

Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Meeting Summary as at May 10, 2021

Meeting date: May 4, 2021 9:00AM to 12:00PM

Location: Online

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

Alkali Resource Management (ARM) – Gord Chipman, Francis Johnson

Atlantic Power – Mark Blezard

BC Wildfire Service – Matt Lees, Dave Fleming, Mike Gash, Brian Clark, Jason Ward

Cariboo Regional District – Stuart Larson, Electoral Area E Director Angie Delaine

Cariboo Woodlot Association – Gord Chipman, Mike Simpson

City of Williams Lake – Erick Peterson, Ken Day (consultant)

Consus Management Ltd. – Tom Foley

ForestWise Environmental Consulting Ltd. – Alan Westhaver

Fraser Basin Council – Jane Wellburn, Mike Simpson, Tom Welfare

MFLNRORD* (district) – Geneve Jasper, Kerri Howse, Kingsley Kyere-Donkor, Harold Stolar

MFLNRORD* (region) – Travis Heckford, Peter Holub

Miocene VFD – Jason Ward

MOTI – Mikaela Arkesteyn, Margaret Henley

Northern Shuswap Tribal Council – Jenny Allen

West Fraser – Mauro Calabrese

Williams Lake Community Forest – Hugh Flinton

Williams Lake Indian Band – John Walker

Xat'sull – Mike Stinson

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

1. Introductions, Agenda, Objectives

Mike Simpson welcomed everyone. Francis did an opening prayer. Introductions were made including territorial acknowledgments. The agenda was accepted as presented.

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

Ken Day 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

Question: How do we effectively engage Firesmart practices with Communities?

Answers:

- If often only takes a few community champion or leader to build momentum - residents can request a hazard assessment of the neighbourhood which can generally is the start of the process.
- Neighbours can get together to come up with a plan.
- Example, Fernie has over 17 neighbourhoods and 2000 plus residents involved off the back of one
- you may want to consider what bounds this community together build on existing relationships for example cottage associations
- Local Firesmart Representatives (LFR) are provided with a ready-made presentation - 45 mins/30 mins which take a lot out the work away from community leads
- Important to acknowledge COVID greatly reduces volunteering capacity

Question: What are CRI funds? As a first nations community shall we access this or shall we stick with emergency planning funds.

Answers:

- First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) manages the CRI funds from the First Nation side of things the fund opens in October and will be coming around quickly so reach out to Matt Lees

Question: How do we get Regional Districts involved with Firesmart?

Answers:

East Kootenay has applied for CRI funds Columbia Basin Fund - BC wild Smart Committee - You can find funding sources on the FireSmart website.

Question: Managing Firesmart program can take up a lot of Staff capacity, how do we manage that?

Answers:

- Volunteering program lost some momentum after amongst COVID
- Angie would like to see Thompson Rivers University, School District 27 find a way of creating credits for working within the land base management and provide students credits.
- Alan Westhaver, makes the point that it's hard but it's all about giving responsibility to the local residents. Creating community involvements helps programs and support mechanisms run themselves. Jason Ward explains that the funding could be used to pay staff and support roles to deliver FireSmart programs. Utilizing finding staff time in your bid submissions coil really help bolster FireSmart Programs

3. Previous Meeting Summary

The meeting summary from February 10, 2021 was approved, with one suggested edit to add Douglas Yano's contact info regarding CRI funding applications. Action items were reviewed.

4. Information Sharing – What’s Underway

BC Wildfire Service

- Mike Gash reported, as of yesterday they have a full collection of staff in the Cariboo Fire Centre, 4 unit crews (100 Mile House, Williams Lake, Alexis Creek and Quesnel) and an air tanker as of a week ago (April 22nd). The air tanker has had one mission within the Cariboo and been over to Alberta last week
- Mike also noted It was a busy April with fires in all 4 zones (none were significant) but a good amount of activity for the crew to refamiliarize themselves with each other and their skills. We have also had some positive light burns supporting local ecosystems
- Jason Ward noted that we have been developing a program and have had some good success. we have five on the go and two more in the queue (a range restoration burn in Beechers’ Prairie and at Joe’s Lake we have been working on creating fire resiliency. Jason has also been working on a collaborative piece with a Yunesitin First Nation with some ecosystem restoration burns and habitat restoration and enjoying learning more about traditional burning.
- Jason Ward - open up to working closely with First Nations communities to do more traditional burning. Mike Stinson (Xat’sull) and Jason Ward agreed to touch base *‘we haven’t been able to do much traditional burning but next spring Deep Creek is hopeful to start the process’* Conversation between Jason and Mike to start early. Matt Lees also mentioned that this kind of planning work can be funded through CRI’s FES.
- Brian Clark noted that they are at full capacity with our crews, 60 staff starting for the season - currently in the onboarding training phase. focused on signing up all our heavy equipment ready for the season and working with licensees to get everything in place
- Matt Lees discussed the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) and Community Resiliency Initiative (CRI) funding and wildfire risk reduction funding. Just short of \$2.9M was applied for and we are confident we are going to get most of that. FireSmart education is the biggest driver of the program so that’s the direction we are hoping to see bids going in. We are hoping to wrap up projects by March 2022 for the FESBC program. Matt Lees welcomes any question around the funding streams so feel free to reach out to him for that matt.lees@gov.bc.ca
- Matt Lees - Mapping Tool - product has been developed and finished - just waiting on the province to give it the thumbs up
- Matt also notes that Clinton Douglas was the point of contact for the CRI funds

MFLNRORD - CC district

- Kingsley went over a map displaying fuel management treatment plans and areas that they have planned going forward, Pheasant drive - 60% Complete - delivered by Spectro. Williams lake airport - 80% complete - partnership with Xat’sull First Nations. South Lakeside - 65% complete - In partnership with Williams lake First Nation.
- Kingsley also described their future plans, 2021/2022 – Focus on primary fuel breaks around Dog Creek, Lower Comer and Soda Creek Road area - prescriptions have been complete and getting the contracts together. 2022/2023 - early-stage planning going ahead for this year, including archaeological and cultural surveys
- Kingsley is happy to be contacted Kingsley.kyeredonkor@gov.bc.ca if you would like to access the mapped-out polygons showing the work they have in progress and planned. See Google Earth kml file circulated with this summary.
- Kerri Howse added that White Road and Fox Mountain have had a prescribed burn, Williams Lake Community Forest hopefully this fall.

Williams Lake First Nation

- John Walker said he has started work on Bond Lake, started bunching there this week and has a quick timeline to complete the work by Oct 1st. Developing other potential blocks, one near the race track - which was bought forward as a recommendation at the last meeting. John says he is looking at getting Williams Lake First Nation involved in the work above South Lakeside which ties in well with what Geneve has done. The issue is it's in an OGMA so it will need to be designated for wildfire reduction for the works to go ahead. Looking to get that designation to enable harvesting to finish off the top of the hill near Williams Lake
- Kerri Howse explained the community wildfire protection plans are not yet fully endorsed by the district. We would need to ponder the CWPP to get it fully endorsed. We need to still understand the legality. A number of people volunteered and agreed to meet to discuss this issue further, Mike Simpson can provide support.
- Michael Gash relayed the importance of getting community wildfire protection plans signed off, Ken Day echos these thoughts.

City of Williams Lake

- Ken Day appreciated the ability to work with BCWS and complete the burn at Boitanio Park and the stampede grounds.
- The city is hosting a course this weekend for engine boss for structural firefighters working within the interface
- The city is hosting two S115 courses for structural protection units, both are fully booked.
- Ken stated there have been some developments on fuel treatment works, the city portion of the airport is complete except for grinding. The Project on the dairy field is complete and signed off, Project at Williams Lake River Valley is partially complete, delayed because of a landslide last spring. Prescription planned for Missioner Creek (South Bank below highway 97) northwest corner of town, ready to go in the fall.
- Working on a prescription between Westridge and Woodland drive - to pick up some Crown land forested in that area.
- City and Williams Lake First Nation partnered on a regional application to CRI through the job creation fund. Focused on fire start treatment and demonstration projects (Williams Lake First Nation led this initiative - Application pending

BC Wildfire Service and Cariboo Region MFLNRORD

- Peter Holub stated that he has been working with Brian Clark's staff to come up with burn plans including the Williams Lake community burn we did at Stampede grounds, Dylan Simpson from the fire zone helped out a lot with that. Good learnables from that, a great cross-training opportunity with the Fire department and BC wildfire service staff.
- Planning for 21/22 grass land restoration needs to connect with Ken Day with this.
- Doing a monitoring project at Bond Lake with John and Williams Lake First Nation evaluating some of that treatment, working closely with Habitat on this to give some recommendations and access what the impacts are.
- Peter did the burn plan for Churn Creek to integrate the grassing plan and burning to come up with a longer-term plan incorporating the grazing rotation and slashing treatments.

Williams Lake Community Forest

- Hugh Flinton said he continues to work on the landscape level fuel break - putting tenders out to complete the fuel break from the top of the hill down into Williams Creek.
- They received \$300,000 of funding from the BC Community Forest Association to complete some more fuel management that backs up landscape-level fuel break on Flat Rock block.
- Hugh stated he completed everything with fuel work on the Cave road project except for the burning part
- Working on fuel post-harvest on our block at Big Lake
- Almost at the point where we are looking at secondary phase-type treatments (2 or 3 years away from that)
- Interested in being involved in the conversation on OGMA

Alkali Resource Management (ARM)

- Gord Chipman stated that they are involved in a project called the adaptive management strategy working with a number of people from MFLNRORD and BC Wildfire Service. Currently, In conversations about how we are going to do fuel treatments in areas that are constrained
- We do have some interesting adaptive strategies that have come out of this. The focus is on resiliency and managing the learning in the urban interface areas. Will update in the fall time where we are at with this.
- Fuel treatments - We have been getting prescriptions approved and active before March Madness and the FESBC deadlines
- Gord Chipman acknowledges that activities on the ground have been tough on his workforce of 25 - 30. There were quite a lot of injuries picked up - Common injuries include slips, trips, objects in the eyes and sprained ankles & hands.
- 4 sites that didn't get approved along Enterprise Road, Dog Creek Road, and Chimney Lake Road. These projects are currently in limbo
- Gord notes that he has been really impressed with the work done in the Cariboo in a short period of time

Cariboo Woodlot Association

- Mike Simpson and Tom Foley noted that ARM did fuel management work this past year on Woodlot Licences (WL) 1694 Fox Mountain, 587 Dog Creek Road, and 1805 Flett Subdivision, all the work was funded by FESBC. A fourth one, WL 1955, Dog Creek Road, had some work initiated this past winter on 15.1 ha. Tom Foley added he's happy with the ARM crews.

West Fraser

- Mauro Calabrese added that while they have no operating area within the CWPP area but got involved with a permit at the end of Eider Drive to run the permit through the licensees. The area is around 40 hectares which has been completed. A number of organizations have been involved including Williams Lake First Nation and Ken Day. This ties together well with the fuel treatments that were done off Fox Mountain Road over the past 10-12 years.

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
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	June
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 October
Peter Holub Planning for 21/22 grassland restoration and will connect with Ken Day about this	Peter Holub, Ken Day	Ongoing
Jason Ward (BCWS) and Mike Stinson (Xat'sull) initiate a conversation to start planning for traditional burning in early spring 2022	Jason Ward, Mike Stinson	Ongoing
MFLNRORD - CC district Kerri Howse and Kingsley to update the 3 woodlots that Gord Chipman stated as being complete on their mapping tool (they show as proposed)	Kerri Howse, Kingsley, Gord Chipman	Ongoing
Matt Lees to send Mapping Tool to Mike Simpson so he can circulate it out to the group	Matt Lees, Mike Simpson	Ongoing
Consider Alan Westhaver presentation to the community, and field tour	Mike Simpson	Fall 2021 or spring 2022
Share "lessons learned on MDWR in WUI in IDF"	Chris Swan	By March 31
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 before next meeting Mikayla (MOTI), Carole Mahood (FLNRORD), others	Ongoing – carry over from January 2020 / pre-COVID
Joint Committee to determine if an MOU is needed; if yes, involve NSTC, T'exelc, Xat'sull, Esketemc	City, CRD	Ongoing – carry over from January 2020
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	Jane, Mike	Ongoing – carry over from January 2020
CWPP recommendations – review before next meeting, discuss which ones are top priority	Everyone	Before next meeting