



April 28, 2023

Mayor Gerard Watts
Rural Municipality of North Shore

Dear Mayor Watts,

Thank you for reaching out to Parks Canada with your concerns regarding fire safety following post-tropical storm Fiona. We understand that the changes in the forested landscape are dramatic and are happy to share our approach to forest health and wildfire risk reduction.

When looking at wildfire risk, both fuel (plant material available for burning, such as: grasses, twigs, shrubs, trees, and coarse woody debris) and the likelihood of ignition need to be considered. We understand the viewpoint that removing large volumes of coarse woody debris from our forest ecosystem will reduce the risk of fire; however, it is important to remember that remaining large pieces of wood will provide shade, habitat for ground vegetation and in time, will increase soil moisture. Removing too much material will promote the growth of grasses and other fine fuels that will cure quickly in hot summer conditions and become a higher risk of a fire start.

Another consideration related to fire risk is the fire history and likelihood of a fire start on PEI. PEI is a lightning 'cold spot' relative to other locations in Canada and naturally occurring (lightning) fires on the landscape are rare. Since PEI National Park was established in 1937, there have been no reported lightning-caused fires. In addition, our maritime climate maintains adequate levels of relative humidity to keep the fire weather index at a manageable level – even throughout late-summer dry periods.

Human-caused fires inside PEI National Park are also rare. Since 2000, there have only been 3 small human-caused fires in the park. The leading source of human-caused fires in PEI National Park is lighting bonfires or BBQs in prohibited areas. Prevention of human-caused fires will continue to be a key component of Parks Canada's approach to wildfire risk reduction. Campgrounds, for example, require strict adherence to burning locations and times based on daily calculations of the fire weather index. It is common for burning to be restricted until risk is diminished.

In PEI National Park, Parks Canada actively manages fire risk by implementing prescriptions developed by FireSmart Canada (<http://firesmartcanada.ca>). By modifying the wildland fire interface in different priority zones in relation to infrastructure and values at risk, we can mitigate the risk of wildfire in the park. We recommend that anyone concerned about the impacts of potential wildfire to their properties also implement these prescriptions on their own property.

We understand the growing concern related to wildfire risk. We would be happy to meet with the Rural Municipality of North Shore to provide some information and education regarding fire risk. If interested, please reach out to Jennifer Stewart, External Relations Manager at: Jennifer.Stewart@pc.gc.ca to make arrangements.

Thank you again for your interest and for reaching out to Parks Canada.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tara McNally MacPhee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Sincerely,
Tara McNally MacPhee
A/Field Unit Superintendent
Parks Canada, PEI