



BCCFA 2026 Conference Notes – Session #5

Wildfire Planning and Regional Network Development

Panel Members:

- Sam Coggins (RPF, Wetzin'Kwa Community Forest)
- Kelly Osbourne (Fire and Fuel Management Officer, BC Wildfire Service)
- Brent Lipinski (Land and Resource Specialist, Ministry of Forests, Vernon District)
- Erik Leslie (RPF, Manager, Harrop-Procter Community Forest)

Moderator: Angela French, BCCFA Wildfire Resiliency Project Coordinator

Notetaker: Brooke Lerman and Angela French

Session Description

Wildfire risk reduction efforts need to be strategically designed and located, with planning that guides and prioritizes fuel treatments at scales appropriate for community forests. This session explored wildfire-related planning underway in British Columbia and highlighted practical approaches community forests can use to develop Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) plans that support broader forest management objectives. Short panel presentations were followed by regional breakout discussions led by BCCFA's Regional Wildfire Liaisons, providing an opportunity for community forests to strengthen regional networks that support wildfire planning and implementation.

Session Summary

The session explored how community forests can strategically reduce wildfire risk through landscape-scale planning, practical implementation, and regional collaboration. Presenters emphasized that effective wildfire risk reduction requires thoughtful planning, prioritization,



and integration with broader forest management objectives rather than simply implementing fuel treatments where opportunities arise.

Presentations examined landscape-level planning approaches, including fuel break design, the use of fire history and terrain data, and integrating wildfire objectives with recreation, wildlife, visual quality, water, and timber values. Case studies from Harrop-Procter and Wetzin'Kwa Community Forests demonstrated how long-term planning, local knowledge, and adapting to site-specific conditions can support successful wildfire risk reduction programs.

A significant focus was placed on emerging provincial planning tools such as **Potential Operational Delineations (PODs)** and **Potential Control Lines (PCLs)**, which are expected to play an increasing role in wildfire preparedness and response planning. While participants recognized the value of these tools, they also identified a need for additional guidance, practical examples, and clarity regarding how PODs and PCLs will integrate with existing planning frameworks.

The panel also reinforced the importance of collaboration among community forests, BC Wildfire Service, Indigenous Nations, local governments, and wildfire practitioners. Participants expressed strong interest in continued peer-to-peer learning, particularly between community forests with well-established WRR programs and those just beginning the work. Public communication emerged as another key theme, with presenters noting that maintaining social licence for fuel treatments requires ongoing education and engagement led by trusted local voices.

Regional Breakout Discussions

Following the panel, participants joined facilitated regional breakout discussions led by BCCFA's Regional Wildfire Liaisons:

- **North:** Sam Coggins
- **South:** Gord Pratt
- **Coast:** Simon Craig

Representatives from **38 community forests** (14 North, 15 South, and 9 Coast), together with BC Wildfire Service staff and other wildfire practitioners, shared experiences, discussed



implementation challenges, identified successful practices, and explored opportunities to strengthen wildfire risk reduction across the province. Discussions were guided by five questions focusing on lessons learned, ongoing uncertainties, barriers to implementation, successful approaches, and how Regional Liaisons can best support community forests.

What We Heard

Community forests across British Columbia are actively seeking practical ways to reduce wildfire risk while balancing ecological, social, cultural, and economic values. Across all three regions, three consistent themes emerged.

1. Wildfire risk reduction needs to move beyond individual treatments toward landscape-scale planning.

Community forests are increasingly adopting coordinated, risk-based planning approaches that connect wildfire mitigation with broader landscape management. Participants discussed the growing importance of tools such as PODs, fuel break planning, and integrating wildfire objectives into overall operational planning rather than treating WRR as a stand-alone activity.

2. Community forests need better tools, guidance, and resources to implement effective treatments.

While there is strong interest in advancing wildfire risk reduction, participants identified ongoing challenges related to funding, staffing capacity, treatment guidance, regulatory processes, and the need for regionally appropriate approaches—particularly in coastal ecosystems. There was also considerable interest in understanding how emerging provincial planning tools will be implemented in practice.

3. Collaboration and knowledge sharing are critical to success.

Participants consistently emphasized stronger partnerships among community forests, Indigenous Nations, BC Wildfire Service, local governments, neighbouring land managers, and wildfire practitioners. There was a clear appetite for expanding peer learning between community forests with established wildfire programs and those beginning the work, as well as continued support through BCCFA's Regional Liaison network.



Public education also emerged as an important theme. Participants noted that maintaining social licence for fuel treatments requires ongoing communication to help communities understand the purpose and long-term benefits of wildfire risk reduction. Trusted local voices—including community forest managers and wildfire professionals—were identified as essential messengers.

Regional Perspectives

Although priorities varied by region, common themes emerged.

Theme	North	South	Coast
Primary Focus	Landscape-scale planning, PODs, operational integration	Balancing multiple values, public engagement, complex landscapes	Coastal-specific treatment approaches and effectiveness
Biggest Barrier	Coordination, approvals, funding	Capacity, funding, public acceptance	Cost, terrain, limited coastal guidance
Key Need	More coordination and practical examples	Better communication and prioritization tools	Research, demonstration projects, coastal prescriptions
Common Solution	Collaboration and knowledge sharing	Education and relationships	Applied research and regional support

These regional discussions reinforced that while local circumstances differ, community forests share many common challenges and can benefit significantly from continued collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Key Takeaways

- Wildfire risk reduction should be integrated into overall forest management rather than treated as a stand-alone activity.
- Landscape-scale planning is becoming increasingly important for effective wildfire resilience.
- Local conditions, including terrain, access, fuels, and community values, are essential considerations when establishing treatment priorities.



- Local fire knowledge and Indigenous knowledge are valuable components of effective planning.
- Collaboration, peer learning, and regional partnerships are major success factors.
- Public education and communication are as important as the technical aspects of fuel management.
- Funding and organizational capacity remain significant challenges, making it important to document community forest investments and outcomes.
- Community forests will benefit from continued peer learning and stronger regional wildfire networks.

Action Items

For Community Forests

- Identify POD and PCL opportunities within local landscapes.
- Integrate wildfire risk reduction into operational planning rather than treating it as a separate activity.
- Identify opportunities where wildfire treatments can also improve long-term stand value.
- Continue documenting investments and outcomes associated with wildfire risk reduction.

For BCCFA

- Continue supporting Regional Liaison networks.
- Share case studies and examples from community forests with established WRR programs.
- Track outstanding questions related to provincial planning tools and implementation.
- Continue facilitating peer learning and regional collaboration opportunities.

Quotes

"Community forests already invest a huge amount of their own dollars... track it."

"All community forests are unique; each presents different barriers and challenges."



Note Taker's Observations

- PODs represent an important emerging planning tool, but community forests are seeking greater clarity on how they will be operationalized.
- There is significant interest in expanding peer learning, particularly between community forests with mature wildfire programs and those beginning this work.
- Maintaining public understanding and social licence is as critical to successful wildfire risk reduction as the technical aspects of fuel management.

Overall Reflection

The session reinforced that wildfire risk reduction is no longer simply a forestry activity. It is central to the future of community forestry. It intersects with governance, Indigenous partnerships, community values, climate resilience, funding, and long-term stewardship. The message from participants was clear: building wildfire-resilient landscapes will require sustained investment, stronger regional collaboration, shared learning, and practical, locally informed solutions.