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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release  
2019FLNR0221-001700  
Sept. 5, 2019

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations  
and Rural Development  
BC Wildfire Service

### **Prescribed burns to help restore Garry oak ecosystems**

PARKSVILLE – The BC Wildfire Service plans to conduct two prescribed burns in the Maple Bay and Metchosin areas of Vancouver Island to reduce wildfire risks, manage flammable vegetation on the landscape and help restore Garry oak ecosystems.

The two controlled burns will be lit sometime in September or October 2019, when site and weather conditions are favourable.

#### **Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve (off Maple Bay Road)**

- This 1.5-hectare prescribed burn will be conducted in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, about six kilometres northeast of Duncan.
- The project will be completed in three stages, burning half a hectare at a time.
- The Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve is a unique ecosystem that is home to Canada's largest recorded Garry oak tree.

#### **Rocky Point, Metchosin (Canadian Armed Forces base)**

- This 20-hectare prescribed burn will be conducted in conjunction with the Department of National Defence, with the assistance of the Department of National Defence's fire department. The burn site is about three kilometres southeast of Pedder Bay Marina.
- This project will be completed in three stages.
- The Rocky Point property is one of the best examples of a Garry oak ecosystem on southern Vancouver Island.

Both of these sites are within the coastal Douglas fir biogeoclimatic zone. They contain notable populations of rare plants and animals that are studied by researchers from throughout North America.

Historically, First Nation communities maintained the grassy plains at these sites by burning off dry grasses, shrubs and young trees that are less tolerant of fire than Garry oaks. These ecosystems relied on regular, low-intensity ground fires to limit the spread of competing tree species, remove accumulations of dead wood and other vegetation, and promote new growth. Fire-resistant Garry oak and mature Douglas fir trees would have survived such fires and herbaceous plants would have vigorously re-sprouted after the fire had passed through.

Reintroducing fire into these areas is an effective way to promote natural regenerative processes, control invasive species and slow the encroachment of conifer trees into these specialized ecosystems. Prescribed burns also help reduce wildfire risks by reducing the amount of fuels available to burn.

These two prescribed burn projects will provide valuable data that will assist with the expansion of the prescribed burning program into other pockets of Garry oak ecosystems, ensuring they are maintained as part of the region's natural history.

To report a wildfire, unattended campfire or open burning violation, call 1 800 663-5555 toll-free or \*5555 on a cellphone. For the latest information on current wildfire activity, burning restrictions, road closures and air quality advisories, visit: <http://www.bcwildfire.ca>

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