

Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Approved Summary as of Oct 18, 2022

Meeting date: May 17, 2022, 9:00AM to 11:30AM

Location: Hybrid meeting - Williams Lake First Nation office and via TEAMS

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

Alkali Resource Management (ARM) – Gord Chipman, Francis Johnson
British Columbia Wildfire Service (BCWS) –Matt Lees, Jason Ward, Dennis Voss
Cariboo Regional District – Irene Israel, Stephanie Masun
City of Williams Lake – Ken Day (contractor)
Fraser Basin Council – Mike Simpson (contractor), Jane Wellburn
MOF* (district) – Kimberly Caytor
MLWRS* (region) – Chris Swan
MOF* (Range Branch) – Peter Holub
Tolko Industries – Jack Darney, Mike Rife
Williams Lake First Nation –John Walker
University of British Columbia – Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz, Sally Bardossy (Alex Fraser Research Forest))

**MOF - Ministry of Forests*

**MLWRS – Ministry of Land, Water, and Resource Stewardship*

Meeting objectives

- Provide updates on what’s happening with wildfire risk reduction work, discuss training and preparation needs in advance of the upcoming fire season
- Develop relationships, share information
- Identify synergies on various initiatives

1. Previous Meeting Summary

The meeting summary from February 15, 2022, was approved. Old action items were reviewed, updated and/or prompted for discussion in the information sharing part of the meeting. See updated table of action items at the end of this summary.

2. Information sharing – what’s underway

MOF (Range Branch) – Peter Holub

- Description of burn plan development for the Westridge area, in coordination with Ken Day. The burn was carried out April 6 2022; it was successful and resulted in significant learning for all involved, including practitioners, the public, and adjacent land owners, as well as valuable lessons for future work; emphasis on areas where further education/outreach might make work better received, included information regarding prep/burn, intended higher-end fire behaviour (candling); the project coordinated efforts of the Williams Lake First Nation, BC Wildfire Service and the City of Williams Lake fire department
- Description of the White Road prescribed burn. The burn was carried out in early May – the weather forecasting tough to nail down, resulting in the burn taking place close to green up;

heavy moss component affected success; gusting winds that were needed to help the burn didn't materialize but the fire met objectives on the lower end; again the burn resulted in further learnings – an on-site weather station may have helped, better prescriptions and detail on moss component; overall a successful initiative – a good job was done informing the public, going door to door and gaining confidence; accomplished the first understory in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

- Questions/comments: Additional comment from Ken Day regarding lessons learned as the liaison for the Westridge project – industrial operations that are adjacent to treatment areas have a large stake in the project outcomes/delivery and should be engaged with actively and early on in the process; Peter – additional comments on building capacity to move forward and upcoming plans to have a burn plan shelf ready for fall 2022 for 100ha of slash in the Williams Lake Community Forest
- ***ACTION: Mike Simpson to reach out to additional industrial enterprises whose properties adjoin areas for proposed treatment within the Williams Lake Community Wildfire Plan area***

BC Wildfire Service – Dennis Voss

- Description of current crews - unit crews and CIFAC operational, 10 IA crews hiring (6 operational); crews currently working on prescribed burns, catching up on training (example of area behind Thompson Rivers University that will be treated by crews)
- Working on pre-organizing heavy equipment in advance of the wildfire season – currently there are contracts available for operators; discussion regarding using/accessing machinery at ranches on fires if operators haven't pre-registered – BCWS is attempting to solicit beforehand but can sign operators up in the moment as well; discussion regarding an action item at a recent BC Cattlemen's meeting to address same issue
- BCWS question from ARM regarding who the contact is for fire rehabilitation – Daniel Mirth, with the district Francis – fire rehab, expression of interest in 100 Mile area; Kim – Daniel Mirth, rehab person for the district

BC Wildfire Service – Matt Lees

- Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program deadline is the second week of October; applicants should begin preparations well in advance; hoping for more update in the region – and would like to focus on smaller communities within the region; comments/description of the role of First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS)
- Mapping project – discussion regarding a comprehensive mapping tool (KMZ and PDF based maps – for full region and broken into districts) that contains all Wildfire Risk Reduction funded activities to-date in the region, legacy treatments, and other related (Forest Employment Program) work that complements the regions initiatives to reduce wildfire risk; the final maps should be completed by May 18th; presentation going to Quesnel Mayor and Council late May; maps should be live for the public/interested user soon; working still on how to track and address errors noticed by users
- ***ACTION: Matt to share the maps to Mike Simpson for distribution to the roundtable when ready***
- Discussion regarding tactical plans for areas (Pablo Creek example); coordination with FNESS (should have representation at the roundtable); clarification on prescriptions vs. burn plans – prescriptions are needed, burn plans are operational to accomplish prescription outcomes; comments on a need for fire effects monitoring training, increasing capacity of staff; discussion regarding the potential for the Cariboo Regional District to pursue CRI funding

BC Wildfire Service – Jason Ward

- Description of fall burn projects- Fox Mountain and Williams Lake Community Forest
- Discussion regarding current restrictions (none to date; Category 3 prohibition around 100 Mile); hoping to get to June before restrictions go on; note from Williams Lake First Nation that they have stopped all burns for the season and will commence again in the fall when weather permits
- Discussion regarding resourcing emergencies when projects are underway (example of crews on a prescribed fire getting called out to another fire that got away) – BCWS is addressing to ensure there is additional coverage available when a project is underway

Alex Fraser Research Forest – Sally Bardossy

- Focusing energy at Knife Creek - tidying up from previous treatments and looking see what opportunities the mule deer winter range exemptions will allow
- Trying to get Fox Mountain property as an example FireSmart site, before/after; having some fuel reductions, looking at a demonstration area; the site is fully staffed now
- Comments from Ken Day regarding the Knife Creek site – previous treatments were modified for mule deer winter range without consideration for fuels, leaving it now in a bad situation for potential wildfires
- ***ACTION: Mike Simpson to forward Mule Deer Winter Range exemption information to roundtable members***

Cariboo Regional District – Stephanie Masun and Irene Israel

- Largely the organization has been focused on response and recovery; previously had funding for a Community Wildfire Plan for the 100 Mile/Lac la Hache area in 2019; would like to connect into regional wildfire reduction initiatives and access funding as available; discussion regarding staff capacity, examples from other regional districts, preparation and potential for applying for the fall Community Resiliency Investment program; current objectives of the CRD are to meet statutory obligations which have been challenged in recent years and will likely increase in coming years
- ***ACTION: Cariboo Regional District staff in attendance to forward new staff member contact information to Mike Simpson to be included in roundtable communications and updates***
- Discussion: inquiry regarding CRD's role including FireSmart standards into building codes – currently there is not a building inspection service across the region but would look at it over the long term; suggestion of CRD to pursue regional application concept for CRI to access more funding with partner organizations; discussion/example of neighbourhoods that have become FireSmart which resulted in fuel treatments priorities on adjacent Crown land areas – shifting emphasis to individual property momentum to FireSmart that can be complemented by tactical plans from the district or additional stakeholders to further the work done/over all benefit

City of Williams Lake – Ken Day

- Two prescriptions for treatment are underway, including 60 ha in the Westridge area and above Windmill crescent, to reduce the risk of rolling debris from treatments on the ridge above; a third treatment is being developed for the west side of the river valley, from approximately where Williams Lake Forestry is located on Mackenzie Avenue
- FireSmart assessments have been completed, 22 out of the 24 that have been available, with mixed results though most requiring significant work; property owners are given a list of priorities to prevent them from feeling overwhelmed; Ken is working with Williams Lake Fire

Department Chief Erik Petersen on stepping back from the program and will be announcing a succession plan in coming months

Williams Lake First Nation – John Walker

- Presented recently with Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz and was well received
- FireSmart update – fulfilled available assessments on residences, currently working on addressing Elders homes
- Completed treatments on woodlots
- Gibbon/Dog Creek Road area close to completion
- Prepping for understory burn this fall in the treated areas by Bond Lake Road/Thunder Mountain Speedway; meeting BCWS staff to discuss
- Applications in for additional burn plans
- Pablo Creek area – archeological assessment of the main area is complete; WLFN can add on additional section as well
- Brunson Lake, 200 ha area – logging will begin in June
- 300 metre fuel break from the CWPP in process – layout and logging will occur this winter
- Spring burns are complete – 60 ha of grasslands by Sugar Cane reserve, well received by community
- Discussion regarding cultural burning in the community and role of burns in social aspect of community, positive appetite for burning within the community

Group discussion regarding forest health in an area like Pablo Creek that is now predominantly dead and potential for expanding work adjacent to residential neighbourhoods, tactical plans, expanding benchmark grasslands designations, potential for enhanced management planning and connection with other regional initiatives; Comments from Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz regarding projects looking at modelling fire behaviours in consideration of mule deer winter range, monitoring on cultural burns and offer to support initiatives going forward if needed

ACTION: Jason to connect Kelsey with the provincial prescribed burn information

Tolko – Mike Rife

- Nothing to report; interested in proposed treatments adjacent to log yards/production areas; will continue to follow roundtable communications and information

Alkali Resource Management – Francis Johnson

- Description of treatments completed to date; new positive from the economic recovery fund; Forest Employment Project activities by Chimney Lake, 40 people working; enough work for crews until the end of June, with capacity now and efficient at fuel treatment; work on adaptive management trials; upcoming training in archeology and cultural awareness; currently working on an expression of interest for wildfire rehabilitation in the 100 Mile area; setting up an SPU and looking to make connections for training and set-up; spring cultural burn at Esket went well
- Comment/suggestion from John Walker that Esketemc reach out to WLFN if crews need additional work after June

Alkali Resource Management – Gord Chipman

- Discussion regarding prescribed burning and interest in the community, trying to do it in a socially acceptable way and work within the process; finding challenges getting burn plans approved; missed the window for some burns this spring; working with Peter on others, cool spring make it more difficult on some sites

- 5 other sites for grasslands ecosystem restoration this fall, including Wycotte Flat’s area; example from Crow’s bar regarding repeated burning to convert from sage to grasslands, would like to see the same at Wycotte Flats; hoping for fall burn windows

Ministry of Forests – Kim Kaytor

- Description of upcoming tactical plan development, with Ulkatcho in Anahim Lake area, Yunesit’in in Big Creek area, WLFN for South Lakeside area; plan with Stswecem’c Xget’tem almost complete; 10 projects, new and ongoing, no location specifics on list
- Comments from Matt regarding large project on the north side of Chimney Valley, archeology underway on the south side of the valley for additional treatment areas; district is ahead on planning with more than enough areas to treat – will expand treatment areas if funding is available, to 300m

General Discussion – all

- FireSmart conference held in Kamloops in early May – key takeaways: increasing education around fuel treatments on the group; address barriers to FireSmart so people will participate; presentation from study in Lytton that emphasized the home ignition problem, simple things within 10m of homes that could have reduced impacts if removed, time lag between grass fire and home ignition due to embers; additional comments on workshop and resources/examples provide
- **ACTION: Mike to add resources and information from FireSmart conference for distribution to roundtable members**
- Podcase recommendation: Get FireSmart
- Discussion regarding re-treatment of areas and need for a sub-committee to target certain areas based on different parameters, goal to have a 3 to 5-year plan for prescribed burns in the region; potential to have a consultant hired to ground truth old treatment areas and make recommendations
- **ACTION: Recruit sub-committee to carry forward re-treatment allocations, assessments, and priority planning**

3. Next Steps

Next meeting planned for fall 2022. Mike will find a date via doodle poll.

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
MFLNRORD approval of CWPPs - Need for a small group to come together to see how they can help with getting community wildfire protection plans approved quicker, how to address OGMA's	Mike Gash, Ken Day, John Walker, Kerri Howse, Gord Chipman, Jason Ward, Hugh Flinton, Geneve Jasper	Late – do ASAP
CRI funding intake – brainstorm ideas for a CRI funding application, supporting CRD with capacity to apply and administer a grant, advance FireSmart	Stephanie Masun, others, Mike Simpson can support	Well before next funding intake (October)
CWPP recommendations – review before next meeting, discuss which ones are top priority, and update them for progress	Everyone	Ongoing
Jason Ward (BCWS) and Mike Stinson (Xat’súll) initiate a conversation to start planning for traditional burning in early spring 2022	Jason Ward, Mike Stinson	Ongoing
Matt or Kingsley to send Mapping Tool to Mike Simpson so he can circulate it out to the group.	Matt Lees, Kingsley Kyere-Donkor, Mike Simpson	ASAP when ready

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Consider Alan Westhaver presentation to the community, and field tour	Mike Simpson	Fall 2022
Share blanket exemption for MDWR in WUI in IDF; coordinate a small group discussion and debrief of document	Chris Swan; Becky Bings	When Becky returns from leave
BCWS to explore creating a short 5min educational video of Kelsey's research	Mike Gash, Matt Lees, Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz	Potential to do it in July 2022
FireSmart – review what's worked in other locations (USA as well as BC), consider ways of not making it overwhelming for people, drive-around tour	Everyone	Ongoing
Route signage, egress and evacuation planning – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Map all known roads, regardless of status – build on what CRD, MOTI or FLNRORD have initiated ▪ CRD requires GIS layer of all roads. FLNRORD contacts are James Moe and Rob Haley. MOTI will provide CRD with roads commonly used for evacuations ▪ Brainstorm at next meeting about status (e.g., 2WD, 4WD, other descriptors) and suitability for evacuation purposes ▪ Explore options for alternate route signage ▪ Explore options for georeferenced maps, utilization of Avenza or other smartphone apps ▪ Invite others as needed for this topic (James Moe, Rob Haley, Carole Mahood from FLNRORD) 	Mike, Jane to quarterback this Mikayla (MOTI), Carole Mahood (FLNRORD), others	Ongoing
Reach out to major industrial enterprises whose properties adjoin areas for proposed treatment within the Williams Lake Community Wildfire Plan area	Mike Simpson	Fall 2022
Recruit sub-committee to carry forward re-treatment allocations, assessments, and priority planning	Peter Holub to initiate	Fall 2022