

## 2. Wells Gray Access/Egress Management Strategy

Date: March 31<sup>st</sup> 2019

Wells Gray Provincial Park has large numbers of tourists throughout the year with the bulk of them visiting the park during peak fire season. The Access/ Egress Management Strategy is designed to address key themes discussed by the Planning Team in the event of an evacuation.

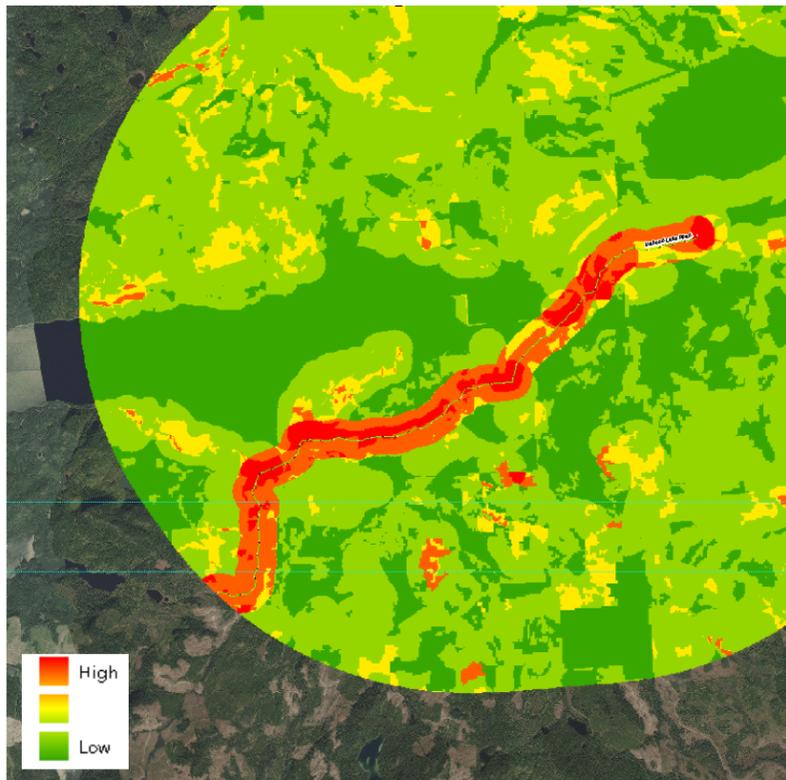


Figure 1: Wildfire Risk Mahood Lake Road

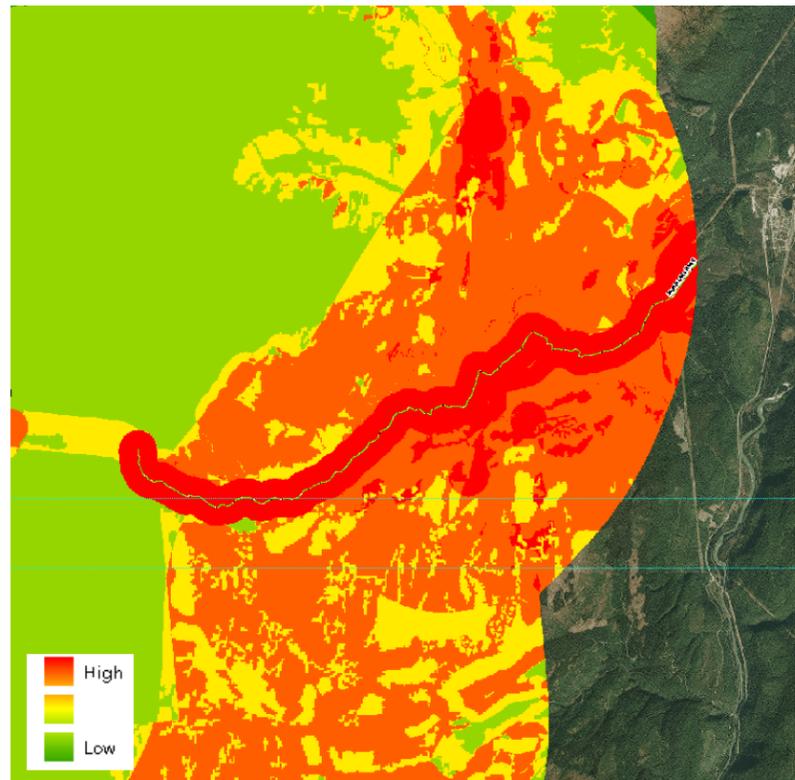


Figure 2: Wildfire Risk Murtle Lake Road

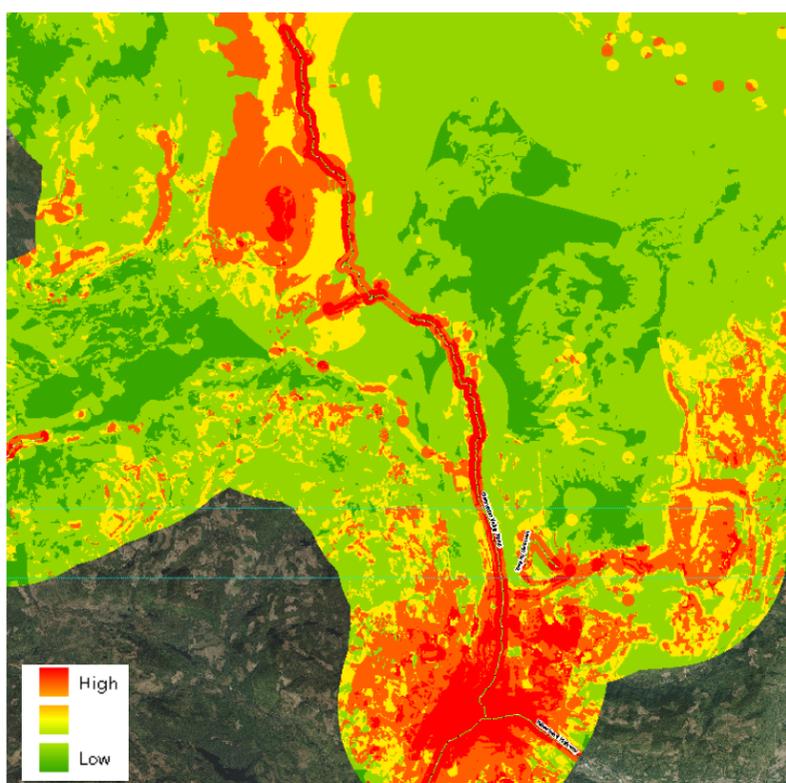


Figure 3: Wildfire Risk Clearwater Valley Road

## Summary of Values at Risk

### HUMAN LIFE AND SAFETY

- 3000 + visitors per day
- Scattered population
- Campsites and site seeing areas
- Travel corridor
- High use trails

### CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Bridge
- Power lines
- Communication towers
- Parks infrastructures

### ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

- An evacuation occurred when the park closed in 2017 - 90 % of people evacuated in 4 hours , remaining 10% took 2 days
- There are also several one way in-out roads very popular during the summer months
- Some water based areas such as Murtle and Clearwater Lake would be challenging to evacuate during an event
- The creation of an alternate route is controversial with political, social, environmental and economic forces at play
- There are many backcountry users in Wells Gray during fire season, which are difficult to track in location and number - these users will be challenging to evacuate during an emergency

# Management Strategies

## 2.1 CREATE A CONSOLIDATED EVACUATION PLAN FOR WELLS GRAY PROVINCIAL PARK

**DISCUSSION:** Evacuation planning has taken place in Wells Gray Park, but has been limited in scope. Consolidation and coordination of evacuation plans produced by Park Operators and Permittees would be more efficient for first responders during an evacuation event.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Wells Gray Park to consolidate current evacuation plans, including the planning done with park operators and permittees, to create a cohesive document.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** BC Parks

**PARTNERS:** Permit Holders/Park Operators /Tourism Wells Gray/Information Wells Gray/EMBC

**RISK RESPONSE GOALS:** Reduce risk through improved communication and consolidated evacuation planning details.

## 2.2 CONDUCT A TABLE TOP EVACUATION EXERCISE FOR WELLS GRAY PARK

**DISCUSSION:** Table top exercises to discuss tactical evacuation concerns can provide guidance to improve emergency management. Conducting a table top exercise for an evacuation in Wells Gray Park in conjunction with the expertise of BCWS and First Responders can assist BC Parks in identifying improvements to the consolidated evacuation plan (**Management Strategy 2.1: Create a Consolidated Evacuation Plan for Wells Gray Provincial Park**).

**ACTIONS:**

1. Conduct a table top exercise with involved stakeholders for a wildfire situation in Wells Gray Park.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** BC Parks

**PARTNERS:** BCWS/Permit Holders/Park Operators/TNRD/District of Clearwater/MOTI/RCMP/EMBC

**RISK RESPONSE GOALS:** Reduce risk through improved communication and consolidated evacuation planning details.

## 2.3 DESIGNATE TURN AROUND SPOTS FOR LARGE VEHICLES FOR EMERGENCY EVACUATION

**DISCUSSION:** During an emergency evacuation large vehicles, such as buses and motorhomes, are challenging to turn around on a one way in one way out evacuation route. Designated turn around spots will alleviate this pressure and reduce the risk of road blockages during an evacuation.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Assess and ensure that there are sufficient turn around spots for large vehicles along the Corridor Road.
2. If applicable based on assessment, consider expansion based on existing and/ or create new turn around.
3. Consider sign installation that communicate these locations to drivers along the Corridor Road.
4. Provide brochure maps at key tourist locations that communicate these turn arounds.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** BC Parks

**PARTNERS:** BCWS/TNRD/MOTI

**RISK RESPONSE GOALS:** Reduce risk through improved evacuation efficiency and operations.

## 2.4 STRATEGIC GATE INSTALLATIONS FOR ROAD CLOSURES

**DISCUSSION:** Wells Gray Park is vast with numerous road systems. It is important to ensure that the general public is kept off road systems during an evacuation event. There are limited resources available to monitor and track visitors; gates are a cost-effective tool to control access. By installing gates at key locations, these areas can be monitored less frequently after they have been evacuated during a wildfire event

**ACTIONS:**

1. Engage with MOTI to discuss strategic gate locations and how to embark on this initiative.
2. Consider gate installations at strategic road locations to manage access and evacuation within the park. These locations may include:
  - Murtle Lake Road
  - Clearwater Valley Road
  - Stillwater Road

**RESPONSIBILITY:** BC Parks

**PARTNERS:** MOTI/BCWS

**RISK RESPONSE GOALS:** Reduce risk of evacuation related complications by controlling access of public to specific roads.

## 2.5 EMERGENCY EGRESS ROUTE

**DISCUSSION:** Discussions of an alternate road system out of Wells Gray Park are out of scope for this project. BC Parks is aware of the conversations around this topic over the many years. As noted in the 1986 Wells Gray Master Plan, this road system would be an alternate access to the center of the park from the 100 Mile House area. While this alternate access may provide planning considerations for the park including emergency egress, there is also significant economic, social, and environmental implications from the creation of this route. There are multiple stakeholders that would be involved in the decision to build an alternate route; it is not within the resource capacity of BC Parks to make this decision independently. The construction of an emergency egress route in Wells Gray Park will require significant conversations with First Nations, government, and stakeholders to determine the feasibility of this project.

**ACTIONS:**

1. BC Parks to continue to engage with First Nations, government, and stakeholders regarding the construction of an emergency egress route in Wells Gray Provincial Park. Consider the following:
  - Ecological considerations for biodiversity, species at risk, habitat conservation and a conservation based land model
  - Economic implications including project cost and tourism impacts
  - Social implications for the District of Clearwater as the gateway to Wells Gray Park

**RESPONSIBILITY:** BC Parks

**PARTNERS:** First Nations/MOTI/TNRD/MFLNRORD/District of Clearwater/Cariboo Regional District