

# Quesnel and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

## Approved Summary as of Nov 14, 2024

**Meeting date:** April 16, 2024, 9:00AM to 12:00PM

**Location:** Forestry Initiatives Office, City of Quesnel and online

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

Barlow Creek Volunteer Fire Department – David Sugden

BC Ministry of Forests (Quesnel District) – Tyrone Green, Vincent Luu

BC Parks – *Sean Owens, Annie Ellison*

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) – John Salewski, Tom Foley

Cariboo Regional District – Irene Israel, Travis Flanagan

Central Interior Mapping – Roland Jarett

City of Quesnel – Erin Robinson, Ron Richert

?Esdilagh – Sean Fogarty

Forest Enhancement Society of BC – *Brian Watson*

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

Lhtako Dene First Nation – *Bruce McDonald*

Nazko First Nation – Florian Bergoin

West Fraser – Ross Griffith

Woodlots BC – John Massier

### 1. Welcome, Introductions, Review Agenda and Objectives

Mike Simpson, a facilitator and professional forester on contract to Fraser Basin Council, welcomed everyone and acknowledged unceded Lhtako Dene Territory. A round of introductions took place for people in the room and those participating online. The City of Quesnel was thanked for hosting.

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

### 2. Previous Meeting Summary

The [meeting summary from November 16, 2023](#) was approved. The lessons learned that were generated at that meeting were reviewed.

### 3. Dragon Mountain Subcommittee

The Dragon Mountain Subcommittee met virtually on December 4, 2023 and January 9, 2024. Meeting summaries that were distributed in advance of the meeting were reviewed on screen. Of note, at the first meeting, the following future desired condition 3 years from now was described, to help envision what we're all working towards:

- Infrastructure – the communications towers and the fibre optic lines to the towers are protected from wildfire impacts, such that they remain functional during a wildfire
- Access – access is sufficiently improved to allow for fuel management treatments and access for BCWS suppression crews, but not improved to the point where party-goers can easily access it

- Fuel loading – reduced to the point where crown and surface fire behaviour is reduced, it's defensible ground for BCWS suppression crews, and we can apply prescribed fire to the area
- Balancing of values – noting it's a provincial park, balance ecological, recreational values with the need to reduce fuel loading and potential wildfire behaviour, given the important communications infrastructure present
- Forest health – work to improve health of the forests, encourage Douglas-fir growth

An update was provided on the status of work planned to be undertaken at Dragon Mountain:

- Sean Owens noted that BC Parks has \$1.2M for wildfire risk reduction (WRR) work province-wide, and that Dragon Mountain work is a priority within that. BC Parks WRR funds will pay for the majority of the work, but there is a **MOTI parcel** (gravel pit reserve) that BC Parks WRR funds may not fund (he has elevated the question). Other funding options to support the project, whether the MOTI parcel or funds to expedite the work could include:
  - MOF WRR funds
  - MOTI – could they fund clearing of timber/vegetation in advance of aggregate needs
  - Forest Employment Program (Alex Morris is contact)
  - Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) – Sean already considering application
- Sean has worked with a consultant to have the fuel management prescriptions modified to clarify diameter range to be harvested and reduce the size of the mountain bike trail buffers. A preliminary field reconnaissance (PFR) for archaeological concerns has to be completed.
- Sean noted that best case scenario, treatments at the top are tendered in May 2024 and work could commence in late summer/early fall (dependent on fire danger rating)
- Roland reiterated that the road up to 4.8km is in good shape for hauling out fibre that is merchantable and is best used in winter for a smooth running surface. Sean noted that authorizations are underway for use of the road.
- Based on previous tenders received, and treatment costs in similar circumstances, Tom Foley suggests that costs of \$13 000 to \$17 000/ha are reasonable.

South and east of Dragon Mountain, Ross noted that West Fraser is developing the following:

- 190 ha fuel treatment with timber harvesting component, a complex prescription with a mix of commercial thinning, spaced trails that works for steep ground with visual constraints, overall about 30% volume removal that will also establish a road on this side of Dragon Mountain. Ross noted it is laid out, timber cruised and has been walked with an experienced logger.
- Best case scenario the treatment implementation starts in fall 2024.
- Thinking is post-harvest, there could be chip and grind or prescribed burn.

See some specific actions related to Dragon Mountain at the end of this summary.

#### 4. Forest Enhancement Society of BC

Brian Watson, Operations Manager with FESBC, gave a [presentation](#) on what FESBC is, what they do, and the funding they have available. It was noted that John Massier is one of five directors on the FESBC board. Reach out to Brian with any questions or to discuss ideas for funding wildfire risk reduction projects at [bwatson@fesbc.ca](mailto:bwatson@fesbc.ca) or 250-919-1471. Discussion and questions raised the following:

- Q - re: shelf-ready projects, and FESBC losing ability to spend across fiscal years, is the March 2025 deadline for full completion? A - if you felt your project will go over fiscal years, would have to break it into phases, and spend phase 1 funds this fiscal year.

- Q - what does the incremental hauling application usually look like, and what are deciding factors? A - getting fair cost to landing that would otherwise be burnt, some of it is dead pine, can be used for pulp, may take more cost to process, transport, store, etc (value minus cost is the incremental haul)
- Q – for projects that span across WRR and fibre recovery, is that allowed? A - always trying to do both, in fact we are mandated to do both in Minister’s mandate letter. Generally, WRR funding is meant to be close to town and FESBC funding farther out, but many of our FESBC projects are being created adjacent to communities.

## 5. Information Sharing – What’s Underway

### BC Wildfire Service

- John noted that their crews are doing school presentations about FireSmart and wildfires, have lined up FireSmart meetings with Nazko, and arranged presence at trade shows
- John is happy with level of industry engagement, lots of equipment signed up pre-season
- John noted that the Cariboo Fire Centre is continuing with Zone Wildfire Coordination and enabling tactical and operational decisions as was done in 2023 at the Zone level
- Tom noted he’s spending time understanding how community wildfire resiliency plans (CWRPs) and MOF wildland urban interface (WUI) wildfire risk reduction (WRR) plans (formerly called tactical plans) overlap with each other, how they should work in collaboration. He noted that both Williams Lake and Quesnel area community wildfire protection plans (CWPPs) are now 6 years old and will need to be replaced. He would like to push the boundaries of what is allowed with CWRPs and enable broad collaboration.

### Ministry of Forests – Quesnel District

- Vince gave an update on the status of fuel treatment IDs 20, 21 and 22 in Barlow Creek area from the [Quesnel and Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) – MOF is working with BC Timber Sales to include fuel management aspects in these units; a lot of manual implementation work is identified; these three units will be connected.
  - It was noted that there is a BC Hydro substation nearby, what’s being done to protect it
  - It was noted that a private hydro transmission line is being developed by Osisko that will run east to the Barkerville Gold project; this could be utilized as a defensible fuel break
  - It was suggested to utilize Barlow Creek VFD or CRD electoral area directors to help communicate with local residents about fuel management operations
- Vince noted that fuel treatment ID 32 (Baker Creek) and one called “Marsh Pinnacles” will have mechanical (fibre removal) treatments start later this year
- Fuel treatment IDs 24 and 25 are lower priority, waiting to see if there is funding for this year
- Fuel treatment 16 Sisters’ Creek, Erin from City of Quesnel has been leading with Cascadia Natural Resource Consultants. Prescription has been finalized. Lots of recreation use, Recreation Sites and Trails BC would like to see a public meeting to engage local people and users. City, BCWS, RSTBC and MOF need to connect to finalize how to do this meeting, and secure funding for implementation.

### Cariboo Regional District

- Irene Israel noted that this is the first year that CRD is doing FireSmart. Their only CWRP is in the South Cariboo (Lac la Hache-108 Mile area). CRD is a huge area and it will be challenging to get

CWRPs in place for all areas, which then enable funding for additional FireSmart programs and services. They need to prioritize and be strategic about how to cover the whole area.

- Irene noted that CRD has an internal committee with planning, development, protective services staff to look at wildfire risk reduction and FireSmart needs from all angles.
- CRD has similar scale and capacity challenges with doing all the evacuation plans needed; they've applied for funds to do evacuation plans in Williams Lake/Williams Lake First Nation area, and the South Cariboo around 108 Mile. They are limited with how many grants can be applied for per year.
- Travis Flanagan is the FireSmart Educator for the entire CRD, contact him about FireSmart presentations to school and community groups. He doesn't do FireSmart home assessments, that is intended to be part of next year's funding application.
- Q – are there supports for seniors or vulnerable populations to FireSmart their properties? A – not through CRD; it was noted that Forest Employment Program (FEP) may fund this; Erin and Vince will look into this.
- Q – who should I reach out to for FireSmart education, CRD or BCWS or City of Quesnel? A – start with Travis as he covers whole CRD, but note that Ted Traer is on contract to City of Quesnel and can cover whole current CWPP area
- Comment – it was suggested that we have Ministry of Agriculture represented at this roundtable, and there is funding to support farms for extreme weather preparedness

#### Lhtako Dene

- Bruce raised concerns about wildfire risk in the Drummond Road area, and concerns with wildfires initiated by CN Rail and railway operations.
- Mike Simpson noted that CN Rail had a staff person (Matthew Leigh) attend the Lillooet & Area Community Wildfire Roundtable meeting last week, and he asked to be added to all wildfire roundtables. Mike's added him to the contact list for this roundtable. Mike also relayed what Matthew shared last week: *CN Rail have just finished retrofitting two fire train cars with deck guns that can fight fires. There are now three in their network, stationed in Kamloops, Prince George and Edmonton will be available for use this wildfire season.*

## 6. Next Steps

Future Planning – as noted above, the [Quesnel and Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) is 6 years old and will need to be replaced with a CWRP. Having a recent CWRP in place is key to unlocking additional funding from the [UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Program](#) such as funds for FireSmart coordinators and funds for operational treatments.

Building on Tom Foley's comments (BCWS update above), comments about how to proceed with future planning were as follows:

- Mike Simpson noted that where we once had one plan with the [Quesnel and Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) there are now potentially three plans: a City of Quesnel CWRP, a CRD CWRP, and the MOF's WUI WRR plan. He opined that this doesn't bode well for collaboration.
- Building on Tom's ideas to "push the boundaries" of how we work together under the current planning regime, participants liked the idea of trying to have one plan for a large area similar to the current CWPP (noting that this doesn't solve CRD's problem of a much larger area).
- It was noted that the award of the [Three Rivers Community Forest](#) area-based tenure is imminent (expected this spring), and it would likely make sense to have the new CWRP either

exclude it entirely but also ensure there are no slivers of “no mans’ land”; or evaluate whether it’s allowed or logical to include the community forest area in the CWRP

- It was suggested to continue to exclude Indian Reserve (IR) lands from a future CWRP, since those lands aren’t eligible for the same funding sources for implementation
- Clarification is needed about land jurisdiction that bisects IR lands (i.e., BC Hydro, MOTI rights of way) and whose plan that falls under

It was noted that an application for future planning likely needs to be completed by September 2024. Mike offered assistance in facilitating discussion about confirming an approach. It was also noted that many of us are participating in the [Wildfire Resiliency and Training Summit](#) in Prince George next week, and many of these questions can be raised there.

**Next meeting** – Fall 2024. Mike to seek a date via doodle poll about a month in advance.

Topics (carry over from November 2023 meeting) – Peter Holub on spot burning, Mike Sakakibara on fuel hazard risk assessment along Hwy 26 corridor.

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Dragon Mountain and funding options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up with BC Parks WRR re: MOTI parcel</li> <li>• Explore FESBC possibility</li> <li>• Explore FEP possibility</li> <li>• Connect with MOTI re: funding</li> <li>• Connect with MOTI re: operations, gravel</li> </ul>	Sean Sean and Brian Vince connect with Alex Morris Roland Erin	Ongoing
Dragon Mountain and status updates, coordination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage Mike Simpson to facilitate a Dragon Mountain Subcommittee meeting if needed</li> <li>• Keep communication open about status, challenges faced, supports needed</li> </ul>	Everyone  Everyone, but Sean Owens in particular	Ongoing
Review <i>Quesnel and Area CWPP implementation status 16apr24.docx</i> circulated with this summary	Those involved in implementation of treatments or their review	Ongoing
Communications about wildfire risk reduction treatments with community members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize volunteer fire departments</li> <li>• Utilize CRD electoral area directors, they have communication networks and can help spread accurate information</li> </ul>	Those implementing WRR treatments	Ongoing
Fuel treatments and mapping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update map from original CWPP with additional treatment units added, which ones are complete vs. being developed</li> <li>• Send to Mike Simpson to circulate/post online</li> </ul>	Roland, Erin	Spring?
Explore FEP funding to support seniors and vulnerable populations to FireSmart their properties	Erin, Vince	Spring
Seek additional representation at this roundtable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Agriculture</li> </ul>	Florian reach out to Nicole Pressey	Before next meeting