

Lillooet and Area Community Wildfire Preparedness Roundtable

Approved Meeting Summary as of April 4, 2025

Meeting date: Monday November 4, 2024, 10:00AM to 3:00PM

Location: Lillooet REC Centre, Mezzanine and online

Present (for at least a portion of the meeting; those noted in *italics* were virtual)

BC Ministry of Forests – Craig Sine

BC Wildfire Service – Justin Rommel, Alicia Rhodenizer

Canadian Disaster Animal Response Team (CDART) – *Cheryl Rogers*

CN Rail – Monty Armstrong

District of Lillooet – Joe McCulloch

Forest Enhancement Society of BC – Chris McGourlick

Fraser Basin Council – *Alex de Chantal*, Mike Simpson (contractor)

Gun Lake Fire Protection – Al Leighton, Roger Stacey

Individuals – Arlen Ferguson

Lillooet Tribal Council – Darryl Adrian, Sharon French

Marshall Valley Community – Roger Tremblay

Pavillion Fire Brigade – Ron Cook

P'egp'ig'lha Council – Christian Ahrenkiel, Buddy _____

Sekw'el'was (Cayoose Creek Indian Band) – Dalton Manuel

Squamish Lillooet Regional District – Director Sal DeMare, Director Vivian Birch-Jones, Mike Fusca,
Maude Lussier

Texas Creek community – Geoff Playfair

Thompson-Nicola Regional District – *Mike Knauff, Kevin Skrepnek, Kim McMillan*

Woodlots BC – *Kerry Rouck*

Xwisten – Gerald (Bobo) Michel

Yalakom community – Robin Andruss

1. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda, Objectives

Mike Simpson, a facilitator and professional forester on contract to Fraser Basin Council, welcomed everyone and acknowledged unceded St'at'imc Territory. A round of introductions took place for people in the room and those participating online.

The agenda was reviewed and accepted as presented. Early departures were noted.

2. Previous Meeting Summary and Old Action Items

The [meeting summary from April 8, 2024](#) was approved. Old action items were reviewed, and updated actions are included in the table at the end of this summary.

3. Information Sharing

Pavillion Fire Brigade – Ron Cook noted that they are an informal fire brigade, not a VFD, and their current initiatives are to get S100, S185 and incident command training for their members. They've had

some recent success engaging seasonal/weekend residents. He suggested that there needs to be traffic control in the Hwy 99 corridor through Pavillion/Marble canyon in the event of wildfires.

Cooperative Community Wildfire Response (CCWR) – Also known as “cooperative response” or “working with rural and remote wildfire fighters” (see BCWS website [here](#)) there was extensive discussion about how CCWR has worked in 2024 from many perspectives:

- Some noted that they understood the restrictions of what “type 3” crews could and couldn’t do (in general, work under direction of BCWS personnel, not do initial attack on their own), some were frustrated that they can’t do initial attack on their own initiative
- Ironically, it was noted at the UBCM conference in September that individual citizens can respond to wildfire on their own, but once these community emergency response societies and fire brigades have an agreement with BCWS, they are expressly forbidden from responding unless they are under the direction of BCWS
- Training was appreciated, but online courses were challenging in areas where residents don’t have internet access
- Funding for rural and remote community emergency response societies and fire brigades to acquire personal protective equipment (PPE) wasn’t in place in 2024, but there is now funding available through UBCM
- The key to moving forward with CCWR is **developing relationships and trust** between BCWS and rural and remote communities and these community emergency response societies and fire brigades, and **enabling the use of knowledge of locals**
- Different regional districts have different interests in supporting and administering this program; SLRD has no interest in this, and TNRD wanted to be involved if these groups were being formed
- Alex de Chantal noted that Fraser Basin Council still has some funding to coordinate training of community emergency response societies and fire brigades, contact him if you want to be put on a list for spring training.
- It was noted that Fraser Basin Council’s role with BCWS to design the CCWR program came to completion in March 2024; feedback about how it’s working should be directed to BCWS

Key points of action in relation to CCWR were noted as follows:

- If any organization has specific feedback to give about how CCWR operates, either comments or suggestions, email BCWS.CooperativeCommunityWildfireResponse@gov.bc.ca or contact Kaitlin Baskerville, Manager, Provincial Operations, Preparedness at BCWS at Kaitlin.Baskerville@gov.bc.ca
- Contact Alex de Chantal adechantal@fraserbasin.ca if your community emergency response societies and fire brigades is interested in S100, S185, ICS and other training

Key points of action related to “making the intent of CCWR work” in Lillooet & Area were noted:

- Justin noted that we consider mimicking the intent of the Indigenous Initial Attack Crew (IIAC), which is more in-depth training, dedicated time spent with small crews
- Community groups and fire brigades should develop relationships and trust with BCWS staff, especially local ones, and not rely on SLRD as a middleman
- As discussed in April, utilize the Fire Warden or Community Liaison positions to augment those trained through CCWR
- Key ingredient is **developing relationships and trust** between BCWS and rural and remote communities, and **enabling the use of knowledge of locals**

Thompson-Nicola Regional District – Mike Knauff noted that there are lots of groups involved in CCWR and TNRD is supportive and engaged. TNRD are working on evacuation planning and pre-organization. Kim McMillan noted that she is FireSmart program lead, they now have community wildfire resiliency plans (CWRPs) for each of 10 electoral areas [here](#). They’ve done 25 education events (including one in Venables Valley the evening of the evacuation order) and assessed 528 structures on 320 properties. They trialled a “chipper day” at Paul Lake and collected 6000 pounds of material and will do another in Lac le Jeune on November 12. They are doing FireSmart assessments on critical infrastructure starting with TNRD fire halls then moving to water systems.

Ministry of Forests (MOF) – Craig Sine noted that their wildfire risk reduction (WRR) program includes implementing treatments on [SLRD’s CWRPs](#), including: working in Bridge River with Xwisten totalling 20 hectares, operations starting soon; prescriptions being developed at Marshall Lake; and funds are in place to start prescriptions at Gun Lake, Bralorne, Goldbridge, Tyaughton. There is an old prescription that needs to be updated in Texas Creek. They are working with BCWS on cultural and prescribed burns in East Lillooet (spring 2025) and Xwisten 3F and 4F to burn areas that had recent WRR hand-treatments.

Responding to questions about WRR treatments or concerns with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) and BC Hydro rights of way, Maude noted that she has ongoing discussions with them and BC Hydro, and Mike Simpson noted they are part of this roundtable, just not present today. Maude also noted that she and MOF have good ongoing communication about implementing priorities in the [SLRD CWRPs](#).

Woodlots BC – Kerry Rouck is on contract to Tyler Hodgkinson, the South Region representative for Woodlots BC; Woodlots BC (WLBC) represents over 800 Woodlots across BC and supports the members through outreach, extension, policy advocacy, and accessing funding for projects. There are 2 funding programs that individual Woodlot Licensees can access related to wildfire prep and response:

- Wildfire Risk Reduction Prescriptions: WLBC can assist Woodlot owners in securing FESBC funds to develop and implement fuel reduction activities on their woodlots. At present, the funding is focused on “life and property”, so WLs that are within 1 km of 25 or more residences are primary candidates. In Lillooet, there are a few woodlots in Goldbridge/Gun Lake, Tyax Lodge that fall in this zone. Both BCWS and MOF are involved in the preparation and review of these projects and work to align with other WRR projects underway.
- The second funding source is from the Forest Investment Program that can potentially provides funds for replanting WL areas that were burnt, but are not under a Cutting Permit, or mature forests that have been killed, but can’t be harvested.
- Lastly, the spring edition of the [Woodland Almanac](#) has a great article on how to prepare for fire season. The 2025 fire season seems like it’s a long ways away, but it’ll be here before you know it, and winter is a great time to start getting yourself ready for April

If anyone present today knows a woodlot licensee in Lillooet and Area that may be interested in topics above please connect them with Tyler southregion@woodlot.bc.ca or Kerry nurturenature@shaw.ca

SLRD Emergency Management – Mike Fusca noted that their emergency operations centre (EOC) was activated for 10 weeks this year, which is now regular business and not exceptional and has implications for staff workload. They are working on Indigenous engagement through the new Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA).

He also noted that with funding from Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (IAFBC) they have contracted Ione Smith, P.Ag. to initiate agriculture emergency planning looking at small lot agriculture and large commercial operations. Key initiatives are to identify all agriculture operations, contact info, and identify support systems to be implemented during emergencies. Contact Mike Fusca mfusca@slrd.bc.ca for more info or to be involved.

Discussion and questions noted support to address workload for EOC activations, opportunities to utilize an incident command system, utilizing a province-wide incident management team with provincial staff to support EOCs, or having paid trained volunteers.

SLRD FireSmart – Maude Lussier noted that maps for the CWRP for Electoral Area A are [here](#) and begin on page 102 and the CWRP for Electoral Area B is [here](#) and maps begin on page 79.

SLRD's FireSmart program was busy in 2024, they hired two local FireSmart representatives (LFR) one for Electoral Areas A/B and one for Electoral Areas C/D. 205 assessments were completed, they ran the rebate program, and workshops were held in spring in Lillooet and Pemberton. They worked with a consultant to assist 10 rural neighbourhoods to work towards FireSmart Canada's neighbourhood recognition program (including Lajoy Lake, Tyaughton Lake, Riley Creek, Pavillion Creek). Contact Maude MLussier@slrd.bc.ca if your community/neighbourhood is interested in being involved next year. Also for 2025, they are looking to increase FireSmart rebates up to \$5000 and implement the [Home Partners Program](#).

Maude noted they tried a pilot project during the Birkenhead Lake fire in 2024: when a community is put on evacuation alert, Maude initiates a "strike team" of LFRs to do a FireSmart blitz to educate residents on FireSmart and orchestrate people to FireSmart their properties, before structure protection crews show up. She noted it worked well, 100 residents were engaged. In future she'd like to have the strike team trained with S100, S185, ICS training.

Discussion and comments: Sal noted it was good that transfer stations were opened longer hours to accommodate FireSmart works during similar events to the strike team pilot (also was done at Gun Lake in 2023); Robin noted the FireSmart blitz could also be done as a "work bee" helping neighbours, not just doing your own property. Maude noted that her program's funding pays to waive tipping fees at transfer stations which typically runs out by fall; and she'd encourage communities to come up with a plan to deal with debris and approach her for support.

P'egp'ig'lha Council (PC) – Christian Ahrenkiel noted that the PC is a family system of governance for T'it'et that covers off-reserve lands. He noted they have a guardians program that has been running 3 years that covers rural and remote areas and works on a variety of priorities, which could include wildfire resiliency and preparedness. They can't do compliance and enforcement due to limited recognition, but they aspire to be able to implement St'at'imc laws. He also noted that many St'at'imc governments initiate their own fire bans and restrictions which may not be in concert with BCWS or local government. He suggested there's an opportunity to explore synergies between their guardians, Fire Wardens and rural and remote non-Indigenous communities (emergency response societies and fire brigades) for the common goal of increasing wildfire resiliency, observing, recording and reporting wildfire starts, and education of the public including tourists and backcountry users. He noted that those requesting increased demands of guardians be aware that they are "funded at the whim of the federal government" and for others to communicate support, as well as respect aspirations of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) and recognition of St'at'imc laws.

Suggested action: in addition to exploring the intent of CCWR above, explore synergies with how guardians, Fire Wardens and rural and remote non-Indigenous communities (emergency response societies and fire brigades) for the common goal of increasing wildfire resiliency, observing, recording and reporting wildfire starts, and education of the public including tourists and backcountry users.

Lillooet Tribal Council – Darryl noted that it was a relatively quite year for them on wildfire EOC front. They hosted an extreme heat workshop with 20 participants. They’ve hired Sharon French as FireSmart coordinator and also had a student employed. They are exploring an Indigenous wildfire climate readiness course to be delivered through TRU or NVIT. Had 8 emergency training sessions. Have 4 people including youth trained to operate drones. They are engaged with the Salish Firekeepers Society which Darryl is part of.

Darryl also noted that he recently met Lee Archibald, Provincial Emergency Management Specialist with BC Transit, who is initiating Disaster Response Transportation project. Essentially, exploring how BC Transit can assist with evacuation needs during an emergency. Lee Archibald will be added to the contact list and invited to future meetings.

Sharon French noted there’s been lots of community engagement with her new role. She shared a few video links that were noted in the spring meeting:

<https://firesmartbc.ca/resource/the-bcaa-firesmart-initiative/>

<https://firesmartbc.ca/resource/lillooet-tribal-council-feature/>

CN Rail – Monty Armstrong that he is in a new position, Fire Prevention Officer, and has been tasked with mitigation and prevention of fires along CN rail rights of way and operations. He noted that there are also Tyler Banick, our Manger of Public Affairs, as well as Brie Ferguson and Karla Graf, both Indigenous Relations Managers at CN Rail that can work with him on initiatives related to fire prevention. He noted that CN Rail is looking to FireSmart their operations and work with communities along their routes. As noted in the spring meeting, CN Rail has 3 fire trains. He also noted that a challenge for CN is that there is only one facility to recycle used railway ties in Canada that is in Quebec.

Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) – Chris McGourlick, Operations Manager with FESBC, reminded folks that they have funding available, (link to [presentation](#) from spring meeting). They have a new Executive Director Jason Fisher. He also noted that they’re exploring a project in the Yalakom with MOF and the local community, and that he can discuss WRR treatments on MOTI rights of way and chipper opportunities with SLRD. Reach out to Chris with any questions or to discuss ideas for funding wildfire risk reduction projects cmcgourlick@fesbc.ca 250-668-7030.

BC Wildfire Service – Justin noted that Kamloops Fire Centre is working on “Wildfire 1” a mapping system to include past and proposed WRR treatments to enable structure protection unit crews to have up to date information; this could also be used to address our ongoing mapping needs. 2024 wildfire season was a “holding year” that had lots of training including leadership and soft skills, and they’ve seen lots of staff turnover. They worked with Xwisten on spring prescribed burn and have set up burn plan and are finalizing approach for east Lillooet burn planned for spring 2025. They are planning a First Nations boot camp with goals of teaching skills, cultural alignment and to help with recruiting. If you have ideas for training sites please contact Justin.

Sekw'el'was (Cayoose) – Dalton Manuel noted that they have hosted two FireSmart days, and their bins are full of material residents have removed. They are hosting Wildfire Mitigation Specialist course next week with Colleen Ross and have some seats available if anyone is interested.

Xwisten – Gerald noted his concerns with FNESS owning information from Xwisten and invited any assistance from others on how to address this. He noted concerns about the spring burn that may have burned roots of 50 year old adjacent pine trees, as well as the amount of invasive plants that established. He suspects impacts of drought and use of calcium chloride for dust control has weakened these trees. He noted his community requires all adult males to have S100, S185 training; this enabled them to help attend the CN bridge fire. He'd like to work with T'it'qet and District of Lillooet to do more prescribed burns.

District of Lillooet – Joe McCulloch noted that they are putting in place a new fire chief; Justin Rommel is a volunteer firefighter, and he noted they currently have 18 members and are recruiting for more.

Canadian Disaster Animal Response Team (CDART) – Cheryl noted that their organization covers all species of animals and are undergoing continuous training. She's happy to connect with SLRD on their agricultural emergency planning initiative. She also noted they are doing a research project with York University, if anyone would like to be interviewed reach out to Cheryl cheryl.rogers@cdart.org

[Post-meeting, she sent a link for the [Building Resilient Communities Conference](#), coming up Nov 18-21 in Penticton. It is "replacing" the Emergency Preparedness Conference in Vancouver every November.]

4. Next Steps

Next meeting – Late April, exact date to be determined based on a scheduling poll.

Topics – in addition to regular updates:

- **Common issues across all wildfire roundtables (Mike Simpson)**
- Scaling up this holistic/silo-busting approach to all of BC (Geoff Playfair)

Consider doing a field trip to one of the following:

- Xwisten prescribed burn from this spring
- East Lillooet prescribed burn (if it happens)
- Local wildfire risk reduction treatments

Task	Responsibility	Timing
Questions about proposed fuel management/wildfire risk reduction treatments? Maude Lussier at SLRD or Craig Sine or Ryan de Visser at MOF Cascades are key point people.	Everyone	Ongoing
Contact Justin Rommel at BCWS Lillooet Fire Zone if you want to become a Fire Warden or find out more information	Everyone	Ongoing
Provide update on mapping initiative Wildfire 1 – we need a system to map past WRR treatments by any jurisdiction	Justin, Craig	Ongoing
Listing training and certifications on our contact list – email Mike Simpson mf_simpson@outlook.com about whether you have S100, S185, ICS or are an LFR or WMS	Everyone	Ongoing
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