



Announcing ...

A plan for Williams Lake and area to reduce the impacts of wildfire

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With joint funding from the City of Williams Lake and the Cariboo Regional District, Williams Lake and area now has a coordinated plan to reduce the impacts of wildfire in surrounding forests and residential areas. Following the firestorms of 2003, it became clear that communities must act proactively to reduce the threat of wildfire to lives and properties. The Williams Lake and Area Interface Fire Plan aims to minimize the impacts of fire in the urban–rural interface surrounding the City of Williams Lake. The interface is considered the zone surrounding communities where low-density housing is often mixed with forested and open areas.

The multi-party Williams Lake and Area Interface Fire Committee developed this cooperative plan through the work of a diverse team of representatives from provincial and local governments, utility companies, the UBC/Alex Fraser Research Forest and First Nations, along with fire control staff, forest managers, and communications and media specialists from a total of 18 organizations. This group has collaborated throughout the past year to build a strong and innovative plan for Williams Lake and area.

"This is the kind of proactive collaboration between different levels of government and other agencies which the City has pursued during this term," Mayor Rick Gibson said. "the City was able to secure \$15,000 for this project, in addition to \$5,500 that the City and the CRD provided from the Grant-in-aid program. We are very pleased with the plan and with the effort of the Committee to prepare it on behalf of the community."

The interface area defined in this plan encompasses the residential areas surrounding the City of Williams Lake: from Deep Creek in the north to 145 Mile in the south, and from Chimney Valley in the west to Dugan Lake in the east. This Interface Fire Plan describes the factors that influence interface fire planning: weather, ignition sources, fuel loading, population, investment and infrastructure, water and emergency response for the interface area. The plan is supported by maps that are available on CD and through the CRD.

The plan presents 22 Interface Recommendations for residents, local governments, land managers, utility companies, fire departments, First Nations, developers and the public to reduce the impacts of fire across the entire area. In addition to the key recommendations, the area was divided into 13 Interface Fire Planning Units, each with its own set of specific recommendations to address locally critical issues.

"The interface fire plan is proof of what can be accomplished when everyone works towards a common goal for the entire community," said Cariboo Regional District Director Tim Pennell. "We didn't get hung up on jurisdiction, we recognized the threat wildfires pose to our neighborhoods and then kept focused on what needed to be done."

Implementation of the plan's recommendations will protect our communities by: addressing access issues; reducing forest fuels; initiating a comprehensive communications plan; establishing pilot projects and demonstration areas; providing high-priority projects for anticipated provincial funding; supporting development of local plans to communicate with residents about local activities to reduce forest fuels; ensuring that utilities have suitable fire protection and back-up plans in the event of a fire; and developing standards to protect future residential developments from the impacts of fire.

To initiate the work, the committee reviewed other plans by communities in BC, Alberta and the Pacific Northwest and then developed an overall approach to build on this work. The committee first established the

interface area boundaries and systematically assessed the defined land base to develop rankings and recommendations. Through forest stand classification and mapping, the committee was able to show both site-specific and general fire issues for the entire interface area.

The Williams Lake and Area Interface Fire Committee will continue with the leadership of a Secretariat composed of representatives from the Cariboo Regional District, City of Williams Lake, the Ministry of Forests and Range, and Tolko Industries Ltd. The Secretariat will promote implementation of the Interface Recommendations and IFPU Actions, ensure the plan is reviewed twice annually, and seek the necessary funding so that the plan's recommendations can help to protect lives and property values within the interface.

The UBC/Alex Fraser Research Forest and Fraser Basin Council worked together over the last year to attract and administer funds for the Interface Fire Committee. Ken Day, Manager, Alex Fraser Research Forest said "On behalf of the Committee, I want to thank the City and CRD for providing both financial and staff support to this project and for working with the community to build a proactive plan for our area. We also want to thank the Fraser Basin Council for their support of this initiative. We are very grateful to all the individuals and organizations who contributed hours of expertise and knowledge to building this plan."

Gail Wallin, Fraser Basin Council explained "the Fraser Basin Council, a non-profit organization, is pleased to work with diverse groups such as this to build joint solutions that will help strengthen the communities throughout the Fraser Basin."

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For more information about the Williams Lake and Interface Fire Plan, please contact:

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