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Fire in the Willmore

By Vivian Pharis

Wet weather conditions into the fall kept the promised 11,000 ha prescribed burn in Meadowland Creek from happening this year (see *WLA*, August 2005). The fire is primarily a means of pine beetle control, but will also enhance wildlife habitat and hopefully contribute to the natural regime that used to include fire. SRD Edson fire officer Kevin Quintillio has assured AWA that the Meadowland fire is only on hold until next fall and dryer conditions.

AWA is also to be invited to participate in a fire plan for the Willmore, to be initiated in the new year. The objective so far is to do some strategic prescribed burns on the periphery of the park in order to make a buffer. Inside the park, wild fires may then be allowed to do their natural thing. Some prescribed burning of willow and young conifer-choked valleys will also be considered for within the park's boundaries.

AWA has written to government through the years arguing for this sort of fire application in the Willmore to return lost wildlife habitat. Traditionally the excellent habitat of the Willmore depended on cyclical burning, but fire has been suppressed, even here, for the past 50 or more years.

