

## AMCS FireSmart Committee (AMFSC) update

The Anarchist Mountain community has been involved in the FireSmart BC Community Recognition program since its inception. Our community has been recognized as a leader in this program due to the high rate of FireSmarting our private properties and, as well as strong community participation in our yearly FireSmart workshops and cleanups.

For the last two years the AMFSC has been talking about the need to take FireSmarting to the next level and develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) specific for our area. The concern being that no matter how well we FireSmart our individual properties we also need to mitigate the risk from large wildfires entering into our community from surrounding areas.

The Anarchist Mountain Fire Department (AMFD) and Fire Chief (Urs Grob) have always been supportive of FireSmarting initiatives as the AMFD recognizes they have limited manpower, equipment and water resources to tackle a major wildfire in our community. However the AMFD must always put protection of life before protection of property so the priority for the AMFD is the safety of both residents and firefighters. The AMFD wants the CWPP to identify public and firefighter safety risks and prioritize the reduction of these risks.

The province of British Columbia established a Community Resiliency Fund several years ago for the purpose of funding wildfire prevention initiatives and the RDOS has received a \$100,000 yearly grant from this program. The RDOS has been using these grants to prepare Community Assessment Reports (CAR) for neighbourhoods at high risk of wildfire. The CAR is not as thorough as a CWPP but does identify the wildfire risks and includes recommendations for mitigation. (These CARs are posted on the RDOS Fire Services web page). The takeaway for CARs completed to date is that the CAR is intended as the first step in setting up a FireSmart committee and obtaining FireSmart Canada Community Recognition.

The AMFSC has been in communication with Dave Bodak (the RDOS FireSmart consultant) who has been helpful and supportive to us and earlier this summer he advised a CAR for Anarchist Mountain would be scheduled next year (2021). Our community already has FireSmart Canada Community Recognition but the AMFSC wants this professional evaluation as this includes recommendations; sets priorities; assigns responsibilities for corrective actions and can be used to help develop a CWPP in the future.

The AMFSC intends to use this CAR for fundraising purposes and to lobby government agencies for resolutions. Where we have similar issues with other communities we can hopefully work together to lobby governments. I.e. the lack of emergency evacuation routes is common to many communities so if each community lobbies their area representative the RDOS may take action.

To develop the CAR the RDOS hires consultants (specialists in FireSmarting) who consult with the residents at two open house events; tour the area to evaluate the risks and prepare the report. From reviewing previous CAR(s) there is minimal community consultation so it's imperative that we are prepared for these open houses. The FireSmart committee would like to encourage residents to read previous CAR(s) and give some thought to the wildfire risks in your area and your ideas to mitigate these risks.

The AMFSC together with the AMFD Fire Chief have started preparing for our CAR. summarized as follows:

- 1) Wildfire Risks in our Community:

The AMFSC prepared a list of wildfire risks in our community that we intend to present to the RDOS consultants and we are looking for input from the community re any risks we've missed. (List attached below)

2) Emergency Evacuation Routes:

The need for emergency evacuation routes will likely be one of the major recommendations of our CAR and the priority for the AMFD. The AMFD and AMFSC position is that in the long term we want to see the dead-end roads upgraded to inter-connecting looped roads as required by law and/or as designed in the original community master plan. In the interim, our position is that the residents on each dead-end road should work together to upgrade and maintain "dirt roads" suitable for emergency use but not to the extent they become through routes. In some cases there may be a need to obtain approval to cross private property for emergency evacuation purposes.

3) FireSmarting in the Pink Zones on Private Properties:

The AMFSC position is that property owners should be able to fully FireSmart their properties to FireSmart requirements not just the first 10 meters as currently allowed by RDOS "pink zone" regulations. (Note: This may be a moot point by next year as the RDOS is apparently reexamining this regulation)

4) FireSmarting in the Pink Zones on Conservation Lands:

The AMFSC position is that all conservation lands need to be evaluated as to the risk of wildfire entering into and within our community. Those areas determined to be high risk would require mitigation and as controlled burns are likely not an option this would involve building fire guards and/or selective logging. This will likely require the RDOS make changes to "pink zone" regulations

5) Mandatory FireSmarting for New Construction:

The AMFSC position is that FireSmart requirements; for both the buildings and property; should be mandated by the RDOS at the building permit stage. (Note: This may also be a moot point as the RDOS is already considering this) The RDOS has suggested a "wildfire professional" evaluate and approve the plans at a cost to the owner. The AMFSC position is that while FireSmart requirements should be mandated there is no need for a "wildfire professional" as the FireSmart requirements are well documented and straight forward.

6) Upgrade the Fire Guard of the North end of Community:

The AMFSC will ask that the fireguard between Lamont/crown lands and Wapiti/Sasquatch/Bullmoose and Longjoe that has overgrown with vegetation be brought back and maintained to fireguard standards.

7) Firefighting Water Sources:

The AMFD will advocate that this item be included in our CAR. We have enough water on our mountain but not always in the right locations for firefighting purposes. The AMFSC position is that we would like to see any future developments include firefighting water sources. We would like to enlarge some existing wet areas to create firefighting ponds such as wet areas between Cougar and Bullmoose and next to the highway at Blacktail. Where no existing ground water is available, we would like to install above ground water tanks. Digging fire ponds will likely require the RDOS to make changes to "pink zone" regulations.

8) Firefighting Safety Zones:

There a need for safety zones in thickly forested areas on dead-end roads otherwise firefighters cannot be sent into these areas. The AMFD will advocate that safety zones be included in future developments and safety zones be established on existing roads where possible.

The Fire Chief and AMFSC have also had discussions; but came to no consensus and will be looking for community input; as follows;

9) The need for FireSmartering on vacant properties; both private and developer owned properties.

10) The need to control both burn piles and campfires on private properties where no water supply is available. (I.e. owners FireSmartering and camping prior to operation of water well)

11) The need to reduce fuel loads on crown lands and conservation lands adjacent and/or within our community.

12) The concern about hunter campfires in the surrounding bush during hunting season.

The AMFSC assumes that developers will be invited to the open houses to have input into the CAR. With that in mind the AMFSC intends to meet with OMEI to determine if we are in agreement on the need for: Emergency Evacuation routes; FireSmartering on conservation and undeveloped lands; and developing firefighting water sources and safety zones in future developments. We also anticipate OMEI may have insights and suggestions that will be helpful in this process. We also plan to contact other developers with the same intent.

The AMFSC is also interested in getting input from our community, to that end please email or speak to any member of the AMCS or AMFSC. We'll add your input to the document we will present to the RDOS consultants prior to the open house.

Urs Grob; AMFD Fire Chief

AMFSC

Denis Thomson; Committee Chair

Helen Malloy; Secretary

Alex Giovannelli, Member at Large

Chris Kayes; Member at Large

Gerry Moran; Member at Large

Walter Zinowki; Member at Large

Anarchistmountainfiresmart@gmail.com

## Wildfire Risks in our Community:

- Canada/US border - wildfires originating on South aspect grasslands in USA with a restricted ability to enter USA to fight fire
- Climate - humidity is very low (<10%) and ambient temperatures are high in wildfire season
- Climate - spring rainfalls results in high grass growth that turns very dry & high in wildfire season
- Climate - many dry lightning strikes due to desert conditions, high elevations, and high iron concentrations
- Conservation areas spread throughout community that have not been fire smarted
- Crown lands and grazing lands border community and are not fire smarted
- Environmental Sensitive Development restrictions (ESDP/Pink zone) limiting FS activities
  - On conservation areas and undeveloped/OME lands
  - On private properties
- Evacuation - long and/or dead-end roads make some resident evacuations unsafe
- Evacuation - heavy vegetation along some evacuation routes make evacuations unsafe
- Evacuation - evacuation plan is required and then conduct mock evacuation
- Fire fighting - no safety zones for fire fighter evacuations and staging FF equipment
- Fire fighting - no fire hydrants and limited water resources for fire fighting
- Fire fighting - fireguard on North end of community overgrown with vegetation
- Fire fighting - dead-end roads make it unsafe to send fire fighters into some areas
- Fire fighting - potential need for satellite fire hall to adequately service community extremities
- Fire fighting - need for apt/software to identify FS properties for triage purposes
- New construction - building permits do not mandate FS building practices
- People caused fires - wildfires started by ATV's travelling through high dry grass
- People caused fires - arsonists starting wildfires
- People caused fires - campfires from squatters/visitors camping on properties with no water sources
- People caused fires - cigarettes discarded from vehicles driving along Hwy 3 which cuts through middle of community
- People caused fires - hunters with campfires on adjacent crown lands
- Terrain - very steep in many areas (> 30% slope), resulting in rapid fire spread and difficulty fire fighting
- Terrain - steep terrain combined with natural upwards winds is conducive to fast spreading wildfires
- Terrain - south facing slopes prone to drying out
- Absentee land owners and Vacant properties spread throughout the community that have not been fire smarted
- Vegetation - highly combustible coniferous vegetation over all areas; very dense in some areas; deep duff and lots of deadfall

- Vegetation – species prone to damage/death from pine beetle and tussock moth create added fire hazard
- Vehicle fires - wildfires starting from vehicle overheating driving up the mountain (several each year)
- Vehicle fires - wildfires starting from overheated truck brakes from driving down Hwy 3
- Wildfire originating on crown lands North side of community and driven into community by North winds
- Lack of funding to support the use of professionals to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan specifically for Anarchist Mountain
- Continued climate change has demonstrated a greater frequency of wildfires in our area