

**Clinton and Area Community Wildfire Preparedness Roundtable
Meeting Summary as of May 22, 2022**

Meeting date: May 17, 2022, 1:30PM to 4:00PM

Location: In Person at Clinton Memorial Hall

Present (for at least a portion of the meeting):

Bonaparte Watershed Stewardship Society – Tom Pitts
BC Wildfire Service – Jason Ward (remotely), Reg Trapp
Emergency Management BC – Trevor Pratt
High Bar First Nation – George Jennings
Ministry of Forests 100 Mile House District – Kane Copley, Johnna Wand
Thompson-Nicola Regional District – Kevin Skrepnek
Village of Clinton – Mayor Susan Swan, Karl Hansen, Murray Daly
West Fraser – Rob Ballinger
Consultants – Mike Simpson, Rob Purdy (recorder)

1. Introductions, Meeting Objectives, Agenda

Mike Simpson and Mayor Swan welcomed everyone and acknowledged First Nations unceded territory. A round of introductions took place. The agenda was approved as presented.

2. Previous meeting summary

Previous meeting summary from February was approved. Action Items were reviewed, see updated table at end of this summary. Updates on some of them are as follows:

- Proposed prescribed burn within the MOTI zone north of town near rail line – not feasible from Reg’s perspective, as there is risk everywhere why just there. BC Wildfire could be supporting agency but not take the lead.
- Kane and Chantelle have discussed the timber sale licence opportunity for fuel treatments near Big Bar; not high priority, and there are now old growth deferrals in the area
- Limited uptake of other training opportunities for volunteer fire departments to date
- March 26 Clinton Fire Department open house was well attended, interest in proposed fuel break NW of town, no new volunteer firefighters signed up
- First Nations boot camp training took place at Alexis Creek/Puntzi in spring with 10 participants from around the Cariboo-Chilcotin

3. Information Sharing

BC Wildfire Service - Reg/Jason

- The Category 3 Prohibition in the 100 Mile area is in place. Currently we have wet/cool conditions. We have not heard any concerns from the public on the Category 3 Prohibition. We are promoting Fire Smart at this time.
- October deadline for Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program applications for the First Nations communities and local governments, rural communities. The call for CRI is not out yet but there will be few changes from past years, so it is important to get organized for submission now.
- Opportunities to hire professionals for the CWRP in Clinton. There is a need to hire a forest professional to move this forward. Reach out to Matt to get this going. FNESS has a similar pot of money for First Nations reserves. Reach out to Matt Lees for more information.

- The Mapping Product (kmz files to be viewed in Google Earth) will be available soon for the public showing the current status of the fuel treatments, polygons for prescribed fire areas.
- Burning Dog Creek / Canoe Creek proponent on northern end of Jesmond Road. Bench/grass areas have been viewed and four blocks have been proposed totaling 300 hectares. There are smaller blocks this fall and bigger blocks next spring (2023) which will be treated while there is still snow in the trees. Another burn will occur this fall in Crow's Bar just north of the road down to the ferry – 300 to 500 ha to burn sage and promote grass. BC Wildlife Federation proposed that this area be treated.
- Rob Barnett to doing some Fire Smart Education with local fire departments.
- Debriefs have occurred with fire departments following 2022 wildfires.
- Crew complements: We are recruiting for a 20-person crew at the 99 Ski Hill Base.
- They are securing land (10 acres) for a new base and new resources which will have 4 Initial Attack crews in 100-Mile each crew will have 4 members so 16 more crew members.
- In the future there will be more IA crews and training in the area:
 - IA Crews – fast response to new fires
 - Unit Crews – for bigger fires
- The Wildfire Centres will be geared up to have more capacity throughout the year (365 days) as opposed to the past where we had more seasonal operations. BCWS is exploring how they could support other emergencies. BCWS will be the lead agency for fire but could have a supporting role in other emergencies. The BC budget has been increased to allow this to move forward. BCWS is starting to fill positions, but this is being rolled out deliberately, slowly and carefully so that this expansion is developed properly.

Bonaparte Watershed Stewardship Society and Rancher's perspective – Tom Pitt

- Tom suggested that there needs to be better communication on the ground between the BCWS crews and the people that live on the land. Running a cat through a fence makes extra work. Back burns are larger than the need to be, which also burns up deer feed. Folks on the land are not happy with lack of communication and lack of involvement of folks who live on the land and have the local knowledge and equipment that could be utilized better in wildfire response.
- Reg responded that the Cattlemen's Association have raised this issue. BCWS does communicate out to crews and equipment operators. Question: could cattlemen write up some Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Back burning is complicated but is also a great tool in the tool kit to get large fires under control.
- Mike noted that South Cariboo Cattlemen and Clinton Cattlemen are invited to be part of this roundtable but haven't been engaged; would like to see them involved more. Perhaps Tom can help with that.
- There is a need to move quickly on fires so important to identify liaisons early prior to the wildfire season. Identify liaisons during pre-organization phase so that we already have these folks identified, and when a fire breaks out then these linkages are already in place.

Ministry of Forests 100 Mile House – Johnna/Kane

- Large landscape breaks being planned and implemented in several areas.
- Works in 70-mile moving forward on treatment as engagement/planning is done. Treatment of 33 ha near 100 Mile House.
- Egress route for Green lake – Watch Lake Bonaparte area, 300m of new road built
- Nolan Creek prescription changed to a fuel break of 150 metres. : currently out for archaeological work now.
- Landscape level fuel management prescription is out for area near Flat Lake fire and Elephant Hill fire below 70 Mile.
- This year we have \$1 million for wildfire risk reduction, which is similar to previous years.

- Kane provided an update on last years fires which burned 220 000 ha:
 - Since the fires we have 730 kms of fire guards for rehabilitation;
 - Critical work has been done such as terrain stability and environmental damage priorities;
 - Prescriptions are almost completed, including grass seeding, finalizing mapping
 - High Bar First Nation is doing lots of the fire guard rehab work;
 - We are currently contracting out for equipment and putting out to tender;
 - There are some direct awards going out to First Nations in June.
- Overall, 30% of the 100 Mile House natural resource district has burned in the last 5 years

Village of Clinton – Murray/Mayor Swan

- We were successful for Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP) funding from UBCM. We are currently reviewing some samples of requests for proposals (RFPs) and hoping to get out the RFP by the end of the week, and we are aiming to hire a consultant to get this done.
- There is a planned fuel break on west side of town. We are currently receiving community comments for the plan and will engage with the community more this spring.

Clinton Volunteer Fire Department – Karl

- Office of the Fire Commissioner was here in March.
- Structural fire protection training occurred.
- There has been less fires as compared to last year.

West Fraser, Rob Ballinger

- On the planning side we are focusing on timber salvage, and supporting recovery, tree planting and road repair and maintenance. Good learnings from the development of salvage strategies between BC and First Nations on the Elephant Hill wildfire.
- Fire Preparedness Plans are complete with all the updated contacts for contractors and equipment
- Aware of the strategic landscape fuel breaks – these will be reviewed.
- Reg asked whether there is something BCWS can keep in mind with regard to the creation of fire guards in the operations of BCWS to make timber salvaging/pick up easier? Rob said that this past year, West Fraser supplied some of their planners in the fire response and recovery so this was very helpful with Salvage operations. The level of information exchange with layout contractors helped with results this year.

Thompson-Nicola Regional District - Kevin

- Last month, the TNRD Board approved a new position (regional fire training officer posted yesterday) that will be providing training services to the fire departments. Part of their portfolio will be supporting Fire Smart throughout the TNRD.
- The Fire Smart Conference held last week was very encouraging and there is lots of good progress. This new position in TNRD will also be able to look into grants for seasonal staff to help with community engagement and Fire Smart training/prescriptions.
- TNRD has grant funding this fall where local Fire Smart representatives can assess a property. The grant will cover the cost of the assessment.
- Alert Ready System is up and running province-wide, complements well with TNRD's Voyent Alert system (subscription based, but can put messages to landline phones)
- Currently concerned with Freshet – Deadman River concerns.
- Debrief of 2021 wildfire season took place in April – a good exercise with EMBC, BC Cattlemens' Associations, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.
- Compliments were given to TNRD for last years orders, alerts and use of GIS and mapping

High Bar First Nation – George

- High Bar does not have residents on reserve, and residents all live in other communities such as Williams Lake, Cache Creek and Clinton.
- HBFN is fireproofing the reserve and purchased fire fighting equipment which we will store on site in a trailer.
- HBFN has completed an Evacuation Plan so residents can know who to contact in an emergency, this is coordinated with services in the Village of Clinton.

Emergency Management BC - Trevor

- EMBC is expanding what emergencies will be included in the Alert Ready system. Currently alerts include tsunamis, tornados, severe thunderstorms, Amber Alerts. The expansion will now also include wildfire and flooding for the Broadcasting Civil Alerting. The alerts are used for an emergency life threatening event where there is no time for normal channels such as issuing alerts or orders, or door knocking.
- Presentations are available on how this works including updates on how this is coordinated with BCWS.
- Be aware of some of the limitations:
 - The concern is that you almost always 'over alert' due to the overlapping infrastructure. Even cell towers create overlap in areas.
 - limitations in rural areas regarding cell coverage
- EMBC central region – hazard preparedness event sometime in early June with update with Environment and Climate Change Canada on what they anticipate.
- New iteration of the Evacuation Registration Assistance Tool – will have updates to include capability of e-transfer – direct transfer to evacuees to use funds as best fit to their personal needs beyond current areas of accommodation, food, clothing.
- Community Emergency Preparedness Funding updates should be coming soon. There will be a funding stream for extreme heat emergencies and planning – update will be coming soon via Interior Health.

FireSmart BC 2022 Conference – Key Take Aways

Mike Simpson reported on the highlights:

- Mostly educational – educating people about need to do fuel management treatments
- Remove the barriers for people to do FireSmart – make it easy
- Wildfires don't spread through communities – the community burns without the wildfire, it's a community conflagration of structures: COMMUNITY BURNS WITHOUT THE WILDFIRE. WUI is a structure ignition problem not a wildfire control problem. Key is 30m home ignition zone. This was a key finding for how Lytton burned down in a [report](#) by Dr. Jack Cohen and Alan Westhaver.
- Funding
 - Comprehensive list of funding sources is at www.firesmartbc.ca/funding
 - Future CRI funding streams may have capacity funding for staffing at RDs
- Prescribed fire, putting fire back on the land – happening through MoF/BCWS, BC Parks, and we need to do it in conjunction with cultural burning
- Home Partners Program – a more formal, rigorous home assessment process that can lead to insurance premium reductions; local FireSmart representatives (LFRs) can do home assessments but Home Partners Program is recognized nationally

Kevin presented at the conference on operating emergency operation centres. He noted that wildfire is the reality we are living with now every year.

Mayor Swan asked there is funding for the United Way to help with funding of Fire Smart Assessments. United Way hired boots on the ground to do these assessments. Due to Covid this caused complications. There is a need but someone else would need to provide this service.

4. Next Steps

Next meeting in fall 2022 – timing to acknowledge local government elections on October 15, 2022

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Consider Alan Westhaver presentation to the community, and field tour to look at fuel treatments and FireSmart risks of homes and structures	Mike Simpson	Fall 2022 or spring 2023
Utilize the Cariboo Region mapping website (Forsite) to upload fuel management polygons (past and present). Soon there will be an updated mapping product in the form of Google Earth kmz files that will show past fuel management treatments and future proposed treatments.	Kane, everyone	ongoing
Questions about proposed fuel management projects, ribbon they see in the forest next to private property, contact Johnna Wandler at johnna.wandler@gov.bc.ca	Everyone	Ongoing
Training opportunities for Volunteer Fire Departments reach out to Jason Ward (Jason.Ward@gov.bc.ca) examples: SWPP 115 – structural, Engine boss course and Wildfire fighter 1 – equivalent to S100.	Everyone	Ongoing
Advise Rob Barnett if they see problems of excessive fuel buildup and fire risk on private land rob.barnett@gov.bc.ca	Everyone	Ongoing
Contact Rob Barnett if First Nations communities want to do training rob.barnett@gov.bc.ca	First Nations	Ongoing
Contact Rob Barnett or Reg Trapp about ideas for proposed prescribed burns	Everyone	Ongoing
Chief Fletcher and Rob Barnett connect re: grass and fire risk on Kelly Lake Road. Rob to follow up with Chief Fletcher.	Chief Fletcher, Rob Barnett	ASAP – not sure if progress since February meeting
Consider funding applications to the CRI program. Mike Simpson can provide support to help with applications, coordinating ideas amongst parties.	Everyone	Anticipated October intake
Help get cattlemen and ranchers engaged in this roundtable to address the communication gaps	Tom Pitt	Before next meeting