

# Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corp.

Site Visit with BCCFA Recipient  
BCCFA Crown Land Wildfire Risk  
Reduction Program

Report date: November 27, 2023  
Site visit: September 20, 2023



British Columbia  
**Community  
Forest**  
Association  
local people, local forests, local decisions



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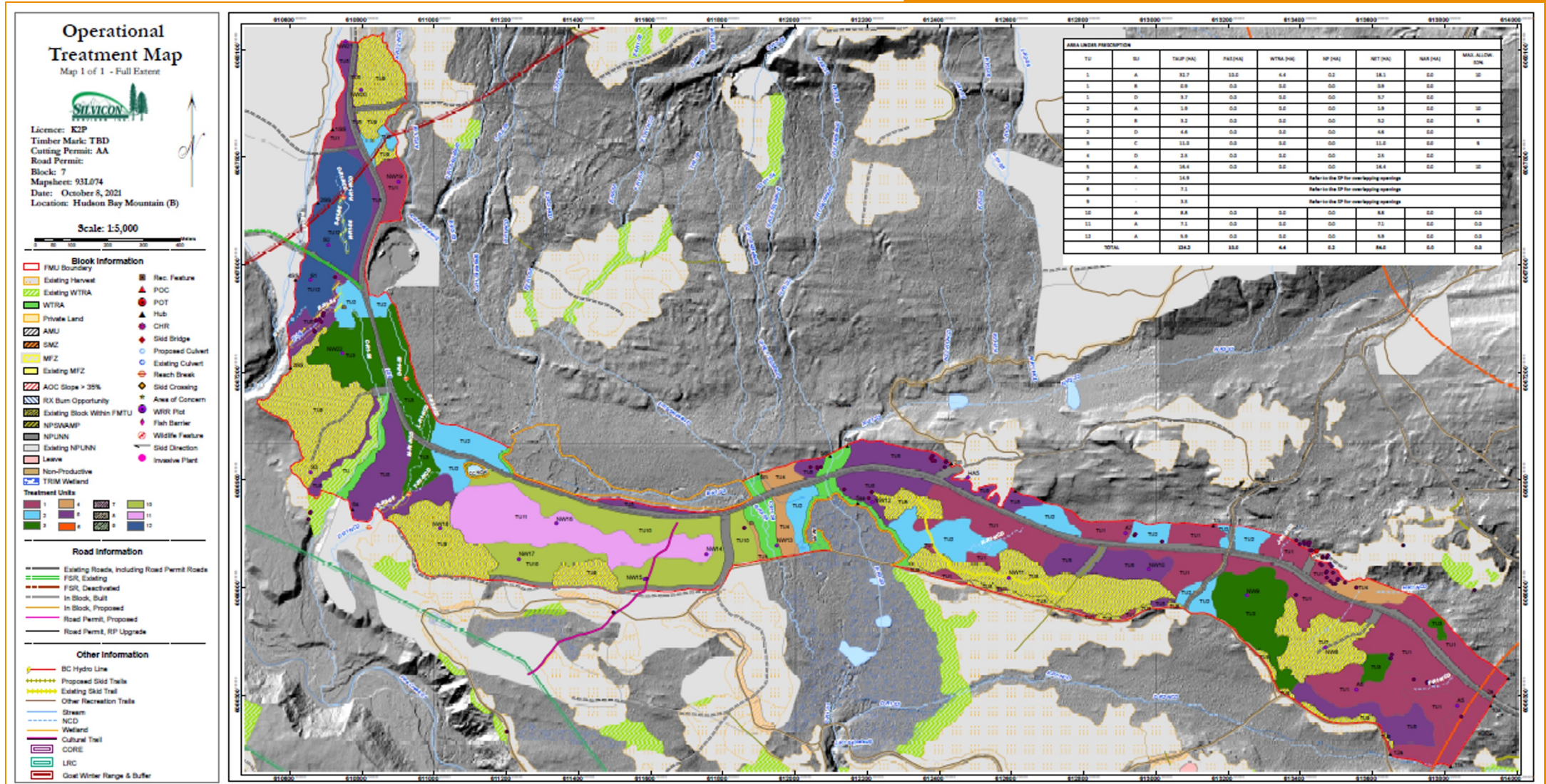
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# Key information

Recipient	Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation (WCFC)
Main contact	Aurora Lavender, General Manager, Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation
Responsible FCM	Diane MacKay, Northwest Fire Centre
District manager	Cam Bentley, DSS
Site visit date	September 20, 2023
Site location	Hudson Bay Mountain Resort Fuel Break
In attendance	Paul Sewell (Silvicon), Chris McGourlick (FESBC), Gord Pratt (FESBC), Brian Watson (FESBC), Jonathan Fane (PwC)
Investment schedule	NO0000011
Project plan	TX0000047 - Hudson Bay Mountain Resort Fuel Break A, TX0000053 - Hudson Bay Mountain Road Fuel Break (Pile Burning)
Authorizations	Timber Mark CFA-K2P, Cutting Permit (CP) AA
Estimated total person days	Total of 1,592 person days - TX0000047 (1,568 person days), TX0000053 (24 person days)
Comments	This project is located along both sides of the Hudson Bay Mountain Road near the municipality of Smithers and was undertaken to mitigate the risk of wildfire on a portion of the Hudson Bay Mountain Controlled Recreation Area (CRA). The CRA receives high public use during the fire season due to the presence of established recreation sites, trails, and associated infrastructure as well as private land parcels and public non-timber forest resource utilization.

# Field map



# Our observations related to the implementation of the project

## Higher level planning



HLP for Hudson Bay Mountain Wildfire Risk Reduction Project included:

- Bulkley Land and Resource Management Plan
- Bulkley Higher Level Plan Order

Land or tenure holders:

- Crown – Provincial
- Ski Smithers Controlled Recreation Area (CRA)
- Hudson Bay Mountain Adventures Ltd.
- Wetzin'kwa Community Forest (CFA K2P)

The treatment area overlaps preliminary mapping of goshawk territory management zones identified by the Northern Goshawk Territory Management Working Group.

Other stakeholders included Smithers Mountain Biking Association and local community.

## Fuel management prescription



Primary objectives of the prescribed fuels management treatment activities:

- Improve public safety and incident response by altering forest fuels adjacent to primary access and egress routes within the CRA.
- Protect critical infrastructure within or adjacent to the treatment area.
- Improve firefighter safety during incident response and suppression activities
- Reduce spotting potential within stands adjacent to private land parcels and areas containing mountain resort infrastructure.

Specs included:

- 44.7ha within 4 treatment units (TU 1,2,3 and 4).
- Target 500 stems/ha for SU1, 3, and 4. Target 200 stems/ha for SU2.
- Target crown closure 20-30%
- Target Surface Loading < 30t/ha.

## Unit costs



BCCFA provided funding for pre-treatment assessments, thinning, pruning, piling, burning, post treatment survey, administration:

- Pre-treatment WR Assessments: Stakeholder engagement; final Fuel Management Prescription = \$527/ha.
- Manual Thinning = \$2,785/ha; Manual Pruning = \$1,993/ha; Manual Piling = \$5,547/ha; Manual Burning = \$2,263/ha
- Manual treatments completed by CAS Ventures (First Nations contractor). This work was direct awarded to CAS.
- Post-treatment assessment: fine fuel loading survey, forest cover survey; final report = \$166/ha
- Overall costs = \$12,754/ha

## Opportunities and challenges



WCFC has successfully built on previous WR projects (FESBC funding) completed already taken place using mechanical and manual fuel management techniques:

- Costs are higher than provincial average due to using local contractors that might not have the right type of machinery or manual crews that may not have the experience with this type of work.
- Newer projects completed by WCFC are costing less as capacity building with local First Nation crews continues and the overall team gains experience.
- Multiple stand entries may be required to achieve the desired treatment specifications and meet the stated fuel management objectives. This will likely be achieved by separate and distinct mechanized and manual stand entries.
- Delay in getting remaining piles burned has been resolved. No further work expected for this project.



# Overall project impression

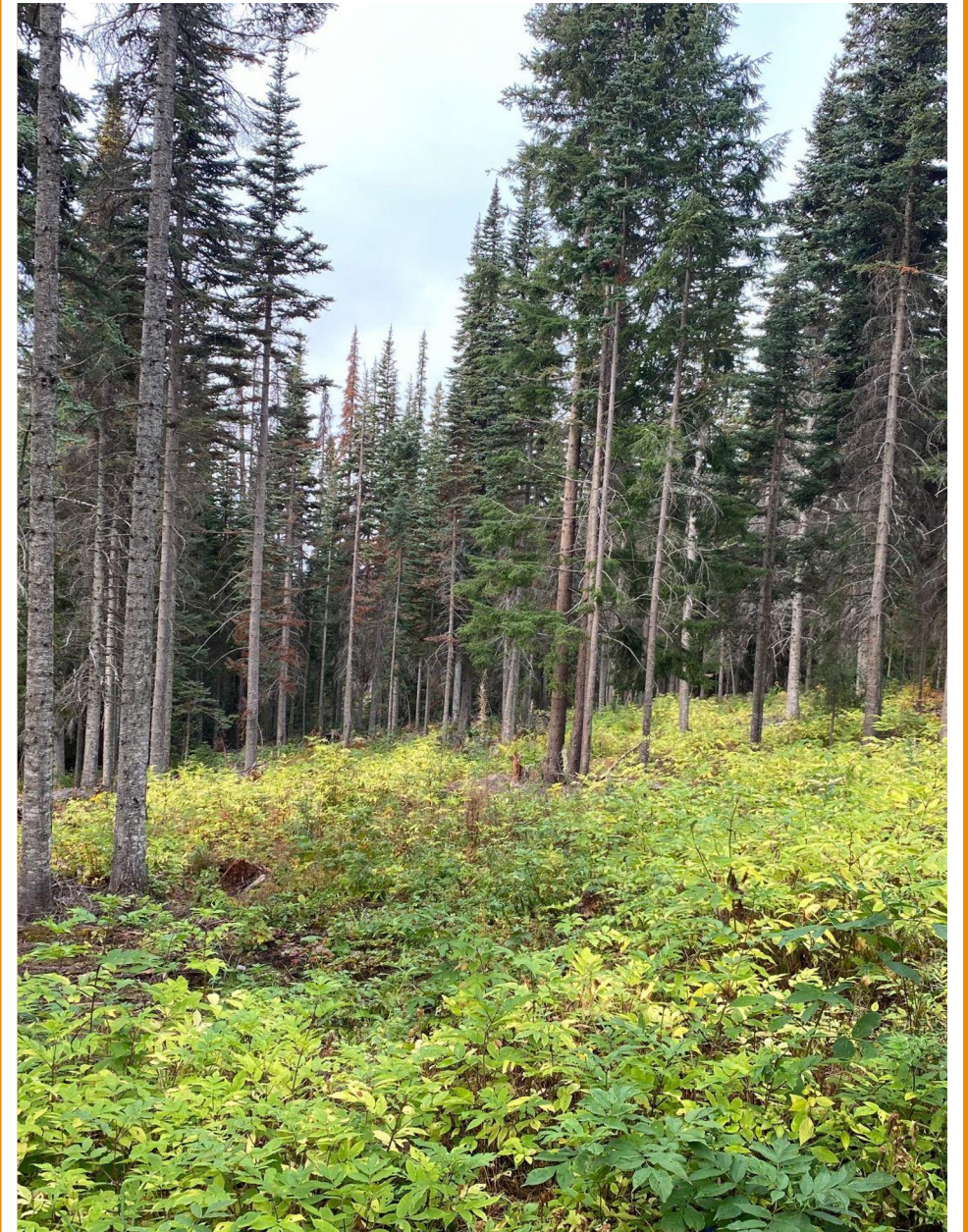
**Project Goal: Implementing important wildfire risk reduction treatment adjacent to the community of Smithers and mitigate the risk of wildfire on a portion of the Hudson Bay Mountain Controlled Recreation Area (CRA).**

Project located along both sides of the Hudson Bay Mountain Road and was undertaken to mitigate the risk of wildfire on a portion of the Hudson Bay Mountain Controlled Recreation Area (CRA).

- The CRA receives high public use during the fire season due to the presence of established recreation sites, trails, and associated infrastructure as well as private land parcels and public non-timber forest resource utilization
- Treatment was direct awarded to First Nations companies, rates were considerably higher than typical wildfire projects in other parts of the province. \$12,754/ha which included manual thinning, piling and burning. New projects being completed by the same contractors are being completed for around \$10,000/ha.
- WCFC and Silvicon staff were very hands on with the crews and had good relationships with the contractors and their employees.
- Hudson Bay Mountain Road is the only egress route out of the area therefore is a critical infrastructure for both evacuation and access for fire fighting efforts?

Actions going forward:

- Consider continuing these types of treatments with existing and new funding sources





# Field pictures



Fully burnt pile in treatment area.



Existing pile still required to be burnt as of September 2023. As of November 2023 all piles have been burned.



# Field pictures



Seedling in burn pile. Planted Spring 2023.



Spacing and pruning on south side of Huson Bay Road. Spacing to approximately 500sph.



Posted information sign along Hudson Mountain Road. Sign adjacent to a vehicle pull-out, good opportunities for public to see the project and what the outcome looks like.



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