Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

POLICY SUBJECT		
Prescribed Fire and Resource Management Open Fire		
EFFECTIVE DATE	RESPONSIBLE BRANCH	NUMBER
April 1, 2018	BC Wildfire Service	9.5
APPROVED		
Signature		

Scope

This policy applies to resource management open fires and prescribed fire.

Purpose

The use of resource management open fires and prescribed fire is an option to provide an ecologically appropriate and cost effective means to achieving land use and public safety objectives on the land base. This policy provides guidance in the application of the *Wildfire Act* and Wildfire Regulation as that legislation pertains to resource management open fire.

Definitions

In this policy, the following words have the following meanings, unless the context dictates otherwise:

a) **"*Act*"** means the *Wildfire Act* (British Columbia) as it may be amended or replaced from time to time;

b) **"Burn Registration Number"** means a number affixed to a burn that has been registered through the BC Wildfire Service;

c) **"Regulation"** means the Wildfire Regulation (British Columbia) as it may be amended or replaced from time to time;

d) **"Resource Management Open Fire"** means an open fire as defined in section 1(1) of the Wildfire Regulation.

e) **"Treaty First Nation**" means a First Nation that has signed an agreement with Canada and the Province that defines the rights of the First Nation people with respect to lands and resources over a specific area;

f) **"Treaty Settlement Lands**" means the lands which, in accordance with the provisions of the treaty, were transferred to a Treaty First Nation and/or are under the governance, jurisdiction and management of the Treaty First Nation.

g) **Prescribed Burning** is the knowledgeable application of fire to a specific land area to accomplish pre-determined forest management and/or other land use objectives.

Policy

Wildfire is a naturally occurring event on the landscape. The use of prescribed fire and resource management open fires can aid in preventing unplanned large and intense wildfires by replacing them with more frequent, well-timed and well-planned low intensity fires.

The application of prescribed fire must be:

- in accordance with current field guides for the identification and interpretation of ecosystems

Burn Plans

If the person submitting the burn plan is not certified to the level of the burn complexity rating, the plan should be reviewed by a B.C. Government staff member certified to that rating.

Despite section 18 of the Regulation, a resource management open fire that is to be conducted for, by, or on behalf of the government will have a burn plan prepared and submitted to a designated official for approval. The person submitting the burn plan must also obtain a burn registration number for the fire.

A burn plan prepared by a BCWS staff member must be submitted to and approved by a designated official who was not involved in the preparation of the burn plan.

The designated official that signs a burn plan as approved must have spending authority for the fire suppression vote (BCWS staff only) in the event an escape fire occurs from the burn and fire suppression vote money need to be expended. The official who approves a burn plan must be certified to the level that the prescribed fire has been rated at (i.e. Type I, Type II, or Type III).

The BCWS will maintain the documentation of training and certification levels for all B.C. Government staff only.

Industry staff or contractors will not be "certified" by the BCWS. It is the responsibility of Industry to ensure their staff or contractors meet equivalent qualifications.

A complexity rating system has been adapted to B.C. to rate Prescribed Fires (Broadcast Burns) into three (3) levels. The rating system is included in the Burn Plan as Schedule 2. Once a prescribed fire has been rated it will be classified as a Type I, Type II, or a Type III prescribed fire. At this point a Burn Boss can be selected that meets the appropriate certification level.

Private Land

The BC Wildfire Service may assist, at its own discretion, with the ignition and suppression of a resource management open fire on private land. The land owner must provide specific written authority prior to the fire ignition in order to use the private land in that way. As part of that authority, the land owner may be asked for a waiver of its rights to take action against the government for any consequences on that land or may be asked to provide insurance that would protect the government from third party claims for damages resulting from the fire.

The BC Wildfire Service may, at its own discretion, provide fire suppression services on private land where a resource management open fire is ignited by a person who is not a BC Wildfire Service employee. The land owner must provide specific written authority prior to the fire ignition in order to use the private land in that way. The role, responsibility and accountability of the person igniting the fire, the land owner and the BC Wildfire Service must be clearly described and agreed to by all parties prior to the fire ignition.

The same constraints, considerations, responsibilities and accountabilities would apply on Federal land as on private land. The appropriate Federal agency responsible for is required to provide the authority to conduct a resource management open fire on Federal land.

References

- Burn Plan Template
- Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation (*Environmental Management Act*)
- *Wildfire Act*;
- Wildfire Regulation;
- Industrial and Resource Management Burning – Info Flip