



Increasing Air Quality Issues

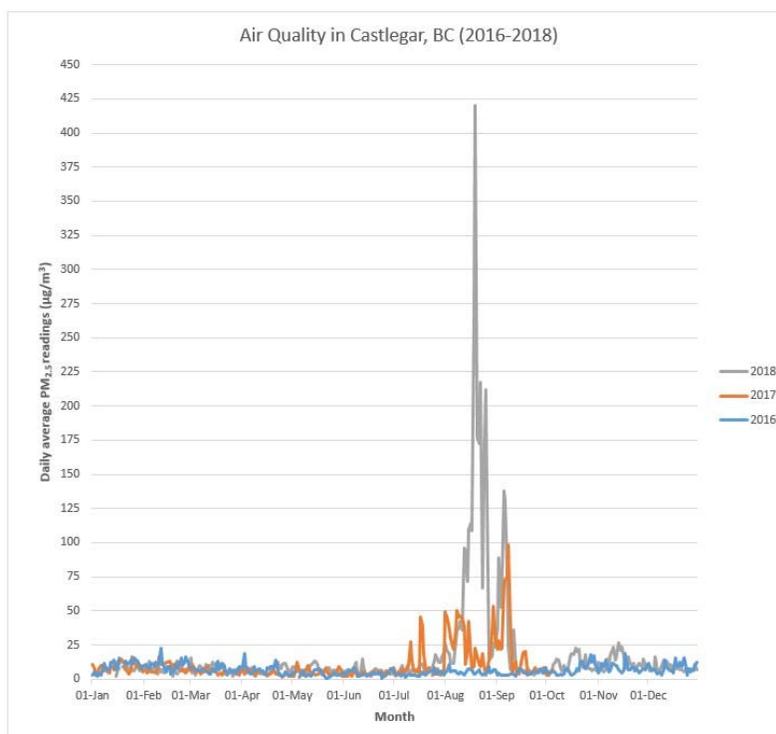
Although winter has just recently come to an end, the forest fire season has already started, with multiple grass fires causing air quality issues in certain areas of the province. To view all the active wildfires, see the BC Wildfire Service [interactive map](#). Forest fires and associated poor air quality are becoming an increasing concern for residents of the Basin-Boundary as well as for visitors to the area. August 2018 had significant air quality issues throughout the region causing related health problems and making it hard to enjoy summer outdoor activities.

Forest fires contribute fine particulate matter into the air. PM2.5 is particulate matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers, which is equivalent to 1/30 the width of a human hair. Monitoring PM2.5 is important as an indicator of air quality because the particles stay suspended in air longer and are small enough to enter the deepest part of the human lungs, causing respiratory issues that can contribute to chronic diseases (See [BC Lung Association State of Clean Air Report](#)).

The air quality issues in our region increased dramatically in 2018. The figure below shows the daily average PM2.5 readings from the air quality monitoring station in Castlegar's Zinio Park from 2016-2018. The 2018 maximum PM2.5 reading occurred on August 19, 2018, coming in at 420 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). This is significantly higher than what was experienced in previous years. The maximum reading in 2017 was 98 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 22 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2016. The 2018 yearly average for PM2.5 in Castlegar was 17 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (See [BC Air Data Archive](#)). This is double the provincially set, non-legally binding, threshold of 8 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (see [Provincial Air Quality Objectives](#)).

The importance of monitoring air quality and related health concerns will likely increase as forest fire duration and severity continues to intensify. [Air quality advisories](#) will be issued by the Province when air quality issues develop. Let's hope for a summer with acceptable air quality levels while preparing for potentially unhealthy conditions.

The *State of the Basin* is a region-wide check-up on life in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region. See our full *State of the Basin* report [here](#).



Forestry Innovation Enhancement Projects

Selkirk College's Applied Research & Innovation Centre (ARIC) is taking part in rapid innovation and technology adoption across the forest sector in rural British Columbia with \$2 million in funding over five years from the Natural Science and Engineering Council of Canada. This research program has been designed to advance the region's economy by building a regional forest tech ecosystem that is bigger and more vibrant than the sum of its parts. (See [Forestry Innovation Applied Research](#)).

Wolverine Research - Report a Sighting

Selkirk College's Doris Hausleitner is co-leading a project describing locations where wolverines reproduce. Wolverines are a species at risk, occur at low densities and are sensitive to disturbance during reproduction, so locating and protecting reproductive wolverine habitat will help protect the species. Public sightings of wolverines have been a critical aspect of this research, all of the reproductive sites followed up on this winter/spring have resulted from public input. For more information on this project and to report a wolverine sighting, see [Wolverine Watch](#).



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