

## **Clearwater and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable Meeting Summary as at May 10, 2021**

**Meeting date:** May 5, 2021 1:00PM to 3:45PM

**Location:** Online

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

BC Timber Sales (BCTS) – Tyson Luedtke  
BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) – Richard Swift  
Blackpool Volunteer Fire Department – Mike Savage  
Clearwater Fire Department – Mike Smith  
District of Clearwater – Mayor Merlin Blackwell, Councillor Bill Haring, Leslie Groulx  
ForestWise Environmental Consulting Ltd. – Alan Westhaver  
Fraser Basin Council – Mike Simpson, Tom Welfare  
Interfor – Sheena Colton  
MFLNRORD\* (Thompson Rivers District) – Marina Irwin, Kris Cooke  
RCMP – Sgt Grant Simpson  
Simpco – Melanie Stutt  
Thompson-Nicola Regional District – Sherri Madden, Kevin Skrepnek  
Wells Grey Community Forest – George Brcko  
West Fraser – Rob Ballinger  
*\*Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development*

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

Mike Simpson welcomed everyone and territory was acknowledged. Introductions were made. The agenda was approved as presented. Mike acknowledged that he will be recording the Alan Westhaver presentation.

### **2. Alan Westhaver – Wildland/urban fire, FireSmart and its Effectiveness**

Mike Simpson introduced Alan Westhaver, one of the originators of FireSmart with over 30 years of experience in the field. Most recently Alan has been consulting on fire smart issues providing support with the wildland-urban interface and investigating recent wildfires. Mike noted that he is going to record this session to post online; no objection was noted.

Alan's narrated presentation can be found on Fraser Basin Council's YouTube channel, there is a link to it [here](#). Alan's key points were as follows:

- Partnership is key to all aspects of wildfire preparedness
- With respect to disasters, we don't have a forest fire problem, we have a home ignition problem. If homes don't burn, disaster is averted
- Reducing fuels in the home ignition zone works
- Alan suggests the [FireSmart Neighbourhood Recognition Program](#) is key to finding local champions and protecting neighbourhoods

Questions and discussion raised the following:

- It was suggested that part of the CRI program funds should be dedicated to hiring a coordinator to run a FireSmart program, similar to BearAware or WildSafe, and do door-to-door campaigns and FireSmart assessments
- Melanie noted that she does that in Simpcw, they build a community presentation and event into their annual funding application. Simpcw is a FireSmart community. Simpcw Fire Department has done training, been outfitted with gear to do the work. Their firefighters have triaged homes (a motivation for homeowners to remain on the list of priority homes to be saved)
- Alan suggested Clearwater and Area could do an open house, public forum, then do a home assessment and walk through the steps, and/or establish a demonstration site
- It was noted that District of Clearwater has a wildfire covenant for property development.
- Kevin relayed the following from TNRD Planning Department after the meeting:
  - o When we approve all new subdivisions they place a wildfire covenant requiring them to take FireSmart measures in design and construction. This also absorbs us of liability if their homes burn down in a wildfire.
  - o Our rezoning bylaw also requires a report and subsequent wildfire mitigation work to be done for any rezoning applications
- George suggested we look to what Logan Lake does, they have a community forest and are FireSmart. They employ summer students using hand tools to do FireSmart work on private property. This could be an opportunity to get students interested in forestry with experience, then pursuing it at post-secondary level. As the Wells Gray Community Forest moves harvest down “into the community” in the near future, more focus will be put on fuel management. George thinks the WGCF could commit funds and leverage CRI funds for this work.

### **3. Previous Meeting Summary**

The meeting summary from Feb 2, 2021 was approved. Action items were reviewed; see updated table of action items at the end of this summary.

### **4. Information Sharing – What’s Underway**

Blackpool VFD (TNRD)

- Mike Savage mentioned that he has had numerous Facebook items on the Clearwater info board on FireSmart. Mike had focused on community awareness and delivered door-to-door advice to every home in the fire protection area. They have reached 450 individuals’ homes mostly FireSmarting homes, installing CO and smoke detectors and delivering home inspections this spring.
- In September 2020 they did the provincial structure protection training course with BCWS for members of Blackpool, Little Fort and Clearwater fire departments. They also delivered 2 Neighbourhood training session on triaging homes
- We entered into our fire suppression water storage enhancement project and with corporate sponsors installed a 10,000-gallon water tank at Blackpool Hall. and a 10,000 Gallon tank at Little Fort Hall. 5,000 gallon tank will be going in Carolin Road area in Blackpool, 4km on the new creek in Little Fort as well as 15,000 gallon on the East side of the North Thompson River at the little Fort Ferry slip. This improves water shuttle reloads and enhanced access to additional water resources in the event of wildfires.

- We have a grant application in to get two more tanks one going over on the old highway near Star Lake School and the other at Round Top
- We have a wildfire bush truck in service this spring
- We are doing an SPU type-2 trailer build, we have pumps and hoses and over equipment ready and on the floor
- Tanks are 3 season - we are looking at a solar power propelled spinner to show keep water movement so it doesn't freeze

#### Simpcw First Nation

- Prescribed burn and did a burn plan rewritten and update so did the burn on the 13th and 14th of April. 22 hectares in total. A big success!
- Burn goals - wildfire risk reduction; a spark from the train could ignite the community.
- A forester wrote the prescription, to approve and confirm it's going to be effective, everything is green now - a month previous to that private landowner burned around that area

#### BC Wildfire Service - Kamloops Fire Centre

- Richard swift stated that at the start of May there has been a influx of crew members. We will host 4 individuals running as 1 crew. The crew have recently finished up the training and boot camps process.
- The majority of the seasonal workforce is ready to go. We have been very occupied with training and onboarding the recruits. This includes standard recall training in resorts. Our crew is based in Clearwater - one crew member is with the local government at the splash park.
- We will be running 1 crew however our preparedness plan is still there when HFI's dictates we need more crew we can recruit more support from other crews.
- Mike Law is scheduled to come back on July 1st. Richard has been doing both jobs (WA and tech role) and will until Mike Law returns.

#### MFLNRORD - Thompsons River District

- Kris Cooke, Spectrum back in clear water working on the Gill Creek on a fuel break about 15 hectares complete so far until June and will come back to complete it in the fall. That's all operational treatments - understory, pruning and fuel clean ups.
- Building some prescription in the Kettle Creek bike trail area around 10 hectares
- Currently working with Leslie to look at prescriptions from the CWPP

#### BC Timber Sales

- Tyson Luedtke noted that they are working on the bark beetle issues in the Foghorn area
- We haven't been able to finalize any fuel management in the area so far.
- We have another block up by Blue River that he will be assessing to do a broadcast burn in the fall, similar to fall 2020

#### West Fraser

- Rob Ballinger is looking at finalizing their logging plan and operations just north of this plan area. We will also be finalizing our emergency preparedness plans and fire preparedness plans.

#### Interfor

- Sheena Colton had nothing to update about fuel management work in the area, but she noted that we did our own drills and got our fire equipment ready in the past month

- Sherri Madden and George Brcko asked about private land logging occurring in the area, which is leaving large quantities of debris with no mandated responsibility to the landowner to clean it up. It was suggested that there are chipping opportunities.
- Question was asked whether issuing a private land timber mark can convey fuel management requirements. Tyson noted that Wildfire Act regulations apply to private land where industrial logging has occurred. How are they enforced on private land?
- Sheena followed up and the following responses were provided after the meeting:
  - *Fire Abatement for Camp 2 Private land is the responsibility of the Private Land Owner;*
  - *Fire Abatement for Private Land located at 980 Old North Thompson Highway in the responsibility of the Private Land Owner;*
  - *Interfor has purchased volume and hired our local contractors to harvest this timber and we are grateful to have the opportunity for our contractors to complete this work during a period where they would normally not be operating due to breakup conditions;*
  - *Interfor has enabled the opportunity for Arrow Transportation to grind and process post-harvest residues for Hog Fuel, Arrow has viewed this project and thus far has indicated that they are interested in performing the work;'*

#### Wells Gray Community Forest

- George Brcko states they aren't doing any more harvesting until winter and have used up all of their 5-year cut in their cut control period.
- WGCF are supporting fuel management prescription going on in the community forest because of the district of Clearwater Landscape Fire Plan, George believes these pieces are really positive - and their next 5 year cut will be targeted in those areas
- The Community Forest will be a proponent to a large amount of wildfire funding which will be streamed through BC Community Forest Association to community forest - opening up a huge amount of opportunities around town.
- Very interested in getting a student team and using multiple funding streams for this forest reworking group has been a good opportunity to do more partnership work (as discussed above)
- George loves the thought of having more water tanks/caches - interested in exploring this

#### District of Clearwater

- Mike Smith explained that the District got a CRI grant \$294,000 for prescription in fuel management two areas - Easts Blackpool at the end of our boundaries and portion in Sunshine Valley, near the gun range.
- Doing an EOC tabletop exercise on May 7 with Simpcw, TNRD, Barriere
- With the help of Mike Simpon we applied for a EOC capacity grant - that was sent off in March
- We will be rolling out our Fire Detector Program when COVID slows down, we plan to integrate some FireSmart education into that
- Leslie Groulx update TMX pipeline clearing is causing some reduction for fuel load on private land - TMX has left things pretty clean - chipping it and putting it onsite

#### Thompson-Nicola Regional District

- Sherri Madden reported that the half-day of effort by locals on a short-term fix on the unstable slope above Clearwater River Road was unstable and work had to be abandoned. They will still be running the rafting trips however there's an ongoing study to look at an alternative route.
- Kevin Skrepnek noted that the [Voyent Alert system](#) is now up and running and that is accessible for the public, it has been tried and tested last month. You have to subscribe to get updates but

you can find this on our website. Numbers for buoyant alert - 2,500 have subscribed so far this is likely to rise dramatically when an emergency kicks in

- We now have 2 SPU trailers and an F250 and F350 to haul them.

## 5. Next Steps

Next Community Wildfire Roundtable to be in fall 2021, Mike will seek a date at least a few weeks in advance.

An updated contact list will be circulated with this summary.

### Action Items:

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Tyson Luedtke and Leslie Groulx to look at development permit areas. Going over subdivisions, planning and permitting requirements for new properties including fire start principles.	Tyson Luedtke, Leslie Groulx, Kevin Skrepnek	
Richard to contact George if he needs any ground for SNAG training	George Brcko, Richard Swift	Ongoing
Kris Cooke or Julie Maxwell to add projects to the Kamloops TSA mapping website	Kris Cooke, Julie Maxwell	Ongoing
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>	MFLNRORD staff, Julie will confirm	Ongoing
George Brcko to Highlight concerns over logging debris on private land of Forest Working Group on the 11th - Pill up in an Interface area	George Brcko	May 11
Confirm whether fuel management requirements can be tied to a private timber mark, and the extent to which Wildfire Act regulations are applied and enforced on private land logging	Kris Cooke, Richard Swift	ASAP
Richard Swift and George Brcko to open up conversations on having more water tanks - a potential spot near the hydro line at Gill Creek	Richard Swift, George Brcko	In advance of next CRI funding intake?
Leslie to reach out to Monica Johnson out of Williams Lake who managed the United Way Team around the idea of funding a Firesmart coordinator through CRI Funding	Leslie Groulx	
Develop a FireSmart coordinator program, with funding from either CRI Program or WGCF or Social Development Ministry or using students	Leslie, George, others (Mike Simpson can support)	Well before October CRI program intake
Coordinate about evacuation plans from Wells Gray Park, Upper Clearwater Valley, share ideas and input	BC Parks staff, Steve Murray, TNRD and others	Ongoing