

WILDFIRE Seasonal Outlook



BC Wildfire Service

MID-MONTH UPDATE

July 24, 2020

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FIRE SEASON SUMMARY

The 2020 wildfire season continues to be slower-than-average. Since the beginning of the month there have been 36 new wildfires in B.C. Of those, five fires have grown over one hectare and seven are confirmed lightning ignitions. Additionally, there have been 124 nuisance fires throughout the province. By BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) definition, a nuisance fire is a fire which does not spread to forest or range land or beyond an area authorized for burning. Examples of nuisance fires include abandoned campfires or burning vehicles and equipment where the fire does not spread to surrounding vegetation.

July weather systems produced scattered rain events over the northern half of the province, whereas warmer, drier days were experienced throughout the south. The hot and dry conditions dried out forest and grassland fuels, increasing wildfire hazard. Of the 36 wildfires in July, the majority occurred in the south half of the province.

In July, many wildfires burned with low intensity and were surface fires with little control difficulties. Fires that did grow over one hectare were Initial Spread Index (ISI) driven fires. Reference the following page to learn more about ISI driven fires.

REST OF THIS MONTH

Current weather models show a ridge shifting over the province around July 25th bringing winds, warm temperatures and low relative humidity values over the southern half of the province. This drying will create conditions which are favourable for lightning ignitions.

There is a high probability of initial attack success in the north as indices have been moderated by June and July rain events. Areas that will see the fastest wildfire growth will be in grassy, steep, south facing areas located close to the U.S.A. border. However, there is also a high probability of sustained action success in these areas with little control difficulties beyond initial fire growth.

STATISTICS AS OF JULY 23, 2020

2020 WILDFIRE SEASON (April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021)	218 WILDFIRES	AVERAGE NUMBER OF WILDFIRES				
		5-YEAR AVG.	10-YEAR AVG.	15-YEAR AVG.	20-YEAR AVG.	25-YEAR AVG.
		797	657	761	783	757
714 HECTARES BURNED	AVERAGE NUMBER OF HECTARES BURNED					
	5-YEAR AVG.	10-YEAR AVG.	15-YEAR AVG.	20-YEAR AVG.	25-YEAR AVG.	
	165,724	105,382	83,720	71,717	60,199	

STAGES OF CONTROL:

OUT OF CONTROL, BEING HELD, UNDER CONTROL, & OUT



WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF CONTROL ON A WILDFIRE?

Stages of control define how responsive a wildfire has been to suppression efforts. When a wildfire is confirmed in B.C. it becomes classified as an Out of Control fire because there has not yet been any suppression action taken. An Out of Control wildfire may also be a fire which is not responding to, or is only responding on a limited basis, to suppression action and containment efforts. The Being Held stage of control indicates that with currently committed resources, sufficient suppression action has been taken and thus the fire is not likely to spread beyond existent or predetermined boundaries under prevailing and forecasted conditions. Once a wildfire has received sufficient suppression action to ensure no further spread, it is classified as Under Control. Only when the fire has been completely extinguished can it be declared that the fire is Out.

Under special circumstances, BC Wildfire Service may not begin or may stop suppression actions on a wildfire. These wildfires are in the stage of control known as Being Monitored.

For more information on how to establish wildfire resiliency in our forests and communities, visit:



bcwildfire.ca



firesmart.ca



[BC Wildfire Service](#)



[BCGovFireInfo](#)

INITIAL SPREAD INDEX (ISI), FINE FUEL MOISTURE CODE (FFMC) & BUILDUP INDEX (BUI)
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WHAT DOES AN INITIAL SPREAD INDEX (ISI) DRIVEN FIRE LOOK LIKE?

The [Initial Spread Index](#) (ISI) is one of the six standard components that provide numerical ratings of relative wildfire potential in the [Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System](#) (CFFDRS).

The ISI is determined by combining wind speed and the Fine Fuel Moisture Code (FFMC). A value of over 10 is a good indicator that ground crews may have control difficulties as the fire is likely to have a high Rate of Spread (ROS). How quickly the fire spreads will be dependent on the fuels available and other site conditions such as topography.

High winds and fine fuels with low moisture content, such as dry grasses which are represented by a high FFMC, are the biggest impacting variables impacting ISI driven fires. The light fuels allow fire to move fast in the direction the wind is pushing it, making control very difficult. The advantage for wildfire personnel is that often these fires will not burn deep into the ground as the fire moves quickly over the land and Buildup Index (BUI) values are low. This will improve ground crew's suppression actions once a fire finishes its ISI driven run.

Figure 1 illustrates FFMC values as of July 23. Red areas on the map indicate where there are high FFMC values. These areas will have ISI values over 10 given winds are over 15 kilometres per hour. The five fires in July that grew over one hectare had elevated ISI values in areas with high winds and high FFMC.

Figure 2 illustrates BUI values as of July 23. BUI values remain relatively low throughout the province with areas in the south beginning to see an increase as displayed by the green areas on the map. The current probability of BUI driven fires occurring is low. By this time in an average wildfire season, BUI values are typically higher.

WHAT DOES A BUILDUP INDEX (BUI) DRIVEN FIRE LOOK LIKE?

The [Buildup Index](#) (BUI) is another component of the [Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System](#) (CFFDRS).

The BUI value is a numerical representation of how much fuel is readily available to burn. The BUI is calculated based on the moisture content of medium to large-sized woody materials, as well as seasonal drought effects on forest fuels. The higher the BUI, the more fuel available to burn. Refer to June Mid-Month Outlook for more information.

The ROS will not be as fast in a BUI driven fire when compared to an ISI driven fire. However, these fires pose a different kind of challenge for wildfire personnel. BUI driven fires will burn deep into the ground or into large fuels which can make suppression slow and difficult. These deep burning fires often burn out the roots of trees increasing the risk to wildfire personnel on site.

FFMC & BUI MAPS AS OF JULY 23

FIGURE 1: FFMC MAP

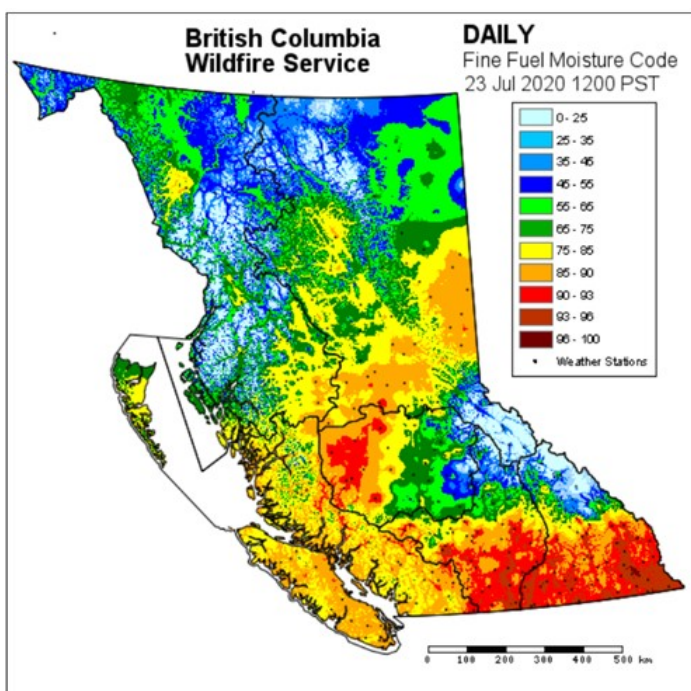
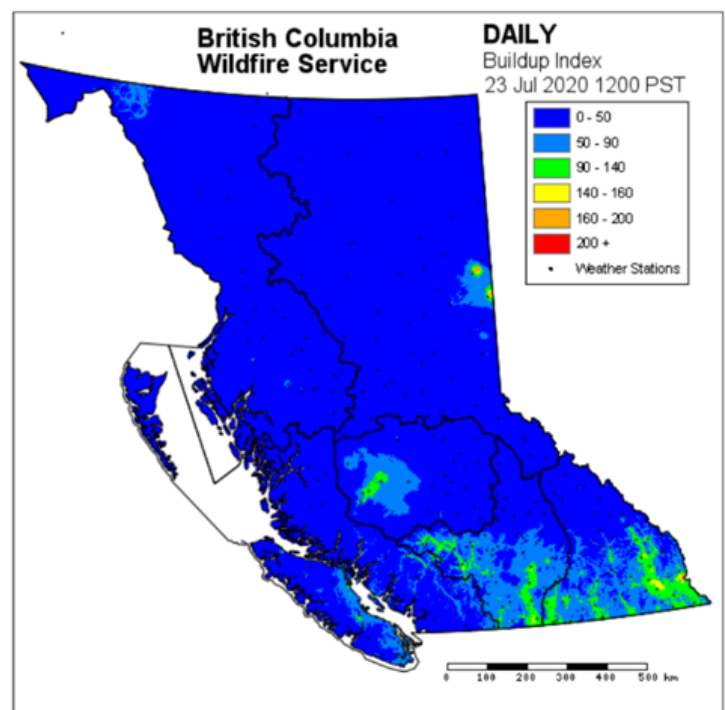


FIGURE 2: BUI MAP



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