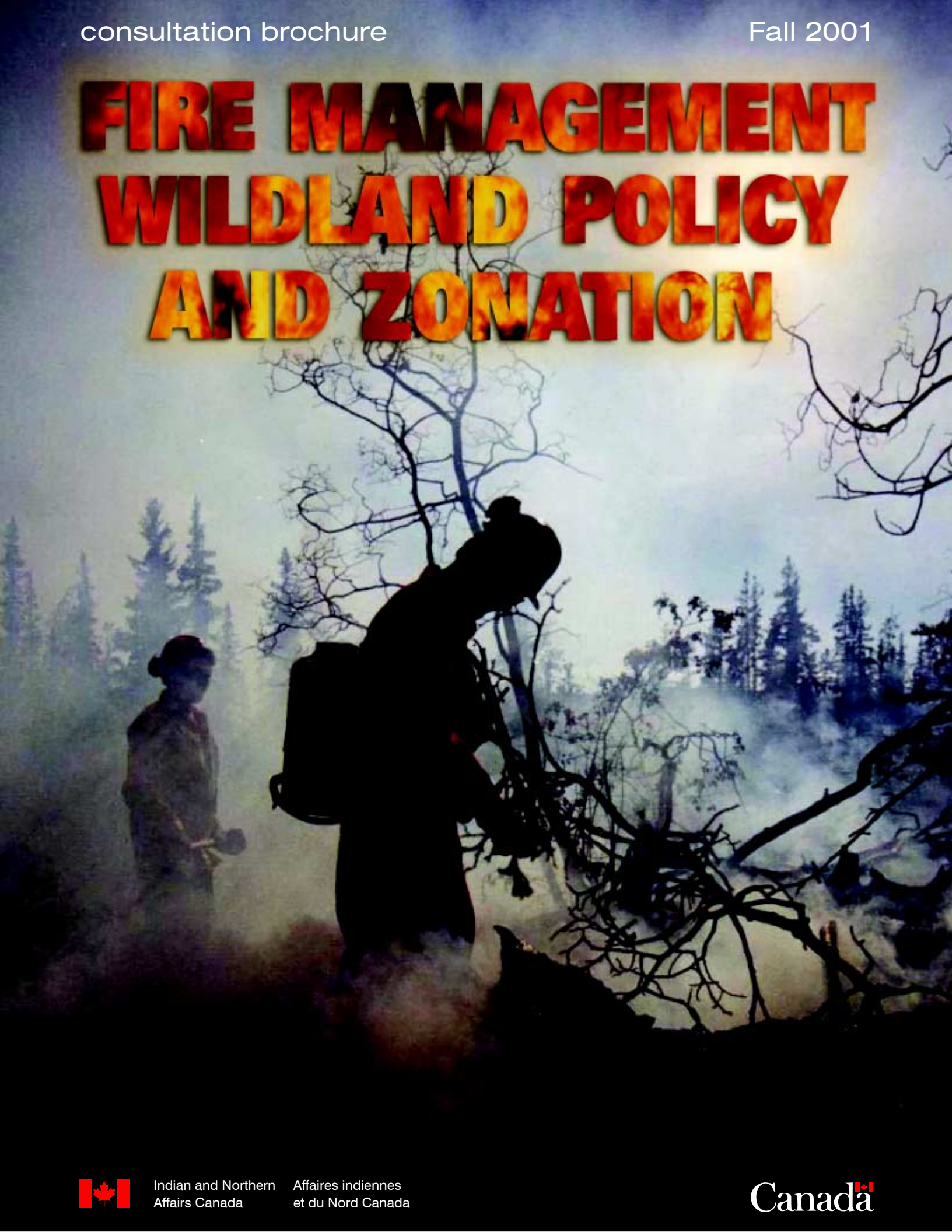


FIRE MANAGEMENT WILDLAND POLICY AND ZONATION



COMMITMENT TO RESPONSIBLE FIRE MANAGEMENT IN THE YUKON

Purpose of this brochure

This brochure provides an overview of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) Fire Management Program's current policy on where we fight wildfires. "Zonation" is the term we use to determine where wildfires are suppressed and where they are allowed to burn naturally.

We are seeking your input on the current system of zonation. We ask you to advise us of any changes or recommendations that would improve wildland fire management in the Yukon.

Fire Ecology

The Yukon's forested area covers 275,000 square kilometres of boreal forest. Fires have been an essential natural process in this forest for over 10,000 years.

With the population of the Yukon largely resident in communities, the majority of the forested area can be considered wildlands. Wildlands are dependent upon fire for the maintenance and renewal of the ecosystem.

Yukon's boreal forest is one of the most flammable forest ecosystems in North America,

increasing in flammability over time. The boreal forest has been defined by fire scientists as a natural forest ecosystem designed to burn. Five percent of the number of fires account for more than 95 percent of the total burned area.

Fires respond to a combination of the material able to burn (fuel), the lay of the land (topography) and weather. Weather is the most variable factor and the most difficult to predict. Hot, dry weather can rapidly increase the likelihood of wildfires and the intensity at which they burn.

In the wildlands of the Yukon, fire is a positive land and resource management tool. Many First Nation people have been using fire as a powerful instrument of land management for thousands of years. Wildland fire plays an integral role in the renewal and maintenance of forest and animal habitats. It helps to remove dead trees and accumulated materials such as dried leaves and twigs from the forest floor, opening up old forest stands and making way for new generations of trees. Many pioneer plant communities can exist only in recently burned forest areas. Some species of

trees, such as the lodgepole pine, depend on fire for their cones to open and free the seeds. Wildland fires can open up a dense forest, letting in sunlight, which encourages the growth of grasses and shrubs needed as forage for wild and domestic animals. The pattern of forest stands of various ages that forms as a result of wildland fire helps to support wildlife habitat for hunting and trapping. Wildfire also acts as a cleaning agent against insect infestation in Yukon forests. In addition, fire can displace wildlife for short periods of time, allowing shrub, bush and grass habitats to re-grow.

Fire Management

Fire control within the Yukon boreal forest is ecologically undesirable and economically unsustainable; therefore, DIAND has adopted the practice of fire management. Fire management recognizes fire as an essential and inevitable natural process. It involves activities that protect people, property and identified forest areas that are negatively affected by fire. Fire management includes fire suppression, fire use and fuel management to achieve forest and land management objectives, all conducted in a manner that considers environmental, social, and economic criteria.

When determining our fire management strategies we have to consider the threat or danger to public safety, followed by the risk to other values. For example, fires that pose a considerable threat to communities and human life would receive immediate action, while fires



Air tankers are used to build a retardant guard around a fire's perimeter to stop its spread.

burning in remote areas, which do not pose a foreseeable threat to people and other values, might receive a different strategy.

Consultation on fire management wildland policy and zonation

The DIAND Fire Management Program has committed to consultations of its Wildland Fire Management Policy and Zonation, and we invite your input in developing contemporary, made-in-Yukon fire management policies.

The current system of zonation has some shortcomings that need to be addressed. Emerging values, modern ecological principles, economic constraints and land claim agreements have prompted a review of the current policy. DIAND Fire Management wishes to establish an improved policy of zonation in the Yukon, one that is values-based, takes into consideration the unique needs of First Nation people, and is manageable within

allocated resources. A new system of zonation will be flexible and subject to periodic review. It will help the program to implement the most effective fire management response in order to protect people, property and other prioritized values.

Public meetings and information sessions have been held over the years, and various studies and reports have been produced aimed at identifying and assessing what values the public felt needed protection from wildfire. DIAND Fire Management has recorded your input to date

on the issue of zonation and fire management policy. We are now preparing to implement a fire zonation plan that fits the unique fire regime, economics and demographics of the Yukon. Your involvement in the current consultation process will help fire management staff develop a plan that is economically and ecologically sound, and which will ensure the safety of the public, protect communities and infrastructure, and foster the continued renewal of Yukon forests.

The goal of the consultation sessions is to develop a fire management policy that reflects the need to balance environmental stewardship; protect homes, infrastructure and communities; and, when possible, protect cultural and heritage sites from wildfire. A new fire management policy on zonation will be adopted based on shared responsibilities involving Yukoners who have a vested interest in the land. The system will be driven by identified and agreed-upon values, be compatible with ecosystem management principles and be dynamic and flexible to the changing values identified through the consultation process.



Fireweed is one of the first plant species to appear in a burned area after a fire.



Yukon fire crews worked hard to save this home during the Minto fire of 1995.



Consultation details: how you can become involved

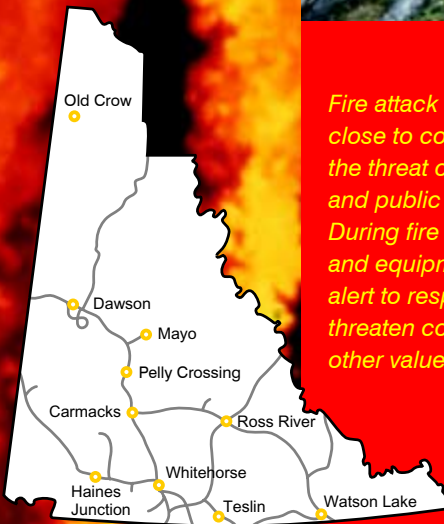
DIAND Fire Management staff will hold First Nation consultations and public information sessions throughout the Yukon. During these sessions, you will have an opportunity to ask questions and contribute towards the

development of an effective zonation plan for the territory. Dates and times of the public information sessions will be announced on the radio and in newspaper ads.

If you wish to provide feedback directly, you may fill out the tear-out feedback form enclosed with

this brochure and fax it to us at 867-667-4319, or you may send an e-mail to: ytfireconsultation@inac.gc.ca

For more information call 867-667-3312 or visit the DIAND web site: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/yt/fires_e.html



Fire attack bases are located close to communities where the threat of wildfire to homes and public safety is high. During fire season, crews and equipment are put on alert to respond to fires that threaten communities and other values.

● Fire attack base

Fire Detection

DIAND Fire Management has a variety of ways of detecting fires in the Yukon. Nine lookout towers are located throughout the territory near communities and are used to scan forest areas for smoke and fires. As well, patrol aircraft are regularly sent out to locate fires that may be burning in remote areas. The public also plays an important role in reporting wildfires. For example, in 1998 more than half of the wildfires in the Yukon were reported by the public. If you spot a fire, please report it to DIAND Fire Management by calling 1-888-798-FIRE (-3473).

FireSmart: Protecting Your Property

Most people in the Yukon live in forested areas, and the majority of fires occur in and around communities.

Protecting your home or property from the threat of fire is a shared responsibility. As a homeowner, you must assess your situation carefully and take all possible steps toward wildfire protection. Clear away debris and underbrush from around your home, keep your eavestroughs free of needles, and move your fire wood at least 10 metres from your house, preferably uphill. Thinning trees around your property is another way to minimize the chance of fire spread. To learn more about FireSmart programs and what you can do to protect your home or property from wildfire, contact your DIAND district office.