Parks Canada Parcs Canada

Canada

National Park of Canada

Jasper

Annual Report

2024

Artist: Nikki Andrew, age 12

Honouring Morgan Kitchen

Morgan Kitchen, a 24-year-old man from Calgary, tragically died while battling the wildfire in Jasper National Park after he was struck by a falling tree on August 3, 2024.

Morgan was an Alberta Wildfire crew member based out of Rocky Mountain House who served in both the Canadian Armed Forces and British Royal Marines. He answered the call to Jasper along with hundreds of other first responders.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Morgan's family, and all those who knew and loved him. In addition to his much-loved character, his family describes him as "generous and hospitable and genuinely interested in and caring towards others – he lived a life that was about more than himself."

This loss is felt deeply by Morgan's family, friends, colleagues, and the firefighting community. He will always be remembered.

All of Parks Canada and the community of Jasper honour Morgan, and his life and memory.

Fireweed in the sunlight. Fireweed is a species that quickly regenerates after wildfires. Photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk.

Introduction

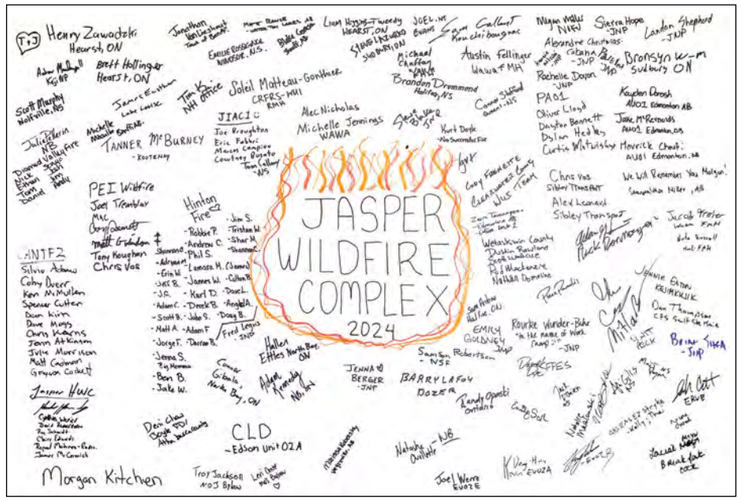
For Jasper National Park, 2024 was a year like no other. On July 22, wildfires started to the north and south of the Jasper townsite; these fires merged into what is now called the 2024 Jasper Wildfire. The wildfire swept through 33,000 hectares of the Athabasca Valley and resulted in the loss of approximately 30% of the structures within the town of Jasper, as well as significant losses of commercial properties and park infrastructure outside the townsite.

The support in the wake of the wildfire from across Canada and around the globe has been heartening. Both the park and the town of Jasper are cherished by many, and this appreciation was evident in the widespread empathy and assistance we have received.

Jasper National Park is an ever-changing landscape that continues to embody its essence of awe-inspiring beauty, ecological integrity and cultural significance. Today, the Rocky Mountains stand strong, the Athabasca River flows freely, wildlife continues to roam the landscape, and come spring, wildflowers will bloom. To Jasper's millions of past visitors, to those who have always dreamed of visiting, and to all Canadians who treasure the park as a natural wonder of our country, thank you for reaching out in our time of need. We look forward to welcoming you back in 2025.

This report follows the structure of the Jasper National Park of Canada Management Plan (2022) and reports on progress in six key strategies and two management areas:

1. Conserving natural and cultural heritage for future generations
2. True-to-place experiences
3. Strengthening Indigenous relations
4. Connect, collaborate and learn together
5. Managing development
6. Climate change and adaptation
   - Management Area: Community of Jasper
   - Management Area: Tonquin Valley



Some of the names of people from across agencies and fire departments who supported the firefighting efforts. Photo by Parks Canada / Blake Correia.

Thank you

Thank you to the thousands who came forward to support Jasper during this summer's wildfire. Crews from across Canada contributed to firefighting efforts, logistics, management, community support, and communications. We are grateful to those from communities near and far who offered their assistance through fundraising, volunteer hours, caring words, and acts of kindness. Each gesture made a difference.

The Caribou Conservation Breeding Centre from the air; the building survived the fire with minimal damage, but the forest around it was heavily impacted. Photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk.

Strategy 1: Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage for Future Generations

Southern mountain caribou recovery

Caribou in Jasper National Park were not directly affected by the wildfire because they occupy a high elevation habitat that the fire did not reach. Parks Canada is closely monitoring how habitat changes caused by the wildfire might affect caribou in the future. Landscape changes caused by wildfire create favourable habitats for species like deer, which are prey for predators like wolves and cougars. More deer can lead to more predators, which is a concern so close to caribou habitat.

At the time of the wildfire, construction on the Caribou Conservation Breeding Centre was nearing completion. The buildings and caribou handling system, including pens and gates, were mostly undamaged by the wildfire. However, almost all forested parts of the site intended for future caribou occupation were burned.

The contractor was able to return to the site in mid-August 2024 to repair minor damage and finish construction. Topsoil and plant seed were placed on disturbed areas and tree planters started vegetation restoration in pens that were least affected by the fire. Construction was delayed only a few weeks and Parks Canada took possession of the centre in December 2024.

Parks Canada is consulting with Indigenous partners and other experts on restoring the burned habitat so that the pens are safe and suitable for future caribou residents.

Caribou relations group

The Caribou Relations Group consists of a group of interested Indigenous partners and Parks Canada team members. This group guides the implementation of the conservation breeding program and how Indigenous partners will support caribou recovery in Jasper National Park. The name of this group reflects the importance of relationships in caribou recovery, including relationships between Indigenous partners and Parks Canada, between Indigenous groups, and between people and caribou.

Lichen is an important food source for caribou and will need to be provided to caribou living in the Conservation Breeding Centre. Indigenous partners are working with Parks Canada to create lichen collection programs in their communities for caribou at the centre. These programs can bring together community members of all ages, especially Elders and youth, to connect with the land and each other. In June 2024, twelve Indigenous partners and biologist Carmen Richter of Saulteau First Nation joined Jasper National Park staff to discuss techniques for sustainably collecting lichen. Three Indigenous partner Nations have contracts to collect and deliver lichen for the Caribou Conservation Breeding Centre, and Parks Canada has already started to receive lichen.

Photos left to right: Indigenous partners deliver lichen collected on their territories to be fed to caribou at the centre, photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk; Parks Canada staff at an alpine vegetation monitoring site, photo by Parks Canada.

Caribou monitoring

Jasper National Park's caribou monitoring program uses annual surveys, GPS collars, remote cameras, scat DNA analysis and modelling techniques to estimate numbers of caribou in the three populations: Tonquin, Brazeau and À La Pêche.

Parks Canada estimates there are about 45 Tonquin caribou, including approximately 10 reproductive females. The Tonquin population is showing a declining trend for 2023 and 2024 after several years of a stable-to-increasing trend. Population growth is expected to be slower in the coming years, due in part to a high number of male calves born in 2022 and recent cougar predation leading to lower survival rates for adult females.

As part of the conservation breeding program, the Parks Canada team has started a pilot study using remote cameras to specifically monitor the number of predators in the Tonquin caribou range. The potential for deer, elk and moose populations to increase after the wildfire means that staying on top of potential changes to predator populations is critical to protect the caribou herds.

Two males were observed during surveys in the Brazeau caribou range in 2024, and one female caribou was collared. The À La Pêche caribou population ranges between the northern portion of Jasper National Park and the foothills in Alberta. These partially migratory caribou are jointly managed and monitored by the Province of Alberta and Parks Canada. Based on data provided by the Government of Alberta, the entire population is likely over 200 caribou as of 2023 and an estimated 95 caribou remain in the park year-round.

Species at Risk

Bats

Acoustic monitoring as part of the North American Bat Monitoring Program continued in 2024 to track bat populations and their activity. The Parks Canada team also collected guano (bat poo) at a known maternity colony to test for the presence of the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome. The results came back negative, indicating that this disease is not yet present in Jasper. Monitoring this colony helps staff develop a better understanding of bats and will aid in early detection of white-nose syndrome.

The 2024 Jasper Wildfire destroyed one known maternity roost and two occupied bat boxes. By July, young bats can fly so it is likely that all bats were able to relocate during the wildfire.

Black swifts

Parks Canada monitors black swift populations and microclimate data at known nesting sites at Athabasca Falls and Maligne Canyon. This information informs management decisions to protect this species at risk. Unfortunately, nestlings were unable to fly in July when the fire burned through nesting sites, so it is likely the park's black swift population was negatively impacted by the wildfire.

Wolverines

Parks Canada has been monitoring wolverines using remote wildlife cameras since 2011 to help protect and recover this species at risk. Two wolverine-specific research studies were conducted in the south and west of the park between 2011 and 2020 using remote cameras and genetic sampling. Researchers used their data, combined with park wildlife camera data, to estimate wolverine density trends in Jasper National Park for each winter season from 2011 to 2024. Consistent with results from other nearby wolverine studies, Jasper National Park's wolverine population has experienced a concerning decline over the last 14 years. There are currently about 0.82-1.92 wolverines per 1000 km2, which translates to about 15 animals currently living in Jasper National Park.

Photos left to right: Parks Canada staff on their way to an alpine vegetation monitoring site, photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk; A grizzly bear rests in the post-wildfire landscape, photo by Parks Canada.

Whitebark pine

Whitebark pine is an endangered high elevation tree species that is vulnerable to an introduced disease called blister rust. Several rust-resistant trees have been identified, and in 2024, 8744 seedings from those trees were planted throughout the park. The 2024 Jasper Wildfire burned areas that were home to previously planted seedlings on Signal and Tekarra mountains. Parks Canada is assessing and restoring wildfire impacted sites.

Ecological integrity monitoring

In 2005, Parks Canada began monitoring 15 indicators of ecological integrity, which are reported every ten years in the "State of the Park" assessment. Examples of ecological integrity indicators include the Athabasca Glacier and populations of alpine plants, mammals, fish, and amphibians. This monitoring program has established a comprehensive baseline for the ecological integrity of Jasper National Park and will inform understanding and decision making related to impacts to habitats and wildlife from the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.

Aquatic Invasive Species

The Parks Canada Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) team engaged with over 1,500 visitors in 2024 and conducted watercraft decontamination at lakes, Whistlers Campground, and the Maligne Lake Road watercraft inspection site. To date, there have been no confirmed detections of high-risk AIS threats like whirling disease or invasive mussels in Jasper National Park. Detections of aquatic threats in neighboring national parks, for example Yoho and Kootenay, in 2023 underscore the importance of monitoring and proactive measures.

Wildlife after wildfire

Fire is part of the Rocky Mountain and boreal forest ecosystem, and many plant and animal species have evolved to live alongside fire.

Tracking data of the Sunwapta wolf pack shows that during the 2024 Jasper wildfire, the wolves fled north from the Wabasso area, climbed towards Marmot Basin, then circled back to the valley behind the fire and returned to the Wabasso area. GPS data (collected from a tracking collar) from a grizzly bear and her cubs shows they too moved out of the fire's path and took refuge along the Athabasca River.

Wildlife killed by the fire served as food for predators and scavengers; grizzly bears were seen feeding on deer and elk. Grasses and shrubby shoots sprouted quickly after the fire along roadsides and at the Jasper airfield, and ungulates like elk and deer were quickly feeding in those areas.

Strategy 2: True-to-Place Experiences

Visitor use management

"Visitor Use Management" (VUM) is a planning process used for national parks and other protected areas. It addresses issues such as congestion, crowding, human-wildlife conflict, and environmental impacts, helping protect the mountain ecosystems that make Jasper National Park special while providing high quality visitor experiences.

Public engagement on VUM kicked off this summer with booths at six project sites: Old Fort Point, Valley of the Five Lakes, Maligne Canyon, Pyramid and Patricia lakes, Mount Edith Cavell, and Lake Annette and Lake Edith. The project connected with approximately 1,500 people online and in person before the wildfire interrupted engagement.

Photos top to bottom:
Public engagement on the Visitor Use Management planning project at Mount Edith Cavell day use area, photo by Parks Canada / Emily Goldney; Parks Canada staff clear wildlife attracting fruit trees, photo by Parks Canada / Janelle Lane.

Trails

Jasper National Park features almost 1,100 km of official trails and over 80 backcountry campgrounds. This network offers day, overnight and multi-day adventures for a range of ages and abilities. The park continues to invest in replacing outdated wayfinding signs, and to restore, re-route, update and maintain trails and infrastructure.

During spring and summer 2024, the trail crew conducted trail maintenance and built bridges and stone staircases in a number of locations, including the Overlander Trail, Fryatt Trail, Wabasso Lake and Jacques Lake areas.

Thousands of hazard trees were cleared from popular campgrounds and parking lots throughout 2024, especially as part of the post-wildfire clean up. A portion of these trees were salvaged and milled into lumber to be used in bridge construction and new picnic tables.

In-person interpretation

In 2024, Jasper National Park launched the "Sharing the Stage" series, which was a weekly scheduled program featuring Indigenous partner presenters who shared cultural teachings at Whistler's Amphitheatre.

The Parks Canada interpretive team provided daily programming at the Whistler's Amphitheatre and Heritage Fire Hall with additional programming at Wabasso campfire circle and other visitor hubs throughout the park.

Inclusivity

Parks Canada continued work in Jasper National Park to welcome people of different abilities, identities, and backgrounds. All single stall privies were given generic toilet icon signage, to create gender neutral washrooms. Upgrades continued to existing washrooms to meet accessible and inclusivity standards.

The Indigenous Parks Pass program was expanded to increase the pass validity period and reach of the program. Beyond the Cultural Use Area, additional spaces were reserved for Indigenous partner camping experiences at Wapiti Campground.

The annual Jasper Pride Festival is a signature event in Jasper, hosted by the Jasper Pride Festival Society. In 2024, Parks Canada and our friendly mascot Parka led a guided walk and welcoming activities at Lake Annette during the festival.

Working with Friends of Jasper

Parks Canada continues to work with the Friends of Jasper National Park. Low snow and warmer temperatures throughout the 2023/2024 winter season meant less time flat-packing trails, but the Friends still contributed 168 hours throughout the season. The Friends also contributed an impressive 557 hours to trail work in the shortened summer season. Thank you, volunteers!

Strategy 2 *(continued)*

Visitation

Between January – July of 2024, visitation to Jasper National Park was on par with previous post-COVID-19 years. The Jasper wildfire changed that trajectory, and while the community and park did reopen, limited camping and other accommodation options for visitors impacted 2024's overall annual visitation.

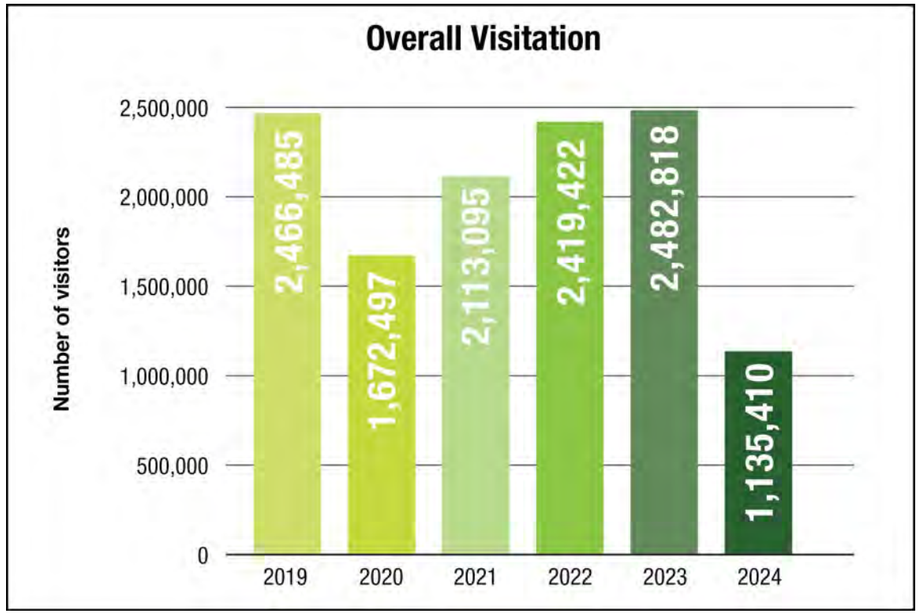
Staff presence

Parks Canada staff presence was increased along the Icefields Parkway to provide better service at campgrounds and day use areas in the south of the park. Parks Canada staff were deployed to popular day use areas across the park to provide onsite traffic and parking guidance and visitor engagement and education.

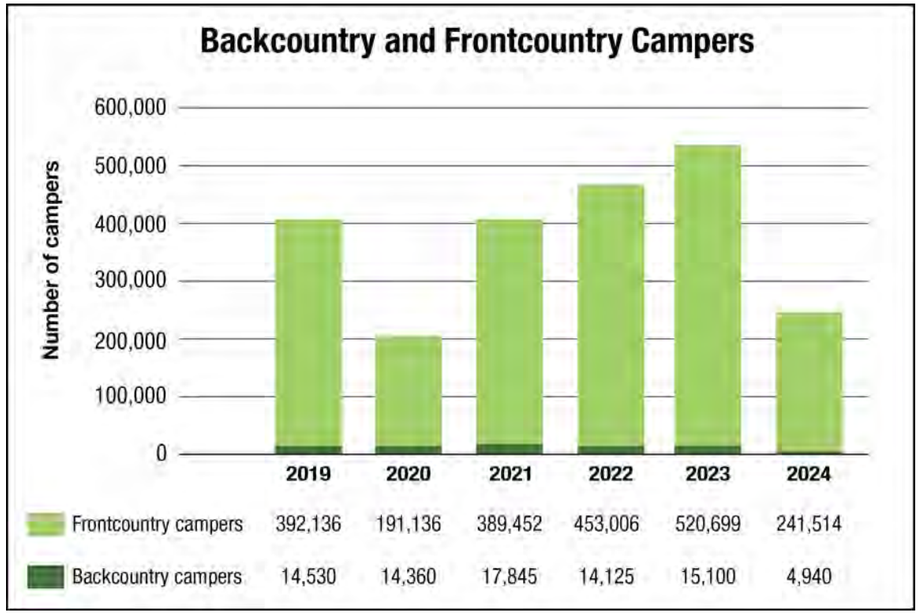
Visitor information program

Parks Canada conducted a Visitor Information Program survey throughout the park in June and July. This social science survey asked visitors about their experiences in Jasper and will inform future decision-making for Parks Canada. Thank you to all who participated.

Photos top to bottom: Two people enjoy the scenery at Pyramid Lake during the Jasper Pride Festival, photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk; A family rides their bikes around the campground, photo by Parks Canada / Liam Fenton; The trail next to Lake Annette winds through the burned forest, photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk.



Overall park visitation: Data for 2024 is based on an estimated post-COVID-19 commercial recovery, with an increase from the 2019 commercial numbers.



Backcountry and frontcountry campers: Total camper numbers are determined by multiplying the number of camping permits sold by 2.8 (the average number in a camping party).

Photos left to right: Indigenous partners share a laugh with Parks Canada staff, photo by Parks Canada / Angélique Tardivel; The Indigenous Exhibit pathways and central art installation, photo by Parks Canada.

Strategy 3: Strengthening Indigenous Relations

Parks Canada works with more than 20 Indigenous groups that comprise the Jasper Indigenous Forum. Indigenous partners and Parks Canada discuss park management and operational issues and collaborate on park projects.

Several in-person engagement sessions were held in 2024 including four pipe ceremonies, two meetings with over 12 Indigenous partner communities in attendance, and National Indigenous Peoples Day in collaboration with partners and community stakeholders which welcomed more than 400 participants.

Indigenous Exhibit

The exhibit is an opportunity for everyone to learn more about Indigenous connections to Jasper National Park and connect with the rich history and artistry of these Indigenous communities. Design and construction of the Indigenous Exhibit, located beside the Jasper National Park Visitor Information Centre, has been guided by the Indigenous Exhibit Working Group (IEWG), a subgroup of Jasper Indigenous Forum members. The working group has met more than 50 times since 2015.

In November 2024, the perimeter fencing around the Indigenous Exhibit was removed with support from members of the IEWG. Protective fencing remains around elements of the exhibit that are not yet complete. Construction work is expected to resume in Spring 2025. The wildfire delayed the fall 2024 exhibit Grand Opening event, but plans are underway for an opening celebration in the fall of 2025.

Connection with the Land

Throughout 2024, Indigenous partners continued to come to Jasper for healing, ceremony, and enjoyment. The Cultural Use Area and the Palisades Education Centre continue to be important sites for Indigenous partners to gather, camp, and host spiritual and community events. Fourteen groups made use of the Cultural Use Area in the short operational season before the fire. Although the Palisades Centre was badly damaged by the wildfire, discussions are in progress to tailor the rebuilding to meet the needs of partner organizations.

Connection, collaboration, and learning

Knowledge holders from Samson Cree led training with the Parks Canada interpretation team in preparation for the operational season. Parks Canada staff and community stakeholders also participated in learning opportunities offered by Indigenous partners.

The Parks Canada Indigenous Relations and Cultural Heritage team developed new training and curriculum with Indigenous partners to better serve the learning needs of other teams in the Jasper Field Unit.

Indigenous partners and the 2024 Jasper wildfire

Throughout the 2024 Jasper wildfire, Indigenous partners and Indigenous Relations and Cultural Heritage staff held weekly smudges, Elder drop-ins and a pipe ceremony to provide culturally appropriate supports to Indigenous firefighters, Parks Canada staff, and members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Non-Indigenous personnel were also welcomed to participate. These supports offered alternative and additional mental health supports to individuals at the operations centre.

Since then, Indigenous partners, including Elders, Knowledge Holders, and youth, have joined Parks Canada staff and worked together to perform on-site monitoring and archaeological investigations such as shovel testing and visual surveys to support recovery from the wildfire. This work limits risk to artifacts or historical objects that might have been revealed post-fire. Partnerships like this allow for the exchange of knowledge on history, language, and wildlife, and foster a deeper understanding of the land and its stories.

Photos left to right: A family sets up their tent in Whistlers Campground, photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk; Child playing at a Parks Canada Xplorers event, photo by Parks Canada / Olivia Robinson.

Strategy 4: Connect, Collaborate and Learn Together

Education and outreach

Jasper National Park boasts a knowledgeable outreach team who developed a series of programs for the park's campgrounds, Xplorer program, roving teams, at the historic Fire Hall, and theater programs. The team delivered 60 programs to educate and entertain visitors prior to the wildfire in July.

Getting the word out – social media

Parks Canada helps Canadians learn about shared heritage and experience the outdoors in a safe and enjoyable way by providing visitors with consistent and accurate information. Jasper National Park aligns its social media channels, newsletters, and website to communicate important information, including trail maintenance updates, trip planning tips, avalanche control information and important updates on events, such as the 2024 Jasper wildfire.

Throughout the 2024 Jasper wildfire the communications team was instrumental in sharing information on the emergency as it developed. Regular posts were a key line of trusted information for community members and visitors alike. As news of the wildfire spread, Jasper's social media communications were viewed by people the world over, as demonstrated by nearly 100,000 new follows across Facebook and X, and over 1.5 million visits to the park's website in the first month of the emergency.

Visitor Guide updates

The Jasper National Park visitor guide was updated to include key messaging about vehicle length restrictions, JasperNow and Jasper Transit. The JasperNow app was expanded to include daily campground occupancy for self-registration and reservable campsites; this daily update provided accurate numbers of available campsites to inform campers of their options to make planning easier.

Cover of the Jasper National Park Visitor Guide. Photo by Parks Canada

Strategy 5: Managing Development

Parks Canada manages development and redevelopment in Jasper National Park to ensure that projects are the right fit for the national park landscape. Projects which align with park policy undergo an impact assessment to determine whether they would pose significant adverse effects on the park environment, and to outline mitigations to reduce those effects.

In 2024, the Jasper Field Unit undertook impact assessment on over 150 new projects. The impact assessment team was also busy conducting environmental surveillance, including on wildfire debris removal, to ensure projects use environmental best practices to protect the park environment.

Following the 2024 Jasper wildfire, a number of redevelopment projects, both within and outside the townsite, have been advanced. Parks Canada worked with utility providers, in particular ATCO Electric, to restore power to outlying areas such as Marmot Basin Ski Resort and the Caribou Conservation Breeding Centre. This work ensured critical utility infrastructure could be restored to support the economic recovery of the park, including the town of Jasper.

Land use planning and housing

The 2024 Jasper Wildfire burned approximately 30% of the Jasper townsite. This loss has forever changed the fabric of Jasper. It has displaced residents and businesses; neighbourhoods with homes that have stood for generations are no longer there. The challenge of rebuilding is a monumental task that requires the community to work with many different organizations and levels of government.

Two important changes have occurred since the fire; Bill C-76 and the updating of the Town of Jasper Land Use Policy and Architectural Motif Guidelines.

In September 2024, Parliament unanimously passed Bill C-76 which will allow for the transfer of some development authorities from Parks Canada to the Municipality of Jasper at a future date.

The transfer of specific authorities for the management of day-to-day administration of land use planning and development could take place following the completion of a number of steps (e.g. establishment of a land use bylaw). Until that time, Parks Canada remains the land use planning and development authority and continues to accept and consider applications for development in the townsite of Jasper. Planners and development officers from Parks Canada and the Municipality of Jasper continue to work closely together to respond to questions and review permit applications.

In preparing for the rebuild, planners from Parks Canada and the Municipality of Jasper completed a review of Parks Canada's existing development policies for the Town of Jasper. After seeking feedback from the Municipality of Jasper's Mayor and Council, updated policies were approved by the Superintendent on October 28, 2024. Key changes included new requirements for fire-resilient construction and FireSmart principles, increasing housing options, and streamlining variance review and approvals.

The Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre published a comprehensive Rebuilding Guide for individuals and businesses who lost their buildings in the 2024 Jasper Wildfire that summarizes the changes to development policies and provides guidance to residents and business owners seeking to rebuild.

Parks Canada land use planning program

Since 2018, Parks Canada has been working on updating the national land use planning and permitting framework, which includes developing new regulations and fees.

Parks Canada is pleased to announce that the new *National Parks of Canada Land Use Planning Regulations* are now in force and effect. They apply to all national parks and national park reserves, and replace the following four older regulations under the *Canada National Parks Act*:

- *National Parks of Canada Building Regulations*
- *National Parks of Canada Cottages Regulations*
- *National Parks Signs Regulations*
- *Town of Jasper Zoning Regulations*

The new regulations do not impact what or where residents of Jasper can rebuild; rather they support ongoing efforts to streamline the rebuilding process. As part of the new regulations, fees for land use planning services were also updated. Please refer to the Parks Canada development website for information on how the new fees will be applied in Jasper.

Commercial floor area

Commercial floor area is the space within a building that is used for commercial purposes, like hotels, restaurants, or shops. It does not include staff housing or parking areas. The amount of commercial floor area that can be developed in Jasper is limited in legislation to 118, 222 m2 . All remaining commercial floor area available has been allocated. Commercial floor area may become available in the future through business change over and redevelopment. This limit was established in 2004 in response to concerns about excessive development in national parks. It also helps preserve land within the townsite for housing and other community needs.

Jasper townsite and surrounding landscape, looking south. Photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk.

Strategy 6: Climate Change and Adaptation

Forest restoration

Thousands of grasses and tree seedlings have been planted since the wildfire to advance post-fire restoration in Jasper National Park. Wolf willow, native grasses and forbs, and Douglas-fir transplants and seedlings were propagated and planted in wildfire affected areas in the fall of 2024. An additional 15,000 Douglas-fir seeds were collected in the park, and are being propagated in a nursery. These seedlings will be ready for planting in the spring and fall of 2025. Replanting is being prioritized for areas disturbed by fire guards and to protect sensitive riparian areas. Replanting is also being used in areas where slope stability is a concern.

Invasive plant species management

Jasper National Park uses an integrated approach to manage invasive plants in sensitive ecosystems throughout the park and townsite. Dalmatian toadflax, spotted knapweed and hawkweeds are the priorities, and over 600 kg of invasive plants were manually picked and destroyed in 2024.

Invasive species can spread readily after wildfire. Parks Canada staff in Jasper are learning from their colleagues in Waterton Lakes National Park, which saw a large wildfire in 2017, what measures are important to prevent invasive species spread and establishment in areas affected by fire.

Forest health initiatives

Parks Canada partnered with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to set 46 tent traps to monitor for the invasive spongy moth, and over 200 pheromone packs were installed in Douglas-fir stands to study other insects. These traps and pheromone packs help staff collect information on harmful insects in the forest. Understanding populations and distribution of these species can help protect forest ecosystems. Unfortunately, this year's traps were inconclusive due to the wildfire which destroyed many of them.

The 2024 Fire Season

Wildfire preparedness initiatives

On April 24, 2024, a public information session on wildfire preparedness was held in partnership with the Municipality of Jasper. The session provided updates on:

- FireSmart programs aimed at reducing wildfire risks through vegetation management and structural resilience.
- Completed and ongoing wildfire risk reduction projects such as:
  - mechanical thinning at Pyramid Bench and Patricia Lake
  - maintenance of the community fireguard
- Planned prescribed fires to reduce fuel loads and support ecosystem health.

In spring 2024, Parks Canada, the Municipality of Jasper, Alberta Emergency Management Agency, and other organizations conducted an emergency scenario tabletop exercise. This exercise was part of a joint training and risk reduction effort and is an annual part of inter-agency and government planning and preparation for joint responses to potential emergencies.

Photos left to right: Parks Canada staff member poses with Douglas Fir seedlings; Wildfire risk reduction work by Parks Canada staff; photos by Parks Canada.

Ongoing risk reduction projects

Wildfire risk reduction projects in 2024 included:

- Clearing and burning debris near Pine Bungalows and Patricia Lake
- Assessing potential fire control lines on Whistlers Mountain
- Continuing to expand fireguards west of the Jasper townsite and maintaining reduced vegetation areas near Pyramid Bench

These projects aim to slow wildfire spread, reduce fire intensity, and improve suppression effectiveness. Parks Canada is working towards the completion of a 2.5 – 3 km perimeter of treated vegetation surrounding the town site.

Parks Canada's wildfire risk reduction strategy includes:

- Enhancing fireguards and expanding treated areas near key locations
- Implementing prescribed fire programs to maintain defensible spaces
- Adapting ongoing wildfire risk reduction plans to reflect the impact of the 2024 Jasper wildfire on the landscape.

2024 wildfire activity

In 2024, four wildfires were extinguished within Jasper National Park.

- **Transfer Station Fire:** Started on April 15 due to rekindled debris. Controlled quickly with no reported injuries and extinguished May 1.
- **Utopia Wildfire:** Reported on July 18 near Utopia Pass. The fire, caused by lightning, burned on steep terrain and was extinguished August 13. It reached a maximum size of two hectares.
- **Needle Peak Wildfire:** Detected on July 19 in the Simon Creek drainage. This fire was held to less than 1 hectare and extinguished on July 21.
- **Bald Hills Wildfire:** Located near Maligne Lake, this fire was reported on July 19. It reached 0.2 hectares and was extinguished the next day.

2024 Jasper Wildfire profile

Timeline of the 2024 Jasper wildfire

July 22:

A fire was reported near the Jasper Transfer Station. Shortly after, three additional wildfires were reported approximately 22 km south of town near Kerkeslin Campground. Wind gusts of 30-45 km/hour merged the three wildfires south of town into one.

July 10:
Fire danger rating was set to Extreme following weeks of extreme hot and dry weather.

July 12:
A fire ban went into effect for the whole park.

July 22 – 23:
Over 20,000 people are evacuated safely from Jasper National Park, including the town of Jasper.

July 24 – 26:
755 of the town's structures, including all critical infrastructure, is protected and saved from destruction. Approximately 30% of the town's structures were lost. 255 Parks Canada infrastructure assets were destroyed or damaged during the wildfire and 132 of those were deemed total loss.

July 29:
Re-entry criteria is established.

July 31: Highway 16 is partially reopened.

August 3: Perimeter fencing, and hazardous tree removals are completed in town.

August 9: The northwest fire perimeter closest to town is 80% contained.

August 12:
The northwest fire perimeter is 99% contained or controlled. The re-entry for residents is announced.

August 14: 78% of the total fire perimeter is contained or controlled.

August 15: The northwest fire perimeter is 100% contained or controlled.

August 16:

Re-entry begins for residents and business owners.

August 17: The fire is classified as being held and the evacuation alert is lifted from the townsite.

August 19:
Highway 16 fully reopens.

August 22:
The Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre was established to ensure continued collaboration and progress as the community moves forward.

September 7:

The 2024 Jasper Wildfire is classified as under control. This means that the wildfire has received sufficient suppression action to ensure no further spread of the fire.

Incident

Re-entry

Recovery

Parks Canada firefighter extinguishes hotspots during the 2024 Jasper wildfire.
Photo by Parks Canada / M. Finlayson.

2024 Jasper Wildfire profile *(continued)*

Resources deployed

From the onset of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire, resources were swiftly deployed to protect the town and surrounding areas. Within the first hour, twenty-five local firefighters from Parks Canada and the Municipality of Jasper, supported by 4 helicopters and 8 fire engines, began initial suppression efforts.

Through an existing mutual aid agreement, Alberta Wildfire crews began arriving the night the wildfires started. In the two days following the evacuation alert, additional personnel and equipment were mobilized, including additional firefighters, helicopters, heavy equipment, structural protection equipment, and incident command personnel.

The wildfire response was coordinated under Unified Command between Parks Canada and the Municipality of Jasper. At the peak of the firefighting efforts, approximately 850 personnel from agencies and fire departments across Canada were on the ground, along with helicopters, air tankers, and specialized equipment. This large-scale mobilization was critical in slowing the wildfire's progression and safeguarding most of Jasper's structures.

Jasper Recover Coordination Centre

The Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre (JRCC), led by Parks Canada and the Municipality of Jasper, is focused on restoring services, supporting residents and rebuilding infrastructure to support recover in Jasper after the wildfire. Parks Canada is committed to listening, learning and adjusting the approach to ensure that support remains timely, relevant and effective at every stage of the recovery process.

Interim housing being delivered in February 2025.
Photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk.

Management Areas

Area management focuses on specific areas of national parks that have complex management challenges – including important natural and cultural values, high visitation, public interest, significant infrastructure and multiple visitor experience opportunities. The Jasper National Park Management Plan (2022) identified the Community of Jasper and the Tonquin Valley as requiring specific management objectives and targets to guide management in these areas.

Management Area: Community of Jasper

Community recovery

Since the fall of 2024, the Jasper Recover Coordination Centre (JRCC) has worked on a comprehensive recovery plan following the wildfire. Parks Canada reopened popular visitor areas soon after re-entry, while infrastructure assessments, hazardous tree removal, and essential repairs were prioritized. Efforts outside the townsite focused on reopening key transport routes, including Highway 16 and the Icefield Parkway (93N). Secondary roads, for example, Maligne Lake and Marmot roads underwent safety assessments before reopening. Recovery also included restoring visitor services, ensuring emergency response readiness and improving communications.

The JRCC continues to play a crucial role in coordinating recovery efforts through collaboration with all levels of government and agencies at the heart of recovery. Key efforts include providing interim housing, debris management, rebuilding the town, restoring park infrastructure and supporting the local economy and community. Parks Canada allocated 4.25 hectares of land for interim housing within the town, as well as land at Marmot Meadows adjacent to Whistlers Campground, and secured funding for the procurement of a range of interim housing units to go on this land. Wabasso Campground has also been offered as a space for temporary contractor camp rebuilding efforts. Parks Canada is continuing to work with the Municipality of Jasper to identify additional parcels of land within the townsite for interim and long-term housing.

Parks Canada is focused on streamlining development processes and improving communication with the community. Policy updates are facilitating rebuilding, with a focus on fire resilience and wildfire risk reduction. To accomplish this, Parks Canada has added more planning and development staff to meet the demand for permits, providing residents with ample opportunities to speak to development officers at every step of the process. Parks Canada issued permits for demolition and debris removal for all outlying commercial accommodation by September 19, 2024, and is working closely with the municipality to work through processes in town to complete debris removal in 2025.

Looking ahead, recovery efforts will prioritize:

- Interim Housing: Supporting displaced residents and businesses.
- Rebuilding: Streamlining permit processes and development reviews to make rebuilding easier.
- Tourism Recovery: Restoring key visitor areas, including Maligne Canyon and Valley of the Five Lakes.

Parks Canada staff person inspects infrastructure in Maligne Canyon post-2024 Jasper Wildfire. Photo by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk.

Management Areas *(continued)*

- Wildfire Risk Reduction: Implementing measures to reduce future wildfire threats.
- Infrastructure Repair: Rebuilding damaged structures throughout the park.

The overarching goal for 2025 is to restore Jasper's social and economic vitality while ensuring long-term resilience for the town and the National Park.

Fruit tree replacement program

In the spring of 2024, Parks Canada launched the Fruit Tree Replacement Program, providing free replacement trees for Jasper residents and businesses who removed non-native fruit trees from their leaseholds between 2019-2024. There was a high level of participation in the program and 279 trees were distributed to residents, businesses, schools, and the Municipality. The Fruit Tree Replacement Program will continue in 2025.

Management Area: Tonquin Valley

Monitoring continues for ecological integrity in the Tonquin Valley. The 2024 Jasper Wildfire did not reach the valley itself; however the ecological impacts of the fire on species like caribou and wolves are currently unknown. The Tonquin Valley will continue to be a key backcountry offer for Jasper visitors.

Funding summary

Parks Canada undertook extraordinary measures to manage, suppress and contain the 2024 Jasper wildfire, while managing the entire 2024 season as the most expensive wildfire season to date for Parks Canada. The 2024 Jasper wildfire alone was the second most expensive wildfire event in Canadian history, with insured damage estimated to be $1.23 billion.

The Government of Canada's announced over $160 million on February 6, 2025. This investment supports costs incurred responding to the 2024 Jasper wildfire and will support some of the recovery and rebuilding efforts for Jasper National Park. Recovery and rebuilding efforts will continue unabated for the next several years.

In the fiscal year 2024-2025, the Jasper Field Unit (which includes Fort St. James National Historic Site in British Columbia) operating budget was complicated by the 2024 Jasper wildfire response and recovery work and a detailed summary is not available.

Front cover photos

Top from left to right:
National Indigenous Peoples day; Black bear at Lac Beauvert after the 2024 Jasper Wildfire; ATCO Street Party, visitors with Parka and Jerry; photos by Parks Canada / Luuk Wijk.

Bottom:
Regrowth after the 2024 Jasper Wildfire; photo by Parks Canada / Kevin Gedling.