

Terms of Reference

Forest Professionals BC – BC Wildfire Service, Ministry of Forests

Wildfire Joint Panel

Purpose

The purpose of the wildfire joint panel (WJP or “panel”) between Forest Professionals BC and BC Wildfire Service is to enhance and grow the expertise of forestry professionals in wildfire as part of the collective response needed in BC in an era of catastrophic wildfires.

Context

As regulatory bodies both Forest Professionals BC (FPBC) and the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) of the Ministry of Forests (FOR) have a shared interest and responsibility to the public to care for and manage B.C.’s forests.

FPBC protects the public interest through the regulation of forest professionals under the *Professional Governance Act* (PGA) ensuring the ongoing competence and professional accountability of its registrants. FOR is responsible (among other duties) to manage, protect and conserve the forest and range resources of the government. FOR administers the *Forest Range Practices Act* (FRPA), which relies on the services of forest professionals for its implementation and accountability framework. FOR is also responsible for the *Wildfire Act* and assigns the BCWS to develop the policy framework, and execute activities, to manage wildfire through a combination of wildfire prevention, mitigation and suppression strategies.

The need for regulated professional expertise and skilled practitioners to help manage for wildfire, in addition to the services of the BC Wildfire Service, is becoming increasingly crucial. Catastrophic wildfire has and continues to impact the province’s vast forest resource, threaten the safety of communities and infrastructure, destroy culturally and ecologically important forest areas, emit massive amounts of greenhouse gas, and impact the livelihood of communities and industries who rely on the forest.

Growing and expanding wildfire management knowledge and expertise in forestry professionals requires standards of practice, and standards of competence, to be set. These standards are used to inform both the training and education of professionals, as well as the on the ground forestry practices. Robust standards are best established by combining the knowledge and experience of those working for the provincial government and working in BC Wildfire Service,

with the knowledge and experience of forest professionals providing professional services in wildfire for other BC employers.

Setting practice standards in wildfire professional forestry practice areas and ensuring the continued expertise and professional competence of regulated professionals working in wildfire, will help reduce risks to the safety of the public and the protection of the forest and environment caused by wildfire. Influencing the standards, practices and forest management goals and objectives in other related forest practice areas to reduce wildfire risk and incorporate climate adaptation can also strengthen the resilience of the forest to wildfire and lower risks to the safety of the public and forest from wildfire.

Functions

The wildfire joint panel will provide guidance and subject matter expertise to make recommendations under the regulatory authority of the *PGA* regarding:

- a) Wildfire Practice Areas: define professional forestry practice areas directly related to wildfire.
- b) Professional Standards: input and advice to set standards of practice, and standards of competence, in wildfire related practice areas.
- c) Extension Materials: inform the development of products to communicate standards. Standards may be communicated to FPBC registrants through descriptive materials, guidance documents and guidelines, workshops, e-courses, webinars and other professional development offerings provided by FPBC.
- d) Community of Practice: provide guidance to foster and sustain a community of practice (for those practicing in, engaging with, conducting research about) to be able to learn and grow their professional competency in wildfire.
- e) External Reviews: provide recommendations to resolve or mitigate known and potential professional practice, and forest management, issues arising between FPBC and FOR or in the forest sector related to wildfire, including those that might be identified by other agencies including the Forest Practices Board, Auditor General, and BC Ombudsperson.
- f) Other Matters: other work may be assigned at the mutual agreement of the FPBC CEO and BCWS Executive Director in response to related emergent issues.

Panel Composition

- Eight voting members:
 - four appointed by FPBC and four appointed by BCWS.
- Staff appointments:
 - FPBC Director of Practice is appointed as a non-voting member. The Director of Practice is accountable to the FPBC CEO to ensure development of practice and competency standards will meet the parameters for developing new standards that have been set by the FPBC Board.
 - BCWS Manager of Wildfire Prevention is appointed as a non-voting member to support the effective governance of the panel, including to facilitate the internal review and vetting of panel products leading up to, and including, the BCWS Executive.
- Two additional non-voting lay members may be appointed by the Chair with the consensus of the panel to support subject matter expertise needs (e.g. fire behavior, cultural use of fire).

Membership Appointments

Appointment terms of voting members will be three years. Reappointments are encouraged for business continuity, but no member will serve longer than two terms without a break.

Each organization will determine its own member recruitment process. Both organizations will give consideration to fostering diversity in the geographic work location, role, and employer group when appointing members.

FPBC appointments will be made the Chief Executive Officer. BCWS appointments will be made by the BCWS Executive Director or Assistant Deputy Minister.

Each organization may revoke the appointment of its appointees at any time.

Although the voting members may be part of both organizations, each voting member will be appointed by one organization to serve as that organization's representative.

Decision-Making

The panel provides guidance and makes recommendations at the request of, and directly provided to, FPBC and BCWS.

Recommendations will arise from a *majority* of the appointed representatives from each regulatory body.

When forming a recommendation or guidance, if the panel cannot come to majority, then the panel has the option of producing a recommendation with a *minority opinion* (a minimum of two members from each organization) for the regulatory body.

Decisions that reside with each regulatory body through their relevant legislation remain the sole decision of that regulatory body.

Quorum

Quorum is reached when the majority of voting panel members (50% plus one) are in attendance, provided at least two voting members of each organization are present.

Conduct of Meetings

- The FPBC Director of Practice will chair the meetings and arrange meeting administration, logistics and project support.
- All meetings must have an agenda. Materials will be provided at least one week in advance of the meeting.
- Minutes will be taken and provided to members within two weeks of the meeting. Minutes must clearly specify action items and associated deadlines.
- Meetings held quarterly in-person or by video conference.
- Regular meeting attendance is required, however it is recognized some conflicts are unavoidable.
- A minimum two weeks notice will be provided for all meetings, and if possible a series of meeting will be set with longer advance notice to facilitate planning and attendance.
- Issues may be discussed by e-mail or other electronic media where communication may not be simultaneous, provided all members of the panel have access to the medium chosen.
- The panel may establish task forces or working groups comprised of panel members and relevant experts as necessary, and delegating tasks or assignments to these groups for the purpose of achieving priority projects.
- Specific project and/or components of work may be assigned to approved consultants. FPBC staff is responsible to manage the associated contracts.

Budget and Expenses

The regulatory bodies will fund the panel to cover routine expenses for meetings and the reasonable out-of-pocket travel, accommodation and meeting expenses incurred by their respective panel members. Ideally, non-routine expenses are determined in time for inclusion in the regulator bodies' annual budgeting processes.

The regulatory bodies will ensure adequate resources are assigned to achieve projects and products, including but not limited to support the work of task forces, working group or contractors for priority projects or initiatives requiring specialized expertise not available on the panel.

Communications

Communication about the work or products of the panel is confidential until it is released with the approval the regulatory bodies, and communicated in accordance with this Terms of Reference.

In some circumstances, a non-disclosure agreement may be required to protect the interests of government, specific organizations, or individuals.

Communications on behalf of the panel are reserved for delivery by the staff representatives of each regulatory body. Specifically there will be:

- a) Reports to inform the public and registrants of important developments through various means of communication including info bulletins, the Increment, Community of Practice events, webinars, recorded videos, electronic surveys, etc.
- b) Periodic reports produced for the CEO of FPBC and the Executive Director of BCWS, whenever requested.



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Forest Professionals BC



Rob Schweitzer
A/ Assistant Deputy Minister
BC Wildfire Service, Ministry of Forests