

# Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

## Approved Summary as of May 16, 2024

**Meeting Date:** February 20, 2024, 1:00PM to 4:00PM

**Location:** Cariboo Fire Centre, Williams Lake Airport and online

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

British Columbia Wildfire Service (BCWS) – Madison Dahl, Dylan Simpson, Talia McKay, Tom Foley, Matt Lees, Jason Ward

Cariboo Regional District – Irene Israel, Director Melynda Neufeld, Director Steve Forseth, Stephanie Masun, Director Maureen Lebourdais, Roger Hollander, Travis Flanagan

City of Williams Lake – Mayor Surinderpal Rathor, Evan Dean, Alyssa Page

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

Ministry of Forests, Cariboo-Chilcotin District – Harold Stolar, Daniel Merth

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure – Mikayla Arkesteyn

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship – Becky Bings, Connor Dolighan

Miocene Volunteer Fire Department – Quintin Duhamel

Emergency Management – Kevin Coppock

Stswecem'c Xget'tem First Nation – Ashley Camille, Ross Wilson, Adam Colpitts

Tyee Lake Volunteer Fire Department – Rick Rhodes, Lorrie Rhodes

University of British Columbia – Mike Stefanuk, Georgina Preston, Stephanie Ewen, Lori Daniels

West Fraser – Mauro Calabrese

Williams Lake First Nation – John Walker, Willem Faasse

Woodlots BC – Gord Chipman

### 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. New participants in the room who didn't get a direct email invite were asked to give their email to Mike Simpson for updates to contact list. BC Wildfire Service was thanked for hosting the meeting at the Cariboo Fire Centre.

The agenda was accepted as presented.

### 2. UBC Research Presentations

Mike Stefanuk, PhD candidate presented on preliminary results of his research on [fire regimes from past to future in the dry Douglas-fir forests](#). His research questions are:

- What were the historical stand structures under historical fire regimes?
- Are historical or contemporary stand structures more resistant to crown fire?

His preliminary findings are that: low-severity fire regimes are shifting to high-severity crown fire; mixed-severity fire regimes are susceptible due to fire deficits and accumulated fuels; and proactive fuels treatments restore forest structures to avoid a regime shift.

Georgina Preston, MSc candidate presented on her research [Wildfire Risk in Stswecem'c Xget'tem Territory: Barriers and SXFN Solutions](#). Her research focused on fuel loads, predicted fire behavior, how much fuel can be removed in a mule deer winter range (MDWR) vs intensive thin-from-below, predicted fire behavior after simulated fuel treatments. Her key findings were that: crown fire dominates our predictions - thinning reduces active crown fires, abatement reduces fire intensity, (intensive thinning + abatement shifts crown fire to surface fire); fuel treatments are most effective when fine fuel treatment paired with cultural and prescribed fire; research results speak to how thinning intensity needs to be increased considerably; and that #landback facilitates proactive, adaptive stewardship, this vital work should be collaborative, in spirit of implementing UNDRIP.

Discussion and questions raised the following:

- Q: did you model just the fine surface fuel abatement without pruning? A: yes, and can share that simulation result after the meeting
- Q: in pictures of Tinmusket, small diameter few large trees, how many stems per hectare? A: median was 2400 stems/hectare, total was 2600 stems/hectare total, just live conifers
- Q: when looking to finish your research? A: Georgina almost done, Mike looking at 1-1.5 years,
- Q: will there be any extension notes or how-to's that can be applied from your research? A: Georgina writing community report for SXFN that captures research findings, would be interested in working with practitioners, knowing can't make a prescription from the simulated fuel treatments
  - suggestion of field walks and taking the simulations and turning them into something more practitioner-oriented (keep in mind for future field trip)

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

The meeting summary from November 17, 2023 was approved and is now posted [online](#). Action items were reviewed; those that remain or new ones are at the end of this summary. The lessons learned from the discussion at the beginning of the last meeting were reviewed.

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

#### **Ministry of Forests, Cariboo-Chilcotin District**

Daniel Merth gave an overview and update of district-led projects, including:

- Fox Mtn, in conjunction with WLFN, at pile burning stage right now, another 10-12 hectares left for thinning and burning
- Tinmusket fuel break, working with SXFN, 300 hectares, thinning, piling, burning
- Comer Hill trailer park, 15 or 16 hectares, thinned and piled, just burning left –
- Pinel Rd behind Xatsull, 50-60 hectare project
- Various other assessment and prescription contracts, other projects identified through annual operating plan, priority projects will be seeing those that have been started through to the end
- Annual operating plan approved, awaiting confirmation, last year \$1.3M, similar budget this year

Daniel also gave a presentation on the [Williams Lake tactical plan](#) (now known as a wildland urban interface wildfire risk reduction (WUI WRR) plan) recently developed. He shared data around stand attributes and treatment strategies; there were 130 or so fuel treatment units (FTUs) identified, plus assess and monitor units (AMUs). He noted that past and proposed fuel treatment polygons in the current [Williams Lake and Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) (CWPP) were included in the tactical plan, and that this type of plan is meant to complement the current CWPP and future community wildfire resiliency plans (CWRPs).

Discussion and questions raised the following:

- Q: When do you anticipate land manager endorsement? A: very soon, once this gets land manager endorsement, will be publicly available, **ACTION\* anyone who needs the Tactical Plan shape files, contact Danny**
- Q: What's the criteria to bump AMU back to FTU's fuel treatment unit? A: 5-7 year monitoring interval, would be incorporated in annual operating plan after assessment
- Q: Priority to treat ones in WUI area first? A: area of interest can be larger scale, maybe priority fuel treatment due to egress routes -WUI WRR – doing work outside the WUI, if it's critical infrastructure or critical egress routes, but large majority of priority areas will be within the WUI
- Q: We have CWPP that is getting old, MOF holds final approval on this, is there opportunity for seeing input from this table? A: Yes, all through this process working with different agencies
- Q: The old legacy treatments from the 2010 era, are they on your maps? A: yes, update provided and will be assessed

### **Williams Lake First Nation**

John Walker described a range of fuel management projects either complete or underway, including:

- finished Esler project, able to get funding through FESBC to have excavator do raking, no pile burning required (except some in summer/fall)
- 150 Mile/Borland Valley is half done
- Pablo Creek, 12 ha has been harvested, Fire Centre is developing burn plan for prescribed burn (also for Esler project - Brunson fuel break almost complete)
- 2300 Rd landscape level fuel break, received funding for

Questions and discussion raised the following:

- Q: understory burn on White Rd, wasn't ideal conditions when burn went off, any plans for follow-up treatment: A: it's on the list, not for this spring, but not losing sight of
- Q: all the small burn piles, will they be cleaned up? A: yes, near breakup the shredder goes in there to the piles

### **Cariboo Regional District**

CRD staff Irene Israel, Roger Hollander, Travis Flanagan and Stephanie Masun noted the following:

- They have a new FireSmart educator, Travis Flanagan, this year will be getting out and educating people on fire smarting their properties, talking to people, see what the interest and drive is and build on that. He'll be working throughout the entire CRD area.
- CRD launching new FireSmart program, looking to figure out collaboratively how to close some of those gaps and to understand where all the existing plans are, connecting with other FireSmart work, to avoid duplication

- Travis will be applying for more funding for CWRPs, however priority this year is to see what's going on, get a feel for where community is at with FireSmart, and then apply for 2024 funding, priorities will be described from what they hear
- Roger highlighted how volunteer fire departments are looking for communication on when any burns are taking place, noting it's tough for volunteer fire dept to get called out to what turns out to be pile burning or prescribed burns. He expressed appreciation for communication that is happening, while noting the need for improved communication strategies (re: day-of burning, or day-before communication, so they can send those to their volunteer fire depts)

### **Woodlots BC**

Gord Chipman noted that there are 3 fuel management projects starting on local woodlot this month at Dugan Lake, Bull Mtn, 141 Mile (thinning, pruning, piling, burning), tendering process being completed currently. He noted that Woodlots BC provincially has an MOU with BCWS to conduct and plan prescriptions, hope to do 1000 hectares of prescriptions throughout the province.

### **Emergency Management and Climate Readiness**

Kevin Coppock gave an update on new legislation, Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA) replaces the old Emergency Management Act, adds a lot of important aspects to our legislation, including the 4 phases of management, and the *whole society approach* to emergency management, really critical for a resilient community to have everyone working together. Some highlights include:

- after state of local emergency, there's recovery period that local Indigenous and Non-Indigenous governments can use
- it's multi-jurisdictional
- consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Governing bodies, more about having communities work together in emergency management, and more integrated
- See more on the EMCR website [here](#)

Kevin also noted several funding opportunities through Union of BC Municipalities:

- UBCM climate adaptation disaster risk reduction, deadline Mar 28, info [here](#)
- FireSmart Community Funding and Supports, deadline Sept 30, info [here](#)

He noted the following upcoming events:

- Spring Readiness - Gibraltar room - April 11, different agencies and communities will be there talking about hazard preparedness for upcoming seasons
- Partnership table with First Nations on Feb 29 in Williams Lake

### **City of Williams Lake**

Lorena Tillotson, Forsite Consultants, on contract to the City of Williams Lake gave an update:

- 2 projects with FESBC and CRSI funding, doing applications for IFT12 between Westridge and Golf Course 67 ha, and municipal portion of IFP59 above Tower Cres.
- CWPP is expiring this year, so they will be seeking funding to develop a new CWRP for City of WL

Fire Chief Evan Dean added that their fire department is getting all their training lined up for the year. Mayor Rathor expressed his sincere appreciation for the work that we're all doing, the great learning, but he's heard anxiety from public, not acceptable to be at the mercy of the media, make sure to let the people know about burning projects, some people learn more from people's facebook page than anywhere else, request to please send info to Kim Dressler at City Hall so they can help communicate.

## BC Timber Sales

See update provided by Nathan Davis via email in Appendix 1.

## 5. Old Action Items and Ongoing Discussion

Two items were discussed in detail: communications and maps and fuel treatments.

### Communications about Burning

Building on the discussion from the last meeting, there is an ongoing need to improve communication about burning (both pile burning as well as prescribed burning) to alleviate concerns from the public and prevent unnecessary call-outs by volunteer fire departments.

Some resources were identified:

- Utilize the [map of registered open burns](#) – if a burn is registered (including private land), it will show up here; if not it's an unauthorized burn or a potential wildfire
- Sign up for BCWS Cariboo Fire Centre information bulletins and status reports:
  - Email [bcws.ca.fc.informationofficer@gov.bc.ca](mailto:bcws.ca.fc.informationofficer@gov.bc.ca)
- Call public and media information line 778-799-2100

The following were suggested as **communications best practices**, noting the operational limitations around those implementing pile burning such as venting indices and not knowing when burning piles is possible until the “morning of:”

- Communicate (email, text, phone) with the following:
  - Evan Dean, City of Williams Lake Fire Chief [edean@williamslake.ca](mailto:edean@williamslake.ca)
  - Kim Dressler, City of Williams Lake communications [kdressler@williamslake.ca](mailto:kdressler@williamslake.ca)
  - Roger Hollander, CRD Regional Fire Chief, [rhollander@cariboord.ca](mailto:rhollander@cariboord.ca)
  - Your local VFD fire chief
  - Fire Dispatch Centre **1-888-253-9999** or [fire@rdffg.bc.ca](mailto:fire@rdffg.bc.ca) (services all fire departments in our area)
  - Your CRD Electoral Area director (see our contact list)
  - CRD communications staff Gerald Pinchbeck [gpinchbeck@cariboord.ca](mailto:gpinchbeck@cariboord.ca)
- Do a door-to-door campaign in the local neighbourhood before burning commences
- Park fire trucks with blinking lights to inform the public that crews are aware of burning
- BCWS share their educational video with media, on pile burning a couple years ago, maybe do that again and share it on media, work with BCWS communications staff and City of WL/CRD communications staff
- Have a consistent communications script re: pile burning and prescribed burns

### Maps, mapping past fuel treatments for operational crews and communicating with the public

There have been several related ongoing challenges:

- Having past fuel treatments available in a format to be used for both future planning, planning of maintenance treatments, and for wildfire suppression crews to be aware of during wildfire season and response as defensible space/anchor points
- The “black hole” of where this data of past treatments exist and why its not readily accessible in a useable format
- The need to communicate past and future proposed fuel treatments with the public

- Through this roundtable, this was initially done by encouraging treatment polygons to be uploaded to [Forsite's Cariboo InfoShare mapping tool](#), and subsequently by a [static pdf map](#) that Matt Lees helped create

Tom Foley did some work on these challenges since the last meeting and reported the following:

- There are 2 main repositories for spatial data sets for past treatments, a BCWS past database, and [RESULTS](#) – he noted that some of spatial data from UBCM funded projects has gone in BCWS database, but now going in RESULTS, same with FireSmart community funding supports
- Things are being moved to RESULTS, and is where data should be pulled from (wildfire risk reduction info, FESBC info, FNESS info, etc) but this is accessible to licensees, consultants and natural resource professionals, not the public
- BCWS is creating internal fire management system, have been working on a dashboard that will be accessible both internally and to public, trying to amalgamate all these sources of data, see holes in the compiled data, good opportunity to see where those pieces can be filled in

Discussion and questions were as follows:

- Q: RESULTS is the official place for all this info which is fine for internal and industry, but how do we make communication system for public? and for wildfire crews to know of fuel treatments done in the past? A: all BCWS operating plans get posted on [Crown Land Wildfire Risk Reduction - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#), (only what BCWS coordinates and plans, doesn't include woodlots or community forests or treatments on municipal jurisdiction)
- BCWS has been working towards public-facing dashboard for both internal and public to view data on treatments, will be coming available, in meantime can put together a static map
- It was suggested that a potential research project could be to develop a tool allowing access to provincial scale data on spatial and stand level (developing post-monitoring assessments post-harvest) using RESULTS and other data sources

It was suggested that the best eventual solution would be the public-facing dashboard, but it needs to have all past treatments regardless of funding source or land jurisdiction.

**ACTION:** A combination of Tom, Matt and Lorena (draw on Ken Day's memory as needed) to review completeness of past treatments data set and at minimum provide an updated static pdf map to share with the public.

## 6. Next Steps:

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

Draft agenda (in addition to the regular stuff – old action items, information sharing):

- Kristi Iverson's presentation: *Past, present and future forests in the Interior Douglas-fir*
- Field trip post-burn near Williams Lake (8 are planned to take place in April)

It was noted that there will be a **Community Wildfire Preparedness Day on May 4**, similar to last year with open house, members of public could do tour, check out tankers, etc. **Action\* anybody interested in having booth or table at Community Wildfire Preparedness Day, reach out to Dylan Simpson**

It was noted that the [BC Wildfire Resiliency and Training Conference](#) is April 20-24 in Prince George.

<b>Task or activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>CWPP recommendations</b> – review before next meeting, discuss which ones are top priority, and update them for progress	Everyone	Ongoing
<b>Maps of past and proposed fuel treatments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review completeness of past treatments data set and at minimum provide an updated static pdf map to share with the public.</li> <li>Encourage utilization of public-facing BCWS dashboard</li> <li>Ensure BCWS suppression crews have access to past treatments</li> </ul>	Tom Foley, Matt Lees, Lorena Tillotson, draw in Ken Day as needed	Before next meeting
<b>Communications best practices re: burning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize the best practices noted above</li> </ul>	Everyone	Ongoing
BCWS to explore creating a short 5min educational <b>video of Kelsey’s research</b>	Matt Lees, Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz	Ongoing
<b>FireSmart</b> – 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 <b>industrial enterprises</b> 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 <b>re-treatment</b> 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	Ongoing, delayed due to 2023 wildfire season
Follow up on request from CRD for <b>fire risk data on private property</b> , engage CRD Planning Manager, BCWS HQ	Matt, Irene	ASAP
<b>Route signage, egress and evacuation planning</b> – CRD and City to work together to secure funding for updating evacuation plans.	Irene Israel, Evan Dean	Ongoing, delayed from 2020
<b>CWPPs or CWRPs in the Cariboo Regional District</b> Help Irene understand where active plans exist so CRD can secure funding. Email <a href="mailto:iisrael@cariboord.ca">iisrael@cariboord.ca</a>	Everyone	Before next meeting
<b>Funding sources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rangeland Advantage IAFBC <a href="#">here</a></li> <li>FESBC <a href="#">funding window</a> – new funds announced</li> <li>UBCM’s <a href="#">Community Resiliency Investment Program</a></li> <li>NRCan</li> </ul>	Anyone interested	Ongoing

## Appendix 1 – BC Timber Sales Update

The following was sent in advance of the meeting by Nathan Davis, Planning Officer, BCTS.

### BCTS WRR projects

TA2098 Hawks Creek Operating Area – MDWR Likely Rd Primary fuel break PFB-01 abutting woodlot W1579 Mark Tamas (see imbedded image)

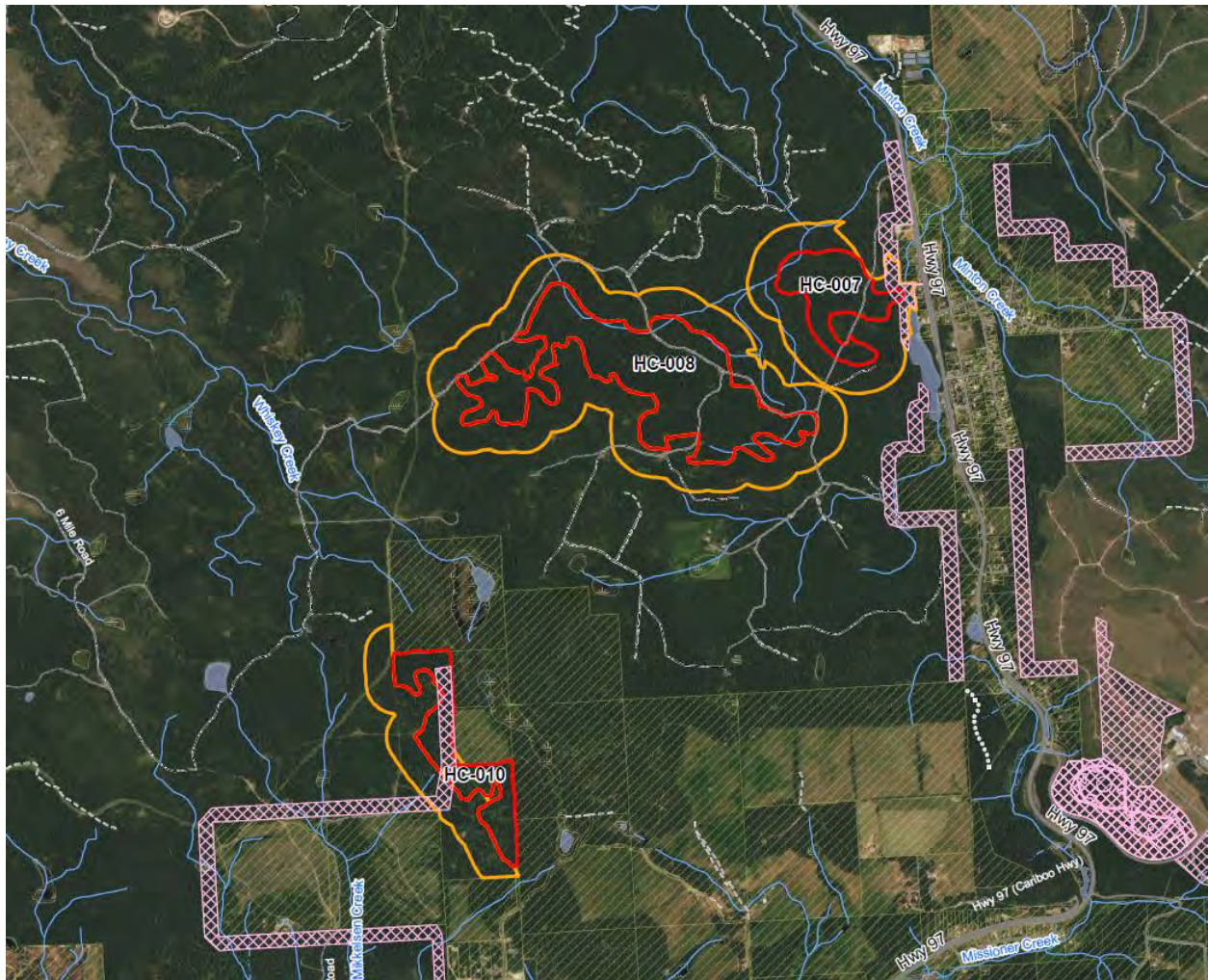
- FN consultation and stakeholder referral closes March 2024
- Target auction date: Q2/Q3 2024-2025 fiscal year
- Boundary layout complete
- Cruising and site plans in progress
- Funding approach
  - BCTS hiring a logger to complete the overstory removal (hour rate) and will sell the wood as a decked sale License to Cut.
  - Cariboo Natural Resource district to provide funding and manage under contract the understory fuel reduction.
- Harvest plan being designed to ensure all fibre/biomass can be removed commercially.
- Require an additional MDWR exemption beyond the WRR blanket exemption to make the operation feasible. Daniel Merth local district and Tom Foley BCWS have committed to support the exemption at time of submission and provide input on the WWR portion of site plan development.
- Thank you again Mark Tamas for sharing all development documents and what you learned when completing your project.





TA1866 Hawks Creek Operating Area – Interface Fuel breaks IFB-58 & IFB-29

- FN consultation and stakeholder referral closes March 2024
- Target auction date: ~Q4 2024-2025
- Internal staff project
- Recce, Layout, cruising, and site plans summer & fall 2024.
- Funding approach – TBD in collaboration with local district and BCTS provincial policy
- Daniel Merth has shared previous prescription completed in the area.
- District and BCWS will provide site plan WWR reviews.



Other updates

- BCTS commits to meeting CWRR tactical plan objectives where it is economically feasible. Thank you, Daniel, for sharing all planning info.
- Requested and waiting for direction from BCTS Provincial headquarters regarding BCTS / WWR funding policy options.