

Clearwater and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Approved meeting summary as of April 23, 2025

Meeting date: November 25, 2024, 1:00PM to 4:00PM

Location: Dutch Lake Community Centre and online (hybrid)

Present (for at least a portion of the meeting) (*virtual attendees in italics*):

BC Hydro – *Rhonda Kariz*

BC Parks – Tod Haughton

BC Transit – *Lee Archibald*

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) – Conlan Sprickerhoff, Vanessa Purves, *Hugh Murdoch*

Blackpool Volunteer Fire Department - Mike Savage, Rod Tulett, Dietrich Rempel

CDART - Canadian Disaster Animal Response Team – *Cheryl Rogers*

CN Rail – Monty Armstrong

District of Clearwater – Mike Smith, Alsid Prime, Mayor Merlin Blackwell, Chance Breckenridge

Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) – Chris McGourlick

Fraser Basin Council – Alex de Chantal (facilitator, recorder)

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure – *Daniel Werkman*

Ministry of Forests – Gwenn Hetherington

RCMP – Sgt Grant Simpson

Simpcw First Nation – *Jim McGowan*

Thompson-Nicola Regional District (TNRD) – Mike Knauff, Kim McMillan, Kevin Skrepnek

TNRD Electoral Area A Director – Usoff Tsao

Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade – Chris Novak, Sandy Crane

West Fraser – Kayla Brok

1. Introductions, Agenda, Objectives

Alex de Chantal welcomed everyone in the unceded territory of Simpcw and the larger Secwepemc nation was acknowledged. A round of introductions took place. The agenda was approved as presented.

2. Previous Meeting Summary

The meeting summary from May 23, 2024. Old action items were reviewed; those that remain are at the end of this summary.

3. Information Sharing – What’s Underway, Who’s Doing What

BC Wildfire Service - Hugh Murdoch put a presentation up on screen and provided a summary of the 2024 fire season. There were 54 total fires, only 2 human caused, large majority (43) of the fires started in July.

District of Clearwater FireSmart – Chance presented some stats on the FireSmart program. 61 home assessments were completed, they hosted a weeklong chipping program, hosted live fire exercise, offered education sessions with schools, 3 people booked for wildfire ignition assessments, worked with Forsite for CWRP, survey to go out soon, and will be showing the documentary The Test.

TNRD – Usoff spoke to his efforts introducing FireSmart assessment in his area. He will bring the FireSmart update to the TNRD Parks and Trails Committee. Thank you to BC Parks for communicating which trails are open/closed. He has received great feedback on the new BCWS app. TNRD is working with Birch Island to extend fire protection from Vavenby.

TNRD – Mike Knauff updated that the emergency program is looking at evacuation routes. Area B is done, and Area A is next. The challenge he is experiencing is that UBCM is not checking the evacuation routes he identifies in his reports. Province has been deactivating roads that are now marked as evacuation routes. How does he find out this is being done? Egress routes are a priority for TNRD, so he needs to know if roads are deactivated. Usoff Area Director A shared that this was addressed with TNRD, they have had issues like this in the past. He met with Minister Ralson suggest better communication but acknowledged that deactivation is best practice. Mike stated he can check with BC iMaps but discussions need to continue. If TNRD is not informed, how do they know if money is needed to rehabilitate?

TNRD FireSmart – Kim started in her role on March 18th, assessed 520 properties so far, hosted 25 events, hosted 2 chipper days and collected over 6000lbs of material. She's now doing critical infrastructure assessments for firehalls, water treatment plants, power plants etc. 30 have been completed to date. They also have a rebate program; she asked folks to reach out directly to her for more information.

BlackPool Volunteer Fire Department – Mike updated that 10 members took the FireSmart course to do assessments. Hosted a March 15 firehall open house with FireSmart. His team had two deployments and 3 wildfire responses. They built a bush truck and donated an old one to Little Fort. They have also installed a large pump on a trailer and put up a cell tower on top of the firehall.

MOF – Gwen shared they have done some wildfire risk reduction work at Candle Creek, approximately 15ha, and they have completed prescriptions for fuel management identified in CWPP.

BC Hydro

Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade – Chris provided an update that 9 members were trained in S100/S185 through the CCWR program. The Brigade recently received a 10-acre donation of land for a permanent firehall. They were approved for a Gaming Grant in the amount of \$20k for operational costs, PPE, and equipment. They also received grants from Community Forest for five 5000-gallon tanks. Their AGM is on Dec. 6th and it's open to the public. There was a question around the timeline for the fire hall, Chris expects the project to take 5 years.

West Fraser – Kayla shared that she has recently returned to work from mat leave. She has sponsorship dollars for local FireSmart events. She also updated that treatments near O'Connor Lake are ongoing.

District of Clearwater Mayor – Merlin updated that a new generator has been moved and installed to District building. EOC will now be located here at District building with the new generator. The district has started looking at abandoned lots that are wooded, will start doing assessments in new year. They have a new CAO, Byron Johnson. They are moving ahead with helipad at hospital, 2026 is timeline. Interior Health will maintain when built.

Chance provided an update on behalf of the Clearwater Fire Department. They trained members in S100/S185 and wildfire fighter 1. Offering courses to the public. A new tender coming in December, Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade is interested in an old truck.

BC Hydro – Rhonda updated the group that they continue to perform maintenance along powerlines and doing tree removals for hazard trees.

Simpcw First Nation – Jim stated that IR3A treatment piles burnt in last few weeks. Treatment done in Coal Creek; piles still need to be burned. Working on permits for WRR in Dunn Lake.

CDART – Cheryl shared that her org is available to assist with animals during wildfire response. Training new members to help with the evacuation of animals.

BCWS – Vanessa shared that applications for FireSmart funding have new changes effective Oct. 1st. Please email her with any questions.

FES – Chris updated that FES is the funding agency for WRR on crown land. Intake is open and stays open, next award date is January 15th.

BC Parks – Question for BC Parks around concerns being heard about piles and blowdown in Parks. What is the view on this from BC parks? Green Lake has issues and residents have been complaining. Todd explained that their WRR budget is very small. Kim from TNRD stated that she'll follow up to learn more.

4. Next Steps

Alex reminded the group about the FireSmart BC Wildfire Resilience and Training Summit in Penticton on April 12-16. There were comments that accommodations are limited in Penticton so book hotels early. This event has grown substantially over the last few years.

Requests for presentations centered on:

- How to act on WRR on private lands
- Success stories about community champions
- Knutsford Emergency Response Society successes in working alongside BCWS.

Possible field trips identified for next meeting:

- Look at crown land corridor between private and Wells Gray Park.
- Chris Nowak UCFB, Todd BC Parks, and Gwen MOF willing to coordinate
- Green Mountain Tower lookout just had WRR brushing done

Next meeting – Spring, Mike to seek a date via doodle poll about a month in advance. Suggested look at dates during the week of May 5th

Meeting Adjourned at 3:30pm

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

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Explore creating development permit area requirements for FireSmart principles and/or fuel management	Jason Johnson, Alsid Prime	Long term, needs council approval
Mapping – since the Forsite Mapping Tool is no longer used, what mechanism can there be to share proposed and completed fuel management treatments?	Nicola Enderud (formerly McGrath), Mike Aldred	Before next meeting
Share information about status of routes for first responders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water bar inventory for access/egress routes • FSRs, status (e.g., car friendly, high clearance) maintenance and barriers 	Everyone	Ongoing
Provide feedback on the TNRD evacuation plan to Mike Knauff – any additional routes?	Everyone	By mid-June
Biomass unit – pursue funding to enable capital investments to enable the biomass unit to take material hog fuel from fuel management sites, not just clean chips	George Brcko, Alsid Prime	Ongoing
Are you hosting an event about FireSmart? Advise Conlan	VFDs, brigades	Ongoing
Talk to BC Wildfire Service prevention people if you need an exemption to venting indices	Those that have piles to burn	Ongoing
Suggest future locations for a BCWS weather station in Clearwater to Conlan Sprickerhoff	Everyone	Sooner than later
Dry hydrant ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcase this at a future BC Wildfire Resiliency and Training Summit • Share specifications/plans (if approved by TNRD) and promote more of these to be installed 	Everyone	No deadline