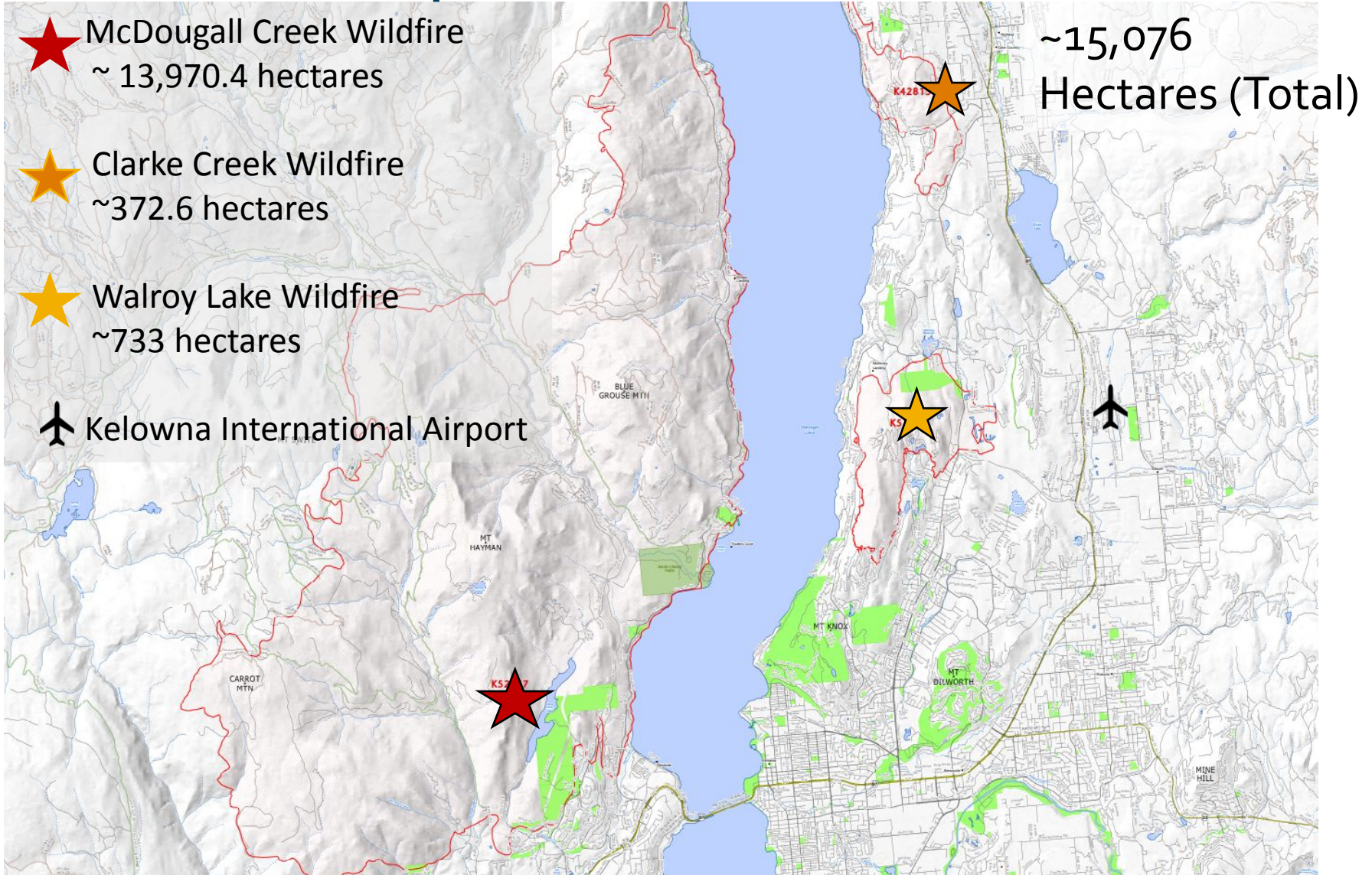


August 2023 Grouse Complex Wildfires



Grouse Complex Wildfires



Grouse Complex Wildfires



Photo: Michael G Holzhey Photography

Affected every community in the Central Okanagan, which includes:

- ▶ Westbank First Nation
- ▶ City of West Kelowna
- ▶ City of Kelowna
- ▶ District of Lake Country
- ▶ District of Peachland
- ▶ Regional District of Central Okanagan.



Grouse Complex Wildfires

August 15

- ▶ McDougall Creek Wildfire discovered

August 17

- ▶ State of Local Emergency issued – McDougall Creek out of control and approximately 300 hectares
- ▶ Clarke Creek Wildfire discovered

August 18

- ▶ Walroy Lake Wildfire discovered (communities adjacent to YLW placed on Evacuation Order)
- ▶ NOTAM issued closing airspace surrounding YLW closed to allow for aerial firefighting activity

August 20

- ▶ Airspace open for evening (9p.m. – 6 a.m.) operations at YLW

August 25

- ▶ Airspace opened for daytime operations at YLW
- ▶ Travel Restrictions related to state of emergency rescinded



Photo: Castanet



Photo: Gregory Dahms

Grouse Complex Wildfires



Photo: Brogan McCluskie

Grouse Complex Wildfires

Approximately 50,000 residents were impacted

- ▶ ~10,700 properties were on Evacuation Order
- ▶ ~10,700 properties on Evacuation Alert
- ▶ Loss of 189 homes



Grouse Complex Wildfires

YLW Impacts



YLW ARFF team and equipment deployed to help in community firefighting efforts

Grouse Complex Wildfires

YLW Impacts



CruzeCo, a YLW food vendor, donated food to firefighters in Lake Country

Customer Care Desk set up immediately to assist passengers visiting the terminal building

441
flights
cancelled

142
flights
operated

Grouse Complex Wildfires YLV Impacts

August 17

- ▶ 2 cancellations

August 18

- ▶ 78 cancellations and 2 movements

August 19

- ▶ 64 cancellations – no flights operated

August 20

- ▶ 68 cancellations and 14 movements

August 21

- ▶ 63 cancellations and 30 movements

August 22

- ▶ 52 cancellations and 30 movements

August 23

- ▶ 59 cancellations and 32 movements

August 24

- ▶ 55 cancellations and 36 movements

Grouse Complex Wildfires

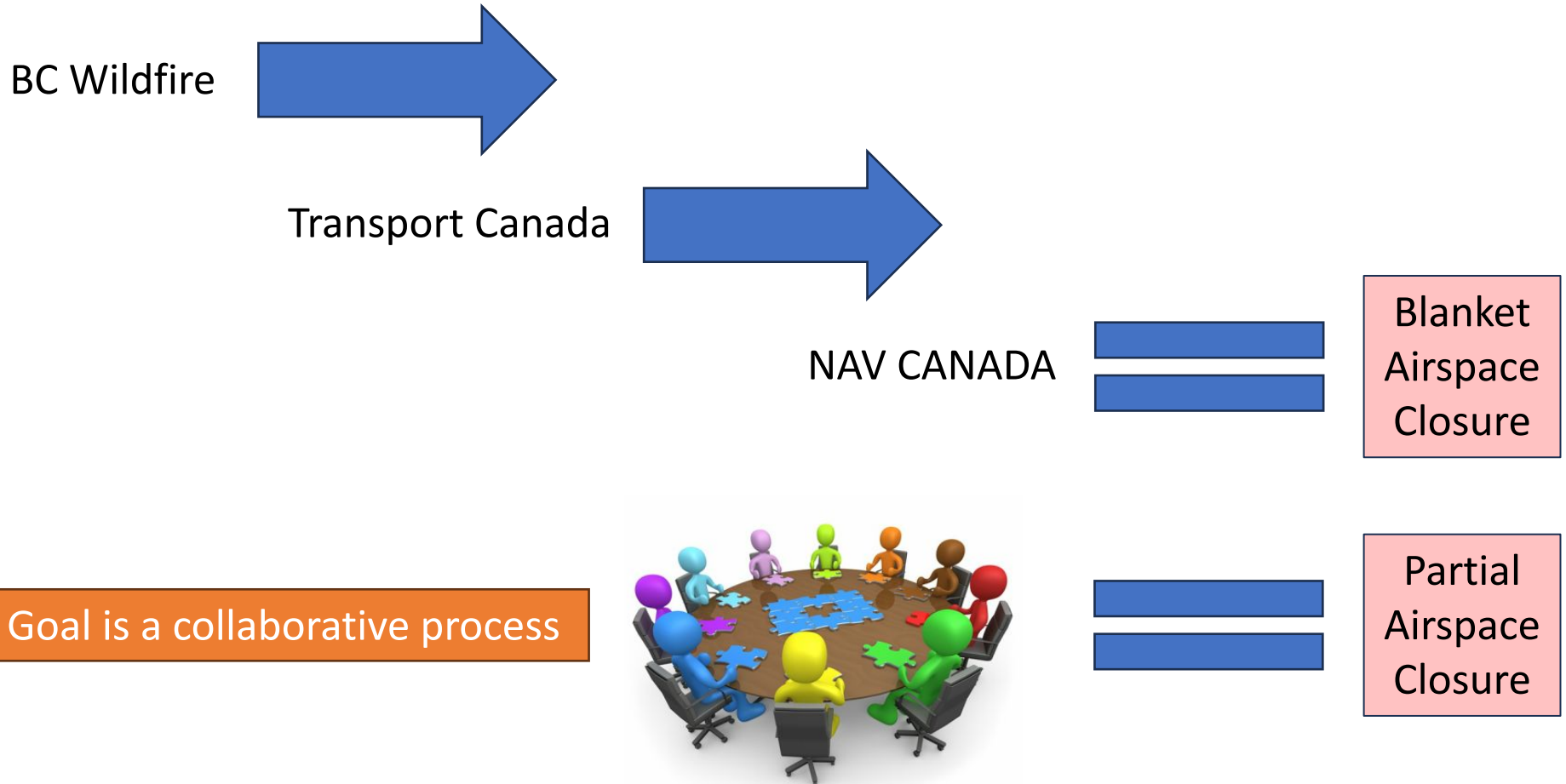
YLW Impacts



Evening operations resumed on Sunday, August 20

Consultation on Airspace Restrictions

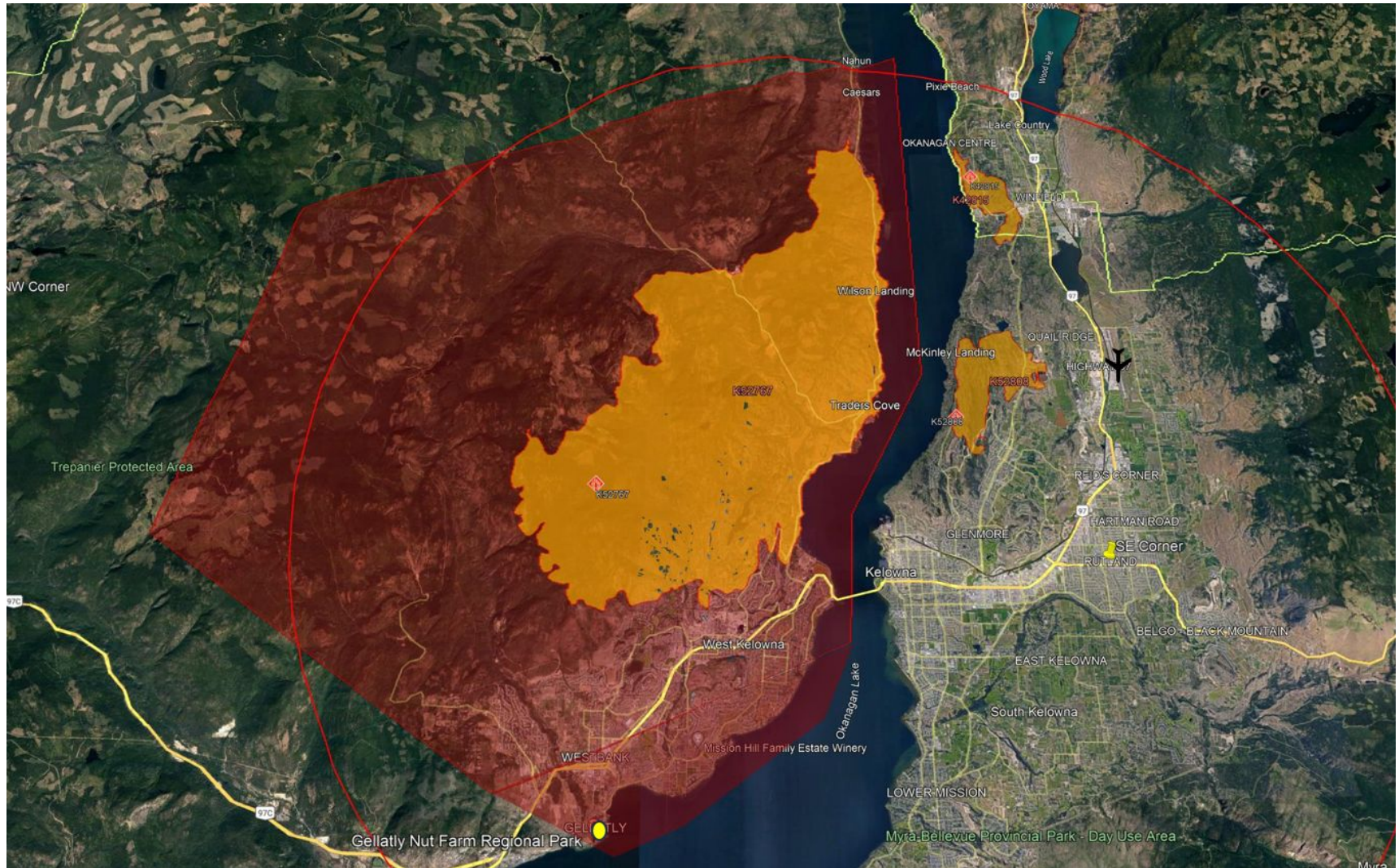
Current decision-making process is linear



Consultation on Airspace Restrictions

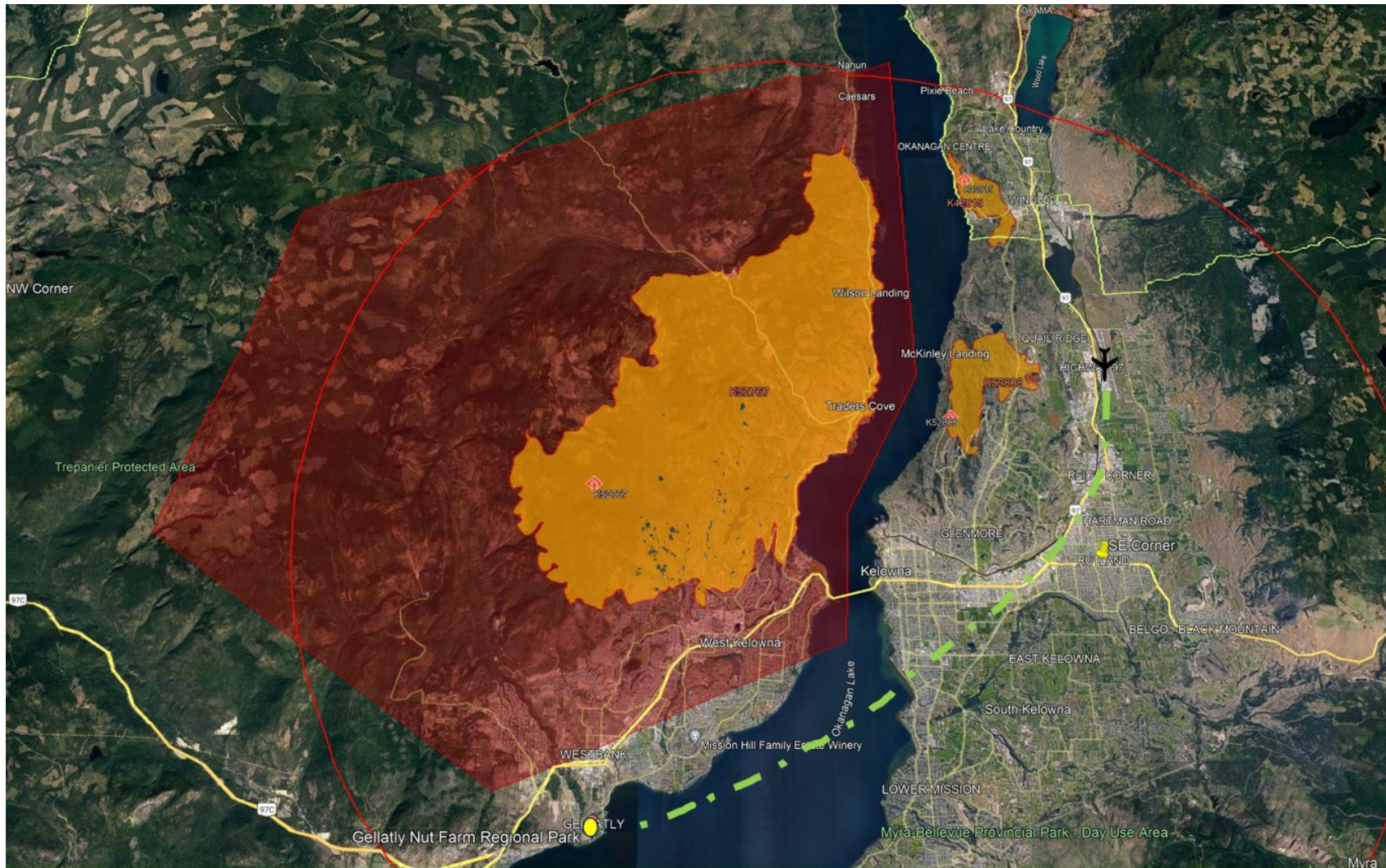
- ▶ Airports in the vicinity of the wildfires are not part of the decision making
- ▶ Airports push for relaxation where possible, and deviance from the restrictions, but all “after the fact”.
- ▶ Airport operators are relevant parties that should be consulted
 - ▶ Regional Emergency Operations
 - ▶ Community impact
 - ▶ Operational impact
 - ▶ Financial impact
 - ▶ Local knowledge

Local Knowledge



And ask the right questions

Local Knowledge



Opened up additional IPs by excluding beacon required on missed approach and engine outs

Grouse Complex Wildfires

YLW Impacts & Challenges – Information Shortfalls

Airport was the expected source for information

- ▶ NAV CANADA Daily NOC calls (5)
 - ▶ Sharing information others reluctant to – projected changes, etc.
 - ▶ IPs coming available

- ▶ A NOTAM can stop everything in an instant, but it takes day(s) to restart
 - ▶ Crew positioning
 - ▶ Plane positioning
 - ▶ Pax notification
 - ▶ Support staff

- ▶ None of those are instantly achieved with the cancelling of a NOTAM

Grouse Complex Wildfires

YLW Impacts & Challenges – Night Ops

After full closures for 3 days, YLW was able to offer night operations with limited approaches between 21:00 – 0600

- ▶ Overwhelming number of flight requests from 2100-0600
 - ▶ Heavy burden on Local Tower, FSS and Area Control Staff
 - ▶ YLW had to develop an adhoc slot program to approve flights with PPR
 - ▶ New waiver program from Transport Canada to air operators
- ▶ Aircraft and crew scheduling
 - ▶ Operator concerns of aircraft getting stuck in Kelowna creating further setback and scheduling challenges
- ▶ Switching from primarily daytime to evening operations required 24+ hour scheduling
 - ▶ Passenger notification
 - ▶ Province issued travel advisory for 2+ weeks

Grouse Complex Wildfires

When is a Fire not a Concern

After operations stabilized, NOTAM's impacting instrument procedures remained in place for weeks following

- ▶ Sporadic assessment flights that could have been managed by ANS dictated extended restrictions
- ▶ Wildfires that were shown on Wildfire service map as "HELD" but as minor burning restrictions stayed in place. Meanwhile residents were allowed to return to their homes

Emerging Trends

- ▶ Does RPAS surveillance negate need for extensive vertical protection over fires?
- ▶ How does night firefighting change the typical SS-SR restrictions?
- ▶ How can ATC staff control wildfire areas that exist in their control zone as alternate to blanket restrictions

National review of the 2023 wildfires and related processes

Commitments from Government and Agencies

- ▶ Transport Canada Director General
- ▶ Nav Canada VP Community Relation & Regulatory Affairs
- ▶ Canadian Airports Council

2023 Wildfires Action Items

- ▶ National review focusing on the closure of airspace in the vicinity of airports
- ▶ Goal is to move from a linear process to a collaborative decision-making process
- ▶ Commitment from Transport Canada and Nav Canada to participate at the national level
- ▶ Facilitated through the Canadian Airports Council

Thank You!

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