

Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable Meeting Summary

**May 6, 2025, 1:00PM to 4:00PM
Cariboo Fire Centre**

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

Alkali Resource Management – Francis Johnson, James Paul
British Columbia Wildfire Service (BCWS) Williams Lake Zone – Tom Foley, Peter Holub, Madison Dahl,
Darren Wilkinson, Talia McKay, Jessica Sutherland, Amanda Cullum
Cariboo Regional District – Stephanie Mason, Leanne Rideau
City of Williams Lake – Evan Dean, Taya Vanderkop-Girard
CN Rail – Monty Armstrong
Forest Enhancement Society of BC – *Brian Watson*
Forsite Consultants – Lorena Tillotson
Fraser Basin Council – Mike Simpson (contractor), Patience Rakochy, Jane Wellburn, Bettina Johnson
FNESS - Darrick Andrew
Interested individuals or consultants – Ken Day
Ministry of Forests, Cariboo-Chilcotin District – Daniel Merth, Harold Stolar, Kerri Howse, Josh Pressey
Tolko – Marco Passeri
West Fraser – Mauro Calabrese
Williams Lake First Nation – John Walker, Chenoa Holte
Woodlots BC – Matt Lebourdais
Xatsull – *Roxanne Pop*

Meeting Objectives

- Provide updates on what's happening with wildfire risk reduction work, discuss training and preparation needs in advance of the upcoming fire season
- Develop relationships, share information
- Identify synergies on various initiatives

Optional Field Tour

Members of the CWR had the option to visit the wildfire risk reduction project between Westridge subdivision and Golf Course at 10.30am, prior to the meeting.



Photo: Mike Simpson

Objectives of the treatment are as follows:

- Reduce fire intensity and rate of spread.
- Reduce the potential for crown fire initiation by increasing base height of live crown to reduce ladder fuels.
- Create opportunities for fire suppression, and
- Reduce overall wildfire risk in the Williams Lake area.

Welcome, Introductions, Confirm Agenda

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

Mike provided an update on the facilitation of the Williams Lake CWR. This is Mike's last meeting and introduced Patience Rakochy, professional forester with the Fraser Basin Council, who will provide facilitation for the Williams Lake CWR moving forward.

The group was reminded to refer to the Fraser Basin Council website [Williams Lake & Area - Fraser Basin Council](#) for common resources, maps, and meeting summaries.

The agenda was reviewed and accepted as presented.

2. Previous Meeting Summary

Meeting summary from November 13, 2024, was approved. Action Items were reviewed; see table at the end of this summary for an updated list of action items.

Presentation: Cariboo Regional District – Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans

Lorena Tillotson, Forsite Consultants

Lorena's presentation will be made available in the William's Lake & Area Link [here](#).

Lorena provided an overview of the project background and objectives, the differences between the community wildfire protection plans (CWPPs) vs community wildfire resiliency plans (CWRPs) vs wildland urban interface wildfire risk reduction (WUI WRRs) plans, and an update on the project status:

- Funding received for CWRP's for areas D, E, F, G, H, and L (D: Commodore Heights –McLeese Lake , E: South Lakeside – Dog Creek , F: Horsefly – Likely – 150 Mile House , G: Lac La Hache – 108 Mile House, H: Canim Lake –Forest Grove , L: Lone Butte – Interlakes)
- Project slated for completion Nov 28, 2025; plan includes recommendations for City to act upon
- Will be hosting CWRP roundtable/open house on Jun 12 at the Casino, 2-4pm, invitations will be sent out (also planning to send out survey for people who can't attend the open house)
- Will be hosting open houses in each electoral area in the fall, will have link on website with all events listed
- The CWR allows the CRD to access wildfire risk reduction funding through UBCM's CRI program

It was noted that due to overlapping areas and the need for efficiency with the plans, communication with stakeholders is key; It's in everyone's best interest to have the field treatment units' shapes labelled with the same names, and also so when talking with public everyone is using common names

A challenge to solve - where to host the info, plans and maps; possibly FBC or BCWS?

Q: Could other groups doing treatments within those areas use this plan for their funding applications?

A: Yes, with the CWRP what is proposed for fuel treatment units should be for others to use, and with a lot of the area on crown land, looking to extend the dollars to go further including with commercial harvesting: a lot of need for coordination and buy in from everyone to get this done at a larger scale

What's Underway, Who's Doing What for Wildfire Preparedness

Taya Vanderkop-Girard, Evan Dean, City of Williams Lake

- City working with Lorena on their CWRP (focuses on just the municipal pieces)
 - Taya started as FireSmart Coordinator for city of WL in Jan2025
 - Fire dept doing lots of wildland training, rejigged trucks to have equipment ready, based off the River Valley fire which was used as a model
 - Doing hazard risk vulnerability assessment and hazard risk assessment, have RFP going out for review of emergency program
 - Finishing hand treatments up at Westridge, and Tower Crescent is a hand treatment in the summer/fall
 - Taya doing educational and community events, and working with schools on FireSmart
 - Taya doing Wildfire Mitigation Specialist course, so can-do home assessments
- *anyone with ideas or contacts for Youth program, please follow up with Taya*

It was suggested when thinking about FireSmart within the city, to consider strata tiles (condos and trailer parks) which could be a place to start and have good impact.

Brian Watson, FESBC

- FESBC announced new projects for 25/26, Cariboo with 4.1 million funding - 14 projects in the Cariboo, including 3 in Quesnel, 2 in 100Mile, and most others in Williams Lake
- Some money left to include further projects, there's flexibility for 26/27
- *if anyone has developing projects, reach out to FESBC around more funding for next year*

Daniel Merth, Ministry of Forests

- Putting in proposals to province for multiyear contract to do district-wide planning; hand in hand with CWRP to avoid duplication
- Plan would look at access egress route and landscape level fuel breaks including partial cut harvest opportunities
- Operational treatments, Tinmusket fuel break is a huge project, working with SXFN, and FESBC funding mechanical fuel treatment units, finishing up hand treatment units this year
- Miller Rd, roughly 20ha complete, putting out competitive opportunity for phase 2, for mechanical raking and piling,
- Hand treatment work at IFB 2 airport project; IFB29 (Comer, 168 Mile area), finished 25 ha this past year
- Working with Xatsull to complete fuel treatment behind reserve, 15ha to complete
- Working with Toosey FN along Hwy 20 corridor to complete fuel treatment and priority piece along Meldrum Rd, (prescriptions and assessments)
- Looking to have BCTS more involved with wildfire risk reduction work, (so costs are priced appropriately)
- All user groups and licensees should have copies of the WUI work, reach out to Daniel to work together, good to touch base if area makes sense to do incremental work on
- Away from one big plan to multiple plans and important for the interagency piece to work well

Discussion on whether there may be a need to have the WL Wildfire Roundtable cover a bigger area, with the plan boundaries expanded. As new plans are completed, there will be a need to have groups talking about who's doing what. The group could consider breaking into smaller subcommittees as plans evolve.

Ken Day, local consultant

- Dry Belt Douglas Fir Best Management Practices was circulated to licencees and First Nations's for feedback,
- *If anyone has input or questions re: Drybelt Douglas-fir Management Committee, contact Ken j.kenneth.day@gmail.com*
- Through UBC, a post doc and 2 graduate research students are in the Cariboo starting field work in May (remeasuring some treatment plots, effectiveness of fuel treatments) with Esk'et and SXFN involved - *For questions, reach out to Ken, John, Francis*

Monty Armstrong, CN Rail

- New position at CN Rail, to work with anything fire related across the network across the country, please reach out if doing any projects or have questions on work within right of ways
- FN's communities looking to access funding can work with Karla Graf

- If community doing CRI application, CN Rail could sponsor or contribute if project butting up to right of way
- CN Rail recognizes role they play, managing vegetation along railway
- Have 3 fire trains on the network, which they use to go out and do pre-soak before rail-grinding, or come in afterwards for mop-up, or to get crews into certain areas that are difficult to access otherwise (they come with adapter buckets, could shuttle water; looking to add more tanks)
- *please reach out to Monty for inquiries regarding access, so that CN Rail can meet those requests (insert monty.armstrong@cn.ca)*

Q: How do you decide where to deploy your fire trains to?

A: We move the resources where the risk is the highest; There are only 3 trains, with 20,00km of network; It's not an initial attack tool: For bridges and crossings we can add sprinklers, wrap the posts and ties, and do pre-treating of ground in high-risk areas

Matt Lebourdais, Woodlots BC

- Working on completing fuel treatments, and looking to develop new areas for treatments, and to key in to work others are doing
- If you know woodlot licensees who may be interested in funding available for fuel treatments, *reach out to Matt for wildfire risk reduction work on woodlots* (initial steps is no cost to the woodlot licensee)

Tom Foley, BCWS

- CWRP's: Continuing work with the City of Williams Lake, City of Quesnel and District of 100 Mile House and their consultants to develop their municipal CWRPs
- Started working with the Cariboo Regional District and their consultants for the development of the first six of twelve CWRPs for Electoral Areas D, E, F, G, H, L
- Fuel Management Prescriptions (FMPs): In addition to the FMPs mentioned by MOF, there are new FESBC funded FMPs being developed. The Williams Lake Community Forest has two for the Flat Rock block west of Williams Lake and the Williams Lake Cross Country Ski Club is developing one around their new infrastructure (lodge, equipment storage, workshops etc.)
- Mapping Updates: Same as before including the Appendix.

Madison Dahl, BCWS

- Communicating the prescribed burns that BCWS is doing, and updating how they do the communications and lay out (in format that is easy to understand for the public)
- *please let Madison know, if you're hearing from people about confusions, or suggestions for ways to clear up communications)*

Peter Holub, BCWS

- 14 burns this spring in the Cariboo Fire Center, most ever done in the spring season
- Continuing to plan for future burns and scaling the program, developing staff operationally and for planning work

Francis Johnson, ARM

- CP37 is a cultural prescribed burn cutting permit putting in soon

- Working on research with Adaptive Management group around thinning and putting fire in the stand, with help from different Ministries on the research side, and utilizing Indigenous side of using fire instead of manpower
- Have long term monitoring plots established to monitor long term changes on the ground
- Have capacity for different projects and are looking for more work
– reach out to Francis regarding crews to take on hand treatment work

John Walker, Shenoa Holte, WLFN

- Research with ECCC, looking at carbon, soil response, and how the type of harvesting we're doing helps wildlife
- Have funding from FESBC for 2300 Rd landscape level fuel break, and funding for fuel treatments around Ferguson Rd and Dugan Lake area, and Comer area along the power line
- Have done a lot of burning this spring, did 100ha on reserve, the most so far, including work at Flat Rock, within city at Stampede grounds, Fox Mtn, Dairy fields, 50ha on racetrack
- Good with looking at understory burns (doing burns without damaging the stand is tough, may only have 5 days in the spring to do that work, tricky to align weather window with resourcing)
- Working with Monty and CN Rail for treatment on reserve past Russet Bluff
- Doing fuel plots with Lori Daniels on Racetrack, Fox Mtn, and at the 50, will be able to see how effective raking and forwarding is
- Research includes Grade 6 logging and stumpage piece to quantify proportions of the saw log, will feed into pricing

Marco Passeri, Tolko

- Looking at implementing a few pilot projects at a landscape level, including in partnership with Esketemc looking at stand resiliency at WUI interfaces
- Opportunities to make these treatments go further could include cultural burning as mechanism to start scaling things up

Participants were reminded to refer to the contact list (circulated via email) to find contact information for people in the Williams Lake CWR group.

Next meeting

Fall 2025, exact date TBD based on doodle poll Patience will initiate in advance.

Field trip options:

- Interface treatments butting on to private land (Spokin Lake, or adjacent to Esk'et, or 168 Mile)
- Farwell Canyon research trials
- Joes Lake Road spot burning
- UBC Research Forest, Knife Creek or Fox Mountain property

Possible presentations to line up:

- Cultural burning – timing, outcomes
- 7 natural disturbance types – Dr. Lori Daniels, UBC
- Mule deer collaring project (Travis Heckford working on)

Action Items

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Maps of past and proposed fuel treatments: Ongoing – share kml files, dashboard as they are available <i>Hasn't changed from the notes (wildfire 1 is a name, software packages are built under wildfire 1 (i.e. the wildfire app), so they talk to each other</i> <i>*note the appendix for google earth (external mapping resources, kmls and kmz)</i> <i>Current treatments on land base is entering spatial data and prescriptions, and BCWS draws from and enters into Wildfire 1 database, intent to have forward facing dashboard for public in future.</i>	Tom Foley	Ongoing
Communications best practices re: burning Utilize the best practices noted in the Feb 20, 2024 meeting summary	Everyone	Ongoing
FireSmart – review (share) what's worked in other locations (USA as well as BC), consider ways of not making it overwhelming for people, drive-around tour	Everyone	Ongoing
Reach out to Kristi Iverson if you want the presentation on Douglas-fir from May 2024 given to your group	Everyone	Ongoing
Download WUI WRR plan document and spatial files from here or reach out to daniel.merth@gov.bc.ca	Everyone involved in planning and implementation	
Funding sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rangeland Advantage IAFBC here FESBC funding window – new funds announced UBCM's Community Resiliency Investment Program NRCan <i>*Add CN funding</i>	Anyone interested	Ongoing