

# Clearwater and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

## Meeting Summary as of February 22, 2023

**Meeting date:** February 14, 2023, 1:00PM to 3:15PM

**Location:** Dutch Lake Community Centre and online (hybrid)

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

BC Parks – Vladi Glat

BC Timber Sales – Tyson Leudtke

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) - Hugh Murdoch, Conlan Sprickerhoff

Blackpool Volunteer Fire Department - Mike Savage, Rod Tulett, Dietrich Rempel

District of Clearwater – Alsid Prime

First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) – Darrick Andrew

Fraser Basin Council (subcontractor) – Mike Simpson (facilitator, recorder)

Interfor – Jim Magowan

Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness – Trevor Pratt

Ministry of Forests, Thompson Rivers District - Marina Irwin, Nicola McGrath

SFU Wosk Centre for Dialogue – Yolanda Clatworthy

TNRD – Kevin Skrepnek, Usoff Tsao, Jeremy Denny, Mike Knauff

Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade – Steve Murray, Chris Nowak

West Fraser – Kayla Brock

### 1. Introductions, Agenda, Objectives

Mike Simpson welcomed everyone, unceded territory was acknowledged, and a round of introductions took place. The agenda was approved as presented, noting people that had to leave early.

### 2. Previous Meeting Summary

The meeting summary from November 18, 2022, was approved and is posted [here](#). Old action items were reviewed; those that remain are at the end of this summary.

### 3. Information Sharing – What’s Underway, Who’s Doing What

#### Blackpool Volunteer Fire Department

- Two water storage tanks were acquired with community forest funds, they will be located at Pumptown 7km south of the Blackpool fire hall, and at the north end of Roundtop FSR
- Did a complete retrofit of bush truck, it now has a 14hp pump with 4 outlets, hoping to upgrade 300 gallon tank to a 400 gallon tank in future
- Tender 1 is going through a retrofit
- Doing train the trainer, will have 3 members that can do training soon. They can train for Blackpool, Little Fort VFDs and are open to training others
- Concerned about water levels, recent snowpack report was 63% of normal for North Thompson
- Mike reiterated concern about the need for fuel management in North Thompson River Provincial Park at the end of Caroline Road, and could the trail be upgraded to an egress route.
- Blackpool VFD has installed a 6000 gallon water tank at the end of Caroline Road

- Blackpool VFD will be hosting a FireSmart event in May, and will continue door-to-door assessments of last 25% of their area and Little Fort
- Two properties of high fire concern have been addressed through sale or bulldozing
- Rod Tulett reiterated his offer to help coordinate and host a tabletop exercise involving multiple agencies and organizations – see list of action items below for more details.

#### **BC Wildfire Service**

- Conlan noted that two assistant staff are starting next week, and crews will be back the week of February 27. They will have 3 full time crew supervisors, and 7 Initial Attack crews based in Kamloops. Hugh added that the full complement of staff will be in place by early May.
- They are working on developing a similar approach to what was done in 2022 with Simpcw and their Initial Attack crews
- In relation to the November action about too many piles to burn and not enough good venting days, Marina and Hugh updated everyone that social license for burning is on the decline, smoke doesn't stay local, and that Open Burning and Smoke Control Regulations were loosened recently. They noted that a small vocal minority against smoke and burning makes a lot of noise.

#### **Thompson-Nicola Regional District**

- Kevin reiterated from the October meeting that TNRD has done some staff restructuring:
  - Kevin is now Manager, Community and Emergency Services
  - Jeremy Denny has been hired to coordinate training for VFDs and look after FireSmart, with the goal of securing funding and hiring seasonal staff
  - Mike Knauff has been hired as Emergency Program Coordinator
- Kevin noted that TNRD is renovating their downtown Kamloops office to have a dedicated emergency operations centre (EOC) that could also accommodate municipalities that have to relocate their EOCs as happened in 2021
- Kevin noted that TNRD applied for funding to purchase personal protective equipment, for a emergency services training session and conference in Kamloops this fall, and also for EOC training for their staff and some member municipalities
- Mike Knauff noted that he's reviewing 16 evacuation plans that cover the TNRD that are about 10 years old, they will be submitting for funding to update these plans
- Jeremy noted that TNRD has applied for \$700 000 in [CRI funding](#) to hire develop community wildfire resiliency plans (CWRPs) in each of their electoral areas and to hire a FireSmart coordinator. Jeremy noted that in anticipation of the funding, they issued a request for proposals for the CWRPs and are currently evaluating 6 proposals received.
- Jeremy hopes to hire a temporary full time FireSmart coordinator in March for start in April

#### **Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade**

- They have purchased 3 x 5000 imperial gallon tanks with support from the community forest, and other safety equipment
- They are not active now in the winter, but with dry conditions and low snowpack, will be ready to start in April. Looking to recruit new members and continue to do door-to-door raising awareness of FireSmart.
- They are keen to have active training and appreciate training from Blackpool VFD.
- Putting a wildfire hazard sign up at the Farmers' Institute property

### **BC Timber Sales**

- Tyson noted that they don't have much fuel management work underway, focus on Douglas-fir bark beetle management timber sale licenses in Hascheak, Foghorn and Rogers Range areas.
- They planned a broadcast burn in Blue River last year that they couldn't do due to the warm dry fall. They are hoping to complete that burn as well as one in the Sager area (Mad R.) this year.

### **West Fraser**

- Kayla noted that West Fraser is preparing for fire season by getting plans in place, training contractors and staff. They train summer staff with S100 and supply their trucks with basic gear.
- No burning in Clearwater area this year, there will be a big pile burning program in fall 2023.
- West Fraser contact when Kayla is on maternity leave will be Rob Ballinger of 100 Mile

### **BC Parks**

- Vladi noted that there are no fuel management/wildfire risk reduction projects in the Clearwater area this winter
- BC Parks have hired a third and fourth land and resource management specialist, similar to Terri Worthen and Sean Owen, to be based in Vernon and Nelson. These positions focus on wildfire risk reduction.
- They've applied for funding for a structure protection unit for Wells Gray Park

### **Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR)**

- Trevor noted that they are a stand-alone ministry now, no longer Emergency Management BC. Office of the Fire Commissioner stayed with Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General.
- They've hired two regional managers in Central Region, one replaces Mike Knauff.
- Planning seasonal hazard preparedness meetings – virtual in March with focus on freshet, debris flows, and then in person meetings in April and another in May focused on wildfires
- Trevor wondered with low snowpack levels if drought planning has been initiated
- The ESS fund has closed and was not oversubscribed
- EOC training and evacuation planning funding windows are still open
- Central Region of EMCR is offering 7 courses around the region from April 2023 to March 2024 for various local and Indigenous governments to participate in
- Recent earthquake response exercise on the Coast has some lessons learned for this area – notably that Edmonton is a national staging area and post-earthquake on the Coast, there would be significant traffic volume on Hwy 5 through Clearwater and Kamloops

### **District of Clearwater (DOC)**

- Alsid clarified that he wears two hats: Deputy Corporate Officer, as well as Climate Action Coordinator, and he's a firefighter
- Alsid noted that DOC has applied for funds to have a FireSmart coordinator
- They've added FireSmart wording in the request for proposal for parks maintenance
- Tender 3 is having chassis replacement this year, their structural protection trailer is ready to go
- Emergency response plans are completed and being reviewed

### **MOF – Thompson Rivers District (DTR)**

- Nicola reported that they have 3 active wildfire risk reduction projects underway in the area: Candle Creek, Gill Creek and Blue River
- They will be hoping to advance a wildfire tactical plan in fiscal year 2023/24

- Marina Irwin reported that there are ongoing staff challenges, they are under-staffed
- Marina encouraged “random acts of wildfire risk reduction”

#### Interfor

- Jim noted that they are in a cut control deficit for Tree Farm Licence (TFL) 18 and will be starting timber harvesting operations post-breakup

#### 4. Alan Westhaver tour May 2023

**Next meeting May 31, 2023** – Afternoon field trip with Alan Westhaver, then public evening FireSmart session. Suggested content, venue and site visits and volunteer offers were as follows:

- Evening venue – suggest the auditorium at Clearwater Secondary School
- Plan B for venue would be gym at Dutch Lake Community Centre (drawback – limited parking)
- Critical infrastructure visit ideas – hospital, hydro substation
  - Alsid Prime and Fire Chief Mike Smith have FS assessment info on those
  - Homes around the hospital too that could be looked at (need permission)
- Fuel treatments – numerous options:
  - Treatment behind gun range, led by District of Clearwater
  - George Brcko of Wells Grey Community Forest can probably ID others
  - East Blackpool area – piles to burn were left a long time, could look at those
- Kayla Brock can help with spreading the word, putting up posters, etc.

#### 5. Next Steps

The following action items were either carried over from previous meetings or created today:

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Explore creating <b>development permit area</b> requirements for FireSmart principles and/or fuel management	Tyson Luedtke, John Thomas, Kevin Skrepnek	Long term, needs council approval
<b>Mapping</b> – since the <a href="#">Forsite Mapping Tool</a> is no longer used, what mechanism can there be to share proposed and completed fuel management treatments?	Nicola McGrath, Mike Aldred	Before next meeting
Coordinate about <b>evacuation plans</b> and <b>evacuation centres</b> from Wells Gray Park, Upper Clearwater Valley, share ideas and input, make sure everyone is on the same page	BC Parks staff, Steve Murray, TNRD and others	Ongoing
Get an updated map showing <b>Blackpool VFD</b> coverage	FBC	Before next meeting
Develop a <b>water bar inventory</b> for access and egress, build into emergency response plans, evacuation plans	Forestry Working group, Mike Smith	ongoing
Help <b>Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade</b> get consent to <b>access private property to fight wildfires</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing privacy laws, can private property contact info in Upper Clearwater be shared?</li> <li>• Distribute waivers in tax notices?</li> <li>• Canada Post mailout?</li> </ul>	Kevin, Alsid	Ongoing

<b>Task or activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
If possible, and recognizing liability, organize a <b>fire or vehicle extraction scenario practice response</b> to enable real-world experience for Upper Clearwater Brigade	Rod, Mike Smith, Steve Murray, Kevin	When possible
Host a multi-agency/organization <b>tabletop exercise</b> for an emergency and evacuation scenario: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find a date that works (May 1-5)</li> <li>• Steve can find facility in Upper Clearwater</li> <li>• Rod can host and organize, no cost</li> <li>• Organizations to invite: fire brigades, VFDs, TNRD, District of Clearwater, BC Parks, MOTI, Ambulance, RCMP</li> </ul>	Rod Tulett	
Are you <b>hosting an event</b> about FireSmart? Advise Conlan	VFDs, brigades	Ongoing
Talk to BC Wildfire Service prevention people if you need an <b>exemption to venting indices</b>	Those that have piles to burn	Ongoing
<b>Caroline Road and North Thompson Provincial Park</b> fuel management and egress concerns – connect, understand the concerns, pursue funding through BC Parks to treat	Sean Owen, Mike Savage	ASAP