

# Clearwater and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

## Meeting Summary as of November 22, 2022

**Meeting date:** November 18, 2022, 9:00AM to 12:00AM

**Location:** Dutch Lake Community Centre and online (hybrid)

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

BC Parks – Terri Worthen, Sean Owens, Vladi Glat  
BC Timber Sales – Tyson Leudtke  
BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) - Hugh Murdoch, Conlan Sprickerhoff  
Blackpool Volunteer Fire Department - Mike Savage, Rod Tulett  
District of Clearwater – Mike Smith, Alsid Prime  
Fraser Basin Council (subcontractor) – Mike Simpson (facilitator, recorder)  
MOF, Thompson Rivers District - Marina Irwin  
Simpchw First Nation (Simpchw) - Ron Lampreau Jr.  
TNRD - Kevin Skrepnek, Usoff Tsao  
Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade – Steve Murray, Chris Nowak  
Wells Gray Community Forest - George Brcko  
West Fraser – Kayla Brock

### 1. Introductions, Agenda, Objectives

Mike Simpson welcomed everyone, unceded territory was acknowledged, and a round of introductions took place. The agenda was approved as presented, noting people that had to leave early. Regrets were noted from EMBC.

Mike reminded participants that the Fraser Basin Council hosts this roundtable, there are three others in the Interior in Williams Lake, Clinton and Lillooet and their surrounding areas. Mike is subcontracting to his former employer to facilitate these. Funding to host these roundtables is from BC Wildfire Service. See [www.wildfireroundtables.ca](http://www.wildfireroundtables.ca) for general information and a subpage for each roundtable.

### 2. Debrief of the Fire Season and Lessons Learned

Participants were asked to reflect on the fire season that just ended, whether locally in Clearwater or in the larger area, and what we can learn from that for next year:

- Weird weather – cold wet spring, followed by a summer with very little precipitation that lasted well into October
- Dry fall meant that a planned prescribed burn above Blue River could not be conducted; now there are trees to plant in spring 2023 without the site having been prepared
- The interior wet belt forests around Clearwater have a lot of fuel/biomass, when things dry out as they did this summer, fires could be extreme
- Pile burning was challenged by a cold spring (piles still under snow) and lack of good venting days in fall and winter
- Water levels are as low as some have seen in 40 years – would need to dam a creek to enable pumping of water
- Attended some vehicle fires, grass fires

- Conlan noted that there were 32 wildfires in Clearwater area, 27 lightning caused and 5 people caused for a total 686 ha burnt

#### Lessons learned:

- Past weather patterns won't enable prediction of future weather such as cold, wet springs with snow that sticks around and dry, warm autumns with low water
- A "not so busy year" for wildfires enables time for cross-disciplinary training and collaboration
- There's year round work for qualified crews, we just need to set it up (fuel management, FireSmart education and treatments, wildfire suppression)
- Need to figure out whether local people would accept some smoke from pile burning to reduce the fire hazard and ensure piles are burnt quickly
- More training and equipment needed to attend to vehicle fires

### 3. Previous Meeting Summary

The meeting summary from May 24, 2022, was approved and will be posted [here](#).

Old action items were reviewed; those that remain are at the end of this summary.

### 4. Information Sharing – What's Underway, Who's Doing What

#### Wells Gray Community Forest

- George noted that the WGCF hired Simpcw's IIA crews to do some fuel management work
- WGCF has 12 fuel management prescriptions in place, with works including fuel breaks underway at Blackpool and Gill Creek.
- George noted that we need more local capacity for people trained and willing to do fuel management work, or to look at what Logan Lake does with high school students to do the work

#### Simpcw First Nation

- Ron Lampreau Jr. stated that Simpcw has had an Indigenous Initial Attack (IIA) crew this past season that worked well. The intent is to complement BCWS crews, not replace them. Many commented that this is a good model that should be replicated across other communities.
- Ron and other emergency staff participated in seasonal preparedness meetings in Osoyoos this past week. They are pushing First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and others to enable crews such as their IIA crew to do a suite of activities such as cultural prescribed burning, fuel management, FireSmart education and treatments as well as structural firefighting – an "all hazards" approach
- They are looking at submitting a [Community Resiliency Investment](#) (CRI) application to support the all hazards approach and fuel management work in community

#### Blackpool Volunteer Fire Department

- Blackpool VFD responded to some grass and vehicle fires this year.
- Mike Savage advised that they did a lot of pre-planning and education work this past spring and summer. They hosted a wildfire preparedness day on May 7 with information and demonstrations. Through the TNRD they've applied for funding for three fuel management prescriptions in Mountainview Sunset, an area outside North Thompson River park by Caroline Road, and south Blackpool above the pump.

- They have done FireSmart promotion door to door, and also done a structural protection triage assessment of homes and structures.
- In addition to water tanks acquired previously, WGCF has funded the acquisition of two more. All these water tanks are available for BC Wildfire Service or Transmountain crews if needed.
- Looking at having crews take engine boss course
- Rod Tulett added that they'd like to have a wildfire scenario practice response, in addition to a tabletop exercise. Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade expressed interest, as did Kevin from TNRD, and George noted that WGCF could help fund this. Conlan was supportive but staff capacity and time of year would need to be considered.

### **BC Parks**

- Sean noted that he and Terri Worthen are full time land and resources staff working on wildfire risk reduction and preparedness in BC Parks in a big part of the BC Interior, with a third staff person in the Kootenays and a fourth soon to be hired. They work internally with BC Parks staff as well as externally.
- Within Thompson-Cariboo, they have 7 active projects and 6 approved but not yet started projects, with 37 total around BC.
- Within the Clearwater area, they are reviewing plans and documents, notably the Wells Gray Wildfire Risk Reduction Plan (it was noted that there is high risk in the road corridor of Upper Clearwater from Clearwater to the park entrance) and preparing to submit funding applications for projects.
- There are two fuel management prescriptions for Spahats campground of Wells Gray park
- Vladi added that BC Parks are developing a toolkit for rangers and will be looking at offering S100 training for them in the future
- It was suggested that there is high fire hazard in North Thompson park along the access trail to the back end loop to Caroline Road, it is used by many people.
- It was suggested that there is high fire hazard from people smoking at Flatiron portion of Wells Gray park, could some no smoking signs be put up (ideally wildfire danger risk rating signs, but Vladi noted that they are labour intensive to change the ratings).
- It was noted that all organizations have to be organized around evacuation plans for the Upper Clearwater corridor into/out of the park

### **BC Wildfire Service**

- Conlan noted that Richard Swift is on a temporary assignment to Vernon. There will be more full time staff in BCWS next year as many crew supervisors have been made full time.
- He will be working on a prevention plan and plans for prescribed fire for the entire Clearwater Fire Zone in 2023.
- He noted that BCWS is open to working on interagency cooperation with groups on scenarios
- Conlan asked if any groups host events such as preparedness days to please let him know

### **West Fraser**

- Kayla advised that she works for West Fraser out of 100 Mile House but lives full time in Clearwater. She is fully trained and has a fully equipped truck and asked others to call on her during wildfires as needed. She noted that West Fraser is active in burning piles right now.

### **Thompson-Nicola Regional District**

- Kevin Skrepnek noted that he is now manager,

- Kevin noted that TNRD has done some staff restructuring:
  - Kevin is now Manager, Community and Emergency Services
  - Jeremy Denny has been hired to coordinate training for VFDs and look after FireSmart, with the goal of securing funding and hiring seasonal staff
  - Mike Knauff has been hired by TNRD and will start in November as Emergency Program Coordinator
- They are also doing renovations at the TNRD building in downtown Kamloops, there will be a dedicated emergency operations centre (EOC) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. This can be made available for training, as well as a multipurpose room at their Mission Flats office.
- Kevin noted that about 80% of the board of directors is new.
- Kevin noted that BC is still embarking on major changes to the Emergency Program Act, which will be anticipated to have big impacts on local and First Nations governments and how they operate, including how small municipalities currently buy into the TNRD emergency program

### **Clearwater Fire Department**

- Mike Smith noted that they will apply to CRI to fund a FireSmart coordinator
- Their structural protection unit (SPU) trailer is now completed thanks to WGCF funding
- A fuel management project is underway at the gun range
- Want to replace chassis on water tender next year and continue training, both formal and on a wildfire scenario practice response
- Need to continue mutual aid training with Blackpool and Vavenby VFDs

### **Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade**

- Chris Nowak is now deputy chief
- They have purchased 3 x 5000 imperial gallon tanks, they will arrive next year
- It's been challenging getting information on who lives where, who is a permanent versus seasonal resident.
- They appreciate that Blackpool VFD donated equipment to deal with vehicle fires
- They received a \$25K grant from Red Cross for equipment such as hoses, pumps and funds from WGCF for a storage container
- Steve noted that they are one of 13 fire brigades in the province, they just do wildfires, but aren't recognized as official fire departments

### **MOF – Thompson Rivers District (DTR)**

- Marina Irwin reported that Nicola McGrath had intended to participate today but is literally putting out fires as there are smoke complaints from some pile burning. They lost most of their Wildfire Risk Reduction staff this past summer but will be seeking funds for a more strategic approach for 2023/24. Poor venting to burn piles is a significant respiratory challenge for some residents, yet the need to burn piles before winter is also urgent.

## **5. Next Steps**

The following action items were either carried over from previous meetings or created today:

<b>Task or activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Explore creating <b>development permit area</b> requirements for FireSmart principles and/or fuel management	Tyson Luedtke, John Thomas, Kevin Skrepnek	Long term, needs council approval
Share <b>maps, data, shape files</b> of fuel management treatments	George, Sean	ASAP
Utilize the <b>Kamloops TSA mapping website</b> to upload fuel management polygons (past and present) from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wells Gray CF Landscape Fire Plan</li> <li>▪ Wells Gray Park Fire Plan</li> <li>▪ DoC and area CWPP</li> </ul>	Marina Irwin, Nicola McGrath, George	Ongoing
Develop a <b>FireSmart coordinator</b> program, with funding from either CRI Program or WGCF or Social Development Ministry or using students	John Thomas, Mike Smith, George, and Clearwater Forestry Working Group	Ongoing
Coordinate about <b>evacuation plans</b> and <b>evacuation centres</b> from Wells Gray Park, Upper Clearwater Valley, share ideas and input, make sure everyone is on the same page	BC Parks staff, Steve Murray, TNRD and others	Ongoing
Get an updated map showing <b>Blackpool VFD</b> coverage	FBC	Before next meeting
Develop a <b>water bar inventory</b> for access and egress, build into emergency response plans	Forestry Working group, Mike Smith	ongoing
Bring <b>Alan Westhaver</b> to present to the community, and field tour to look at fuel treatments and FireSmart risks of homes and structures	Mike Simpson	Spring 2023
Help get <b>private property information</b> for Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade's area	Kevin, others	Ongoing
Organize a <b>wildfire scenario practice response</b> to enable real-world experience for VFDs and Upper Clearwater Brigade	Rod, Mike Smith, Steve Murray, Conlan, Kevin	In early spring
Are you <b>hosting an event</b> about FireSmart? Advise Conlan	VFDs, brigades	Ongoing
Talk to BC Wildfire Service prevention people if you need an <b>exemption to venting indices</b>	Those that have piles to burn	Ongoing
Find better ways to deal with <b>too many piles to burn and not enough good venting days</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise this to higher levels within BCWS</li> <li>• Raise this with Ministry of Environment that the Open Burning and Smoke Control Regulation is unworkable</li> <li>• Explore whether local residents can agree to override venting indices</li> </ul>	Hugh, Conlan, Marina	Ongoing