

Rick Mumford – Moderator

Approximate summary of meeting notes

Attendees:

- BC Wildfire Service
 - Pete Laing (Incident Commander)
 - Todd Flanagan (Ops Chief)
 - Erin Catherall (Information Officer)
- RCMP
 - Madonna Saunderson (Information Officer)
 - Local Member TBD
- Provincial Government Staff
 - Chris Arms (Range)
 - Harold Stolar (FLNRO)
 - Ministry of Agriculture rep TBD
- Elected Officials
 - CRD Chair Al Richmond
 - CRD Area K Director Betty Anderson
 - CRD Area J Director Roger Williams
 - MLA Donna Barnett
 - MP Todd Doherty

Pete Fire Update:

White Lake approx. 13,000ha – priorities: getting around the whole fire

Hanceville approx. 170,000ha – priorities: E (Riske), SE (Big Creek & Fletcher Lake) and NE (Williams Lake & Fraser River) flanks to protect infrastructure

- 287 fire fighters; 367 staff total
- 80 heavy equipment
- 14 helis

Question: Ranch west of Alexis Creek. CRD has overdone evac orders, alerts would have sufficed. Refused the order due to work on the ranch b/c crops and animals may have been lost if they left. Other ranchers will be demanding compensation after due to losses from orders. Industry needs to be involved quicker to use equipment and experience to be actioned on fires (i.e. forestry industry)

Response: Room for continuous improvement. Logging industry did action fires early. Rancher process needs to be developed in the fall to allow ranchers to plan for events in the future like this and for BCWS to know where ranchers are in the future. Working with Kevin Boone to develop this process.

Reply: Ranching community has these plans but it's up to the forest industry to communicate with the ranchers now.

Al Richmond Response: CRD doesn't determine size of the order, they base areas off the BCWS recommendation.

Question: Riske Creek area. Social media isn't a way to get info, communication wasn't good before email list. No info on local news. PG and Kamloops news was more relevant to local area. Were out of the community when fire started and couldn't get back in after order. Community members kept the fire out of their home until BCWS came 4 days later (too late). Crews are in for too short of a time and just get to know the community and area before they are shipped out again.

Reply: We need people to "help us help you." Please provide suggestions to Erin via email about improvement suggestions. Challenge to maintain consistency and we need the knowledge transfer between teams, would be ideal to have one team but we need to ensure worker safety (fatigue management).

Todd Reply: Riske fire originated in Palmer Lake Road. Industry crew sent out by BCWS to start even though red shirts weren't out there.

Response: Put common names on the roads for maps that are distributed.

Erin Reply: We have since been trying to establish an extensive distribution list and need community help to disseminate it. Local media is included on distribution list so they get updated info, but what they chose to publish is out of our control. It is our hope that they will use this information because we want consistent, timely, and accurate information shared with the local communities.

Question: Why we can't leave hwy open and leave evac order in place so that residents can still be compensated by Red Cross etc... and can chose to leave or stay.

Al Reply: As soon as we've been told its safe we open it up roads again. Order comes in quickly to get people out. Life and limb over compensation from Red Cross. If BCWS or highways say it's safe, we'll open it. Best they can based on info from BCWS.

Question again: Alexis creek is only on alert so they can't get \$600 a week from Red Cross anymore but still feel in danger. **"Why isn't there compensation available for people on alert as opposed to order or why doesn't the area stay on order to come and go as they want on the highway? So that they don't have to explain to insurance companies why they should be compensated."**

Send info on orders and alerts and compensation.

Rick Reply: Keep the highway open but put orders up to road if possible. RCMP could temporarily block highway if danger is too close. Areas weren't under order but were blocked from coming back from town if they left due to order across highway.

Pete Reply: Safety concerns include smoke and danger trees and access points along those highways.

Question: Brian from Riske Creek. Had to steal ladders because there was no sprinklers or SPS provided when needed. Felt abandoned. Good to see Todd back.

Question: Bob. Doesn't understand evac orders on roads, why you can drive to town but can't come back. Why were evacuees sent through Dog Creek-Big Creek Road when Hwy 20 was open and RCMP drove up Hwy 20 to implement evac order.

This order was just last Saturday Farwell Canyon Road to Gang Ranch to Wlms Lake. Route was through fire. Gang Ranch Evac order question.

Reply: Will work on getting info to them about the Gang Ranch evac issue

Question Again: How many pieces of 784 fire?

Erin Reply: 146 fire fighters and 40 heavies on that fire.

Send info about what's on the southern part of the fire.

Question: How is it that the Bands have maps but forestry doesn't have them.

Rick Reply: Because they're taking the time to do them.

Krista reply: Bands are using modus which shows heat signatures for the last 48 hours. Takes a lot of time to map every day. Our GIS people are working constantly to develop maps and high scans will soon provide more updated maps.

TNG Reply: Hired high-tech mapping person to overlap maps with local names.

Todd Reply: Modus is close but not completely accurate. It can be a source for rumours and inaccuracy around specific geographic location.

Pete Reply: BCWS does accurate flying with handheld GPS that way our maps are accurate, more so than Modis. Pete worries that info on modis maps that aren't BCWS maps may be inaccurate.

TNG Reply: Maps are being produced for different audiences so they may be more suited than BCWS maps may seem. TNG maps may show burning now not what was burnt.

Question: Is 100 Rd open. Mackin Creek area. Tautri Fire area. They have cattle back there but no access, can ride in the back way.

Krista Reply: Contact EOC to see if it's safe to go in for a pass.

Rich Stewart (EOC/Rancher): Permit system – support from all levels of CRD to design system to allow ranchers to do what they need to do. Have developed a solid rationale for ranchers to be allowed in.

- 143 ongoing permits issued.
- Close to 400 temporary permits for cattle care.

Security aspect was previously un-realized. BC Permits ID allow them to trace permits and keep track of who is in and doing their job. Has been valuable to get hay out and create a fire break. Important to see ranchers as an asset not a liability. Knowledge of which back roads can be used for egress is important.

Question: Why Big Creek/Fletcher Lake residents can't get a pass to go to town and back even when they aren't ranchers. They still have important responsibilities.

Rich Stewart: Only deals with cattle and horses for passes. Will work with CRD to solve that problem, it has been solved before for similar issues.

Connie Question: Has been here since the start and lost power for 4 days too. Crews have been threatened by community members. Unacceptable for community members to treat crews that way and stop blaming. Community needs to pull together and have support for people working for the fires.

Question: Equipment shortage but contractors have registered equipment that is not being called.

Pete Reply: Pass names onto Erin.

Todd Reply: White Lane and Hanceville fire has an abundance of equipment. Organization was a problem for a while to be meaningfully used. 83 pieces of equip now, goal to have everything be used and allocated for emergency responses. We can't use more, can't speak for other fires.

Cariboo Fire Centre logistics section to track and prioritize. Erin to give info to fire centre about equipment available.

Question: Trina, Big Creek – under order for 1 month, phones on and off. Farwell Canyon Road, 2400 Road guards. Why with the road already there, do they not just widen the 2400 road to be a guard.

Pete Reply: Roads used to control volatile fire by burn off operations because spotting happens and guards don't always work. Can't put crews out there so burn off is the only option. Contingency line transects 2400 Rd, where they meet will plan to burn the corner out today or tomorrow, depending on weather. Weather needs to be perfect for burn-off operations to commence. Contingency line south of properties because they didn't want to build guard directly through private land.

Question Again: Plan to go down 2400 road all the way to big creek doesn't make sense.

Pete: Direct attack doesn't work

Question: Is it the contingency line from the Wheetman(?) hay fields? They haven't been told of this.

Todd: Explains plan of where fire is and where burn offs are planned/what are defendable roads.

Question: How will winds affect this operation? Winds are picking up now.

Question: How did the fires get this big after 1 good day of rain? What is the good of controlled burns?

Pete Reply: One day of rain isn't enough. Without controlled burning, the fire would be even larger. Controlled burns take power out of the fire so it can't take a run.

Question: With the amount of smoke, are they not able to use air attack?

Pete Reply: If it will burn over the line anyways, we should take advantage of smoke cover to burn because it keeps fire activity down.

Question: Who do I get a hold of to get sprinklers because house hasn't been done yet and it's very close.

Get info to Erin about location for SPS.

Chief Ervin: When the fire starts, you should get right on it and not wait until it gets bigger. Was in Chezacut and saw smoke but no firefighters. Got proper hoses to water some of the hot spots and water trucks. Asked BCWS why they weren't out there working to save houses up there. Elderly lady out

fighting fire herself to save house, and there will be trouble if she's injured doing this. Dozer going up. Skidder and water tank made available. Worry of equipment destroying mule deer habitat instead of fighting fire... Problems with highway closures. Thinks the army coming in is overkill. "Pushed the panic button too soon." Wants logging company to be utilized in Chezacut.

RCMP Reply: Military is here to assist RCMP with road closures to give RCMP members time away from the front line. Assisting with the evacuation orders. Military is not here to fight fires yet.

Chief Ervin: Doesn't want to be order from community. Pete replied that BCWS doesn't have the authority to order FNs off community.

Question: Most is scorched but there have been pockets of un-burnt. Why does the BCWS go back and burn green patches after a burn when they could have been left. They have cattle that need feeding.

Pete Reply: Talk to Todd about where this is happening. Needs specific information.

Response: Palmer Lake area.

Pete Reply: Dirty edges need to get burnt off so they can't build intensity and spot across a road/guard...

Todd Doherty: There should be no lack of resources on the fire line because there is equipment and resources in the community.

Chief Roger Williams: Communication needs to happen. "If you don't communicate, we can't help you."

Betty Anderson: If it weren't for the ranchers, we wouldn't have any ranches left. FN's have stood up and protected the land. Ranchers and locals need to be used and work together with the BCWS

Donna Barnett: Ranchers have taken the brunt of much of this fire situation. Ranchers have had guns drawn on them due to not leaving evac orders. Work and repairs will need to be done. Communications have been worse this time than in 2010.

Rick update on chat with Kevin Boon:

- 2.2 million for highway fencing, 100kms(?) of highway fencing has been burnt.

- 4 million for infrastructure on crown land.
 - \$350/day for a cowboy and horse to help transport/round up cattle.
 - Hay burnt (standing or stored), pastures burn
 - 514B Form – 2 weeks worth of hay for now to feed on location (will look for more after)
 - 514 form to relocate and feed livestock (to EMBC)
 - Cattlemans has a form to fill out for losses – compensate for up to 70% of losses (?)
 - Red Cross from Alberta/Sask has resources available for feed and hay
 - Don't do anything until you get approval, because reimbursement may not happen
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Question: What is the time that elapses between when a fire starts and when it is actioned? When fires are left for days before being actioned, they grow too large.

Harold: Recovery Plan needs to be developed. Salvage operations, rehabilitation, re-stocking. The time to plan for the recovery is in the winter/fall with input from the communities.

Rob: Heavy equip operator on Hanceville fire. The fire centre doesn't have infinite staff and many resources were already being used on other fires in the province.

Todd: 66 fires his first night, doubled 2nd night. Difficult to prioritize between calls and events in a disaster situation.

Audience comment: Equipment couldn't be used without insurance, but once on the fires insurance is void. A system needs to be developed for this issue.