

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **Unregulated recreation on Crown land creates fire risk in Kootenay area**

Victoria – A campfire ban imposed on a private campsite near Lake Kooconusa – southeast of Cranbrook – was warranted given the dry conditions and the unregulated use of Crown Land and related fire risk in the surrounding area, a Forest Practices Board report says.

The investigation, sparked by a complaint from a private campground operator whose business was impacted by the ban, determined that dry conditions, illegal and abandoned campfires and the risk to lives and property were key factors that justified keeping the ban in place from late July to early September, 2008.

“A week before the campfire ban was imposed, a 35-hectare fire caused by an abandoned campfire destroyed property and forced vacationers to protect themselves by taking shelter in the lake, as the exit road was blocked by the fire,” said board chair, Bruce Fraser. “Given the province’s increasingly dry summers, the challenges faced by officials policing the area and the safety concerns for people and wildlife, government acted appropriately in imposing the fire ban.”

Unregulated camping and other recreational use, at Lake Kooconusa have also caused environmental concerns around use of ATVs, accumulation of garbage and litter, and inappropriate disposal of human waste. As well, there is sometimes difficulty collecting fines imposed by enforcement officials.

The board has recommended that government assess the risk to public health and safety posed by unregulated recreation in this popular tourist spot, and review the effectiveness of enforcement measures.

The Forest Practices Board is B.C.’s independent watchdog for sound forest and range practices, reporting its findings and recommendations directly to the public and government.

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