

Boosting the restoration of fire in Canada's national parks with the Conservation and Restoration Program

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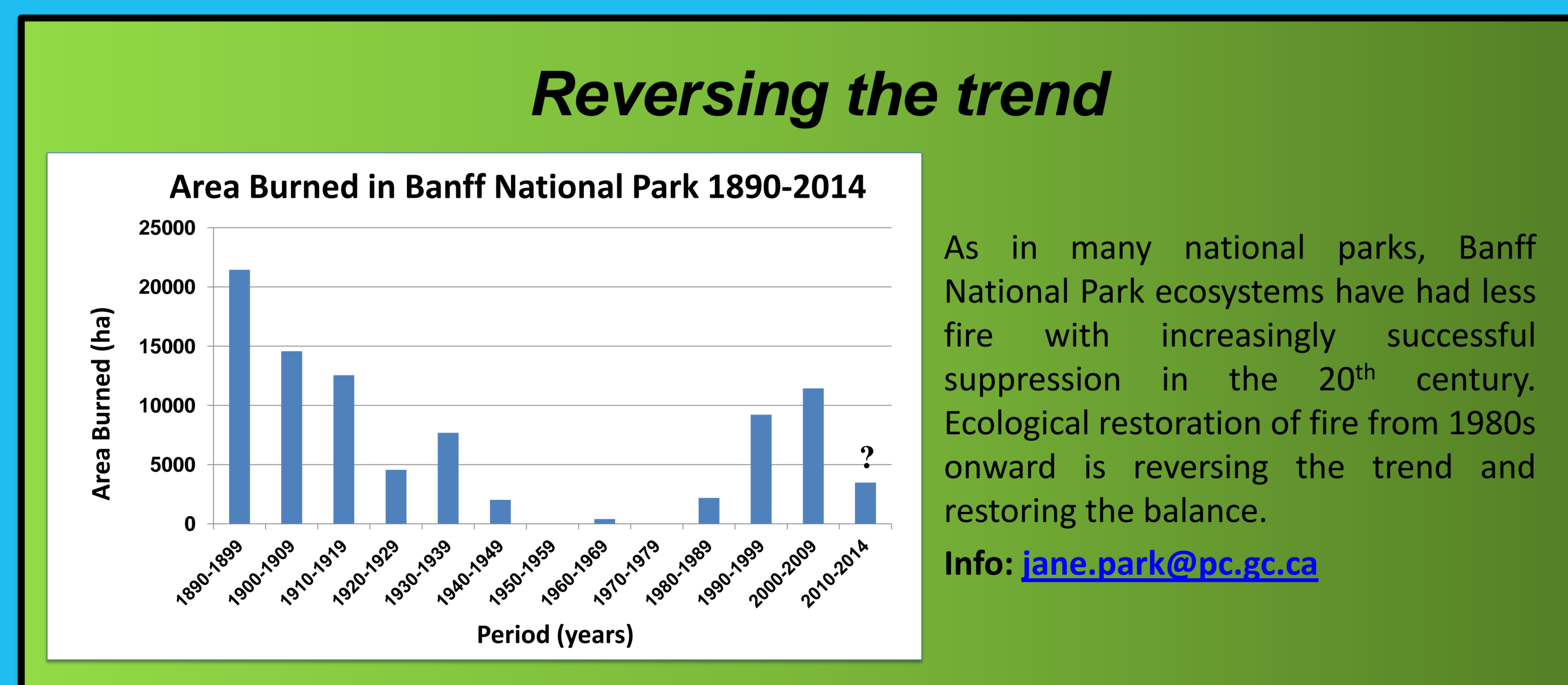
The Conservation and Restoration Program

The Conservation and Restoration (CoRe) Program (2014-2019) has been launched at Parks Canada Agency (PCA) and will provide the resources required to achieve a significant boost in restoring fire in national parks. The CoRe Program is part of the National Conservation Plan, a Government of Canada initiative that supports the restoration of degraded ecosystems. From landscape-level ecosystem restoration to the local maintenance of fire-dependent species, several projects will be conducted, providing numerous research opportunities.



Ecological Restoration

PCA has been restoring fire in national parks ecosystems since the beginning of 1980s. Over the years, more than 300 prescribed fires have been conducted over approximately 85,000 hectares! In the next 5 years, the goal is to step up and conduct some 60 prescribed fires in as many as 17 national parks. Three regions stand out in terms of the restoration focus. For each region, a national park program is highlighted.



Restoring fire in the Rocky Mountains

Fire needs to be maintained to ensure ecological integrity and wildlife diversity. Through the use of prescribed fires and management of wildfires, ecosystems in Kootenay National Park are back on track with regards to the ecological effects of fire and forest age structure. In the last 2 decades, some 23,000 hectares have burned, offsetting previous decades with full suppression and low area burned levels. The CoRe Program allows park staff to continue to restore fire and address the decline of whitebark and limber pine, two fire-dependent species. Info: jed.cochrane@pc.gc.ca

Restoring fire in the Prairies

The grasslands of Canada have evolved with frequent fire. Landuse and forest encroachment due to fire suppression have greatly reduced areas covered by native grasses. Riding Mountain National Park staff are addressing the issue by conducting prescribed fires. This restoration halted the loss of grasslands in the park in the last 20 years. With CoRe program funding and an objective of 10,000 hectares in area burned over the next 5 years, not only will grassland ecosystems continue to be maintained but a net gain of 1000 hectares is expected. Info: stephen.cornelsen@pc.gc.ca



Restoring fire in the East

The focus of the restoration program in eastern national parks is the maintenance of fire-adapted or fire-dependent species. Pitch pine is one of these species for which surveys have shown a significant decline in Canada. With approximately a fifth of the Canadian population in Thousand Islands National Park, ecological integrity is at stake. Experimental prescribed fires and associated research have confirmed that fire is an excellent tool to regenerate the species. Ongoing restoration efforts and funding through the CoRe program will ensure that the species remains a component of ecosystems in the future. Info: katie.ellsworth@pc.gc.ca



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Ecological Restoration Program : www.pc.gc.ca/eng/progs/np-pn/re-er/index.aspx
 Fire Management Program : www.pc.gc.ca/eng/progs/np-pn/eco/eco5.aspx