

Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Draft Summary as of Feb 3, 2023

Meeting date: January 30, 2023, 1:00PM to 4:00PM

Location: Cariboo Fire Centre, Williams Lake Airport and online

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

Alkali Resource Management – Francis Johnson, Clayton Harry

BC Timber Sales – Nathan Davis

Cariboo Regional District – Irene Israel

City of Williams Lake – Evan Dean, Gord Chipman (contractor)

British Columbia Wildfire Service (BCWS) – Matt Lees, Brian Clarke, Mike Gash, Darren Wilkinson, Peter Holub, Jason Ward

First Nations Emergency Services Society – Darrick Andrew

Forsite Consultants – Lorena Tillotson

Fraser Basin Council – Mike Simpson (contractor), Bettina Johnson

Interested individuals or consultants – Ken Day

Ministry of Forests – Cariboo Region – Lindsey Wood

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship – Becky Bings, Chris Swan

Simon Fraser University – Yolanda Clatworthy

Stswecem'c Xget'tem First Nation – Judah Melton, Ashley Camille

University of British Columbia – Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz

Williams Lake Community Forest – Hugh Flinton

Williams Lake First Nation – John Walker, Willem Fasse

1. Introductions, Review Agenda

Mike welcomed everyone and thanked Matt Lees and the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) staff for hosting the meeting. A round of introductions was done in the room and online. The agenda was accepted as presented.

2. Previous Meeting Summary

The meeting summary from October 18, 2022, was approved. Old action items were reviewed, updated and/or prompted for discussion in the information sharing part of the meeting. See updated table of action items at the end of this summary. (One old action was removed and clarified as it is now redundant: future CWRPs are intended to only cover municipalities, the MOF land manager has more say over what happens on Crown land outside of municipalities. The action was modified to address the current CWPP which covers a large area beyond municipalities.)

3. Tactical Plan – Lorena Tillotson, Forsite

Matt Lees introduced Lorena Tillotson and Forsite as the consultant doing the [tactical plan](#) for Williams Lake and the immediate surrounding area, a smaller area than our [community wildfire protection plan](#). Lorena described the approach that Forsite is taking, using gridded wildfire modelling, and that Joanna

Wand is leading the modelling work with support from Brad Armitage of Ember Research. Lorena's presentation will be posted [here](#) in early February.

Discussion and questions covered the following: values are mapped in the modelling but ground truthing during prescription development will verify things; we could be moving towards treatment recommendations based on the value or infrastructure or timber type, not just a generic 100m; it was suggested that the next tactical plan should be for Horsefly-Dugan Lake area.

Lorena requested that everyone spread the word that this tactical planning is underway. Contact Lorena with any follow up questions or to provide input via email ltillotson@forsite.ca

4. Information Sharing – What's Underway

Williams Lake First Nation

- John noted that they have funding from Natural Resources Canada to do work on the north side of Chimney Valley, and are working on the Brunson Lake 300m strategic fuel break. Waiting for a permit to start the logging phase.
- WLFN crews are working on the WL community forest doing an ecosystem restoration project removing stems less than 12.5cm dbh; also doing fuel treatments at Fox Mountain near Ross Road; fuel treatments on reserve; and burning at the Race Track
- John asked for input from the group on what to do with large Douglas-fir >65cm dbh, how best to protect them and make sure they survive in fuel management treatments: Chris and Becky suggested it's not a conflict to remove smaller diameter trees; perhaps let's look at this in the field on May 18, 2023 as a group and have a discussion.

BC Wildfire Service

- **Mike Gash** reported that BCWS Cariboo Fire Centre has increased their full time staff complement and capacity as BCWS now supports the province with all forms of natural disaster response 365 days a year, not just wildfire, working closely with the new Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness. They can now do a lot of training in-house. Specifically, there are now chainsaw specialists and a structure prevention unit specialist and more information officers. He noted they are doing a capital expansion of a new zone office in 100 Mile and expanding capacity both there and in Quesnel.
- Mike Gash reported that they're currently working on planning and pre-organization for this upcoming season, lining up equipment contractors and contract crews.
- **Matt Lees** reported that the following is proposed to be funded in fiscal year 23/24:
 - \$1M of projects in Cariboo-Chilcotin District (DCC), \$3M across Cariboo Fire Centre
 - Fuel treatments to be implemented:
 - IFB 29 Comer-168 Mile, 118 ha
 - IFB 28 Lower Comer to Soda Creek 17 ha
 - IFB 59 Fox Mountain-Windmill Crescent 102 ha
 - Implementation of about 20 ha of a woodlot licence developed prescription from 2018 (based on as it was developed, not new standards)
- Outside of our plan area, the Tinmusket primary fuel break will be advanced next year; Becky noted that a Government Actions Regulation (GAR) order exemption will be needed for this
- Matt will provide static pdf maps of past and proposed treatments to Mike Simpson to post on the [website](#); these will be updated by March 31

- Matt (and John Walker) noted that archaeological fieldwork is needed at Pablo Creek
- **Peter Holub** reminded folks that he is a dedicated prescribed fire role, there is one in each region/fire centre, he'll also be assisting Indigenous governments with cultural burns. He is also looking to increase use of spot burning as well as prescribed fire. He noted that 25 ha of a 100ha planned burn at the WL community forest was completed in the fall. Other burns completed last year were at Fox Mountain, Stampede Grounds and Boitanio Park.
- Peter is organizing a course to increase capacity on doing burn prescriptions and burn plans to be held in mid-May; email peter.holub@gov.bc.ca if anyone wants to sign up
- Peter's also working with WLFN to organize a cultural burning and paint night to engage the community and elders (based on similar initiative done in Xeni Gwet'in that went well)

University of British Columbia

- Kelsey shared the [link](#) to a published article based on her research: *The contribution of Indigenous stewardship to an historical mixed-severity fire regime in British Columbia, Canada*

Lessons from Spain – Ken Day

- Ken shared [photos](#) and lessons learned from his October 2022 trip to Spain
- Key takeaways for him were: their firefighters are both structural and wildfire trained; their firefighters doing prescribed burns don't talk to the land manager (we're doing better in that regard); faith that manipulating fuels works; and the question "who's problem is this anyway" is universal and that private landowners and governments each have a role to play

City of Williams Lake

- Gord is working as a consultant to the City of Williams Lake, and Evan Dean is the new Fire Chief.
- Treatments and prescription update:
 - IFB 19 South Dairy Fields – 10 ha of 20 ha of treatments is complete
 - Prescriptions in river valley and at Tower Crescent IFB 59 are completed, applied for funding to do implementation
 - South Lakeside/Juniper – 15 ha that is steep, slope stability issues, near homes but no ability to use equipment, will be challenging to develop solutions
- Things they want to get going soon include:
 - Fox Mountain – Ross Road area
 - Airport

BC Timber Sales

- Nathan reported that they are evaluating how they can include fuel management in some of their timber sales, specifically looking at the primary fuel break along gas pipeline east of Williams Lake. Mike Gash suggested that BCTS looks at operations in the whole area, including Tamas woodlot licence 1579, and suggested Nathan work with Jason Ward on an approach.
- Nathan sought direction from the roundtable: how best can BCTS contribute to achieving wildfire resiliency goals in the CWPP? Discussion raised the following:
 - BCTS operates differently than others (e.g., Tolko, community forest) in that they sell timber sale licenses (TSLs) and there is no ability to supervise how things are implemented.
 - It's challenging for BCTS to include treatment of non-merchantable material in a TSL, as this material costs a lot to treat and generally has no economic value unless subsidized by external funding such as Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC)

- There are two possible approaches BCTS can take: a) sell TSLs with the merchantable harvesting component, then seek external funding for non-merchantable fuel treatments subsequent to harvesting, or b) try and bundle the non-merchantable fuel treatments into a TSL and see if it would sell
- For b) above, several people noted the following:
 - This has been done in some BCTS business areas, including Vernon (Ellison) and the Kootenays. Talk to Jonathan Merkin of BCTS
 - We need some real-world cost data on these treatments, and selling a TSL with fuel treatments included would provide that baseline
- It was also suggested to look at the American approach of “stewardship contracts” where proponents could get paid (negative bid) to provide fuel management works (concept of trading goods for ecological services); Judah did his master’s degree on this and would like to help move this forward here.

Cariboo Regional District

- Irene reported that they are working on a CRI funding application for FireSmart including amendments to official community plans.
- Irene asked why fire risk data on the WUI maps are greyed out on private property. Matt will follow up with Irene, the CRD planning manager and BC Wildfire Service headquarters staff.
- Irene noted that their FireSmart approach is education first, in response to Ken’s question about whether any FireSmart structure assessments have been implemented. Ken suggested Irene and CRD staff reach out to other regional districts that have done this work for years, such as in the Kootenays.

5. Alan Westhaver tour

Mike Simpson advised that the tentative schedule was to bring Alan to Williams Lake on Thursday May 18, 2023 but that the concern is that’s the Thursday evening before a long weekend (Monday May 22 is Victoria Day). **[POST MEETING: Mike confirmed with Alan that he *can do the evening presentation on Wed May 17, and the afternoon field tour with the roundtable on Thurs May 18. Subsequent notes reflect this schedule.***] Therefore, the schedule is as follows:

Date	Location	Afternoon	Evening
Mon May 15	Lillooet	Field trip for local wildfire roundtable & other officials involved in wildland-urban fire preparedness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forest & fuel modification adjacent community ● Ignition vulnerabilities & resistance at a home or structure 	General public presentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do WU fire disasters happen? ● Effective solutions for preventing WU disasters ● Lessons from Lytton, Fort McMurray and other locations
Tues May 16	Clinton		
Wed May 17 evening	Williams Lake		
Thurs May 18 afternoon	Williams Lake		
Mon May 29	Quesnel		
Wed May 31	Clearwater		

Logistics and sites:

- Wed evening – consider piggybacking this with other educational and engagement opportunities, such as the Williams Lake Tactical Plan, or information about prescribed burns being proposed or recently completed. Venue needs to be considered (Gibraltar room?)
- Afternoon field tour – possible field tour stops could be:

- How to do fuel treatments around >65cm dbh trees
- Airport and Cariboo Fire Centre – 2017 wildfire and previous fuel treatment effects
- Ken Day’s house to assess his FireSmart efforts
- Stephanie Ewen offered the UBC property at Fox Mountain for FireSmart
- Stephanie Ewen suggested a site at the end of Rodeo Drive (Knife Creek Block of UBC Alex Fraser Research Forest) that was treated in 1984, 2006 and 2014 that is accessible on pavement by bus if logistics is at all a concern (see photo at right)



6. Next Steps

Wildfire Resiliency and Training Summit – Vancouver, May 10-14, 2023

- See info and how to register [here](#)

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
MOF land manager approval – for the current CWPP , how is it working to get land manager approval where it is needed (e.g., MDWR, OGMA, GAR orders) – is it working, do we need better processes or systems?	Mike Gash, Ken Day, John Walker, Kerri Howse, Harold Stolar, Gord Chipman, Hugh Flinton, Matt Lees, Becky Bings	By April
Fire Stocking Standards – inquire and/or advocate for them to be approved for use in Cariboo-Chilcotin District, perhaps at upcoming regional stocking standards meeting	Multiple people – need DCC folks; reach out to Kerri Howse, WLTA silviculture group	By late February
CWPP recommendations – review before next meeting, discuss which ones are top priority, and update them for progress	Everyone	Ongoing
Maps of past and proposed fuel treatments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • post current ones on website • provide updated ones 	Mike Simpson Matt Lees	ASAP March 31
BCTS and Timber Sales to achieve fuel management – learn from Jonathan Merkin, BCTS about what’s been done in Vernon, Kootenays	Nathan Davis	May
BCTS and Gas Pipeline/W1579 area – explore options and a wider approach for the area to achieve wildfire resiliency	Jason Ward, Nathan Davis	May
Stewardship Contracts – learn about the American approach and how it could be applied here	Matt, Judah	May
Alan Westhaver presentation to the community, and field tour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange venue for evening presentation, consider other content to present • Help identify field tour sites • Put the word out to public 	Mike Simpson, Matt Lees	May 17-18
BCWS to explore creating a short 5min educational video of Kelsey’s research	Matt Lees, Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz	Yes, advance in 2023

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
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
Reach out to major industrial enterprises whose properties adjoin areas for proposed treatment within the Williams Lake Community Wildfire Plan area	Mike Simpson – more to add	Ongoing
Recruit sub-committee to carry forward re-treatment allocations, assessments, and priority planning. Matt noted had discussions with DCC to hire consultants to look at previously treated areas.	Peter Holub to initiate with Gord, DCC and zone reps	By fall 2023
Follow up on request from CRD for fire risk data on private property , engage CRD Planning Manager, BCWS HQ	Matt, Irene	ASAP
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) 	Suggested to ask CRD to coordinate this – new staff person Gerald Pinchbeck	Ongoing, delayed from 2020
Funding sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rangeland Advantage IAFBC here ▪ FESBC funding window – new funds announced ▪ UBCM’s Community Resiliency Investment Program ▪ NRCan 	Anyone interested	Ongoing