

AUGUST GRAZING SERIES

3 Prescribed Fire on Aspen Logging Regrowth, Aug 19th

By Heather Fossom



All photo credits: Heather F

On Aug 19th we visited a prescribed fire site in the Bear Mountain Community Pasture in an area that had been logged for aspen approx. 5 years before. The burn took place on April 30th under the guidance of Northern Fire WoRx and with volunteers from the Bear Mountain Grazing Association (BMGA), Arras Fire Hall and BC Wildfire Service.

- * Below ground temperature probes did not register an increase in temperature during the fire, despite the heat felt by volunteers.
- * Soil samples were taken 2 weeks & 6 months post burn to measure microbes and carbon. A control sample was taken in 2024 (pre-burn) and one more sample will be taken 1 year post burn.
- * Forage yield and quality samples were taken pre & post burn to measure any response from fire.
- * Due to drought conditions and fire bans the burn area was reduced.

For information and photos of this prescribed burn check out page 3 & 4 in our summer issue 103 (Coordinator update article).

Prescribed Fire Goal (Bear Mtn Community Pasture)
Reduce aspen regrowth in areas that have been logged to maintain access to the forage in those acres.

- * The regrowth is so dense about 5 years post logging that the cattle will no longer enter the logged areas.
- * As a result, aspen logging results in a long-term loss of forage when access to the logged acres is no longer possible.

Project Plan: evaluate how forage production/quality respond to prescribed fire & grazing practices, along with soil chemical/microbial properties and soil carbon.

Funders: the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC), AAFC Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership Projects Component & BC Hydro Peace Ag Fund.

Partners: [Northern Fire WoRx](#), [Shifting Mosaics Corp](#), AAFC, Jack Thiessen, Renee Ardill, Peace River Ranch (Peace RR) & Bear Mtn Community Pasture.

L: Hundreds of dead aspen; now cattle are able to access the forage.
R: Lots of lush native grass and some aspen seedlings/suckers

Prescribed Fire in Grazed Areas:

Goal is to **impact above ground woody material** and leave the soil & grass roots untouched.

- ⇒ Improves pasture productivity and
- ⇒ Allows cattle to access forage in logged aspen areas where seedling density inhibited access.

Other landscape benefits of Prescribed Fire:

- 1) reduced hazardous fuel buildup,
- 2) improved wildlife habitat, and
- 3) reduced wildfire risk.



Inside the grazing enclosure aspen regrowth appeared taller than outside the enclosure where cattle had access to browse seedlings.

"We have demonstrated this spring, and last, that we can do safe prescribed fire even in high risk times. Thank you to our project partners for helping make this happen." Sonja Leverkus

Project Duration: 3 years (2024, 2025 & 2026). Final reporting by March 2027.

4 Project Sites: Jack Thiessen's, Ardill Ranch, Peace RR, BM Community Pasture

Treatments: 1) unburned/ungrazed, 2) unburned/grazed, 3) burned/ungrazed, and 4) burned/grazed.