

## Appendix 10



July 05, 2002

### TERMS OF REFERENCE JASPER INTERFACE STEERING TEAM

#### 1. BACKGROUND

The terms "wildland/urban interface" or "interface" refer to areas where buildings and structures are mingled with combustible native vegetation. Interface communities are at risk from fire, that is wildfires moving towards developed areas from forested lands and structural fires that originate in developed areas and spread to the forest. Interface fire is a complex issue that involves many, disparate factors. Mitigating the interface fire risk means addressing deficiencies in: (1) the management of wildland (forest) fuels; (2) public information and awareness; (3) community infra-structure; (4) structural design; (5) emergency response; (6) training; (7) equipment; and (8) community planning.

Internal and external hazard assessments have long recognized that developed areas within Jasper National Park are at particular risk due to the combination of topography, prevailing winds and dense fuels. Fire losses aside, there are also strong socio-economic reasons for maintaining visual qualities within and adjacent the town of Jasper and nearby recreational/tourism facilities.

In general, standard solutions to reduce the risk of wildfire losses in interface areas are known. These are prescribed in a recent manual produced by Partners in Protection: "*FireSmart: Protecting Your Community from Wildfire*".

However, these same interface areas are among the most ecologically important parts of Jasper National Park. The coincidence of high ecological values, intense development and significant fire risk create unique circumstances that call for customized solutions. Therefore, the special challenge faced by the community of Jasper is to find solutions that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire losses that, at the same time, maintain or enhance long-term ecological conditions, wildlife habitats and the aesthetic value of forests adjacent developed areas. This approach is supported in the Management Plan for Jasper National Park of Canada (2000).

In answer to that challenge, the Foothills Model Forest (FMF) has established a broad initiative called the "*FireSmart - ForestWise Communities program*". As a partner in the FMF, and to provide keystone elements of that broader FMF initiative, Parks Canada has initiated a forest restoration/fuel management project around the town of Jasper and the Lake Edith subdivision. Through this project, it is believed that our local communities can become templates for other interface communities and developments elsewhere, within and beyond the boundaries of the FMF.

Aside from the Foothills Model Forest, major partners contributing to the "*FireSmart - ForestWise Communities program*" are the Municipality of Jasper, Parks Canada, ATCO Electric and the University of Calgary.

## Appendix 10

### 3.0 MEMBERSHIP

#### 3.1 Core Membership

From the outset, representation of key organizations and citizen groups is required on the steering team. Others may be added to this core group as needed. Initial core members of the Jasper Interface Steering Team are:

Chairperson: Brian Wallace, Chief Park Warden, JNP

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| - Municipality of Jasper                        | Mike Day                  |
| - Municipality of Jasper, Fire Chief            | Greg Van Tighem           |
| - Jasper Tourism and Commerce                   | Krista Rodger             |
| - Lake Edith Fire Prevention Committee          | Don Campbell              |
| - Jasper Environmental Association              | Jill Seaton               |
| - Outlying Commercial Accommodation Association | Mike Wasuita, Chris Allin |
| - Jasper Hotel Association                      | Chad Gulevich             |
| - Jasper Volunteer Fire Brigade                 | Kevin Lillinston          |
| - Jasper Park Lodge                             | Ralph Melnyk              |
| - ATCO Electric                                 | Craig Nyrose              |
| - Parks Canada, Jasper National Park            |                           |
| - FireSmart- Forest Wise project manager        | Alan Westhaver            |
| - A/ Vegetation\Fire Specialist                 | Dave Smith                |
| - Communications Specialist                     | Janet Breau               |
| - Communications Specialist                     | Carolyn Duchoslav         |
| - Townsite Manager                              | Barry Romanko             |
| - Alberta Forest Protection                     | Kevin Freeehill           |
| - Town of Hinton, Fire Department               | Colin Hannington          |
| - Foothills Model Forest                        | (Appointed by FMF)        |
| - R.C.M.P. Detachment                           | (Appointed by RCMP)       |
| - Community members at large (2)                | Recommended by JIST       |

#### 3.2. Associate Members

Other individuals, guests and experts will be invited to meetings or asked for periodic involvement in relation to specific tasks or agenda items. Some potential associate members are:

- |                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| - University of Calgary            | Dr. Richard Revel |
| - Disaster Services                | Bob Van Goethem   |
| - JNP Public Safety Specialist     | Steve Blake       |
| - CN Rail                          | Greg Cronkwright  |
| - Trans Mountain Pipe Line Ltd.    | Rob Scott         |
| - City of Edmonton Fire Department | Kurt Sobottka     |



## HOT TOPIC!

### Community fire protection and forest restoration program

*A Fact Sheet from the Jasper Interface Steering Team*

The next time you're out walking on a favorite trail near town, take a close look at the forest that surrounds you. Notice the tangle of fallen trees, branches and other woody debris? This volume of build up is the result of an early fire protection policy that suppressed all park fires beginning in the 1930s. We're now used to seeing this buildup in our local forests. However, in a natural fire cycle, Jasper's forests would have burned as often as every 20 years. Seventy years of fire suppression later, those same forests are now so full of fuels that if a fire started, it would be extremely difficult to control.

Communities like Jasper are at significant risk. People are beginning to understand that we need to take some new approaches to fire, forests and protecting ourselves. Locally, Parks Canada continues its successful prescribed burn program—restoring the natural role of fire and reducing forest fuels in key areas that can be managed for safety. This year, a new community-based group called the Jasper Interface Steering Team is helping to implement the Foothills Model Forest *FireSmart-ForestWise* program.

1915



*Athabasca Valley in 1915. Notice the mix of open meadows, grasslands and sparse forests.*

1996



*A "repeat" photo taken in 1996 showing dense forest replacing open areas.*

Early photo, M.P. Bridgland. Present-day photo, J. Rheintulla/University of Alberta, Bridgland Rephotography Project



Parks  
Canada

Parcs  
Canada



### The Basics

# FireSmart-ForestWise

The *FireSmart-ForestWise* initiative is a unique project. It combines research, restoration, education and stewardship to reduce the risk of wildfires and restore local forests. In the first year, three small demonstration sites around town gave people a chance to participate in neighbourhood "work bees" and see first-hand what a restored forest will look like. Over the next four years, almost 300 hectares of townsite area forest will benefit.



#### **What is the main goal?**

Reduce the build-up of forest fuels that surround the town and restore the health and beauty of local forests and their habitat.

#### **How will we get there?**

- Thin and remove the excess woody debris from overgrown forests surrounding the townsite so that wildfires don't become intense and spread into town.
- Restore forests and wildlife habitat to a more natural state that's aesthetically pleasing and less of a fire risk.
- Use *FireSmart* techniques in building construction and home maintenance so that building fires are prevented.
- Support managed fires that restore fire's natural role in park ecosystems.
- Make Jasper the kind of *FireSmart-ForestWise* community that others can model.

A **special research project** is also part of the program. It will help us use science to monitor and track our progress.

For more information contact: Greg Van Tighem 852-1595 or Alan Westhaver 852-6169.



### The Flip Side of Fire

We all know about fire's potentially deadly and destructive effects, but fire has a flip side. It includes a long list of important ecological benefits in places like Jasper. Here are a few of them:

#### **Fire-The Kick Starter**

When fire moves into a coniferous forest, it stimulates a mosaic of different vegetation to take hold—grasses, herbs, shrubs, willow and aspen.

#### **Fire-The Habitat Builder**

Large fire-killed trees are called 'snags'. They provide new food and shelter for local wildlife. Birds hollow out nesting cavities and feed on invading insects. When snags fall down, they become food and shelter for an entire chain of other organisms.

#### **Fire-The Soil Conditioner**

Fire burns the build-up of leaves, needles and logs on the forest floor converting it to layers of mineral-rich ash. The ash works like a soil conditioner, releasing and recycling important nutrients.

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### *Working together for a safe community and a healthy forest*

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#### **Who's behind the Jasper Interface Steering Committee?**

The Jasper Interface Steering Team is a group of residents concerned with protecting the community against fire and restoring ecological health to the surrounding forests: Municipality of Jasper, Jasper Tourism and Commerce, Lake Edith Fire Prevention Committee, Outlying Commercial Accommodation Assoc., Jasper Hotel Association, Jasper Volunteer Fire Brigade, Jasper Environmental Assoc., Town of Hinton, ATCO Electric, Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge, RCMP, Foothills Model Forest, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Parks Canada.