

Not all timber destroyed by 2017 forest fires should be salvaged, chief forester says

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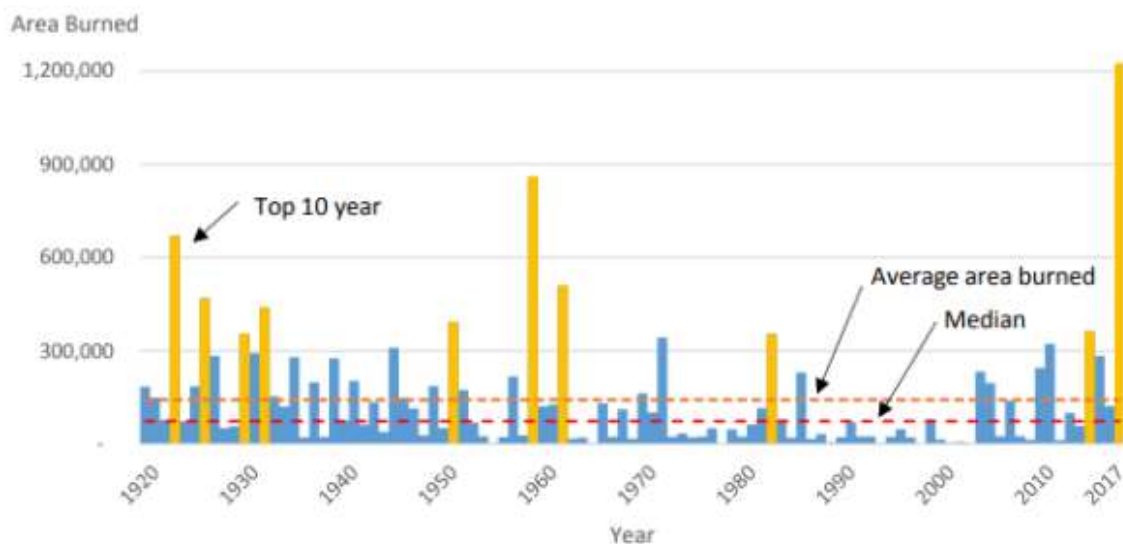
B.C.'s chief forester says she recognizes the economic desire to harvest wood damaged in 2017's record-setting wildfire, but warns the long-term health of ecosystems must trump short-term commercial gains.

Fire-damaged wood is only commercially viable for two to three years, and both local governments and private companies have been calling for a salvage plan after more than 1.2 million hectares of forest burned last year, most of it in the province's Cariboo region,

- **Burnt timber salvageable if harvested now, says B.C. forest company**
- **Williams Lake city councillor worries time running out to salvage B.C.'s wildfire-damaged timber**

Chief forester Diane Nicholls said the amount of timber burned or damaged is "substantially greater" than the annual allowable cut in many areas and that it is "unlikely" all of it can be salvage logged.

In a **26-page guide** released last week, Nicholls said it is important to recognize the role forests — even burned ones — play in supporting the long-term health of ecosystems and wildlife habitat.



Forty per cent of the total area affected by wildfires in B.C. the last century was the result of the 10 largest wildfire years, indicated by yellow bars. Damage from the 2017 wildfires was the largest on record. (Office of the Chief Forester Division)



"Previous experience indicates that post-fire salvage logging often has negative effects," she writes.

To that end, she recommends licenced harvesters come up with plans to replant and maintain forests affected by wildfires should salvage logging take place.

She also notes that in some cases, leaving burned wood may be the most beneficial action in the long-term.

Quesnel mayor wants plan to protect remaining forests

Quesnel Mayor Bob Simpson, whose region is one of the hardest hit by the forest fires, said he agrees with Nicholls' assessment.

"What the report says is logging can be a disturbance on top of a disturbance, and you can create more permanent ecological damage," by salvage logging, he said.

Simpson said his main priority is for the province to come up with a plan to prevent future forest fires.

"Where's the fuel management strategy and the plan to protect our communities and protect the forest that didn't burn this year?" he asked.

He also said he expects the forest industry to decline in the coming decade as forest fires and the effects of the mountain pine beetle continue to play out.

"Lots of planning needs to be done and we are, quite frankly, still too close to it to see the effects," he said.

Link: <http://www.cbc.ca>

