

# Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

## Draft Meeting Summary as at July 5, 2019

**Meeting date:** June 20, 2019 1:00PM to 4:20PM

**Location:** Fire Hall, 230 Hodgson Road, Williams Lake, BC

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

Alkali Resource Management (ARM) - Francis Johnson, Beverly Hutchison  
BC Timber Sales (BCTS) - Kristina Zoller  
BC Wildfire Service - Matt Lees, Matt Sherlock, Peter Holub  
Big Lake Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) - Peter Baetz  
Cariboo Regional District - John MacLean, Genny Hilliard, Angie Delainey  
City of Williams Lake - Erick Peterson, Rob Warnock, Ken Day (consultant to City)  
Community Forest - Hugh Flinton  
Fraser Basin Council - Jane Wellburn, Mike Simpson  
MFLNRORD - Kerri Howse, Geneve Jasper, Rodger Stewart, Lindsey Wood, Jen Bowman  
Pinnacle Pellet - Jason Fisher, Sarah Jackman  
Tolko - Kevin Sytsma  
West Fraser - Mauro Calabrese  
Williams Lake Indian Band - Cynthia Dick  
Xat'sull - Scott Scholefield

### 1. Introductions, Agenda, Objectives

Mike Simpson welcomed everyone, acknowledged Secwepemc territory, and thanked Erick and Rob for hosting the meeting at the Fire Hall. Introductions were made around the room. The agenda was approved as accepted.

### 2. Overview, Purpose

Fraser Basin Council has secured funding from BC Wildfire Service to pilot three community wildfire roundtables over the next two years: Quesnel and Area, Williams Lake and Area, and in the Thompson-Nicola.

The purpose of creating a community wildfire roundtable is to ensure **good coordination and communication** about who's doing what around wildfire preparedness:

- FireSmart education
- Timber harvesting opportunities
- Fuel management
- Resources and capacity - volunteer fire departments, ranchers, agriculture sector, forest industry
- First Nations traditional burning

The multiple actors involved in the above activities include but are not limited to local government (including some volunteer fire departments), First Nations governments, MFLNRORD (including BC Wildfire Service, district offices), the forest industry, BC Timber Sales, and independent fire departments.

Objectives are to implement the WL & Area [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) (CWPP) with components of FireSmart education, fuel management treatments (commercial harvest, non-commercial fuel), primary fuel breaks, interface treatments, and egress.

As such, the area in question is the boundary of the CWPP.

Additional objectives address some Abbott and Chapman recommendations, such as incorporating traditional burning and traditional ecological knowledge, and capacity and resources of volunteer fire departments, ranchers/agriculture sector, and others to aid in fire suppression activities when needed.

There was an active Williams Lake and Area Interface Fire Plan secretariat that met regularly, leveraged resources, coordinated fuel management treatments, education initiatives from about 2007 to 2012. It fizzled out for several reasons, including inability to leverage Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative funding and lack of capacity in local government to manage projects.

### **3. What's Already Underway**

Those present built on the list on the back of the agenda, and shared who's doing what by activity and jurisdiction.

#### **Williams Lake Community Forest (Hugh Flinton):**

##### *Education*

- Tours for 200 school kids K-grade 8, fuel management, burning etc
- Tours for local groups - Williams Lake Field Naturalists, ABCFP executive, Williams Lake Indian Band elders
- Inquiries from public regarding practices - other community forests, or prospective community forests, BCTS, both administrative and operational interest in learning from WLCF example

##### *Prescriptions*

- Landscape level fuel breaks - south end of community forest to snakes and ladders trailhead area
- Prescriptions being developed for remainder of landscape - Hwy 20 corridor and Moore Mtn underway
- In Big Lake area prescriptions by schools and subdivisions - radio tower at Potato Mtn prescription underway
- FESBC partially funds fuel management
- Materials to Norbord, Pinnacle, Atlantic Power
- Douglas Fir Beetle salvage on hill above creek valley
- Looking strategically at ecosystems

#### **Esketemc First Nation (Bev Hutchinson and Francis Johnson):**

- Wildfire Risk Management Plan developed
- Follows Chimney Valley/Chimney Lake
- Looking at egress routes - Dog Creek, Chimney - 200m buffer on roads
- FESBC funding for chipping

##### *Education*

- Traditional burning - 5 burn plans approved. Burns conducted at Echo Valley, Place L.
- Tours with TRU Applied Sustainable Ranching program
- Schools at Alkali
- Firesmart in communities - funding for house assessments
- 173 ha to log/harvest - crews doing recce now, commercial and non-commercial
- EOC plan for the community
- Discussion regarding signage for egress routes

#### **Cariboo Chilcotin Ecosystem Restoration Committee (Hugh Flinton):**

- Grasslands emphasis, benchmark
- Discussion over dove tailing w/ land manager priorities
- Example of ARM project pairing grasslands restoration with fuel management, and WLCF pocket grasslands
- Builds capacity for burning

#### **IDF Committee (Rodger Stewart):**

- Partnership between Esketemc, Tolko and Ministry
- Fuel break at Chimney
- Examples of Borland and South Lakeside (with WLIB)
- Borland - landscape level treatments
- 9 months planning - working on prescriptions
- At permitting stage - fall 2019 start for treatments
- Education piece - recreation groups (Mtn bike club) and WLIB elders
- Borland - 450 ha of interface fuel break almost complete; interpretive signs/education in place; funded by FESBC; testing 10 different treatment options
- Rodger - there is a need to treat 5000-7000 ha per year to meet needs of region

#### **Operational Issues Forum (MFLNRORD, forest industry)**

- Very high level strategic; one for South Area
- Licensees are implementers of gov policy
- Looking at how policy impacts pace of activity
- Need to define resilience, model with fire behavior
- Crown education - info out to licensees, public - Borland example, outreach

#### **Cariboo Regional District**

- No FireSmart activities currently

#### **City of Williams Lake - Fire Department**

- City of WL has hired a communications officer
- Fire Department conducted Firesmart door-to-door education in Esler/Hodgson Road area

#### **City of Williams Lake (Ken Day)**

- Received \$100,000 CRI funding
- Education - firesmart activities ongoing, example of Scout Island as model area
- 6 prescriptions funded - none completed to date
- Focusing work on upper end of creek valley - fuel treatment under powerline
- 9 priority 1 areas in CWPP were identified, 6 funded so far - approx. 250 ha
- Treatment in Dairy Fields funded, non-commercial
- Firesmart -funding for 10 public buildings, 3 neighbourhoods, and 30 residences

### **Cariboo Woodlot Association (Mike Simpson)**

- FESBC funding to implement fuel management on WL 1694 Fox Mountain, and WL 587 Dog Creek Road, within the CWPP area
- \$500,000 to treat in total; other woodlots to proceed with treatments are 1805 and 1955, south down Dog Creek Road

### **BC Wildfire Service and MFLNRORD**

- Just starting projects, \$25 000 000 provincially over 3 years, decisions from BCWS and Ministry, will work with completed CWPPs
- Celtic Engineering working on some Crown land between woodlot, private and previously treated, Fox Mountain 80 ha - funded by FESBC

### **Private Land**

- Approximately 40% of CWPP
- Firesmart as outreach
- In Williams Lake, mechanism through CRD to waive tipping fees for Firesmart activities
- Question/discussion regarding insurers offering incentives/breaks for Firesmart - in progress
- United Way project - assisting with Firesmart for some home owners w/ criteria (elderly, disabled, etc.) - unsure if the program is still running
- Advise/outreach for private land owners
- Pinnacle - can buy from private land

### **Xat'sull**

- Focused on rehab from 2017 - working with Tree Canada to replant for resiliency, medium and long term planning for access underway

### **Williams Lake Indian Band**

- Mike to follow up with Aaron Higginbottom
- Grinding harvest debris on incremental treaty lands - last year the fibre went to Atlantic Power
- Reviewing burn plan, applying burn registrations
- Conducting Firesmart in community
- Looking at additional egress routes

### **Pinnacle Renewable Energy**

- Looking at upgrades to process bush grade materials

### **BC Timber Sales**

- Much of the area in the north portion of the CWPP is BCTS operating area; now that they know about proposed fuel treatments in the CWPP, they can look to help implement them by offering timber sales there

## **4. Resources and Capacity**

Capacity and resources were discussed for various sectors: volunteer fire departments, forest professionals doing the wildfire threat assessment and prescription development work, crews to carry out fuel management work.

The following was noted for resources and capacity:

- Big Lake VFD (independent) - gathering forestry equipment; fire on scene at fires in area; conducting home assessments for Firesmart; need for more resources - pumps, equipment, etc.
- Xat'sull agreement w/CRD re fire protection, Wildwood would respond for structural; Xat'sull hopes to increase firefighting capacity in community
- WLF D - will support areas with imminent threat to City (even if out of bounds); can send structural protection unit as long as it isn't needed within City limits
- BCWS partnerships - equipment inventory (ranchers, licencees in area, etc.); discussion regarding liabilities
- CRD (oversees Wildwood, Miocene, 150 Mile VFDs) working on engaging resources for forest fire fighting; their firefighters are strictly structural in terms of training and equipment available
- Task teams - allotments of equipment - ex Tolko, West Fraser, ARM, Tsi Deldel
- Williams Lake Community forest - exercise in setting stage for fuel suppression, access etc. and role of informal communication
- ARM example - 5 5-pack crews and initial attack, strike teams contracted, relationship with ranchers, Alkali has a fire department
- [Point raised by Linda Bartsch, Horsefly VFD after the meeting - their VFD is trained to fight wildfires, they have a specified wildfire brush truck (4 x 4, 400 gallon capacity, fully equipped) a 3000 gallon water tender, 2 pumper trucks with 500 gallon capacity and an ETV. There are pumps, water bladders, hoses, etc.]

The following were noted as gaps in resources and capacity:

- Independent VFDs (Big Lake, Chimney-Felker) don't have shared resources or may not have agreements in place with BCWS
- There are areas within the CWPP that don't have any fire department coverage; risk of burning homes, vehicles could start a forest fire
- [Points raised by Stephanie Masun, CRD after the meeting - CRD doesn't have a wildfire fighting service, only a structural firefighting service; these VFDs are manned by volunteers and critical incident stress is a significant risk]

It was suggested to offer a high school or post-secondary course credit for fire smart activities (planning, prescriptions, fuel management, etc.) on private land.

It was suggested that there is sufficient capacity in the forest professional community to undertake wildfire threat assessments, develop prescriptions, but that there is significant liability with this work, and sometimes tensions about the efficacy of the treatment and the costs of the treatments amount of area treated. It was suggested that for hand-treatment fuel management work, there could be a limitation in capacity to undertake the work. It was suggested that we need to treat 5000-7000 ha in the Cariboo region.

## **5. Opportunities for Utilizing TEK, Burning**

It was noted that there are opportunities for win-win-win scenarios: fuel management to remove woody debris, prescribed burn to restore vegetation of benefit for cultural use and wildlife, as well as increased community protection. ARM is already doing some of this in areas closer to Esketemc.

## **6. Funding Resources**

It was noted that Forest Enhancement Society of BC has issued its last intake, they will manage these last projects, but future funds for fuel management and other activities will be undertaken by BC government staff.

Other funding sources(either cash, or in-kind work) noted include:

- Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) programs:
  - Community Resiliency Investment Program
  - Community Emergency Preparedness Fund
- Stumpage - a larger issue to look into; if the Interior Appraisal System recognized costs of doing fuel management, major licensees could undertake the work more readily
- Red Cross - funded FireSmart work around homes for elderly, disabled elsewhere
- United Way - funded FireSmart work around homes for elderly, disabled elsewhere
- Work BC - funded FireSmart work around homes for elderly, disabled elsewhere
- BC Hydro - they could do work in key areas that advances fuel management
- Utilities - Enbridge, Fortis BC

## 7. Key Needs for 2019 Wildfire Season

The following key needs were identified, **beyond** what was already underway:

- Egress routes - there have been many raised for a long time, with no resolution. The land manager needs to make them a priority to address the access issues.
- Egress signs - explore having them installed at key locations
- Develop key working definitions (i.e., fuels breaks, resiliency, OGMA)
- Share past and proposed fuel management treatments, utilize the Forsite mapping tool

## 8. Next Steps

It was agreed to create a community wildfire roundtable, based on the following: lean on Fraser Basin Council to lead and convene the parties, do funding applications; meet quarterly; have meetings open to a wide range of people, but essential organizations to attend are CRD, City, MFLNRORD, BC Wildfire Service, BC Timber Sales, Tolko, West Fraser, Community Forest, woodlots, Xat'sull, WLIB, Esketemc/ARM, BC Hydro and utilities. Two venue options were offered for future meetings: Williams Lake Fire Hall, or BC Wildfire Service Fire Centre.

**Next meeting** - half day, fall 2019. Mike will seek a date 3-4 weeks in advance.

The following ACTION items were agreed to:

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Contact Forsite about hosting fuel management projects (past and proposed) on their mapping website	Mike, Jane	In July
Create a draft terms of reference	Mike, Jane	Before next meeting
Address the egress routes, signs issue - follow up with City, CRD and MFLNRORD	Mike, Jane	Before next meeting
[Point raised by Stephanie Masun, CRD after the meeting - need an MOU or agreement in place between City and CRD regarding implementation of the CWPP]	Mike and others at City, CRD	Over summer