

Lillooet and Area Community Wildfire Preparedness Roundtable

Draft Meeting Summary as of December 1, 2022

Meeting date: Thursday November 24, 2022 10:00AM to 3:00PM

Location: Lillooet REC Centre, Mezzanine and online

Present

BC Ministry of Forests – Alycia Fennings
BC Wildfire Service – Justin Rommel, Jennifer Young
District of Lillooet – Darren Oike, Barb Wiebe
First Nations Emergency Services Society – Darrick Andrew
First Nations Health Authority – Alan Leung
Fraser Basin Council (contractor) – Mike Simpson (facilitator, recorder)
Gun Lake Fire Protection – Al Leighton
Individual – Arlen Ferguson
Landscape Consulting Corp – Robin Strong, Sharon French
Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society – Janna Pyke
Lillooet Tribal Council – Darryl Adrian
Sekw'el'was (Cayoos Creek Indian Band) – Delaney Adolph
Squamish Lillooet Regional District – Mike Fusca, Maude Lussier
Texas Creek community – Geoff Playfair
Xaxli'p – Anishia LeBourdais, Jason Jacob, V. Dan
Xwisten – Gerald (Bobo) Michel, Yvonne Michel
Yalakom community – Robin Andruss

Welcome, Introductions

Mike Simpson, a facilitator and professional forester on contract to Fraser Basin Council, welcomed everyone and acknowledged unceded St'at'imc territory. A round of introductions took place for people in the room and those participating online. See Appendix 1 for list of participants present.

Agenda, Objectives and Previous Meeting Summary

The agenda was reviewed and accepted as presented. The meeting summary from the inaugural meeting held June 27 was approved. It is now posted [here](#).

Debriefing the Fire Season – What did we Learn?

Participants shared their perspectives on the 2022 fire season. Common themes were as follow:

- Weird weather – cold spring, delayed dry and warm weather well into October
- Lots of natural fire starts, small fires generally compared to 2021
- Communication and coordination between orders of government was noted as excellent, in terms of wildfire bulletins, frequency of updates and information on wildfires, weather updates, and action planning for wildfire response
- Increased capacity within local governments enabled ability to improve coordination, communication efforts

- Some disagreed with the campfire ban being lifted in the entire Kamloops Fire Centre on the Friday before Labour Day weekend when conditions were still dry. Some of the St'at'imc communities advised their members to refrain from having campfires despite BCWS lifting the prohibition.
- Jurisdictional boundaries, especially TNRD/SLRD boundaries were challenging as some information was posted by one regional district but not the other
- Despite the severity of the 2021 wildfire season, there was limited interest in local FireSmart activities including free home assessments in 2022. This is also partly because this work is expensive if you can't do it yourself.
- There are lots of resources available (such as [BC FireSmart website](#), the Jack Cohen/Alan Westhaver [report on contributing factors to Village of Lytton fire](#))

Lessons learned were noted as the following:

- Education for backcountry users and tourists – campfire etiquette, cigarette butts and proper disposal, proper preparation of wildfire and other risks in backcountry
- Education for homeowners – FireSmart is voluntary, not a requirement but voluntary.
- Education for the general public – BC Wildfire Service statistics, cigarette butts and proper disposal, good fire vs. bad fire
- Hopefully we don't need to resort to “sticks” instead of “carrots” to encourage people to FireSmart their properties (example provided was from California, where FireSmarting your home ignition zone is in a bylaw and property owners are fined for contraventions)
- Utilize local Fire Wardens as much as possible

Information Sharing

Participants were welcomed to share what they have underway with regard to wildfire preparedness (planning, fuel management/wildfire risk reduction, FireSmart, training, acquiring equipment, cultural burning).

Xwisten – Bobo noted that Xwisten are participating in a traditional burn study, and they are also part of the [Salish Fire Keepers Society](#) with other Interior nations. They are also working to recruit structural firefighters in their community and cross-train them for wildfires. They have a shelf-ready burn plan for 60 ha from three years ago.

SLRD – Maude gave a [presentation](#) on their FireSmart program, see the slides for details. She also highlighted that in the 2023 application, so available for delivery in 2024, the amount of funding for property owners is doubling from \$500 to \$1000.

Discussion that ensued included the following: dryer vents and size of screening to prevent embers from entering; the need to connect with farmers, agriculture and the rural population with [FireSmart for farms and ranches](#); the lack of knowledge of emergency responders and BCWS regarding amount of livestock on a property (community associations would know this); and the need to have logical treatment units for wildfire risk reduction that may cross jurisdictional boundaries and need to therefore leverage funding.

Ministry of Forests, Cascades District – Alycia described the programs that MOF delivers on Crown land (noted as unceded Indigenous territory), which can complement other programs that get delivered in municipal boundaries, private land or IR (Indian Reserve) lands. The two main streams are wildfire risk

reduction/fuel management, and prescribed burning. She acknowledged that not much has been delivered in the Lillooet/Northern St'at'imc/SLRD area of the MOF Cascades District, but she has been in contact with Tawnya Collins about opportunities in the community wildfire resiliency plans (CWRPs) that are currently being developed. She also clarified that their funding for fuel management is eligible in the wildland urban interface (WUI), which are mapped zones where there are generally 6 or more structures per km². See [here](#) for maps of WUI zones in BC.

Discussion ensued about challenges with the [Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation](#), the narrow window of good venting days where vegetative debris can be burnt or prescribed burns implemented. While mitigating the health risks of smoke on nearby populations is important, it is also a major impediment to reducing wildfire risk in a reasonable time period. Jennifer noted that BC Wildfire Service staff are meeting with Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy this week to discuss challenges with reducing fire hazard by burning debris, prescribed burns and the application of OBSCR.

This discussion expanded into the **challenges of lawfully managing the vegetative debris created from UBCM funded programs FireSmart programs** that SLRD implements, notably:

- FireSmart activities create vegetation that must be dealt with, usually by burning in fall during good venting conditions.
- Some seasonal residents aren't able to get to their properties in fall to burn debris
- The costs to haul material from the Upper Bridge River Valley to Lillooet is prohibitive, not to mention carbon-intensive which produces greenhouse gas emissions through trucking
- Options such as having a portable air curtain device, or creating temporary locations to accumulate debris and then burn in fall ("burn pits") have come up against various hurdles, such as use of Crown land for such a purpose and eligibility of the funding
- There is a "chip app" that matches suppliers of vegetative debris with those that want it

Other options that people suggested included the following:

- Hügelkultur composting – Robin Andruss noted that she does this, it's a method to compost material and use as a soil amendment. She has been receiving FireSmart debris from the Yalakom area, which has been a local win-win solution
- Jennifer described the City of Kamloops operations whereby they receive yard waste, then compost it at Cinnamon Ridge and sell it back to residents for gardens
- It was suggested that perhaps seeing if local area farms and agriculture operations would be interested in receiving material for composting
- Securing a special use permit from BC to enable burn pits
- Exploring economic development opportunities around compost creation

ACTION: Mike Fusca and Maude Lussier from SLRD to take the lead, create a subcommittee with District of Lillooet (Darren Oike), Lillooet Tribal Council (Darryl Adrian) and MOF (Alycia Fennings) to explore this issue further and devise solutions.

District of Lillooet – Darren reported that they hosted and/or hired Landscape Consultants to do several FireSmart initiatives in 2022, including:

- Two community events, including one focused on FireSmart Landscaping with Karla Hoffman
- 23 critical infrastructure assessments
- 8 neighbourhood assessments
- They had capacity to do up to 182 individual home assessments, but only 30 were completed due to lack of uptake by residents

District of Lillooet will be submitting for funds again in 2023, focusing on hiring a FireSmart coordinator, the rebate program for homeowners, mitigation activities and updating their CWPP to a CWRP. He also noted that DoL wants to engage in the next steps beyond the local FireSmart representative (LFR), which is the [Home Partners Program](#). DoL Fire Department has completed their structural protection unit trailers, these are joint with SLRD. There are good working relationships with BCWS, including 8 of their members on the DoL volunteer fire department.

Discussion and ideas ensued: Yukon used to have a contest for FireSmart, and it was equated with spring cleaning of your yard and outside of your house. Darren noted that DoL are getting an [Ember](#) costume, and Jennifer noted that Kamloops Fire Centre has one that can be loaned out.

BC Wildfire Service – Justin noted that their staff capacity is growing, they are adding positions in Lillooet and Lytton. Initial Attack crews will be up to 4 persons next year. Unit crews will be up to 23 people. Many seasonal staff were offered full time positions; this enables more work with communities. Jennifer added that across the entire BC Wildfire Service there are 113 new full time positions. BCWS is also now “365 ready” for other natural disasters year round, not just wildfires.

Lillooet Tribal Council – Darryl noted that he is coordinating training opportunities across all of their communities, from EOC to ESS and tabletop exercises. He was liaison with BCWS in the past fire season, and he noted that Emergency Management BC is looking to have community to community navigators for Indigenous communities going forward. He noted that each of the 6 St’at’imc communities have varying degrees of FireSmart activities underway. The LTC will be doing a year end debrief soon, with the weird weather at least one well/reservoir has gone dry. He is involved in a post-wildfire working group looking at the McKay Creek wildfire of 2021.

Questions were as follows: Robin Andruss requested for Darryl to share upcoming training opportunities, no problem he said; Justin requested to have \$100 training offered, and that he’d like to connect with Darryl about wildfire scenarios in their training.

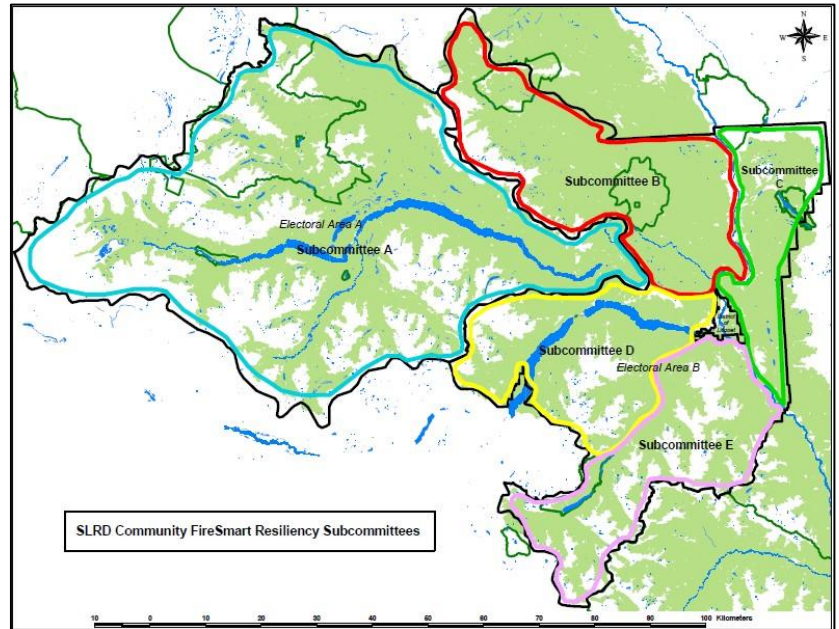
Xaxli’p – Jason reported that most of their volunteer fire department is retiring, they will have limited capacity to respond to structural fires. Darryl and Justin offered to help alleviate this situation.

Anishia reported that the Xaxli’p Community Forest hosted two FireSmart days with youth, and they assessed 10 elders’ homes in the community. All elders homes also had sprinkler systems set up for the fire season, which were removed in fall. They removed FireSmart debris from people’s properties, some was burned and some was brought to Lillooet. Fireguards were maintained at Fountain Flats, Chill Hill, 12 Mile, 7 Mile and the main reserve. They will be meeting with the community in January to see what they want to do next year.

Status and Update of Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans for SLRD Areas A and B

Robin Strong gave an update on what's happening with the CWRPs that are being developed. The five Community FireSmart Resiliency Committees (A through E, see map) met and provided feedback with top priorities being more fuel management work and vegetative debris removal. Landscape did fieldwork over the summer, with 75 and 80 plots in Areas A and B, respectively, to characterize the fuel characteristics of the forests. They also did structure mapping, which informed refinements to the WUI boundaries as follows:

- Area A WUIs: Marshall Lake Road, Marshall Lake, Tyaughton/Gun Lakes, Bralorne, Goldbridge
- Area B WUIs: Texas Creek Road, Fountain Valley, Pavillion Lake, Yalakom and Seton Portage



Currently they are creating maps of wildfire risk, proposing fuel management polygons for treatment, and finalizing the written plan which will go to SLRD staff in January.

Questions and discussion: Alycia Fennings noted that MOF has lots of fuel management prescriptions developed for the area; it was suggested to make sure treatments align with private property and BC Hydro lands; need to encourage farms and ranches to become FireSmart.

Terms of Reference

The draft terms of reference dated November 7 that were circulated in advance of the meeting were reviewed on-screen. A few edits were made (using Indigenous instead of First Nations, noting that the roundtable will only meet twice per year in spring and fall, and finalizing the area to include portions of TNRD to the east and south). Otherwise, the terms of reference were adopted by consensus. They can be found [here](#).

Next Steps

It was agreed that the REC centre is the most central, accessible venue for these meetings and that the Mezzanine worked better than the gym. Darren Oike can provide technology to make hybrid meetings better.

There was a request for forest health maps – Alycia Fennings provided these links after the meeting:

- [Regional and district Forest Health Strategies - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)
- [Aerial overview survey summary reports - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)
- Maps and other data: www.for.gov.bc.ca - /ftp/HFP/external/!publish/Aerial_Overview/

Next meeting – spring 2023. Mike is working to bring Alan Westhaver to all the community wildfire roundtables to host a public evening session, as well as do a field tour with roundtable members. A doodle poll will be used to find a date that works for the majority and achieves quorum.

Task	Responsibility	Timing
Create a Vegetative Debris Disposal subcommittee with District of Lillooet (Darren Oike), Lillooet Tribal Council (Darryl Adrian) and MOF (Alycia Fennings) to devise solutions	Mike Fusca or Maude Lussier to initiate	Before spring meeting
Explore a data sharing mechanism such as Sharepoint	Mike Fusca, Maude Lussier	Before spring meeting
Bring Alan Westhaver to present to the community, and field tour to look at fuel treatments an FireSmart risks of homes and structures	Mike Simpson	Spring 2023
Investigate funding sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Enhancement Society of BC • UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Program 	Everyone	Ongoing