Woods restrictions – August 5, 2025

Am I allowed to [fill in the blank activity not mentioned below]?

Our overall message is stay out of the woods and no open fires anywhere. Nobody wants a repeat of the devastation we experienced in 2023. We are asking all Nova Scotians to co-operate and be sensible in applying these rules to help keep our people and our communities safe. Don't look for loopholes. If you're not sure, just don't do it – that is the safest approach.

Why are you restricting travel and activities in the woods? When will they be lifted?

Conditions continue to be extremely dry. Until we get a significant amount of rain, we're at an elevated risk of wildfire. Most wildfires are caused by human activity, so to reduce the risk, we're keeping people out of the woods until conditions improve. The restrictions on travel and activities in the woods were put in place August 5 and will remain in place until October 15 – the end of wildfire season – or until conditions improve.

How much rain do we need before you can lift these restrictions?

We are grateful for any rain that we get, but it will take more than a couple of days of rain to change the dry conditions. We can't lift the burn ban or woods restrictions until conditions have improved enough to lower the wildfire risk. We are monitoring conditions closely and with the best interests of Nova Scotians in mind.

What is the fine for violating the wood restrictions? How many of these fines have you given this season…how many while the woods restrictions are in place?

The fine for violating the restrictions on travel and activities in the woods is $25,000.

[Get update from Orlando each time we are asked for latest number of fines.]

How do you define travel and activities in the woods?

Hiking, camping, fishing and the use of vehicles in the woods are not permitted. People can still access beaches and parks, but trail systems are off limits. Camping is only allowed in campgrounds.

The restrictions apply to provincial Crown and private land. Private landowners are free to use their own properties but cannot host others to use wooded areas of their properties.

Forestry, mining and any commercial activity on provincial Crown lands are also restricted. People who conduct this kind of activity can apply for a permit at their local Department of Natural Resources office.

There are no wildfires near me. Do the restrictions still apply to me?

The restrictions apply to everyone. They are in effect across the entire province. Wildfires can happen anywhere.

My primary residence is in a heavily wooded area, can I still access my home?

As a private landowner, you can use your own property. We strongly discourage using wooded areas of your property, but it is allowed. Use your best judgement. However, you cannot host others to use the wooded areas of your property.

Can I go to a campground? Can I bring group of people to community campsites?

Camping is only allowed in actual campgrounds – such as campground businesses and provincial parks. You can ask the federal government about their rules for national parks.

Can I go to a cottage or trailer in a wooded area?

We strongly discourage going to a cottage or trailer in a wooded area, but it is allowed. Use your best judgement.

Can I cross woods on Crown land to get to my cottage?

We strongly discourage going to a cottage or trailer in a wooded area, but it is allowed and you can cross Crown land to get to your private property if you need to. Use your best judgement.

I have a Crown land lease (with or without cottage/camp on it). Can I go to there?

You cannot go to your Crown land lease until the restrictions are lifted.

Can I go through a wooded area to reach a beach?

People can still go to beaches. It's fine to use a relatively short trail to reach the beach – like from the parking area to the beach. Use your best judgement. You cannot go on a hike through a wooded area that eventually leads to a beach, unless you're on land that you own or occupy/rent – and we still discourage that.

Can I hike through woods?

You cannot hike through the woods unless it's on your land (ie you own or occupy/rent the land) – and we discourage that. If you do go hiking on your land, you can't bring any visitors or guests.

How do I know which trails I can and cannot use? Why aren't there signs on trails that are closed?

It's impossible to put signs on all the trails around the province. You cannot use trails for recreation, like walking, hiking and biking, unless you're on land that you own or occupy/rent – and we still discourage that. If you need to use a relatively short trail through a wooded area to get from point A to point B, that is generally ok. Use your best judgement.

Is fishing banned during the restrictions? If so, will we get a refund on our fishing license?

Sportfishing is allowed as long as you don't travel any great distance through the woods to do it. For example, you can access a waterway from a public highway and stay in the boat. Although we strongly discourage it, private landowners can fish in wooded areas in their own private land. You can't bring any guests or visitors.

Can I cross Crown or private land to go fishing?

You cannot cross wooded Crown land for recreational purposes. You are allowed to travel over private land that you own or occupy/rent but you can't bring any guests or visitors.

Can I go boating if the boat launch isn't in the woods?

You can go boating as long as you are not going any great distance through the woods to reach the boat launch. Use your best judgement.

Can I still operate an off-highway vehicle?

Generally, you cannot use OHVs in wooded areas. Although we strongly discourage it, you can use OHVs in wooded areas on private land that you own or occupy/rent – so can your employees or contractors – but not any guests or visitors.

Are the Crown rifle ranges closed?

Yes, rifle ranges are closed while the restrictions are in place. Watch the website for changes https://novascotia.ca/natr/srbs

Can I apply for a permit to continue commercial activity on Crown land?

You can apply for a permit at your local Department of Natural Resources office.

Can tourist accommodations (resorts, cottages, chalets) in a wooded area continue to operate?

Tourist accommodations can operate as long as guests only access their accommodations and they do not engage in any activities in the woods.

Are commercial operations like forestry, mining, utilities and wind farm construction still able to operate on private or Crown land?

Commercial operations like forestry, mining, utilities and wind farm construction need a travel permit to continue working on Crown land. Where possible, permits will require work to be done overnight/early morning. Contact your local Natural Resources office to get a travel permit.

A permit is not required on private land. We encourage working overnight/early morning where possible on private land.

What restrictions are there for forest harvesting on private or Crown land?

Harvesters operating on Crown lands must get for a travel permit to operate in the woods while the restrictions are in effect. They must comply with the conditions of the permit, including working overnight/early morning rather than during the day. Contact your local Natural Resources office to get a travel permit.

Forestry business can operate on their own private land. They are still subject to all applicable regulations, including Forest Fire Protection Regulations. We highly encourage best practices such as working overnight/early morning and monitoring your site the rest of the time.

Are provincial government inspectors (e.g., bee inspectors with Department of Agriculture) allowed to carry out duties in wooded areas?

Provincial officials are only allowed on wooded Crown land to do work in support of private commercial operations if that operator has a valid travel permit.

On private land, a travel permit is not required.

In both cases, we strongly encourage waiting until the restrictions are lifted before asking government officials to carry out inspections etc. in wooded areas.

What about work being carried out by DNR or other departments in or around wooded Crown or provincial lands?

Provincial departments do not need travel permits. However, we strongly encourage departments to consider holding off on any non-essential work until the restrictions are lifted – or at the very least, until after we've had a significant rain fall.