

July 4, 2024

Wildfire Working Group Meeting Summary – June 27

The RMA's Wildfire Working Group (WWG) had its second meeting on June 27, 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

In this meeting, working group members recapped and discussed the first meeting, the after-action report reviews and common themes and had a presentation by Dr. Jen Beverly on fuel mapping and predictive analysis.

Recap and Discussion of First Meeting

Training

- ◆ How to improve preparedness for both municipalities, the province, and landowners.
- ◆ Potential strategies to integrate qualified local equipment operators into fire response.
- ◆ How resource sharing and communications are handled across various municipal, provincial, and law enforcement stakeholders.
- ◆ Standardization of training resources as well as response procedures across Alberta was identified as a gap during previous wildfire events.

Communication

- ◆ Evacuations were observed to be most effective when supplemented with credible, up to date and understandable public messaging that conveys the severity of the wildfire emergency.
- ◆ Opportunities to reconsider the data, modelling and methods that inform the communication of wildfire risk and events were discussed.

Legislation and Enforcement Tools

- ◆ As many wildfires are human caused, risk assessment tools could be used to determine the curtailment or cancelation of fire permits.

- ◆ Use of fire bans should be carefully considered, progressive, and accompanied by a thorough explanation to ensure public support and cooperation.

Intermunicipal Collaboration

- ◆ Mutual aid agreements and leveraging pre-existing working relationships are effective in improving wildfire response, and their further use should be explored.
- ◆ Intermunicipal collaboration proved challenging if it occurred across the FPA boundary, given the uncertainty around each group's jurisdiction.

After Action Reports and Common Themes

Between the first and second meeting, RMA staff reviewed and summarized key themes and findings from several after-action reports from past wildfire events to inform the WWG's work. At the second meeting, these reviews and the common themes across each were discussed by members. Recurring topics were identified not only across reports, but also between the reports and previous working group discussions.

Delegation: Dr. Jen Beverly, Wildfire Analytics

Dr. Jen Beverly is a fire behaviour specialist and has been studying wildfires for over 25 years. Her method for community wildfire exposure assessment is promoted nationally by FireSmart Canada and her metric of landscape fire exposure is being used by multiple provincial fire management agencies.

Dr. Beverly delivered a presentation on her modelling methods related to mapping wildfire risk and how these methods have helped several municipalities with their strategic planning and wildfire prevention.

Next Steps

- ◆ RMA will extend invitations to FRIAA and any other organizations identified by the WWG as potential delegations.
- ◆ RMA staff will prepare briefings on topics that the WWG identified as requiring further information in advance of the next meeting.
- ◆ RMA staff will compile the items discussed into themes that can be built upon to structure the working group's strategy and deliverables

The long-term goal of the WWG is to develop a strategy for managing wildfires outside the FPA. The next WWG is scheduled in late July. The RMA plans to have the strategy completed in fall 2024.

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