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'WE WERE LUCKY'

Crews halt wildfire near Horseshoe Bay

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Crews have now largely extinguished a fast-moving wildfire that burnt up more than a hectare of brush and forest above Horseshoe Bay, Monday.

West Vancouver Fire & Rescue has been leading a multi-agency response since the fire was first reported around 1 p.m. when smoke was spotted coming from the slope above a Highway 99 rest area and viewpoint.

"Over the night, we didn't have any wind, which is great, so the fire has been held," said West Vancouver Fire & Rescue Chief Dave Clark on Tuesday morning. "There's the odd spot fire but very easily manageable. We're not losing any more landscape... which is awesome."

By the time the first truck arrived, the fire had grown to the size of a baseball diamond, Clark said. At its peak, they estimated it grew to a hectare in size – 10,000 square metres.

"It's not that big but the speed that it moved was really what was concerning," Clark said, adding that there was

an onshore breeze coming from Howe Sound at the time and a lot of moss and dead trees in the area that provided plenty of fuel.

Crews closed the Sea to Sky Highway and diverted traffic.

Clark said they had a lot of luck on their side in getting the blaze under control. The fire was spotted and reported quickly. The first officer on the scene got water on it immediately, slowing the spread, and he called BC Wildfire Service for assistance. Metro Vancouver and District of North Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services members joined in the effort. By 2:15 p.m., an airtanker arrived from Kamloops to dump fire retardant on the site. Water bombers and Talon Helicopters followed in the aerial attack.

"We had a lot of resources at it pretty quick but we were lucky," Clark said, noting that it's still early in wildfire season in B.C. "If this was August, it would be very difficult to try to track down a couple of helicopters and fire retardant tankers."

Continued on page 12



A BC Wildfire airtanker drops a load of fire retardant on a West Vancouver fire near Horseshoe Bay on Monday. PAUL MCGRATH / NSN

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