

Culturally Significant Sites and Green Spaces(CSSGS) Guide

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Introduction

The FireSmart Culturally Significant Sites and Green Spaces Hazard Assessment Form is a qualitative process that is intended for assessing vulnerability of First Nations Culturally Significant Sites and Local Government Green Spaces.

This assessment may replace the need for Fuel Management Prescriptions on smaller sites and spaces that have high levels of human impact and are no longer being protected solely as natural spaces.

Fuel Management Prescription may be required due to a variety of circumstances. This assessment is not meant to replace any legal or regulatory requirements such as but not limited to those in the Forest and Range Practices Act, Forest Practices and Planning Regulation, Heritage Conservation Act, Water Act etc.

FireSmart Activities for Culturally Significant Sites and Green Spaces Definition

Implementing FireSmart activities in culturally significant sites and green spaces (CSSGS) involves managing vegetation and implementing fire-resistant landscaping practices to reduce wildfire risk and enhance site and space resilience.

FireSmart vegetation management focuses on intentionally removing or reducing flammable plants and vegetation, both natural and cultivated. This minimizes potential fuel sources, lowers wildfire intensity, and decreases overall risk in CSSGS from embers and flames.

FireSmart landscaping is a vital aspect in creating fire adaptive sites and spaces. It entails selecting fire-resistant plant species and implementing appropriate landscape design and maintenance techniques. The goal is to minimize fire risk and create spaces that act as barriers against fire spread while preserving the aesthetic, cultural and recreational qualities of CSSGS.

FireSmart activities in CSSGS aim to reduce the risk of wildfire, enhance the safety of residents and visitors, protect culturally significant sites, and maintain the ecological integrity of the natural environment.

Table 1. Examples of Culturally Significant Sites and Green Spaces

- **Culturally Significant Sites:** Locations of cultural importance to First Nations communities, preserving their heritage, traditions, and connection to the land. Includes but is not limited to
 - Culturally modified trees, traditional dwellings, burial sites, and ceremonial site
 - Some culturally significant sites may be protected under the Arch Branch - further requirements may need to be met.
 - Archaeological sites on both public and private land are protected under the [Heritage Conservation Act](#) and must not be altered without a permit
- **Parks:** Open areas with lawns, trees, and amenities for recreation, including playgrounds, sports fields, and picnic areas.
- **Gardens:** Spaces featuring a variety of plants and flowers, often with educational purposes
- **Cemeteries**
- **Naturalized spaces:** Undeveloped areas within urban settings.
- **Trails and Pathways:** Walking and biking routes connecting different parts of a city or town.
- **Waterfronts:** Areas along rivers, lakes, or coasts, offering recreational activities and scenic views.
 - Additional permissions and considerations may be required when working around lakes, wetlands, streams, coastlines, including but not limited to retention buffers, habitat requirements, species, etc.
- **Linear Parks and Greenways:** Green spaces along rivers, canals, or former railway lines.
- **Right-of-Ways and Boulevards:** Landscaped roadside areas with trees and vegetation.

Eligible and Ineligible Activities

FireSmart activities for culturally significant sites and green spaces involves community-scale FireSmart vegetation management aimed at reducing fire risk within specific areas, not removing the risk entirely. If removal of trees greater than 2 metres in height (the maximum pruning height) is required, or disturbance of sensitive areas is in question, please contact a qualified forest professional to determine if a Fuel Management Prescription is required - <https://www.fpbc.ca/public-interest/registrator-directory/>. For Fuel Management Projects, refer to Worksheet 2 on the [FireSmart Community Funding and Supports](#) page.

Preceding applying for Culturally Significant Sites and Green Spaces funding, a checklist has been created to determine if a culturally significant site or green space requires a Fuel Management Prescription. Refer to [Checklist for CRI requirement for a Fuel Management Prescription](#).

Table 2: Eligible Activities FireSmart Projects for Culturally Significant Sites and Green Spaces

Culturally Significant Site or Green Space (mitigated to the standard of the Extended Zone from the Home Ignition Zone Scorecard)		
1	Brushing of trees and shrubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove conifers that are no greater than 2 metres in height Ensure shrubs are spaced to break up fuel continuity Ensure surface fuels are mitigated by removing heavy accumulation of dead branches, logs, leaves or needles, and wood chips. Using walking paths as fuel breaks.
2	Pruning of trees and shrubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure conifer trees are pruned to 2m above ground or 1/3 of canopy, whichever is less. Ensure flammable shrubs and excessive build up is removed from tree drip line.
3	Plant selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure there is a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees present. Ensure flammable shrub species are replaced with fire resistant plants found in the FireSmart BC Landscaping guide. Prioritize native species to reduce maintenance and water use. Ensure deciduous vegetation is well maintained, remove excessive dead branches. Trim excessive grass growth.
4	Hardscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure landscaping timbers are properly mitigated, i.e. replace wooden ties with non-combustible material. Ensure bark mulch is replaced with non-combustible material, including walking paths and garden beds
5	Slope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure extra measures are taken when CSSGS has slope as a contributing risk factor Ensure horizontal and vertical fuels are broken up with spacing
Culturally Significant Site - with a precise focal point (Mitigated to the standard of the Home Ignition Zone Scorecard's Immediate Zone, Intermediate Zone, and Extended Zone)		
FireSmart Immediate Zone (0 to 1.5 metres)		
1.5 meters from furthest extent of focal point or specific value		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace combustible material with a non-combustible surface Remove or mitigate combustible debris, materials, fences, or vegetation

FireSmart Intermediate Zone (1.5 to 10 metres)	
Trees, shrubs, and surface fuels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove coniferous trees from this zone or mitigate mature conifers (limb to 2 metres and ensure 3 metre crown spacing where ecologically appropriate). • Promote deciduous trees that are more resistant to wildfires • Cut and maintain grass to less than 10 centimetres if necessary • Plant low-growing, well spaced, fire-resistant plants and shrubs. Avoid having any woody debris, including mulch • Ensure surface debris is kept to a minimum. Remove dead branches, excessive build up of pine needles, and heavy accumulation of grass
FireSmart Extended Zone (10 to 30 metres)	
Trees, shrubs and surface fuels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigate or remove coniferous trees or replace with deciduous tree species (crown spacing to 3 metres if ecologically appropriate) • Limb conifer tree branches within 2 metres of the ground • Reduce surface vegetation - long grass and flammable shrubs • Reduce accumulations of branches, logs and debris

Exclusions

FireSmart practices in CSSGS specifically excludes routine maintenance activities and non-FireSmart related landscaping. This means that regular tasks such as mowing lawns, trimming hedges, and general upkeep, that are already implemented in community maintenance, are not considered part of FireSmart initiatives. Instead, the focus is on targeted vegetation management and FireSmart landscaping to reduce fire risk.

Examples of activities excluded from FireSmart practices in CSSGS include:

- 1. Routine Lawn Maintenance:** Regular grass cutting, disposal of clippings, edging, and fertilization that are part of standard maintenance practices.
- 2. General Landscape Maintenance:** Maintenance tasks unrelated to FireSmart principles, such as pruning trees or shrubs for aesthetic and plant health purposes, planting decorative flowers, or installing non-fire-resistant garden features. Invasive species removal not related to FireSmart activities will not be considered.
- 3. Non-FireSmart Pathway Maintenance:** Routine cleaning, sweeping, or repairing of pathways and trails that do not involve vegetation management or wildfire risk reduction measures.

4. **Ornamental Plantings:** Planting non-fire-resistant or purely ornamental plants that do not contribute to FireSmart goals.
5. **Aesthetic Landscaping:** Landscape design and features primarily focused on aesthetics and visual appeal without considering fire resistance or vegetation management.

It is important to note that while FireSmart practices in CSSGS excludes these activities, they may still be necessary for general park maintenance and the overall appearance of the CSSGS. However, they should not be considered as part of the specific FireSmart initiatives aimed at reducing fire risk and enhancing the resilience of the green space to wildfires.

Qualified Professional Input

First Nations and Local Governments are responsible for consulting with qualified professionals based on the recommendations of the Culturally Significant Sites and Green spaces assessments. These assessments are completed by Wildfire Mitigation Specialists or a Local FireSmart Representative. The list of qualified professionals includes but is not limited to:

1. Local Fire Keeper or First Nations Knowledge Keeper
2. **Ecologist/Biologist:** Consider ecological impacts and biodiversity conservation.
3. **Forest Professional/Arborist:** Manages and removes trees, assess risks, and select fire-resistant species.
4. **Cultural Resource Specialist:** Preserve cultural values and traditional knowledge.
5. **Landscape Architect/Designer:** Develop FireSmart landscaping plans.
6. **Fire Department or BCWS:** Provide fire suppression expertise and coordination.
7. **Community Engagement Specialist:** Facilitate Aboriginal Rights Holder and relevant stakeholder involvement and communication.
8. **Project Manager/Coordinator:** Oversee and coordinate mitigation activities.
9. **Geo-technical Engineer:** Provide technical expertise for implementing FireSmart Community scale vegetation management on slopes.

Assessment

The assessment form is laid out to address specific characteristics of the CSSGS and identify mitigation measures, including:

- Specific measures for Culturally Significant Sites
- Brushing of trees and shrubs
- Pruning of trees and shrubs

- Plant Selection
- Hardscaping
- Slope

Depending on the features of the CSSGS, sections of the assessment may not be applicable.

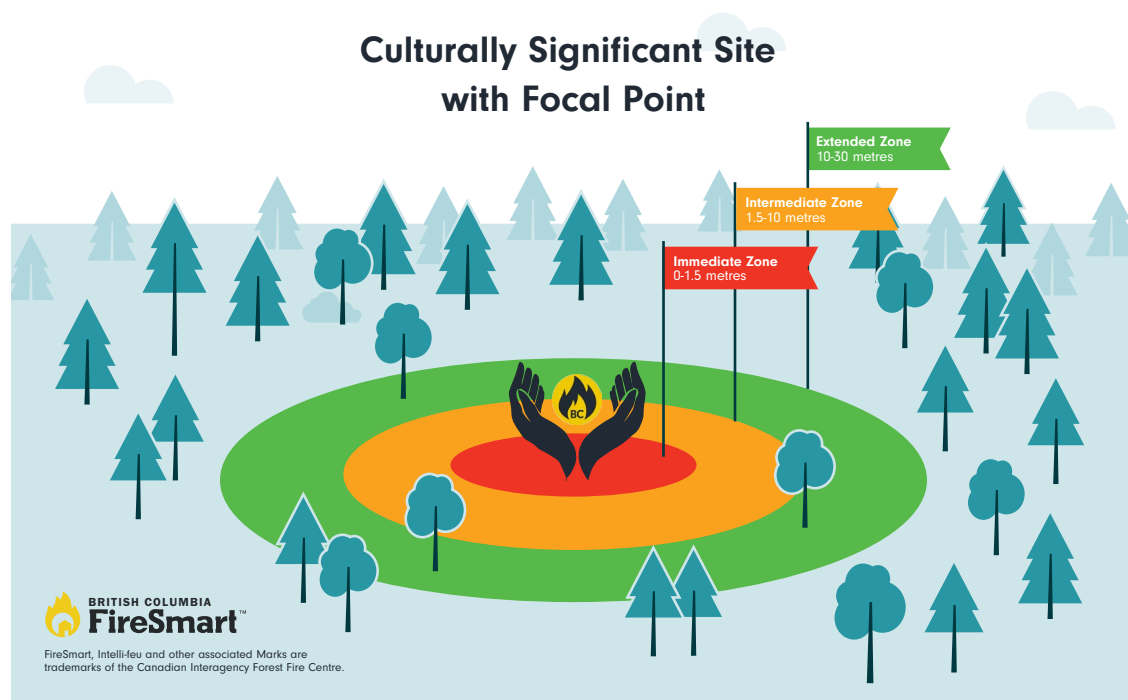
Please note that all CSSGS Assessments must be conducted by a Wildfire Mitigation Specialist (WMS). WMSs must have current training qualifications from FireSmart Canada.

Each question will have a comment box where the assessor should communicate:

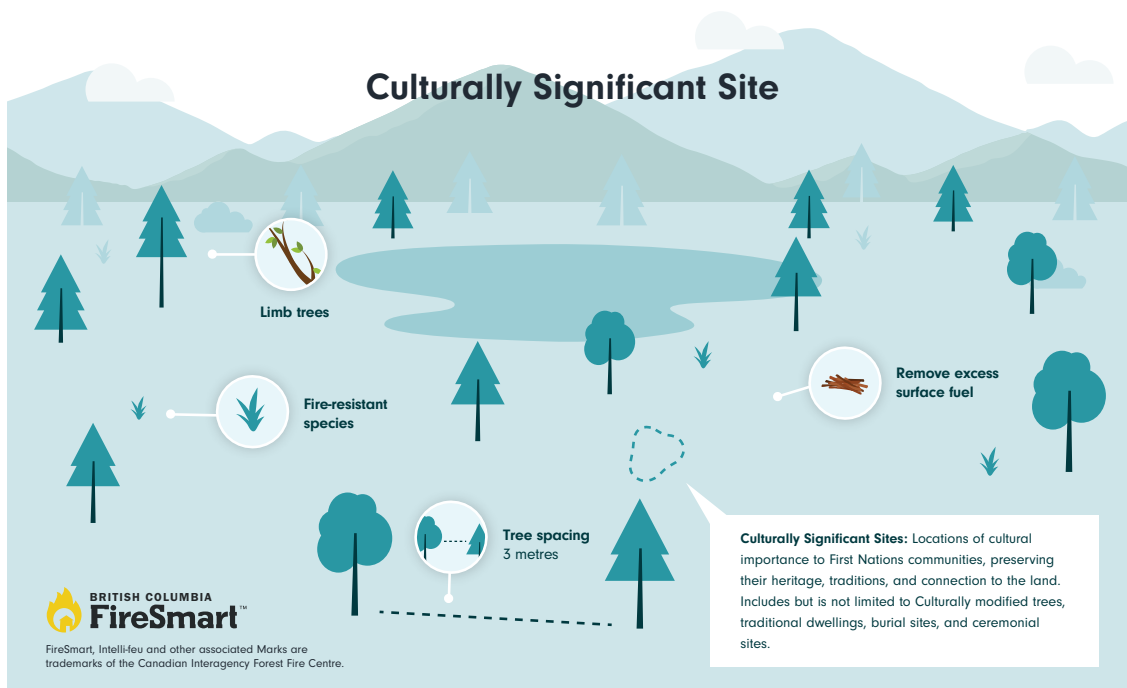
- What the hazard is
- Why it is a hazard
- What are the recommended mitigations actions

Note for assessors

- **Section 1, Culturally Significant Sites:** This section of the assessment should only be filled out when assessing a CSS that has a specific value that is combustible, i.e, a culturally modified tree, traditional dwelling, etc.



- **Section 2 to 6:** This section of the assessment includes assessment and mitigation measures similar to the extended zone concepts from the Home Ignition Zone - Extended Zone (10m-30m). The goal is to reduce overall fire behavior of the site or space.



1. Culturally Significant Sites

FireSmart principles recognize the importance of preserving and protecting culturally significant sites, including those of First Nations. When implementing FireSmart practices in areas with cultural significance, collaboration with local communities and Aboriginal rights holders is crucial. It involves respecting and integrating traditional ecological knowledge and practices while implementing vegetation management, FireSmart landscaping principles, and other FireSmart measures to minimize wildfire risk and protect cultural resources. If the Culturally Significant Site has a specific combustible value or focal point, use the Home Ignition Zone principles to mitigate the immediate, intermediate, and extended zone.

Specific Guidelines

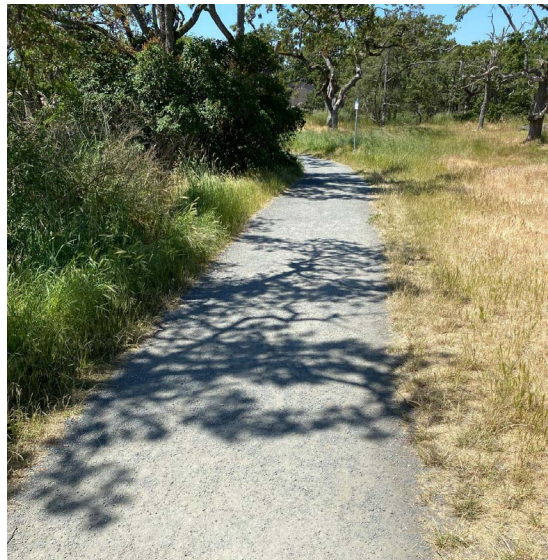
1. Evaluate the immediate zone (0-1.5m). Woody shrubs, trees or tree branches should be avoided in this zone, any that are present should be properly mitigated.
2. Evaluate the intermediate zone (1.5-10m). Plant a low density of fire-resistant plants and shrubs. Avoid having any woody debris, including mulch.
3. Evaluate the extended zone (10-30m). Thin and prune coniferous trees to reduce hazard in this area

2. Brushing of Trees and Shrubs

Brushing refers to the intentional creation of adequate space between vegetation to reduce the potential for fire spread. In FireSmart principles, maintaining proper fuel spacing involves managing vegetation density. This can include brushing trees and shrubs, pruning lower branches, and ensuring adequate separation between vegetation and flammable objects. Tree removal above 2 metres in height may require a fuel management prescription or a qualified professional to assess the value of the treatment.



Proper spacing



**Implementation of pathways to
break up fuel continuity**

Specific Guidelines

1. Remove smaller coniferous trees (no greater than 2 metre height) and mitigate larger coniferous trees by pruning lower branches.
2. Create fuel breaks to interrupt vegetation continuity.
3. Use clumping for fuel spacing to create a break up of horizontal fuel continuity.

3. Pruning of Trees and Shrubs

Ladder fuels are vegetation elements that allow fire to climb from ground-level to higher vegetation, increasing the intensity and spread of wildfires. FireSmart principles emphasize the removal or reduction of ladder fuels to prevent fire from moving vertically through the vegetation. This involves identifying and pruning lower branches and shrubs that connect ground-level fuels to the tree canopy.



Ladder fuels pruned up to 2m



Ladder fuels pruned up to 2m



Excess ladder fuels



Excess shrubs acting as ladder fuel

Specific Guidelines

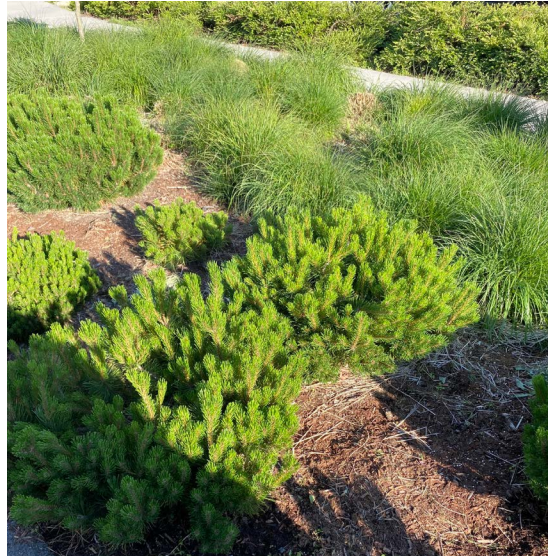
1. Identify and remove lower branches, shrubs, or ladder fuels that connect ground-level fuels to the tree canopy.
2. Prune lower branches of trees up to a height of 6-10 feet (2 meters) above the ground.

4. Plant Selection

FireSmart principles advocate for identifying and addressing flammable plant species within a given area. This involves assessing the presence of highly flammable vegetation and considering the potential fire risk they pose. FireSmart encourages the removal, reduction, or replacement of such species with fire-resistant alternatives to minimize the risk of ignition and fire spread.



Invasive species such as Scotch Broom are highly flammable



Coniferous ornamentals should be replaced with plants from the FireSmart Landscaping Guide

Specific Guidelines

1. Identify highly flammable plant species in the area and assess their risk to CSSGS.
2. Prioritize the removal or reduction of highly flammable plant species that pose a significant fire risk.
3. Replace flammable plant species with fire-resistant alternatives whenever possible.
4. Consult local fire-resistant plant lists or nurseries for suitable fire-resistant species.
5. Consider factors such as moisture content, flammability, and fuel volume when selecting plant species.
6. Create a landscape design that incorporates a variety of fire-resistant plants to enhance the overall resilience of the CSSGS.

5. Hardscaping

Mulch and garden bed materials can pose a fire risk if they are flammable and located near structures. FireSmart principles recommend using non-combustible or fire-resistant mulch materials, such as rock, gravel, and ensuring proper clearance between mulch and flammable objects. This helps reduce the risk of embers igniting mulch beds and potentially spreading fire.



Combustible mulch on pathway



Non-combustible gravel on pathway

Specific Guidelines

1. Replace combustible mulch with non-combustible material.
2. Replace combustible landscaping ties with non-combustible material.

6. Slope

Slope plays a significant role in wildfire behavior. Steeper slopes can contribute to the rapid spread of fires. FireSmart principles emphasize managing vegetation on slopes to reduce fire intensity and slow fire spread. This can involve thinning vegetation or creating small scale fuel breaks to mitigate the risk of extreme fire behavior on hills.



Implement vegetation spacing and use strategies such as non-combustible pathways to break up fuel pathways on slope in CSSGS

Specific Guidelines

1. Thin vegetation on steep slopes to reduce fuel density and limit the continuity of vegetation.
2. Create fuel breaks along the contour of the slope to break up the continuity of fuels and slow fire spread.
3. Consult with local fire departments or BCWS to ensure slope management practices align with local regulations and recommendations.

FAQ's

Culturally Significant Sites often contain sensitive information, do we need to report location, photos, description to access funding?
No, First Nations can withhold any information they deem necessary. Mitigation actions and cost will be necessary for reporting to ensure accurate funding. Although, site alteration permit may be required if working in Archeological Sites.
Are Culturally Significant Sites that are located off IR but in traditional territory eligible for funding?
Yes, they are eligible for funding. As a reminder, please work with the appropriate authorities/ land management if sites are located in Traditional Territory but intersect with crown land, etc.
Are Heritage Sites (non-First Nations) considered eligible?
No, however, cemeteries are considered green spaces and are eligible if they are located within local government jurisdiction.
Are Green Spaces that are outside of Municipal boundaries eligible?
Yes, the same process as the Critical Infrastructure Assessment applies here. The green space must be in the area that the applicant represents. This does not include private or crown land.
What are the reporting requirements?
Any CSSGS projects would be reported on the final report form and the post-mitigation assessment would need to be submitted (same as CI/CA projects are funded now)
What does CRI/UBCM need throughout the life cycle of the assessment and mitigation?
UBCM doesn't have any mid-stream reporting requirements unless an applicant requests an amendment, extension or progress payment. Follow reporting guidelines found in the CRI Program and Application Guide
What is the timeline for the project?
All projects are approved for 2 years
Funding maximum?
Funding maximum is \$25,000 per year.
Where will this live in the application guide?
Worksheet 1 with an applicable appendix.