

**For immediate release
August 2, 2023**

BENDOR RANGE COMPLEX: Lillooet Fire Zone

LILLOOET, BC – The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) continues to work closely with BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) and all other agencies involved in the response to the Bendor Range Complex wildfires.

There are currently Evacuation Orders and Alerts in place, within the SLRD, in response to the Downton Lake wildfire (K71649) and the Casper Creek wildfire (K71535).

- **Evacuation Order**: Gun Lake and Lajoie Lake – SLRD Electoral Area A (Downton Lake wildfire)
- **Evacuation Order**: Seton Portage – SLRD Electoral Area B (Casper Creek wildfire)
- **Evacuation Alert**: Gun Creek and Tyaughton Lake areas – SLRD Electoral Area A (Downton Lake wildfire)
- **Evacuation Alert**: Connel Creek to Pemberton Portage Road – SLRD Electoral Areas B and C (Casper Creek wildfire)

In regard to the Downton Lake wildfire and its impact on the communities of Gun Lake and Lajoie Lake, and the surrounding area, the SLRD is aware of some structure loss in those areas, and is in the process of confirming those impacts.

At the advice of BCWS, the SLRD issued the Evacuation Order for Gun Lake and Lajoie Lake at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, August 1. Residents were notified to leave the area immediately, and to register for Emergency Services Support at the ESS Centre at the Lillooet Recreation Centre (930 Main Street, Lillooet) or in Whistler, at 4308 Main Street. At 9 p.m., on August 1, also on the advice of BCWS, an additional Evacuation Alert was issued for properties northeast of Gun Lake.

As of August 2, 2023:

- Yesterday, the Downton Lake wildfire showed significant growth to the north and east, growing towards Gun Lake. This growth was driven by shifting winds, slope and large amounts of continuous dry fuels. Structure protection and BCWS crews remained on site overnight, responding to the incident.
- The BCWS Incident Management Team managing the Bendor Complex is aware of some impacts to structures along the southwest side of Gun Lake overnight.
- The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District will be conducting rapid damage assessments as soon as it is safe to do so and will release that information when available.

- The Downton Lake wildfire is now estimated to be 1,795 hectares in size. There are over 50 personnel responding to the wildfire, including an Incident Management Team, ground personnel, and structure protection personnel. Helicopters will continue responding throughout the day, as well as heavy equipment constructing guard in priority containment areas.
- BCWS continues to work in conjunction with the Gun Lake Fire Bridge and BC Hydro within the community of Gun Lake. The safety of first responders and the public remains our collective top priority. This is a dynamic situation; more information will be shared once available.
- The SLRD is actively monitoring and supporting response and readiness efforts to all fire risk across the region.

“This is a highly volatile situation,” said SLRD Board Chair Jen Ford. “These fires remain active, and wildfire, in general, is unpredictable,” she added.

“We understand that this is a very trying time for all involved – the first responders and many partner agencies responding to these fires, and of course the residents who are directly affected. It is heartbreaking to know that structures have been lost, and that there is still so much uncertainty. It is never easy to leave your home, and we empathize with everyone affected,” Ford said.

“We are so grateful to everyone who is involved in resourcing the fight against these fires, and to our residents who are having to leave their properties, and prepare for the worst,” she added.

“If there is one thing we can stress, is that if you are on evacuation order, please follow the directions to leave immediately. We do not make these decisions lightly, and your safety is of utmost importance. And, if you are on evacuation alert, this is the time to prepare for the very likely possibility of having to evacuate.”

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About the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

Located in southwestern BC, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) is a local government federation consisting of four member municipalities (the District of Lillooet, the District of Squamish, the Village of Pemberton and the Resort Municipality of Whistler) and four unincorporated, rural electoral areas (A, B, C, and D). Headquartered in Pemberton, which is the approximate geographic centre of the region, the SLRD delivers a wide range of local, regional and sub-regional services to approximately 50,496 residents (2021 Census as certified by the Minister of Municipal Affairs).

The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District is found within the traditional territories of several First Nations, including the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), St’át’imc and Lil’wat. Small parts of the SLRD also overlap with the traditional territories of the Stó:lō, Tseil-Waututh, Nlaka’pamux, Tsilhqot’in, and Secwepemc Nations. While the SLRD does not provide direct services to the residents of the First Nations communities located within the region, the organization is committed to enhancing relations with the Indigenous communities and First Nations within whose territories the SLRD operates.

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