



Standing Committee Report Electoral Area Services Committee

To: Electoral Area Services Committee
From: Director of Protective Services
Date: June 5, 2025
Subject: Open Burning

Objective: To review legislation, policy and other constraints limiting open burning.

Discussion:

This report is to inform the Electoral Area Services Committee of the legislation, policy and other constraints limiting open burning. The following regulations and bylaw regulate open burning within the Regional District Electoral Areas:

- Province of British Columbia – Environmental Management Act – Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation
- RDCO Bylaw No. 1066 – Fire Prevention and Regulations
- RDCO Bylaw No. 773 – Smoke Control Regulatory Bylaw

Part 2 – Section 13 and Part 3 – Section 23 of the Province of BC – Environmental Management Act – Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation defines burn pile setbacks from neighbouring residences or businesses. The minimum regulatory setback for burn piles for Community Wildfire Risk Reduction, is fifty (50) metres from neighbouring residences. The minimum lot size of one (1) hectare under Regional District Bylaw No. 1066 promotes compliance with the provincial regulation, and generally aligns with the RDCO's local government partners and other regional districts.

As smaller parcels tend to have closer proximity to neighbours, reducing the minimum lot size for open burning may lead to an increase in smoke complaints from neighbouring properties, citing discomfort and health concerns. Maintaining the one-hectare minimum parcel size helps to mitigate these issues as open burning is distanced from neighbouring properties. Additionally, fires that are closer to property boundaries pose a higher risk to spread to adjacent properties. The one (1) hectare minimum parcel size by design, reduces the risk of fire spread via a healthy buffer zone.

Balancing the need for open burning to mitigate fire risk with the health of residents, is of paramount importance. While open burning can be effective to reduce flammable vegetation as an effort towards wildfire mitigation, due consideration must be given to the risks associated with open burning. Smoke from these burns can adversely affect air quality, leading to respiratory issues and other health complications for local communities. The community has been vocal in raising concerns with air quality, even when planned prescribed burns are conducted by professionals. The current regulations and bylaws safeguard the well-being of our residents by honouring their air quality concerns and ensuring open burning practices do not inadvertently result in uncontrolled fires. Residents are encouraged to use chipping and bins as alternatives to open burning for disposing of combustible materials.

Recommendation(s):

THAT the Electoral Area Services Committee receives the Open Burning report from the Director of Protective Services dated June 5, 2025 for information.

Respectfully submitted by: Mike Walroth, Director of Protective Services

Approved for Agenda: Sally Ginter, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment(s):

1. Fire-Prevention-and-Regulations-Consolidated-Bylaw-No.-1066
2. Smoke-Control-Consolidated-Bylaw-No.-773
3. Environmental Management Act - Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation
4. Burning in a High Smoke Sensitivity Zone - Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation Factsheet
