



Fuel Management Plan

Prince Albert Crown Forest

Prepared by
Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency
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Introduction

The City of Prince Albert has expressed concerns about the wildfire risk to the various subdivisions on the north side of the Saskatchewan River. Many of these subdivisions are rated at a “Very High Risk” from wildfire due to the jack pine stands in the area.

In 2019 the federal government opened the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund for project applications. The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency put in a proposal to this fund to carry out community wildfire mitigation project work within the province, including work on Crown Land in the Prince Albert area. The federal government will cover 50% of eligible project costs for mitigation work on crown land with the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency covering the other 50%.

As part of the Wildfire Risk Reduction and Community Resiliency Project funded by the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund 45.5 hectares of forest is proposed for thinning.

Project Objective

To contract out the opportunity to remove dead trees, clean up deadfall, and to thin and prune the softwood trees to ensure these areas will not carry a high intensity fire. The treated blocks will not burn as intensely because there is less fuel available to burn, making it easier for suppression efforts to be successful should a wildfire ignite or burn into these areas.

Thinning projects have shown to be effective in reducing the intensity of wildfire and preventing tree crown to crown spread. Fires that burn less intensely and are not burning as full crown fires are much easier for suppression crews to manage. The end result would be a clean, parklike area that is still aesthetically pleasing but will not carry an intense wildfire. Thinning projects are not designed to stop fires and it is important to note that individuals who own property in the area should take the necessary FireSmart steps to reduce the risk from wildfire to their own properties.

This work will also help to increase safety levels of any responding to a wildfire incident and those evacuating because of the incident.

The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency has developed case studies on how these thinning projects have shown to be effective in helping manage wildfires within Saskatchewan. These case studies are available on saskpublicsafety.ca

Project Areas

Mitigation work this fiscal year will take place in 5 blocks and will total 45.5 hectares. Work will be completed to the east of Peter Pond Road (Figure 1). These two blocks will tie in with existing fuel treatments that were completed on crownland in 2019 (figure 1).

The third block is located on the south side of C.L. Marshall Road totaling 4.2 hectares of jack pine forest (figure 2). The final two blocks are adjacent to Holmes Road and total 20.9 hectares (figure 3).

All areas being thinned can be accessed directly from the existing road network and no new access trails will be constructed.



Figure 1: 20.3 hectares of Jack Pine forest proposed for thinning to the west of Peter Pond Road



Figure 2: 4.2 hectares identified for thinning on the south side of C.L Marshall Road



Figure 3: 20.9 hectares identified for thinning adjacent to Holmes Drive.



Figure 4: Thinning block representative picture

Fuel Management Prescription:

Hand Crew Thinning

The proposed work would start in November before excessive snow depth and cold temperatures make the mitigation work more difficult. Burning of slash will not begin until there is enough snow to facilitate safe brush pile burning.

Hand crews using chain saws would remove all the standing dead and any down trees within the blocks and the softwood trees would be thinned so there is a 2 m separation between the widest portion of the crowns. All live hardwood trees would be left. When removing trees, the unhealthy trees would be targeted leaving the healthiest trees behind. All mature softwood trees that are left within the block will be pruned to a height of 1.5 m to help prevent a surface fire from getting up into the tree crowns. The resulting slash would be piled and burned as the crew's progress through the blocks.

Trees suitable for firewood would be cut up and piled within the blocks for the locals to utilize. Firewood piles need to be scaled before the wood can be removed. Scaled piles will have spray paint on them which have to sit for 48 hours before they can be removed. Any firewood resulting from the project cannot be sold or bartered.

The completed project will look similar to figure 5 below.



Figure 5: Mature Jack Pine stand that was hand thinned by Forest Drive in 2022

The burn piles will have to be checked by the crews on a regular basis and any resulting ground fires will have to be dug out and extinguished as they are found. No burning would be allowed until there is snow cover to minimize these potential issues. Controlled Burns and Grass Fires notification would be required once the project commences until completion.

Project Engagement Process

This proposal is designed to be shared with the local stakeholders for comment and ultimately for sign off by the Rural Municipality of Buckland, the areas Protection Officer, Director of Land Operations, and a Registered Professional Forest Technologist.

Once the project is signed off the project will go through the governments Duty to Consult process to ensure any legal duty to consult obligations are met.

Environmental & Heritage Considerations

A Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre project review of the proposed sites was performed and appropriate mitigation measures are in effect for rare, endangered, or at risk species.

The work being proposed would be done by hand crews, which is considered to be a low intensity activity as all work is to be done by chainsaws and brush saws and the crew will be accessing the area by foot. Small burn piles within the parcel areas may generate some local smoke conditions. No new access trails would be created as a result of these projects.

A Heritage Resource Review has been requested for the proposed project sites with no concerns returned. Past experience has shown that hand crews will have no impact on Heritage sites.

Summary

Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency staff are available to meet to discuss the project in more detail, contact the representative below. Comments and suggestions are welcomed and every effort will be made to incorporate any input into a final proposal.

Once the plan is approved by the listed stakeholders and any necessary Duty to Consult processes are complete then the project can be advertised. The approved project would be advertised as a Negotiated Request for Bids opportunity on the Sasktenders.ca website. All work must be completed by March 31, 2025.

Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency Contact Information

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Fuel Management Plan Sign-off

The signatures below indicate approval by the RM of Buckland No.491, the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency and a Registered Professional Forest Technologist for the Fuel Management Project that is proposed to take place this fall and winter (2024/2025).

Proposed Project Work Approved by:

Rural Municipality of Buckland

Date

Protection Officer

Date

Land Operations Director

Date

Registered Professional Forest Technologist

Date