



Regional Board Report

TO: Regional Board

FROM: Brian Reardon
CAO

DATE: September 27, 2021

SUBJECT: White Rock Lake Wildfire Community Recovery Plan

Voting Entitlement: All Directors – Unweighted Corporate Vote – Simple Majority – LGA 208

Purpose: To present the interim Community Recovery Plan specific to those areas of the RDCO impacted by the White Rock Lake Wildfire.

Executive Summary:

On August 15, 2021, the White Rock Lake wildfire aggressively destroyed or damaged homes and some or all their respective outbuildings. The Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO), as the local government authority of jurisdiction, has obligations under the Emergency Program Act of BC to develop a recovery plan for its impacted residents. The Community Recovery Plan document outlines the initial recovery objectives but recognizes that new ones may evolve as response activities continue.

Short-term, mid-term, and long-term objectives have been established, and tactics have been defined to achieve desired outcomes. Instrumental to the achievement of these objectives is the work to be undertaken by the RDCO's contracted Community Recovery Manager.

The scope of the Community Recovery Manager includes:

- Update and maintain the Community Recovery Plan;
- Lead and coordinate the transition from response to recovery;
- Collect and document impacts of the wildfire;
- Act as the main RDCO point of contact for all recovery activities;
- Lead the recovery program while coordinating with other agencies; and
- Develop programs and strategies for recovery, with input from affected communities.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Board receive the report from the CAO, 'White Rock Lake Wildfire Community Recovery', dated September 27th, 2021, for information.

Respectfully Submitted:



Brian Reardon, CAO

Prepared by: Travis Kendel

Attachment(s):

1. RDCO Wildfire Recovery Plan v1.0.pdf

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan: More severe weather and wildfire events can be associated with climate change. Through the recovery process, we plan to support communities by adapting them to climate change and future severe natural disasters.

General: The recovery plan provides a framework for recovery and informs recovery-focused staff on how to progress.

Organizational: The recovery plan outlines several term positions. The RDCO will, wherever possible, endeavour to use full time RDCO employees to fill positions on a temporary basis, backfilling where necessary. This builds organizational capacity to support future recovery efforts within the RDCO, while maintaining existing service levels.

Financial: Recovery items can be supported through up to 80% funding from the Disaster Financial Assistance program. Some transitional costs that work to establish the scope and scale of the wildfire and its impact on the community can be funded by up to 100% through Emergency Management BC.

Policy: Some policy decisions, particularly around rebuilding and permitting may need Board input and decisions as recovery progresses.

Legal/Statutory

Authority: The Regional District Central Okanagan (RDCO), as the local government authority of jurisdiction has obligations under the Emergency Program Act of BC to develop a recovery plan for its impacted residents.

Background:

On August 15, 2021, the White Rock Lake wildfire aggressively consumed, destroyed or damaged homes and some or all their respective outbuildings. The Community Recovery Plan outlines the initial recovery objectives, while recognizing that new ones may evolve as response activities continue and eventually wind down.

In general, the recovery team will strive to meet the following seven objectives as they proceed through the recovery process:

1. Protect Public Safety;
2. Foster and Improve Health and Wellness and Support Housing Recovery;
3. Deliver Permanent Solutions;
4. Facilitate Economic Revitalization;
5. Facilitate Environmental Resilience & Adaptation;
6. Engage Community and Stakeholders; and
7. Ensure Equitable, Fair and Reasonable Decisions.

Short-term objectives were initiated during the response phase, and are primarily focused on:

- establishing worker and public safety for re-entry and beyond;
- establishing scope and scale of impacts on residents and facilitating longer term supports;
- establishing scope and scale of impacts on local economy, critical infrastructure, the environment, and identifying recovery needs;
- meeting the immediate needs of residents as the transition from response to recovery takes place; and
- identifying and reducing hazards.

Medium term initial objectives include:

- facilitating the rebuilding process;
- potential water quality issues for domestic sources;
- land use zoning conflicts;
- legacy, illegal construction (unpermitted) or “grandfathered” properties;
- ensuring that environmental contamination is remediated;
- ensuring that those who are struggling with loss and the heaviness of the rebuilding / recovery process are adequately supported with mental health support services; and
- critical infrastructure repairs.

Long term Objectives when addressed in early stages of recovery planning will be managed and mitigated by other existing frameworks and organizations. For example, FireSmart programming to build community awareness about risk and risk reduction.

Policy Group:

Within the Recovery framework, a Policy Group composed of elected officials representing areas affected by the disaster will be created. This policy group will work directly with the CAO and Recovery staff.

The policy group will play an important role in collecting information and feedback from affected residents and relaying it to the recovery team. The Policy Group is strictly advisory in nature, with policy level decision-making occurring through the Regional Board.

Progress to Date:

To date, the RDCO has progress several Recovery related items, including:

- Enabling the safe re-entry of community members;
- Maintaining a Recovery hotline and email inbox;
- Establishing Case Worker and Insurance Advocates;
- Contracting of a Community Recovery Manager;
- Establishing 'point in time' GIS data; and
- Mailing letters to impacted property owners with photos and confirmation of structure damage.

Community Recovery Manager:

Steve Schell has been contracted by the RDCO to support recovery efforts relating to the Whiterock Lake Wildfire. Mr. Schell brings 30 + years of emergency management experience within the provincial government to the table.

The scope of Mr. Schell's work includes:

- Update and maintain the Community Recovery Plan;
- Leading and coordinating the transition from response to recovery;
- Collect and document impacts of the wildfire;
- Act as the main point of contact for all recovery activities;
- Lead the recovery program while coordinating with other agencies; and
- Develop programs and strategies for recovery, with input from affected communities