

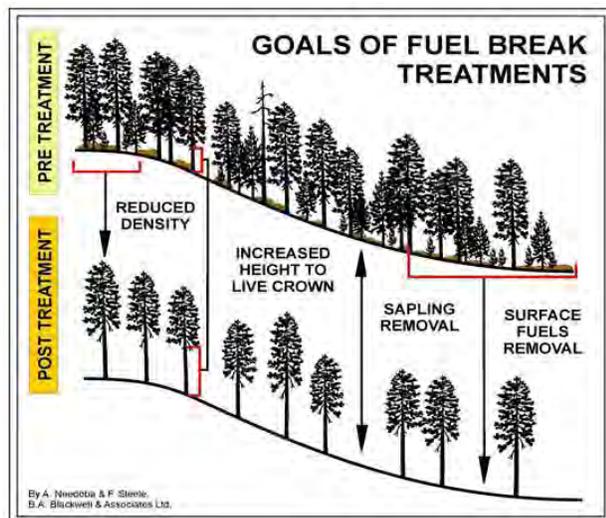
Revelstoke Wildfire Fuel Break Design Project Background

What is a Wildfire Fuel Break?

A network of fuel breaks around the developed areas of a community is an important tool for protecting community values from large scale wildfires. Each fuel break is a strategically located strip of low volume fuel where the intensity of an uncontrolled wildfire is lowered so that firefighters can safely take actions to put the fire out.

Existing areas with low wildfire fuels can be effective fuel breaks. Around Revelstoke this includes natural spaces such as rivers and rock outcrops and man-made open areas within transmission lines, highway corridors and ski runs. Forests that are dominated by deciduous tree species (e.g. birch, aspen, cottonwood) or are older and have limited ground fuels can also be effective. Dense forests require fuel reduction by removing dead materials, pruning trees and reducing tree density to be effective fuel breaks (see diagram below).

Fuelbreaks act as staging areas where fire suppression crews can anchor their fire suppression efforts, thus increasing the likelihood that fires could be stopped, or subdued, so that the potential for a fire to move into inhabited areas is substantially reduced.



Why Do We Need Fuelbreaks in Revelstoke?

In 2011 Revelstoke and Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan was updated with a thorough wildfire risk assessment. One of the findings was that Revelstoke will likely be threatened by wildfire in the future – ***the question is not IF this will happen, the question is WHEN?***

This assessment identified fuel breaks as a key element to reduce the risk of a wildfire advancing into areas with homes and other developments.

For more information see:

<http://www.cityofrevelstoke.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/398 Appendix 7.>

The recent wildfires to the east and west of the community in 2003 and 2006 signal the potential for wildfires to occur locally, and to threaten the community. Fortunately calm wind conditions during these fires did not create serious threats to the community.

Fuel breaks do not stop wildfires that start within the developed area of a community, nor do they stop embers from large wildfires outside the community from drifting into developed areas. Home owners and businesses need to FireSmart their properties to protect from these risks. For information about FireSmart see <http://bcwildfire.ca/Prevention/firesmart.html>.

What Geographic Area is Included?

The project covers a 2 kilometre area around the City of Revelstoke's Fire Protection Area as well as the developed portion of Revelstoke Mountain Resort and Greeley Creek, the City's main watershed – see map on third page.

Who is Working on this Project?

The project team includes Archie McConnachie, a retired wildfire specialist from Revelstoke, Bruce Blackwell and the team at B.A. Blackwell and Associates, a firm that works on wildfire management with communities across BC, and Cindy Pearce, professional forester and project

manager from Revelstoke. This team has worked closely with local wildfire specialists from the Columbia Fire Base and Parks Canada, as well as provincial specialists and Revelstoke's Community Wildland Fire Protection Committee.

How are Fuel Breaks Designed?

Draft fuel breaks have been located to protect areas with the highest probability of a wildfire occurring and the greatest community values. The 2011 Wildfire Risk Management Assessment was expanded to provide this information for the entire project area. Effective fuel breaks must also have road access so that fire crews can take fire control actions along the break.

The project team and local wildfire experts first considered the location of historical wildfires, prevailing winds, existing forest conditions and fire suppression challenges to pinpoint likely wildfire start locations and direction of spread. In addition to historical winds from the south east, the team also considered potential impacts from winds coming from the north along the Columbia River since Lake Revelstoke was created in the 1970's.

Natural and man-made areas that might provide effective fuel breaks were identified using a combination of aerial photographs, resource inventories, topographic maps, and personal field experience. Each potential fuel break was reviewed on-site to confirm its effectiveness. The team also got input from the relevant land management agencies and any potentially impacted licensed users and property owners.

Draft Fuel Break Recommendations

The team found that Revelstoke and area is fortunate to be surrounded by many natural and man-made areas meet the criteria for fuel breaks, creating the foundation for an effective fuel break network. These include:

- the main BC Hydro transmission line from Revelstoke dam, across Highway 1 and west of Begbie Bench and the line to the Downie substation where vegetation management is done regularly;

- the Highway 23S and transmission line corridor;
- old forests along Begbie Creek and Greeley Creek;
- cleared runs on Revelstoke Mountain Resort (RMR), especially the Devils' Club and North Bowl runs;
- recent wildfires in rocky, steep areas to the east and west of the community;
- deciduous forests to the west of the City and between Highway 1 and Mount Revelstoke National Park.

There are three gaps in this network:

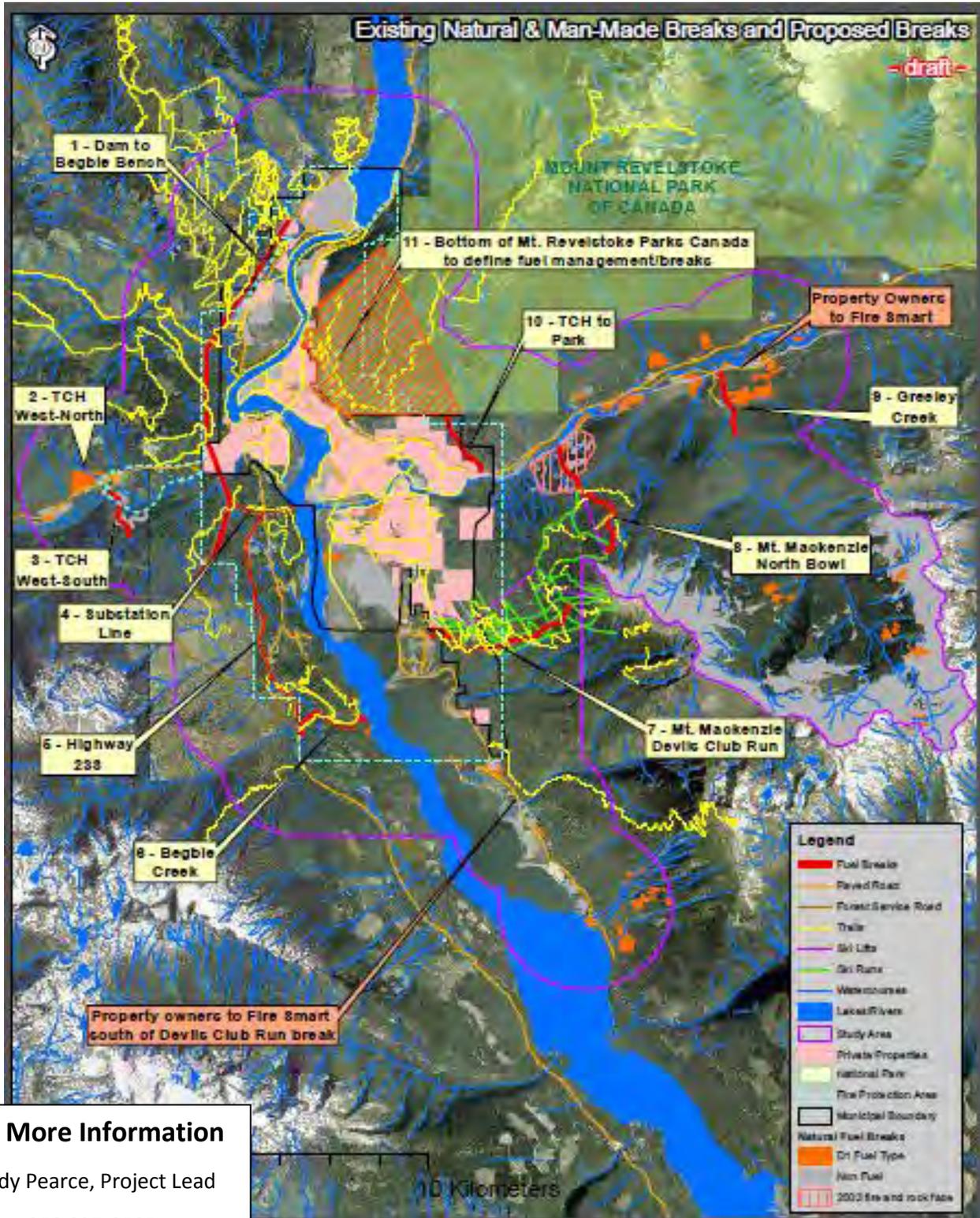
- south of the developed area of RMR and east of Greeley Creek where property owners will need to be especially vigilant to FireSmart their properties, and
- Mount Revelstoke National Park – As a member of the City's Community Wildland Fire Protection Committee Parks Canada recognizes this gap and has drafted a Fire Management Plan that includes an assessment of wildfire risks and options by 2016, with fuel treatment decisions to follow.

The map on the next page shows the location of these breaks.

The team recommends that these breaks be reviewed every 10 years to ensure they continue to be effective.

Next Steps

The community is invited to review and comment on the draft fuel breaks during May - see the back page for neighbourhood meeting dates. ***The comment period ends on June 2.*** The project team will revise the recommendations for review and approval by the City's Wildland Fire Protection Committee. City Council will decide whether to accept the final recommendations. The BC Wildfire Management Branch will use the fuel break network to refine its tactical fire suppression activities.



For More Information

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Community Wildfire Protection Fuel Break Design Review and FireSmart

The City of Revelstoke and the Columbia Shuswap Regional District invite your input on the draft design for community wildfire protection fuel breaks within the Revelstoke Fire Protection Area and forests within 2 kilometres of the Protection Area as well as Greeley Creek watershed and portions of Revelstoke Mountain Resort. You can also learn how to FireSmart your property.

Fuel breaks are strategically located strips of low volume fuel where the intensity of a catastrophic wildfire is lowered so that firefighters can safely take actions to put the fire out. Existing highways, transmission lines, wide ski runs and older forests create fuel breaks around much of the community.

Draft information is available from the Fire Hall and on the City's website.

Neighbourhood meetings

Tuesday, May 26 at 7 pm at the Coast Hillcrest Hotel for Columbia Park, Clearview Heights and Johnson Heights

Wednesday, May 27 at 7 pm at the Nordic ski lodge for Begbie Bench/MacPherson area

Thursday, May 28 at 7 pm at Sutton Place Building 2 – Nelson Room for Arrow Heights and Airport Road

Comments are welcomed until June 2, 2015

For more information contact Revelstoke Fire Rescue Services Chief Rob Girard at 250 837-2884 or rgirard@cityofrevelstoke.com