

## **FACT SHEET: BACK-COUNTRY CLOSURE IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN RESOURCE DISTRICT**

### **Why are you restricting access to all Crown land in the Rocky Mountain Resource District?**

- Our first priority is keeping people safe. Every British Columbian needs to do his or her part to ensure the safety of their community.
- In order to protect public safety, specific areas of B.C.'s backcountry may be formally closed to public access due to wildfires and firefighting activity, in accordance with the *Wildfire Act* and *Wildfire Regulation*.
- Given the level of fire activity and the extreme fire danger rating in the Southeast, we do not want people possibly stranded in remote areas.
- Backcountry closures and wildfire conditions are constantly monitored by BC Parks and the BC Wildfire Service.

### **Why was this area restriction not announced sooner?**

- When deciding to implement a restriction multiple factors are considered, such as current and forecasted weather conditions, anticipated fire behaviour, access routes, the number of active fires and the current extreme fire danger rating.
- Given, the extreme wildfire activity within the Rocky Mountain Resource District and forecasted high temperatures and winds, it has, in the interests of public safety, become necessary to restrict access to the backcountry in the Rocky Mountain Resource District.

### **My permanent residence is accessed via forest service road. Do I need authorization to go to my home?**

- No, the area restriction order provides for a person to travel to and from his or her residence without special authorization. All private property and land owners are advised to travel with documentation of ownership of said property.

### **I just want to launch/take out my boat from a recreation site. Is that permitted?**

- This order does not apply to Crown land covered by water within the restricted area, provided that access and egress to water is via private land, municipal land, highway or BC Parks front country boat launch facility.

### **I have an RV parked on Crown land. Can I access it?**

- No, not after 12 noon on Sept. 2, 2017

### **Where can I find the specific boundary lines of the Rocky Mountain Resource District?**

- A map of the affected area is available online at: <http://ow.ly/EfiR30eQBUM>

### **Are provincial Parks included in the area restriction?**

- Front country provincial parks are excluded. (Backcountry provincial parks and trails are included in the area restriction).
- However, there are several provincial parks closed in the areas currently impacted by wildfires. The public is encouraged to continue to monitor the BC Parks website at [www.bcparks.ca](http://www.bcparks.ca) for the most up-to-date information on provincial park closures.

- This restriction does not apply to National parks.
- The following BC Parks are considered front country (check for alerts and orders that may be in place before visiting):
  - Dry Gulch
  - James Charbot
  - Premier Lake
  - Wasa
  - Jimsmith Lake
  - Kikomun Creek
  - Mount Fernie
  - Moyie Lake
  - Norbury Lake
  - Yahk
  - Columbia Lake

This restriction does not apply to the following MOTI highway rest stops:

- Ryan
- Crowsnest
- Elk Valley

#### **How will the area restriction be enforced?**

- There will be increased patrols by enforcement personnel, including Natural Resource Officers, Conservation Officers, and the RCMP.
- Individuals found to be in contravention of the area restriction may be issued a violation ticket that carries a fine of \$767.
- If the activity causes or contributes to a wildfire, the person responsible may be ordered to pay all firefighting and associated costs.

#### **Does this area restriction apply to First Nations and towns?**

- The area restriction applies to all provincial Crown land. It does not apply to private land such as Indian Reserves, Aboriginal Titles Land, or to land within municipal boundaries.

#### **I have a lease on Crown land. (Example: I have a lease for my farm animals to graze) Does the area restriction apply?**

- Under the *Wildfire Act*, leased Crown land is considered private land.

#### **Are highways through the restricted area closed?**

- No. As long as it is highway serviced/recognized by the Ministry of Transportation.

#### **What does this order not apply to? What operations can I do without needing to apply for an exemption?**

- Range Tenure Holders, including guide outfitters that hold a range act agreement, specifically for the purpose of addressing animal welfare.

- Commercial activities, including backcountry tourism, to remove assets or periodically monitor and maintain assets as required.
- Angling and river rafting on the Elk River between the town of Sparwood and Elko from boat launches accessed from highways only.
- Activities within the controlled recreation areas of Fernie, Kimberley, Panorama and Fairmont Resorts.
- Utility transmission operations to perform emergency restoration work.
- Large scale mining operations.
- Forest industry personnel to remove or service equipment.
- Mine Act Permit holders – to remove equipment, to remove explosives from within explosive magazines and to monitor pumps engaged in dewatering of the underground.

**I am a commercial operation or guide/outfitter. Does this area restriction apply to my business operations? Can I apply for an exemption?**

- If your business operations are located/conducted within the Rocky Mountain Resource District, and were not addressed in the above section, then yes, this area restriction applies to your business activities within that geographic.
- If you have industry operations that will be at risk due to the area restriction, please send your name, contact the Southeast Fire Centre at 250 365-4040 and state you are looking for an exemption.

**What is the fine associated with this restriction?**

- People can be issued a violation ticket that carries a fine of \$767.
- If the activity causes or contributes to a wildfire, the person responsible may be ordered to pay all firefighting and associated costs.
- Enforcement patrols have been stepped up this summer to ensure compliance with this prohibition.