

Quesnel and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Approved Summary as of April 16, 2024

Meeting date: November 16, 2023, 9:00AM to 12:00PM

Location: Forestry Initiatives Office, City of Quesnel and online

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

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

BC Ministry of Forests (Cariboo Region) – Josh Pressey

BC Parks – Sean Owens

BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship – Becky Bings

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) – Matt Duran, Peter Holub, Tom Foley

Central Interior Mapping – Roland Jarett

City of Quesnel – Erin Robinson, Ron Richert

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

Lhtako Dene First Nation – Bruce McDonald

Nazko First Nation – Florian Bergoin

West Fraser – Mike Sakakibara

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 moment of silence was observed for those who lost their lives fighting wildfires this past season. 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. No early departures were noted.

2. Debriefing the Fire Season – What did we Learn?

Participants were encouraged to reflect on the 2023 wildfire season, not just in Quesnel and the surrounding area, but the whole province and think of lessons learned that we could apply here.

Feedback was as follows:

Reflection	Lesson Learned to Apply
BCWS Quesnel Fire Zone was delegated the ability to manage their own resources under MZOC 2	Having BCWS Quesnel Fire Zone act as an independent entity for tactical and logistical decisions worked well, keep doing this
Wildfire Technical Working Group of the Forest Landscape Plan initiative is addressing evacuation routes	Evacuation routes need to be identified and communicated with residents
Wildfires in eastern portion of the area, traditionally the wetter ecosystems, are having extreme fire behaviour	Need to do forest fuel management, decrease fuel loads, simulate the fire cycle through better land management planning

Reflection	Lesson Learned to Apply
Harvested cutblocks used to break up the landscape but due to volume of Mountain pine beetle debris, there's still a lot of fuel	We need to reduce fuel loads post-harvest on cutblocks (whole of BC Interior challenge)
Smartphone apps allow lightning strikes to be monitored real time	Utilize the lightning strike data to monitor for flare-ups the following few days (BCWS can do this)
Good communications between zone staff and incident management team (IMT) and the Nazko community meant that only part of the community was evacuated.	Continue good communications, rely on community liaisons

3. Debriefing the Spring Field Tour, Alan Westhaver Presentation

Participants debriefed on the spring field tour that we undertook with Alan Westhaver, and the evening public presentation that Alan gave. Observations were as follows: our recreation centre is in poor shape; having a FireSmart Coordinator (Ted Traer) is helpful; we need to tie public presentations to a funding opportunity (e.g., FireSmart homeowner grant); engage schools (already underway by BCWS) and environmental organizations such as Baker Creek Enhancement Society.

Mike noted the following from discussions during the afternoon field tour:

- Fuel Management Trails develop a small scale demonstration home site around the kiosk
- Quesnel approach – do a fuel management treatment, then engage local neighbourhoods
- Considering engagement through churches, temples as a way to reach people

Mike reminded people that a narrated version of Alan's presentation is available [here](#) to circulate to anyone as an educational tool.

4. Information Sharing – What's Underway

There had been facilitated meetings in late 2022, supported by Fraser Basin Council, to track progress and coordinate actions on the implementation of fuel management treatments in the [Quesnel & Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#). The latest implementation status meeting had been held December 13, 2022, so this was an update on that document.

Much of the meeting was spent reviewing the status of implementation of those treatments. See separate document named *Quesnel and Area CWPP implementation status 16nov23.docx* circulated with this meeting summary.

A lot of discussion ensued about the **Dragon Mountain** area. A summary of the situation described by several participants is as follows:

- Complex jurisdictions, much of the area is provincial park
- Lots of values – communication/cellular towers, mountain bike trails and infrastructure
- Road is non-status and in terrible condition – can be driven by a 4 x 4 truck but not a lowbed to bring heavy equipment in or have trucks haul fibre out. It was suggested that a grader could improve the running surface in the lower portion only; rock blasting and re-engineering corners is needed higher up. There is insufficient volume of timber to pay for this road work.
- From a wildfire risk perspective, “a bomb waiting to go off” with top third of area having significant blowdown and high fuel loading

- From a wildfire suppression perspective, too dangerous to put crews (topography, poor access)
- Wildfires in this area would disrupt communication for Quesnel

Sean Owens, BC Parks noted the following:

- Sean confirmed that Dragon Mountain is their primary project in Quesnel. Approaches to wildfire in BC Parks are changing to proactive management in certain areas.
- They put out to tender the fuel management projects at the top of Dragon Mountain (TU 2c) and the tenders received were exceedingly high (\$23 700/ha); BCWS didn't support those costs, the solicitation was cancelled
- The plan is for BC Parks to re-release that solicitation early next fiscal year

ACTION: Mike Simpson offered to facilitate a Dragon Mountain subcommittee, consisting of BC Parks, Telus, and any other interested organizations to try and create some solutions

Other updates provided were as follows:

- BCWS has done lots of FireSmart educational initiatives with the City of Quesnel and MOF
- City of Quesnel has done lots of FireSmart educational initiatives, including movie night in the park, as well as implementation initiatives such as having goats grazing at the fuel management trails area near the airport
- City of Quesnel is working with University of Alberta and UBC on a wildfire evacuation survey (*Strategic Evacuation Planning and Infrastructure: Wildfire, Transportation, and Human Behaviour*), go [here](#) to complete the survey (Quesnel and North Cariboo residents only)
- John noted that many communities are at risk, evacuation plans are needed
 - Erin noted that the Forest Landscape Plan process has a Wildfire working group that is looking at egress, fuel types
 - Mike Sakakibara noted that West Fraser commissioned Forsite to do a fuel hazard risk assessment last year along the Hwy 26 corridor to Bowron Lake park
- A spring prescribed burn is being planned for the North Star Highway 97 interchange

5. Establishing a Quesnel & Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Participants endorsed the concept of formally creating the Quesnel & Area Community Wildfire Roundtable and approved the [terms of reference](#). There will be a webpage for the roundtable [here](#).

Suggested organizations to add to the membership were noted as follows:

- Recreation Sites and Trails BC – Desi Cheverie
- ?Esdilagh First Nation
- Quesnel Cattlemen
- Emergency Management and Climate Readiness
- CRD Regional Fire Chief Roger Hollander (new position)
- Educational institutions – College of New Caledonia, School District 28

6. Next Steps

Next meeting – early to mid-April. Mike to seek a date via doodle poll about a month in advance.

Topics – Peter Holub on spot burning, Mike Sakakibara on fuel hazard risk assessment along Hwy 26 corridor.

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
ACTION: Mike Simpson offered to facilitate a Dragon Mountain subcommittee, consisting of BC Parks, Telus, and any other interested organizations to try and create some solutions to wildfire risks and infrastructure	BC Parks, MOF, BCWS reach out to Mike Simpson if interested in convening a small group.	Ongoing
Review <i>Quesnel and Area CWPP implementation status 16nov23.docx</i> circulated with this summary	Those involved in implementation of treatments or their review – Tom, Vince, Mike Sakakibara, Becky Bings,	Ongoing
Provide Mike Simpson with appropriate names and contact information for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ?Esdilagh First Nation • Quesnel Cattlemen • Educational institutions – College of New Caledonia, School District 28 	Everyone	By March 2024