



# WHISTLER

## REPORT | ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL

**PRESENTED:** April 6, 2021  
**FROM:** Corporate and Community Services  
**SUBJECT:** FIRESMART® ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUND GRANT APPLICATION

**REPORT:** 21-033  
**FILE:** 7130-00

### COMMENT/RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**That** the recommendation of the General Manager of Corporate and Community Services be endorsed.

### RECOMMENDATION

**That** Council endorse the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund (FERF) grant application and, if successful, direct staff to provide overall grant management as per Union of British Columbia Municipalities grant requirements.

### REFERENCES

Appendix A – CRI FERG Program and Application Guide

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this Report is to seek Council endorsement for UBCM-CRI-FERG Program grant application. In order for the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) to be eligible for UBCM grant funding, a Council Resolution indicating support for the grant application and direction to provide overall grant management is required to be submitted with the application.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

The CRI program is a provincial program intended to reduce the risk and impact of wildfire to communities in BC through community funding, supports and priority fuel management activities.

The intent of the FERG is to support immediate job creation in order to build local wildfire resiliency and assist communities in recovering from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

If supported, the new term staff positions will further the engagement, education and administrative support of our FireSmart program by conducting FireSmart assessments, outreach, and documenting the progress. The additional resources will be structured to emphasize that FireSmart is a shared responsibility focusing on the prevention of home ignition during wildfire events with proactive mitigation initiatives. A focus on proactive, home-based treatments in the residential sector is a critically important part of the overall wildfire preparedness of the RMOW.

At a provincial scale, the wildfire risk framework starts with an analysis of the wildland urban interface (WUI), which consists of areas where urban development borders on forested areas. Whistler is classified as wildfire risk class one with approximately \$16 billion (bcassessment.ca) in assets located within two km of identified wildfire risks. Five risk class ratings are applied to the WUI polygons with “one” being a higher relative risk and “five” being the lowest relative risk. Additionally, with over three million visitors annually, the community is exposed to greater likelihood of human caused ignitions.

The Whistler FireSmart Program engages the community to educate, motivate, guide and support FireSmart activities intended to reduce the potential impact of wildfire in the municipality. Building a strong understanding and appreciation of local wildfire threat, and advocating FireSmart solutions are cornerstone to these efforts. Program activities include FireSmart outreach and presentations, conducting FireSmart assessments, organizing and leading FireSmart work days with homeowners, organizing and leading volunteer groups in the Adopt-a-Trail campaign (treating forest around the valley trail system), as well as deploying FireSmart crews to deliver regular community chipper service and reducing fuel load in dense juvenile municipal forest. Collectively, these activities are the key components designed to progressively move the community toward greater wildfire resilience.

With Council support, this application will be submitted.

## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

FireSmart® fuel management on private lands will continue to complement the ongoing work and Municipal wildfire protection expenditures on Provincial Crown lands within the municipality. These actions are consistent with the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Community Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), and the Official Community Plan (OCP).

### **Official Community Plan (OCP)**

#### **Community Vision**

FireSmart initiatives provide the community with a structured means to identify and mitigate the risk of wildfires. These initiatives are in alignment with Whistler’s vision, as well as a number of the Goals, Objectives and Policies included within the OCP.

#### **Goals, Objectives and Policies**

This Report’s recommendation is aligned with the following key goals, objectives, and policies of Whistler’s OCP.

4.1.5. Objective - Protect human safety and property from natural hazards.

4.1.5.3. Policy - A wildfire hazard assessment report prepared by a qualified professional in accordance with FireSmart guidelines may be required for zoning amendment and subdivision applications.

7.2. Goal - Natural areas are proactively managed for and resilient to climate change.

7.2.1.4. Policy - Support residents in reducing wildfire risk on private property in alignment with FireSmart Canada guidelines and consistent with other municipal priorities.

### **Other Relevant Policies**

The RMOW is investing in an accelerated and aggressive wildfire protection program guided by a comprehensive Wildfire Protection Strategy. The strategy includes 17 prioritized recommendations for planning, fuel reduction and outreach programs to reduce the impact of wildfire on Whistler.

Building on Whistler's leading practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Whistler's Community Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) was developed in 2016, setting out strategic directions and practical actions to further reduce Whistler's contribution to climate change, as well as recommending prioritized adaptation strategies to prevent or minimize the key potential impacts of projected local climate changes.

Fuel reduction by reducing the amount of highly combustible organic matter such as trees, woody debris and ground cover is an important component of Whistler's wildfire protection program and the CECAP objectives.

### **BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS**

If successful, the UBCM CRI FERF funding will cover 100% of the \$75,000 cost to create additional supporting staff positions. This is on top of the current 2021 annual budget which includes \$400,000 of spending on the FireSmart program and associated initiatives.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

Ongoing community engagement is led by the FireSmart Supervisor and these new staff positions will enhance the RMOW's capacity in this area. The FireSmart program team will continue to work closely with homeowners through program delivery and will provide information to Whistler residents on how to FireSmart their property, assist them with understanding options, prioritizing work, fuel removal, engaging arborists, and connecting with the parks department or other land managers, as needed.

### **SUMMARY**

FireSmart investments are key components of wildfire loss reduction for the community. Supporting the UBCM-CRI-FERF grant application will assist the community to expand the reach of FireSmart activities during Q2 and Q3 of 2021. As such, the purpose of this Report is to seek Council's endorsement for this grant application and for direction to provide overall grant management.

Respectfully submitted,

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for

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MANAGER OF PROTECTIVE SERVICES

for

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