

Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

Approved Summary as of Nov 13, 2024

Meeting Date: May 15, 2024, 1:00PM to 4:00PM

Location: Williams Lake Fire Department and online

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

British Columbia Wildfire Service (BCWS) – Dylan Simpson, Tom Foley, Peter Holub
Cariboo Regional District – Travis Flanagan
City of Williams Lake – Evan Dean
Forsite Consultants – Lorena Tillotson
Fraser Basin Council – Mike Simpson (contractor), Bettina Johnson
Interested individuals or consultants – Jim Hilton, Ken Day
Ministry of Forests, Cariboo Region – Lindsey Wood, Kristi Iverson, Josh Pressey
Ministry of Forests, Cariboo-Chilcotin District – Harold Stolar, Kerri Howse
Stswecem’c Xget’tem First Nation – Ashley Camille
Tolko – Marco Passeri
University of British Columbia – Stephanie Ewen
Williams Lake First Nation – John Walker
Woodlots BC – Tyler Hodgkinson, Mark Tamas

Present online for Past, Present and Future Forests in the Interior Douglas-fir

BC Cattlemens – Norene Parke
Consus Management – Sean Fogerty

1. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda and Objectives

Mike Simpson, a facilitator and professional forester on contract to Fraser Basin Council, welcomed everyone and acknowledged unceded Secwepemc Territory. A round of introductions took place for people in the room and those participating online. The City of Williams Lake was thanked for hosting the meeting at the Fire Department. The agenda was accepted as presented.

2. Past, Present and Future Forests in the Interior Douglas-fir

Kristi Iverson, Research Vegetation Ecologist with Ministry of Forests (MOF) Cariboo Region, gave a [presentation](#) on what past Douglas-fir forests looked like, their present condition and contributing factors, and what future climate scenarios could mean for future Douglas-fir forests. This work builds on the research recently done in the area, and Kristi suggested there is a path forward where there can be an integration of industrial forest management for timber harvesting as well as leaving more ideal forest structures that are more resilient to drought, wildfire, pests, snow interception, wildlife habitat and other values. Next steps include a Land Act Order amendment, best management practices, more pilot projects and incorporation of these concepts into forest landscape plans. Contact kristi.iverson@gov.bc.ca for questions or more info or to request Kristi give this presentation to any other interested group.

Discussion and questions raised the following:

- Evidence of fire history showed there were pockets of high severity within more widespread fires
- Reburning of high severity fires (i.e., Fort McMurray area) is often accompanied by high rate of spread due to grass and other fuels that didn't completely burn
- Can't share draft wording of the Land Act Order amendment yet, but it's meant to improve flexibility for management in areas and not be overly prescriptive, highlight an overall goal of resiliency and identifying the "ditch lines" to remain within
- Draft best management practices are available for review and input now
- First Nations in the Cariboo are involved and leading the way, such as what WLFN is doing
- The scale we should be working at to affect change should change, the 2km wildland urban interface (WUI) came from the 2004 Filmon Report and while that focuses on structure values, it may not be an appropriate scale given climate change over 20 years and changing fire behaviour
- Need to educate and bring the broader public along as things change
- Our challenge is that 31% of the current [Williams Lake & Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) (CWPP) is private land; Douglas-fir forest structures need to become resilient on private land and we have limited leverage to influence
- This is a Cariboo-wide initiative, need to consider what we can do within the geographic area of this roundtable

3. Approval of previous summary/Status review of action items

The meeting summary from February 20, 2024 was approved and is now posted [online](#). Action items were reviewed; those that remain or new ones are at the end of this summary.

4. What's Underway, Who's Doing What for Wildfire Preparedness

Woodlot Licenses

Mark noted that Borland Creek Logging is initiating work on the landscape fuel break on the east side of this CWPP area, it bisects his woodlot license 1579 east of 150 Mile House. Tyler noted that Woodlots BC has funding to support woodlot licensees looking at fuel management opportunities on woodlots, and that there are some existing woodlots in this area with existing prescriptions to be implemented (Woodlot Education Society at Bull Mountain, Rod Blake at Spokin Lake).

City of Williams Lake

Fire Chief Evan Dean noted that the old action items around evacuation planning have been completed or are underway in conjunction with Cariboo Regional District. He noted that he is acting FireSmart coordinator (in addition to his other roles), there is limited capacity at the City this year, hence the focus will be on FireSmart education and less on treatments. Evan noted a public screening of the documentary [The Test](#) about Logan Lake's decades of FireSmart work leading up to the 2021 Tremont Creek wildfire.

Lorena noted she is helping finish up the previous year's work for [Union of BC Municipalities Community Resiliency Investment](#) program and then they can focus on the 2024 activities. With that funding, the City is looking for a full-time wildfire risk reduction coordinator, which is hopefully to be filled by fall.

Lorene and Evan noted that since the current CWPP was initiated in 2018, it needs to be replaced with a Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP). Since the content and activities under a CWRP are different

than a CWPP, and the fact that there is now a WUI WRR plan (formerly called tactical plan) being implemented by Ministry of Forests Cariboo-Chilcotin District for much of the current CWPP area on Crown land, the City has decided to pursue funding to develop a CWRP only for the City of Williams Lake municipal area. Lorena and Evan noted that interagency cooperation is one of the 7 FireSmart disciplines to be addressed in a CWRP, and there will be a continued ongoing need to coordinate between the multiple plans that will replace the current CWPP.

Williams Lake First Nation

John described that WLFN and their crews are doing lots of fuel management projects as identified in either the CWPP or WUI WRR plan at the following locations: Chimney Valley; 150 Mile House; Rideau Lake Road; Brunson Lake fuel break (mostly done); Tamas WL 1579 as noted above; Fox Mountain near Ross Road; Comer Station (needs burning in fall). He noted that WLFN burned 75 ha of grassland this spring along Hwy 97.

Ministry of Forests – Cariboo-Chilcotin District

Kerri noted that the WUI WRR plan can't be posted online but the plan and associated maps and GIS files can be made available to those working in this area. She has posted the WUI WRR plan and associated files on a file transfer protocol site [here](#) (note that FTP sites are often wiped clean weekly). If anyone subsequently needs these files, reach out to daniel.merth@gov.bc.ca

Kerri noted that MOF is leading the implementation of the Comer projects, Fox Mountain, Pablo Creek, Tinmusket and near Xatsull. Working with Williams Lake Community Forest to develop a prescribed burn prescription. Beyond this roundtable area, they are developing prescriptions at Anahim Lake airport, Miller Rd in Horsefly and working on a WUI WRR plan for Sheep Creek/Meldrum to Rudy Johnson bridge.

University of BC Research Forest

Stephanie noted that they have FESBC funds to do a research project looking at mechanized fuel management/thinning treatments with small equipment. Ken added that the intent is to start in fall with a specialized head attached to a small harvester. Tyler noted that West Lake Contracting is the official Alstor dealer for compact harvester and forwarder forestry machines. He has been working with the Gorman group on thinning treatments. They will have good info on the equipment. Tyler noted in addition, Axis Forestry Inc. has falling processing heads here in BC. The mini stroker machine I spoke of is with Axis Forestry and is the Kesla 20SH-II model. It makes a very nice log with minimal damage, yet it is slow when compared to a roller type model. See the following resources:

www.westlakeltd.ca

www.alstor.se

www.axisforestry.com

John suggested reaching out to Rachael Pollard in the Office of the Chief Forester to pursue funding to purchase a specialized head.

Cariboo Regional District

Travis noted that his focus is FireSmart education, he has been getting out to lots of communities and presenting about FireSmart. CRD does not have funding to do FireSmart assessments this year.

BC Wildfire Service

Following up on the mapping needs discussed in detail at the [last meeting](#), Tom acknowledged there's work to be done. Mike noted that this is especially needed for future planning as we move to an era of

having multiple plans, not just the 2018 CWPP. Mike also noted that this is a common problem across all [wildfire roundtables](#), not unique to Williams Lake and area. Mapping is needed for several purposes:

- Sharing past and proposed treatments with those of us planning and implementing the work
- Sharing past and proposed treatments with the public, whether generally or with targeted groups such as neighbourhoods or communities
- Having BCWS suppression crews aware of past treatments that can be used as anchor points during wildfire response

Peter noted they are providing an update on prescribed burning, including fuel types and timing to complete burns based on recent experience in the Cariboo with a variety of scale and types of prescribed burns. This spring, they completed prescribed burns on 35 ha of the Williams Lake Community Forest, the Bond Lake racetrack project (see Appendix 1 for summary and photos of the morning field trip), and Chimney Lake recreation site. Recently they've had a lot of junipers in burn areas, both common and Rocky Mountain which presents unique challenges due to oils and flammability. He is also exploring the use of spot burning in fall in lieu of piling and burning as a method to reduce fuel loading before a spring prescribed burn.



Forest Enhancement Society of BC

Brian Watson, Operations Manager for [FESBC](#), a Crown agency gave his regrets to Mike in advance of the meeting and asked him to mention a few key points. FESBC funds wildfire risk reduction and fibre recovery Crown land that complements other wildfire risk reduction activities funded by Union of BC Municipalities or Ministry of Forests Wildfire Risk Reduction programs. FESBC can fund a broad variety of applicants, not just local governments, or First Nations. There is an open [funding call](#) right now. Brian's contact information is bwatson@fesbc.ca or 250-919-1471. Ken Day is a director on the FESBC board.

Recent Reports or Resources Related to Wildfire

Mike mentioned the following that are related to the purposes of this roundtable:

- Premier's expert task force on emergencies report [here](#)
- POLIS Wildfire Resilience Project – Learning to live with wildfire report [here](#)

5. Next Steps:

Next meeting – Fall, exact date TBD based on a doodle poll Mike will initiate about a month in advance.

Future field trip opportunities:

- Farwell Canyon research trials
- Joes Lake Road spot burning
- UBC Research Forest, Knife Creek or Fox Mountain property

Action Items

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Maps of past and proposed fuel treatments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review completeness of past treatments data set and at minimum provide an updated static pdf map to share with the public. Encourage utilization of public-facing BCWS dashboard Ensure BCWS suppression crews have access to past treatments 	Tom Foley, Lorena Tillotson, draw in Ken Day as needed	Ongoing
Communications best practices re: burning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize the best practices noted in the Feb 20, 2024 meeting summary 	Everyone	Ongoing
BCWS to explore creating a short 5min educational video of Kelsey's research	Tom Foley, Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz	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
Reach out to Kristi Iverson if you want the presentation on Douglas-fir given to your group	Everyone	Ongoing
Download WUI WRR plan document and spatial files from here or reach out to daniel.merth@gov.bc.ca	Everyone involved in planning and implementation	
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

Appendix 1 – Pre-meeting Field Tour

Nine people participated in the optional field tour to look at the April 2024 prescribed burn near the Bond Lake racetrack just off Highway 20 in Esler.

Brief history and key discussion points:

- WLFN led this work with Peter Holub and BCWS supporting
- Area was harvested and 24m²/ha basal area was left
- Spot burning was done in fall 2023 to reduce fuel loading
- Prescribed burn was ignited April 12, 2024
- Generally Peter and John were happy with the results, it could have burned a bit hotter
- Clumps of layer 3 (trees >1.3m in height, but less than 7.5cm diameter) survived the prescribed burn based on ignition patterns
- Prescribed burns are category 4 burns, the communication challenge with the public is that this burn took place after category 2 and 3 burns were prohibited
- Key concerns with prescribed burns are tree mortality (either direct from burning, or making them susceptible to bark beetle attacks), soil impacts and reducing fuel loading.

