

# Clearwater and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

## Approved Meeting Summary as at Jan 23, 2020

**Meeting date:** Oct 9, 2019 1:00PM to 4:00PM

**Location:** Dutch Lake Community Centre, Clearwater, BC

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

BC Parks - Tom Hughes (phone)

BC Timber Sales (BCTS) - Jessica Gunn

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) - Hugh Murdoch, Mike Aldred (phone), Mike Law, Jim Jones

Blackpool Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) - Mike Savage

Clearwater Fire Department - Mike Smith

District of Clearwater - Mayor Merlin Blackwell, Leslie Groulx

Fraser Basin Council - Mike Simpson

Interfor - Marino Bordin

MFLNRORD\* (Thompson Rivers District) - Marina Irwin, Heather MacLennan, Kris Cooke

MFLNRORD\* (Thompson Okanagan Region) - Danya Leduc (phone)

Thompson-Nicola Regional District - Director Carol Schaffer, Sherri Madden, Ron Storie

Upper Clearwater Fire Brigade - Steve Murray, Mike Ward

Wells Gray Community Forest - George Brcko (phone)

West Fraser - Rob Ballinger

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

### 1. Introductions, Agenda, Objectives

Mike Simpson welcomed everyone, acknowledged Secwepemc territory, and the District of Clearwater and Community Centre for hosting the meeting. Introductions were made around the room and on the phone. The agenda was approved as accepted.

Many regrets were noted, it is a busy time of year and there is a conflicting meeting involving MFLNRORD and Secwepemc leadership.

### 2. Overview, Purpose

Fraser Basin Council has secured funding from BC Wildfire Service to pilot three community wildfire roundtables over the next two years: Quesnel and Area, Williams Lake and Area, and in the Thompson-Nicola. The TNRD board of directors determined the pilot should be in Clearwater and surrounding area.

The purpose of creating a community wildfire roundtable is to ensure **good coordination and communication** about who's doing what around wildfire preparedness:

- FireSmart education
- Timber harvesting opportunities
- Fuel management
- Resources and capacity - volunteer fire departments, ranchers, agriculture sector, forest industry
- First Nations traditional burning

The multiple actors involved in the above activities include but are not limited to local government (including some volunteer fire departments), First Nations governments, MFLNRORD (including BC Wildfire Service, district offices), the forest industry (including major licensees, community forests, woodlot licensees), BC Timber Sales, and independent fire departments.

The area to be included was noted as open and to be determined with input from today's meeting.

Additional objectives address some Abbott and Chapman recommendations, such as incorporating traditional burning and traditional ecological knowledge, and capacity and resources of volunteer fire departments, ranchers/agriculture sector, and others to aid in fire suppression activities when needed.

### **3. What's Already Underway**

Those present built on the list on the back of the agenda, and shared who's doing what by activity and jurisdiction.

#### **District of Clearwater (DoC)**

- FireSmart education within DoC by VFD. Neighbourhood ambassadors in place in 2016.
- Education - demonstration projects; Mayor Blackwell will do one in his yard.
- Supporting United Way to bring their job creation program to DoC in the future. This program supports landowners that can't do FireSmart themselves.
- The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is being updated by Forsite. Open house on Oct 19. Talking to lots of local folks. Looking to expand to Birch Island area. And includes WG park corridor all the way to park boundary; and a 2 km buffer, and Upper Clearwater area.
- Working on Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program application by Oct 18 for fuel management activities, within DoC boundaries.
- Fire Department is putting in application for equipment to UBCM Community Emergency Protection Fund (CEPF). Equipment for thermal imaging, other equipment for fire (structural and wildfire).

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

- They have 20 members with S100 and S185 training. Average age is 63.
- They did FireSmart education session in 2018, had 58 people come out
- Challenge is that they need experience fighting fires and availability to train.
- Challenge of having to fund their own equipment. They have a couple of trucks, 3 pumps, and are buying firefighter outfits. BCWS has been helpful.
- Challenge in Upper Clearwater is the one way road; machine flailing; most Europeans smoke and rental vehicles don't have ashtrays anymore. Need to daylight the road. Anything impacting the park affects village of Upper Clearwater
- Carol Schaffer met with minister at UBCM - working on funding. \$25K grant is available for brigades; in the process.

#### **Wells Gray Community Forest (WGCF)**

- A landscape fuel management plan for entire area has been created; it surrounds DoC and covers whole area of the WGCF. It's a robust plan, a historic snapshot - points to

right areas to treat. There are 200 years' worth of fuel management projects to implement identified.

- Can now move to prescription level; select multiple areas with DoC to get best bang for the buck. Funding available this fall for prescriptions; running out of time on ground, do down low by end of October, look at IDF where snow-free. Close to town would be pile and burn this winter. Get some data, develop prescriptions so they are in place for spring treatments. Open to input from others as well.
- Provincial funding for prescriptions is in place; WGCF is also willing to use surplus profits to get the work initiated.
- Most prescriptions will likely be mechanical removal, producing sawlogs and other residual fibre. Probably need a grinding component.
- Just acquired LiDAR data last year. Good data set. Most woodlot licences adjacent to WGCF also had LiDAR data acquired.
- DoC has 2 facilities that need 12 B trains worth of chips; used to get from Canfor.
- There may be volunteer opportunities for fuel management, not on commercial harvest blocks, but possibly on hand-treatment blocks or pruning.
- It was noted that District of Barriere also needs chip supply. Domtar needs chips; could be good opportunity to utilize residual fibre from operations.

#### MFLNRORD - Thompson Rivers District

- Kris Cooke is new; Heather MacLennan is in new role with wildfire risk reduction in partnership with BCWS.
- Working together with communities and BCWS. Put projects forward that could already be shovel ready; looked at projects from FESBC that didn't get funded in last round of application. Used that as initial basis for projects. Talked with many communities interested in wildfire risk reduction (i.e., Venables Valley, etc.).
- For DoC and WGCF - \$190 000 funding for this fiscal year ending March 31, 2020. Prescriptions will get done. May or may not spend all funds by end of March. Additional money (this is year 1 of 3). Heather and Kris meeting with communities throughout Thompson Rivers District. This will help coordinate across the landscape.
- Some pinch points with the funding - timing; can't carry out treatments in snow. One person reviewing prescriptions for three districts. Who's available for prescription development is a challenge, with limited capacity. Need some training out there; new needs and requirements from BCWS.
- MFLNRORD Wildfire Reduction funds are for outside of municipalities only; CRI program funds are for within municipalities.

#### BC Wildfire Service (BCWS)

- Working on WGCF, DoC as discussed with Thompson Rivers MFLNRORD
- Working with DoC for an intake for next Friday Oct 18, CRI applications and the Crown land funding through FLNRORD district
- No active FESBC projects right now
- Probably looking for new projects for spring, fiscal year 2020/21
- Key role is trying to make sure projects are viable/in the right location, working in conjunction with Fire Zone, in high risk classes so that they can be funded, and conducting reviews of prescriptions so that the wildfire risk reduction part of the prescription can be met.
- Working with TNRD as well, in the non-municipal areas around the TNRD.
- Are there spatially explicit priority zones for fuel breaks? Mike A - there could be some; look at the PSTA, and maps online, and come up with high risk areas.

Clearwater is a Risk Class 1; do plots and checks to verify. Majority of areas are based on structures and populations; more than 2km of >20 structures/km<sup>2</sup> may not be fundable unless it's addressing a high value asset/infrastructure.

- It was noted that an opportunity exists to build on what's in the WGCF landscape area plan; fill in for the other Crown land areas with input from this Roundtable.
- Kelly Johnston, FireSmart Canada and BCWS are doing 6 workshops around the province this fall on community resiliency planning, how to update CWPPs and make them better.

#### BC Parks

- Wildfire Risk Management Strategic Plan for Wells Gray Park is complete
- Received \$30 000 in funding for prescriptions in Wells Gray park; Helmcken Falls, Spahats Falls, Clearwater campground, Pyramid, Falls Creek and boat launch for Clearwater Lake are the key areas to focus on. Seeking to implement prescriptions next year.

#### Blackpool VFD

- 20 members, 2 junior fire fighters, 12 members that are SPU structural protection trained, 16 that are cross trained for structural and wildland, and 3 train the trainers
- Tender, 2 structural engines, portable pump trailer
- Mutual aid to Little Fort and Clearwater - they help with whatever is called for.
- Programs - best practices prior to 2017; neighbourhood FireSmart program, encourage residents to FireSmart as best they can. Blackpool VFD then does the burn-off.
- From 2017 a fire pre-plan involving 9 community landowners and industry for commercial irrigation, strategic within the Fire Protection Area.
- 2018 - Mike Smith and Mike Savage did a fundraising campaign, 4 fire boss water cannons, 4 cart cannons, 2 high pressure pumps and hose to support wildland operations
- Have SPU equipment on hand for 5 homes
- Tentative pool for funding for a type 2 structural protection unit (SPU) trailer, second one for TNRD
- Training - regional and local to enhance what they can do for FireSmart, community Assessment, and grant applications in through TNRD for combined funding sources. Better resource for suppression and resiliency
- Had one home/yard demo a month ago; 10 people showed up.
- Agree need to work more as a group. This is worthwhile.

#### TNRD

- In midst of hiring an emergency program coordinator. That person would be responsible for planning with DoC.
- Emergency route planning - up to RCMP, BCWS to designate the route - depends on jurisdiction of the road. Important in the North Thompson area as there are many long routes with no egress.
- FireSmart carried out - \$100K from CRI program, \$75K was for FireSmart. Twenty communities participated; at most 18 people participated at a session. Jason Tomlin would like to delegate to Fire Departments to do. To be discussed further.
- SPU trailer stationed in Pritchard. Jason seeking a 350 gas truck to pull it. Interchangeable throughout TNRD. Draft firefighters with the training to man that when required.

- Alert BC - a request for proposal out; attending a 911 meeting at end of October. First hand operability of the Alert BC system, cast a message within a cell tower area. At District/RD/FN level. An EMBC product.
- South Green Lake, Little Fort, Blackpool VFDs - Red Cross provided money for a sea can for each. 2 units coming to North Thompson Valley.
- 8 fire departments to collect \$25K each from CRI program for training and/or equipment being applied for - Fire brigades can apply as well.
- TNRD Area A - allotted \$175K from TransMountain and Carol has assigned up to \$100K for the Blackpool SPU fire department (a regional program, the SPU moves as needed). They could also go outside the regional district
- Looking at updated CWPPs for Blue River area; could be opportunities for West Fraser in that area.

#### Clearwater FD

- Did a FireSmart education program in 2016
- Doing training with Blackpool VFD
- Mutual aid with Vavenby VFD as well as auto aid

#### BC Timber Sales (BCTS)

- Some operating area around the community
- Potential to work with others to reduce risk in the area; BCTS are open to that

#### West Fraser

- Has operating area in Vavenby-Avola area, Mad River and Finn Creek
- Operating Area negotiation in Thompson Rivers District is currently underway, they hope to finalize in coming months.
- Fuel hazard abatement approaches are followed and ongoing with their operations.
- Open to strategic fuel management approaches

#### Interfor

- Not currently adjacent to the community
- Tenure areas to the east around Vavenby
- Operating area negotiations ongoing right now
- Lots of capacity can be brought to reduce wildfire risk through logging in key areas

#### Other

- United Way looking to expand FireSmart program for private landowners into Clearwater area in 2020 (as noted in DoC update above)
- MFLNRORD Operational Issues Forum (OIF) - involving government staff and the forest industry, the South Region has identified wildfire resiliency as a priority

## 4. Other Elements to Discuss

Resources and capacity (human, equipment) was covered above.

Utilizing traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and burning was not covered since a representative from Simpcw was not in attendance.

Future funding sources was not covered in detail, since there appears to be sufficient funding to initiate several phases of work for the remainder of this fiscal year.

## 5. Next Steps

It was agreed to create a community wildfire roundtable. The geographic area was agreed by those present to include the following:

- As per District of Clearwater CWPP update, east to Birch Island/Vavenby area and Upper Clearwater corridor to Wells Gray park boundary
- Fire protection districts of the following VFDs: Little Fort and 2km buffer around Little Fort, Vavenby, Blackpool, but also include East Blackpool (no fire protection)
- Simpcw fire protection area, and south to Darfield

The following needs/opportunities were identified, **beyond** what was already underway:

- FireSmart and lack of uptake amongst private landowners
- Identifying opportunities on Crown land outside of WGCF - whether strategic treatments by licensees, or large fuel breaks, etc.
- Utilize all fibre on a logging block, whole tree chipping, need roads accessible to B train trucks - a matter of supply and demand.
- Looking at facility in Vavenby Canfor site to use fibre (DoC are the lead)
- Command training with Fire Departments and BCWS - going in same direction; and other partners
- Encourage people to implement things - FireSmart in particular
- Consider using the “Red Rock, Green Rock” approach to identifying properties that are FireSmarted
- Define success of this group; define goals of this group (ask before next meeting)
- Target message to tell community about this work and FireSmart
- Utilize Timber Supply Area (TSA) web map
- Strategic communication about this initiative - TNRD, DoC and others

**Next meeting** - half day, mid to late January 2020. Mike Simpson will seek a date 3-4 weeks in advance.

The following ACTION items were agreed to:

Task or activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
Define goals - what does success look like?	Everyone	Before next meeting
Create a draft terms of reference	Mike Simpson	Before next meeting
Connect with those present today, build on the opportunities identified	Everyone	Ongoing
Update map of the area under the Clearwater and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable	Mike Simpson, with support from BCWS Geospatial Services	Before next meeting