

Article #1 – How Can You Protect Your Community from Wildfire?

While we don't know when the next wildfire will arrive, we can take action to protect our community from the catastrophic impacts that it can create. Fires need three things to exist: oxygen, fuel and heat. The common ignition source for natural wildfires is lightning, as was the case on July 7, 2017. But people often accidentally start fires, too. To protect communities from the impacts of future wildfires, the goal is to reduce available forest fuel so that when the wildfires arrive (and they will!), there is less fuel to burn which will decrease the intensity of the fire as it moves closer to the community.

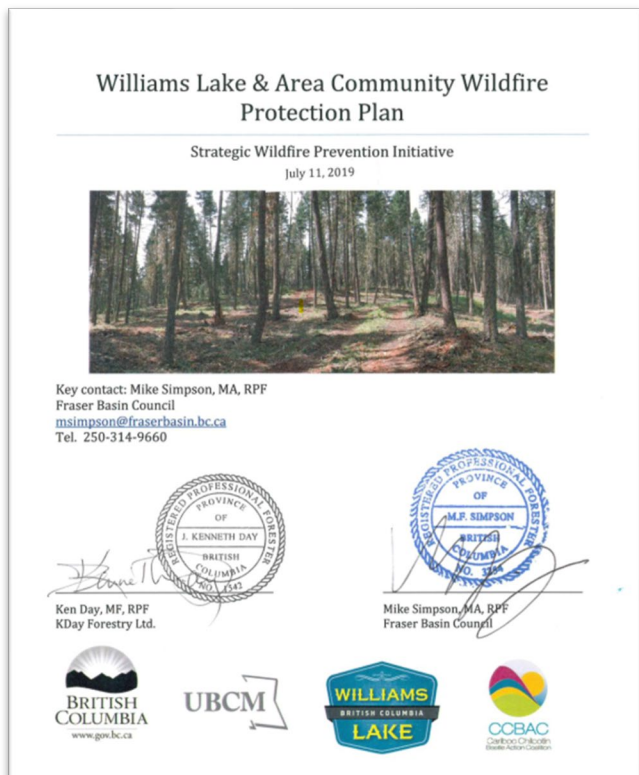
Professionals worked together in a team to build the [Williams Lake Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) which identified critical lands for fuel reduction based on wind patterns, fuel loads and terrain. In planning for the recommended actions, the team has to ensure that other values such as mule deer winter range, nesting sites, range and recreational features are also considered. Using all of this information, work is underway in the 'interface' areas where forest land is closely connected to the community. When complete, a 300-metre-wide primary fuel break with reduced fuels, will protect our communities in locations where fire-fighters can safely make a stand to fight a fire. In addition, 100-metre-wide fuel treatments adjacent to private properties will reduce the impact of fire inside those primary fuel breaks.

Since 2010, fuel reduction activities occurred around our communities, including thinning trees and removing brush. Some logs are produced for the sawmills, and where possible, the brush and surface

fuels go to the power plant or the pellet mill. In other areas, trees and branchers are piled and burned in the forest. Removing underbrush through 'controlled burns' also reduces fuel. In addition to reducing fuels, these actions create healthier forest, more recreation opportunities, and better protection for our communities from intense fires.

Working only on the edges of the community isn't enough though. There is important work to be done within the city on residential and commercial properties to reduce flammable fuels - find out more about what action you can take to FireSmart your property at <https://firesmartbc.ca/>. Consider requesting a FireSmart Assessment by contacting the City of Williams Lake: homesafety@williamslake.ca.

Check out the recent work to protect Williams Lake – explore the trails around the airport, at Fox Mountain, or in the Dairy Fields and envision how the next fire will have less fuel to burn!



<https://williamslake.ca/DocumentCenter/View/2204/COMMUNITY-WILDFIRE-RECOVERY-PLAN---July-11-2019-UPDATED-FINAL?bidid=>



Chipping accumulated fuel, Fox Mountain 2021 (Ken Day photo)



Before (left) and after thinning (right), Williams Lake race-track project, WLFN, 2022 (John Walker photo)