



July 27, 2026, Issue Brief

Wildfire activity continues across the Kootenay Rockies, with suppression efforts continuing on several incidents while smoke and localized access restrictions remain important considerations for visitors. Since the last issue brief, suppression efforts have resulted in changes to evacuation information near Kimberley, while a new wildfire near Needles and continued growth of the Upper Smith wildfire in northern Idaho reinforce the need for ongoing monitoring.

This issue brief summarizes current wildfire conditions, access restrictions, cross-border developments, and visitor considerations for tourism partners.

Current Conditions

Wildfire activity remains the primary operational consideration across the Kootenay Rockies. While suppression efforts continue to make progress on several incidents, smoke conditions and localized access restrictions remain dynamic. [Yellow Air Quality Warnings](#) continue for portions of the region, and visitors may encounter changing smoke conditions depending on weather patterns and proximity to active wildfires.

While conditions continue to evolve, impacts remain localized and most tourism businesses, communities and travel corridors across the Kootenay Rockies remain open. Visitors may encounter smoke in areas well beyond the immediate vicinity of active wildfires, as smoke conditions are influenced by weather patterns and can change rapidly throughout the day.

What this means for tourism partners

- Monitor BC Wildfire Service, DriveBC and local emergency information.
- Communicate current conditions proactively with guests.

- Encourage visitors to check conditions before travelling or recreating in the backcountry.

Bootleg Complex Updates

BC Wildfire Service continues suppression efforts on the Bootleg Complex, which includes the [Matthew Creek](#) and [Tower Creek 2](#) wildfires near Kimberley. Recent suppression progress has resulted in changes to evacuation information for the area, although wildfire activity and access restrictions remain in place.

The [Evacuation Alert](#) for the City of Kimberley has been rescinded following recommendations from BC Wildfire Service. However, an [Evacuation](#) Alert remains in effect for properties in the St. Mary Lake area associated with the Tower Creek wildfires.

An [area restriction](#) remains in effect around the Bootleg Complex to support wildfire suppression activities and protect public and responder safety. The restriction prohibits public access to Crown land within the affected area, including the Matthew Creek Forest Service Road and Mark Creek Forest Service Road. Travel on St. Mary Lake Road remains permitted, but visitors are not permitted to leave the roadway and enter the restricted area. The restriction is in place to provide a safe working environment for BC Wildfire Service crews and to protect the public while suppression activities continue.

Tourism operators are encouraged to remind visitors to respect all area restrictions and avoid entering closed areas, even if wildfire activity appears limited. Visitors planning to recreate near Kimberley should check BC Wildfire Service for current restrictions and DriveBC for travel conditions before departing.

Upper Smith Wildfire Update

The [Upper Smith](#) wildfire in northern Idaho continues to grow south of the Canada-US border and is now estimated at approximately 1,518 acres. The fire remains out of control, and evacuation alerts (“Set”) have been issued for nearby communities in Idaho as suppression efforts continue.

While the wildfire remains outside the Kootenay Rockies, smoke from the incident may continue to affect air quality and visibility in the Creston Valley depending on weather conditions. There are currently no reported impacts to travel or tourism within the Kootenay Rockies associated with the wildfire.

Tourism operators in the Creston Valley are encouraged to monitor official air quality resources and continue directing visitors to official information sources for current wildfire conditions. Visitors should be aware that smoke conditions can change throughout the day as weather patterns shift.

New Wildfire Near Needles

A new lightning-caused wildfire ([N51198](#)) is burning approximately 17 km northwest of Needles on the north side of Highway 6. BC Wildfire Service is responding to the incident. While the wildfire is visible from the highway, there are currently no impacts to travel, and Highway 6 remains open.

Visitors travelling through the area are encouraged to remain focused on the road, avoid stopping to view the wildfire, and follow any directions from emergency personnel to ensure responder and traveller safety. Tourism operators are encouraged to remind visitors to check DriveBC for the latest road conditions and BC Wildfire Service for current wildfire information before travelling, and to expect visible smoke and active wildfire response in the area.

Visitor Considerations

While localized wildfire impacts continue in portions of the Kootenay Rockies, most tourism businesses, communities and travel corridors remain open.

Tourism businesses are encouraged to:

- Monitor official wildfire, weather and air quality information daily.
- Advise visitors to check current conditions before travelling.
- Respect evacuation alerts, area restrictions, and road closures.
- Encourage visitors to use official information sources rather than social media for travel decisions.
- Remind visitors that smoke conditions and access restrictions can change quickly and should be checked before travelling.

Monitoring Resources

Conditions can change quickly between issue briefs. The following official resources provide the most current information on wildfire activity, emergency information, travel conditions, and air quality.

Wildfire Information

- [BC Wildfire Dashboard](#)
- [InciWeb](#) (US)

Emergency Information

- [EmergencyInfoBC](#)
- [Regional District of East Kootenay](#) emergency page
- [DriveBC](#)

Air Quality & Smoke

- [BC Air Quality Warnings](#)
- [Environment Canada Air Quality Health Index](#)
- Government of Canada [FireWork](#)

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