

Wildfire Risk Reduction in the Wildland-Urban Interface

Conflicts, Politics, and
Urban Ecology

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USDA Forest Service, 1933



Michael Barnes, c. 1916



EXTENDED ZONE
10m to 30m

INTERMEDIATE ZONE
1.5m to 10m

IMMEDIATE ZONE
0m to 1.5m

HOME IGNITION ZONE

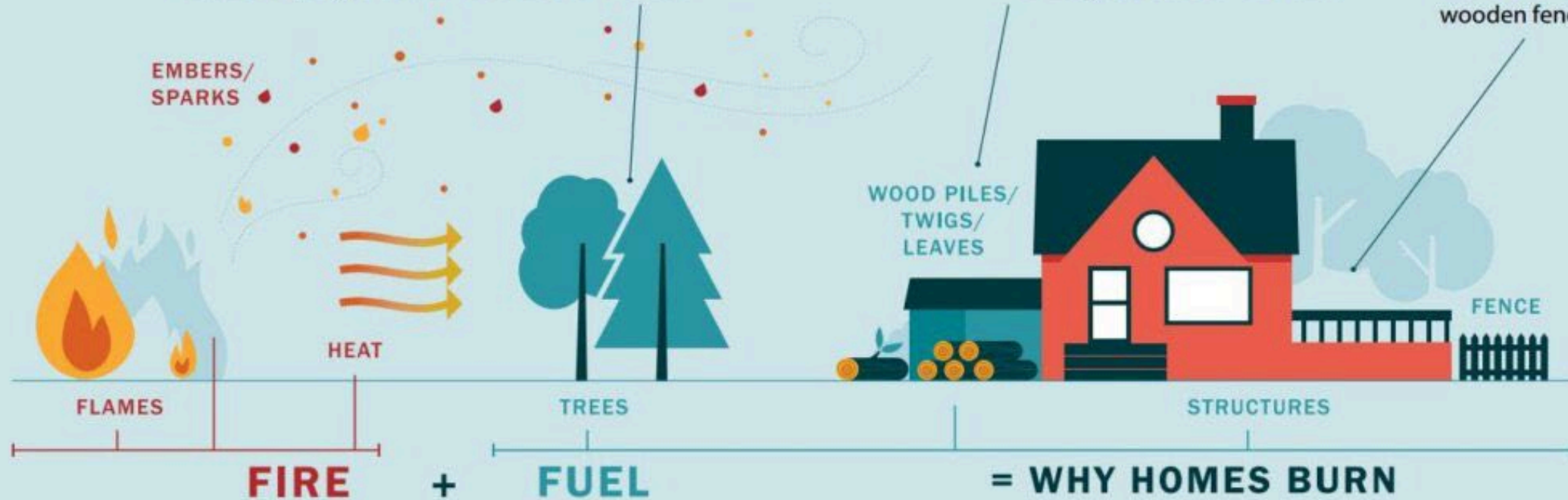


FireSmart, Intelli-feu and other associated Marks are trademarks of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC).

TREES
Coniferous trees are highly flammable.
Deciduous (leafy) trees are much less flammable.

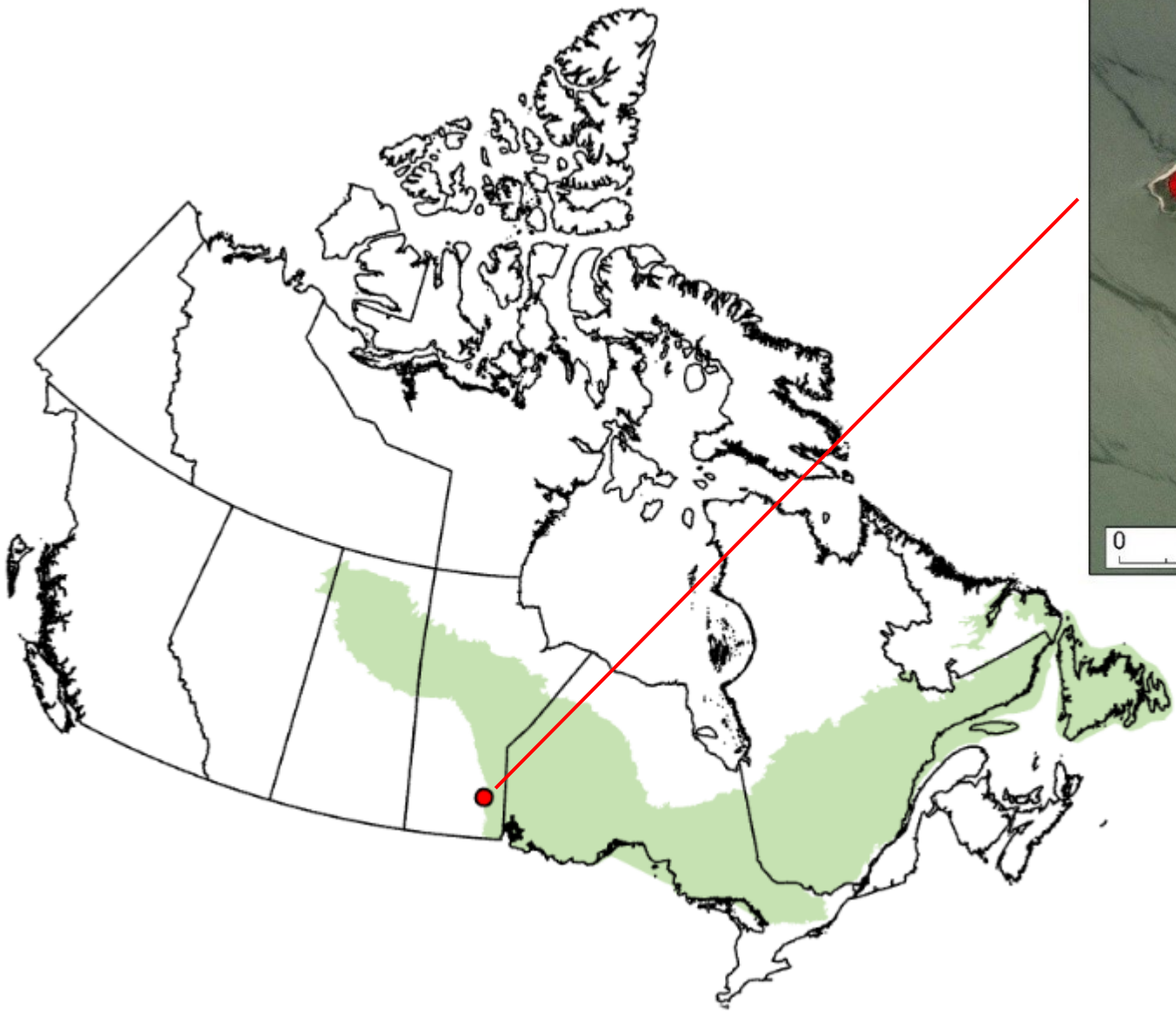
SURFACE FUELS
Plants, leaves, twigs, wood piles and dried grasses are surface fuels.

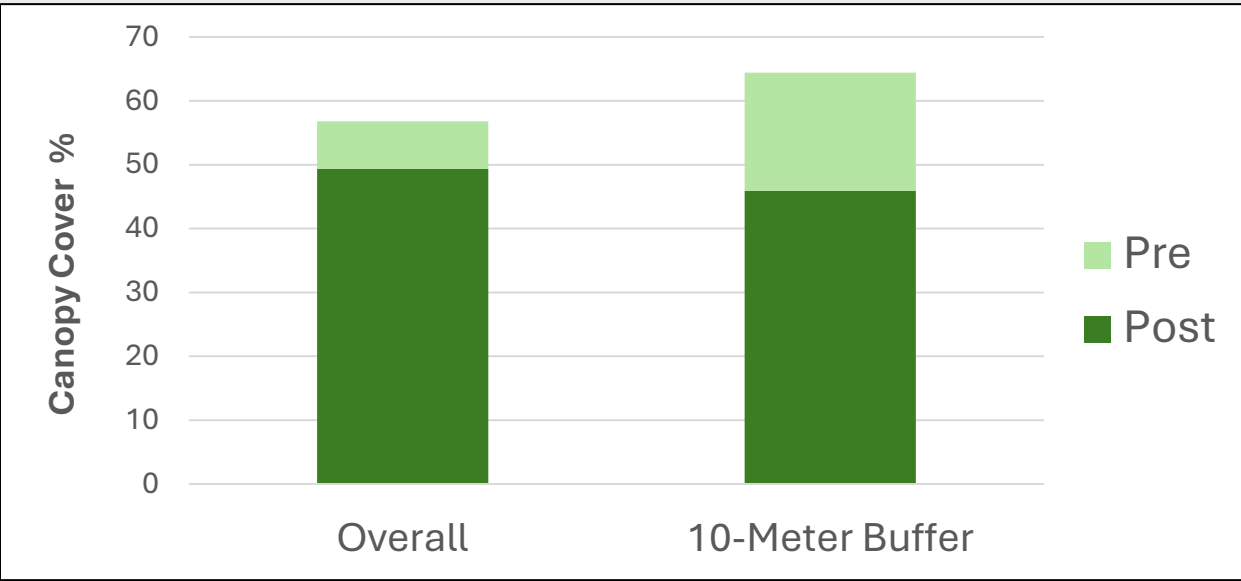
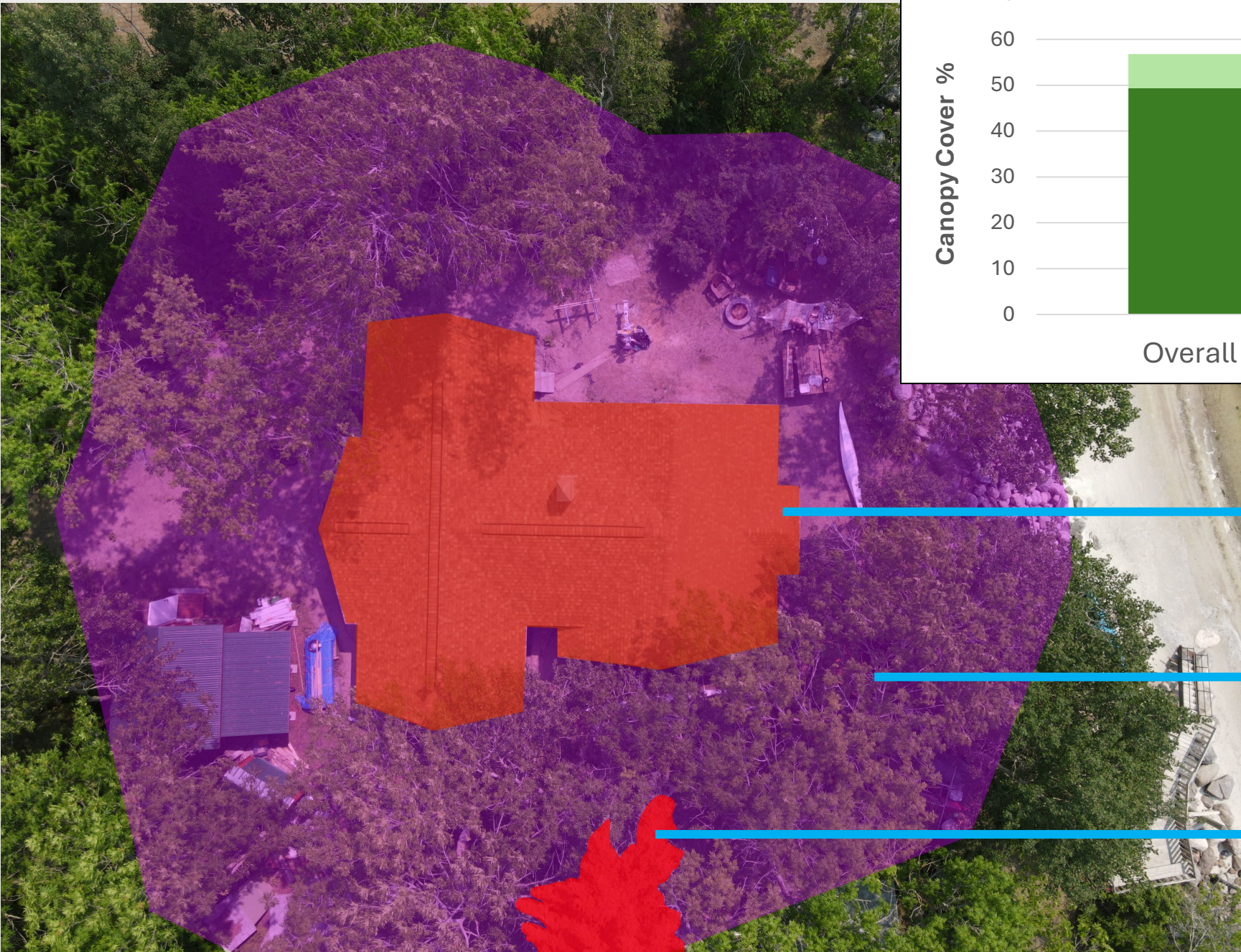
STRUCTURES
Building materials include:
wood shakes, wood or vinyl siding,
wooden fences attached to homes.





Elaine Thompson, Associated Press



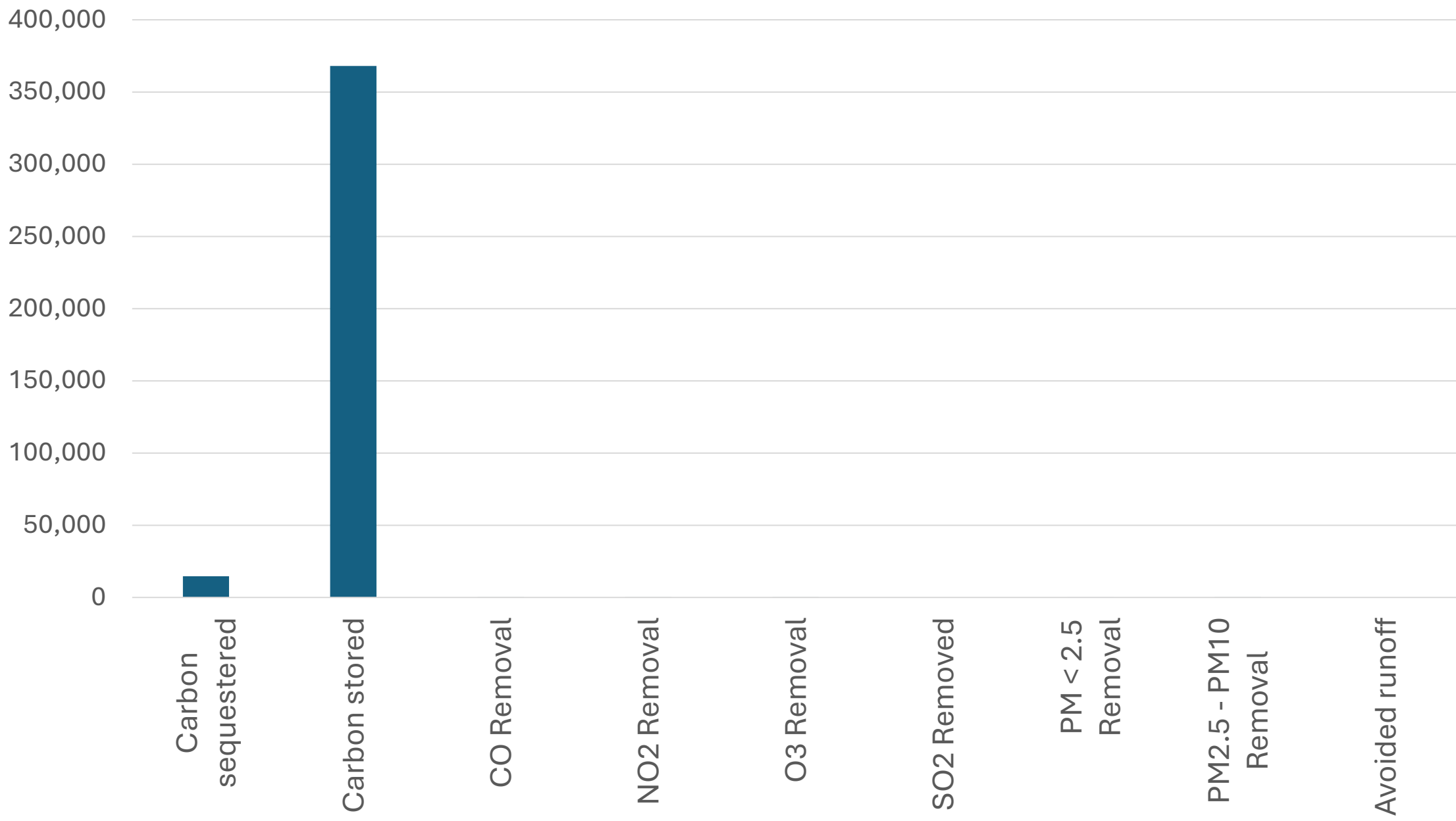


Footprint

10 m (33') Buffer

Conifer

ES Loss in Canadian \$ Value



Methods

- 🔥 Manitoba's ModelForest and FireSmart Canada's test community
- 🔥 Qualitative survey (20-30 minutes)
- 🔥 108 responses
- 🔥 Thematic analysis:
 - 🔥 Understanding of wildfire behaviour
 - 🔥 FireSmart Canada
 - 🔥 Environmental barriers
 - 🔥 Socio-political barriers



Understanding of Wildfire Behaviour

- 🔥 83 respondents perceived wildfire risk as a wall of flame rather than embers
- 🔥 12 respondents identified embers as the focus of risk reduction activities
- 🔥 98 respondents considered wildfire to be a natural forest process

“When that wall of flame approaches my home, cutting my grass every week won’t do a lick of sh*t”



Understanding of Wildfire Behaviour



FireSmart Canada

- 🔥 86 respondents were familiar with FireSmart Canada
- 🔥 102 respondents did not have a fully “FireSmarted” property

“I don’t know it really at all, but I do hate it and anyone who suggest it. I don’t want to lose my foresst” {sic.}

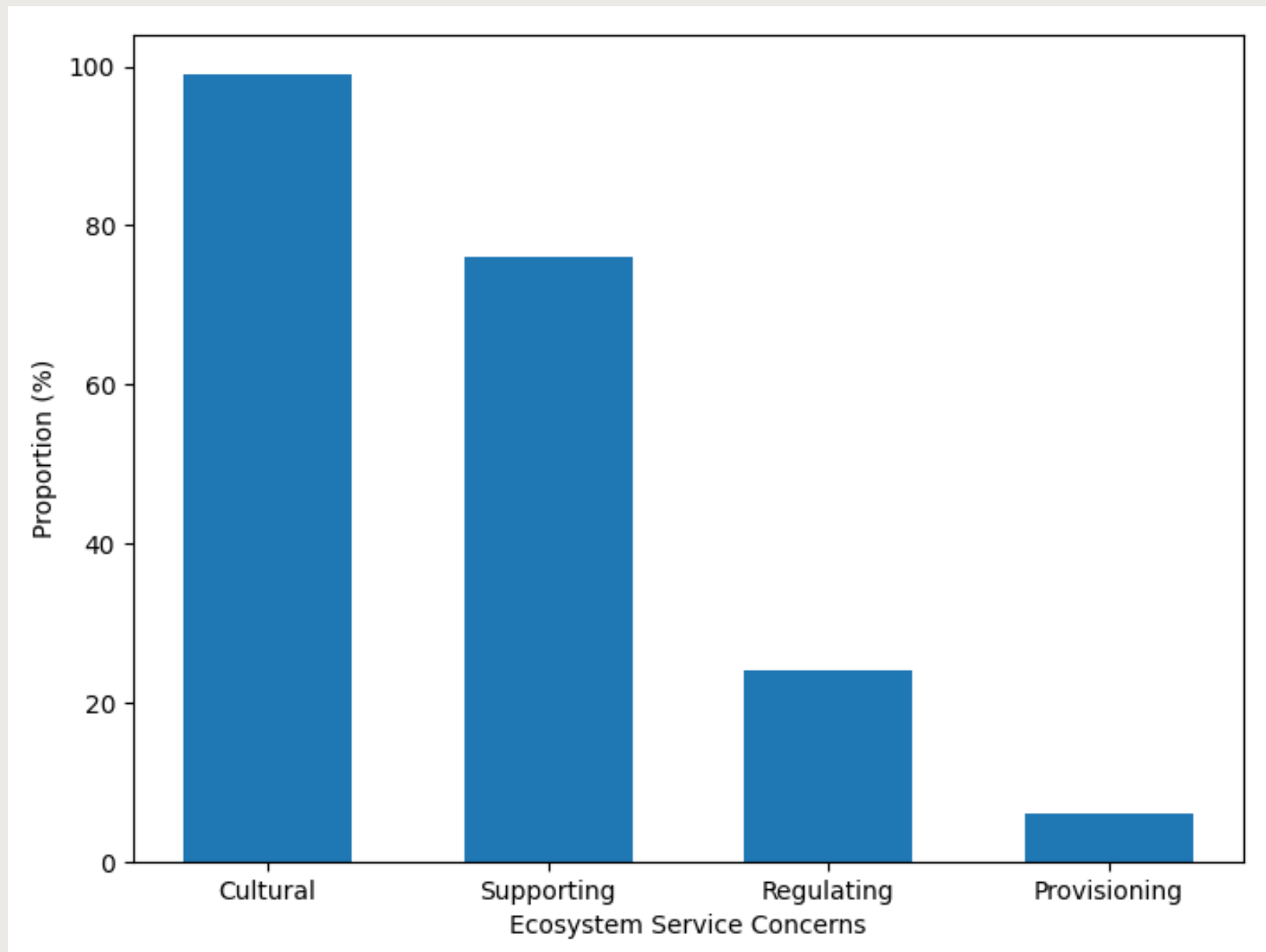


Environmental Barriers

- 🔥 51 respondents were concerned that the loss of conifers would kill the aesthetic of the area
- 🔥 46 respondents worried about biodiversity
- 🔥 104 respondents (96%) mentioned conifer removal and thinning as a concern or barrier

“Why are they suggesting to plant ash trees when Winnipeg says not to? I don’t want to lose all of them to that bore[r]”



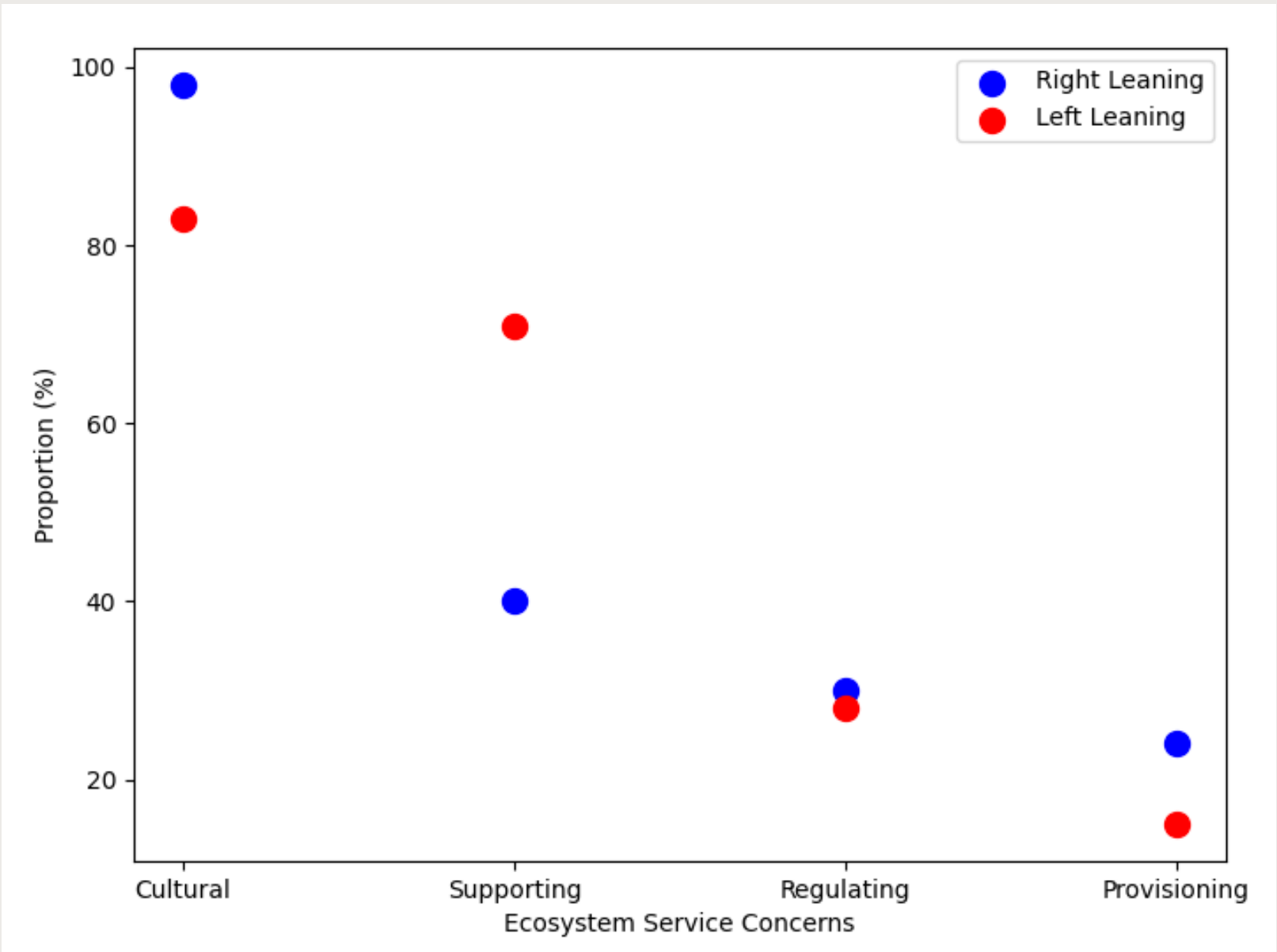


Socio-Political Barriers

- 🔥 62 respondents described FireSmart as an unwelcome top-down approach
- 🔥 87 respondents felt that risk reduction activities were diminished by neighbours not doing anything
- 🔥 52 respondents felt that activities were diminished by the RM not doing anything
- 🔥 94 respondents criticized the RM for not taking action
 - 🔥 43 said they would not take action themselves as a result

“We went from a 48-page wildfire risk reduction strategy to a 2-page email. How is that a wildfire plan? We are all f**ked!!”





Summary

- 🔥 Socio-political issues – not just environmental connectedness – influence wildfire risk reduction activities
- 🔥 Libertarianism ideology is common in recent socio-political discourse
- 🔥 Wildfire risk reduction strategies decrease biodiversity and ecosystem services



Recommendations

- 🔥 Consider relationships between property owners and with government in risk reduction studies
- 🔥 Revise “doomsday” matrices
- 🔥 Distinguish between ecosystems
- 🔥 Emphasize the cause before the avoidance tactics



CBC News



Don Seabrook/AP

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