

Guidelines for HCTF Prescribed Fire Proposals

BACKGROUND

Prescribed fire is an important and effective tool to restore and enhance wildlife habitat. The technique is used throughout all regions of the province and each year, HCTF receives many proposals for prescribed burning. Typically, these proposals are multi-year, cover large areas, and are comparatively costly. However, these proposals have had a checkered history of funding success because of their variable technical soundness, particularly related to monitoring; their lack of information related to regional and provincial plans and priorities; and their lack of information on conformance with provincial government policies related to prescribed fire.

These concerns have prompted HCTF to develop a set of guidelines that are designed to help proponents prepare submissions that address these shortcomings and result in proposals that are:

- focused on high priority areas and species
- technically sound and ecologically based
- integrated with higher level plans
- balanced assessments of positive and negative impacts
- consistent with relevant governmental policies and procedures
- professionally executed
- appropriately monitored
- effectively communicated to "clients"

As well, these guidelines will help the Technical Wildlife Review Committee and the HCTF Board to evaluate prescribed fire proposals.

Prescribed fires for wildlife management purposes are considered by the Wildfire Management Branch (WMB) as a type of “resource management open fire”. The WMB also makes a distinction between a prescribed fire project which is typically a single site, and a prescribed fire program which consists of a series of burns or sites. Prescribed fire programs usually cover a three-year period.

Many of the following questions require information that is also required in site-specific “Prescribed Fire Burn Plans” (These plans are prerequisites for approval to burn). Proponents are encouraged to draw upon these burn plans to facilitate preparation of their HCTF submissions.

For further information on burn plans, consult the following websites:

<http://bcwildfire.ca/Prevention/PrescribedFire/Planning/>

<http://bcwildfire.ca/Prevention/PrescribedFire/burnplanhelp.htm>

Also, proponents should contact local protection personnel of the BC Wildfire Management Branch for additional assistance. Proponents are also encouraged to consult the [WMB website](#) for access to useful background documents.

Prescribed fire proposals submitted to HCTF should address the following questions:

Planning and justification for the proposal:

1. How are management objectives for populations of key species integrated into the prescribed fire program? (Include a comment on the adequacy of the population inventories).
2. How do the size, location and pattern of proposed prescribed fires relate to the relevant natural disturbance regimes and incorporate the most recent findings on ecological restoration for the focal wildlife species?
3. How has information from relevant scientific articles, past monitoring and regional anecdotal observations been used to develop the current proposal?
4. How have both positive and negative impacts on species and ecosystems been addressed, including both species and ecosystems at-risk?
5. How has current and historical information on the proposed burn sites been used to inform planning and treatment activities, e.g., date when last burned, results from monitoring, etc.?
6. How is the proposal rationalized with respect to relevant wildlife habitat programs and landscape plans?
7. How is the proposal consistent with higher level plans and integrated with overall strategic planning goals and objectives?
8. How have broader concerns, such as cumulative effects and climate change, been addressed in the proposal?
9. How well does the budget information follow from project objectives and activities, and is it at a level of detail that enables a clear assessment of costs?

Approvals and consultations:

10. Who is the designated land manager for the treatment site (s), and what steps have been taken to secure his or her approval?
11. What is the status of the prescribed fire burn plan with respect to its preparation and approval by appropriate governmental authorities, including both District and Fire Zone offices?
12. How have consultations with First Nations been undertaken and what has been their outcome?
13. How have interactions with other land users been identified and addressed, including the requirement to inform landowners and identify structures within 1 kilometer of the burn site(s)?
14. What type of communication plan has been prepared, and how does it indicate the way in which the public has been informed, and how their comments, support, and concerns have been addressed and incorporated into the proposal?

Operational considerations:

15. What is the status of securing an appropriately qualified “Burn Boss”?
16. How has the management of smoke been addressed?
17. How have archeological concerns been addressed?
18. How has the management of invasive species been addressed?
19. How has access management been addressed?
20. Are there other area-specific issues, and how have they been identified and addressed?

Monitoring and evaluation:

21. What is the nature and extent of the monitoring program, e.g., how are both effectiveness and compliance aspects addressed in the monitoring plan?
22. How does the proposed monitoring program relate to existing, approved monitoring protocols?

SUGGESTED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

<http://bcwildfire.ca/Prevention/PrescribedFire/Planning/>

<http://bcwildfire.ca/Prevention/PrescribedFire/burnplanhelp.htm>

Fire Effects information System <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/>

Kennedy, P. L. and J. B. Fontaine. 2009. Synthesis of knowledge on the effects of fire and fire surrogates in wildlife in U. S. dry forests. Special report 1096. Extension and Experiment Station Communications, Oregon State University, 422 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, OR 97331. <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These draft guidelines were prepared by Don Eastman with input from: Sue Crowley, Scott McNay, Lyle Gawalko, Al Neal, Randy Harris, Alicia Goddard, and Les Husband.

Please send any comments or suggestions for improving the utility of the guidelines to [Manager, HCTF Biological and Evaluation Services](#).