

Keji fire part of on-going research project

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A prescribed burn at the Kejimikujik national park on April 13 was part of an on-going research project that will involve four more burns over the next five years.

Parks Canada fire specialists brought in from Newfoundland and Quebec were joined by their provincial counterparts in conducting the controlled blaze. Two helicopters were also on site.

"We had 25 to 30 personnel on the fire," said Ian Morrison, Parks Canada's chief fire officer, who is stationed in Kejimikujik.

The burn, which took three hours, was conducted in maturing Acadian forest growth in the eastern part of the park just east of Big Dam Lake and involved two to three hectares of land, said Morrison.

Conditions were near perfect for the blaze, said Morrison. "We had no escapes, no close calls," he said. "The fire behaved as expected and was kept

in the designated area with no problems."

Morrison said the burn is part of a much larger on-going research project that involves multiple agencies and interest groups, including the Mersey Tobiotic Research Institute the provincial Department of Natural Resources as well as private landowners.

The intent of the project to look at ways to enhance forest regeneration within the Acadian forest, said Morrison.

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The research project also involves looking at soil chemistry, studying the impact browsing deer and rabbits have on forest growth, examining the effect that opening up the forest canopy to provide more light has new growth, and how forestry management techniques might impact bird species.

Morrison said the research project is being conducted both inside and outside the park. Where Parks Canada has a policy that permits prescribed burns, it only made sense to conduct the burn in the park, he said.

Research data was collected in the area before the burn and will continue to be collected as part of the project.

"I'm confident we met the objective we wanted to meet with this fire," said Morrison, adding if everything goes well, "We hope to conduct four more prescribed burns over the next five years."

Morrison said if anyone is interested in learning more about the project or in visiting the site they can contact the park.