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# City of Rossland Community Wildfire Protection Plan Final Report

## Section 1.0: Executive Summary

**1.1 - Background:** In 2008, Fireline Consulting was engaged to assist the City of Rossland (henceforth referred to as the 'City') in developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (henceforth referred to as the 'Plan' or CWPP) in consultation with both City municipal staff (Fire Department and Planning office) and the B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range – Arrow Fire Protection Zone staff. The CWPP project is jointly funded by the City and the Union of B.C. Municipalities.

**1.2 - Project Scope:** The purpose of this project is to:

- i) conduct a detailed assessment and mapping of the hazard, defining the risk from wildland urban interface (WUI) fire to the City of Rossland,
- ii) to identify explicit mitigation measures necessary to mitigate those risks, and;
- iii) use the assessment data and recommended mitigations to develop a comprehensive 'Community Wildfire Protection Plan' for the City of Rossland.

The CWPP planning process reviews and provides recommendations on the following items:

**Section 2: Wildfire Risk Assessment** – an analysis of both historic ignitions and probable wildfire scenarios dependent upon various fire ignition situations is provided and Fire Danger Zones established.

**Section 3: Facility Hazard Assessment & Mitigation** - City properties were assessed for general compliance with FireSmart recommended guidelines under two broad categories - structural features and vegetation clearances within 30 metres.

**Section 4: Fuel Management** – a plan developed for provision of wildfire protection to the City with the use of existing fuelbreaks and stand level fuel treatments in strategic locations. Fully detailed fuel treatment recommendations are provided.

**Section 5: Wildfire Prevention, Preparedness and Response** – a full range of wildfire prevention, preparedness and response issues were investigated with a variety of initiatives proposed to mitigate potential wildfire impacts on the City.

**Section 6: Legislation** - opportunities to mitigate interface fire hazard through the use of FireSmart planning guidelines backed with legislative authority were investigated.



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## 1.3 - Section Summaries

### Summary - Section 2.0: Wildfire Risk Assessment

Wildfire risk assessment for the City analyzes both historic ignitions and probable wildfire scenarios dependent upon various fire ignition scenarios.

**2.1 - Historic Ignitions:** The BC Ministry of Forests and Range (MoFR) fire reporting system was used to compile an historical database of Rossland area fires by size class and cause occurring between 1975 and 2008.

**2.2 - Wildfire Scenarios:** Probable wildfire scenarios are based on an assessment of terrain and fuels adjacent the City along with typical weather and wind patterns in the City area.

**Terrain:** The City is located in two distinct areas – the bulk of City values at risk are positioned on a wide, almost encircling mountainside drainage. A smaller values at risk component extends north from the principal City footprint along a bench at the base of Red and Granite Mountains.

Topographic influences on fire behaviour are complex with the presence of Red, Monte Cristo and Deer Park mountains west and north of the City channeling upslope and downslope winds through the Sheep, Trail and Topping creek drainages.

**Fuel:** Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System (CFFDRS) fuel typing was used to display the positioning – relative to City WUI fire protection units - of fuel types capable of supporting higher (or lower) levels of fire behaviour. Mapping of these respectively high or low hazard fuel types **Map 1A – CFFDRS Fuel Types** effectively highlights problematic fire ignition and spread potential in or adjacent critical high hazard areas within the City. Analysis of the CFFDRS fuel types configuration assists in both prioritizing accomplishment of recommended hazard mitigations in established units and identifying landscape fuel treatment priorities.

**Weather:** Analysis of weather is important in determining fire danger and potential for high intensity fire behaviour. The Ministry of Forests and Range (MOFR) fire weather stations provide data that is interpreted to determine fire danger in the forested areas surrounding the City. The Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System (CFFDRS) uses the terms - Danger Class 4 (high) and - Danger Class 5 (extreme) to describe periods of critically high fire danger. The data shows that the average number of Danger Class 4 + 5 days per fire season is 29, with the range varying from 0 to 65 days. Typically, the most extreme fire weather occurs in five to six weeks spread between July and August.

From this assessment, a tentative determination of possible rates of spread and probable intensities dependent upon various fire ignition scenarios can be made. The most problematic was a fire start south or west of the City with south winds. Fire in a head or flanking condition would be most likely to advance to impinge on Units 1, 3 + 4. Fire intensity will be a minimum of Rank 3/4 — public safety and facilities in perimeter areas may be threatened. Spot fire ignitions in the City are highly probable however, fuels within the City are not sufficiently dense to support the rapid spread of spot fire ignitions.

**2.3 - Fire Danger Zones:** This report considers probable wildfire scenarios and assigns ‘Fire Danger Zone’ classifications to the various sectors located within and adjacent the City. Fire Danger Zones are mapped on **Map 1B – Fire Danger Zones**.



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**Summary - Section 3.0: Facility Hazard Assessment & Mitigation**

**3.1 - Hazard Assessment Procedure:** The City was divided into fifteen Wildfire Protection Units. Hazard assessment procedures using the 'FireSmart Structure & Site / Area Hazard Assessment Forms' were performed on representative structures within each unit. Unit properties were assessed for general compliance with FireSmart recommended guidelines under two broad categories - structural features and vegetation clearances within 30 metres.

**Structural Features:** The majority of structures were compliant with FireSmart recommended guidelines in terms of FireSmart guidelines pertaining to structural hazard factors. Exceptions are noted in the Hazard Mitigation Recommendations section.

**Vegetation Clearances:** The majority of structures were sited on properties that were compliant with FireSmart guidelines pertaining to vegetation management within 30 metres of the structure exterior. Exceptions are noted in the Hazard Mitigation Recommendations section.

**3.2 - Hazard Assessment & Mitigation Recommendations - Units 1 – 15:** A number of structures and properties do not currently comply with FireSmart recommended guidelines and obtained site and structure hazard assessment ratings of high or extreme. High and extreme hazard structures or structure groups are mapped on 'Map 2 – WUI Fire Protection Units'. Recommendations on structure modification or site fuel management required for compliance with FireSmart recommended guidelines are provided in this section of the plan.

**Summary - Section 4.0: Fuel Management**

**4.1 - Fuel Management Overview -** Fuel management is an important component of any strategy to reduce wildfire danger adjacent interface values at risk.

**4.2 - Fuel Management Strategy -** The general fuel management strategy for provision of wildfire protection to WUI communities involves using existing fuelbreaks (areas featuring deciduous or low flammability fuels, green space or access/utility infrastructure corridors) or stand level fuel treatments involving fuel removal, fuel reduction or fuel conversion in strategic locations.

**4.3 - Fuel Treatment Goals -** The goal of fuel treatment is to reduce the chance of structural ignition from direct wildfire impingement or heavy firebrand accumulation and resulting spot fire ignitions by implementing FireSmart fuel reduction recommended guidelines.

**4.4 - Mountain Pine Beetle – Implications for Fuel Management -** The current mountain pine beetle epidemic affecting many areas of western Canada is one of several forest health issues that may affect the wildfire hazard adjacent the City. The potential fuel management implications of the mountain pine beetle epidemic are discussed in the CWPP.



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**4.5 - Fuel Treatment Recommendations** - Fuel treatment recommendations are based on FireSmart fuel management guidelines and incorporate the following general principles:

1. Removal of selected whole trees to leave a forest of more separated and fire resistive trees,
2. Pruning of trees to increase the height to live crown to a minimum of 2 meters,
3. Removal of surface fuels or slash created by spacing and pruning.

Fuel treatment recommendations provide for shaded and open fuel breaks by varying whole tree spacing criteria. Fully detailed fuel treatment recommendations are provided in **Appendix 4A – General Fuel Treatment Recommendations**. Both fuel treatment standards (specifying tree, surface fuel removal and burn pile criteria) and fuel treatment actions (methods – handfall, mechanical, chip + spread and firewood salvage with environmental and operational guidelines) are provided.

**4.6 - Existing and Proposed Landscape Fuelbreak Units** - The City is situated within an encircling network of wildfire hazard areas that range from higher hazard fuel types such as continuous coniferous or slash fuel types to lower hazard fuel types such as deciduous, mixed / open fuel types and fuel modified areas (highways, golf course, ski run or open fields and transmission line right of ways).

**4.7 - Fuel Treatment Unit Summary** - The CWPP planning process has identified a number of areas of high hazard fuel types (C2, C3, C4, C7, S2, S3) and fuel treatment units (sub-divided into 4 categories) within or adjacent City WUI fire protection units. Fuel treatment recommendations are provided – See **Fig 4-2 - Unit Fuel Treatment Summary**.

**4.8 - Maintenance of Fuel Treated Areas** - The effectiveness of fuel treated areas tends to decrease over time and ongoing treatment will be required to maintain low fuel loadings.

**4.9 - Pilot Projects** - Pilot projects are undertaken by communities that, in the process of completing a CWPP, have identified one or more priority interface fire protection issues. Pilot projects are small scale initiatives principally focus on projects designed to investigate the effectiveness and viability of various fuel management methodologies. By extension, pilot projects may incorporate structural and infrastructural modification elements and public education or legislation initiatives.



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***Summary - Section 5.0: Wildfire Prevention, Preparedness & Response***

Preventing, preparing for and responding to wildfire emergencies are important priorities for the City of Rossland. The City is located in an area subject to wildfire ignition and - under high fire danger conditions – wildfire impingements on several areas within or adjacent to the City. Local fire and forestry officials are attempting to mitigate the potential impacts of wildfire on interface communities with a variety of wildfire prevention, preparedness and response initiatives.

***Summary - Wildfire Prevention***

**5.1 - Public Education** - Effective public education is important in preventing or minimizing fire risk in the wildland / urban interface. Public education presentations should be based on recommendations provided by the **FireSmart – Protecting Your Community from Wildfire** manual and may include use of the FireSmart Powerpoint presentation and development of a public education display. Use of fire danger signs and FireSmart Demonstration Properties is also recommended.

***Summary - Wildfire Preparedness***

City fire and emergency response officials must be prepared for both the possibility and the effects of periods of high wildfire activity in the vicinity of the City. Large wildfires burning anywhere in the West Kootenay region can affect City businesses, particularly if tourists and the travelling public alter travel plans. Wildfire ignitions or spread into forests adjacent the City may require evacuation of residents and visitors to safe areas.

**5.2 - Fire Danger Monitoring and Communications:** The traveling public or tourist perception of wildfire conditions in the City area can have a significant effect on the City and businesses – it is important that accurate and up to date information on wildfire status be conveyed to these groups.

**5.3 - Wildfire Evacuation Planning:** This plan recognizes the potential requirement for evacuation procedures which establish evacuation triggers for specific areas and identify primary / secondary evacuation routes and safety zones for evacuee marshalling. Units classified as Fire Danger Zone 1 are most likely to require evacuation of residents while Units classified as Fire Danger Zone 2 or 3 are less likely to require evacuation of residents.

The City features a number of evacuation route possibilities. The City features a number of fuel-free areas within and adjacent most areas of the City. While a complete evacuation of the City due to wildfire threat is unlikely, evacuation of specific City areas or resident groups (those vulnerable to high smoke concentrations and poor air quality) may be required.

**5.4 - Post-Wildfire Rehabilitation Planning:** Post wildfire rehabilitation planning is important and helps to avoid long term damage to slopes, soils or storm drain infrastructure by designating restoration activities that will mitigate damage caused by fire suppression activity or high intensity fire.



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### ***Summary - Wildfire Response***

Use of safe and effective wildfire response procedures by trained members of the Rossland Fire Dept. can contain small wildfire ignitions before they escape control and become major wildfire incidents.

**5.5 - Wildfire Reporting and Response:** Detection and reporting of wildfire ignitions during periods of high and extreme wildfire hazard is critical to the success of wildfire initial attack efforts. All wildfires detected within and adjacent the City are reported to the Rossland Fire Dept. and BC Ministry of Forests and Range - Arrow Fire Zone protection staff.

**5.6 - Training and Equipment:** The Rossland Fire Dept. currently responds to structural and wildfire ignitions with approximately seventeen (17) members. The Rossland Fire Dept. is trained and equipped to provide basic wildfire suppression. Further discussion on training standards and equipment requirements is provided.

**5.7 - Structure and Site Preparation:** In the event that a wildfire threat to the City is expected or imminent - additional fire protection measures can be provided by implementation of a number of pre-planned structure and site preparation actions including set-up of sprinkler protection systems.

**5.8 - Firefighting Access and Water Supply:** Tactical response that requires water delivery will be hydrant supported. Water supply and pumping details are discussed in this section.

### ***Summary - Section 6.0: Legislation***

Local government can reduce the potential for interface fire disasters and wildfire damage through both public education and the use of legislative tools. Community leaders must continue to support 'FireSmart community' public education initiatives as well as seeking opportunities to mitigate interface fire hazard through the use of FireSmart planning guidelines backed with legislative authority.

**6.1 - Status of Interface Fire Legislation – City of Rossland -** The City is experiencing increasing development pressure with continued growth forecast for the foreseeable future. The physical layout of the City is such that most future development will be required to occur on and adjacent the City's perimeter – an area subject to various degrees of wildfire hazard. FireSmart development can occur in this or any area but will require proactive imposition of planning or development controls tailored to wildfire hazard mitigation.

**6.2 - City of Rossland Bylaws -** A review of City bylaws with the potential to mitigate wildfire hazard was conducted. The following bylaws were reviewed and wildfire hazard mitigation references or lack thereof were noted.

- Official Community Plan (OCP)
- Subdivision and Development Bylaw 1018
- Building Bylaw 1978
- Zoning Bylaw 1912
- Tree Retention Bylaw 2389
- Burning Bylaw 2383

**Note:** City of Rossland has no Fire Protection & Safety Bylaw.



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***1.4 - Recommendation Summaries***

While there are no strategies providing fail safe wildfire protection to municipal areas located in forested areas - the FireSmart recommended guidelines are the current national standard and provide an established and reasonable benchmark based primarily on National Fire Protection Association standards that are published as a code: NFPA 1144 - Standard for Protection of Life and Property from Wildfire.

The FireSmart program manual 'FireSmart – Protecting Your Community from Wildfire' (Partners in Protection – July 2003) was referenced extensively in the development of the City CWPP.

Wildfire protection of interface values at risk located adjacent forested areas is attained through compliance with FireSmart recommended guidelines in the categories of vegetation (fuel) management, structural and infrastructural design, installation or modification. Effective wildfire protection also requires strong fire prevention, preparedness and response planning.

In total, 29 recommendations were developed for consideration by the City. No recommendations were provided for Section 2.0 Wildfire Risk Assessment. Recommendations pertaining to Section 3.0 Facility Hazard Assessment & Mitigation are provided on a unit specific basis and are not provided in this recommendation summary.

***Recommendation Summary - Section 4.0: Fuel Management***

***Recommendation 4.4.1*** The City should review the Community Wildfire Protection Plan every five years. The City should require that forest health issues in the forest surrounding the municipality of Rosland continue to be monitored and reported on within the Community Wildfire Protection Plan review. Federal and provincial programs targeting mitigation of wildfire hazard due to pine beetle attack may be accessed for funding assistance where required.

***Recommendation 4.5.1*** The City should commit to an annual fuel treatment program (implemented over 5 years on a priority basis) that targets progressive fuel reduction in high hazard fuel type areas identified by the CWPP planning process (Map 2 - WUI Fire Protection Units). The goal of fuel treatment is to reduce both crown and surface fire potential in priority areas. Fuel treatment programs will require that fuel break plans and site specific prescriptions be developed in consultation with qualified interface fire protection professionals.

***Recommendation 4.6.1:*** The City should meet with BC Ministry of Forests and Range officials to discuss the potential for development of a landscape fuelbreak within WUI Fire Protection Units 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11.

***Recommendation 4.6.2*** The City should meet with Ministry of Transportation & Highway officials to discuss highway right of way vegetation clearing procedures and standards along those sections of Highway 22 / Highway 3B northwest of the City core, Highway 3B northeast of Unit's 12, 13 and 14 and Highway 3B southeast of the City core that could function as a strategic fuel break.



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- Recommendation 4.6.3** The City should develop vegetation clearing procedures and standards for recreational trail maintenance in areas identified as strategic fuelbreaks – thinning with understory fuels removed over a 5m area on each side of the trail is proposed. Use of trails to facilitate access by fire suppression crews should also be considered in the development of any trail maintenance standard.
- Recommendation 4.6.4** The City should meet with British Columbia Transmission Corporation (BCTC) and Fortis officials to discuss powerline right of way vegetation clearing procedures and standards along those sections of BCTC and Fortis transmission line that could function as a fuel break in Unit's 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14. The City should work with utility companies to establish critical electrical infrastructure hazard reduction guidelines and cooperative arrangements for maintenance of low wildfire hazard conditions on and adjacent transmission line right of ways.
- Recommendation 4.7.1** The City should commence a hazard notification / mitigation recommendation program targeting property owners in Category 1 fuel treatment areas on a priority basis. While hazard reduction fuel treatments on private residential land within City boundaries remains the responsibility of property owners - City officials should facilitate the required fuel treatments to the greatest extent possible. Notification of residential property owners with property located in a high / extreme wildfire hazard area as identified during the recent City CWPP planning process is recommended. Further provision of FireSmart Homeowner's manual hazard assessment and mitigation information (including contact information for local fuel management contractor's) is recommended.
- Recommendation 4.7.2** The City should commence a hazard notification / mitigation recommendation program targeting property owners in Category 2 fuel treatment areas on a priority basis. Hazard reduction fuel treatments on land outside of City boundaries may involve cooperative fuel reduction initiatives using City of Rossland / Ministry of Forest and Range or leaseholder resources. City officials should facilitate the required fuel treatments to the greatest extent possible. Notification of non-residential property owners (Crown agencies or private landowners) with property located in a high / extreme wildfire hazard area as identified during the recent City CWPP planning process is recommended. Cooperative arrangements in support of fuel treatment actions should be considered to reduce the existing wildfire hazard to the City.
- Recommendation 4.8.1** The City should commit to performing required maintenance on fuel treated areas within its jurisdiction. Cooperative arrangements in support of required maintenance should be considered for fuel treated areas outside City jurisdiction.



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**Recommendation 4.9.1** The City should commit to the use of the existing Fuel Management – Pilot Project program to assist with completion of many of the key fuel management and associated interface fire protection initiative recommendations tabled under the City’s recent CWPP. The City should consider establishment of a FireSmart sub-committee of Council and proceed to submit a letter of interest to the UBCM evaluation committee. In the event that the pilot project proposal is of interest to the evaluation committee a more detailed proposal will be requested.

**Recommendation Summary - Section 5.0: Wildfire Prevention, Preparedness & Response**

**Recommendation 5.1.1** Planning and fire officials should commit to provision of regularly scheduled public education presentations augmented with additional presentation series following periods of heavy wildfire activity. One methodology would be to establish different target groups – schools, residents and business leaders – and ensure each group received a customized presentation on a multi-year rotation basis.

**Recommendation 5.1.2** Planning and fire officials should work to develop a Rossland specific Powerpoint presentation product. Developed in consultation with interface fire protection specialists the presentation would address FireSmart structural fire protection issues - ‘Understanding Structural Ignitions’ - why structures ignite during wildland interface fire events with an overview coverage of the three part FireSmart mitigation strategy (vegetation management, structural options and infrastructural modifications) specific to the Rossland area.

**Recommendation 5.1.3** Planning and fire officials should work to develop a Rossland specific public education display, fire danger signs and FireSmart demonstration properties in consultation with both interface fire protection, planning and media development specialists.

**Recommendation 5.1.4** The City should review all wildfire prevention and suppression policies to ensure that activities such as industrial closures, fire tool requirements and prevention activities are regulated by City bylaw as provincial authority under the provincial Wildfire Act and Regulation no longer applies within municipalities.

**Recommendation 5.1.5** The City should develop an ancillary wildfire prevention program for use during periods of high fire danger (when provincial fire bans or fire advisories are in place for the City area). Such restrictions would be determined by an appointed staff representative via consultation with the following link: <http://www.bcwildfire.ca/hprScripts/DgrCls/index.asp?Region=6>



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- Recommendation 5.2.1** During periods of high wildfire activity in the City area - City should monitor (via appointed staff representative) the BC Ministry of Forests and Range Protection Branch website which features a 'Current Situation' link - - <http://bcwildfire.ca/Situation/> providing details on any active wildfires in the City area. The City staff representative should contact BC MoFR Southeast Fire Centre fire management staff for the latest information on any fires adjacent to or affecting the City.
- Recommendation 5.2.2** In the event that significant wildfire activity is occurring in the City area, a 'Daily Wildfire Update' should be provided by an appointed City Media / Communications person. Wildfire updates should be accessible on the City website and available to assist all front line service staff in providing responses to resident inquiries regarding wildfire activity.
- Recommendation 5.3.1** A written wildfire evacuation procedure should be included as part of the City Emergency Response Plan – a component of the City Emergency Program. City fire and emergency response officials should meet with BC Ministry of Forests and Range Protection, Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) and Regional District emergency planning representatives to review the wildfire evacuation plan.
- Recommendation 5.4.1** The City should develop post wildfire rehabilitation plans that address the full range of rehabilitation activities that may be required on a large burn area (500 – 4,000 ha's). Initially, rehabilitation work will focus on stabilization of slopes and protection of infrastructure. Post wildfire rehabilitation work will be limited to a short period of time in the fall (Aug. – Nov.).
- Recommendation 5.4.2** A list of contractors that are qualified and capable of providing post-wildfire assessments and emergency stabilization/rehabilitation of damaged areas should be developed.
- Recommendation 5.5.1** City fire and emergency response officials should review wildfire reporting and initial response procedures with BC Ministry of Forests and Range protection representatives annually.
- Recommendation 5.6.1** All Rossland Fire Dept. members should be provided with a basic wildland fire suppression training course on an annual basis. Rossland Fire Dept members should also be provided with interface fire operations and Incident Command System training with reviews provided on an annual basis.
- Recommendation 5.6.2** Additional wildfire suppression equipment would improve Rossland Fire Dept. wildfire suppression effectiveness. The following items should be purchased:
- 7 pulaskis and 6 fire shovels;
  - pressure pump (Wildfire Striker II Plus, Wildfire Ultra-Striker or Wildfire Mark 3) complete (suction hose, fuel can, tool kit with valves + nozzles etc.);
  - volume pump (Honda WH30X or equivalent) complete (suction hose, fuel can, tool kit with valves + nozzles etc.);
  - 1,000' x 1 ½" wildland lined fire hose lengths;
  - sufficient quantity of wildland personal protective equipment to outfit 20 firefighters with Nomex coveralls, helmets, wildland boots, gloves, goggles, ear protection.



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- Recommendation 5.7.1** Tactical response plans should be prepared for WUI Protection Unit values at risk on a priority basis – plans will list general structure and site preparation actions including installation of sprinkler protection systems.
- Recommendation 5.7.2** The City should purchase a basic structural sprinkler protection system. A basic sprinkler kit package would include sufficient equipment (sprinkler heads, hoses, valves and adapters, mounting poles and brackets) to provide rooftop sprinklers for twenty-five structures and Priority Zone 1 and 2 sprinkler coverage for a kilometer of sprinkler line. Rossland Fire Dept. members should be trained and exercise in the rapid assembly and activation of the sprinkler system.
- Recommendation 5.8.1** City fire officials should commence a formal tactical response planning process for all Fire Danger Zone 1 and 2 WUI Protection Units. Tactical response access as well as resource and water requirements for both planned sprinkler systems and tactical engine needs should be included in the tactical response plan.
- Recommendation 5.8.2** City fire officials should work with City Works personnel to ensure adequate hydrant water supply in all foreseeable wildfire tactical response situations. Exercises to test the effectiveness of emergency firefighting water supplies during wildfire tactical response are recommended.
- Recommendation 5.8.3** City fire officials should work with City Works personnel to ensure that generator capacity is installed at both the Star Gulch water treatment plant / pumping station and the Kirkup pumping station to ensure hydrant water supplies are unaffected by electrical power failure.

**Recommendation Summary - Section 6.0: Legislation**

- Recommendation 6.2.1** City of Rossland planning and fire officials should review and compare both existing City bylaws and examples of successful interface fire legislation in consultation with an interface fire protection specialist. Development of viable interface fire legislation may be most effectively facilitated by amending the existing OCP DPA section to incorporate a schedule designated DPA – Wildfire Hazard Area (the boundaries of which can be derived from the CWPP Fire Danger Zone section).

In addition, guidelines for development permit issuance in any DPA – Wildfire Hazard Area should require that all new development or addition/retrofitting to existing structures takes place in accordance with FireSmart recommended guidelines applying to vegetation management, structural design and construction and infrastructural design or modification.



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