

August 23, 2017 CRD, Anahim Lake, Nimpo Lake, Charlotte Lake, Kleena Kleene Meeting
Nimpo Lake Hall

Presenters: Donna Barnett MLA Cariboo Chilcotin
Tony Falcao, Operations Manager, BC Wildfire Service
Wes Nimco, Incident Commander, BC Wildfire Service
Reg Steward, CRD EOC Ranching Liaison/BC Cattleman's Association
Ashleigh Brooks, Red Cross
Phil Folz, MOTI
Sgt. Scott Clay, RCMP
Al Richmond, CRD Chair
Roger William, CRD Area J Director

Donna Barnett welcomed everyone and introduced the guest speakers. Laurie Vaughan had contacted to let meeting know an Ulkatcho representative wouldn't be present.

Tony Falcao gave a report:

It was explained to meeting that the weather has a severe effect on what is decided, and what needs to be done in respect to alerts, orders etc. We were in a severe drought, very dry conditions, and then lightning. It was overwhelming, fire reports everywhere.

The fires to the east were looking good, The Hanceville fire was giving the fire center a challenge to contain – very north finger and south end.

Plateau Fire – 19 fires – Aug. 11 and 12 – all merged, cold front came through, wind happened, fire grew 40 kilometers in one run. There were some losses, and we need a major rain for at least a week or more.

Now a low passage of cold front coming through from the north east. Weather and forecasted weather make our decisions on Evacuation orders. Difficult decisions – Responder and public safety first.

Q. **Jane Baker** – nothing said about our fire. We have received no information from Cariboo Fire Center, only had 2 day old updates on Kleena Kleenee fire. Why aren't you bringing up the Kleena Kleene fire, Colwell and Precipice fire?

A. We do try, and will try to get better. Wes Nimco is about to give an update on the fires here in the West Chilcotin.

Q. **Member of Audience:** Were any lives lost?

A. No, and no major injuries.

Wes Nimco gave report: Precipice Fire – 60 men, helicopters and heavy equipment. This order is at Alert now. Kleena Kleene fire – 120 men, helicopters – holding the edge – if winds hold may go to Alert – looking good if stays and we can chase fire back to rocks.

Q. What happens when students working for BC Wildfire go back to school?

A. We have approximately 55% students in our workforce, so we will be requesting more help, local contractors, staff from Ontario, more army personnel. It is going to be ok.

Q. **Bernie Wiersbitzky:** A lot of people looking for work but don't have certificates so unable to get hired, people can't afford to get certified. I have received no assistance in trying to keep my house safe, no fire hoses available, forestry not prepared, there are so many restrictions for people trying to get work, why is that?

A. Emergency Fire Fighter rules – require certification. We have to live with that, but we are doing some on the job training, and if enough people want to get certified, we would put on a course if need be.

Q. We need volunteer groups and a liason between them and forestry service, to give us information. We need cell service to be able to contact people when emergencies happen.

Q. **Jane Baker:** With backburns, we need a policy in place that you should consult with our people, re winds etc.

A. No policy along those lines at this time. But the Incident Commander tries to tap into local knowledge and take in local knowledge of lands etc.

Q. **Jane Baker:** Spoke to a lot of people, firefighters from other places start work at 6:00a.m., BC firefighters at Kleena Kleene not at work early, how come?

A. You're right, in these conditions sometimes earlier is better. In order to have 3 shifts we need people; fatigue management of people is of great importance.

Q. **Richard (CP internet) wife:** Why if others can do it, there is no excuse for BC firefighters - start early shift out there. When are you going to change it?

- A. There are a lot of reasons for the different shift start times. Fire behaviour in afternoon is when we need the people working. How come 8 or 10 a.m.? Cool in the morning, people need to be working during active time.
- Q. Whose responsibility to give us information about the status of wildfires?
- A. The BC Wildfire provides fire information. The local government provides information about evacs and alerts.
- Q. Charlotte Lake has buffer – what do you do with all the equipment used? Do you have stuff to donate to communities?
- A. No, put away till next year.
- Q. **Bernie Wiersbitzky**: Don't you have influence on Parks board – to insist to be able to fight fires close to habitation, and wildlife?
- A. No, it is not up to us to influence government to change a parks decision on us being able to fight a fire in the park.

Reg Stewart, CRD EOC, Ranching Liason, BC Cattleman's Assoc.

It will be a long time to recover from this devastation, recovery process – contact me for instructions on how to get compensated for feed and feed stacks.

Ashleigh Brooks: Red Cross, For those evacuated initial \$600 paid and then another \$600 every 14 days after that, and \$300 re entry fee. We have recovery moving forward, provide assistance, Community Partnership program, Small Business Program, apply on line or by phone.

- Q. **Jane Baker**: Of the \$100,000,000 spent what percentage goes to the people and what goes to the administration?
- A. 5% to Administration, audit reports on donations are required, (not for profit donations).
- Q. **Bernie Wiersbitzky**: Victims don't have funds to get to places to access support, people who can't get to Prince George.
- A. Williams Lake is the closest place to go, same for everyone. It's a challenge, Red Cross will come out here if requested.

Phil Folz: MOTI makes the decision where to close highway. Highway 20 has one way in and one way out. Permits issued or pilot cars on closures until government gets notice from BC Wildfire Service and the CRD to open highway.

Q. **Jane Baker:** Are Kleena Kleene residents in any danger? When everyone got evacuated through evac order, supposed to leave. If you chose to stay and want to leave, you can't get back in. How come?

A. Under Evac Order you are supposed to leave for safety reasons, so for safety reasons you are not allowed back if you choose to leave at another time.

Q. **Audience:** Why is it difficult to get a permit, why can't it be emailed?

A. Williams Lake can email permit.

Q. **Barry Wilson:** Was told Road Maintenance Contractor not needed to be here after requested work was completed.??

A. Not considered essential service. Clear rules were defined with Pat Gunderson.

Q. **Audience:** Road closed for people coming in but open for people going out east bound, how come?

A. So any evacuated people could get out.

Q. If you were staying under Order, couldn't fish or get permits, but some fishermen had permits, how come?

A. Provide us with the details and we can look into it. Shouldn't have had permits.

Sgt. Scott Clay: Intro, Why all the officers and military? Example, Kleena Kleene, late night Evacuation Order issued, went around to everyone to let them know to evacuate. Everybody pretty well stayed.

Roadblocks:

Q. Charlotte Lake: Status of roadblocks, how often reviewed, daily, hourly? Why is woman imprisoned on her property, only person there, can't get through roadblock at Charlotte Lake turnoff, or she won't be able to come back.

A. Identifying boundaries, RCMP has no say to verify order.

Q. How do you check permits? Some people with status cards, t-shirts saying volunteers, were waived through. How come?

A. Scott is working with his officers to try to find consistency and to verify – They talk through the common things to look for, people taking advantage, etc.

Q. Swiss fellow said he was told by Bill Smiley that the RCMP were abusive and physical with him.

A. Scott – will follow up on that.

Q. **Jane Baker:** Directive for property arrest comes from CRD. RCMP had discretionary power? Told Jane. Zac told Richard at store not to deliver groceries.

A. Scott has followed up with Richard about groceries. The Emergency Protection Act talks about being off of your property during an evacuation. It does give the RCMP the ability to use discretion. When the order in place, stay at home, not encouraging people to leave property. But the RCMP can use discretion.

Q. What protects us if a reasonable RCMP member is not in the area if it happens the next time?

A. Scott is working on a plan for that with the lessons learned from this time.

Tim Noble – RCMP have done a good job, problem is with legislation to keep people on property.

Donna Barnett: Don't need to change legislation, what we need to do is establish community groups to have the leadership and knowledge and the people are in place to work through the emergency. Will be going after the government for funding. Will continue to pursue the cell issue.

Al Richmond: Orders reviewed daily. CRD will continue to raise issue about fires in BC Parks to the Minister. Orders are issued by the CRD based on the recommendations of the BC Wildfire Service; we do try to avoid isolating people with the boundaries of our orders but the purpose is to get people out.

Roger William: Communication is important.

Q. **Audience:** Who are your people?

A. People of Area J.

Q. When evacuation order came out, we faced different threats, why were we put under house arrest, no real valid reason.

A. For safety. If you decide to stay home to look after you home and to make sure you don't lose your livelihood, you must deal with it.

Q. **Bernie Wiersbitzky:** Why is it buses were here to evacuate First Nations people only?

A. Ulkatcho requested buses for the Ulkatcho. CRD would have sent out buses if anyone else requested them.

In roadblocks, piloted through preferred over permits. RCMP don't make decisions about piloting or permitting. Permits are issued by CRD.

Q. Consider better communication, cell phones. Get a representative from all parties to be under Scott and his authority. Central Command, responsible group, each agency have rep there.

A. See benefit, can we reasonably do that?

Q. We can put together a group, but you don't have to listen?

A. Donna Barnett – Yes we do. I am hoping you are going to put together a group and I will listen, even come out.

Q. Can CRD Board interpret the legislation and change it?

A. No.

Q. **Jane Baker:** Scott do you get your directive from CRD?

A. Scott needs to interpret the law.

Q. **Andy Baker:** We felt things were heavy handed when order came down and under house arrest. People need to leave, recommended to leave, your decision.

A. RCMP will still go back to people who do not leave if necessary.

Q. If you own a ranch you can get a permit, if you don't, you can't.

A. Permit issued was presented, and if matched protocol, then issued.

Q. It took Bernie Wiersbitzky 2 days through CRD to get ahold of Reg Steward. Why?

A. It will get better.

Q. Charlotte Lake person went to register in Prince George, they have to mark the area they are from, and Nimpo or Anahim or Charlotte Lake weren't listed.

A. Going to get in touch with Prince George to follow up on that.

Q. Why didn't you take action on fire on island on Nimpo Lake, local people put out.

A. Should have, yes we should adjust our policies.

Richard(CP) wife wants apology for way she was treated, told she couldn't leave her property.
Didn't make Richard an Essential Service, and she said he should have been.

Jordy Tubbs: We were 2 weeks without medical clinic, closed and couldn't get permit to go to town to get pig food.

A. Hospital in Williams Lake was closed under Order.

B. Agricultural permits were available and you could have got one to get pig feed.

Al Richmond announced that anyone who wanted to be on his email was welcome, just let him know.