

Mitigating Wildfires On Woodlots



BC Wildfire
Service

1. 2016 Wildfire Season Review

2. Importance of Fire Prevention & Mitigation

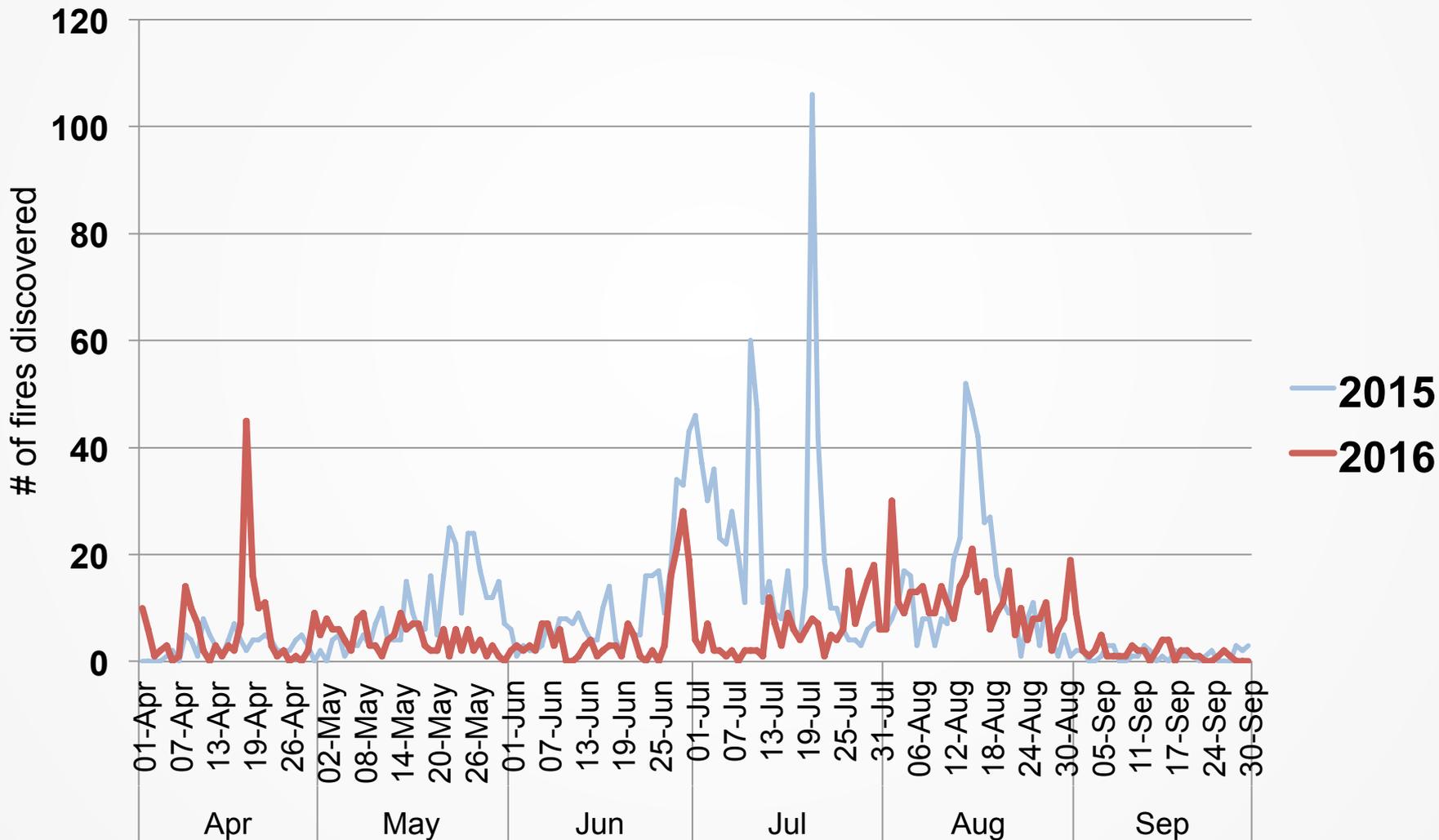
- The Forest Enhancement Society
- Woodlots in the Wildland Urban Interface

3. Wildfire on Woodlots

- Prioritizing wildfires
- Communicating with woodlot owners
- Allocating resources



YEAR	TOTAL FIRES	AREA BURNED	TOTAL COST
2016* <small>*estimates</small>	1,041	99,874 ha	\$118 M
2015	1,858	280,605 ha	\$277 M
AVG	1,756	130,329 ha	\$158 M* <small>*Unadjusted for inflation; ~\$176 M after inflation</small>



Wildfire prevention and mitigation of wildfire risk is a shared responsibility

- The risks and impacts of wildland fires are not just related to forestry; they also present public safety and economic concerns.
- No single method will be successful. A comprehensive, integrated approach is necessary.
- All partners and stakeholders have a role to play: all levels of government, industry and the general public.

Local government:

- statutory obligation within municipal limits, planning
- declaring a State of Local Emergency, evacuation alerts and orders

Provincial entities:

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO)

- *Wildfire Act* and Wildfire Regulation
- suppression and response, prevention planning

Emergency Management BC (EMBC)

- provincial co-ordination, emergency planning, *Emergency Program Act*

Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (CSCD)

- land use planning, Community Charter, *Local Government Act*

Federal government:

- Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC)

Disaster events are more frequent and more severe

- Before 1990, only three disasters in Canadian history had exceeded \$500 million in damages (in 2010 dollars).
- Since 1996, 14 disasters have exceeded \$500 million for a combined cost in Canada of \$1.1 billion per year.
- Over 8,000 wildfires per year burn an average of 2.1 million hectares.
- The Fort McMurray fire was the most expensive disaster to date:
 - \$3.58 billion in insurance claims
 - \$615 million in response costs
- Small towns with fewer than 25,000 citizens are 2.5 times more prone to disaster than a large city.



- total number of wildfires is **decreasing**
- number of hectares burned is **increasing**
- number of extreme fire seasons is **increasing**
- cost is **increasing**



These trends are attributed to the following:

- increasing **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)** areas
- expanded **industrial activity**, most notably oil and gas operations in northeastern B.C.
- **climate change**
- changing **forest stand conditions**
- **escalation of fire risks** in other provinces and jurisdictions



A large, intense wildfire burning in a forest, with thick smoke and bright orange and yellow flames. The trees are silhouetted against the fire.

**Wildfire risk reduction
strategies must change.**

Forest Enhancement Society of BC:

- Supported by \$85 M in gov't funding
- Will concentrate its activities on:
 1. Wildfire risk reduction
 2. Forest rehabilitation
 3. Wildlife habitat restoration
 4. FireSmart
- Industry will be a key partner in FES's success

	Total Area	PSTA > 7	% of Total Ha
Grand Total	1,335,748 ha	103,441 ha	8%
Schedule B Total (excludes private woodlots)		86,290 ha	6%

- There are 10 PSTA Fire Threat Classes representing increased levels of overall fire threat
- Areas rated as **Class 7** or higher are locations where the fire intensity, frequency and spotting risks can be severe enough to potentially cause catastrophic losses in any given wildfire season, if those ratings overlap with significant values at risk (ie. woodlots)

We need to prioritize fires to ensure we protect our best assets:

1. The top priority is always **human life and safety**
2. The second priority is **property**
3. The third priority is **high environmental values** (ie. Community watersheds, habitats of species at risk, etc.)
4. The fourth priority is **resource values** (ie. Woodlots, timber harvesting sites, resource extraction sites, etc.)

Several variables also influence the priority of a specific wildfire:

- Present and forecast weather and fire behavior;
- Availability of suitable fire suppression resources;
- Guidance or information in fire response plans;
- Values at risk in the immediate vicinity and surrounding area;
- Potential smoke and public health impacts;
- Information available from local sources; and
- The probability of success

How does BCWS allocate resources?

- Again, fire suppression resources are allocated based on the priority of a wildfire
- Proactive partnerships and projects can also be explored:
 - Partnerships through The Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative and Forest Enhancement Society
 - BCWS crews are available for project work (ie. fuels treatment, etc.)
- Woodlot owners are encourage not only to collaborate with BCWS, but also with local communities and stakeholders



Thank you!