

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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