



# MEMBER RELEASE

March 10, 2011

TO: Mayors, Chairs, Administrators and relevant staff

FROM: Union of BC Municipalities

**RE: Consideration of a Two-Phase Campfire Prohibition**

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The Ministry of Natural Resource Operations, Wildfire Management Branch is seeking feedback from local governments on the consideration of a one-year trial to allow campfires in supervised commercial campgrounds during the first phase of campfire prohibitions.

If the trial proceeds there would be two phases of campfire prohibitions:

- Phase one may be implemented at a high fire danger class
- Phase two may be implemented at an extreme fire danger class

During a phase one campfire prohibition, campfires would be prohibited except in registered supervised commercial campgrounds that comply with the conditions specified in the attached document. During a phase two prohibition, all campfires would be prohibited including supervised campgrounds.

It is important to note that local government bylaws governing burning or the release of smoke (and which prohibit or allow fires or the release of smoke) will take precedence over Wildfire Management Branch authority.

For more information, please refer to the attached document provided by the Ministry. Local governments can provide feedback in writing by March 30th 2011, to:

Ministry of Natural Resources Operations  
Wildfire Management Branch  
P.O. Box 9502 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC, V8W 9C1

Attention: Kerry Brewer

or: e-mail to: [Forests.ProtectionBranchOffice@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Forests.ProtectionBranchOffice@gov.bc.ca)



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File: 125-20 WFA

March 2, 2011

**Re: UBCM Consultation for Consideration of a Two Phase Campfire Prohibition**

The Wildfire Management Branch is committed to reducing human caused fires. In 2010 a campfire was redefined in the Wildfire Regulation, reducing the maximum size to 0.5 m x 0.5 m. The threshold for implementing campfire bans was also lowered, resulting in a longer ban period. It appears that these actions contributed to reducing wildfires caused by campfires to 91 in 2010 (33% below the 10 year average), however, the longer ban period has also caused concerns for campground operators.

Campground operators have voiced concern about campfire bans. Prior to 2005 campfire bans did not apply to supervised campgrounds, many campground operators feel prohibiting campfires is not necessary in supervised campgrounds due to the higher standard of site engineering and campfire supervision. Many feel campfire bans have reduced client satisfaction and reduced the amount of revenue generated throughout the camping season.

Wildfire statistics seem to support the campground operators' position and indicate that campfires located in well engineered sites and used in compliance with the Wildfire Regulations rarely cause problems. The indication is that the campfires that cause the most problems are those that are not in engineered sites, have no supervision and are not properly extinguished.

The Ministry of Natural Resource Operations, Wildfire Management Branch is considering a one year trial which will allow campfires in supervised commercial campgrounds during the first phase of campfire prohibitions. This document represents initial consultation with the Union of BC Municipalities. It should be noted that consultation will also be conducted with other stakeholders including recreational service providers. The outcome of consultation will be taken into account by the Ministry for a final decision on considering allowing campfires in supervised commercial campgrounds during campfire prohibitions. This trial policy may be continued in future years depending on the outcome of the trial during the 2011 fire season.

If the trial proceeds there would be two phases of campfire prohibitions. Phase one may be implemented at a high fire danger class and phase two may be implemented at an extreme fire danger class. Other factors will also be considered such as fire activity, time of year and forecasted weather. During a phase one campfire prohibition, campfires would be prohibited except in registered supervised commercial campgrounds that



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Ministry of Natural  
Resource Operations

Wildfire Management Branch

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PO Box 9502 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria BC V8W 9C1

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comply with the conditions specified below. During a phase two prohibition all campfires would be prohibited including supervised campgrounds. Open fires in outdoor stoves and portable campfire apparatus that use briquettes, liquid or gaseous fuel and are CSA or ULC approved would normally be allowed during campfire prohibitions as long as the flame length does not exceed 15 cm.

Where a municipal or regional bylaw governing burning or the release of smoke is established and it prohibits or allows fires or the release of smoke, it will take precedence over Wildfire Management Branch authority. As air quality concerns increase many local governments may create bylaws to limit emissions from open burning. Campground owners or operators within a local government jurisdiction are encouraged to consult with local authorities for bylaws pertaining to open burning or air quality and also consider smoke free alternatives to burning wood such as portable campfire apparatus.

Campground owners or operators are responsible for campfires within their campground. During a phase one campfire prohibitions all campfires will be prohibited except those in supervised commercial campgrounds that meet specific requirements and choose to register with Wildfire Management Branch. Those campgrounds will be expected to ensure guests' campfires comply with the [Wildfire Act](#), [Wildfire Regulation](#) and all of the requirements specified in policy for supervised campground. An official may enter on land to administer or enforce the Wildfire Act and Regulation.

A supervised campground may be a privately operated or operated by BC Parks or another provincial agency. Campground owners or operators will be required to register their campgrounds with the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations, Wildfire Management Branch.

Specific requirements to qualify as a Supervised Commercial Campground are:

- fees must be charged for temporary overnight use by tents and/or recreational vehicles;
- the campground must maintain a campsite registry identifying a responsible person or party occupying each site and their contact information and;
- the campground owner or operator must monitor all campfires to ensure compliance with all requirements.

To permit campfires during a phase one campfire prohibition within a supervised commercial campground the owners or operators must:

- ensure no other enactment prohibits lighting campfires;
- possess a valid campground registration number from Wildfire Management Branch;
- ensure an employee who holds a current S-100 (BC) Basic Fire Suppression and Safety Certification is on site within the campground at all times while campfires are burning;

- provide “sufficient fire fighting tools” and an “adequate fire suppression system” as defined in the [Wildfire Regulation](#).

Campground owners or operators must only allow campfires in permanent fireplaces under the following circumstances;

- campfires must be lit within a non-combustible fireplace ring having inside walls at least 20 cm high;
- a fuel break must be established and maintained, which is a 3 metre radius around the campfire ring that is cleared to mineral soil or covered with gravel to a depth of 10 cm or more, all live and dead vegetation including trees shrubs and grass must be removed from the 3 fuel break;
- campfires must be extinguished when sustained winds are capable of carrying hot embers outside of the 3 meter fuel break;
- campfires must be constructed in a manner which ensures material does not roll or fall outside of the fireplace ring.

In circumstances where it has been determined that a campfire in a supervised campground is not in compliance, penalties may be applied to the Campground Owner and/or the individual(s) responsible for lighting, fuelling or using the campfire. The WMB may also suspend a campgrounds registration in circumstances of non-compliance.

When the fire danger rating reaches extreme and conditions warrant a Phase 2 Prohibition Order may be imposed which will prohibit all campfires include those in registered supervised commercial campgrounds. A phase 2 prohibition does not normally apply to open fires in outdoor stoves or portable campfire apparatus that are CSA or ULC approved and use briquettes, liquid or gaseous fuel as long as the flame is no longer than 15 cm.

The Wildfire Management Branch is interested in comments or concerns that you may have as a stakeholder. Please provide feedback in writing by March 30<sup>th</sup> 2011, to:

Ministry of Natural Resources Operations  
Wildfire Management Branch  
P.O. Box 9502 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, B.C.  
V8W 9C1

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