



July 23, 2026, Issue Brief

Hot, dry weather continues to drive elevated wildfire activity across the Kootenay Rockies, prompting additional prevention measures and ongoing suppression efforts. Although some moderation in temperatures is expected over the weekend, wildfire conditions remain dynamic, with changing smoke conditions, new access restrictions, and a region-wide Category 1 campfire prohibition now in effect. This issue brief summarizes current conditions, wildfire activity, operational restrictions, and visitor considerations for tourism partners.

Current Conditions

Several weather and wildfire-related alerts remain in effect across portions of the Kootenay Rockies, reflecting the dynamic conditions influencing wildfire behaviour and visitor safety.

Current alerts include:

- [Heat Warning](#) for portions of the region.
- [Air Quality Warning](#) due to wildfire smoke.
- [Thunderstorm potential](#), with the possibility of lightning over the coming days.

While thunderstorms may bring localized cooling or rainfall, lightning has the potential to ignite new wildfires where little precipitation reaches the ground.

Environment and Climate Change Canada indicates that Interior heat warnings are expected to gradually ease through Friday and Saturday as cooler air moves into southern BC. However, smoke conditions are expected to remain variable, with communities downwind of active wildfires continuing to experience periods of reduced air quality.

What this means for tourism partners

Conditions are evolving quickly and forecasts may change from day to day. Tourism businesses are encouraged to:

- Monitor weather alerts, wildfire activity and air quality daily.
- Review outdoor activities and operational plans as conditions change.
- Communicate current conditions proactively with guests.
- Direct visitors to official information sources before travelling.

Category 1 campfire prohibition now in effect across the Southeast Fire Centre

Effective 12:00 PT on July 23, a [Category 1 campfire prohibition](#) is now in effect throughout the Southeast Fire Centre, including the Kootenay Rockies. The prohibition has been implemented to reduce the risk of human-caused wildfires as hot, dry conditions continue across the region.

With this latest restriction, all Category 1, Category 2, and Category 3 open fires are now prohibited throughout the Southeast Fire Centre. Category 2 open fires have been prohibited since July 10, while Category 3 open fires have been prohibited since May 21.

The prohibition applies to Crown land, BC Parks, recreation sites and trails, ecological reserves, wildlife management areas, and private managed forest lands. Municipalities may also implement their own restrictions, and visitors should check local regulations before lighting any fire.

CSA- or ULC-approved gas or propane outdoor cooking appliances remain permitted where allowed, provided they meet BC Wildfire Service requirements.

Visitor Considerations:

- Campfires are no longer permitted in provincial parks, recreation sites, backcountry camping areas, and other lands covered by the prohibition.
- Tourism operators are encouraged to advise guests of current campfire restrictions before arrival and direct visitors to official BC Wildfire Service information for the latest updates.
- Visitors should always confirm any additional municipal or local restrictions before travelling.

Wildfire Update

Bootleg Complex update

The [Matthew Creek wildfire](#) (N11020), now estimated at 869 hectares, remains the largest fire within the Bootleg Complex and continues to be the primary focus of suppression efforts. The

City of Kimberley remains under Evacuation Alert, along with 66 properties in the St. Mary Lake area due to the Tower Creek wildfires.

BC Wildfire Services reports that warmer temperatures, strengthening winds and extremely dry fuels contributed to increased fire behaviour on July 22, producing significant smoke visible throughout the surrounding area. Forecast conditions continue to present challenges, with stronger winds and extremely dry fuels contributed to increased fire behaviour on July 22, producing significant smoke visible throughout the surrounding area. Forecast conditions remain challenging, with stronger winds expected through Saturday and the potential for dry thunderstorms that may produce little precipitation while increasing the risk of new fire starts.

Suppression efforts continue to expand, with Incident Management Teams, helicopters, heavy equipment, structural protection crews and Initial Attack personnel working to strengthening containment lines, improve access along forest service roads and protect priority infrastructure and residences.

The Tower Creek #2 wildfire is currently estimated at 250 hectares, while the adjacent Tower Creek wildfire remains approximately 12 hectares. Both continue to be managed using indirect attack strategies and structure protection operations.

Elsewhere within the complex, the Bootleg Mountain wildfire is now listed as Under Control, while the Meachen Creek and Tower Creek #3 wildfires have been removed from the BC Wildfire Service map after achieving suppression objective.

Area Restriction established around Matthew Creek wildfire

Effective 1:00 pm MDT on July 23, [BC Wildfire Service](#) has established an area restriction surrounding the Matthew Creek wildfire to protect public safety and allow firefighters to continue suppression operations safely.

The restriction applies to Crown land surrounding the fire until October 15, or until rescinded.

Key visitor impacts include:

- St. Mary Lake Road remains open for through travel
- Matthew Creek Forest Service Road is closed
- Mark Creek Forest Service Road is closed
- Public entry into the restricted Crown land is prohibited unless specifically exempt under the Wildfire Act

Tourism operators should encourage visitors to remain on authorized routes and respect all closures and restrictions. Visitors accessing backcountry recreation, hiking trails or Forest Service Roads near Kimberley should confirm current access conditions before travelling.

Upper Smith Cross-Border Wildfire update

The [Upper Smith Fire](#) in northern Idaho has grown to approximately 1,032 acres as firefighters continue full suppression efforts. Much of the recent growth is the result of planned firing operations designed to strengthen containment lines and prevent the fire from crossing Smith Creek, rather than uncontrolled fire spread.

More than 440 personnel are assigned to the incident, with crews continuing both direct and indirect suppression strategies to protect nearby communities and critical infrastructure.

While the fire remains south of the Canada-US border, smoke from the incident may continue to contribute to reduced visibility and air quality in the Creston area when wind conditions align. At this time, no impacts to cross-border travel or transportation routes have been reported. Tourism partners in the Creston area may wish to monitor smoke conditions, particularly if serving visitors participating in outdoor recreation or cross-border travel.

Visitor Considerations

Conditions across the Kootenay Rockies remain dynamic and may change quickly as wildfire activity, weather patterns, and smoke conditions evolve.

Tourism businesses are encouraged to:

- Monitor official wildfire, weather and air quality information daily.
- Advise guests to check current conditions before travelling and before heading into the backcountry.
- Respect all evacuation alerts, area restrictions, campfire prohibitions and road closures.
- Be prepared to adjust outdoor activities as conditions change.
- Continue sharing official information sources rather than recreating emergency information.

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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