

For immediate release
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Wildfire-risk-reduction harvesting near Alkali Lake largely compliant

WILLIAMS LAKE – The Forest Practices Board has completed an investigation into wildfire risk reduction harvesting in wildlife habitat areas near Alkali Lake in the Cariboo, following a complaint that activities did not meet legal requirements.

The board found that most activities met those requirements, with one administrative error resulting in two non-compliances.

The board received a complaint in July 2024 alleging that harvesting in mule deer winter range and old-growth management areas did not meet legal requirements and commitments set out in forest plans. Investigators reviewed five cutblocks harvested since 2020 within these areas as part of wildfire risk reduction treatments.

Four cutblocks met requirements. In one case, harvesting proceeded without a required exemption, resulting in non-compliance with both forest stewardship plan commitments and general wildlife measures. While the exemption was not obtained, the board observed that the work on the ground reduced wildfire risk and maintained mature forest cover important for mule deer winter habitat.

“This investigation shows that community wildfire safety and wildlife habitat aren’t an either-or choice,” said Gerry Grant, acting chair, Forest Practices Board. “In this case, the work on the ground supported community wildfire safety, while maintaining important habitat values.”

Wildfire-risk-reduction has become an increasing priority for communities, First Nations and government as wildfire frequency and severity continue to rise. In many areas, these efforts take place in landscapes with pre-existing legal objectives for wildlife habitat and old growth, creating challenges where these and other forest values overlap.

As wildfire risk increases throughout B.C., integrated and adaptive processes are essential to support community safety, while maintaining wildlife habitat and other forest values.

The board recognizes that the work examined in this investigation took place within the traditional territories of the Secwépemc communities, including Esk’etemc, Stswecem’c Xget’tem First Nation, Williams Lake First Nation, Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band and Neskonlith Indian Band. The board acknowledges their deep connection to, and longstanding stewardship of these lands.

Quick Facts:

- The five cutblocks are located near the community of Esk’et, approximately 52 kilometres south of Williams Lake in the Cariboo-Chilcotin Natural Resource District.
- Stswecem’c Xget’tem First Nation submitted the complaint; Esk’etemc was the licensee.

Learn More:

- To read the full report, visit: <https://www.bcfpb.ca/release-publications/releases/alkali-lake-harvesting>

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