



BC Wildfire Service

ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT | 2025

CULTURAL & PRESCRIBED FIRE

Safely and collaboratively restoring fire to the landscape.
Working with partners from Indigenous and local
governments, industry and other levels of government.

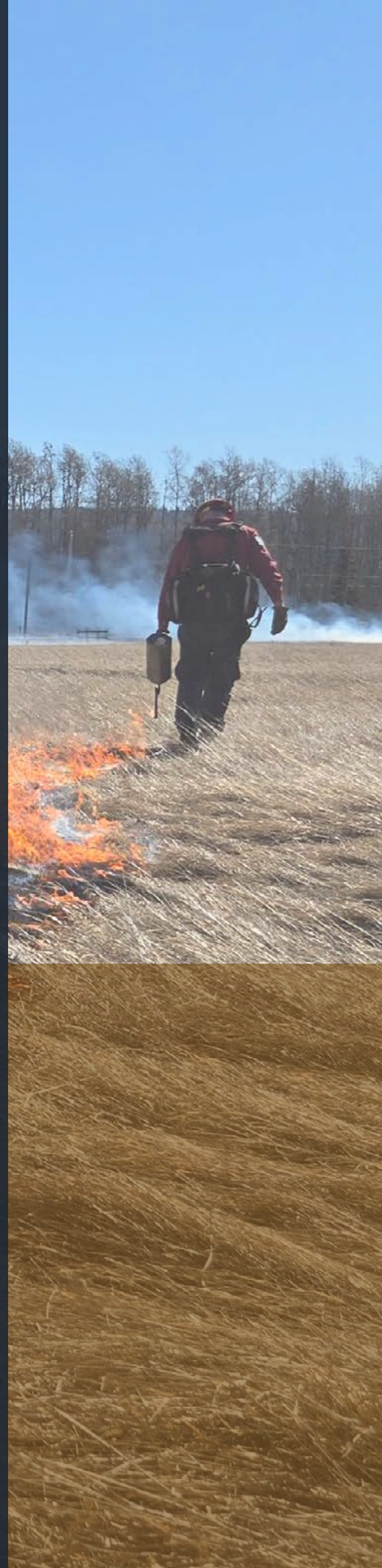


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Executive Summary

In 2025, cultural and prescribed fire continued to expand across British Columbia through collaboration, partnership and shared stewardship. A total of 76 cultural and prescribed fire projects were completed in all six of B.C.'s regional Fire Centres. This sustained progression reflects growing capacity and interest across the province and a strengthening network of partners working together to restore beneficial fire to the landscape. The Prince George, Kamloops, Southeast and Cariboo Fire Centres supported delivery at an expanded scale, while the Coastal and Northwest Fire Centres also implemented projects under more constrained conditions. Together, these efforts demonstrate the increasing reach of cultural and prescribed fire across diverse landscapes and governance contexts.

These successes were made possible through long-standing relationships, new collaborations and partnerships currently in development. Long-time partners continued to lead projects that advance wildfire risk reduction, ecosystem health, cultural values and community protection. New partners engaged in program delivery in 2025, expanding the application of fire as a stewardship tool in new regions and settings. At the same time, partners working through the planning and engagement phases continued to build the relationships, governance arrangements and technical readiness required for future implementation, strengthening the long-term foundation of the program.



Throughout 2025, BC Wildfire Service worked alongside Indigenous governing bodies and other partners, providing technical expertise and capacity where requested, supporting Nation-led and partnership-based burning. Recent legislative and policy changes continue to remove barriers, supporting place-based decision-making and collaborative approaches to land stewardship. Training, practitioner development, monitoring and operational learning remained central to safe and effective implementation across regions.

In September 2025, partners delivered the second Kootenay ʔa-kinq̓uku Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (Trex) in collaboration with the community and leadership of ʔaḡam. Grounded in Ktunaxa culture, language and relationships to land and fire, the 12-day exchange brought together participants from 14 agencies and communities for shared learning and field experience. With support from local fire zones and the Southeast Fire Centre, participants contributed to five prescribed fire projects, treating approximately 85 hectares while advancing practitioner capacity and collaborative approaches to stewardship. It also afforded the opportunity to engage future prospective hosts and program partners in an effort to expand the program and respond to enthusiastic demand from British Columbia prescribed fire practitioners.

As momentum continues to build, cultural and prescribed fire is increasingly practiced as a shared stewardship approach across British Columbia. By working together to restore fire in a safe, intentional and collaborative way, partners are supporting healthy landscapes, reducing wildfire risk to communities and building the enduring relationships needed to underpin more resilient ecosystems and communities for generations to come.





Introduction

Cultural and prescribed fire projects are intentionally planned to meet specific land stewardship goals, such as reducing wildfire risk, restoring ecosystems, supporting First Nations cultural values, preparing sites for silviculture, or enhancing wildlife habitat.

To achieve these outcomes, each burn relies on particular site and weather conditions that will produce the desired fire behaviour. For example:

- A burn plan may require a low-intensity fire that consumes only surface fuels, or a higher-intensity fire capable of reaching ladder fuels and affecting the canopy.
- Warm, dry weather can make it difficult to maintain low-intensity fire behaviour.

While spring and fall generally offer the most suitable windows for cultural and prescribed burning, conditions do not always align. Practitioners actively monitor burn units and proceed only when site and environmental conditions support both crew safety and burn objectives.

In recent years, the BC Wildfire Service has increased the focus on using prescribed burning as a tool for cross training with First Nations and local fire departments. Working closely with regional emergency management programs in these well-planned, controlled settings is one way we can collectively build the skills, relationships and capabilities needed for integrated wildfire response capacity in British Columbia.

Wildfire Season Summary

In 2025, wildfire activity across British Columbia reflected increasingly variable and less predictable seasonal patterns. Spring activity was concentrated in the northeastern region of the province, followed by a period of reduced mid-summer activity in many areas. Despite widespread precipitation in mid-August, wildfire activity increased again toward the end of the month and into early September, particularly in southern and central regions. This late-season escalation, driven by above-seasonal temperatures, lightning activity and underlying drought conditions, underscored that the traditional “core wildfire season” continues to shift and that wildfire risk increasingly extends beyond historical timelines.



While the 2025 wildfire season was impactful in nearly every region of the province, it was less destructive than the previous two seasons. A total of 1,370 fires were recorded, fewer than the provincial average, yet 886,300 hectares burned, well above B.C.'s 10-year average. This illustrates that fewer starts do not necessarily translate to lower overall impact and that large, complex fires continue to shape seasonal outcomes.

Throughout the season, the BC Wildfire Service worked alongside Indigenous governing bodies, local governments, industry, community organizations and many other partners to respond to evolving risk. Moving into winter, partners across the province continue to advance preparedness, prevention and recovery through ongoing, respectful collaboration.



The Power of Partnership

Partnership remains at the heart of cultural and prescribed fire delivery in British Columbia. In 2025, projects were led by a wide range of proponents, reflecting the diversity of governance, land stewardship priorities and community needs across the province. First Nations were the single largest proponent group, accounting for nearly one-third of all completed projects, alongside strong leadership from non-profit organizations, local governments, tenure holders and multiple provincial ministries. This broad distribution highlights the shared responsibility and collaborative nature of restoring fire as a stewardship practice in B.C.

The diversity of management objectives further reflects the many benefits cultural

and prescribed fire can bring to the landbase. While wildfire risk reduction remained the most common objective, projects also advanced wildlife habitat enhancement, ecological restoration, Indigenous-identified purposes, range improvement, silviculture and forest health management. Together, these projects demonstrate how partnerships enable fire to be applied in ways that support community safety, ecosystem resilience, cultural values and long-term land stewardship.

By working across jurisdictions, knowledge systems and mandates, we continue to strengthen collective capacity and build durable relationships that support the safe, intentional and locally informed use of fire across B.C.



Partner Stories

Strong partnerships are critical for the restoration of healthy fire to the landscape in B.C. By working and learning together, the pool of engaged, knowledgeable and experienced practitioners will continue to grow, returning fire to our collective stewardship toolkit and ultimately, to the landscape.



Partner Story: Saulteau First Nations

AGRICULTURAL BURNING

In April 2025, Saulteau First Nations led a successful agricultural burn on approximately 100 hectares of pasture and hay fields on Saulteau First Nations Reserve Lands, strengthening both agricultural productivity and wildfire resilience near the community. The project was delivered in partnership with the BC Wildfire Service and the Moberly Lake Volunteer Fire Department, bringing together Indigenous leadership, wildfire professionals and local responders in a community-driven operation.

The agricultural burn focused on two key parcels adjacent to community infrastructure, where accumulated fine grass fuels posed both a land management challenge and an elevated grass fire risk during the spring and early summer months. Using hand ignition techniques, crews carried out a slow-moving grass fire that reduced surface fuels, refreshed field conditions for the upcoming growing season, and lowered the likelihood and potential severity of fast-spreading fires in the area.

Burn planning and implementation were guided by detailed assessments of weather forecasts, wind patterns, fuel moisture and venting conditions. Preparation began several days in advance, and the burn proceeded only when conditions were favourable to ensure safe ignition, effective smoke dispersion and protection of nearby communities and





transportation corridors. Throughout operations, personnel carefully monitored fire behaviour and smoke, with suppression resources in place to respond quickly if conditions changed.

A central objective of the project was cross-training between Saulteau First Nations and BC Wildfire Service staff. Through joint planning sessions, ignition operations and onsite monitoring, the burn created opportunities for shared learning and operational alignment in prescribed fire and agricultural burning practices. The involvement of the Moberly Lake Volunteer Fire Department further strengthened local readiness and provided additional suppression capacity, reinforcing a collaborative approach to risk management.

This partnership highlights how agricultural burning can serve multiple objectives: supporting productive land use, reducing wildfire risk and strengthening local and regional fire management capacity. By combining Indigenous leadership and expertise, community priorities and support from wildfire staff, Saulteau First Nations and their partners delivered a practical project with tangible outcomes on the ground.

The success of the 2025 agricultural burn demonstrates the value of coordinated planning, training and partnership in advancing wildfire resilience. It reflects a growing model of collaborative fire stewardship in northeastern British Columbia that supports communities, builds capacity and strengthens long-term resilience on the landscape.

Partner Story: Williams Lake Prescribed Fire Projects

In the spring of 2025, the Cariboo Fire Centre worked with the City of Williams Lake, the Williams Lake Fire Department and Williams Lake First Nation on a series of prescribed burns in and around the city. These prescribed burns are a continuation of ongoing projects previous years and supported early season preparedness for all participants.

Over several days in early April, crews carried out prescribed burns across seven sites within and adjacent to Williams Lake, treating areas ranging from six to 20 hectares. The work targeted dry, cured grasses in higher risk locations and refreshed previously treated areas where new growth and surface fuels had accumulated beneath forest canopies. All sites have a documented history of fire activity and were identified as priorities for early-season treatment.

This work brought together municipal, First Nations and provincial partners in a planned and cooperative pre-season environment. Completing joint prevention activities outside of active wildfire response supports operational alignment, strengthens interagency relationships and enhances readiness ahead of the wildfire season. This collaboration at both leadership and crew levels contributes to more effective coordination during periods of elevated wildfire activity.





For Williams Lake residents, the prescribed burns provide an opportunity to observe wildfire prevention work taking place within city limits and learn about the importance of continuous wildfire mitigation and fuel treatment initiatives. Visible, well-managed burns help to increase public familiarity with smoke associated with planned treatments and reinforce the role of proactive fuel management activities in reducing wildfire risk near neighbourhoods. Williams Lake, which experienced significant wildfire impacts in 2017 and has continued to face fire activity in recent years, remains a priority area for ongoing mitigation.

These projects were delivered through cooperation between the City of Williams Lake, Williams Lake First Nation and the Cariboo Fire Centre, along with support from local contract crews and industry partners. This shared approach reflects a commitment to wildfire prevention and community protection, supported by local knowledge, operational capacity and on-the-ground experience.

As prescribed fire activities continue across the Cariboo region, partnerships of this kind remain essential to reducing wildfire risk and strengthening community preparedness.

Partner Story: Prescribed Burn Near Seymour Arm

STRENGTHENS FOREST HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

BC Timber Sales' (BCTS) Okanagan-Columbia Business Area and the Kamloops Fire Centre partnered in the fall of 2025 to conduct a prescribed burn near the community of Seymour Arm, treating approximately 55 hectares, split into four treatment units of cutblocks. This initiative reflects a shared commitment to sustainable forest management and wildfire risk reduction.

The burn aimed to simulate a natural, low-intensity ground fire, increasing plantable spots for future reforestation and reducing wildfire risk. This was achieved by removing fine fuels and logging slash while retaining coarse woody debris and wildlife trees as outlined in site plans. The project will help protect the community of Seymour Arm from future wildfires as it clears the flammable materials on the ground layer and uses existing roads to develop a fuel break near the town.



PHOTO: OCT 9TH, OVERVIEW OF
LONGRIDGE BLOCKS.



The burn was scheduled for fall 2025 due to its visibility and proximity to the community. Timing was critical to mitigate the risk of any escapes paired with site preparation work completed by BC Wildfire Service staff. Crews reinforced safety measures by completing chainsaw work that established fuel-free breaks along timber edges and wildlife tree retention areas, which were the areas of most concern. Crews were also prepared on the day of implementation, ensuring the water delivery systems were set up and ready for rapid response if required.

Unlike previous prescribed fire projects in the Okanagan-Columbia Business Area, drones were not available, and this burn relied entirely on hand ignition. On October 9 and 10, BC Wildfire Service deployed crews across four blocks simultaneously to maximize the short ignition window. Crews faced a narrow burn window due to moisture and limited daylight, waiting for conditions to align before starting a successful test fire which allowed crews to proceed with the burning operations. Skw'lax guardians were also on site to provide valuable assistance during the ignitions.

Public outreach was a joint effort between BCTS and the Kamloops Fire Centre communications team. Door-to-door engagement during the burn helped address concerns, share project information and has resulted in learnings to improve proactive communications for potential future projects. Feedback shifted positively as residents observed the burn.

As of October 2025, approximately 25 of the 55 hectares have been treated. The remaining blocks will be burned when conditions allow, ensuring priority areas are ready for planting in 2026. This project also supports BC Wildfire Service's Provincial Prescribed Fire Effects Monitoring initiative, which is working to provide consistent monitoring for fire impacts before and after treatment in addition to any secondary fire effects.

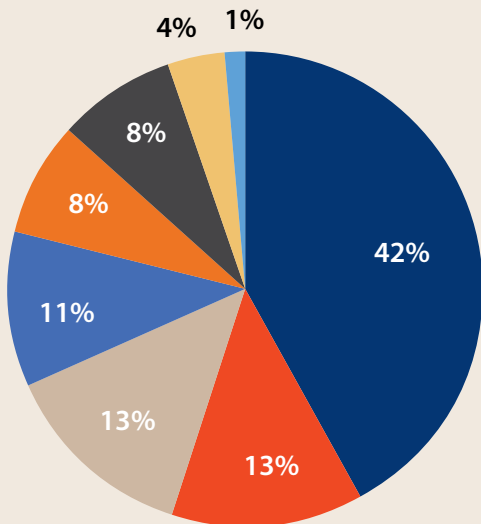
The guidance that will come out of this initiative will provide staff, fire practitioners and partners with standardized monitoring guidance and a protocol system that can be used to monitor if a prescribed burn is achieving its objectives.

BCTS and the BC Wildfire Service remain committed to proactive wildfire mitigation and sustainable forestry, building healthier, more resilient landscapes for generations to come.



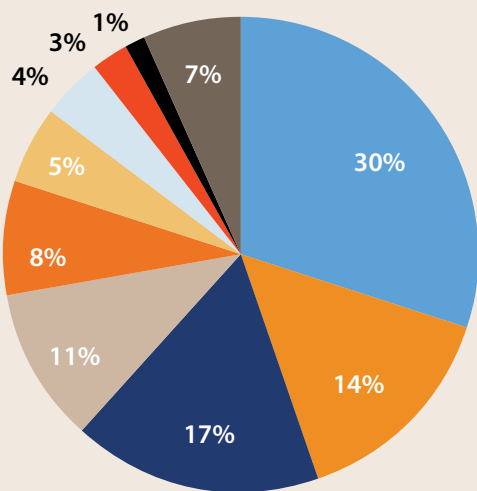
The Numbers

2025 Prescribed Fire Projects by Management Objective Type



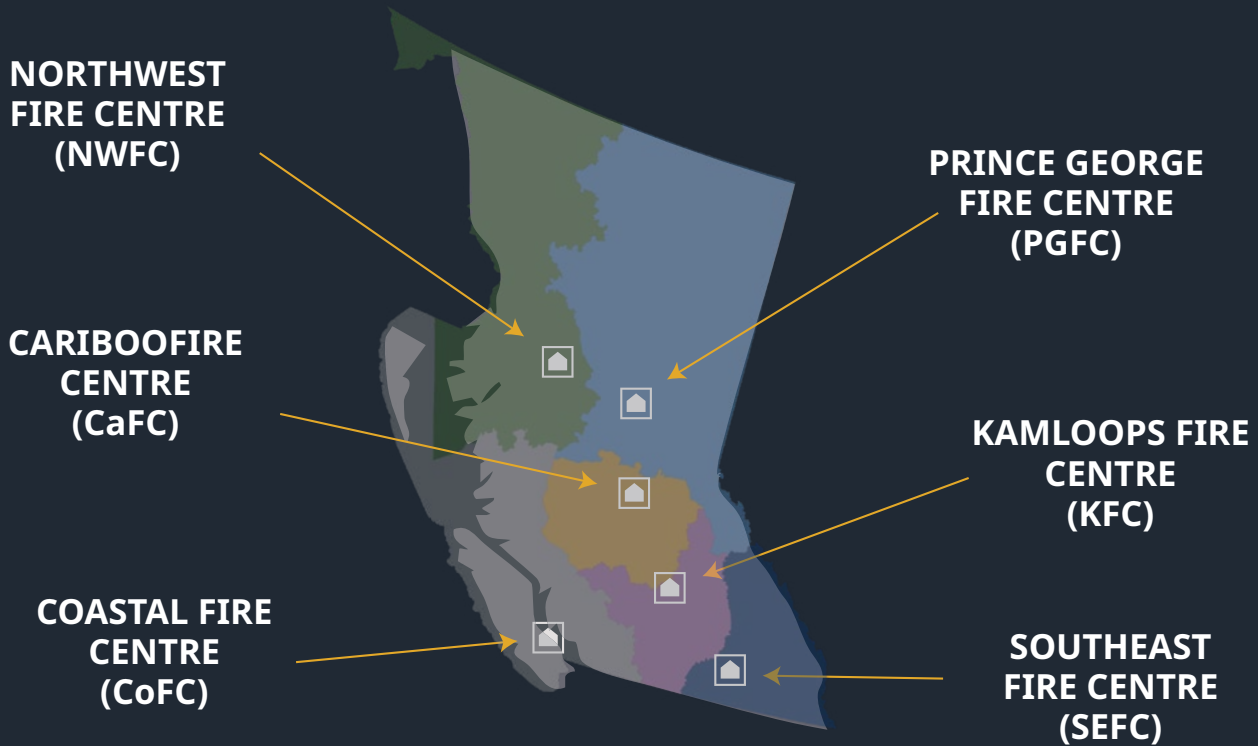
Objective	Projects	%
Wildfire Risk Reduction	32	42%
Wildlife Habitat Enhancement	10	13%
Ecological Restoration	10	13%
Purposes Identified by Indigenous Peoples	8	11%
Range Improvement	6	8%
Silviculture Treatment	6	8%
Other	3	4%
Forest Health Management	1	1%
Total	76	

2025 Burn Project Proponent Type Distribution

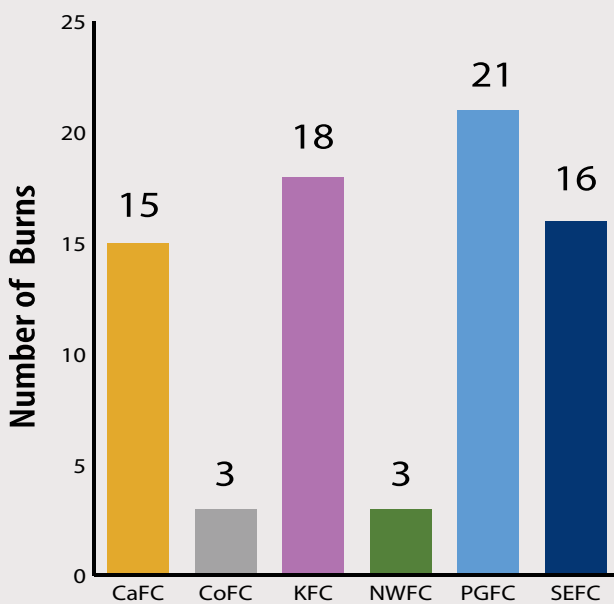


Objective	Project	%
First Nation	23	30%
Local Government	13	17%
Non-Profit	11	14%
Tenure Holder	8	11%
Ministry of Forests	6	8%
Private Landowner	5	7%
Other Ministry	4	5%
Ministry of Environment	3	4%
Municipal Fire Department	2	3%
Ministry of WLRS	1	1%
Total	76	

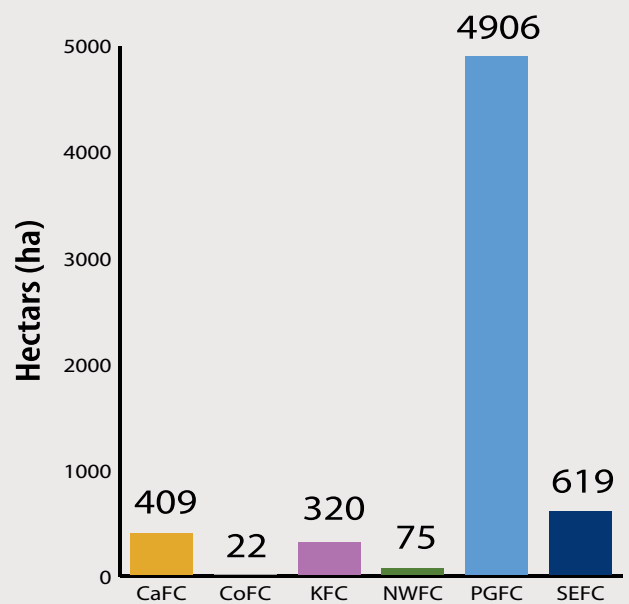
Treated Areas by Fire Centre



NUMBER OF BURNS FOR EACH FIRE CENTRE



TOTAL HECTARES BURNED BY EACH FIRE CENTRE



Looking Ahead

As the use of cultural and prescribed fire continues to expand across British Columbia, partners are preparing for another year of collaborative, place-based fire stewardship. Building on the relationships, project work and shared learning strengthened throughout 2025, planning is already well underway for the 2026 burning season. Across the province, Indigenous governing bodies, local governments, industry and community organizations are actively developing and refining future projects that reflect local priorities, community values and long-term stewardship goals.

Work in the year ahead will continue to focus on supporting Indigenous-led and partnership-based burning, strengthening practitioner development, advancing shared governance approaches and building capacity for integrated wildfire management. Lessons learned from this year's projects, including the second Kootenay ʔa-kinq̓uku TREX, community-driven agricultural burns and landscape-level prescribed fire, will guide planning and training across regions. Continued investment in monitoring and fire effects evaluation will also support adaptive decision-making and help ensure that cultural and prescribed fire continues to meet ecological,

cultural and community-identified objectives. By integrating new technologies and tools, like drones for planning, ignition and monitoring, cultural and prescribed fire projects will continue to advance the way we steward the land as well as how we respond to complex wildfires.

As climate variability extends wildfire risk beyond traditional seasonal boundaries, partners are preparing for a broader range of potential burning windows. Collaborative work is also underway to align processes with recent legislative and policy changes, ensuring that the tools supporting shared stewardship and decision-making can be applied in a way that upholds local governance, community safety and culturally grounded fire use.

Momentum remains strong across all regions. There are 144 planned prescribed burn projects for 2026 for a total of 25,200 hectares, with additional initiatives in early development for future years. By working together to return fire to the land safely, intentionally and respectfully, partners are strengthening ecosystems, supporting community protection and deepening the relationships that will sustain this work for generations to come.

