

Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Summary as at February 22, 2022

Meeting date: February 15, 2022 9:00AM to 12:00PM

Location: Online

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

Alkali Resource Management (ARM) – Gord Chipman, Francis Johnson
British Columbia Wildfire Service (BCWS) – Brian Clark, Matt Lees, Dave Fleming, Mike Gash
Cariboo Regional District – Angie Delainey
City of Williams Lake – Ken Day (contractor), Erick Peterson
Fraser Basin Council – Mike Simpson
MFLNRORD* (district) – Geneve Jasper, Kingsley Kyere-Donkor
MFLNRORD* (region) – Chris Swan
MFLNRORD* (Range Branch) – Peter Holub
Tolko Industries – Bryan Jakubec
Williams Lake Community Forest – Hugh Flinton
Williams Lake First Nation – John Walker, Willem Faasse
University of British Columbia – Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz, Sally Bardossy
**Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development*

Meeting objectives

- Learn about fire histories in the Interior
- 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

1. Historical Fire Regimes in the Dry Forests of the Cariboo-Chilcotin

Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz, who recently defended her PhD at University of British Columbia, gave a presentation on the historical fire regimes in the dry forests of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. Her research involved a team of archaeologists, T'exelc elders and fire specialists and her expertise as a dendrochronologist (tree rings) and looked at fire severity, fire frequency, and Indigenous stewardship of the land and use of fire and how things have changed since colonization and suppression of fire.

Kelsey's presentation can't be shared due to the sensitive nature of some of the information and the fact that it hasn't been published yet. She welcomes questions via email kelsey.copes-gerbitz@ubc.ca

Questions and discussion raised the following:

- Kelsey's research has been published; she shared some resources that Mike will post online
- Questions were raised about how to protect archaeological sites, and whether tools such as the grasslands strategy can restore landscapes back to what is more appropriate from a fire perspective; whether the fire history demonstrates that forest insects and pests were managed with fire (elders say forests are not healthy today); and whether fires were lit in spring or fall (10-15% of fire scars were in the early wood)
- Opportunities to educate the public about states of our forests, need to burn them

- Old photos are an excellent education tool; use multiple lines of evidence
- ACTION: BCWS to explore creating a short 5min video of Kelsey's research
- Need for extension notes, how to relay the applicability of this information to practitioners
- Sarah Dixon-Hoyle has published a paper about restoration and reconciliation

2. Previous Meeting Summary

The meeting summary from November 15, 2021 was approved. Old action items were reviewed, updated and/or prompted for discussion in the information sharing part of the meeting.

Mike reminded people that the November meeting started off with “what lessons did we learn from 2021” in BC, and the common themes were as follows:

- FireSmart educational material development and messaging
- Learn from Logan Lake (FireSmart, fuel management and other factors)
- Need for public education re: fuel management, prevention and backburns; lack of public trust
- Emergency Management System
- Fire science/fire behaviour and changing conditions
- Speed things up for fuel management/ treat more areas on the landscape
- Planning subdivisions in the future with FireSmart in mind
- Mapping platforms and information that is accessible to all during suppression activities.

3. Information sharing – what's underway

FLNRORD Region – Resource Management

- Chris Swan noted that the blanket exemption for mule deer winter range (MDWR) requirements in the wildland urban interface (WUI) in the IDF is in progress and will be shared soon. It will be similar to the blanket exemption issued to Alkali Resource Management.

FLNRORD District

- Kingsley brought up a map and showed wildfire risk reduction activities currently underway this fiscal year (treatments at airport, Pheasant Drive, Russet Bluff, Bond Lake, Gunanoot) and what is planned for next year (Lower Comer, Fox Mountain).
- There are also prescribed burns planned for as early as spring 2022 in several locations
- Kingsley noted that beyond what's planned for the next 2 years that was shown on screen, he is working with Matt Lees to do a tactical plan for what's left to be treated. Some people suggested there are other polygons to the east within the CWPP, and also opportunities to re-treat areas done circa 2008-12.

BC Timber Sales

- Nathan Davis was not present, but it was noted that BCTS is exploring expansion of treatments adjacent to Tamas Woodlot Licence 1579 at Dugan Lake

BC Wildfire Service – Cariboo Fire Centre

- The map that Kingsley was using is the “mapping tool” that Matt Lees has spoken of in the last year; Forsite has been hired to help develop this. Kingsley is in the process of updating past treatments in this map. This map will be updated at least annually and will have a .kml file that can be used by anyone on Google Earth and Arc GIS files for more advanced users.
- TRU property between Midnight and 11th Ave. will be treated by BCWS staff starting in April

- Brian Clark noted that Cariboo Fire Centre has staff due to the atmospheric river event.
- There are a total 8 burns planned totalling 930 ha this spring, could also be fall for some.
- Tried a boot camp with Tsilhqot'in last year, it went well. Want to do again to increase First Nations participation in fire crews.
- Matt Lees noted that \$2.3M for wildfire risk reduction should be coming to the Cariboo in Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) and other funding; decisions were delayed.
- Mike Gash noted that the provincial budget will be tabled in the Legislature next week. There will be a FLNRORD restructuring, with a new ministry being created. Mike noted that there will be no job losses and more emphasis on management of the land.

MFLNRORD (Range Branch)

- Peter Holub noted that he's helping with several burn plans (community forest, grasslands between Golf Course and Westridge, more)
- He also noted that he is working with Williams Lake First Nation and Yunesit'in on combining cultural burning and art, with elders expressing through painting what cultural burning was

City of Williams Lake

- Ken Day noted the following underway for fuel management treatments:
 - North end of Mackenzie connector will be put out for tender again after breakup
 - Mackenzie North – geotechnical assessments of gullies in Missioner Creek
 - IFP 12 between Golf Course and Westridge is in the prescription stage, with a plan to burn the grasslands this spring, then have treatments in 22/23 or 23/24
 - Funds to do works in the River Valley were applied for, likely to proceed in 2023
 - Bottom of Fox Mountain, steep hillside above hydro line, hand treatment for 100m strip
 - South Lakeside, municipal property, potentially unstable, steep, hand treatment only
- Ken expanded on the grassland burn between Golf Course and Westridge – there is a public information session planned for March 3, drop-in session 4-8PM. Ken noted it's a good opportunity for BCWS and others to be there to present FireSmart education and encourage home assessments. Peter Holub is working with them on the burn plan.
- Ken noted that the City has funds for home assessments, targeted 24 of them, only done 8-10 so far. Need to strategize with Willem of WLFN on how to do raise interest in these, best approaches in the past is to be at events such as farmers' markets.

Williams Lake First Nation

- John Walker noted that the conversations and painting around cultural burning has been great
- Bond Lake fuel treatment project is progressing, with timber harvesting almost complete and then hand crews starting near Chilcotin Estates soon.
- Their crews are also working on the Tamas woodlot license to the east at Dugan Lake
- They have DWB doing a 200ha landscape fuel break at Brunson Lake, want to start harvesting in June. Then planning for Pablo Creek.
- John suggested that we need to develop a tactical plan for entire IDF – is there an opportunity to tie this in with Lindsey Woods' [IDF management initiative](#) from 2021?
- John introduced Willem as their FireSmart coordinator

Alkali Resource Management/Esketemc

- Francis Johnson and Gord Chipman noted that they have many projects underway with a variety of funding sources, at Chimney Lake, as well as several prescribed burns this spring. A high priority burn is 120 ha at 3km on Joes Lake Road. Some burns are on IR lands.

- Gord reiterated concerns about “lurch funding” that result in starts/stops in employment opportunities for people, lack of employment continuity, constant training of new workers and the need to rush to get funds spent quickly on deadline that result in safety issues with too many people on a site. He advocated for a steady state program.

Williams Lake Community Forest

- Hugh noted that the landscape level fuel break at the Flat Rock block is now complete, and they’ve also made good progress on fuel work at Cave Road on the Big Lake block.
- Hugh expressed appreciation for Peter, John, Gord and Francis and their staff
- Work to reduce fuels and fire risk at radio tower at Potato Mountain and the cell tower at Flat Rock block is on the radar but not complete.

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
MFLNRORD approval of CWPPs - Need for a small group to come together to see how they can help with getting community wildfire protection plans approved quicker, how to address OGMA's	Mike Gash, Ken Day, John Walker, Kerri Howse, Gord Chipman, Jason Ward, Hugh Flinton, Geneve Jasper	By April 2022
CRI funding intake – brainstorm ideas for a CRI funding application, supporting CRD with capacity to apply and administer a grant, advance FireSmart	Matt Lees, Stuart Larson, Mike Simpson or Jane Wellburn	Well before next funding intake
CWPP recommendations – review before next meeting, discuss which ones are top priority	Everyone	Ongoing
Amendment to the CWPP to support a tactical plan for additional proposed treatments not originally in plan	Matt Lees	Before next meeting
Jason Ward (BCWS) and Mike Stinson (Xat'sül) initiate a conversation to start planning for traditional burning in early spring 2022	Jason Ward, Mike Stinson	Ongoing – carry over from May 2021 meeting
Matt or Kingsley to send Mapping Tool to Mike Simpson so he can circulate it out to the group. Need a way for both information sharing and map sharing. Bigger challenge is ensuring sharing of mapping information across all organizations/governments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kingsley – add past treatments to the map 	Matt Lees, Kingsley Kyere-Donkor, Mike Simpson	Ongoing
Consider Alan Westhaver presentation to the community, and field tour	Mike Simpson	Spring 2022
Share blanket exemption for MDWR in WUI in IDF	Chris Swan	Ongoing
BCWS to explore creating a short 5min educational video of Kelsey's research	Mike Gash, Matt Lees, Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz	Soon
Develop a tactical plan for entire IDF – tie this in with Lindsey Woods' IDF management initiative from 2021?	John Walker, others	Ongoing
FireSmart – review what's worked in other locations (USA as well as BC), consider ways of not making it overwhelming for people, drive-around tour	Everyone	Ongoing – carry over from January 2020
Volunteer Fire Department training contact Jason Ward, examples: SWPP 115 – structural, Engine boss course, Wildfire fighter 1 – equivalent to S100. Jason.Ward@gov.bc.ca	Everyone	Ongoing
Connect re: FireSmart education, home assessments	Ken Day, Willem Faasse	Soon
Connect re: opportunities at Brunson, Pablo Creek	Francis Johnson, John Walker	Soon

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Route signage, egress and evacuation planning – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Map all known roads, regardless of status – build on what CRD, MOTI or FLNRORD have initiated ▪ CRD requires GIS layer of all roads. FLNRORD contacts are James Moe and Rob Haley. MOTI will provide CRD with roads commonly used for evacuations ▪ Brainstorm at next meeting about status (e.g., 2WD, 4WD, other descriptors) and suitability for evacuation purposes ▪ Explore options for alternate route signage ▪ Explore options for georeferenced maps, utilization of Avenza or other smartphone apps ▪ Invite others as needed for this topic (James Moe, Rob Haley, Carole Mahood from FLNRORD) 	Mike, Jane to quarterback this Mikayla (MOTI), Carole Mahood (FLNRORD), others	Ongoing – carry over from January 2020 / pre-COVID

4. Next Steps

Next meeting planned for May – Mike to seek a date via doodle poll a few weeks in advance

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