



Parks Services
1450 K.L.O. Road
Kelowna, B.C. V1W 3Z4
Telephone: (250) 469-6232
rdco.com

FAQ

SUBJECT: Regional Park Closures Due to 2023 Wildfire Damage

Background

Parks Services closed four Regional Parks (Raymer Bay, Rose Valley, Stephens Coyote Ridge, Traders Cove) following the Grouse Complex Wildfires in 2023. Assessments for danger trees and other hazards are underway. Mitigation work will need to occur before they are safe to reopen to visitors.

When will the parks reopen?

Raymer Bay and Traders Cove Regional Parks reopened on April 1, 2024. Rose Valley and Stephens Coyote Ridge Regional Parks remain closed.

Why are Rose Valley and Stephens Coyote Ridge Regional Parks still closed?

The closed parks contain a number of dangers including fire-damaged trees and potential geotechnical hazards (rockfall, ash pits, land movement). Mitigation work is required to ensure safety of staff and park visitors.

What is a post-wildfire natural hazard analysis?

The post-wildfire natural hazards risk analysis (PWFNHRA) process allows for the province to study burned areas and determine if risk is present. Fires with identified values at risk with terrain steep enough to generate possible hazards are selected for a reconnaissance-scale review. The Reconnaissance Review typically consists of a helicopter overflight, with on-the-ground verification of burn-severity and soil characteristics, as well as verification of suspected values at risk such as homes and provincial or community infrastructure. A detailed PWFNHRA follows and the process for the study starts as soon as the reconnaissance report is complete.

How long do post-wildfire risks last?

In areas that have been severely burned, post-wildfire risks may last for a substantial number of years. For example, on-going risks and impacts from other historical large wildfires, such as the 2003 Okanagan Mountain Park Wildfire are still present today. Post wildfire, there is an increased risk of danger trees, flooding and/or debris flow risks, these risks can persist for a considerable time after a wildfire.

Why is the recovery process taking so long?

Recovering the parks to a safe condition for public access requires a number of provincial processes to be completed. These include:

- establishing funding through the provincial Disaster Financial Assistance program
- salvage logging and cutting permits
- archaeology assessments
- hazard tree assessments
- geotechnical assessments.

Working through these processes takes time, and we are working as quickly as practically possible. Plans are currently underway to conduct some small-scale salvage harvesting to

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address vast areas of danger trees. We are concurrently working on the completion of assessments of hazard trees in the lesser burned areas and working through salvage logging permit processes to address significantly burned portions of the parks.

What is the process for assessment of danger trees?

Once the danger trees are assessed, as being a hazard to public safety, funding has been approved by DFA, they are felled to eliminate the risk.

When will the parks reopen?

We do not have a firm timeline for re-opening as we need to follow the process for removing hazards and recovering these areas. Due to natural area damage in Stephens Coyote and Rose Valley, we anticipate those will take longer to reopen fully. We are currently assessing priority areas within the Rose Valley Park for hazard mitigation allowing for potential partial opening of some designated trails as soon as possible.

What type of damage occurred in the parks?

We have confirmed that the damage was mostly to natural areas and trails. Fortunately, we did not lose infrastructure like washrooms, playgrounds and picnic shelters.

How can I learn about volunteer opportunities in the closed parks (i.e., treeplanting)?

Prospective volunteers can email parks.volunteers@rdco.com for more information and to request updates on volunteer opportunities in these parks.

What is being done to mitigate for wildfires in Regional Parks?

In 2020, the [Community Wildfire Prevention Plan](#) was completed which took into account all 30 Regional Parks and ranked their wildfire risk. This plan was assessed and approved by BC Wildfire Service. RDCO Parks Services is working on mitigation according to the plan in order of priority as funding is made available through provincial grants.

What should I do if I see someone enter a closed park?

You can report an issue with any of our parks through an online service request at requests.rdco.com or by calling Parks Services at 250-469-6232.

What is the RDCO doing about trespassing in closed parks?

Parks Services are actively ticketing those found within closed parks (Bylaw 1427, Section 3 b) "Person in a closed park due to hazards" with a \$500 fine. Not complying with a request may result in obstructing a bylaw officer from their duties (Bylaw 1427, Section 4 a) "Obstruct Bylaw Officer" with a \$1,000 fine.