



Wildfire Recovery in BC Community Forests

June 1, 2019
(*DRAFT – Input Welcome!*)

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide general guidance and principles for Community Forests to consider after experiencing a wildfire event. The focus is on the key activities, responsibilities and funding opportunities for wildfire rehabilitation and recovery. Do not underestimate the benefit of meaningful and proactive conversations and relationships with other Community Forests in the area, BC Wildfire Service (BCWS), Regional and Resource District staff, First Nations, stakeholders and potential funders and implementation partners.

This document is not intended to be a comprehensive review of BCWS' four pillars of emergency management (Prevention, Planning, Preparedness and Response); however, each of these pillars include important considerations that will ultimately lend to the success of wildfire rehabilitation and other activities following a wildfire event.

This document should be considered in concert with the *Engagement Agreement between Federation of BC Woodlot Associations (Licensees), BC Community Forest Association (Agreement Holders) and BC Wildfire Service (draft version 1.0, 2019)*. The purpose of the engagement agreement is to provide the basis from which BCWS, woodlots and Community Forest Agreement holders can build and/or improve their working relationships around emergency management and wildfire risk mitigation.

DISCLAIMER

Wildfire management and funding opportunities varies by local Resource District – all management activities should be in concert with local/regional MFLNRORD and BCWS staff.

This document provides a summary of conditions at the time it was developed; individual funding groups (e.g. FESBC) and agencies (e.g. BCWS) should be consulted directly for up-to-date criteria and application processes, as these change over time. Ensure you are aware of the full requirements and criteria for the organization/funding campaign when developing applications.

Pre-Wildfire

The following provides an overview of the BCWS pillars (Prevention, Planning, Preparedness and Response) in relation to relevant aspects of Community Forest management. Additional detail can be found on the BCWS website¹. This discussion provides Community Forest managers with proactive approaches that can be used to reduce the potential for wildfire related impacts. Some of these actions are related to activities on the ground, e.g. to reduce fuels, and others are more related to communications, relationships and systems to support the effectiveness of emergency operations.

¹ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status>

Prevention

- Includes activities completed by the Community Forest to prevent or mitigate risks associated with wildfire, such as:
 - Landscape level planning, i.e. wildfire management plans
 - Prescribed fire
 - Fuel hazard mitigation treatments, landscape level fuel breaks
 - Operational design with a lens for wildfire risk, such as block layout, harvest techniques, silviculture systems, waste management, etc.
 - Supporting and implementing FireSmart activities within the community

Planning and Preparedness

- Relationship building with local BCWS staff (i.e. Zone Officer)
- Planning and collaboration early in the fire season
 - Clearly communicate objectives and specific areas of increased importance to BCWS pre-fire season (proactively, before emergency operations commence)
- Engage with Emergency Management BC (EMBC) to identify if any existing systems, plans, training, or other programs are in place for your community
- Identify egress routes and communicate emergency response plans to your community
- Complete mapping of values (i.e. values for protection, values that may benefit from fire) and resources (i.e. roads) within CFA boundary
- Identify areas or situations that may allow for a modified response

Response

- Responsibility of the BCWS; determination of suppression priorities determined provincially through EMBC and BCWS
- Communication and relationship building between CFAs and BCWS pre-fire can streamline operations and assist in mitigating wildfire impacts

A key component of a strategic approach to wildfire is an understanding of the natural disturbance patterns within your Community Forest. These disturbances types, informed by climate-related changes, should be identified and can be used to plan for prescribed fire on the landscape. Ecological concepts such as natural disturbance types as well as “time since fire” (TSF) can be used to inform this conversation

Post-Wildfire

Rehabilitation is required on all fire suppression related activities, such as rehabilitation of fire guards and roads as per Sections 16 and 17 of the Wildfire Regulations. This work is coordinated by BCWS and Resource District offices, however Community Forests should play an integral role in the rehabilitation of these areas where they are within or adjacent to the community forest. Approach your local BCWS Zone Officer for opportunities to be involved in road/fireguard rehabilitation decisions.

Forest-related rehabilitation is the other key aspect post wildfire. The approach to be taken for forest rehabilitation will differ depending on the location of the burned area, economic viability of remaining timber, harvest history, and outstanding obligations. These different ‘land classifications’ require different approaches to rehabilitation activities, have varying responsibilities by agency, and may have varying alternative funding opportunities.

Following wildfire, the Community Forest should embark on an assessment as soon as possible to determine the extent and impact of the wildfire within the community forest. There may be opportunity to secure alternative funding to support some aspects of a broad assessment across the burned areas of a community forest, but this will need to be confirmed with your local Resource District office. See also the “Landbase Funding Summary for CFAs” document that is also provided by the BCCFA for further information on alternative funding opportunities.

Rehabilitation

- Assess impact of fire – consider areas, burn severity, and location and types of impacted values and resources
- Identify sites for treatment – consider burn severity, timber availability, site productivity, WUI and community values
- Wildfire Rehabilitation Plan – participate in plan development, implement the plan, monitor progress against the plan

Effort should be undertaken by the Community Forest manager to complete an assessment of the landbase and classify the landbase to support rehabilitation. This planning exercise can build from information that may be available from the province including inventory, burn severity and silviculture obligation (RESULTS) data. A coordinated approach (beyond just the Community Forest) may also be desired or beneficial to provide a landscape level lens to rehabilitation activities. Coordination with the Resource District and local First nations could be used to support this

Based on this assessment, there are a number of key types of situations or scenarios that may exist, that are discussed further below.

Areas with Incomplete Obligations

INCLUDES	Areas that have not reached free growing status; legacy obligations established prior to CFA designation.
CONTEXT	Subject to reforestation obligations after a wildfire unless exemption granted by land manager (i.e. Resource District).
LEGISLATION	FRPA Section 108 government may fund extra expense or waive obligation: “because of an event causing damage, the obligation on the area cannot be met without significant extra expense than would have been the case if the damage had not occurred”.
FUNDING	Funding within burned areas where silviculture obligations exists remains the responsibility of the Community Forest (or another organization that may hold the obligation).

Immature and/or Non-Merchantable Timber

INCLUDES	Areas with no outstanding silviculture obligations and either immature or not sufficiently merchantable to be considered for harvest.
CONTEXT	Opportunity to bring area into future timber supply (if site conditions warrant).
LEGISLATION	No specific legislative requirement for treatment. General expectation for area based tenure holder (including Community Forest) to manage this landbase.
FUNDING	FFT funding may be available for activities such as direct planting in areas where no trees remain, or removal of standing/downed timber followed by site preparation and/or planting. Forest Carbon Initiative (FCI) may fund similar replanting in wildfire effected areas where forest carbon uptake is the objective. Forest Enhancement Society (FESBC) may support rehabilitation where burning of slash or removal of uneconomic fibre is involved.

Economically Viable, Merchantable Timber

INCLUDES	Areas that remain economically viable and/or with merchantable timber (timber with value enough to cover off reforestation and other costs) are addressed through operational timber development/cutting permits through the Community Forest.
CONTEXT	Check local Resource Districts for guidelines developed in conjunction with local First Nations to determine best salvage practices. Guidelines often focus on retention of green timber where practicable, an objective critical to Community Forests as this represents future timber supply. Communication and relationship building local First Nations is strongly recommended before any wildfire event, in anticipation of the need to complete expedited salvage harvesting to maximize the value that can be generated.
LEGISLATION	No specific legislative requirement for treatment. General expectation for area based tenure holder (including Community Forest) to manage this landbase.
FUNDING	No alternate funding is available to support what is generally considered a part of the regular operations of the Community Forest.

M marginally Economically or Merchantable Timber

INCLUDES	Areas marginally economic prior to wildfire, or those that are now non-economic due to wildfire damage.
CONTEXT	Depending on the stand type, it may be in the Community Forest's best interest to harvest and plant these areas through operational timber development and cutting permits, where long-term timber supply or other objectives warrant treatment when the economics of the activity are marginal.
LEGISLATION	No specific legislative requirement for treatment. General expectation for area based tenure holder (including Community Forest) to manage this landbase.

- FUNDING**
1. **FESBC** - FESBC may partner where stands are marginally economic with objectives related to FESBC's fibre utilization mandate. Apply to FESBC for related funding.
 2. **BCTS** - There is potential in some parts of the province to align with local BCTS Innovative Timber Sale License (ITSL)² program and/or decked wood sales, which potentially funds development and the auctioning of low quality stands to rehabilitate the THLB. Contact your local BCTS office to discuss further.
 3. **FLTC** - In addition, the awarding of a FFT competitive site preparation contract under a Forest Licence to Cut (FLTC) can be used to remove overstory burned timber prior to reforestation. Community Forests are encouraged to work with their District FFT contact as the District Manager ultimately needs to be comfortable with issuing the FLTC. Competitiveness of the sale needs to be maintained. For example, such an FLTC can be competitively awarded in a Community Forest as long as it isn't awarded to the Community Forest, itself. If the Community Forest hires contractors that work with them, these contractors would be able to bid on the FLTC.

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

- INCLUDES** Within the 2 km buffer of developed areas or communities. BCWS has created WUI risk class maps³ to determine if portion of a CFA is designated WUI area.
- CONTEXT** These areas may warrant alternate management considerations due to their influence on human life and safety. May be a priority area for rehabilitation due to changing soil and water conditions that may impact infrastructure and private property. Other rehabilitation priorities may include fire guards and other suppression tactical components due to impacts on natural drainage patterns. Contact local BCWS office for locations of built fire guards within or adjacent to your Community Forest.
- LEGISLATION** Alternative stocking standards⁴ (i.e. reduced stocking, alternative species selection) may be considered that have an additional public safety and wildfire behavior reduction objective. This may require an amendment to your FSP or a one-off approval for modified (reduced) stocking standards that are an absolving of the reforestation obligation. To determine eligibility, contact the local Resource District office.
- FUNDING** Funding to support forest rehabilitation within the WUI will be consistent with the land types outlined above and will be related to presence of obligations, salvage merchantability, etc.

² <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/land-based-investment/forests-for-tomorrow/stand-establishment-and-treatment-standards/over-storey-removal-for-innovative-timber-sale-license-itsl>

³ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention/vegetation-and-fuel-management/fire-fuel-management/wui-risk-class-maps>

⁴ Wildfire stocking standards are currently being developed by the province.

Non-THLB, Constrained Areas and Other

INCLUDES	Riparian reserves, old growth management areas (OGMA), wildlife habitats (i.e. mule deer winter range), and areas with other legal objectives that render that area as outside the THLB.
CONTEXT	There may be areas within the Community Forest that contribute to multiple government and other social/cultural objectives other than timber productivity, including wildlife, cultural values, carbon sequestration, etc.
LEGISLATION	No specific requirement by the Community Forest to restore these areas. General expectation for area based tenure holder (including Community Forest) to manage this landbase overall.
FUNDING	Habitat Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF) would be a source for funds to restore wildlife habitat and/or ecologically sensitive areas. Coordination with FLNRORD would be required. FESBC and/or FCI funds could be applied to revegetation and reforestation efforts that will result in increased carbon sequestration.

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