

Clearwater and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Meeting Summary as at Feb 4, 2021

Meeting date: February 2, 2021 10:00AM to 11:35AM

Location: Online

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

BC Timber Sales (BCTS) - Jessica Gunn

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) - Richard Swift, Hugh Murdoch

Clearwater Fire Department - Mike Smith

District of Clearwater - Mayor Merlin Blackwell, Councillor Barry Banford, Leslie Groulx

Fraser Basin Council - Mike Simpson (facilitator, recorder)

Interfor - Sheena Colton

MFLNRORD* (Thompson Rivers District) - Marina Irwin, Kris Cooke, Julie Maxwell

MFLNRORD* (Thompson Okanagan Region) - Danya Leduc

Thompson-Nicola Regional District - Director Carol Schaffer, Sherri Madden, Kevin Skrepnek

**Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development*

1. Introductions, Agenda, Objectives

Mike Simpson welcomed everyone and acknowledged Secwepemc territory. Introductions were made around the room and on the phone. The agenda was approved as presented. Regrets were noted from BC Parks staff.

2. Previous Meeting Summary

The meeting summary from January 23, 2020 was approved. Action items were reviewed; see updated table of action items at the end of this summary.

3. Information Sharing - What's Underway

BC Wildfire Service - Hugh reported that their seasonal workforce will commence in early March. Their full time staff has decreased temporarily by three full time staff. Jim Jones has retired, but will likely be on contract this fire season. BCWS crews weren't as productive on wildfire risk reduction activities in 2020 due to COVID restrictions. BCWS staff will be reaching out in the coming months to local governments, VFDs and First Nations to partner on training and preparedness plans for the upcoming wildfire season. BCWS will work with Emergency Management BC to participate in spring readiness training and tabletop exercises. Richard offered for anyone to contact him with questions at richard.swift@gov.bc.ca or 250-574-4000.

District of Clearwater - Leslie noted that wildfire risk reduction activities are almost complete on 3 sites covering 17 ha, including 2 community parks and an area off Raft Road in the community forest. They've submitted another grant application to UBCM Community Resilience Investment (CRI) program for \$259 000 for implementation of wildfire risk reduction prescriptions at the ski hill and other areas.

Leslie noted that she is retiring in the spring, and that Clearwater Fire Chief Mike Smith will be taking the lead on fuel management activities. Mike Smith reported that \$52 000 of Red Cross Resiliency funding has gone towards acquiring a structure protection unit (SPU), pumps

and other equipment. He and the firefighters have undertaken training for wildfire, and is looking forward to doing a table top exercise with the emergency operations centre (EOC). He's doing lots of training and courses on EOC operations, planning and logistics. He'd like to see FireSmart education opportunities in the community.

Mayor Blackwell reported that it was nice to see recent fuel management associated with logging inside of town, at the old race track and upslope from Vavenby.

MFLNRORD (Thompson Rivers District) - Julie reported that several prescriptions were completed a year ago for fuel management/wildfire risk reduction projects on the community forest. Operations commenced on about 35 ha in June 2020 on the Gill Creek fuel break, the work was awarded to Spectrum Resource Group. Thompson Rivers District staff applied for Wildfire Risk Reduction funding (internal to MFLNRORD) to complete the next 35 ha in the same area for this fiscal year commencing April 1, 2021. Forsite has been hired to complete prescriptions on CWPP units 6 and 7.

Kris noted that Douglas-fir bark beetle (IBD) population in the area is growing and management actions are being taken to minimize the damage and control populations.

BC Timber Sales - Jessica reported that they are working to address IBD and also do some fuel management work and burning in Foghorn. Next steps are to sit down with Simpcw, review drone footage and devise a plan. While outside of this area, BCTS did a broadcast burn on a harvested cutblock near Blue River in October 2020.

MFLNRORD (Thompson Okanagan Region) - Danya, as the regional integrated investment specialist, noted that although the Wildfire Risk Reduction program funding can be multi-year, there are annual applications and the funding is tied to the fiscal year ending March 31. She noted that the applications Julie mentioned are in the top 10 of those received.

Thompson-Nicola Regional District - Kevin reported that seasonal training workshops with local governments will soon be underway, albeit with COVID challenges of doing them online. TNRD has secured funding for rural VFDs and library staff to take EOC training. The public alert app is in place, it's subscription-based, see [here](#) for information and to subscribe (it can be email, landline or cell phone). Various equipment such as COVID barriers have been purchased in case they are needed for emergency services and EOCs this year. TNRD is finalizing an agreement with the Barriere Agriplex for use as an evacuation centre on an as-needed basis. Ron Storie, Jason Tomlin and Kevin are the key contacts for emergency management at TNRD.

Director Shaffer reported that both VFDs have recently applied for grants, and funds from TransMountain have been directed to them for equipment. Kevin added that a ¾ ton truck has been acquired that can be deployed to the North Thompson to tow the SPU trailer as needed.

4. Next Steps

Resources available - a new funding program was announced Friday January 29, 2021, with a closing date of March 19, 2021. The UBCM CRI Program [FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund](#) is offering up to \$500 000 of 100% funding for coordinated applications to primarily employ and train people to build local wildfire resiliency. Mike Simpson noted that eligible activities include funding assessments of FireSmart score cards/workbooks on residential areas (private

land, IR land) and farms and ranches, community assets and infrastructure. It can fund implementation of residential and farm/ranch actions where the landowner is 65 or older or has mobility challenges. It can also fund fuel management demonstration projects, and all sorts of training. Challenges with the funding are quick turnaround for an application, the capacity to prepare the application, and past experiences with reporting.

Danya noted that Forest Enhancement Society of BC has up to \$3M for fibre recovery, which dovetails nicely with wildfire risk reduction work (however no local facility to use fibre).

Danya noted the following resources are available for on-reserve works:

- The [Emergency Management Assistance Fund](#)
- [First Nation Adapt](#)

Leslie, Mike Smith and Kevin will review the program and application guide further. Mike Simpson is available (at no cost, support is funded by BCWS) to assist with the applications.

Contact list - all present agreed to share their contact info. Mike Simpson will email an updated contact list.

Opportunities for Collaboration - FireSmart education is a common need

Alan Westhaver - Alan is a former Parks Canada employee, extensive experience with wildfire and fuel management (here's a [video](#) on his assessment of FireSmart effectiveness post-Fort McMurray wildfires) is aiming to host a spring webinar for all three community wildfire roundtables. Fraser Basin Council can fund his labour and expenses. More details to come.

Next meeting - 2-3 hours online, late April or early May 2020.

The following ACTION items were agreed to:

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Coordinate about evacuation plans from Wells Gray Park, Upper Clearwater Valley, share ideas and input	BC Parks staff, Steve Murray, TNRD and others	Ongoing
Connect with those present today, build on the opportunities identified	Everyone	Ongoing
Include FireSmart content in annual community meetings	Carol, Sherri	Ongoing
Send Mike Simpson content to add to the Clearwater and Area page of www.wildfireroundtables.ca and utilize it for your own communication purposes	Everyone	Ongoing
Utilize the Kamloops TSA mapping website to upload fuel management polygons (past and present) from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wells Gray CF Landscape Fire Plan ▪ Wells Gray Park Fire Plan ▪ DoC and area CWPP 	MFLNRORD staff, Julie will confirm	Ongoing
Add DoC CWPP link from Clearwater website to the FBC wildfire roundtable website for Clearwater	Leslie, Mike	ASAP
Share draft prescriptions for CWPP units 6, 7 and meet to review them	Julie, Mike Smith, others	February
Follow up with Mike Simpson if support is desired to prepare a funding application for the FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund	Kevin, Leslie, Mike Smith	Well before March 19