and wildfire agencies are encouraging preparedness as warmer and drier conditions return.

This issue brief provides an update on current snowpack and drought conditions, seasonal wildfire outlooks, and several park advisories that may impact visitor planning.

### Seasonal Conditions & Preparedness

#### Snowpack and Water Conditions

The River Forecast Centre released its final Snow Survey and Water Supply Bulletin of the season on June 15. While provincial snowpack has declined to 48% of normal as seasonal melt progresses, conditions across the Kootenay Rockies remain near normal for this time of year.

Current snow basin indices are:

- Upper Columbia: 105% of normal
- East Kootenay: 97% of normal
- West Kootenay: 95% of normal

Approximately 85% of the seasonal snowpack has now melted across BC, slightly ahead of the historical average. Remaining snow is primarily located at higher elevations and will continue contributing to streamflows through late June.

The River Forecast Centre notes that elevated streamflows remain possible in snowmelt-driven watersheds, particularly during periods of hot weather. As the season progresses, the primary hazard focus is expected to shift from spring freshet conditions toward drought and summer weather impacts.

### Tourism Considerations

- Visitors recreating near rivers, streams, and alpine environments should continue to exercise caution around fast-moving water and cold-water conditions
- Backcountry users may still encounter lingering snow at higher elevations and should check current trail conditions before departure
- Operators should be aware that rapid weather changes, localized flooding, and debris flows remain possible during intense rainfall events, particularly in steep terrain and previously burned areas

### Resources

- River Forecast Centre – [Snow Survey and Water Supply Bulletin, June 15, 2026](#)

### Drought Conditions

Provincial drought monitoring indicates varying conditions across the Kootenay Rockies. As of June 22, 2026, the Slocan-Lower Columbia region is at **Level 2 (Very Dry)**, and the Upper Arrow Lakes and Creston are at **Level 1 (Dry)**, with other watersheds remaining at **Level 0 (Normal)** due to near-normal snowpack and recent moisture conditions.

Current drought conditions vary considerably across the Kootenay Rockies, reinforcing the importance of monitoring local watershed conditions rather than relying on a single regional assessment.

The River Forecast Centre notes that drought concerns may increase through the summer as snowmelt contributions diminish and warmer, drier weather patterns become more influential. While snowpack conditions in our region remain near normal for mid-June, conditions can change rapidly depending on precipitation and temperature patterns.

## Tourism Considerations

- Drought conditions currently vary across the region, with some watersheds remaining in normal conditions
- Operators are encouraged to stay informed of local drought ratings, water conservation measures, and water-use restrictions that may be implemented
- Visitors may encounter different conditions depending on where they are travelling within the Kootenay Rockies
- Continued drying trends may contribute to elevated wildfire risk later in the season

## Resources

- [BC Drought Information Portal](#)

## Wildfire Preparedness and Seasonal Outlook

The Southeast Fire Centre reports that recent precipitation has helped limit fire behaviour across the region; however, warmer and drier conditions are forecast to return through late June. BC Wildfire Service notes that elevated winds and drying fuels may increase the potential for new fire starts, particularly in the Boundary and Kootenay Lake fire zones.

### Zone Fire Danger Rating and Activity Level

Zone	Fire Danger Rating	Activity Level
Cranbrook	Low to Moderate	1
Invermere	Low to Moderate	1
Columbia	Low to Moderate	1
Arrow	Low to Moderate	1
Boundary	Low to High	1
Kootenay Lake	Low to High	1

At present, wildfire activity remains relatively low. Fire danger ratings across much of the Kootenay Rockies remain in the Low to Moderate range, although portions of the Boundary and Kootenay Lake fire zones are currently experiencing areas of High fire danger.

## Parks & Recreation Updates

### Purcell Wilderness Conservancy

BC Parks continues to maintain partial closures within Purcell Wilderness Conservancy Provincial Park due to ongoing post-wildfire hazards in the Clint Creek drainage, Hamill Creek drainage, and the western portion of the Earl Grey Pass Trail. Timelines for reopening remain unknown.

In addition, BC Parks recently advised of limited access at Dewar Creek. The pedestrian bridge crossing Westley Creek from the Dewar Creek Forest Service Road trailhead remains closed due to storm damage, and creek crossings are not advised.

### Visitor Considerations

- Visitors planning backcountry trips within the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy should confirm current access conditions before departure
- Some routes and trail access points may be unavailable or require alternate trip planning
- Backcountry users should be prepared for changing conditions and ensure they have the current route information
- Tourism operators and visitor services staff are encouraged to direct visitors to BC Parks and other official sources for the latest updates

### Resources

- BC Parks – [Purcell Wilderness Conservancy Park](#)

### Mount Assiniboine Park

Visitors planning to access Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park via the Mount Shark Trailhead or Mount Shark Heli Pad should be aware that Highway 742 between Canmore Hill and Kananaskis remains closed and is not expected to reopen until mid-July.

BC Parks advises visitors travelling to the Mount Shark Heli Pad to allow additional travel time and use the Highway 40 detour through Kananaskis. [Alberta 511](#) should be consulted for the current closure and detour information.

## Visitor Considerations

- Visitors accessing Mount Assiniboine from Alberta should anticipate longer travel times and adjust itineraries accordingly
- Guests with helicopter bookings or time-sensitive reservations should confirm travel plans in advance
- Tourism operators and visitor services staff may wish to remind visitors to check Alberta road conditions before departure
- Delays may be particularly impactful for visitors unfamiliar with the region or travelling on fixed schedules

## Resources

- BC Parks – [Mount Assiniboine Park](#)

## Water Activity Restrictions Remain in Effect in Kootenay and Yoho National Parks

As summer recreation activity increases, Parks Canada is reminding visitors that all lakes, rivers, and streams within Kootenay and Yoho National Parks remain closed to watercraft and angling until March 31, 2027. The restrictions are intended to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, including whirling disease, and apply to all waterbodies within both parks.

The closure includes canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, kiteboards, inflatable watercraft, and fishing activities. Swimming, snorkeling, shoreline access, and beach activities remain permitted. Visitors are encouraged to clean, drain, and dry all equipment that comes into contact with water.

## Visitor Considerations

- Visitors may be surprised to learn that paddling and angling are not permitted within Kootenay and Yoho National Parks
- Tourism operators and visitor services staff may wish to proactively communicate these restrictions to guests planning water-based recreation
- Alternative paddling opportunities may be available outside national park boundaries, where provincial regulations permit
- Clean, Drain, Dry practices remain one of the most effective tools for preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species and protecting regional waterways

## Why It Matters

Aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels, quagga mussels, and the parasite responsible for whirling disease can be transported in mud, water, and on recreational equipment. Once established, these species are extremely difficult to remove and can have significant impacts on aquatic ecosystems, fisheries, infrastructure, and recreation opportunities.

## Resources

- [Kootenay National Park](#)
- [Yoho National Park](#)

## Partner Resource: Southeast Fire Centre Spotlight

The BC Wildfire Service Southeast Fire Centre offers several information products that can help tourism operators, destination organizations, and community partners stay informed. The **Southeast Fire Centre Spotlight** is an educational newsletter focused on wildfire prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and understanding the work of the BC Wildfire Service. Topics include FireSmart practices, cultural and prescribed burning, seasonal preparedness, and wildfire management.

KRT encourages tourism partners to consider subscribing to these resources as part of their seasonal situational awareness and preparedness efforts.

To subscribe, click [HERE](#).

## Looking Ahead

Current conditions across much of the Kootenay Rockies remain favourable for summer travel and outdoor recreation. As the region moves further into summer, tourism partners are encouraged to monitor local conditions, park advisories, and wildfire information throughout the season. KRT will continue to monitor emerging issues and share updates as conditions evolve.

*\*This report includes content generated with AI assistance, with all information verified and approved by Kootenay Rockies Tourism staff. Final content reflects our organization's expertise and commitment to accuracy.*