



August 2, 2026, Issue Brief

Strong winds on August 1 resulted in rapidly evolving wildfire conditions across parts of the Kootenay Rockies. New wildfire activity has prompted evacuation orders and alerts, area restrictions, and the closure of Highways 93 and 95A, significantly disrupting travel through the Columbia Valley during the BC Day long weekend. This issue brief provides the latest information on transportation impacts, visitor considerations, and wildfire-related restrictions affecting tourism.

Wait Creek Wildfire (N11360) – Major Travel Disruptions in the Columbia Valley

A new wildfire, [Wait Creek \(N11360\)](#), was discovered on August 2, approximately 12 km east of Kimberley. Strong winds contributed to rapid fire growth, prompting an [Evacuation Order](#) for portions of the Ta Ta Creek, Wasa Lake and Lazy Lake areas.

The wildfire has also resulted in the closure of [Highway 93 and Highway 95A](#), interrupting one of the Kootenay Rockies' primary north-south travel corridors during the BC Day long weekend. The closures have severed the direct route between Cranbrook and the Columbia Valley, requiring travellers to significantly reroute their journeys. There is currently no estimated reopening time.

Visitors planning to travel through the Columbia Valley, including Kimberley, Wasa Lake, Invermere, Radium Hot Springs and Golden, should check current road conditions before departing and be prepared to adjust their travel plans. Businesses may also experience itinerary changes, delayed arrivals and increased inquiries from travellers seeking alternate routes or accommodations.

The Regional District of East Kootenay has established a Reception Centre at Parkland Middle School in Cranbrook for evacuees. Emergency Support Services (ESS) are available only to those

displaced from their primary residence. Campers displaced by the evacuation are also able to temporarily park RVs and camping units at Western Financial Place and Moir Park in Cranbrook while they make arrangements to return home or travel to an alternate camping destination.

BC Wildfire Service continues to respond with firefighters, aircraft, heavy equipment and structure protection resources. Suppression efforts remain ongoing, and conditions may continue to change.

What this means for tourism partners

- The closure of Highways 93 and 95A is significantly affecting travel through the Columbia Valley and will require many visitors to reroute their journeys.
- Encourage visitors to check DriveBC before travelling and continue monitoring conditions throughout their trip.
- Visitors should respect all evacuation orders, road closures and emergency operations and avoid travelling into the affected area.
- Be prepared to assist guests with alternate travel routes, itinerary adjustments and accommodation needs as conditions evolve.

Poplar Creek Wildfire (N71253) – Evacuation Alert and Area Restriction

The [Poplar Creek wildfire \(N71253\)](#), located approximately 20 km northwest of Meadow Creek, remains active. In response to the wildfire, the Regional District of Central Kootenay has issued an [Evacuation Alert](#) for portions of the Howser and Poplar Creek communities along Highway 31. Residents and visitors within the alert area should be prepared to leave on short notice if conditions change.

BC Wildfire Service has also established an [Area Restriction](#) around the wildfire to support suppression operations and protect public safety. The restriction applies to Crown land surrounding the fire and will remain in effect until October 15, unless rescinded earlier. Access to private property and travel along Highway 31 remain permitted; however, visitors should not enter the restricted Crown land or interfere with wildfire operations.

At this time, Highway 31 remains open; however, travellers may encounter wildfire response activity and changing conditions. Visitors travelling between Kaslo, Meadow Creek, Trout Lake and communities along the north end of Kootenay Lake should monitor conditions before travelling.

What this means for tourism partners

- Highway 31 remains open; however, wildfire activity may affect travel conditions and visitor itineraries.
- An Evacuation Alert is in place for portions of the Howser and Poplar Creek communities. Visitors staying in the area should be aware of the alert and be prepared should conditions change.
- The Area Restriction closes access to surrounding Crown land but does not restrict travel on Highway 31 or access to private property.
- Encourage visitors to check BC Wildfire Service, DriveBC and local emergency information before travelling and to respect all closures and emergency operations.

**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.*