

# Clearwater and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

## Draft Meeting Summary as of February 28, 2022

**Meeting date:** February 24, 2022, 9:00AM to 10:30AM

**Location:** Online

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

BC Timber Sales (BCTS) – Daniel Arcand

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

MFLNRORD\* (Thompson Rivers District) – Marina Irwin, Julie Maxwell

Fraser Basin Council – Mike Simpson

TNRD – Sherri Madden (from 9:20), Kevin Skrepnek (from 9:30)

District of Clearwater – Mayor Merlin Blackwell, John Thomas, Mike Smith, Sid Prime (both to 10:00)

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

### **1. Introductions, Agenda, Objectives**

Mike Simpson welcomed everyone; territory was acknowledged. Introductions were made. The agenda was approved as presented.

### **2. Previous Meeting Summary**

The meeting summary from November 10, 2021, was approved and is available [here](#).

The following are updates on old action items that were completed; those that remain are at the end of this summary:

- Creating development permit areas and requirements with fuel management requirements for new subdivisions will take time and involve Mayor and Council
- Fuel management treatments cannot be tied to a private timber mark (i.e., private land logging). The requirements for hazard abatement under the Wildfire Act do apply to private land.
- Mike spoke with Monica Johnson, formerly with United Way Canada who coordinated FireSmart crews working on private land. Monica relayed that United Way is not interested in running the program again, it's not their normal business activity.
- Mike Simpson had a meeting with Thompson Rivers University professors Mike Flannigan and Jill Harvey in December. Dr. Flannigan studies fire behaviour and Dr. Harvey is an ecologist more interested in fire history, ecological effects of fires on trees and Indigenous use of fire. They are both interested in research opportunities and regularly engage MSc students. Hugh noted that BC Wildfire Service has a good ongoing relationship with those professors and TRU.
- Mike will add Ryan McLarty of Wells Gray Search and Rescue to the contact list

### **3. Information Sharing – What's Underway, Who's Doing What**

District of Clearwater

- Mike Smith noted that they have finished one Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Community Resilience Investment (CRI) program grant. Prescriptions are being developed on two sections

totalling 54 ha including one area near the gun range and one area near the boundary with Dunn Lake Road.

- Mike also noted that the fire department is doing structural protection training in May to learn how to set up sprinkler protection units, this is through the Office of the Fire Commissioner
- Mike also noted they are updating their emergency management bylaws and the emergency management plan
- John Thomas noted that the District is submitting CRI and other funding applications as their capacity allows
- Mayor Blackwell advised that they are seeking funds from the Wells Gray Community Forest and funds they are accessing for wildfire risk reduction to fund a structure protection unit and trailer

#### BC Wildfire Service

- Richard Swift advised that BCWS is in hiring mode, then it will be in training mode including boot camp before fire season. A portion of staff will be called back by Feb 28. At least one staff person from the Clearwater zone has transferred, but everyone else is returning. Crew configuration of which types and size of crews that will be in Clearwater is being determined, with ongoing support from Kamloops base.
- Depending on the demands of the fire season, Richard hopes local crews can finish the wildfire risk reduction project at the splash park this year. They are also engaged on projects with the Wells Gray Community Forest and BC Parks.
- Hugh Murdoch advised that they are still understanding the impacts of the budget and ministry reorganization on BCWS (will stay within Ministry of Forests, not the new Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship). He noted that there were significant investments in the UBCM CRI program (\$90M), as well as to the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) (\$25M). Indigenous capacity and engagement is a key priority, as is prevention and advancing the use of prescribed fire. He also noted that Recreation Sites and Trails BC will join BC Parks within Ministry of Environment and likely get more funding. Within the Clearwater area, this is good news as Wells Gray Park is good training ground for BCWS crews to assist in chainsaw training, trail clearing and wildfire risk reduction.

#### MFLNRORD – Thompson Rivers District

- Marina Irwin stated that they don't foresee significant changes in how they deliver programs and services because of reorganization and the budget. She noted that post-wildfire rehabilitation responsibilities are being transferred to districts and they are building that team.
- Julie Maxwell noted that they are hoping for \$1.3M for fiscal year beginning April 2022, similar to this past year. She brought a map up on-screen and noted that 35 ha at Gill Creek will be finished by fall, Campbell Creek unit 7 will have operations start in June on 20 ha, and that units 6 and 7 will comprise a couple years worth of work. She is developing a tactical plan to identify wildfire risk reduction opportunities from Little Fort south to Vinsulla, and also east to East Barriere Lake.

#### BC Timber Sales

- Daniel noted that their recent focus has been on understanding with the implications of the old growth short term deferrals announced in November, less so on wildfire risk reduction.
- Daniel can offer training opportunities for chainsaw work for BCWS crews on trap trees for Douglas-fir beetle control work in the Foghorn area

#### Thompson-Nicola Regional District

- Kevin Skrepnek updated the group that their wildfire debrief planned for mid-November had to be rescheduled due to the flooding in the Nicola valley.
- Kevin noted that in addition to the subscription based Voyent Alert public alerting system that TNRD uses, Emergency Management BC can use the provincial “alert ready” system when requested by local governments. This is a new opportunity not available in previous years.
- Kevin advised that since the District of Clearwater is part of the TNRD Emergency Management program, TNRD provides support for updating emergency management bylaws, development of plans and training opportunities. He noted that there will be a new provincial Emergency Program Act introduced this fall that will change expectations and content required in local government emergency management plans. There are some updates that need to be done for plans in 2022, before substantial changes to comply with the new legislation after this fall.
- Julie confirmed to Sherri that wildfire risk reduction activities in the Blue River area are coordinated by her through MFLNRORD Thompson Rivers District.
- It was noted by several participants that advocating for increased cellular coverage in the areas surrounding Clearwater, which would benefit emergency response, is underway

#### 4. Next Steps

Next meeting date will be in May (possibly in-person), Mike will seek a date a few weeks in advance.

Wildfire FireSmart workshop is coming up May 11-12 in Kamloops, information can be found [here](#)

Action items.

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Explore creating <b>development permit area</b> requirements for FireSmart principles and/or fuel management	Tyson Luedtke, John Thomas, Kevin Skrepnek	Long term, needs council approval
Utilize the <b>Kamloops TSA mapping website</b> to upload fuel management polygons (past and present) from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wells Gray CF Landscape Fire Plan</li> <li>▪ Wells Gray Park Fire Plan</li> <li>▪ DoC and area CWPP</li> </ul>	Julie Maxwell	Ongoing
Create a <b>static map</b> of past and proposed fuel management polygons for the CWPP area, send to Mike Simpson to post at <a href="http://www.wildfireroundtables.ca">www.wildfireroundtables.ca</a> on the Clearwater page	Julie Maxwell	Done on Feb 25
Develop a <b>FireSmart coordinator</b> program, with funding from either CRI Program or WGCF or Social Development Ministry or using students	John Thomas, George, others (Mike Simpson can support) and Clearwater Forestry Working Group	Ongoing
Coordinate about <b>evacuation plans</b> from Wells Gray Park, Upper Clearwater Valley, share ideas and input	BC Parks staff, Steve Murray, TNRD and others	Ongoing
Get an updated map showing <b>Blackpool VFD</b> coverage	FBC	Before next meeting
Develop a <b>water bar inventory</b> for access and egress, build into emergency response plans	Forestry Working group	ongoing