

Wildfire Working Group Meeting Summary – May 24

The RMA's Wildfire Working Group (WWG) met for the first time on May 24, 2024. The mandate of the WWG is to develop a strategy to manage wildfires outside the Forest Protection Area (FPA), as called for by RMA resolution [7-23F: Strategy for Management of Wildland Fires Outside Forest Protection Area](#). Members of the WWG represent:

- ◆ Brazeau County
- ◆ Leduc County
- ◆ Parkland County
- ◆ Westlock County
- ◆ ABmunis
- ◆ Alberta Fire Chiefs Association
- ◆ Alberta Forest Products Association
- ◆ Alberta Emergency Management Agency
- ◆ Alberta Forestry and Parks
- ◆ Alberta Environment and Protected Areas
- ◆ Alberta Municipal Affairs
- ◆ The WWG is chaired by RMA District 3 Director John Burrows and co-chaired by RMA District 4 Director Karen Rosvold

The initial meeting consisted primarily of two brainstorming discussions:

How have the province and municipalities worked together in the past?

WWG members discussed a broad range of topics, including:

- ◆ How to improve preparedness for both municipalities, the province, and landowners.
- ◆ Potential tools to train and identify qualified local equipment operators to be integrated into the fire response.
- ◆ How resource sharing and communications are handled across various municipal, provincial, and law enforcement stakeholders.
- ◆ How supports for evacuees can be expanded.
- ◆ Data-driven and widespread communication and awareness campaigns led to increased resilience and prevention as well as better support for evacuees during wildfire events.
- ◆ Tools to streamline a provincial fire ban declaration.
- ◆ Labour supply to fight wildfires, particularly in the shoulder seasons.
- ◆ When a fire occurs near the FPA boundary, either inside or outside, there may be opportunities for the province and municipalities to coordinate their response to ensure a rapid response.
- ◆ Considerations around livestock and companion animals are managed during evacuations.
- ◆ 911 dispatch operators often receive calls from the public regarding a fire within the FPA and reroute to 310-fire. There may be an opportunity to streamline this process.

What are the lessons learned for municipalities?

- ◆ Wildfires are starting to occur in municipalities that have never had them before, which forces these municipalities to face a steep learning curve.
- ◆ Municipalities are considering using automatic triggers, such as fire bans, to spur other actions like staffing on-call fire halls during the ban.
- ◆ In a world of limited resources, municipalities need to determine what level of fire response they are prepared to provide.
- ◆ There may be an opportunity for a single repository of municipal after action and lessons learned reports.
- ◆ Mutual aid agreements and building relationships before an emergency are critical.
- ◆ With municipalities involved in long-term firefighting operations, there is an emerging need to prioritize fatigue management.
- ◆ Consider opportunities to collaborate with industry during wildfire events given that local businesses may have expertise that can be utilised.

Action items and next steps

- ◆ RMA will extend invitations to individuals and organizations identified by the WWG as potential delegations.
- ◆ RMA staff will review and provide analysis of the reports identified, including the provincial wildfire reviews, municipal after action reports, and reports from other fire fighting organizations.
- ◆ RMA staff will compile the items discussed into themes that can be built upon to structure the strategy.
- ◆ The long-term goal of the WWG is to develop a strategy for managing wildfires outside the FPA by the end of October, 2024.

For more information visit: [RMAAlberta.com](https://www.rmalberta.com)

Warren Noga

Policy Advisor

825.319.2285

warren@RMAAlberta.com