

# **Quesnel and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable**

## **Meeting Summary**

May 5, 2025, 1:00PM to 4:00PM

Forestry Innovation Centre, 410 Kinchant Street, Quesnel and online

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

BC Ministry of Forests (Quesnel District) –V incent Luu

BC Parks – Annie Ellison, Brita Pedersson

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) Quesnel Zone – John Salewski

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) Cariboo Fire Centre – Tom Foley, Madison Dahl

Cariboo Regional District – Travis Flanagan, Leanne Rivet

City of Quesnel – Erin Robinson, Ron Richert

CN Rail – Monty Armstrong, Abby Campbell

Consus Management – Sean Fogarty

?Esdilagh – Ted Traer

Forest Enhancement Society of BC – *Brian Watson*

Fraser Basin Council – Mike Simpson (contractor), Patience Rakochy, Bettina Johnson

FNESS – Darrick Andrew

Pet Safety Coalition Society of Canada – Debbie Knabke

RCMP – Richard Weseen

Three Rivers Community Forest – Nick Pickles

Wells Barkerville Community Forest – Eric Matzner

Woodlots BC – John Massier

Xatsull – *Roxanne Pop*

Forsite Consultants – *Lauren Shinnimin*

University of Alberta: *Stephen Wong*, Jen Beverly,

University of BC - Amy Kim

### **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 Marsh Pinnacles wildfire risk reduction project at 11am, prior to the meeting. Treatment area is located ~6.5km southwest of Quesnel and is within the WUI risk class 2 and the provincial strategic threat analysis rating of high/extreme. 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 Quesnel area.

The prescribed treatment aimed to these objectives by reducing crown ladder and ground fuel availability and reducing both vertical and horizontal fuel continuity the treatment aims to reduce surface fire intensity below 2000 kW/m.

Tour ended at ~12pm.

## **1. Welcome, Introductions, Confirm Agenda**

Mike Simpson, a facilitator and professional forester on contract to Fraser Basin Council, welcomed everyone and acknowledged unceded Lhtako Dene Territory = Nazko, Ihookuz, Xatsull, Ulkatcho, and other nations in the larger area. A round of introductions took place for people in the room and those participating online.

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

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

## **2. Previous Meeting Summary**

Meeting summary from November 14, 2024 was approved. Action Items were reviewed; see table at the end of this summary for an updated list of action items. Meeting notes are posted [here](#) under the November 14 meeting summary.

## **Presentation: Strategic Infrastructure Planning: Wildfire Evacuation, Transportation, and Human Behaviour**

Slides are posted [here](#) under the May 5, 2025 meeting summary at the bottom of the page.

*Dr. Amy Kim - University of BC, Dr. Stephen Wong and Dr. Jen Beverly - University of Alberta*

An overview was presented on the research outcomes and results from the project work. Three aspects of their wildfire evacuation study were presented: wildfire modelling, human behaviour around evacuation, and transport network modelling. They each shared information on how the models were built and how they used the metrics and collected the data.

- Quesnel was one of 5 communities studied, one other community was Salmon Arm.
- The analysis is available to anyone interested (maps, spatial data, etc).
- Key recommendations include: a real focus on evacuation route improvement, such as temporary increase of roadway capacity, diverse communication strategies (cross-posting and consistency across platforms), and tailored evacuation plans to the local context and household needs.
- The simulation work was done using simulation models (using open-source platform Multi Agent Transport Simulation Model), and while they started with 5 communities, due to time constraints, they focused on 2 communities (Canmore and Salmon Arm)
- Key results include travel time histograms (how long it takes residents to leave to a point 15km outside of town)
- Website with all project deliverables will be ready in next month or so
- [WILDFIRE ANALYTICS - Home](#)

- **Key takeaways**

1. **Start evacuation earlier** – study found that a lot of congestion both in town and on highways out during evacuation period
2. Favoring major movements at intersections may create more localized congestion but improves overall evacuation measures
3. Match evacuee egress routes with roadway capacity as much as possible (through evacuation staging by neighborhood, egress direction recommendations by neighborhood, and designation of reception centres)

*Q: For Evacuation preparedness levels, are you assuming these communities are put on emergency evacuation without alert? How would the data change in preparedness level if there was an alert?*

*A: Didn't specifically give them alert in advance, but the general scenario to respond to, to encompass wide variety of situations, (premise of questions was if an order is issued)*

### **Quick review of action items**

- Action to reengage Dragon Mtn subcommittee, met virtually on Dec 10, left it in Dec with questions about procurement process, and discussion around marrying up treatments outside of the park and the boundary, and engagement on the new CWRP and WUI WRR plan.
- Meeting Summary from previous meeting was approved.

### **Update on the CWRP for City of Quesnel**

*Lauren Shinnimin, Forsite Consultants*

- Previously had CWPP from 2019 and main difference between that plan and new CWRP is there's been major changes with funding and where fuel treatments can happen within areas of interest, more focus on FireSmart and the 7 FireSmart disciplines.
- Previous boundary incorporated area outside of Quesnel, FN's IR's, provincial park, looking more broader on the landscape, that's where find uninterrupted fuels that provide pathway to community.
- But focus now is closer, fuel treatments within 1km WUI, (under funding program, certain structure density needed).
- Interagency cooperation is more important than previously, for everyone to come together and play their part at a greater landscape level, beyond relying on fuel treatments as so much of the forested land sits beyond the municipal boundary.
- Focus is on putting the puzzle pieces together and working collaboratively with other land managers and partners in the area to make the Quesnel area more wildfire resilient (goal to be completed by Oct 2025, and then applications for next round).
- Multiple plans in the works, CRD is doing 6 southern electoral areas, and next year doing northern electoral areas including unincorporated CRD communities around Quesnel.

### **Update on status of fuel management operations**

*Vincent Luu, Ministry of Forests, Quesnel District*

- Key update on Dragon mtn: cautiously optimistic, earliest opportunity for work to start would be in the fall.
- Work at Marsh Pinnacles is wrapping up, piles left to be cleaned up by fall – chipped and removed.
- Ongoing work at Sisters Creek/Kersley (ID 16), last year completed handwork treatment in fall/winter, funded by Forest Employment program, 20 meters on either side with inclusion of accessibility trail, piles have been burned.

- Shelf ready prescriptions and archaeology work done, looking to moving towards next portion of mechanical treatment, waiting on funding.
- This year looking to contract out prescription development work and corresponding archaeology assessment work, Sugarlov area and Quesnel Uplands, looking to direct funding towards getting some of that work ready.
- Barlow creek (ID20), for the most part, looking to partner with BCTS on that one as a resource to do layer 1 removal (= larger trees bigger than 12 ½ cm diameter), for BCTS to go in first, and harvesting it to fuel treatment objectives, and touch up areas with hand treatments, in talks
- WUI WRR plans for Quesnel is almost complete now, been trying to include partners and stakeholders at each stage, please reach out with any feedback, always looking to improve.

*\*Action – Vince to share Quesnel WUI WRR plan when ready, for Patience to share with group*

*Q: Was there learnings you could share on resident engagement?*

A: Weigh the priorities and look for ways to modify the approach; Spent time really talking to community (key is communication and engagement), and built in a field tour, bringing people out to the site, trees were flagged and identified so people could see which trees would be removed; explaining and showing people what the decision and thought processes look like.

## Information Sharing – What’s Underway

*Vincent Luu, BC Ministry of Forests (Quesnel District)*

- Update on status of WUI WR plan: last fall and winter had consultants working on, had 1 covering west side of district and 1 (by Frontera), gone through several phases.
- Has final reports for WUI WRR plan almost wrapped up and will send out when ready
- includes expansion to the south to cover ?Esdilagh WUI and beyond and covering Barkerville corridor following the highway, (areas of interest around Cottonwood, Troll and Wells, as well as Bowron Lakes).
- City is doing CWRP on the city boundaries, and WUI is bigger area, and next year CRD is doing CWRP’s on overlap areas that.
- **Reiterated that inter-agency pieces needs to work really well together.**

It was noted that some MOF districts will have their WUI WRR plans in place, some CWRP’s – recognize potential for overlap, borrowing information from existing plans for other plans. In the case where CWRP’s are in place first, that information goes to the WUI WRR plans. MOF districts are meeting to sort out collaboration, and cut down on duplication, (and align naming conventions). Previous iterations of WUI WRR plans were called tactical plans. Fuel treatment units with current standards identified in one plan will be in the other plan too. Doing CRD boundaries per electoral area. They need to talk well with WUI WRR plans.

*Q: On multiple plans: Will the group prioritize all the possible treatments in the Quesnel area?*

A: No, we’re not there yet, but eventually yes, that will be done, we’ll have a prioritization ranking or score based on the methodology developed by risk or hazard type, etc.

*Brita, BC Parks*

- Recently got approval to put Dragon Mountain out to contract for fuel treatment, have new expenditure management controls, aiming to have on BCBid in next 2-3 weeks and have contractors start in July.

- Also putting out contract for implementation contractors to be onsite and monitor meeting of prescription targets, and WWR and Park objectives are being met.

*\*Action for Brita - send update once goes out to tender on BCBid*

*Brian Watson, FESBC*

- Recently finalized projects for funding in 2025/26 including some for 26/27, out of 24 approved, 14 are in the Cariboo regions, 3 projects in Quesnel area.
- Next intake: 3 million left unallocated for 26/27.

*\*Action all - check in with FESBC in the fall about next funding intake date*

*John Salewski, BC Wildfire, Quesnel*

- Doing FireSmart work with ?Esdilagh, engaged with Farmers Market, have 2 landscape burns, (Poplar Mountain and Newar), working with Nazko on maintenance burning

*\*Action - Patience to share the fire season forecast information from Mark Dyer*

*Mark Dyer Prevention Specialist BCWS - 2025 Wildfire Preparedness - please view the presentation [here](#). (From May 1, 2025 PG CWR)*

*Q: What is overall sentiment with wildfire risk reduction relating to burning, in community in Quesnel? Is education required around that? What is the readiness for burning and smoke?*

*A: Haven't done a lot of prescribed fire. For pile burning, at first public was calling 911, but over last 5 years its changed, people are seeing media releases and seeing crews working.*

*Yes, need to educate more people, and also need to educate about cultural fire deployed by First Nations and BCWS being support or back-up (that's the key to start scaling this up and do more area)*

*Erin Robinson, City of Quesnel*

- Thank you to FESBC for over 300k funding for phase 2, for fuel management work in mountain bike area.
- Finished tradeshow, reached over 400 people, Ember mascot was there.
- Working on FireSmart on private land, assisting vulnerable populations, CRD allowing to still support residents under old footprint.
- Continuing education rebates and home assessments (Ted managing through the summer).
- Staff taking wildfire training for home assessments through home partnership program
- Working on HRVA hazard and risk vulnerability assessment for City of Quesnel (on wildfire, landslides and floods).

*Ron Richert, City of Quesnel*

- Lots of EOC (Emergency Operations Centre) training in last while with a very dialled in crew, good to see fuel treatments; have been busy with lots structural fires and lots of grass fires lately.

*Leanne Rivet, Cariboo Regional District*

- Hired Forsite consulting to help with CWRP for 5 CRD areas (B, E, F, G, H, L), next year will be 6 other electoral areas (A, B, C, I, J, K).

*Nick Pickles, Three Rivers Community Forest*

- Dragon Mountain, aim is to build road up from cell tower for fuel treatment, there's good ground separation.

- Designed fuel treatment to support commercial thinning operation and tying treatment back to encase the south end of the park with fuel treatment, gives opportunity for access both from north and south in case of fire in park.
- Doing commercial harvesting to support the fuel management prescription.

*Debbie Knabke, Pet Safe Coalition Society of Canada*

- Debbie noted that their organization assists evacuees with sheltering their animals, they work closely with emergency services providers.
- They are also focusing efforts on preparedness and would welcome the opportunity to work with FireSmart assessors (local FireSmart representatives or LFRs, or certified wildfire mitigation specialists) to encourage people to be prepared for evacuation if they have animals.
- Attended Northern Emergency Support Services convention in PG and presented on disaster work.
- It's mandated now that every community (where the ESS is located) has to have animal component embedded in their emergency plan. This can affect transportation routes (trailer towing, etc).
- Quesnel has an MOU with Petsafe, a centre and plan is in place. Many other communities don't; took a long time to get this work through the government.

*Q: Are there guidance documents to assist communities to build this into plans?*

A: Yes, through any of the 3 groups, Debbie is happy to share the knowledge; Relates to pets and livestock, anything domesticated, hobby farms (not agriculture or commercial operations)

- Reminder of the Action item from Nov meeting, Debbie offered to be part of FireSmart events, (Debbie's main focus is Quesnel, and can travel to help others get plans in place)

- *Please contact Debbie for information or guidance documents to assist communities*

*Annie Ellison, BC Parks*

- Have had preseason conversations with BCWS around evacuations and knowledge sharing, to ensure communications with BC Parks with evacuation efforts.

*Eric Matzner, Wells Barkerville Community Forest*

- successful application to FESBC for 17ha for mechanical and hand WRR treatments, may be able to tie with commercial harvesting component.

*Ted Traer, Esdilaq First Nation*

- Got new wildfire truck designed to work with fire hydrants
- Fire awareness day May 6, Sal and folks from TNG coming, also have FireSmart coordinator
- Doing spot burning, collaborative planning work, and communications with city
- In Ted's other role (City of Quesnel Firesmart), he looks after information sharing, community engagement, home assessments, etc.

*Monty Armstrong, Abby Campbell, CN Rail*

- Monty started last August in new position of wildfire prevention officer doing outreach. Focus is mainly on maintaining safety of rail network.
  - CN does herbicide work to maintain vegetation along railway and avoid vegetation build-up issues.
  - Communities can apply for grant funding for any type of fire emergency project
- [Donations and Sponsorships](#) | [Community](#) | [Delivering Responsibly](#) | [cn.ca](#)

- Abbie is based out of PG, for region anything WL and up. Their Team handles all things dangerous goods related. Team goes out on the fire train. Working on making fleet larger to be more agile in the field and broadening their reach.

*Q: What's a fire train?*

A: Fire fighting capability from the track to keep right of way protected, hi-rail with tanks and pumps on each side, with at least 60,000 gallons, (2 x 30,000 litre tanks), it's a simple design and so far it works well. One is located in Kamloops, one on the way for PG, and one in Edmonton (they get moved around depending on fire risk and fire activity). It's not used or suitable for initial attack, but for mop up control and pre-wetting in advance of activities like rail grinding.

- If the resource is needed, it's usually requested through EOC liaison or BCWS,  
CN rail can be contacted via the [CN Police](#) (24hr dispatch/call centre)

*Q: How are the piles of accumulated creosoted ties collected or managed?*

A: Challenge of creosote being treated and not able to landfill it; in Canada there's only 1 facility (in Quebec), and we have millions of ties that are being processed as quickly as the facility can accept them being prioritized,  
- if you have a specific rail tie risk that needs priority attention, reach out to Monty

Meeting closed with much appreciation to Mike for hosting the preceding Wildfire Roundtable Meetings in Quesnel.

#### **Next meeting:**

- in the fall (October, or early November)
- Field trip option: Sisters Creek fuel treatment, with meeting at Kersley Hall

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
<b>Dragon Mountain</b> subcommittee to re-engage if and when needed	Erin Robinson, Ron Richert, Roland Jarrett, Bruce McDonald, Anne Ellison, Chris Nowotny, Lindsay Vandesteeg, Jason Ward, Matt Duran, John Salewski, Tom Foley, Ross Griffith, Mike Sakakibara, Brian Watson	Ongoing as needed
<b>Communications about wildfire risk reduction treatments</b> 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
Contact Erin Robinson to borrow <b>Ember costume</b>	Everyone	Ongoing
Coordinate <b>FireSmart education</b> events, work together	Pet Safe Coalition, CRD, BCWS, City	Ongoing