

District of Wells

Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan 2022



Photo Credit: Louis Orioux

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CWRP – Purpose and Goals

Purpose:

- To identify and update the wildfire risk specific to Wells' Wildland Urban Interface (WUI),
- to describe the potential consequences of wildfire to the community, and
- to examine options and strategies to reduce the wildfire risks.

Goals:

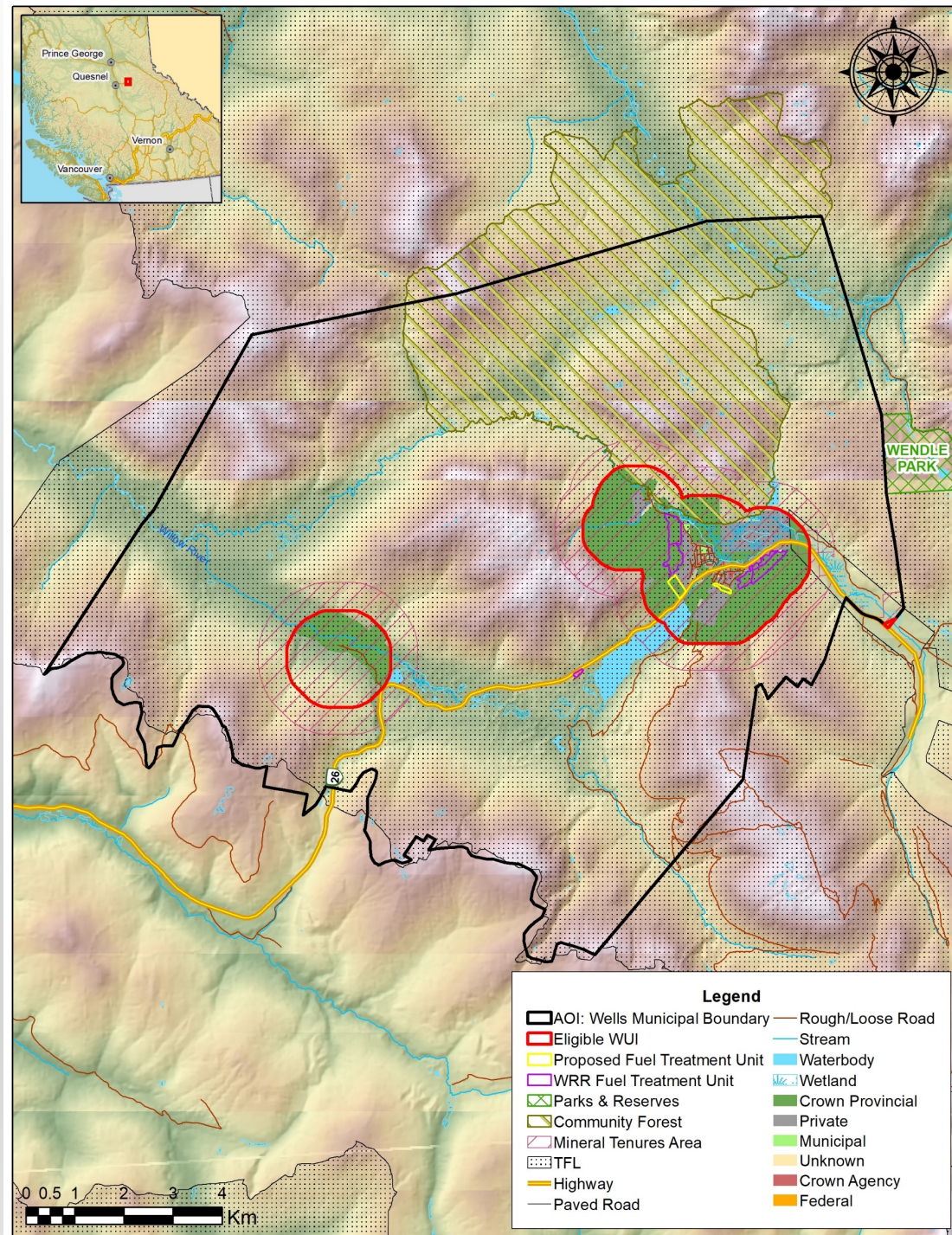
- For the District of Wells to use the CWRP as a framework to inform the implementation of specific actions and strategies (based on the 7 FireSmart principles) to:
 - 1) Increase the effectiveness of fire suppression and emergency response,
 - 2) Reduce potential impacts and losses to property and critical infrastructure from wildfire, and
 - 3) Reduce wildfire behaviour threats within the community.



Eligible Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

(Map 1 in CWRP document)

The eligible WUI represents a 1 km buffer surrounding a structure density of six or more structures per square kilometre within the area of interest. This designates the scope of the CWRP.



Wildfire Behavior

(Map 5 in CWRP document)

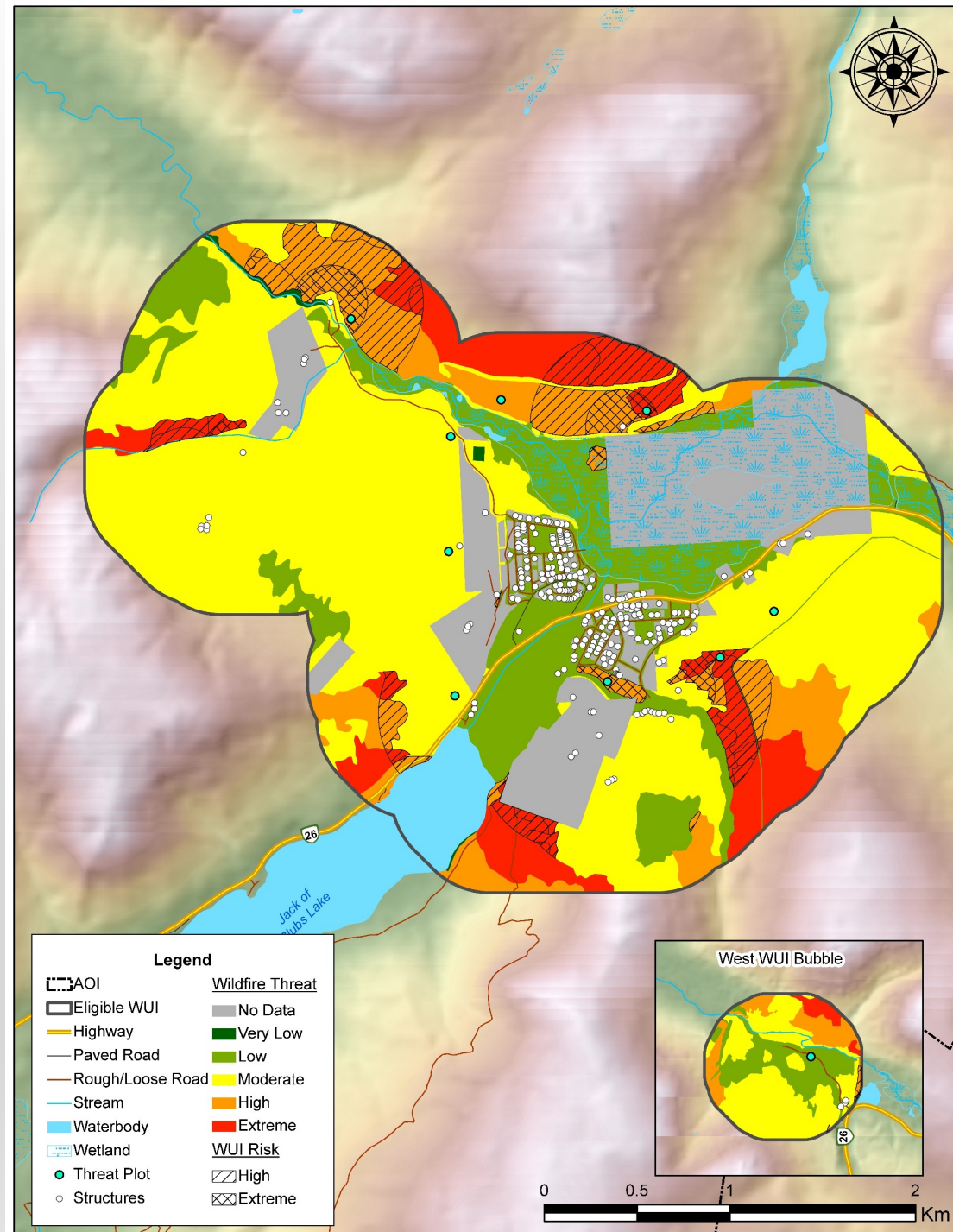
The local wildfire threat assessment process incorporates several key steps and factors in its analysis. These include:

- Updated fuel types from field assessments,
- proximity of fuels to the community,
- analysis of fire spread patterns, and
- consideration of topography

Fire behaviour threat for the assessable area of Wells' WUI is determined as being (by area):

- 21% = Low or Very Low
- 44% = Moderate
- 21% = High or Extreme

Note: CRI grant funding does not allow for assessment of private property, which constitutes 14% of the WUI's land base.



Summary of Key Recommendations & Objectives

Wells should look to mitigate its highest risk factors (vulnerabilities) while also building upon its existing strengths (resilience) factors:

Vulnerability	Resilience
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Forest interface edge on leading wind edge- Structures (older and newer) wood or vinyl siding- Wood piles against or within 10m of home- Small lots = structures very close together- Isolated community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hydrants- Relatively flat topography of developed area- Metal roofs- Urban vegetation largely low in fire hazard- Municipal properties mostly maintained vegetation- Large wetlands and lakes provide natural fire breaks



Summary of Key Recommendations & Objectives

Since:

- 1) The majority of the WUI is dominated Crown land with conifer and mixed wood forests that can carry fires, and
- 2) Structures on the edge of the small community are almost all forest interface;

And understanding the inherent limited capacity/manpower of small municipalities, such as Wells...

A focus on:

FireSmart™ education	FireSmart home and infrastructure management
Cross-Training and Emergency Planning	Implementing Fuel Treatment Units

... are the most important factors towards people, structures, and homes surviving a wildfire event in Wells.



Summary of Key Recommendations & Action Items

Education

Targeting Visitors/Tourists:

- Purchase and install Fire Danger Rating signs for major highway entrances/exits to Wells (i.e., both ends of Highway 26/Barkerville Highway).

Targeting Residents:

- Launch a FireSmart social media campaign targeting platforms and online community groups used by Wells' residents.



Summary of Key Recommendations & Action Items

Legislation, Planning, and Development Considerations

Water

- Conduct a water supply analysis to determine how long 'fire flows' can be maintained on the existing system, even in 'peak drought scenarios' and high-use periods.
 - Explore opportunities to increase the Wells water reservoir capacity as required.

Development

- Conduct a full review and update of the Wells OCP to imbed FireSmart principles within the stated objectives and policies and to guide future land use and development decisions through a FireSmart lens.



Summary of Key Recommendations & Action Items

Interagency Cooperation

Emergency Planners and Responders

- Continue hosting Wells Emergency Management Committee meetings, incorporating recommended FireSmart, wildfire, and land managers as recommended for Community FireSmart and Resiliency Committee (CFRC) topics, discussions, and planning.

Local Stakeholders and Industry

- Engage with forest licensees within the WUI so that both harvesting operations and the future forest stand maintain or enhance wildfire resiliency, especially at interface edges/within Wells' WUI.



Summary of Key Recommendations & Action Items

Cross-Training

First Responders

- Support WVFB in obtaining necessary wildfire equipment, and training with it.
 - Much of WVFB's current equipment was noted as being aging and unreliable.
 - Included in this is the acquisition of structural sprinkler protection units.

Emergency Planners and Responders

- Complete and participate in regular testing of, and updates to, the Wells Emergency Management Plan. Include yearly (pre-fire season is best) wildfire emergency simulation exercises.
 - Identify hazards, barriers to access (i.e., locked gates, tight or no turnarounds), and other response issues and develop measures to address them.



Summary of Key Recommendations & Action Items

Emergency Planning

Safe Access/Egress

- Mount/install acquired Emergency Evacuation signs.
- Work with the road permit holders of available resource road access/egress routes so that a minimum of one additional route is always kept in evacuation-ready condition during fire season.

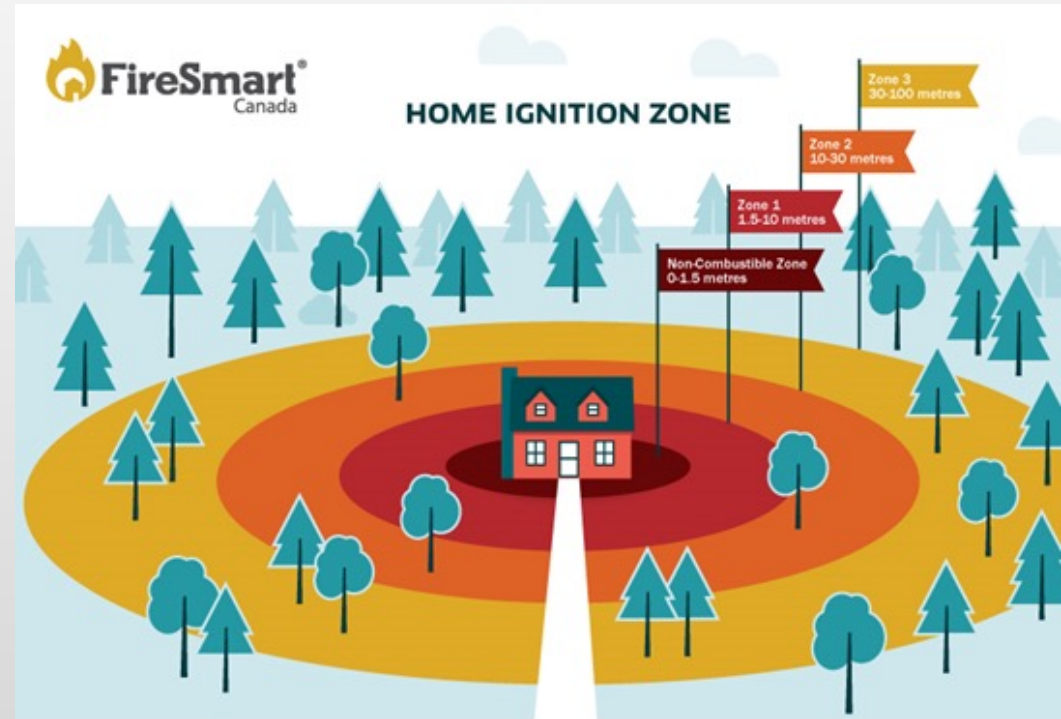


Vegetation Management

Residential scale FireSmart practices

Residential FireSmart Vegetation management refers to the removal, reduction, or conversion of flammable [landscaping] plants to create more fire-resistant areas surrounding homes and infrastructure.

- Complete FireSmart Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) assessments Wells received funding for.
- In conjunction with the FireSmart HIZ assessments, make residents aware of the rebate program Wells received funding for.



Graphic: FireSmart Canada

(<https://www.firesmartcanada.ca/mdocs-posts/firesmart-home-ignition-zone-graphic/>)

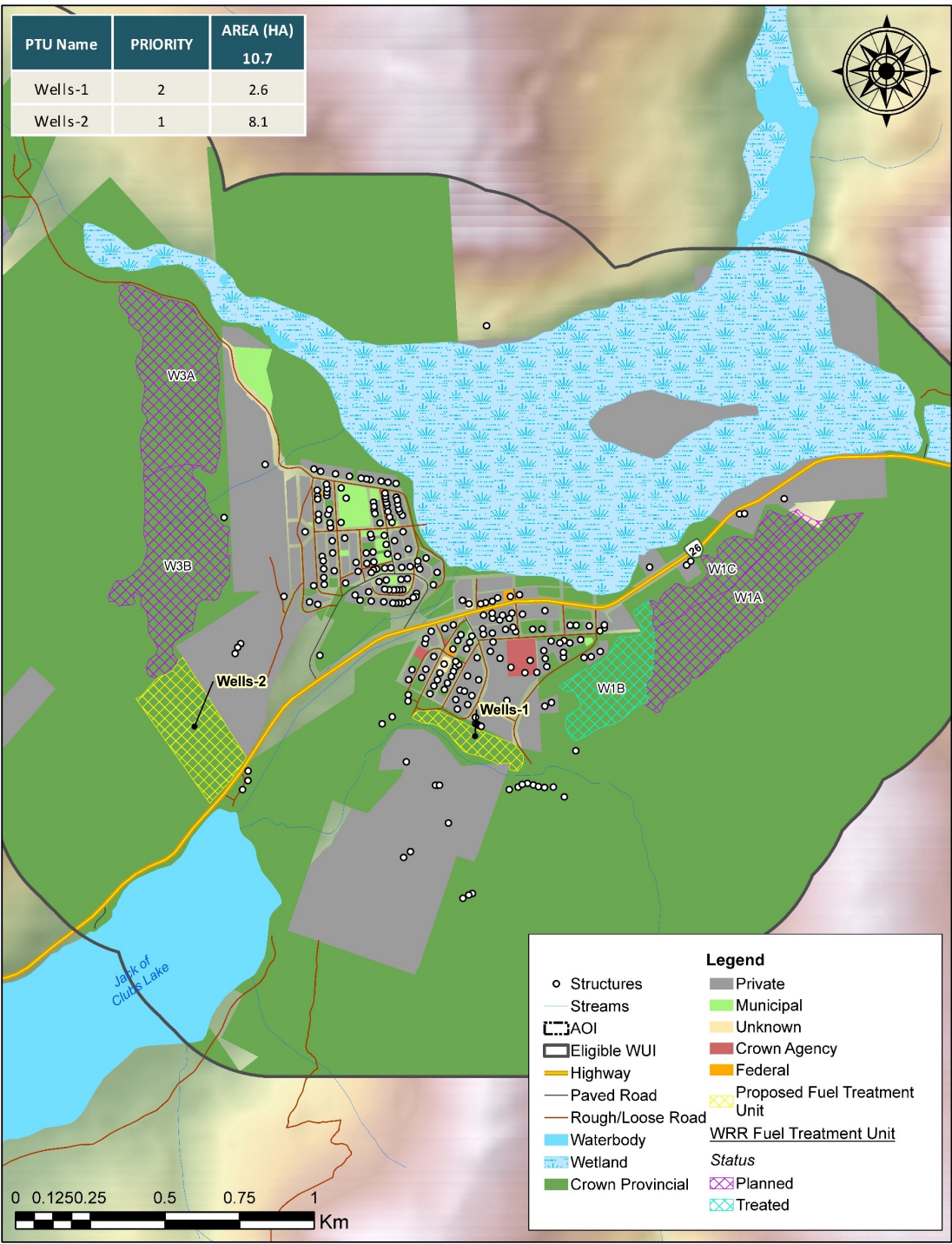


Summary of Key Recommendations & Action Items

Vegetation Management

Fuel Management Treatments

Proceed with detailed assessment, prescription development, and treatment of fuel treatment units identified and prioritized in this CWRP.



SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

- 65% of Wells' assessable WUI has a moderate wildfire behaviour threat or higher. Despite Wells' fire season being short, the analyses presented and discussed throughout the CWRP document show that wildfire is a threat to the community
- The CWRP sets the stage for implementing important, relevant actions to increase awareness of wildfire risk and to increase Wells' wildfire preparedness and resiliency.
- Overall, a focus on
 - FireSmart education,
 - FireSmart Home and Critical Infrastructure Ignition Zone management, and
 - Implementing planned and proposed fuel treatment units adjacent to the community

are the most important factors towards people, structures, and homes surviving a wildfire event in Wells' WUI.



Thank you!

