



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 (Vernon District, Land and Resource Specialist, Ministry of Forests), Erik Leslie (RPF, Manager, Harrop Procter Community Forest)

Moderator: Angela French, BCCFA, Wildfire Resiliency Project Coordinator

Session Description

Wildfire risk reduction efforts need to be strategically designed and located, and planning is required to guide and prioritize fuel treatments. Plans also need to be appropriate to scale and useful for community forests. This session will explore wildfire-related planning work currently being done in BC, and how community forests can develop practical plans that direct WRR treatments. A series of short panel presentations will be followed by regional breakouts led by BCCFA’s regional wildfire liaisons Gord Pratt (South), Sam Coggins (North), and Simon Craig (Coast). This is an opportunity for community forests to further develop regional networks that support wildfire planning and treatment work.

Session Summary

This session focused on how community forests can develop practical, strategic approaches to wildfire risk reduction (WRR) that are tailored to local conditions and integrated with broader forest management objectives. Presenters emphasized that effective WRR requires thoughtful planning, prioritization, and collaboration rather than simply implementing fuel treatments where opportunities arise.

Participants explored landscape-level planning approaches, including fuel break design, the use of fire history and terrain data, and the integration of wildfire objectives with recreation,



wildlife, visual quality, water, and timber values. Case studies from Harrop-Procter Community Forest and Wetzin'kwa Community Forest demonstrated how long-term planning, local knowledge, and adaptation to site-specific challenges can support successful wildfire risk reduction programs.

A significant focus was placed on emerging provincial 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 saw value in these tools, there was also a clear need for more guidance, examples, and clarity on how they will integrate with existing planning frameworks.

The session highlighted the importance of collaboration among community forests, BC Wildfire Service, First Nations, local governments, and fire practitioners. Participants expressed strong interest in peer-to-peer learning and sharing experiences between community forests with established WRR programs and those just beginning the work.

Public communication emerged as another key theme. Maintaining social licence for fuel treatments requires ongoing education and engagement, helping communities understand the purpose and long-term benefits of wildfire risk reduction. Trusted local voices, including community forest managers and fire professionals, were identified as important messengers.

Key Takeaways

- Wildfire risk reduction should be integrated into overall forest management rather than treated as a standalone activity.
- Local conditions, including terrain, access, and fuel continuity, are critical factors in determining treatment priorities.
- Local fire knowledge is essential for effective planning and implementation.
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing are major success factors.
- Funding and capacity remain significant challenges, making it important to document community forest contributions and outcomes.



- Public education and communication are as important as the technical aspects of fuel management.
- Community forests would benefit from continued peer learning and stronger regional networks.

Overall, the discussion reinforced that wildfire risk reduction is not solely a forestry issue. Rather it intersects with governance, community values, Indigenous partnerships, funding, climate resilience, and long-term stewardship, making it a central consideration for the future of community forestry in BC.

Action Items

For Community Forests

- Map local POD/PCL opportunities and integrate them into WRR plans.
- Integrate WRR into operational planning (not a standalone activity).
- Identify areas where WRR can also enhance stand value (e.g., thinning young stands).

For BCCFA

- Share case studies from advanced CFs.
- Questions & Follow-Ups: Record any questions that arise that need further information or clarification.
- How will PODs integrate with FLP, LRMPs, and existing CF plans?
- What standards or targets will apply to PODs and PCLs?
- How do CFs educate communities that haven't yet experienced fire?

Important Details/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 are clearly an upcoming shift, but CFs aren't sure yet how they should operationalize them.
- There is a huge appetite for cross CF learning, especially between advanced CFs and those just starting WRR work.
- Social license is a major theme. WRR is as much about communication as it is about fuel management.