

## NORTHEAST ROUNDTABLE – MEETING NOTES

**Date:** September 27, 2023

**Time:** Morning session: 09:00AM - 12:00PM (PST)  
Afternoon session: 13:00 – 15:30 (PST)

**Location:** FSJ Holiday Inn and Express  
[Virtual MS Teams](#)

### Attendees:

#### Government:

- Jason Lawson (WLRS) *In-person*
- Shayla Blue (WLRS) *In-person*
- Melissa Stewart (WLRS)
- Aviva Jones (WLRS)
- Anna Regnier (WLRS)
- Susan Campbell (IRR)
- Darius Low (FOR) *In-person*
- Marianne Johnson (FOR) *In-person*
- Susan Campbell (IRR)
- Tara Forest (IRR)
- Heather MacRae (EMCR)
- Melanie Webster (FOR)
- Angie White (WLRS)
- Cynthia Cole (WLRS)
- Ed Hoffman (ENV)
- Mike Huck (WLRS)
- Darcy Peel (WLRS)
- Scott Schilds (WLRS) *In-person*
- Uelun Tuvshinjargal (WLRS)
- Alanna Schroeder (IRR)
- Janelle Tuininga (EMCR)
- Joelle Ward (WLRS)
- Mark Wong (WLRS)
- Kiara Gannon (WLRS)
- Liia Schilds (FOR) *In-person*

#### Municipal:

- Kathleen Connolly (FSJ Chamber of Commerce)
- Steve McClain (District of Chetwynd)
- Lisa Thompson (Northern Rockies)

**First Nations:**

- Ryan McKay (SFN) *In-person*
- Tammy Brown (WMFN)
- Catherine Piedt (HRFN)
- Vanessa Law (Daylu Dena Council, Kaska)
- Eran Spence (MLIB)
- Katherine Wolfenden (FNFN)
- Naomi Owens-Beek (SFN)
- Nathan Prince (MLIB)
- Sarah Forbes (SFN)

**Stakeholders:**

- Jim Little (NE Stakeholders) *In-person*
- Darin Hancock (LP) *In-person*
- Ethan Brandt (LP) *In-person*
- Mark Phinney (Canfor)
- Elizabeth Abbs (Summit Lake Resident)
- Johnny Mikes (MKAB / CPAWS)
- Aimee Giebrecht (NorthRiver Midstream) *In-person*
- Peter Andreasen (Mining)
- Wayne Sawchuck (Env Cons) *In-person*
- Krista Phillips (CAPP)
- Gerry Paille (BC Wildlife Federation) *In-person*
- James O’Hanley (Pembina) *In-person*
- Rob Smith (Pembina) *In-person*
- Antonio Pega (LP)
- Andrew Tyrrell (Canfor) *In-person*
- Alanna Brunet (LP)
- Ray Ensz (FSJ Trappers) *In-person*
- Barry Holland (NPR&G Club / MKAB) *In-person*
- Alexis Jorgensen (Shifting Mosaics Consulting)
- Alicia Woods (Ridgeline Wildlife Enhancement Inc)
- Joyce Smith (Red Creek) *In-person*
- Brian Milakovic (Ursus Wildlands Consulting)
- Denny Johnson (Dawson Road Maintenance)
- Gillian Leverkus (Shifting Mosaics Consulting)
- Kari Sawatsky (Todd Energy)
- Korey Green (Enbridge and WSSBC)
- Jocelyn Paul (BC Hydro)
- Mark Phinney (Canfor)
- Rick Walters (Remax)
- Scott Ellis (GOABC)
- Garth Thoroughgood (BCER)
- Wagner Ksenhuk (Algonquin Power)

## Welcome, Agenda, Minutes

- Opening words and First Nations acknowledgements: Jason Lawson.
- Introductions: Shayla Blue in the room and virtual.
- Discussion: Supreme Court decision on Mining Permitting and BC Gov't infringing on Indigenous rights.

## North Area Wildlife

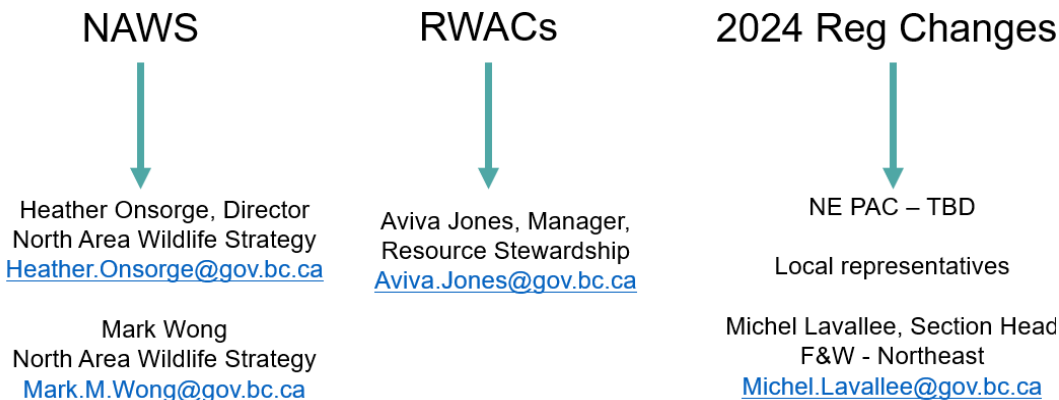
- Aviva Jones - Collaborative Game Checks:
  - Aviva was unable to present due to technical difficulties.
- Mark Wong – Introduction of the [North Area Wildlife Strategy](#)
  - High level overview of the North Area Wildlife Strategy (NAWS) Program. Ensure coordination and common approaches to wildlife co-management across the north.
    - The strategy will create opportunities for sharing resources and helps coordinate across Ministries (WLRs, FOR etc.) and North Area regions (Peace, Omineca, Skeena)
    - Develop a strategy for wildlife co-management
    - Support development of Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs), which could be venues for joint objective setting processes
    - A multi-year workplan that identifies immediate, mid-term and long-term objectives.
- Mark Wong- Overview of the 2024-2026 Hunting and Trapping Regulation Change Process
  - A multi-year workplan that identifies immediate, mid-term and long-term objectives.
  - Assist regions with the coordination of the 2024/26 regulation change proposals and will lead the coordination across the north for the next reg cycle.
  - All proposals were shared in one package to FN and stakeholders
  - Public engagement will be available later this year; contact Regional Leads/ reps
  - Discussion:
    - *Q:* Where are we on Together for Wildlife? There are some frustrations that there a little or no input from people with boots on the ground.
    - *R:* At different stages depending on the regions. We will try to have consistency at each of these RWAC tables, but we recognize the needs differ for different communities and recognizing the needs of different communities. Developing tables where we can have these discussions with various user groups/industry. Public engagement via EngageBC website will be available December 2023- January 2024.
    - *R:* The intent of Action 2 from T4W is to bring together various perspectives, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices, to improve outcomes for wildlife and habitats.
    - First Nations are being given the opportunity to play an instrumental role in the development and formation of structures that meet the intent of Action 2, which includes regional wildlife advisory committees. Where Indigenous community members are not participating, an approach should be in place to nurture and respect Indigenous perspectives throughout the development and

implementation of these structures (e.g., non-representative Indigenous participants).

- Each First Nation is at a different stage of readiness and the pace of structure development and implementation needs to respect each Nations' readiness level.
  - Relationships with First Nations are of the utmost importance and cannot be rushed as it essential to respect Indigenous rights in alignment with United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) / *Declaration Act*.
  - Staff may also meet with interest holders during the exploratory/development stage. These early conversations with interest holders will help to identify their interests in and recommendations for developing and implementing regional wildlife advisory committees or similar structures in their region.
  - Information received from interest holders will be shared with interested First Nations to help inform an approach that works for all parties involved.
  - Nurturing and respecting Indigenous perspectives through engagement with First Nations or otherwise is a critical first step to developing and implementing Action 2 in a manner that is truly grounded in an ethical space.
  - Training may be available to support you or your organizations reconciliation journey, please ask your regional Together for Wildlife contact if interested
- *Comment:* There is a lot of frustration out there that all planning is being done by BC and First Nations – but not involving hunters, trappers etc.
  - *R:* We have commitments for broader engagement with the public (guide outfitters, hunters etc.). We do hope to have a NE PAC meeting in November.
  - *Q:* Are the different Ministries talking to each other? Process and engagements are happening; but we met with MoF (operations) and nobody from ecosystems-strategy side (WLRs).
  - *R:* Sharing resources and WLRs is supporting MoF and vice versa. The decision rests with the Ministry of Forests. We are learning from some bumps and trying to make it better for next rounds.
  - *Q:* The packages are hugely lacking in maps or it says it will be delivered in the future. How can we comment on something like that? (Details are variant from Region 6 & 7)
  - *R:* The packages are trying to be consistent throughout the province. But depending on the regions, some have more information and others have less data available. Updates will be provided as they become available. We will take these comments back and continue to improve.
  - *Q:* There is nothing about trapping in the package. Are there no changes to the process? Was there no proposal for fisher trapping?
  - *R1:* Not all will go to public engagement. Proposals will be examined at branch level with an additional lens of provincial policy or legislation. Region specific process updates can be enquired from your Regional Leads at regional levels.

- *R 2*: There is no regional proposal for changes to fisher trapping in the North Area. However, there may be one at the Provincial level. This would be put out for engagement through the Provincial engagement process.
- *Q*: Do these processes/package reflect the impacts of wildfires?
- *R*: There were discussions about the impacts of wildfires and options for regulatory change. However, we need data to identify and understand how wildfire and wildfire intensities may impact wildlife and wildlife habitats. These can vary depending on the regions.

Contact information provided by Mark:



## Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

- Presenter: Tara Forest on updates on Land Transfers; Treaty 8 and Site C – implementation of the transfer of the parcels.
  - As part of implementation of the land transfers, the Province has been reaching out to tenure holders, and coordinating meetings with local government to address interests, including servicing agreements. The process is going to take some time and information/updates will be shared as they become available. We will engage with stakeholders and the public on new lands as they are identified to the Province by First Nations.
  - Information can be found on govTogether website. To easily find the govTogether webpage for northeast land transfers, just Google “northeast land transfers,” also located at this address: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/land-transfers-in-northeast-bc/>.
  - Funding has been secured for some fieldwork for Halfway River Trail. just received funding for some fieldwork for Halfway River Trail.
  - The intent is to gather geotechnical information, with considerations for where a trail may be suitably located.
  - After the fieldwork, the plan is to talk about the gathered information with stakeholders (Rod and Gun, BC Wildlife Federation, Muskwa Kechika Advisory Board etc.) this winter. If any boards are missed and have an interest, please reach out.

- Questions:
  - *Q:* Waiting for a response on the Saulteau First Nation parcels for transfers. On the map it doesn't show the Saulteau parcels. We received some clarification from Penny; and the information is opposite of what we heard (W. Moberly). Could the terms of the transfer have changed without consultation with the community? Or could someone provide more clarification and assurance that it will be Fee Simple.
  - *R:* Provincial team committed to following up directly.
  - *Comment:* Regarding parcels and Tenures the Northern Guides have a meeting at the end of November. Please talk to the local guide outfitters.
  - *Q:* Will there be any changes due to the wildfire activities with proposed land transfers?
  - The Province and Blueberry haven't talked about the wildfires in relation to parcels as it's pretty new; if there are any changes the Province will share the updates with the Northeast Roundtable.
  - *Q:* Halfway River Trail. There are some concerns on access and parking. You need parking lot for the trail as the trail affects Halfway River Nations.
  - *R:* The staging area is a key piece with the field work The Province is committed to engage with HRN and relevant stakeholders on those concerns.

## Permitting Ministry of Forests

- Presenter: Marianne Johnson – Status of permitting process
  - Moving more permits forward and collaborating with the nations. Some of the decisions will be approvals, modifications, and disallowance.
  - NE has complex landscapes, different industries (aggregates, agriculture, forestry, oil and gas, wind power), wildlife value and habitats.
  - Going forward we are looking into hosting workshops with various industry.
- Questions:
  - *Q:* Status of negotiations permitting BRFN. Are all new applications going through the same process or are there different prioritizations? When will the industry be engaged? Are there opportunities for industry to directly engage with the FN?
  - *R:* For the NRS applications (not BCER), the status is ongoing with weekly meetings and the process is improving. There is some prioritization, talking with the Ministries, how the information is flowing. If the application has some missing information, it requires more back and forth. However, if the application is complete, then the process is faster. There are some packages, where we make bundles (footprint type process). The consultation is part of the process and creating relationship with the FN.
  - *Q:* How are habitat restoration permits being prioritized compared to industry development permits?
  - *R:* Restoration permitting is being prioritized within the queue of other authorizations. There are changes that are coming to enable the BC Energy Regulator to have authority for

restoration permitting. These are being prioritized by different decision makers in relation to the various priorities they are managing.

- Q: Doig River First Nation has opted out of the land management sections of the *Indian Act* by ratifying their Land Code this June. How does the province have to consider this when making decisions on lands and resources?
- R: Doig recently enacted their Land Code which is a significant milestone. Doig River First Nation now has land governance over their lands, rather than being governed by the land management sections of the *Indian Act*. The land governance powers only apply to the reserve lands of the First Nation (not the full traditional territory, or fee simple lands owned by the First Nation).

Since the province does not have any statutory authority to make land and resource decisions over reserve lands, Doig River's Land Code is not relevant for the province to consider for permitting or any other land and resource decisions.

If there was a project that straddled provincial crown land, and Doig River First Nations' reserve lands, the proponent would have to consider both Doig River's Land Code, and Provincial regulations.

## Land Use Planning

- Presenter: Jason Lawson presentation on [land use planning](#) process and the path forward. The agreements referenced in the presentation are linked here: [Blueberry River First Nations Implementation Agreement](#) and the Treaty 8 First Nations Letters of Agreement with the Consensus Document imbedded can be found at this [webpage](#) under 'Other Agreements'. Linked is the land use planning in the [North Peace map](#) and the associated [GIS files](#).
  - Future plans to develop land use plans in the Liard, North and South Peace areas
  - Working with First Nations and Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Initiative on operational/industry restoration and development plans in 2023 and 2024. This type of planning is new to government. Starting to work with BRFN , HRFN and SFN.
  - Questions:
    - Q: Does the N Peace Water Shed Level Plan totally 100% replace the FSJ LRMP? Or will there some parts that are incremental changes? Would the FSJ LRMP in the N Peace WS area get tossed/nullified?
    - **Action:** Jason to follow up directly.
    - R: The intent is to have updated land use direction in a manner that protects Treaty Rights. As described, there are a number of commitments in the agreements, including areas for new protection proposals, enhanced management zones, high value area for planning and protection, and watershed management basis plans. Implementation of these commitments will be critical in updating the land use direction and will be an incremental step towards the North Peace Watershed Level Plan. It is envisioned that a North Peace Watershed Level Plan would update, amend, and/or replace the direction in the Fort St. John LRMP and would replace the LRMP document.

- *Q:* Where is the opportunity for stakeholders? We should have some input into this discussion.
- *R:* At this stage we don't have projects and processes scoped out, so we don't have engagement plans put together, it's a little early.
- *Q:* Some of the areas discussed have been over committed. How will you deal with those?
- *R:* We have the agreements that sets the commitment and next is the process to get there.
  
- *Q:* Are you able to share GIS data?
- *R:* Links are posted above.
  
- *Q:* We hear the term "Enhanced Management". Is it referring to more culturally and environmentally sensitive forms of management?
- *R:* I can't comment on this as we haven't been able to talk to the Nations about this yet.
  
- *Comment:* Where is public consultation in this path forward? When will the industry be consulted?
- *R:* Project scoping will involve engagement plans.
  
- *Comment:* Electrification and the call for power requires landscape level planning.

## **NE Drought Update**

- Presenter: Liia Schilds (Sr. Water Authorization Specialist): [NE Drought Update](#)
  - Provincial website for more information  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/drought-flooding-dikes-dams/drought-information>
  - Brief overview of what drought is and the history of drought in NE. Current Drought Levels and 2023 Provincial Drought Actions and next steps.
  - "Drought is a recurrent feature of climate involving a deficiency of precipitation over an extended period, resulting in a water shortage for activities, communities or aquatic ecosystems" (BC Drought and Water Scarcity Response Plan (2023)).
  - Drought levels: 0-5; impacts and the general response measures
  - Streamflow Indicators are based off hydrometric (flow monitoring) stations where real time flows are compared to historic stream flows. The larger the deviation from average historic flows the higher the drought level for a given water basin.
  - Questions:
    - *Q:* Funding opportunities
    - *R:* Send email to Liia or ministry of environment.
  
    - *Q:* What does water storage options for agriculture mean?
    - *R:* Generally building dug outs, dams, cisterns, pipes, storing water anywhere you can. Capture snowmelts in reservoirs.



- *Follow-up Q:* How can we not penalize people for storing water (negativity around dug outs)
- *R:* Dugout users with a water license or application have chosen the regulatory route and Forests current approach is to not pursue compliance and regulatory routes concurrently. Holding a license and securing water rights provides benefits to water users and Forests is actively seeking avenues to enhance communication around dugouts and licensing.

## **Wildfire Risk Reduction**

- Darius Low introduced presenter Melanie Webster – Presentation on [NE Wildfire Risk Reduction Review \(2021-2025\)](#).
- Crown Land Wildfire Risk Reduction (CLWRR) was launched as part of Community Resiliency Investment (CRI program) in 2018. The polygons are identified using geospatial layer functions, public and tenure holder input, etc.
- CLWRR Projects include:  
Fort Nelson FN – Community Forest  
Wonowon – Crown Land  
Tumbler Ridge – Community Forest  
2023-2025:  
Fort Nelson FN and WLRs Cultural burning  
Red Creek Windthrow treatment
- Thinning, pruning and selective clearcuts and some seismic lines as ignition points has worked. Some of the challenges are lack of contractor capacity and government recruitment.
- Funding comes from BC FireSmart, Crown Land, BC Wildfire Service and First Nations' Emergency Services Society of BC.
- Currently 1 Wildfire Risk Reduction Specialist with one vacant, 1 vacant WRR Technician (auxilliary), 1 Integrated Investment Specialist (30 FTE), 1 BC Wildfire Service Prevention Officer in NE
  - Questions:
    - *Q:* What efforts are being undertaken to coordinate projects that are being undertaken independently by local governments, tenure holders (CFs), First Nations, and the province. Seems effectiveness and efficiencies could be increased if we worked on projects that complement each other and are planned at a landscape level.
    - *Written Response :* [Coordination for wildfire risk reduction](#)
    - *Q:* How often do you go out in the field? Specifically Red Creek. People want to be involved when you guys are on the ground.
    - *R:* Sherri goes in the field a couple of times
    - *Comment:* Lacking maps and the information is not a true picture of current conditions. We want to have input. Access points are horrible.
    - *Comment:* Emailed Sherri. She said there is a Request for Proposal (RFP) out, but not to the public. Why can we not have an input on the RFP? Is it being clear cut? It is a little concerning.

- **Action:** Melanie will ask Sherri if she can set up a meeting with the community to consider the interest of the community
- **Comment:** Blowdown needs clean up. Mitigate with least danger to the people.

## Partnership Agreement: Strategic Caribou Restoration Implementation Plan

- Scott Schilds – Intro to the draft [Strategic Caribou Restoration Implementation Plan \(SCRIP\)](#) and the next steps.
  - First engagement opportunity
  - Connections to other restoration planning efforts. Restoration work is being undertaken by Saulteau First Nations and West Moberly First Nation, the federal government and the Province. There are collaborations at implementation levels guided by high level plans. There are some administrative challenges; competing priorities for funds, competing priorities across industries and fiscal and authorization timelines.
  - Key objectives for restoration planning in the South Peace were identified at a workshop in January 2023: recover meaningful habitat areas, reduce disturbance, incorporate cultural significance, consider longevity, develop adaptive approach
  - The Plan is built on 5 key indicators reflecting the objectives: Caribou Habitat, Connectivity, Restoration Effectiveness, Full Protection, Partial Protection  
The Plan is intended to guide restoration efforts undertaken by the Province and signatory First Nations. While it may be used as guidance for external parties, it is not intended to be a binding document.
  - **Next steps:** public engagement, future restoration engagement via open houses and other feedback, ongoing implementation.
  - Questions:
    - **Q:** How will trappers be engaged in work overlapping their territory? There has been issues in the past with trapline holders not being notified.
    - **R:** Trapline holders receive a notification package during the permitting process. It's clear this hasn't been an effective method of communication in the past. We are planning in-person open house sessions in the future that will give trappers and other land users an opportunity to review areas further in advance of permitting, during the planning process. We are also trying to streamline engagement between the parties so trappers aren't bombarded with multiple requests. The Province is open to other approaches to engage, as getting responses and buy-in has been difficult to date.

## Caribou Recovery Program Update

- Presenter: Mike Huck Draft Boreal Caribou Protection & Recovery Plan (BCPRP)
  - Draft Boreal Caribou Protection & Recovery Plan (BCPRP) has been developed in partnership with Fort Nelson FN and Northern Rockies Regional Municipality and endorsed by the Cabinet in Summer 2023, which will replace 2011 implementation plan.
  - What we heard report released September 2022 is accessible via the engagement portal: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/caribou/boreal-caribou/>
  - Bi-lateral Contribution Agreement to support boreal caribou recovery measures with ECCC until FY 25/26 has been negotiated.

- BCPRP management measures through Liard Collaborative Stewardship Forum. Regulatory consultation on management measures to inform statutory decision packages; implementation of habitat and population management measures:
  - Prophet FN, Liard
  - Consensus regulatory consultation
  - Started executive briefings on a draft land use objectives package for the Partnership Agreement to get cabinet endorsement in the Fall to engage with the public.
- Questions:
  - Q: Have you looked into grizzly and black bears as predators to caribou?
  - R: The majority (75%) of our mortalities that we have found due to collar data are wolf related deaths.
- Presenter: Joelle Ward: [Caribou Recovery Program Updates](#).
- Caribou Partnership Agreement – Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement for the Conservation of the Central Group of the Southern Mountain Caribou was signed in 2020.
  - Caribou Recovery Related Land Use Objectives:
    - Reduce impacts of anthropogenic disturbance activities to caribou
    - Reduce density of linear disturbance, cumulative habitat disturbance
- Status of Land Use Objectives:
  - Internal Cross-Agency engagement (NE and Omineca Resource Management Committees; one on one meetings with EMLI/BCER...)
    - In the process of seeking Cabinet (ELUC) endorsement to engage on draft LUO
- Other Partnership Agreement Updates:
  - B3 Park Expansion
    - Establishment of the Zone B3 Park Expansion in the Klinse Za range has been delayed due to:
      - Changes to forest compensation regulations (approved in July)
      - Finalizing the boundary to address the approved route for the Westcoast Connector Gas Transmission (WCFT) pipeline. Pipeline has EAC valid until Fall 2024.
  - BC Parks is currently reviewing boundary options with West Moberly FN and Sauleau FN.
  - Snowmobile Closures/Management Areas:
    - Website showing closure status. Closure area boundaries can be downloaded in multiple formats.
  - Conservation Officer Patrols:
    - Received funding through CRP to increase the number of patrols (ground and air) and to hire a dedicated COS member.
    - Continue to coordinate with FN Guardians.
  - Klinse Za Maternity Pen:
    - Population estimate at the end of March: 132
    - 17 penned calves released end of August
    - 13 free-ranging calves
    - Current population estimate: 162

- Questions:
  - Q: Who is the population lead in the Northeast?
  - R: Michael Klaczek - [Michael.Klaczek@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Michael.Klaczek@gov.bc.ca)

Any questions please send email: [joelle.ward@gov.bc.ca](mailto:joelle.ward@gov.bc.ca)

## Wildfires in the NE

- Presenter: Janelle Tuininga and Heather McRae - [Summary of 2023 Fire Season](#)
  - 57 hazards in the province.
    - Total Properties evacuated: 24,350;
    - Total Population evacuated: 48,600;
    - 60 orders and alerts remain in place; 579 properties remain on alert, 349 under order
  - North PREOC Evacuations:
    - Total Properties evacuated: 4,700;
    - Total population evacuated: 8,600
  - Area Restriction:
    - Donnie Creek (fire burned 500,000 hectares)
    - Big Creek
  - Year to Date Hectares Burned:

Fire Centre	Total Fires	Total Area Burned (Hectares)
Prince George	664	1,924,145.82
Northwest	275	174,789.347
All of BC	2217	2,486,221.882

- Question:
  - *Comment:* We need to get the community involved in the firefighting process, we could have stopped the fires sooner. BCWS was just worried about volunteers having certificates and wouldn't allow them to help.
  - Q: Can we get BCWS to talk about this request at the next meeting?
  - **Action:** Shayla to plan for a follow up fire presentation.

## Meeting Closure

- Additional Comments:
  - Edward Hoffman –Parks Management Plan led by BC Parks - Spoke to news article in the Alaska Highway news – FNFN put together a survey for their members on the planning of parks in Muskwa Kechika and this survey got out to the public. They are working with First Nations in the initial planning phase and FNFN chose to use a survey to engage with their members. Next stage is to draft the plan and that will allow for stakeholder engagement.
- **Action:** Engagement and what it looks going forward on various land use projects as possible future agenda item.
- **December 6** next NE Roundtable meeting