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For Immediate Release

## **CRD wildfire report released following public consultation**

*Williams Lake, B.C.* – Today, the Cariboo Regional District Board of Directors held a special Board meeting to review a wildfire report following the CRD’s community consultations in the fall. The report combines results from two dozen community meetings, a survey and Facebook event, which engaged over 2,600 residents between October and December 2017.

The consultant, Butterfly Effect Communications, presented the report identifying numerous recommendations regarding communications, emergency operations, prevention, wildfire fighting and recovery. Recommendations and information within the report are not directed solely at the CRD, but are designed to be useful for other governments to adapt ahead of emergencies as well. Many of the recommendations also require coordination and collaboration between multiple levels of government and various agencies.

Following the presentation, the CRD Board referred the report to the Board’s newly formed Emergency Preparedness Committee, which consists of Chair Wagner and Directors Armstrong, Massier, Forseth, Sorley, Richmond and Anderson. The Committee will review the report and recommendations in depth and develop an action plan.

As a first step in preparedness efforts, the Board asked CRD staff to prepare a report and implementation plan for the Board’s consideration that would facilitate fuel reduction on private land in the Wildland Urban Interface, including the identification of costs, revenue loss and potential sources for funding. They also requested information on how to provide meaningful and timely information to residents related to the [FireSmart program](#).

The Cariboo Regional District commissioned the report following 262 wildfires burning over 900,000 hectares during a 77-day long disaster from July 6 to September 20, impacting nearly every corner of the region which is home to 61,000 residents.

Three of the largest wildfires in the province’s history were within the region last summer, including the Plateau Fire, which burned nearly 500,000 hectares. Sixty homes and 167 other structures were destroyed in the region’s fires, with no loss of life directly attributed to the disaster despite 60 per cent of the population being under evacuation order or alert.

During the consultations, over 53,000 pieces of data were collected, including verbal and written comments and survey answers. To collect the feedback, meetings were held in communities across the vast area of the Cariboo impacted by the wildfires. The consultant and CRD staff spent over 50 hours listening to residents and traveled over 3,500 kilometres.

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## Quotes

“Looking back at the summer of 2017 and what our communities went through, I want to thank the residents of the Cariboo for taking that extra step to participate in our public consultations last fall. Thank you for sharing your feedback and concerns – this is how we can make improvements for the next time and understand how the emergency affected you.”

“We have a lot to digest in this report, but I look forward to working with our Emergency Preparedness Committee to discuss these recommendations further and make an action plan for steps forward.”

- Margo Wagner, Chair, Cariboo Regional District

“A culture of preparedness is critical for everyone from residents to governments. Areas of concern include a lack of prevention programs, no cellular, radio or internet communication for many residents, and exhausted resources in many agencies.”

“Recovery resources, particularly around mental health and financial assistance, are not meeting the needs of residents. The timing of this disaster, during peak season for many activities, combined with the length of this disaster, which stretched over three months, equaled a devastating impact on residents and businesses in the region.”

- Tim Conrad, Consultant, Butterfly Effect Communications

## Links

- [Cariboo-Chilcotin Wildfires 2017 Report \(46 pages, 8.2MB\) PDF](#)
- [Cariboo-Chilcotin Wildfires 2017 Report Appendix \(306 pages, 12.5MB\) PDF](#)
- [Graphics From the Report \(Dropbox\)](#)

### Cariboo Regional District

- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#) (Region page)
- [Facebook](#) (Emergency Operations page)
- [Twitter](#)

### Butterfly Effect Communications

- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Website](#)

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