

# 2022

## Cultural & Prescribed Fire Annual Summary Report



CULTURAL BURNING  
& PRESCRIBED FIRE



BC Wildfire  
Service



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fire is a natural process that is necessary for many ecosystems in B.C. and has been used by Indigenous People as a land stewardship tool and for cultural purposes since time immemorial. In B.C., the focus on fire suppression over the past 100 years has impacted the natural state of fire on the landscape, changing the structure and characteristics of ecosystems. This has resulted in wildfire events that are far more impactful than those historically experienced in B.C.

Cultural and prescribed fire are important tools for maintaining the health and safety of B.C.'s forests, communities and wildlife and can help to support wildfire resiliency. To im-

prove wildfire resiliency and align with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, the Province has committed to expanding the use of beneficial fire as a land stewardship tool in partnership with First Nations and other partners.

In 2022, a total of 35 projects covered 1,647 hectares but most importantly, significant progress was made to advance and strengthen relationships with First Nations across the province. While relationships are not formally captured in hectares burned, they are crucial to the success of this work, and will continue to guide the expansion of cultural and prescribed fire in B.C.

## Definitions

**Cultural Burning** is a practice that has existed for millennia. It holds different meanings for different Indigenous communities but is often defined as the controlled application of fire on the landscape to achieve specific cultural objectives.

**Prescribed fire** is the planned and controlled application of fire to a specific land area and is one of the most ecologically appropriate and relatively efficient means for achieving a variety of land management objectives.

**Shared Stewardship** is a collaborative approach to land management that focuses on working together with government agencies and other partners to establish joint priorities and opportunities.



## 2022 CULTURAL AND PRESCRIBED FIRE ANNUAL SUMMARY

Cultural and prescribed fire projects are carefully planned to achieve specific land stewardship objectives, like wildfire risk reduction, ecosystem restoration, First Nations values, silviculture and habitat goals. To achieve these objectives, burning projects require specific site and weather conditions,

which are generally found during the spring and fall. Practitioners constantly monitor burn units and projects proceed only when the site and environmental conditions are favourable to ensure the safety of crews and that the burn objectives can be met.





# SPRING BURNING SEASON

After a challenging 2021 wildfire season, precipitation levels over the winter were within +/- 30% of normal across the province. The Northwest, Cariboo and Coastal Fire Centres recorded higher-than-normal overwinter precipitation. As winter transitioned into spring, cooler-than-average temperatures persisted through April and May. Delayed snowmelt and spring green-up slowed the drying out of forest fuels.

These weather patterns prevented prescribed burning in some areas but expanded the available burning window in others. Despite wet conditions and uncooperative weather limiting delivery in some areas, the Southern Cariboo, Thompson-Okanagan and the Rocky Mountain Trench saw below-normal precipitation, which allowed for these areas to successfully implement many spring projects.



# THE WILDFIRE SEASON

The 2022 wildfire season started later than usual due to sufficient winter precipitation and a cool, wet spring. However, sustained warm and dry weather starting in late July extended B.C.'s wildfire season well into the fall with new records set in late August and mid-October resulting in a heightened number of fires detected per week compared to the past 20 years.

Many areas of the province set temperature records late in the season, and accumulated rainfall amounts through September were below normal levels. Despite the late drought conditions, the 2022 wildfire season remained below average in terms of number of fires and area burned statistics.





# FALL BURNING SEASON

The 2022 wildfire season extended well into October, with unseasonably warm temperatures and below-normal amounts of rainfall in many areas around the province. In northern B.C., multiple large fires burned right until the snow fell in late October, with some continuing to burn deep underground through the winter.

The sustained warm and dry weather supported good burning conditions into November for the southern half of the province. However, implementation was hampered in some areas by ongoing wildfires, reducing the number of available staff and resources. In addition, high drought codes and environmental conditions created the potential for prescribed fire to burn too deep and extend residence times, which can lead to soil, root, and tree damage, making fall implementation too risky in some areas.



# THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

The revitalization of cultural and prescribed fire in B.C. requires a partnership-based approach where the Province works alongside First Nations and local authorities to determine shared objectives, scope and plan projects, and monitor outcomes over time. The relationships and partnerships built with First Nations in 2022, while not formally captured in hectares burned, are an invaluable measure of success.

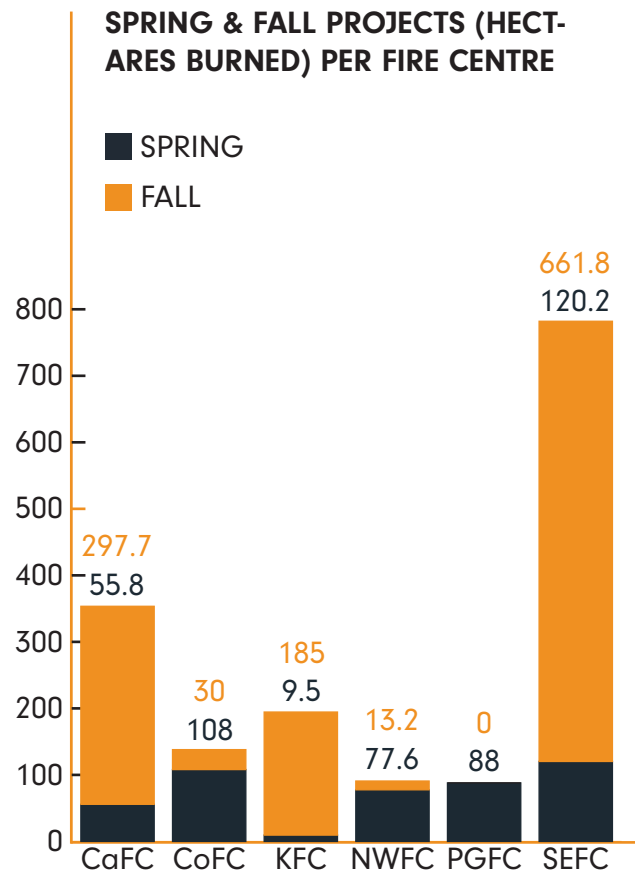
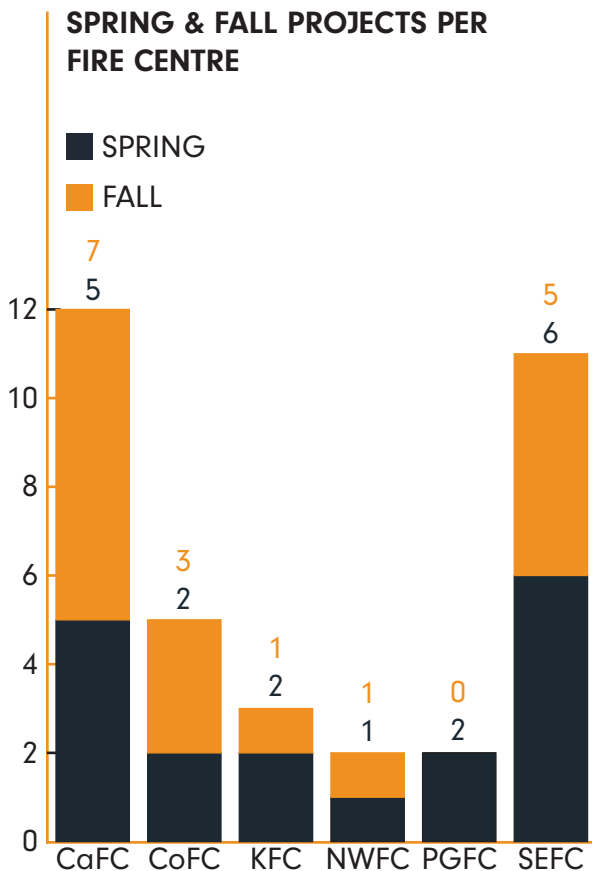
In 2022, there were 15 approved burn plans developed or codeveloped with First Nations, and an additional 22 partnership projects were in the developmental stages. First Nations involvement on burn projects beyond prescription and burn plan development took the form of ceremonial blessing and/or ceremonial burns, as well as First Nations operational participation with burn implementation.



# THE NUMBERS

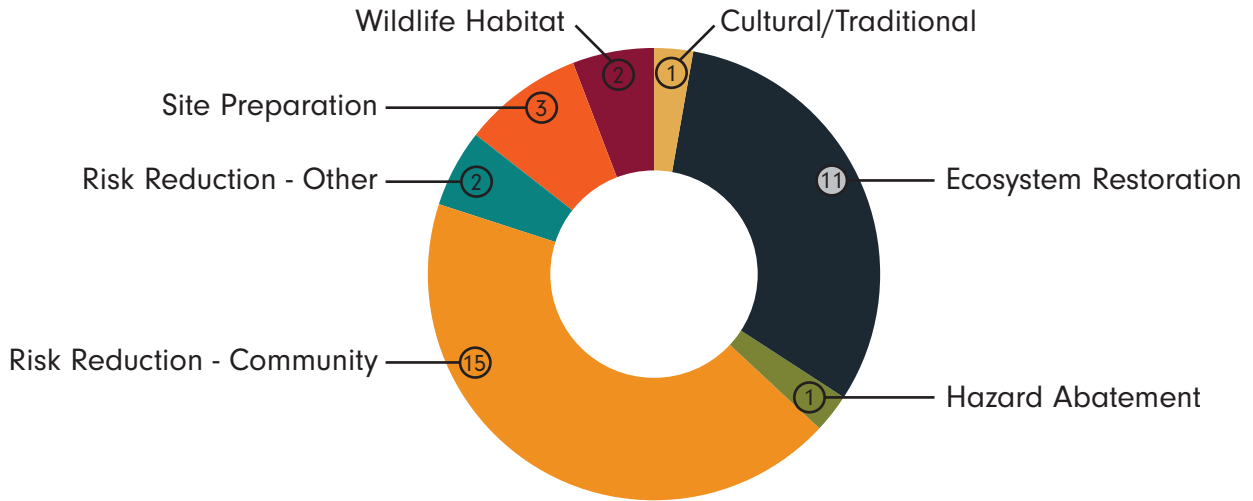
In 2022, 17 projects were implemented in the spring, covering a total of 460 hectares. The long fall season allowed for a further 18 projects to be implemented, covering 1,187 hectares. A total of 35 projects covered a total of 1,647 hectares in 2022. There were 23 fully implemented projects and 12 projects that were partially completed.

<b>CaFC</b>	Cariboo Fire Centre
<b>CoFC</b>	Coastal Fire Centre
<b>KFC</b>	Kamloops Fire Centre
<b>NWFC</b>	Northwest Fire Centre
<b>PGFC</b>	Prince George Fire Centre
<b>SEFC</b>	Southeast Fire Centre

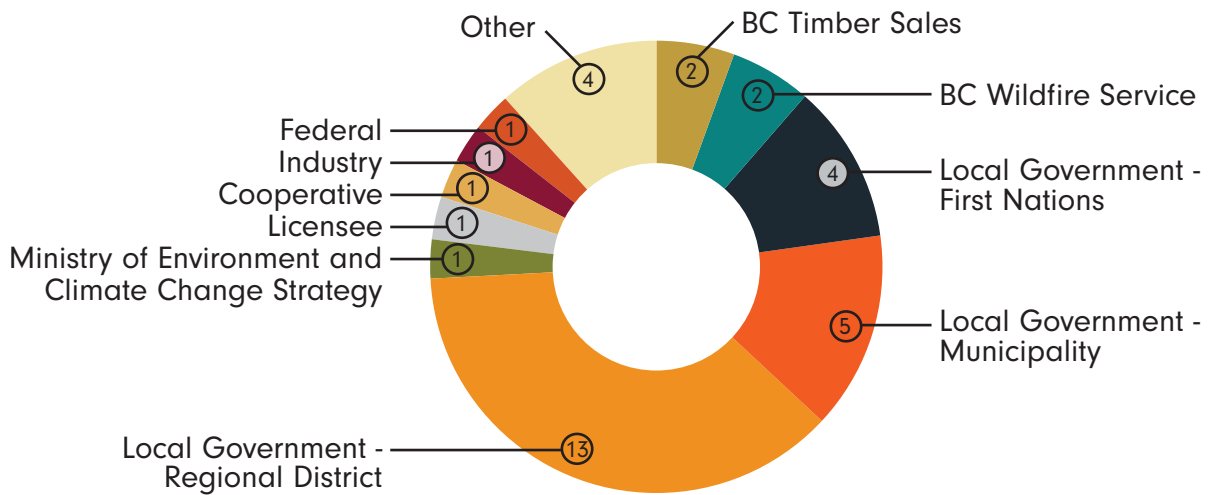




**NUMBER OF C&RX FIRE PROJECTS PER PRIMARY MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE**



**NUMBER OF C&RX FIRE PROJECTS PER PROPONENT TYPE**



# 2023 OUTLOOK

Looking to 2023, there are 65 burning projects approved or in development for implementation. An estimated 35 projects will have burn plans developed or codeveloped with First Nations.

