

Clearwater and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Meeting Summary as at Jan 29, 2020 - approved Feb 2, 2021

Meeting date: January 23, 2020 1:00PM to 4:00PM

Location: Dutch Lake Community Centre, Clearwater, BC

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

BC Parks - Andrea Zemanek (phone)

BC Timber Sales (BCTS) - Clint Fenton

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) - Mike Law, Jim Jones

Blackpool Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) - Mike Savage, Dietrich Rempel

Clearwater Fire Department - Mike Smith

District of Clearwater - Mayor Merlin Blackwell, Ctrs Bill Haring, Lynne Frizzle, Leslie Groulx

Fraser Basin Council - Mike Simpson

Interfor - Erik Kok

MFLNRORD* (Thompson Rivers District) - Marina Irwin, Kris Cooke, Jocelyn Poirior-Hardy

RCMP - Sergeant Grant Simpson

Simpcw First Nation - Councillor Martha Matthew

Simpcw Resource Group - Glenn Foss

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

Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade - Steve Murray, Mike Ward

West Fraser - Rob Ballinger

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

1. Introductions, Agenda, Objectives

Mike Simpson welcomed everyone and Martha Matthew acknowledged Secwepemc territory. Introductions were made around the room and on the phone. The agenda was approved as presented.

2. Information Sharing - What's Underway

Simpcw - Glenn noted that 10 ha of fuel management work was completed on reserve last year, doing 14 ha for this year to be completed by mid-February. Identified close to 50 mature standing trees to have a certified arborist assess and take down. Looking for permit for a fireguard around the community on reserve of 1km to 1.5km, 2-2.5 tree lengths in width. Commercial permit, will sell the wood, project is self-funded. Simpcw FN is looking to build capacity to develop wildfire fighting capacity, involve members in fire department. Martha noted that Simpcw has a mobile command post for communications with a 15 minute response time, has hired a coordinator for that and developing plans and capacity. Martha noted a summary of inventory and capacity of crews, resources, equipment (see *Simpcw emergency resources.pdf* circulated with this meeting summary).

Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade - looking at an early start up, it's warm and raining. In process of recertifying with S100 and S185, lots of wind, and certifying for falling and bucking. In process of fundraising, no operational money, grant application was submitted in November for \$25 000 for training and equipment, no decision yet. Trying to do all of Upper Clearwater with FireSmart program, there are some concerns about the FireSmart Canada representative in the area. Will practice drills soon. Did a course that Blackpool VFD put on, it was great.

There are only a few large structures in the area, only 3 - they have access to 2 of them. Working with BCWS is good. All private land in Upper Clearwater; age factor of people and equipment. Going into fourth year as a brigade. Need on fire experience.

Blackpool VFD - since last meeting, Blackpool has taken on the training for Little Fort VFD, put purchase order request in for \$12 000 for hose and nozzle to upgrade their truck to standards. Their new tender is due to arrive next week to replace old one. They will be training with Blackpool crew. Grants in and approved for Red Cross resiliency, and finishing Little Fort as well. Will get them up to what they want to have. New base radio in upstairs of fire hall. Plumed for another radio and water. Can run 2 frequencies at once from upstairs. Wells Gray amateur radio club, will want to utilize them during emergencies, secure ham radio frequency in case coms go down, can reach up into park and whole area. Aiming to have 22 operators for ham radio. FireSmart assessment training in March. Enrolled for CalFire interface response course, May 19-22, then bring back to local level. Comment on ham radios - these would be useful for Upper Clearwater valley to communicate down the valley. Parks should communicate and coordinate with Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade. Some overlap with Search and Rescue, fire departments, RCMP. ACTION - get the HAM operators together and coordinated; resolutions needed, then bring to DoC and TNRD for what to be utilized. Other communication options for remote areas include In-Reach devices.

RCMP - running short, down 3 members should have 9 (6 general duty and 3 traffic). Not a lot of training with firefighting, but work closely with first responders in the event of emergency, public safety, scene safety, criminality.

District of Clearwater - Leslie noted that the community wildfire protection plan (CWPP) area was expanded to South of Blackpool, up to Vavenby. Doing an amended Community Resilience Initiative (CRI) application. Waiting to hear on CRI funding in February, areas in town. Survey online right now for CWPP input. FireSmart reminders done in newsletters, 1760 houses received it. An assessment of EOC readiness was undertaken on December 17 without Leslie in attendance, report to come to council soon from Steve Newton. Still waiting to hear about short term worker program (\$500 000) following the forest sector downturn and doing fuel management in Wells Gray park. Council will start lobbying to get things moving, 8 months since Canfor closure, and it's been frustrating. Lots of talk, not lots of action. Still advocating for Telus for cell tower in Wells Gray Park corridor.

BC Parks - fuel management prescriptions underway at Clearwater Lake, Pyramid Creek, major day use areas; applied for funding within BC Parks. Evacuation plans are being developed, lots of interest from Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade. Main concern is if road is blocked, and how to get people out, and marshalling areas. Parks needs to upgrade the plan and communicate it. Suggestion was to have a contingency plan, and time trials, and is it manageable (weather, wildfire, hazmat, etc.). Mike Law noted evacuation is a challenge. Mayor Blackwell noted that the park operator previously had to develop the evacuation plan, now it is BC Parks. Also there was no required communication protocol with other businesses in the park. An improvement now with BC Parks taking the lead. In past used to be able to evacuate 98% of people within 4 hours; more like 3 days with remote areas. Average summer night in Wells Gray park, there are 1200-1500 people sleeping with no communications.

Thompson-Nicola Regional District - Kevin Skrepnek is in his second week on the job, he was previously with BCWS. His position of Emergency Program Coordinator was created last year, it was a part of Ron Storie and Jason Tomlin's roles previously. Jason is now Manager of Fire

Protection Services. Had Steve Newton do some sessions with TNRD member municipalities. Kevin is a radio operator as well. Carol noted she has 5 community meetings per year, would like to see FireSmart come and present. Vavenby VFD has a new fire truck, they are training. Looking to see if TNRD can take over highway rescue, Blackpool would be primary and Vavenby secondary. Canfor has a letter of intent for someone to buy the property with a February 1 deadline. TNRD is implementing a new public notification system this year, will require users to subscribe. Kevin will share more info on this at the next meeting.

Interfor - facility on Adams Lake, in light of fire summers, have done a fuel management project around their facility. Worked with local Clearwater contractors, they would be happy to work on projects here. They train 200 loggers on S100A each spring. No active operations in this plan area, they are operational in Avola (Homestead, others). Intent to purchase Canfor tenure, no decision yet. Operations up in Blackpool area in 2020.

Thompson Rivers District, MFLNRORD - contract is out for prescription development on 300 ha of fuel breaks around Clearwater, one on road 9 into CF, another from Road 2 in TFL to Gill Creek. Were identified in the Wells Gray Community Forest Landscape Fire plan. Prescriptions will be done in next month, then reviewed. Next intake to wildfire risk reduction program next week, will apply for funding for treatments in 2020/21 fiscal year. They have earmarked funds for Clearwater CWPP. Forestry employment program (not linked to wildfire) has 2 contracts underway, around Douglas-fir bark beetle management. Kris has been working closely with Leslie and others since 2019; Clearwater area top for priorities, there may be room for additional projects. Heather is mostly retired, working briefly in March. Starting Feb 3, Julie Maxwell will be hired and will focus on fuel management in this area.

BC Wildfire Service - funding for lots of these projects from BCWS. Sitting on planning teams, and providing prescription support. In spring, looking to engage with groups on prescribed burning, such as community forest and BCTS. Kamloops Fire Centre will do an industry meeting again, or come around to licensees. Mike will revisit VFDs and the brigades in spring.

BC Timber Sales - Clint here for Jessica. Highest bidder gets timber sale licence. Provide input to prescriptions, such as getting loggers to do more piling; broadcast burns looking for opportunity to expand and partner with BCWS. They have prescribed burn expertise, average 1 block or 20 ha per year, usually cable hemlock blocks north of Blue River.

West Fraser - some operating area north of here. Haven't operated in there this year. No current plans this winter, or likely in 2020 as well. Working on fuel management initiatives around 100 Mile House and their community forest. When back here, will utilize emergency preparedness plans, link to communications with BCWS, etc. Doing some grinding in Clinton to deal with material and do less burning; hopefully can use that here too; hauling off site.

Clearwater Fire Department - working on training plans, working with Blackpool and Vavenby VFDs for wildland and other incidents. Providing input to CWPP, likely a FireSmart education will be rolled out this year. Did FireSmart training in Kelowna. Need people trained for firefighting. It was suggested that a VFD have separated wildland firefighters vs. structural; the challenge is the training requirements for both and the legalities.

United Way - Leslie relayed that there is continued funding for 10 people to complete FireSmart activities for property owners that can't do their own work. Took 30 names of seniors, currently being assessed.

3. Other Elements to Discuss

Terms of Reference - was edited on screen and approved.

Geographic area of the roundtable - was reviewed and confirmed as appropriate; it extends further south than the CWPP update but that's logical as it includes Simpcw fire service area.

Website - simple web address www.wildfireroundtables.ca takes you to the main landing page, then click on the Clearwater and Area tab. Suggested to add [TNRD GIS map link](#), Forsite tool map link for Kamloops TSA. Suggested to add fuel management polygons (past, proposed treatments) to the [Forsite mapping tool for the Kamloops Timber Supply Area](#) (MFLNRORD/licensee action).

Capacity (people, training, equipment) - many VFDs and brigades are waiting on funding applications. Lots of community members sitting on the fence for getting involved as a volunteer firefighter. Mike Smith and Mike Savage are working on a strategy for this. Have a junior program for 16 year olds where they can be trained, but not attend to a fire until they are 18. Lost volunteers as a result of the Canfor shutdown. Idea for volunteer wildland firefighters only, not structural. Challenges around having volunteer firefighters called out to a fire during their regular work hours; need support from employers. Incentives for employing volunteer firefighters, tax reduction on their business is an option that Sherri will look into. Simpcw has insufficient numbers for volunteer firefighters, especially during working hours, as they may be working outside the community. Looking to Simpcw Resource Group and Administration to have employees trained. Identify employers and the need for volunteer firefighters. Blackpool VFD has sent letters to employers in 2017. Try putting stats out of average fires. Consider approaching chamber of commerce and getting the message out. DoC has to look at business continuity approach too. Have a booth to attract volunteers at CWPP open house, planned for April.

Traditional burning - Mike Law noted that prescribed burns happen in the community, working with BCWS. Opportunity exists to explore where burning on lands outside of community that overlap with goals and areas for community protection. Suggestion to burn large areas of Wells Gray park. ACTION - explore at a future meeting. Currently no goals for prescribed burns in the Wells Gray park plan. Pushback is caribou habitat and protection of species at risk.

Goals for this roundtable - communication, networking, mapping piece (develop a map with past fuel management treatments, future ones), community awareness and communication with community members, maintaining and ensuring communications infrastructure. Messaging about what people need to do to FireSmart their properties. Want to shock people into action, don't sugar coat it. Red rock/green rock, ask for dental records. Advocate for more funding in CRI program for private properties to undertake FireSmart. Could advocate for strategic fuel management with respect to other resource values on the landscape.

4. Next Steps

All present agreed to share their contact info. Mike Simpson will email a contact list.

Next meeting - half day, April 2020. Ideally to be coordinated with CWPP open house presentation, and possibly a field tour. Mike Simpson will work with DoC staff to coordinate a date and seek maximum participation from roundtable members.

Future meeting topics

- Explore traditional burning opportunities further
- New *Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation*, impacts on forestry operations and fuel management projects

The following ACTION items were agreed to:

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Complete the CWPP survey and circulate it to friends and neighbours	Everyone	ASAP
Share contact info for this Roundtable	Mike Simpson	With this meeting summary
Coordinate about evacuation plans from Wells Gray Park, Upper Clearwater Valley, share ideas and input	Andrea Zemanek, 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 the Wells Gray Park Fire Plan, with permission to post on the website	Andrea	ASAP
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 (when complete) 	MFLNRORD staff	Ongoing
Once DoC CWPP is complete: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upload fuel management polygons (past and proposed) to Kamloops TSA mapping website ▪ Invite roundtable members to the open house 	MFLNRORD staff Leslie to coordinate with Mike Simpson	April