

Backcountry Travel Restriction - Aug. 28 Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is considered “backcountry”?

This includes forested areas, alpine, grasslands and non-productive forest land which are all in extreme fire danger in the south third of the province.

2. What does the “restriction order” mean?

It means that all Crown land and Forest Service roads in the restricted areas remain closed to the public. The restriction order does not apply to private or municipal lands. Forest Service roads that access private property or open provincial parks remain accessible.

3. What areas of the province are affected by the restriction order?

The travel restriction covers southern Vancouver Island to the Alberta border, and Blue River to the U.S. border. This represents approximately 18 per cent of the Crown land base. The restriction order is in effect in the following forest districts:

South Island	Columbia	Kamloops
Chilliwack	Arrow Boundary	Okanagan-Shuswap
Squamish	Kootenay Lake	Cascades
	Rocky Mountain	Headwaters – south of Blue River

4. Who is affected by the ban?

All users of the backcountry in the southern quarter of the province including:

- Loggers
- Hunters
- Campers
- Anyone else who uses the backcountry for business or recreation

5. What about people who live in the backcountry? Do they need to leave their homes?

No. Forest Service roads that access private property remain open for local residents. However, we are urging all backcountry property owners to use extreme caution.

6. What about people currently camping in the backcountry? Do they need to leave?

Yes. BC Forest Service staff, conservation officers and volunteers will be patrolling the woods this weekend to inform people already in the backcountry of the new travel restriction.

7. Does the ban apply to provincial parks?

Day use areas that are accessible by road as well as supervised, developed campgrounds area open to the public. As well, BC Parks has closed some provincial parks. Travellers are advised to visit the BC Parks Web site at wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks or telephone 1-800-hellobc to check on which parks are open or closed.

For example, at Golden Ears Provincial Park, people are free to go swimming and relax on the beach; but hiking trails are closed.

8. Does this apply to private tourism operations on crown leases?

The ban applies to commercial backcountry tourism operations, but not to tourism operations on private land with access via public roads or Forest Service roads. Lodges and fly-in recreational operations will be considered for exemption on an individual basis.

9. Does this ban apply to private land?

No, although we would urge private landowners to use extreme caution and avoid unnecessary activities on undeveloped lands.

10. Does this apply to First Nations?

Reserve lands are under federal jurisdiction and so not covered by this ban.

11. I have a cottage on a crown lease in the backcountry. Can I access it?

Only if it is accessible by public gazetted road and your activities there are limited to water and developed lands. Please be advised that you must abide by the campfire ban and all activities on adjacent Crown land are restricted

12. I have livestock on a crown grazing lease. Can I do necessary management activities?

Yes, with some limitations. You can carry on livestock management operations as long you do not use a chain saw, all terrain vehicle, motorcycle, or other tool or vehicle powered by a small engine.

In practice this will usually mean driving to the area involved and carrying on operations by horse.

13. I have a licence to log crown land. Am I exempt?

No. The ban applies to all logging activities.

14. What is the economic impact of this ban on forest companies?

Minimal. Most companies have already shutdown logging operations in the areas with high to extreme fire danger. Companies support this ban because they recognize that we

cannot afford the risk of any further forest fires. Companies have indicated they will use this time for maintenance.

15. Can I go fishing on backcountry lakes and streams?

Only if they can be accessed by public gazetted road, and your activities must be limited to on the water.

16. I have a hunting licence that is only good for a short time period. Can I go in to hunt?

Not until after the restriction is lifted. The hunting season is not cancelled. We expect that hunters will be able to access the backcountry later in the season.

17. I have a valid exploration permit. Can I proceed with my prospecting?

No.

18. Why didn't you do this sooner?

It wasn't necessary. However, with the continuing dry conditions and expected increased activity over the Labour Day long weekend and start of hunting season, it's just too risky to allow any activity in the backcountry. During the major lightning season, the public is very valuable in quickly reporting remote fires. We will likely not experience as many lightning fires for the rest of the season.

While cigarettes and open flames are obvious risks, in these tinder dry conditions, fires can also start from the sparks of a firearm.

19. Will there be compensation to businesses affected by the restrictions?

The province will be discussing disaster assistance with the federal government when the fire season is over. It is not the right time to speculate on compensation or impacts on the economy. We must focus our efforts on getting the fires out and ensuring everything possible is done to reduce the risk of future fires.

Lodges that are accessed by Forest Service roads remain accessible. British Columbia is world-renowned for its forests and natural beauty; unfortunately – as pointed out this year – forest fires are one of the risks associated in living so close to nature. The costs of rebuilding a business burnt to the ground outweigh the potential of business lost due to road closures.

20. My tour clients come from all over the world. Who will compensate them or me for this ban?

You will need to find out if your business insurance covers this.

21. Will hunters be compensated for the loss of their hunting licence?

The hunting season is not cancelled. We expect that hunters will be able to access the backcountry later in the season.

22. How can a person or business be exempted from the restriction?

A person or business must obtain the written consent of a designated forest official. People interested in obtaining an exemption should contact their local forest district office. However, exemptions will be very rare and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

23. Are you recommending that people who are recreating in the backcountry use only commercial operators or provincial campsites?

Forest recreation sites and trails in the restricted area are closed to the public. To ensure public safety, we recommend that people look to provincial campgrounds and commercial recreational areas. This will allow us to better monitor people's whereabouts and ensure their safety in the case of new fires starting or existing fires spreading.

24. Why are you issuing a full ban?

The reason is twofold: to reduce the number of human-caused fires and to ensure the safety of the recreating public in highly flammable areas.

25. Why isn't the restricted area the same size as that covered by the voluntary travel advisory?

The restriction order only covers those areas where the fire danger merits this action – as determined by our experts.

26. Is the voluntary travel advisory still in effect?

The backcountry travel advisory has been lifted for the Cariboo fire center with the exception of the 100 Mile House forest District. Backcountry travel in this forest district is limited to essential use only. The travel advisory still remains in effect for the coastal areas originally set out in the advisory, e.g. Port McNeil south on the Island and the Sunshine Coast.

27. How are you going to enforce the ban?

Forest Service staff will work with other agencies such as the RCMP and the Conservation Officer Service to enforce these restrictions.

We also ask members of the public to be vigilant and to report any wildfires to 1-800-663-5555 or *5555 on most cellular networks. Citizens are encouraged to report suspicious activity to CrimeStoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

People in violation of the restriction order may face fines of \$10,000 and 6 months in jail.

A reward of up to \$50,000 is offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone involved in deliberately setting wildfires.

Under the Forest Practices Code, a person found guilty of deliberately setting a wildfire can receive up to a \$1 million fine and three years in jail.

28. I thought you were recording licence plate numbers as a safety measure. What's changed?

We were recording licence plate numbers as a means of tracking individuals in the backcountry when the travel advisory was voluntary. Now that we've banned all travel in the backcountry, we're also tracking licence plate numbers for enforcement.

29. When will the ban be lifted?

The ban is in effect from noon Friday, August 29 until September 14, 2003, and will be re-evaluated at that time. We have no way of predicting how the weather will affect the current fire situation, but we will continue to update the public as conditions change.