

Clinton and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable Meeting Summary as at Feb 22, 2020

Meeting date: February 18, 2020 12:30PM to 3:30PM

Location: Clinton Memorial Hall, Clinton, BC

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

BC Timber Sales (BCTS) - David Lishman

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) - Reg Trapp, Shelly Harnden, Jamie Jeffreys

Clinton Community Forest - Steve Law, Robin Fennell

Clinton Fire Department - Wayne Walch

Village of Clinton - Mayor Susan Swan, Wendy Rockafellow

Fraser Basin Council - Mike Simpson (facilitator, recorder)

High Bar First Nation - Chief Roy Fletcher

Loon Lake Volunteer Fire Department - Colin Smith, Jiri Kouril, Norm Dixon

MFLNRORD* (100 Mile House District) - Kane Copley, Sarah Szatmari

MFLNRORD* (Thompson Rivers District) - Julie Maxwell

Secwepemc'ecw Riparian Restoration Society - Josh Batson

Thompson-Nicola Regional District - Director Sally Watson, Kevin Skrepnek

West Fraser - Rob Ballinger

16 Mile Community Association, Bonaparte Watershed Stewardship Society - Al Midgley

70 Mile Volunteer Fire Department - Dennis Huber, Cam Robb

**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.

2. Overview, Purpose

Fraser Basin Council has secured funding from BC Wildfire Service to pilot three community wildfire roundtables over the next two years: Quesnel and Area, Williams Lake and Area, and in the Thompson-Nicola. The TNRD board of directors determined the pilot should be in Clearwater and surrounding area. That roundtable launched in October 2019, and Quesnel did not need additional support. Therefore a second one is now underway in Clinton and Area.

The purpose of creating a community wildfire roundtable is to ensure **good coordination and communication** about who's doing what around wildfire preparedness:

- FireSmart education
- Timber harvesting opportunities
- Fuel management
- Resources and capacity - volunteer fire departments, ranchers, agriculture sector, forest industry
- First Nations traditional burning

The multiple actors involved in the above activities include but are not limited to local government (including some volunteer fire departments), First Nations governments, MFLNRORD

(including BC Wildfire Service, district offices), the forest industry (including major licensees, community forests, and woodlot licensees), BC Timber Sales, and independent fire departments.

The area to be included was noted as to be determined with input from today's meeting.

Additional objectives address some Abbott and Chapman recommendations, such as incorporating traditional burning and traditional ecological knowledge, and capacity and resources of volunteer fire departments, ranchers/agriculture sector, and others to aid in fire suppression activities when needed.

It was confirmed that these roundtables are not being established in response to proposed changes to the Emergency Program Act that all communities have a community wildfire protection plan. The engagement period for input ended Jan 31, 2020 but the discussion paper can be found [here](#).

3. Information Sharing - What's Underway

Clinton Community Forest (CCF) - Steve noted that there is a Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) funded fuel break project that is 100m wide and covering 60 ha total. Current status is prescriptions are approved and treatments will commence soon. The CCF shares equipment with Clinton Fire Department. There is currently a FESBC funded project to recover non-merchantable fibre, to chip and grind pulp logs rather than burn them on site.

Village of Clinton - Steve noted that a community wildfire protection plan (CWPP) was completed in 2007, and 3 fuel management treatments were completed in 2009 north of town on both sides of the railway tracks. In the past there was an extensive FireSmart education program, and a chipping program where resident's woody debris material would be chipped and hauled away.

Clinton Fire Department - Wayne noted they currently have 17 volunteers, and are receiving \$30 000 to purchase a structural protection unit and a further \$30 000 for interface training.

Loon Lake VFD - Colin noted that they joined the TNRD in 2019, have 22 members, a new pumper, water tanker. Their service area was severely impacted by the 2017 Elephant Hill wildfire, and therefore have little FireSmart education to do and are currently rebuilding the fire hall. Long narrow service area of 32km from end of Loon Lake to Hwy 97.

BC Wildfire Service - Reg noted that each year they do a pre-work with equipment contractors, map out locations of where equipment exists, and ensure they have up to date lists of VFD equipment. They work closely with MFLNRORD district folks. He noted there is a desire to put more fire back on the landscape, and they are working to develop a community of practice to do this. Shelly noted that BCWS annually burn the area north of town that had fuel management treatments completed in 2009 with Bernie from the Clinton VFD, as a maintenance treatment. Jamie noted that there is the prevention focus of BCWS is supporting prescribed fire and cultural burning. BCWS is funding some pilot projects with BC Cattlemens' Association in other areas where fuels that are comprised of grasses are grazed, Mike Pritchard is coordinating this, and she would like to see that here as well.

70 Mile VFD - an independent VFD, they have 15 members, a new fire truck and two tenders (one for pavement, one for off pavement), an initial attack truck, a 14 foot structural protection unit equipped with pumps, bladders, hoses, etc. They have a mutual aid agreement with Watch Lake/North Green Lake VFD and South Green Lake VFD. They recently received grants of \$50 000

for training and \$50 000 for equipment. They were involved in the 2009 wildfire near 70 Mile, and noted that there are some areas of fuel left to be cleaned up close to private property.

West Fraser - Rob noted that they are active in operations in salvaging fire-killed timber and reforestation activities. They have capacity to implement portions of fuel management treatments, they are currently doing some of that work in 100 Mile Community Forest and near Lac la Hache and Forest Grove. They burn piles where it is uneconomical to utilize the material, but currently have funding for grinding material in the Elephant Hill wildfire area.

TNRD - Sally noted that improvements have been made since the 2009 fires in this area. Kevin Skrepnek is new 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 and oversees the 8 VFDs. TNRD is implementing a new public notification system this year, will require users to subscribe, it will be in place until a province-wide system is in place. Kevin can share more info on this at the next meeting. Kevin noted two funding sources (see #4 below).

MFLNRORD - Julie Maxwell is from Thompson Rivers District (Kamloops office), whereas Kane Copley and Sarah Szatmari are from 100 Mile House District. Sarah is in a community transition support role following mill closures and curtailments, and is looking for opportunities to collaborate with communities and groups. Kane noted that wildfire risk reduction is the number 1 priority in the district, they have worked with BCWS to identify and advance primary shaded fuel breaks (long, and up to 300m wide) and interface fuel mitigation projects on Crown land adjacent to residential areas with a high density of structures. Prescriptions are in the works. Treatments may include hand/manual works only, mechanical work, or those with a timber harvesting/logging component. Egress routes are being planned but they need local knowledge. Kane noted that a 10 year non-replaceable forest licence is being considered in the district for a significant volume, requiring the construction of a processing facility, and aimed at unsalvaged burnt wood.

16 Mile Community Association and Bonaparte Watershed Stewardship Society - Al noted that their association is essentially neighbours helping neighbours, and aren't even to the level of organization of a fire brigade. They established a well before the 2017 wildfire with mining industry support that was helpful as a water source, and see their value as being a 5 minute response and to address risks from the highway corridor. They service an area from the Hwy 99 turnoff in the south to the Loon Lake Road turnoff in the north. They now have some equipment. Al suggested that the area of this roundtable extend south to Cache Creek and east to the Deadman River valley. He also noted that First Nations, RCMP, BC Hydro and MOTI were missing today.

Secwepemcul'ecw Riparian Restoration Society (SRSS) - Josh noted that the society was formed by 8 First Nations governments to advance riparian restoration in the area of the Elephant Hill Wildfire, as well as support territorial patrol initiatives. It was suggested that there could be a good opportunity to engage the SRSS and the 8 First Nations on cultural burning and prescribed fire in the future.

BC Timber Sales - David noted that they have two operating areas within this proposed area: south of Green Lake around Rayfield River; and near Chasm. BCTS is open to fuel management opportunities in their operations where it makes sense.

BC Parks - Tom Hughes provided the following information to Mike in advance of the meeting to share (which Kane also noted): i) Big Bar Lake Park fuel reduction project funded through MFLNRORD Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) funds; and ii) Green Lake Park (south side of lake) is also a fuel reduction project funded through MFLNRORD WRR funds and is being done in the Nolan Creek, Sunsetview and Boyd Bay Sites of the park.

Items of interest raised during the discussion include the following:

- Utilization of logging debris piles rather than burning them; current reality is that without funding it is not economical to haul this debris from very far, however recommendations from the Interior Forest Sector Renewal may have policy changes coming around utilization
- Clinton has had relatively successful FireSmart implementation in the past
- Unlike in the past, there does not need to be a CWPP in place before a fuel management or wildfire risk reduction project is funded or implemented.
- Opportunity exists to do fuel management projects close to private property in 70 Mile area; Dennis and Kane to follow up with specific areas and it could be funded.
- If primary fuel breaks create grazing opportunities, open them up for community pastures or unique grazing opportunities as well as cattle

4. Other Elements to Discuss

Establishment - it was agreed to establish the Clinton and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable.

Geographic area of the roundtable - was discussed, dialogue ensued and it was agreed to expand the draft area to include the following (but stay within the TNRD):

- South to the TNRD Electoral Area E boundary, roughly at the junction of Loon Lake Road with Hwy 97
- West to include areas out to Meadow Lake, Jesmond, Kelly Lake, Big Bar
- East to include North Bonaparte Road area

It was noted that while the Clinton Community Watershed is important, the focus of this roundtable is community wildfire protection and to focus on homes and infrastructure.

It was suggested to have a consistent width around private properties on both maps, such as 2km which is commonly used surrounding a wildland-urban interface (WUI) area.

It was suggested that a separate community wildfire roundtable be explored and established if support exists in the Cache Creek-Ashcroft and surrounding area, including portions of TNRD Electoral Area I (Steve Rice is director).

Therefore the area of this roundtable is within 100 Mile House District of MFLNRORD and the Cariboo Fire Centre of BCWS.

Website - simple web address www.wildfireroundtables.ca takes you to the main landing page, a separate page for Clinton and Area will be created soon.

Capacity (people, training, equipment) - many VFDs and brigades are receiving more funding than before 2017, but more is needed for training and equipment.

Funding - Kevin Skrepnek noted the following funding programs under the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF):

- Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) - equipment, supplies, training, up to \$25 000, deadline March 13, 2020, more info [here](#)
- Evacuation Route Planning - up to \$25 000, deadline April 17, 2020, more info [here](#)

Alan Westhaver - Mike noted that the Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable proposed bringing Alan Westhaver (former Parks Canada employee, extensive experience with wildfire and fuel management) for an evening public presentation in the spring. Alan suggested doing this in several locations around southern BC Interior. Those present agreed it would be a good idea to bring him to Clinton, likely in early to mid-May based on his schedule. Fraser Basin Council can fund his labour and expenses.

Contact list - it was noted that RCMP, BC Ambulance and other first responders could be advised of this roundtable, but their roles are clearly defined in response and they may have limited input to the prevention and preparedness roles of this roundtable. Otherwise, all those present agreed to share their contact info (Mike will circulate it by email, but not post it online).

5. Next Steps

Next meeting - half day, afternoon, in conjunction with Alan Westhaver presentation, May 2020.

Future meeting topics

- Standard meeting agenda, recurring topics
- Confirming geographic area
- Approve a terms of reference

The following ACTION items were agreed to:

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Update map boundaries for this area based on input heard	Mike Simpson to connect with Devona Hay, BCWS	Before next meeting
Share shape files of fuel management polygons (past and present) to pass on to Devona Hay of BCWS	Kane send to Mike	By end February
Utilize the Cariboo Region mapping website (Forsite) to upload fuel management polygons (past and present)	Kane	Before next meeting
Share contact info for this Roundtable	Mike Simpson	With this meeting summary
Send contact info for any blank cells	Everyone	Ongoing
Coordinate about evacuation plans from Wells Gray Park, Upper Clinton 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
Follow up with United Way to see if they are operating in Clinton and Area in 2020	Mike	ASAP
Send Mike Simpson content to add to the Clinton and Area page of www.wildfireroundtables.ca and utilize it for your own communication purposes	Everyone	Ongoing