



# Wildfire Threat Assessment Guide and Worksheets

Sub-component and descriptor definitions



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Version 3, March 2019

*This version of the Wildfire Threat Assessment Guide and Worksheets was edited and produced by the:*

**Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development  
BC Wildfire Service**

## Acknowledgements

The British Columbia Wildfire Service (BCWS) would like to thank and acknowledge the previous work completed in the 2008 “*Rating Interface Wildfire Threats in British Columbia*” (not available online, can be made available upon request) and the 2013 “*Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Threat Assessments in B.C.*” authored by Bruce Morrow, Kelly Johnston, and John Davies. These documents have been time tested to meet the needs of the Community Resilience Investment program (CRI) in terms of rating relative wildfire threat to communities in B.C. This *Wildfire Threat Assessment Guide and Worksheets* document builds on the knowledge base of the previous documents and updates the process with the inclusion of the 2019 [Provincial Strategic Threat Analysis \(PSTA\)](#). The feedback and contributions of the BCWS and the SWPI working group is also acknowledged in preparation of this document.

## Version 2

Version 2 changes include;

1. Editing to format, grammar and structure to provide more clarity.
2. Addition of a section in the Introduction (1.5 How the WTA Integrates with the CWPP Template Section 4 Wildfire Threat)
3. Addition of sections in 2.1 Designing the Wildfire Threat Assessment (2.1.1 Field Planning and 2.1.2 Fuel Typing)
4. Additional text added for clarification to the following sections, subsections or components.
  - a. 2.0 Completing the Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheets
  - b. 2.1 Designing the Wildfire Threat Assessment
  - c. 3.1.2 Worksheet Components
    - 1. Proximity of Fuel Treatment Area to Value
    - 2. Vegetation Management Practices
    - 3. Predominant Wildfire Spread Direction
    - 4. Distance to Nearest Vehicle Access
    - 5. Distance to Non-fuel Polygons near the Assessment Area
  - d. 3.1.3 Wildfire Threat Assessment - Priority Setting Scoring Summary
  - e. 3.2 Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheet - Fuel Assessment (Site Level)
  - f. 3.1.2 Worksheet Components
    - 3. Dead and Down Material Continuity  $\leq 7$  cm (% cover)
    - 4. Ladder Fuel Composition
  - g. 3.2.3 Wildfire Threat Assessment – Site Level Scoring

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## 1.0 Introduction

An effective fuel management program is a key element of British Columbia's proactive wildfire threat reduction approach. Fuel management treatments involve the manipulation or reduction of living or dead vegetation to reduce the likelihood of ignition and the potential for extreme fire behaviour resulting in negative impacts to values. Fuel treatments can require extensive resources and therefore must be carefully planned and prioritized in order to identify treatment units that will have the greatest impact. The *Wildfire Threat Assessment Guide and Worksheets* provide an updated approach to assessing fuel hazard in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) in order to inform fuel treatment planning and quantify wildfire threat reduction at the post treatment stage.

Any fire mitigation strategy must examine the true drivers of fire behaviour: fuel, weather and topography. The BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) released the 2019 [Provincial Strategic Threat Assessment \(PSTA\)](#) to provide a relative wildfire threat rating at a provincial level, to communities, resource managers and practitioners planning wildfire risk mitigation activities. The goal of the PSTA is to provide spatially-explicit tools for understanding the variables that contribute to wildfire threat including: fire density, spotting impact, and head fire intensity. These inputs were combined to produce an overall fire threat analysis layer that integrates many different aspects of fire hazard and risk. The PSTA provides a strategic level assessment to identify areas of relative wildfire threat across the landscape while wildfire threat assessments are utilized to assess fuel hazard at the individual stand level. This stand level information is used to update the PSTA.

Previous wildfire threat assessment guides and worksheets including the 2008 *Rating Interface Wildfire Threats in British Columbia* and the 2013 [Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Threat Assessments in B.C.](#), were intended to assign relative threat ratings to forest stands in the WUI in B.C. The new *Wildfire Threat Assessment Guide and Worksheets* was developed to help validate, qualify, or ground truth the PSTA threat rating and define specific fuel stratum within forest stands and rangelands. This will ensure the wildfire threat rating and pre-stand attributes are quantified prior to the fuel management prescription stage. This allows for a consistent standard of quantifying wildfire threat in B.C. As in the previous threat assessment guides, this update does not address issues with actual structures (building materials, windows, porches, etc.). FireSmart, or some other recognized assessment system, should be utilized to address structural issues. Rating house or structure survivability is outside the area of practice of most forest professionals and should be left to those specializing in that field, such as structural firefighting professionals.

The Wildfire Threat Assessment (WTA) process was developed to be consistent with wildfire behaviour principles from the Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System (CFFDRS). The goal is to assess the forest fuel hazard immediately adjacent to values and extend outwards into the landscape. There is a reduced focus on weather and topography components due to the level they are currently represented at in the PSTA. The WTA process builds upon the solid foundation provided in the 2013 [Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Threat Assessments in B.C.](#) and the supporting materials within that document are still applicable for the components described here. This document will explain the updated components and processes as well as describe the linkages between the WTA Guide and Worksheets and the 2017 Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Template. As wildfire threat knowledge increases, the WTA guide will be reviewed.

## 1.1 Experience and Knowledge Required to Complete Wildfire Threat Assessments

The WTA process was developed for use by forest professionals to validate or verify the wildfire threat rating from the PSTA while also collecting detailed data on key forest stand attributes. The wildfire threat assessor is a forest professional working within their scope of practice in terms of wildfire response and fire behaviour experience. This has changed from previous threat assessments guides which were oriented towards forest professionals with limited wildfire experience, local government or provincial staff, or members of a local fire department with very basic forestry skills. Completing an accurate wildfire threat assessment facilitates fuel management prescription development and requires knowledge and expertise in surveying practices, as well extensive familiarity with the CFFDRS.

## 1.2 The Practice of Professional Forestry in B.C.

The Association of British Columbia Forest Professionals' (ABC FP) position is that the skills and knowledge required for completing wildfire threat assessments in B.C. fall under the practice of professional forestry. The Association's position and guidance can be found in [Appendix A - The ABCFP Position on Rating Interface Wildfire Threats in British Columbia](#). Additionally, any forest professional undertaking wildfire threat assessments must ensure they are operating within their scope of practice and have the appropriate experience and knowledge as outlined in the [ABCFP Interim Guidelines – Fire and Fuel Management](#). Practitioners should be familiar with the guidance provided within this document.

## 1.3 How to Use This Guide

This WTA Guide is intended to assist wildfire threat assessors in completing the WTA Worksheets. More information regarding the entire wildfire risk assessment process for the development of a CWPP is available on the 2019 / 2020 [Community Resiliency Investment website](#). The new [community wildfire resiliency planning framework](#) is expected to be implemented by spring 2020 and will replace the current CWPP process, however existing and current CWPPs will still be considered valid.

There are two WTA Worksheets. Each WTA Worksheet is comprised of several components and sub-components. Each sub-component has 4-5 choices for selection.

The **Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheet - Priority Setting Scoring** examines topography, site level and previous mitigation activities within the area of interest. Only one of these will need to be completed per treatment unit or area of interest. This assessment will not be added to the plot level assessment score but is a stand-alone score which assists in prioritization of treatment areas or areas requiring more detailed review.

The **Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheet - Fuel Assessment (Site Level)** portrays a full fuel stratum for the forest stand by examining the ground fuel, surface fuel, ladder fuel and crown or aerial fuel. One worksheet will be completed for each plot within the area of interest treatment unit. The final survey methodology will be determined by the qualified professional in the field.

A reference copy of the worksheets can be found in [Appendix B - Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheets](#). A working version of the worksheets can be found on the [UBCM website](#).

## 1.4 Provincial Strategic Threat Analysis - Wildfire Threat Analysis

The 2019 [PSTA](#) is designed to assess and map relative wildfire threat to values on the B.C. landscape; including communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. Values, in the context of the PSTA refer to natural resources or man-made structures or features that have measurable or intrinsic worth and could be impacted by wildfire. Cultural values, species and ecosystems at risk, community watersheds, old growth management areas (OGMAs), wildlife habitat areas (WHAs), and timber are examples of values that may be negatively impacted by wildfire.

The PSTA was developed using geographic modelling tools and a wide range of data to assess various wildfire threat elements, including vegetation types, historical wildfire data, forest fuel classification, fire behaviour patterns, geography and other factors. The relative wildfire threat was determined in large part by evaluating three distinct elements: fire occurrence (fire density), suppression difficulty and fire impacts under severe fire weather conditions (head fire intensity under the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile fire weather), and spotting potential (where embers are blown ahead of the main fire and start new fires). The final PSTA wildfire threat maps indicate relative wildfire threat across the province, using a 10-level threat scale (with 1 being the lowest risk and 10 being the highest risk). The PSTA is also grouped into four threat classes of Extreme (9/10), High (7/8), Moderate (4/5/6), and Low (1/2/3).

The PSTA was conducted at a provincial scale to assess the broad threat presented by wildfire across the geographic extent of B.C. The PSTA should be considered dynamic and will be updated as required to capture changes occurring on the land base. The [Provincial Strategic Threat Analysis Report](#) speaks to areas of higher threat as: *“The 10 Fire Threat Classes represent increasing levels of overall fire threat. Class 7 (with values from 33.1 to 40) is a threshold and the most severe overall threat classes are Class 7 and higher. Areas of the province that fall into these higher classes are most in need of mitigation, where it is feasible to do so.”* PSTA rating of 7 or above represents a high or extreme wildfire threat and should be prioritized for further review. The [PSTA Report](#) provides details regarding the assumptions and limitations of the PSTA and should be reviewed by practitioners prior to completing a threat assessment. An overview of improvements made in the 2019 PSTA can be viewed in the [2019 PSTA Overview](#).

## 1.5 How the WTA Integrates with the CWPP Template Section 4 Wildfire Threat and Risk

The goal of the 2019 CWPP wildfire threat process is to link the PSTA to updated fuel typing so the PSTA will reflect a local wildfire threat. Consistency in the approach to updating the PSTA for a local wildfire threat is a fundamental outcome. The entire area of interest would have to be assessed and confirmed during the process to meet the standards outlined in the 2019 CWPP Template. The subsequent local wildfire risk classification process builds from the local wildfire threat score to include additional fire behavior and values information gathered through the WTA process. This process is described in more detail in Section 4 of the [Community Wildfire Protection Plan Template 2019](#). The new [community wildfire resiliency planning framework](#) is expected to be implemented by spring 2020 and will replace the current CWPP process, however existing and current CWPPs will still be considered valid.

The PSTA is a starting point meant to aid in the identification of areas requiring further review. Updating the

PSTA to produce the local wildfire threat score is predominately linked to fuel type updating. The BCWS, through the development of the BCWS Fuel Type Mapping and Summary Document has developed a set of principles that are used to assign a fuel type to all polygons in B.C. Detailed information on the approach, assumptions and principles is provided in the [BC Fuel Type Map Document](#).

Identifying stand structure attributes and the local fuel hazard information from the WTA worksheets will help to identify fuel type changes and aid in the final wildfire risk classification. Key information gathered from the WTA Worksheets is used to inform the local wildfire risk classification including the proximity (proximity of fuel treatment area to value/interface), fire spread patterns (predominant wildfire spread direction), slope position of value and slope percent components. The 'local fuel hazard' as defined through the Fuel Assessment Site Level Scoring process of the WTA is also part of the final wildfire risk class assignment described in the Wildfire Threat and Risk section of the 2017 CWPP Template. The final wildfire risk class is based on the local wildfire risk score and the local fuel hazard as determined through the Fuel Assessment (Site Level) final score (E/H/M/L). The final decision on how to assign within these components is left to the professional's judgement. Where local factors are sufficient to justify changes to the local wildfire risk values provided in the 2017 CWPP Template, a rationale is required.

The local threat assessment (updated PSTA) and wildfire risk class are meant to highlight areas for more focused review and aid in the final fuel treatment design. The PSTA, updated fuel types, local wildfire threat, final wildfire risk classification are all key drivers of final fuel treatment design as well as any additional relevant local and professional knowledge. Treatment areas should be anchored, logical and driven by key fire behavior characteristics including wind spread direction. The final wildfire risk class, in combination with professional judgment, should drive the design of tactical fuel treatments or fuel breaks to address each unique wildfire risk situation.

## 2.0 Completing the Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheets

The significant change for this version of the WTA is the focus on stand attribute data, and the removal of supporting fire weather and fire behaviour components as these are contained in the PSTA. As a result, the worksheets concentrate on fuel structure components.

Completing a WTA involves documenting the ability of a unique area of forestland to support a wildfire. The WTA is designed to provide a view of the forest structure which is then used to quantify the rating of the PSTA by updating the fuel types. Usually areas of interest are located adjacent to, surrounding or abutting communities or values at risk on the landscape.

### 2.1 Designing the Wildfire Threat Assessment

An initial review of the entire area will be required using the PSTA as the starting point for determining where to focus the WTA. Areas of highest priority for detailed review will have a threat rating of PSTA greater less than 7 (or 6 in some cases). However, if the underlying fuel typing is not representative of the stand or polygon to the effect that an update will result in the PSTA score being increased significantly (6 or greater) then the next step is to update accordingly.

The process is an iterative one where the data can be reviewed through an aerial or orthophoto/imagery exercise to focus on priority areas for further review. The review could include low to moderate areas



targeted for assessment or high and extreme areas to ensure that no areas are left out of the process based on their initial PSTA rating. Much of the work could be done through an imagery review or aerial survey consistent with past approaches described in previous threat guides to determining threat over a larger area such as the WUI. The intent is to focus the updating process only on areas where the change to threat is significant, as in resulting in a change to the PSTA Threat Classes. That decision is left to the professional.

Key information required to complete an accurate assessment include air photo, forest cover, PSTA rating, fuel type, aspect, topography, maps, and imagery at the right scale for the areas of interest. Section 3 Assessment Procedure of the [“Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Threat Assessment in B.C.”](#) which has been reproduced in [Appendix F – Assessment Procedure](#) provides a summary of an assessment approach that could be used for reference. It describes a polygon-based approach where areas of relatively homogenous forest cover and/or fuel type can be assessed through a combination of office and field review. There will be variation between polygon size attributed to the size of the study area and the targeted intensity of the assessment.

The WTA worksheets should be completed where it is required to confirm that the area has the correct PSTA rating, based on fuel information. Project proponents will determine which polygons are required to be stratified and assessed based on the experience of the forest professional. This would be done to ensure that all polygons rated high are captured. The **Fuel Assessment (Site Level) Worksheets** are where the detailed per hectare data can be collected to aid in fuel treatment prioritization and design as well as field verified fuel typing. The data required for fuel updates and threat assessment could be gathered at the same time.

## 2.2 Fuel Typing

There is a requirement to determine areas where fuel type mapping appears to be inaccurate and develop a quality assurance process to validate and provide a summary of local fuel types within and around the community on Crown land using the [Field Guide to the Canadian Forest Fire Behaviour Prediction System](#) (Special Report 11). A more detailed description of the fuel type verification process is provided in Section 4.3.1 of the 2019 CWPP Template. The final recommendations for fuel type are left to the qualified professional with the appropriate rationale and should be submitted to [BCWSPrevention@gov.bc.ca](mailto:BCWSPrevention@gov.bc.ca) for review. In addition, practitioners should also review the [BCWS Fuel Typing Summary Document](#).

Fuel typing updates can be correlated over larger areas with similar fuel attributes; with the final fuel type update form identifying associated polygons. In these circumstances, one submission per fuel type update is not required with the general fuel typing approach described and is not a spatial requirement. The assessor should determine where field work is required to support a rationale and where it is not. An office review can be used for areas that are easily typed such as clear cuts or non-fuel areas of new development that are clearly non-fuel. Grass fuel types are assumed to be cured. The form would then include images (google earth, orthographic maps) instead of photos with the appropriate rationale and have attached a representative photo and/or image that support the fuel type rationale change. The final spatial submissions standards outlined in the [2019 Program Guide for the Fuel Type](#) layer describes the required polygon attribute information for the final fuel layer associated with only the updated polygons.

## 2.3 Field Planning

The **Fuel Assessment (Site Level) Worksheet** could be completed several times for each area, based on the survey intensity prescribed and stratified in accordance with the [Silviculture Survey Procedures Manual](#). The requirement for sampling methodology, design and intensity is left to the field practitioner.

The goal is to ensure that some level of survey background must be understood in order to accurately perform the task. The manual includes ranges and alternative survey methodologies including high level walk through, aerial overview and ocular approaches consistent with the stated survey objective as well as stratification principles. This could include a full ocular or spatial review. It is up to the qualified professional to determine the most useful approach. There will be different intensities on the survey objective. For example, at the fuel typing update level it may be rather coarse and include a combination of aerial imagery and field work and refined to a higher sampling intensity once the treatment areas have been confirmed.

As discussed in the "[Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Threat Assessments in B.C.](#)" guide, assessments are best completed under snow free conditions when vegetation has fully flushed in order to accurately measure the duff, surface fuel, and vegetation sub-components. Heavy snow loading can limit the threat assessors' ability to accurately estimate or measure the sub-components listed above. Timing for wildfire threat assessments are often dictated by external factors. Snow and other conditions that prevent complete or accurate assessments must be discussed with project proponents to ensure constraints and limitations are understood.

To account for regional differences in forest stand structure, there is different scoring (low, moderate, high, and extreme) by Eco provinces. This scoring is not necessary to apply for funding to treat an area under the SWPI, as a supporting rationale will be evaluated for treatment funding. The Fuel Assessment - Site Level worksheet can be used to score the treatment areas in terms of prioritization and aid in the final assignment of risk class.

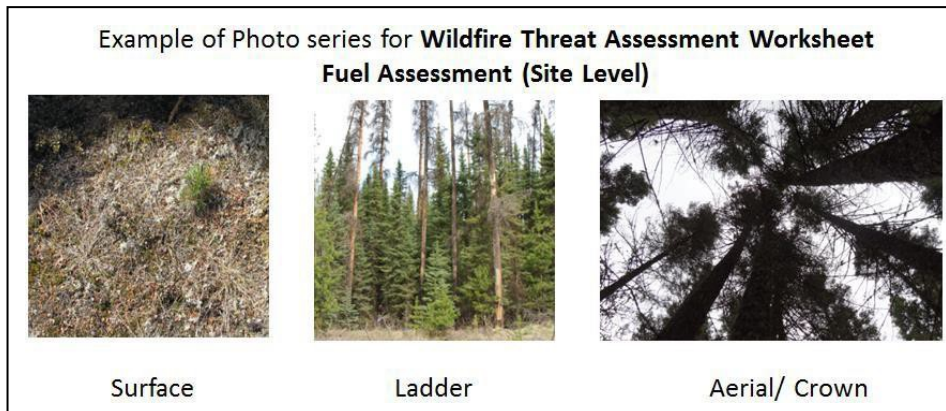
Nota Bene: This WTA methodology was not developed as a fuel hazard rating tool for licensees to meet Wildfire Act hazard assessment and abatement requirements.

## 2.4 Photo Standards

When fuel typing is based on a site review, photographs must accompany the fuel type rationale and the **Fuel Assessment (Site Level) Worksheet** and are collected as part of the plot and fuel typing information gathering. The purpose of this is to visually document the wildfire threat and fuel stratum in a pre-treatment condition.

The wildfire threat assessor must take at least three photos of each plot. These photos should document the fuel stratum of the plot area by including photos of the surface fuel, ladder fuel (whether present or absent) and the crown or aerial fuel. The wildfire threat assessor should note the cardinal direction in which the photos were taken and note any other comments on the assessment sheet. Where possible there should be some type of reference in the photo for scale. [Appendix C - Robel Pole Construction](#) has instructions for constructing a "Robel" pole for photo scale. [Appendix D - Photo Guide Template](#) includes a photo guide template for completing a photo series for each plot.

The following is an example of the type of photo to provide at each plot point.



**Figure 1: Example Photo Series**

## 3.0 Worksheet Components and Sub-components

### 3.1 Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheet – Priority Setting Scoring

The **Priority Setting Scoring Worksheet** describes the strategic non-fuel factors that influence the importance of a specific fuel treatment area to mitigate an identified wildfire threat. The scoring from this sheet will not be part of the overall threat calculation, but may be used to form a priority setting score at a local level.

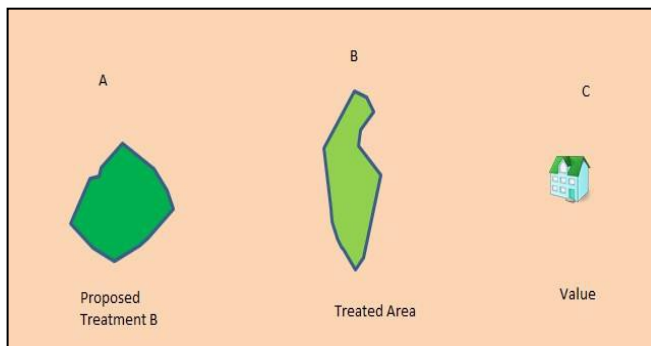
#### 3.1.1 Worksheet descriptions

| Item                                | Description   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Location                            | Geographical location or can be indicated by a cardinal direction for clarification (i.e. NW of Pleasantville)  |
| Date                                | Date of assessment  |
| Assessor / Professional Designation | Assessor’s name and professional designation  |
| Coordinates                         | Coordinates of the treatment area (usually a single point at the access point)  |
| Coordinate System Used and Format   | Coordinate system used and format i.e. Lat./ Long – DD MM.MMM   |
| PSTA Threat Rating                  | What is the PSTA rating for the area being assessed?  |
| FBP Fuel Type                       | Fuel type from the FBP fuel map   |
| Assessor’s FBP Fuel type            | If the assessor thinks the mapped FBP fuel type is incorrect. Fill out FBP Fuel Type Rationale form in <a href="#">Appendix E - FBP Fuel Type Rationale</a> |
| Ownership                           | Ownership – crown, private etc.   |
| Assessor’s Fuel Type Rationale      | Rationale for the Assessor’s FBP fuel type (include photos)   |
| Value Description                   | What is the value(s) that this threat mitigation will be protecting?  |

## 3.1.2 Worksheet Components

### 1. Proximity of Fuel Treatment Area to Value

Using FireSmart principles, this component classifies the overall location of treatments and their ability to mitigate wildfire threat to values. Fuel closest to the value usually represents the highest hazard. A treatment placed further from a value allows for a wildfire to build in intensity and rate of spread before impacting a value. If a treatment is placed further from the value but there is another treatment closer and in line with the value, this would be the distance to the next treated area as shown in Figure 2: Distance to Value. In situations where an existing completed treatment area or non-fuel/fuel free area exists between the proposed treatment unit and the value, use that distance rather than the distance from the proposed treatment to actual value.



Distance from Treatment area (A) to Value (C). If an existing treatment (B) is applicable, then the distance is from A to B.

This component is measured from the cleared (e.g. FireSmart) or previously treated area around the value outward to the closest edge of the treatment boundary.

**Figure 2: Distance to Value**

**Table 1: Proximity to Value**

| Level | Descriptor*   | Explanation  |
|-------|---------------|--|
| A     | 0 - 100 m     | Treatment would modify the wildfire behaviour near or adjacent to the value.   |
| B     | 101 - 500 m   | Treatment would affect wildfire behaviour approaching a value, as well as the wildfire's ability to impact the value with short - to medium - range spotting; would also provide suppression opportunities near a value.                       |
| C     | 501 - 1000 m  | Treatment would be effective in limiting medium - range spotting but short - range spotting would fall short of the value and may cause a new wildfire ignition that would affect a value; could provide suppression opportunities near value. |
| D     | 1001 - 2000 m | Marginal treatment value for threat mitigation. Lofted embers Have a lower likelihood of reaching the value but could cause a new wildfire near a value. Reduced benefit to suppression.   |
| E     | >2000 m       | Treatment is relatively ineffective for threat mitigation to a value, unless used to form a part of a larger fuel break / treatment.   |

\*Distances are based on spotting distances of high and moderate fuel types spotting potential and threshold to break crown fire potential (100m).

## 2. Vegetation Management Practices

This category will assess the ability of a proposed fuel management treatment to be added value to mitigating an advanced wildfire by further breaking up the fuel continuity on the landscape. The value added piece is that it would work with an existing fuel treatment to break the landscape fuel continuity.

**Table 2: Vegetation Management Practices**

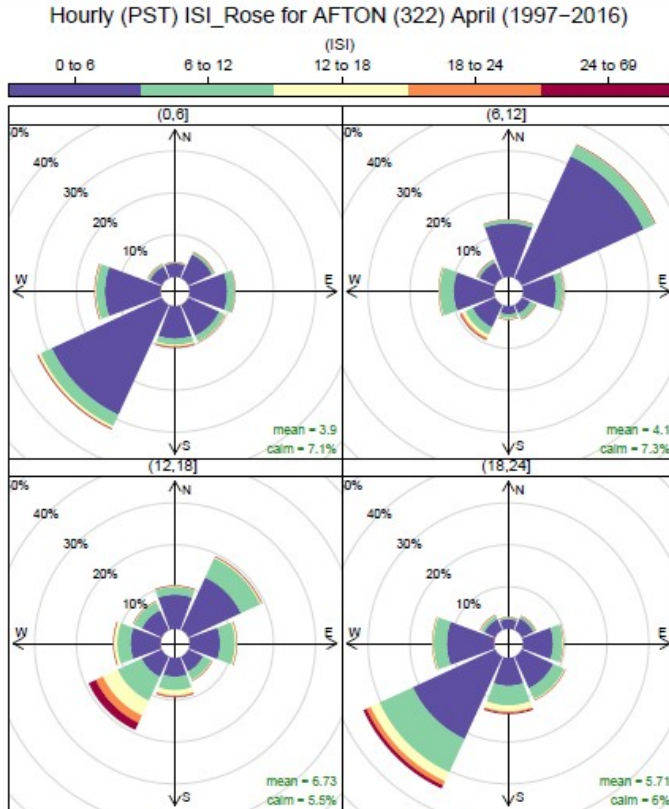
| Level | Descriptor | Explanation   |
|-------|------------|---|
| A     | Yes        | “Work from the value out to the wildfire threat.” Will this proposed treatment add extra value in wildfire mitigation?  |
| B     | No         | Flammable fuel are left untreated between the value and the proposed treatment area, this could allow a wildfire to make a full run towards a value. No suppression options near a value. |

## 3. Predominant Wildfire Spread Direction

Wind speed, wind direction, and fine fuel moisture condition influences wildfire trajectory and rate of spread, and is summarized in the [Initial Spread Index \(ISI\) Roses](#) from the local representative BCWS weather station(s) throughout the province. Wildfire that occurs upwind of a value poses a much more significant threat to that value than a fire that occurs downwind. These ISI Roses can provide users with a static look at the prevailing wind direction and wind speed for the representative wildfire weather stations. ISI Roses are an example of the tools that could be used to determine the “Predominant Wildfire Spread Direction.” If there is no representative ISI Roses or if the area around the community is affected by topographical influences, the assessor will have to use professional judgement and local knowledge to arrive at the “Predominant Wildfire Spread Direction.”

The hourly roses were completed by month (April to October). The daily period was broken into four time periods 0000 - 0600hrs (0, 6), 600 - 1200hrs (6, 12), 1200 - 1800hrs (12, 18) and 1800 - 2400hrs (18, 24). Figure 3 below shows an ISI Rose for the Afton weather station. Each ISI Rose shows the frequency of counts by wind direction with the frequency of the ISI values during that time period. The upper limits of the ISI are based on the highest recorded ISI for the station; in the example below, the upper limit is 24 - 103 with 103 being the highest recorded ISI for this station.

These ISI Roses will have numerous uses such as planning the placement of fuel treatments to help mitigate wildfire threat to values by showing the predominant wildfire spread direction. It should be noted however that significant wildfire runs can occur in directions other than the predominate spread direction. Historical wildfire perimeters can also provide valuable information as well.



**Figure 3: Initial Spread Index (ISI) Roses**

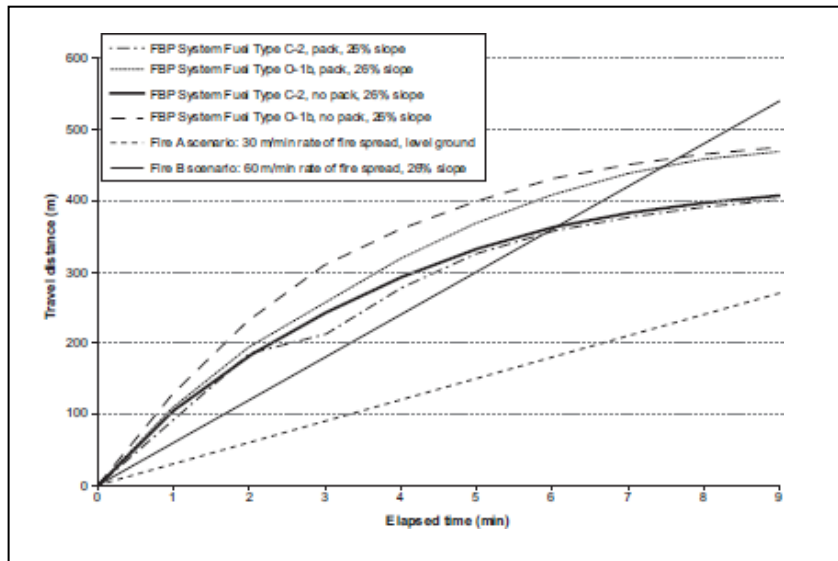
In the example ISI Roses above, treatments placed SW of the value may offer the most mitigation from an approaching wildfire. To complete the table below the local ISI Rose is reviewed. If the available weather station’s ISI Roses are not representative then the approach is to gather wind data from a more representative source along with the FFMC and use this data to inform the final predominant wildfire spread direction table.

**Table 3: Predominant Wildfire Spread Direction**

| Level | Descriptor                           | Explanation / Example   |
|-------|--------------------------------------|---|
| A     | NA                                   |   |
| B     | Downwind                             | Wind blowing from the value to the treatment area with a high to extreme ISI value (>18) (value would be impacted by backing wildfire). |
| C     | 90 degree offset to prevailing wind  | Wind blowing at an offset to the value location with a high to extreme ISI value (>18) (value would be impacted by flanking wildfire).  |
| D     | 270 degree offset to prevailing wind | Wind blowing at an offset to the value location with a high to extreme ISI value (>18) (value would be impacted by flanking wildfire).  |
| E     | Upwind                               | Wind blowing from the treatment area to the value with a high to extreme ISI value (>18) (value impacted by head wildfire).             |

## 4. Distance to Nearest Vehicle Access

This component rates the length of access to the treatment area. Access should wherever possible be linked to, or integrated with the treated area. The nearer the access to the treatment area, the quicker multiple types of resources could access and use this area as a fuel break. For example, fire suppression crews may also designate a road as an anchor point used in their safety plan. The distance from the treatment may be considered as part of the travel time necessary for their escape route. The example below is of fire fighter travel time research from FPIInnovations. This helps to show the ability of a fire fighter to access the treatment area to suppress any wildfire that is creeping into the treatment area, but it is not the definitive rational for assigning levels.



**Figure 4: Fire Fighter Travel Time**

The component is measured from the nearest part of the treatment boundary to the edge of the road. Access is defined as an active road (not de-activated) which a four by four vehicle could travel with relative ease. This access must have a canopy clearance (side to side) of > 20 m.

**Table 4: Distance to Nearest Vehicle Access**

| Level | Descriptor   | Explanation  |
|-------|--------------|--|
| A     | NA           |  |
| B     | 0 - 200 m    | Quick access, minimal amount of equipment needed (6-7 lengths of hose).                  |
| C     | 201 - 400 m  | Good access, reach of crews packing equipment in a timely fashion.                       |
| D     | 401 - 1000 m | Minimal timely accesses, stretching the limit of crews escape route time to safety zone. |
| E     | >1000 m      | Equipment needed to move equipment to target area.                                       |

## 5. Distance to Non-fuel Polygons near the Assessment Area

This component builds on the ability to strengthen the fuel break using the treatment area and non-fuel polygons to mitigate the wildfire threat to a value. The outcome of this sub-component is the selection of distance itself to represent the level of connectivity between the proposed treated areas and non-fuel polygons. Below is a description of why it is important to understand the time to connect areas in a wildfire situation. It is noted that machinery can construct a fire line at a much faster rate, but the logistics of getting machinery to that location is not always preferred or possible in the context of a fast moving wildfire. The following chart is an example of fireline construction rates for 20 person crews using hand tools in meters per hour.

| <b>Sustained Line Production Rates (hand tools) of 20-Person Crews in Meters per Hour</b> |   |                        |                                   |                                     |
|---|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|   | Crew Type and Method of fireline attack |                        |                                   |                                     |
| <b>Fire Behavior Fuel Model</b>   | <b>Type I Direct</b>                    | <b>Type I Indirect</b> | <b>Type II &amp; II IA Direct</b> | <b>Type II &amp; II IA Indirect</b> |
| Timber Litter and Understory  | 210m<br>(180-240m)                      | 138m<br>(120-156m)     | 135m<br>(112-136m)                | 115m<br>(77-137m)                   |

Adapted from: Wildland Fire Incident Management Field Guide, A publication of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, PMS 210, April 2013

**Figure 5 : Fireline Construction Rates**

The component is measured from the nearest part of the non-fuel polygon to the nearest treatment boundary. In this component, non-fuel polygon is defined as an area with no organic material present. An example would be: rock scree, gravel pits, lakes and wide creeks or rivers (i.e. minimum 20 m in width) or deciduous stands and moist bogs or fens.

**Table 5: Distance to Non-Fuel Treated Area**

| Level | Descriptor    | Explanation  |
|-------|---------------|--|
| A     | NA            | This section will rate treatment ability to strengthen the fuel break using the treatment area and non-fuel polygons to form a larger continuous break in the fuel on the landscape and mitigate the wildfire threat to a value. |
| B     | 0 - 200 m     |  |
| C     | 201 - 400 m   |  |
| D     | 401 - 1,000 m |  |
| E     | >1000 m       |  |

## 6. Topography: Slope

Wildfire will spread faster uphill due to the convective pre-heating of fuel in front of the wildfire, as well as the flame angle bathing the fuel into the fuel ahead of the wildfire. Slope will change the flame angle causing the flame/fire to bathe into the fuel more readily.



The up slope should be the average slope angle within the polygon, measured in percent with a clinometer or other slope measuring device. This should be the angle of the main face or a majority of the area. Side slopes in gullies should not be included unless they are their own polygon. Slopes are always measured in 1% increments. The length of a slope to be assessed should be longer than 150 m in length as well as somewhat uniform and continuous to capture the macro conditions. This definition is found in the [Silviculture Prescriptions Field Methods Book, Interpretive Guide for Data Collection, Stratification, and Sensitivity Evaluation for Silviculture Prescriptions Order No. SIL411](#)

This component is used to measure slope percentage from a treatment area to a value. If the treatment area is uphill from the value, the scoring would be A <20%. If there are multiple values whether uphill or downhill from treatment area (i.e. community) or if there are any values uphill, score as such (use the full scoring suite).

**Table 6: Topography: Slope Percent**

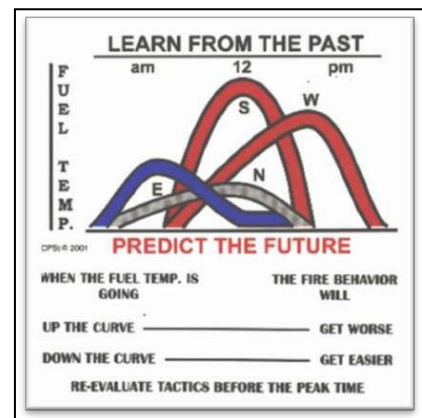
| Level | Descriptor | Explanation  |
|-------|------------|--|
| A     | <20%       | Very little flame and fuel interaction caused by slope, normal rate of spread.             |
| B     | 21 - 30%   | Flame tilt begins to preheat fuel, increased rate of spread.                               |
| C     | 31 - 45%   | Flame tilt preheats fuel and begins to bathe flames into fuel, high rate of spread.        |
| D     | 46 - 60%   | Flame tilt preheats fuel and bathes flames into fuel, very high rate of spread.            |
| E     | >60%       | Flame tilt preheats fuel and bathes flames into fuel well upslope, extreme rate of spread. |

In the FBP system, upslope wildfire potential is giving a wind speed to account for slope, based on different fuel types.

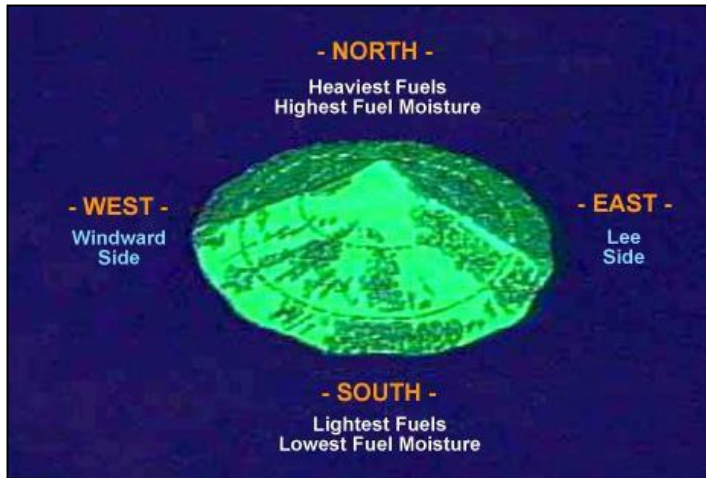
## 7. Topography: Aspect

Aspect is scored to the differing moisture regime and fuel conditions found of the different aspects. North aspects are usually moister and more heavily fueled than south and west aspects that have drier and lighter fuel. Figure 6 below shows the relationship between fuel temperature and fire behaviour.

The aspect (sometimes referred to as exposure) is measured using a compass or other device that provides the direction in degrees or cardinal direction. The aspect is best measured by facing away from the slope and using the compass to locate the direction you are facing and as described: North - 316 to 45 degrees, East - 46 to 135 degrees, South - 136 to 225 degrees, and West - 226 to 315 degrees.



**Figure 6: Fuel Temperature and Fire Behaviour**



**Figure 7: Aspect and Fuel**

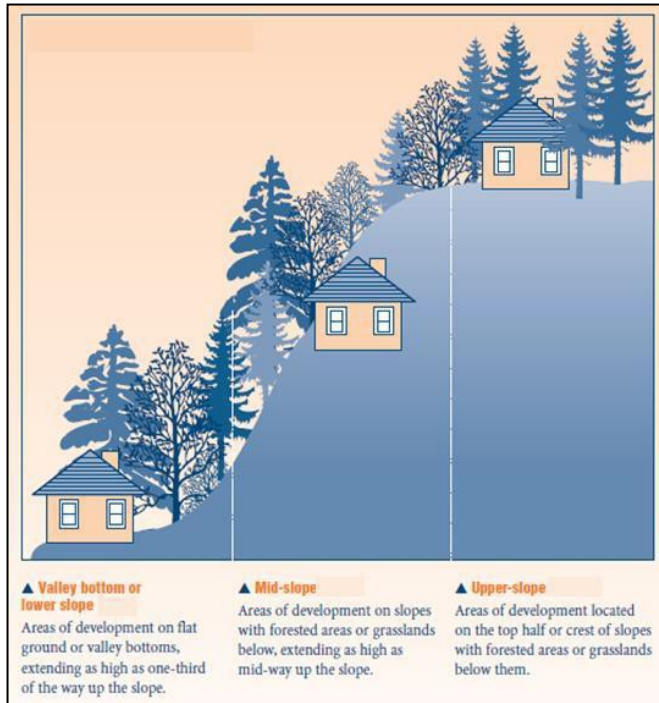
Figure 7 above shows the relationship between aspect and fuel with the heaviest and wettest fuels on the north aspects and lightest and driest fuels on the south aspect.

**Table 7: Topography: Aspect**

| Level | Descriptor  | Explanation   |
|-------|-------------|---|
| A     |             |   |
| B     | North       | Higher moisture content, heavy fuel loads. Very little impact from solar radiation.                             |
| C     | East / Flat | Slightly drier than North Aspect, moderate fuel load. Only real impact from solar radiation is the morning sun. |
| D     | West        | Light dry fuel, good sun exposure for solar radiation.  |
| E     | South       | Light dry fuel, impacted by solar radiation is the longest of any aspect.                                       |

**8. Slope Position of Value**

This component scores the position of a value on a slope. The scoring relates to the ability of a wildfire to gain momentum during an uphill run. A value at the bottom of the slope would impact in a fashion similar to a value on flat ground. A value on the upper 1/3 of the slope would be impacted by high preheating and faster rates of spread than a value on flat ground.



**Figure 8: FireSmart Slope Position of Value**

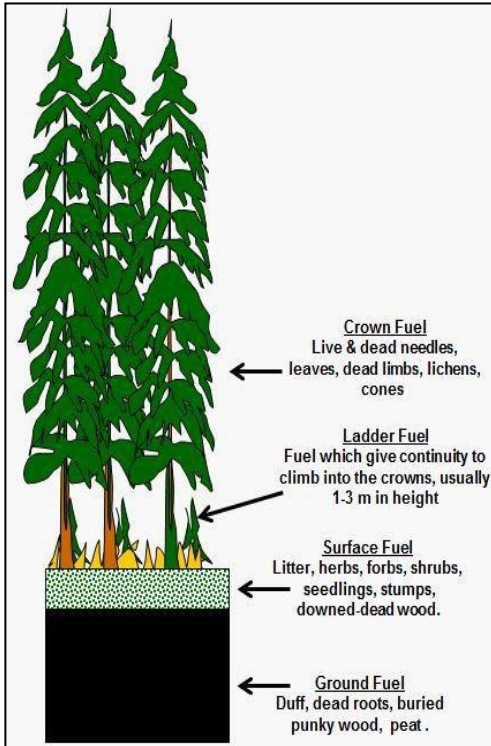
**Table 8: Slope Position of Value**

| Level | Descriptor                     | Explanation   |
|-------|--------------------------------|---|
| A     | NA                             |   |
| B     | Bottom of Slope/ Valley Bottom | Impacted by normal rates of spread.   |
| C     | Mid Slope- Bench               | Impacted by increase rates of spread. Position on a bench may reduce the preheating near the value. (Value is offset from the slope).     |
| D     | Mid slope – continuous         | Impacted by fast rates of spread. No break in terrain features affected by preheating and flames bathing into the fuel ahead of the fire. |
| E     | Upper 1/3 of slope             | Impacted by extreme rates of spread. At risk to large continuous fire run, preheating and flames bathing into the fuel.                   |

**3.1.3 Wildfire Threat Assessment - Priority Setting Scoring Summary**

This worksheet is not used to stratify an area as low /moderate / high or extreme on its own, instead certain components are utilized to help rate the final local wildfire risk classification as outlined in Section 4 of the [2019 CWPP Template](#). It can also be utilized to help rank different treatment areas in order of priority. An example would be a community or land management agency is proposing four different treatment areas, the highest scoring area using this worksheet would be the top priority to treat. This worksheet helps to ties in landscape attributes that help set that priority.

### 3.2 Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheet - Fuel Assessment (Site Level)



The **Fuel Assessment (Site Level) Worksheet** assesses the fuel hazard at the fuel type assessment and/or the treatment unit level through multiple site level assessments. This worksheet is designed to assess the fuel stratum of a fuel type. Once the initial risk assessment process has been completed, and areas have been identified for further review as potential fuel treatment areas, then any additional plot level assessments should be completed for each plot within the treatment unit.

This worksheet has been developed by focusing on the forest fuel availability and arrangement using the rationale for describing a forest stand in terms of the progression of a wildfire from a surface fire (organic and surface fuels involvement), to a passive crown fire<sup>1</sup> (organic, surface and ladder fuel involvement) to an active crown fire<sup>2</sup> (all fuel involved). Figure 9, Forest Stand Layer and Fuel Layer Descriptors shows the forest stand layer for forest fire descriptors. Pick the sub-component that best describes the plot area.

Figure 9: Forest Stand Layer and Fuel Descriptors

<sup>1</sup> **Passive Crown Fire:** A type of crown fire in which the crowns of individual trees or small groups of trees burn, but solid flaming in the canopy cannot be maintained except for short periods. Passive crown fire encompasses a wide range of crown fire behaviour, from occasional torching of isolated trees to nearly active crown fire. Passive crown fire is also called torching or candling. A fire in the crowns of the trees in which trees or groups of trees torch, ignited by the passing front of the fire. The torching trees reinforce the spread rate, but these fires are not basically different from surface fires (Scott and Reinhardt 2007).

<sup>2</sup> **Active Crown Fire:** A crown fire in which the entire fuel complex is involved in flame, but the crowning phase remains dependent on heat released from surface fuel for continued spread. An active crown fire may also be also called a running crown fire or continuous crown fire. An active crown fire presents a solid wall of flame from the surface through the canopy fuel layers. Flames appear to emanate from the canopy as a whole rather than from individual trees within the canopy. Active crown fire is one of several types of crown fire and is contrasted with passive crown fires which are less vigorous types of crown fire that do not emit continuous, solid flames from the canopy (Scott and Reinhardt 2007).

The scoring system on the **Fuel Assessment (Site Level) Worksheet** will differ by location in the province due to coarse scale climatic influences. The scoring system will be based on the Eco province boundaries within B.C. For example, in the Southern Interior Eco province, a high score may be 80-100 points, while a high score in the Taiga Plains Eco province may be > 60 points. Each score will be based on a percentage of the applicable score available for that Eco province. The final score can be used to determine the final local wildfire risk. This scoring is not necessary to apply for treatment funding but can be used as a supporting rationale (i.e. treating a low score area to form a large continuous treatment area).



**Figure 10: Eco provinces of BC**

### 3.2.1 Worksheet descriptions

| Item                                | Description  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Location                            | Geographical location or can be indicated by a cardinal direction for clarification (i.e. NW of Pleasantville) |
| Date                                | Date of assessment   |
| Assessor / Professional Designation | Assessor’s name and professional designation   |
| Coordinates                         | Coordinates of the treatment area (usually a single point at the access point)                                 |
| Coordinate System Used and Format   | Coordinate system used and format i.e. Lat./ Long (Degrees/Decimal Minutes)                                    |
| Crown Species Composition           | Describe the Crown / overstory composition   |
| Ladder Fuel Species Composition     | Describe the Ladder Fuel / understory composition by % species (up to three species)                           |



### 3.2.2 Worksheet Components

#### 1. Depth of the Organic Layer

Duff and litter are often referred to as the LFH (litter, fermenting, humidified) layer. Duff depth is the average thickness, measured in centimeters, of the litter, needles, and semi-decomposed material that constitute the forest floor within the assessment polygon. The measurements of duff and litter depth should include rotten materials that are more than 50% buried in the LFH layer.

The depth of the organic layer is a function of moisture and fuel available for consumption. The concept of surface and organic layer consumption is based on the Buildup Index (BUI). Although the BCWS wildfire weather station network may not be representative of all areas, the network should provide a good representative of an area’s moisture regime as well as the BioGeoClimatic (BEC) zone and subzone indicators. Figure 11 shows a measurement of the depth of the organic layer.

Figure 11: Measuring the Depth of the Organic Layer

Table 9: Depth of the Organic Layer

| Level | Descriptor     | Explanation  |
|-------|----------------|--|
| A     | 1 - 1.9 cm     | Usually found in drier ecosystems. Usually supports light fuel (grass / shrubs).   |
| B     | 2.0 - 4.9 cm   | Usually found in drier ecosystems. Usually supports trees and light fuel (grass / shrubs).   |
| C     | 5.0 - 9.9 cm   | Found in drier ecosystems, still able to dry out completely. Moss and needle beds are common. Support abundant growth of vegetation.                                     |
| D     | 10.0 - 20.0 cm | Found in moister ecosystems, tends not to dry out. Deeper beds of moss / lichens and needle beds are common. Can support deep combustion in extended drought conditions. |
| E     | >20.0 cm       | Found in wet ecosystems, only top layer dries out. Very deep beds of moss / lichens. Usually dense canopy forest.  |

Measurement of the duff and litter can be made by using a shovel or an axe to create a duff profile in a minimum of four random locations within the polygon. The profile should be measured with a ruler to determine depth to within 0.5 cm. The duff and litter depth should be the average depth of the four (or more) measured profiles.

**2. Surface Fuel Composition**

The surface fuel composition is the dominant surface species that is covering the plot area. It includes mosses, lichens, grasses, herbs, shrubs, and fresh needle litter (not included in the Duff Depth and Moisture Regime above). Low flammability surface fuels, including many noxious weeds, are not included in this cover tally.

The surface fuel resides on top of the organic layer to a height of approximately 1.0 m. Surface fuels usually have contact with the ground and don't grow tall enough to be considered ladder fuel.



**Table 10: Surface Fuel Composition**

**Figure 12: Surface Fuel**

| Level | Descriptor  | Explanation  |
|-------|---|--|
| A     | Moss, Herbs and Deciduous Shrubs                                  | Indicative of a moister site with green lush vegetation for most of the summer months. This lush vegetation maintains a moist organic layer. Not that flammable, fire moves slowly in the surface fuel.  |
| B     | Lichen, Conifer Shrubs  | This vegetation can maintain a moister site but if there are drought type condition and the organic layer can maintain fire combustion, these surface fuels can be consumed, thus increasing fire intensity and rate of spread.  |
| C     | Dead fines (Leaves, Needles or fine branch material) fuel (<1 cm) | This material can readily ignite or be consumed in a flaming front. Moist content in this material tends to be low. This material has a short time lag from saturated to dry. The combustion of this material adds to fire intensity, flame length and rate of spread. |
| D     | Pinegrass   | This material is very flammable depending on the percentage of curing. Fuel consumption is usually 100%, adding to the fire intensity, flame length and rate of spread.  |
| E     | Sagebrush, Bunchgrass, Juniper and Scotch broom                   | The chemical composition of these species lends them to rapid rates of spread, high fire intensity and increased flame length.   |

**3. Dead and Down Material Continuity ≤ 7 cm (% cover)**



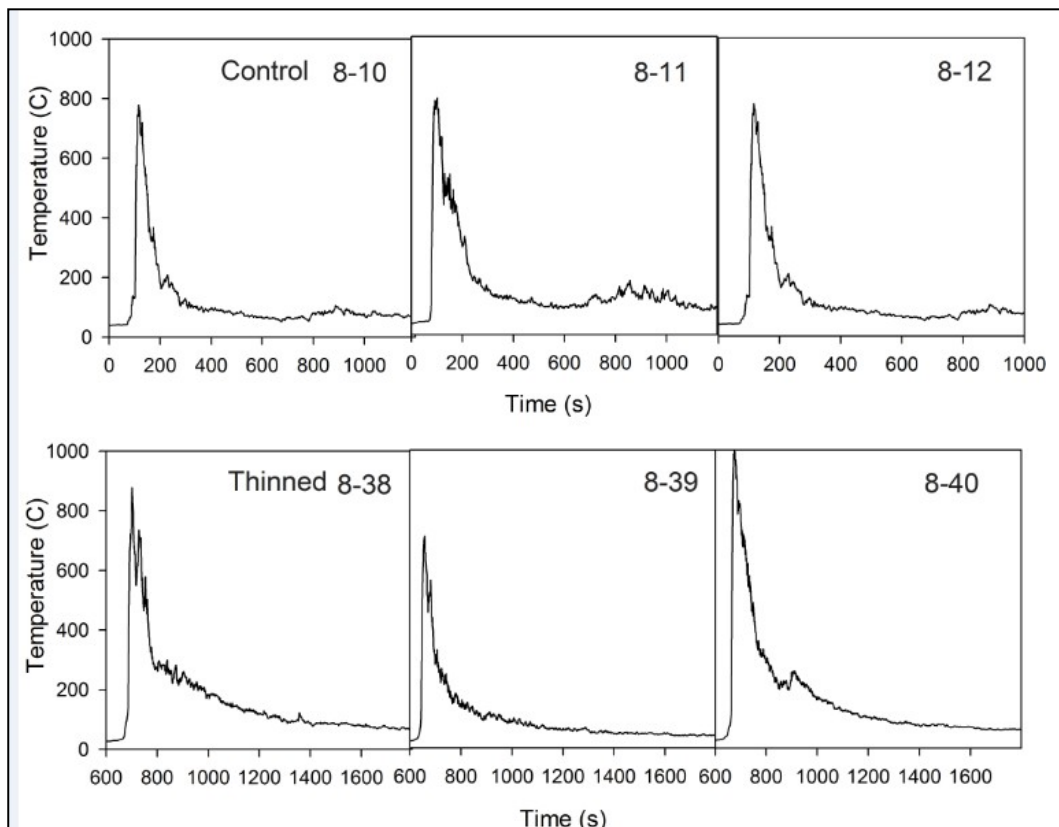
Fine woody debris continuity is a site attribute that plays a significant role in a wildfire's rate of spread. It is a measure of the percentage of the area that is covered by woody debris that is less than or equal to 7 cm in diameter. The material should be greater than 25% sound (or a solid outer shell). Conifer needles and deciduous leaves lying on the ground as litter should not be included in the assessment. Figure 13 below shows an example of fine woody debris.

**Figure 13: Fine Woody Debris**

Conifer needles attached to elevated branches should be included. Debris with more than 50% of its circumference buried in the duff and litter layers should not be included. Descriptor chosen should be the highest end of the range for the assessment area and not necessarily the average.

Dead and downed material >7 cm in diameter (contacting the surface fuel bed) is not factored into fuel consumption of a spreading wildfire in the Canadian Forest Fire Behaviour Prediction System. This size fuel is normally consumed in smoldering combustion after the flaming front has passed. As fuel treatments are not meant to stop smoldering combustion, as such the fuel >7 cm is not assessed as part of the surface fuel in this worksheet.

These facts were confirmed in the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) experimental burns conducted at Carrott Lake in the Vanderhoof Natural Resources District during the summer of 2013. The pre and post burn woody debris plots showed very little consumption of the >7 cm class fuel within two hours of the flaming front passage. The following figure is a time/temperature plot of the Carrott Lake burns. Note the temperature drops considerably after the passage of the flaming front but remains above the lethal scorch temperature of 90°C for 24-28 minutes (thinned plot).



**Figure 14: Time/temperature plot from thermocouple in the MPB experimental burns (Carrott Lake)**

Fuel >7 cm in size that form part of surface fuel are considered “coarse woody debris” in this process and will be dealt with under the [appropriate guidelines](#) issued by the Chief Forester of British Columbia.



The fuel > 7cm (elevated) are assessed in this worksheet in category 11 “Dead and Dying,” but will fall under the “Stand Structure and Composition” heading as most of these fuels are found elevated within stands. A good example of this is the MPB affected stands.

**Table 11: Dead and Downed Material Continuity ≤7 cm**

| Level | Descriptor             | Explanation   |
|-------|------------------------|---|
| A     | Absent                 | Fine woody debris is present but not significant. Debris is rarely in contact with other pieces. Debris is in close contact with the ground.  |
| B     | Scattered <10 coverage | Fine woody debris occurs irregularly, is not usually in contact with other debris and is in close contact with the ground. Debris may be patchy in nature with small piles or grouped in one portion of the rating area.  |
| C     | 10 - 25% coverage      | Fine woody debris occurs patchy throughout much of the rating area. Debris may be clumped or accumulated in certain areas. Accumulations are likely the result of regular shedding of branch wood or minor wind events.   |
| D     | 26 - 50% coverage      | Fine woody debris occurs regularly throughout much of the rating area. Debris may be clumped or accumulated in certain areas. Accumulations are likely the result of regular shedding of branch wood, minor wind events or harvested areas with regular skid trails.  |
| E     | >50% Coverage          | Fine woody debris occurs regularly throughout much of the rating area and has minimal depth. Debris may be accumulations resulting from the shedding of branch wood from consistent winds or past moderate wind events. Accumulations may also be a result of past forest treatment (spacing, pruning, tree removal, selective harvesting, etc.). |

#### 4. Ladder Fuel Composition

Ladder fuels allow a wildfire to climb from a surface fire into the crown to initiate a crown fire. Ladder fuels are usually approximately 1.0 to 3.0 m in height. This component scores ladder fuel based on flammability. Figure 15 shows an example of ladder fuels.



**Figure 15: Ladder Fuels (Live and Dead)**

**Table 12: Ladder Fuel Composition**

| Level | Descriptor               | Explanation   |
|-------|--------------------------|---|
| A     | Deciduous (<25% conifer) | Deciduous species, chemically less flammable than conifer species. In most cases deciduous species are seen as a fire break in wildfire spread.   |
| B     | Mixwood (<75% conifer)   | Although there is a mixture of conifer species in a Mixwood stand, the ability for continuous spread in the ladder fuels would be hampered by the mixture of the less flammable deciduous.  |
| C     | Other conifer            | Other conifers are typically wet belt species: cedar, hemlock and larch. These species are usually associated with a lush green understory. If these species are found on a dry site (BEC Climate Zone), use the Spruce/Fir/Pine scoring to represent the appropriate scoring. Make an appropriate note in the comment section. |
| D     | Elevated dead fuel       | Elevated dead fuel is found in the ladder fuel space (1-3m). There should be a fair amount of finer material (<7cm in diameter) to carry fire from the surface fuel towards the crown fuel (less than a 45° angle).   |
| E     | Spruce/Fir/Pine          | The most flammable conifer species found in B.C., usually associated with drier sites and higher potential to spread fire to the crown fuel.  |

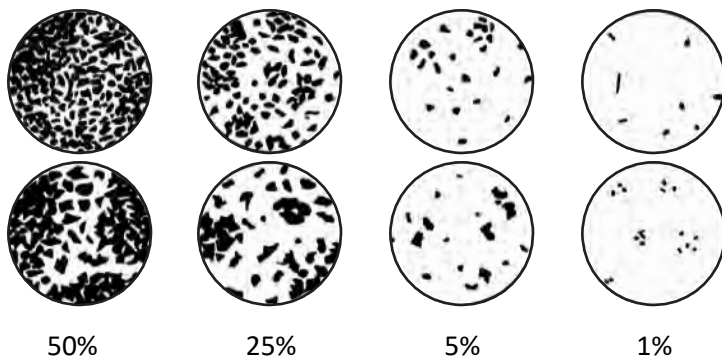
**5. Ladder Fuel Horizontal Continuity**

This component scores ladder fuel on the basis of continuity.

**Table 13: Ladder Fuel Continuity**

| Level | Descriptor | Explanation   |
|-------|------------|---|
| A     | Absent     | No ladder fuel present.   |
| B     | Sparse     | Less than 10% coverage of the plot area is covered with ladder fuel.    |
| C     | Scattered  | 10-39% coverage of the plot area is covered with ladder fuel.           |
| D     | Patchy     | 40-60% coverage of the plot area is covered with ladder fuel.           |
| E     | Uniform    | Greater than 60% coverage of the plot area is covered with ladder fuel. |

The following figure can be used to estimate percent cover of crown closure to support ladder fuel continuity coverage estimates.



**Figure 16: Visual Estimates of Percent Cover**

**6. Stems Per Hectare (Understory)**

Understory conifers provide ladder fuels that allow a wildfire to move from the surface into the main forest canopy causing candling or crown wildfire initiation. Ladder fuels are correlated to the density of live and dead understory conifers. This sub-component quantifies the average number of stems per hectare (sph) of immature conifers within the assessment polygon. The tree layer is not measured in the overstory crown closure (sub-component 7) and these trees are typically regeneration, smaller diameter suppressed, or shade tolerant trees, with live or dead crowns starting at less than two meters from the ground.

All understory fuels play a role in a stand’s ability to support a crown fire. Any understory fuel that forms a bridge between the surface fuel and crown fuels should be eliminated. Any understory fuel that occupies a forest opening and is a safe distance (2-2.5 times the height of the understory fuel’s height in horizontal distance) away from crown fuel is acceptable.

**Table 14: Stems per Hectare**

| Level | Descriptor      | Explanation                |
|-------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| A     | 0 - 500 sph     | ~4.4 m average spacing     |
| B     | 501 - 1000 sph  | ~3.1-4.4 m average spacing |
| C     | 1001 - 2000 sph | ~2.2-3.1 m average spacing |
| D     | 2001 - 4000 sph | ~1.6-2.2 m average spacing |
| E     | >4000 sph       | >1.6 m average spacing     |

Note: sph – Stems per ha

An example of how this can be measured is through the use of fixed radius plots when large numbers of trees are involved. The number of plots required to accurately estimate these conifer ladder fuels within a polygon will vary with polygon size and variability. In general, at least four representative plots should be used to

roughly estimate the coniferous ladder fuels. Additional plots increase the accuracy of the conifer ladder fuel estimate. The plots can be 3.99 meters or 5.64 meter radius, which provides 50 square meters or 100 square meter plot areas respectively. To calculate stems per hectare using these two plot radii the following calculations can be used:

1. 3.99 m radius plot (50 m<sup>2</sup>) Average trees per plot X 200 = stems per hectare
2. 5.64 m radius plot (100 m<sup>2</sup>) Average trees per plot X 100 = stems per hectare

## 7. Overstory Composition/Crown Base Height

This component scores species composition for the ability of the forest stand to actually develop and support a crown fire. Deciduous overstory compositions tend to act as a shade for cool and moister conditions in the forest stand and provide very little potential for crown fire. Conifer stands will also act as shade breaks to the understory depending on the stand density but have potential to develop and support large crown fire runs. The conifer categories are broken into crown base height to further categorize the crown fire potential. Mixed stands are categorized by the percent of conifer in the stand composition.

**Table 15: Overstory Composition/Crown Base Height (CBH)**

| Level | Descriptor                         | Explanation   |
|-------|------------------------------------|---|
| A     | Deciduous (< 25% conifer)          | Low flammability canopy.  |
| B     | Mixwood (% Conifer)                | Canopy flammability based on the percent of conifer composition.  |
| C     | Conifer with high CBH (>10m)       | High canopy flammability but needs very high surface fire intensity to interact with crown (CSI > 5149 kW/m)    |
| D     | Conifer with moderate CBH (6 – 9m) | High canopy flammability but needs high surface fire intensity to interact with crown (CSI > 3345 kW/m).        |
| E     | Conifer with low CBH (<5m)         | High canopy flammability but needs very little surface fire intensity to interact with crown (CSI > 1820 kW/m). |

\* CBH is measured to the greatest full meter (i.e. measured of 5.4 meter CBH would fit into the tables as 6 meter CBH)

CBH is a measure, in meters from the ground, of the average height of the live or dead crown in the veteran, dominant and co-dominant coniferous canopy layers throughout the assessment polygon. Dead crowns are only measured when they are of enough density to allow vertical wildfire to spread. Individual dead limbs should not be considered. Full whorls of dead limbs, especially with needles and fine branches or volatile mosses or lichens, should be identified in this sub-component.

## 8. Crown Closure

Within this component, crown closure is related to crown bulk density. The calculation of crown bulk density (kg/m<sup>2</sup>) requires species-specific crown foliage weight vs. Diameter Base Height (DBH), stems per hectare and

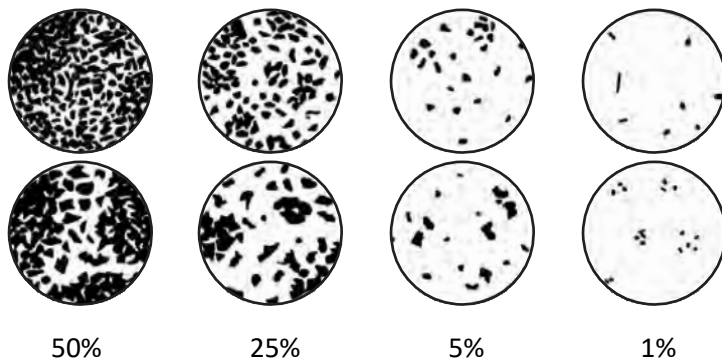
<sup>3</sup> Critical Surface Intensity using Field Guide to the Canadian Forest Fire Behavior Prediction System value of 97% foliar moisture content.

tree height; a complicated process. To establish a relative relationship of crown bulk density in the field we have assumed that the percent crown closure relates to crown bulk density ( $\text{kg/m}^3$ ) relative to the same species composition with a lower percent crown closure (i.e. an increase in percent crown closure is indicative of an increase in crown bulk density). However, once the crown approaches 100% increase in-stand humidity and reduced in-stand wind velocity, this creates conditions that will hinder crown fire initiation and spread.

**Table 16: Crown Closure**

| Level | Descriptor                   | Explanation  |
|-------|------------------------------|--|
| A     | <20% and Deciduous overstory | Crown closure relates to continuity / spacing in the crown fuel. If there is continuity, the ability of a stand to sustain a crown fire is increased considerably. If the stand is low crown closure the ability is limited to carry a crown fire unless stronger winds are present at the time. |
| B     | 20 - 40%                     |  |
| C     | 41 - 60%                     |  |
| D     | 61 - 80%                     |  |
| E     | >80%                         |  |

The following figure can be used to estimate percent cover of woody debris, plant coverage or crown closure.



**Figure 17: Visual Estimates of Percent Cover**

### 9. Fuel Strata Gap

Fuel stratum gap is the distance, in meters, between the top of the average height of the ladder fuel to the average green crown in the crown fuel. This gap represents the ability of flame to move from the ladder fuel to impact or initiate the crown fuel into a crown fire. The larger the gap the less likelihood of a crown fire in the stand.

This component is very similar to component 7 “Overstory Composition/Crown Base Height” except now the CSI is engaging another fuel stratum of the ladder fuel, thus increasing the intensity and enabling the fire to reach the crown fuel.

**Table 17: Fuel Strata Gap**

| Level | Descriptor | Explanation   |
|-------|------------|---|
| A     | NA         |   |
| B     | >10m       | No crown fuel involvement.  |
| C     | 6 - 9m     | With a CSI of 5200 kW/m Crown fuel will be engaged (8.0m flame height). |
| D     | 3 - 6m     | With a CSI of 3345 kW/m Crown fuel will be engaged (6.0m flame height). |
| E     | <3m        | With a CSI of 1820 kW/m Crown fuel will be engaged (4.0m flame height). |

**10. Stems per Hectare (Overstory)**

Consistent with the information captured in component 8 “Crown Closure,” this component will help capture the crown bulk density of the forest stand by placing the number of stems per ha into classes.

**Table 18: Stems per Hectare (Overstory)**

| Level | Descriptor       | Explanation                       |
|-------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A     | < 400 stems      | Average stem spacing/ha of 5.0m   |
| B     | 401 - 600 stems  | Average stem spacing/ha of 4.1m   |
| C     | 601 - 900 stems  | Average stem spacing/ha of 3.3m   |
| D     | 901 - 1200 stems | Average stem spacing/ha of 2.9m   |
| E     | >1200 stems      | Average stem spacing/ha of < 2.9m |

**11. Dead and Dying**

Dead and dying is a measure of the dead standing component of the stand resulting from abiotic or biotic events that contribute to tree or whole stand mortality. The assessment is a visual estimate of the percent of the veteran, dominant and co-dominant stems that are either dead standing or partly fallen and elevated (greater than 45° angle and still may have contact with crown fuel). Figure 18 below is an example of standing dead fuel.



This material is not previously quantified in the fine woody debris sub-components. Stands with less than 20 percent of the stems per hectare of veteran, dominant or co-dominant conifers as standing dead or partly elevated, should be assessed as Level B.

Figure 18: Standing Dead Fuel

Table 19: Dead and Dying Fuel

| Level | Descriptor*                               | Explanation  |
|-------|---|--|
| A     | NA  |  |
| B     | Standing Dead/ Partly Down<br><br><20%    | Percent cover of polygon impacted by dead standing or downed trees with or without needles. The total polygon area is less than 20% impacted with dead, dying and downed trees that do not have a significant amount of needles remaining. |
| C     | Standing Dead/ Partly Down<br><br>21 –50% | Percent cover of polygon impacted by dead standing or partly downed trees. Includes trees without needles affecting between 21 - 50% of the polygon.   |
| D     | Standing Dead/ Partly Down<br><br>51-75%  | Percent cover of polygon impacted by dead standing or partly downed trees. Includes trees without needles affecting between 51 - 75% of the polygon.   |
| E     | Standing Dead/ Partly Down<br><br>>75%    | Percent cover of polygon impacted by dead standing or partly downed trees. Includes trees without needles affecting greater than 75% of the polygon of the polygon.  |

\* The standing dead and partly downed trees should include both conifers and deciduous trees. Dry, dead stems of all trees can contribute to aggressive wildfire spread and intensity.

### 3.2.3 Wildfire Threat Assessment – Site Level Scoring

The **Fuel Assessment (Site Level) Worksheet** will be completed as required in the area of interest or a treatment area based on the survey intensity prescribed by the qualified professional. Each sheet will be scored and each sheet’s score averaged for the overall area score. This scoring is not necessary to apply for funding to treat an area, supporting rationale will be evaluated for treatment funding (i.e. treating a low score area to form a large continuous treatment area). Once a score is derived from the survey an appropriate fuel assessment rating will be found using the following table:

**Table 20: Site Level Scoring**

| <b>Fuel Assessment Rating (Max Score 110)</b> |            |                 |             |                |
|---|------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| <b>Eco – province</b>                         | <b>Low</b> | <b>Moderate</b> | <b>High</b> | <b>Extreme</b> |
| Coast and Mountains, Georgia Depression       | 0 - 43     | 44 - 59         | 60 - 72     | 73 - 110       |
| Central Interior                              | 0 - 46     | 47 - 63         | 64 - 77     | 78 - 110       |
| Southern Interior                             | 0 - 51     | 52 - 71         | 72 - 86     | 87 - 110       |
| Southern Interior Mountains                   | 0 - 51     | 52 - 71         | 72 - 86     | 87 - 110       |
| Sub Boreal Interior                           | 0 - 43     | 44 - 59         | 60 - 72     | 73 - 110       |
| Boreal Plains                                 | 0 - 43     | 44 - 59         | 60 - 72     | 73 - 110       |
| Northern Boreal Mountains, Taiga Plains       | 0 - 40     | 41 - 56         | 57 - 68     | 69 - 110       |

The Northeast Coast Eco province is a marine eco province with no land mass. For description of each Eco Province, please go to the following link: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/ecology/ecoregions/humidtemp.html>

The following will give generalized descriptions of the “Fuel Assessment Rating” classes:

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Low</b>      | Fires may start and spread slowly. There will be minimal involvement of deeper fuel layers or larger fuels.  |
| <b>Moderate</b> | Forest fuels are drier and there is an increased risk of surface fires starting. There will be involvement of the organic layer but larger dead material will not readily combust.   |
| <b>High</b>     | Forest fuels are very dry, new fires may start easily, burn vigorously; aerial fuel will be engaged in the flaming front. Most fuel in the organic layer will be consumed and larger dead fuel will be consumed in the smoldering combustion.      |
| <b>Extreme</b>  | Extremely dry forest fuel, new fires will start easily, burn vigorously; all aerial fuel will be engaged in the flaming front. Most fuel in the organic layer will be consumed and larger dead fuel will be consumed in the smoldering combustion. |

These generalized descriptions are also based on the climatic conditions for the appropriate Eco province. A comparison of the fuel assessment scores across Eco provinces is not appropriate and should not be undertaken. The fuel composition will further refine the classes. In general, conifer dominant fuel will fit into the higher classes with mixedwood and deciduous dominated fuel in the lower classes. These rating will be used when the proponent is defining “Wildfire Risk” in a CWPP or a landscape value at risk.

### Questions

If you have any questions regarding this guide or the associated worksheet, please contact Dana Hicks at [dana.hicks@gov.bc.ca](mailto:dana.hicks@gov.bc.ca)



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## Appendix A - The ABCFP Position on Rating Interface Wildfire Threats in British Columbia

The Association of British Columbia Forest Professionals (ABCFP) was provided with the 2010 “Rating Interface Wildfire Threats in BC” document and requested to provide feedback and their position on whether these assessments fall into the practice of professional forestry. The ABCFP Professional Practice Committee returned the following comments<sup>4</sup> :

*“A review committee of the association’s Professional Practice Committee agrees that the practice of professional forestry does occur within the document’s threat rating process, including the Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification component and some of the fuel components, and that the use of hazard assessment ratings to develop associated treatment plans is also the practice of professional forestry.”*

*“We suggest it is important for the document to be clear when it is referring to forest professionals, and when it is referring to other natural resource professionals or fire-fighting professionals. Use of the term “professional” in this document can be made more specific and be improved to provide greater clarity of the intent. Use of the term “qualified professional” is not recommended except if a clear and precise definition for the term is included in the text. In reference to the practice of professional forestry, a suggestion for wording is: “a registered forest professional, or a person working under the supervision of a registered forest professional”.*

*“In our role as regulator for the practice of professional forestry in BC, it is important to the ABCFP that documents which refer to the need for a forest professional include reference to the Foresters Act. Such a reference will flag for readers that this is another area of legislation that applies to the actions and assessments outlined in the “rating” document. Reference to Foresters Act requirements in the introductory text and within appropriate sections of the document will also help individuals and employers who use this interface wildfire threat rating system, to understand the need to engage a forest professional who has expertise in this area of practice. To support this, copies of the pertinent sections of the Foresters Act (Section 1: definition of the practice of professional forestry, Section 20: requirement that only a member of the ABCFP practice professional forestry engage in the practice of professional forestry) can be included in an Appendix and [Cited]”*

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<sup>4</sup> Extracted from email correspondence received on March 5, 2012 from Jackie Hipwell, RFT- Resource Associate, Professional Practice and Forest Stewardship - Association of BC Forest Professionals

Appendix B – Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheets

Updated March 2017

|  |       |  |
|--|-------|--|
| <b>Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheet - Fuel Assessment (Site Level)<sup>3</sup></b> |       | <b>Plot #</b>                          |
| Location:  | Date: | Assessor/<br>Professional Designation: |
| Coordinates (Lat/Long – Degrees/Decimal Minutes):                                      |       |  |
| Crown Species Composition (species %):   |       |  |
| Ladder Fuel Species Composition (species %):   |       |  |

| Component/<br>Sub-Component | Levels/Classes                 |        |        |         |         |      |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|------|
|                             | Forest Floor and Organic Layer |        |        |         |         |      |
| 1                           | Depth of organic layer (cm)    | 1- < 2 | 2- < 5 | 5- < 10 | 10 - 20 | > 20 |
|                             |                                | 1      | 3      | 5       | 3       | 2    |

| Surface and Ladder Fuel (0.1 – 3.0 meters in height) |   |                               |                         |                           |                        |   |
|--|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---|
| 2  | Surface fuel composition                  | Moss, herbs, deciduous shrubs | Lichen, conifer shrubs  | Dead fines fuel* (<1 cm)  | Pinegrass              | Sagebrush, Bunch grass, Juniper, Scotch broom |
|  |   | 4                             | 6                       | 8                         | 10                     | 15  |
| 3  | Dead and down material continuity (< 7cm) | Absent                        | Scattered < 10 coverage | 10-25% coverage           | 26-50% coverage        | > 50% coverage                                |
|  |   | 0                             | 4                       | 8                         | 12                     | 15  |
| 4  | Ladder fuel composition                   | Deciduous                     | Mixwood                 | Other conifer             | Elevated dead fuel     | Spruce, Fir, Pine                             |
|  |   | 0                             | 3                       | 5                         | 7                      | 10  |
| 5  | Ladder fuel horizontal continuity         | Absent                        | Sparse < 10% coverage   | Scattered 10-39% coverage | Patchy 40-60% coverage | Uniform > 60% coverage                        |
|  |   | 0                             | 2                       | 5                         | 8                      | 10  |
| 6  | Stem/ha (understory) <sup>4</sup>         | < 900                         | 901- 1,500              | 1 501- 2,500              | 2 501- 4,000           | > 4,000                                       |
|  |   | 2                             | 4                       | 6                         | 8                      | 10  |

| Stand Structure and Composition (Dominant and co-dominant stems) |  |                           |                                      |                                       |                                       |                                      |
|--|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 7  | Overstory composition/<br>Crown Base Height (CBH)    | Deciduous (< 25% conifer) | Mixwood (% conifer)<br>25% 50% 75%   | Conifer with high CBH (> 10m)         | Conifer with moderate CBH (6-9m)      | Conifer with low CBH (< 5m)          |
|  |  | 0                         | 2 5 7                                | 10                                    | 12                                    | 15                                   |
| 8  | Crown Closure (CC)                                   | < 20%                     | 20-40%                               | 41-60%                                | 61-80%                                | > 80%                                |
|  |  | 0                         | 1                                    | 2                                     | 5                                     | 4                                    |
| 9  | Fuel Strata Gap <sup>5</sup> (m)                     |                           | > 10                                 | 6-9                                   | 3-6                                   | < 3                                  |
|  |  |                           | 0                                    | 3                                     | 7                                     | 10                                   |
| 10   | Stems/ha (overstory) <sup>6</sup>                    | < 400                     | 401-600                              | 601-900                               | 901- 1,200                            | > 1,200                              |
|  |  | 0                         | 2                                    | 3                                     | 4                                     | 5                                    |
| 11   | Dead and dying (% of dominant and co-dominant stems) |                           | Standing dead/<br>Partial down < 20% | Standing dead/<br>Partial down 21-50% | Standing dead/<br>Partial down 51-75% | Standing dead/<br>Partial down > 75% |
|  |  |                           | 2                                    | 5                                     | 8                                     | 10                                   |

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Total Score <sup>8</sup> : |  |
| Eco Province:              |  |
| Fuel Assessment Rating:    |  |

<sup>3</sup> This sheet is used to summarize and score the completed plot tallies

<sup>4</sup> Leaves, needles or fine branch material

<sup>5</sup> Understory is considered ladder and suppressed stems in this category (distinct break between these stems and overstory)

<sup>6</sup> Fuel Strata Gap – Distance from top of ladder fuel to live crown base height of overstory

<sup>7</sup> Overstory is dominant and co-dominant stems (Green/Living)

<sup>8</sup> 110 points based on 65 points on ground, surface and ladder fuel, and 45 points on overstory

*Updated March 2017*

| <b>Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheet – Priority Setting Scoring (complete one for entire proposed treatment area)</b> |       |  |
|--|-------|--|
| Location:  | Date: | Assessor/<br>Professional Designation: |
| Coordinates (Lat/Long – Degrees/Decimal Minutes):  |       |  |
| PSTA Threat:   |       | FBP Fuel Type:                         |
| Assessor's FBP Fuel Type:  |       | Ownership:                             |
| Assessor's Fuel Type Rationale <sup>1</sup> :  |       |  |

Value Description (include type of value and distance to the value from the proposed treatment area):

| Landscape Assessment   |             |               |   |   |                                  |
|--|-------------|---------------|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Proximity of fuel treatment area to value (m)  | 0-100<br>25 | 101-500<br>20 | 501- 1,000<br>15  | 1 000- 2,000<br>5                                       | > 2,000<br>0                     |
| Existing Fuel Mgmt. treatment area in place between the proposed treatment area and the value(s)   | Yes<br>5    | No<br>0       |   |   |                                  |
| Treatment Placement: using the predominant wind direction/ fire spread pattern, what is the treatment location in relationship to the value(s) location? |             | Downwind<br>0 | 270° offset to prevailing wind/ highest ISI values<br>7 | 90° offset to prevailing wind/ highest ISI values<br>10 | Upwind/ highest ISI values<br>15 |
| Distance to nearest vehicle access (m)   |             | 0-200<br>5    | 201-400<br>3  | 401- 1,000<br>1   | > 1,000<br>0                     |
| Distance to non-fuel / treated <sup>2</sup> area near the assessment area (m)  |             | 0-200<br>5    | 201-400<br>3  | 401- 1,000<br>1   | > 1,000<br>0                     |

| Topographical Factors                                    |            |                                     |                        |                             |                         |
|--|------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Topography: Slope  | < 20%<br>0 | 21-30%<br>1                         | 31-45%<br>3            | 46-60%<br>4                 | > 60%<br>5              |
| Topography: Aspect (> 20% slope)                         |            | North<br>0                          | East/Flat<br>3         | West<br>4                   | South<br>5              |
| Slope position of value (only applies if slope is > 20%) |            | Bottom of slope/ valley bottom<br>0 | Mid slope - bench<br>1 | Mid slope - continuous<br>3 | Upper 1/3 of slope<br>5 |

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Total Score:</b> |  |
|---------------------|--|

**Comments:**

<sup>1</sup> Must include three photos for each plot (one of forest floor, one of surface and ladder fuel, one of overstory)

<sup>2</sup> Fuel management type treatment where wildfire threat has been mitigated

## Appendix C - Robel Pole Construction

These instructions are borrowed from Toledo, Abbott and Herrick (1997).

### Materials

- 1 piece of schedule 40 polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe, 2 m long, 2.54 cm diameter
- 1 threaded male PVC connector, 2.54 cm diameter
- 2 threaded female PVC connectors, 2.54 cm diameter
- 1 threaded male plug, 2.54 cm diameter
- 1 flat headed spike, 20 cm long, 1.3 cm diameter
- 1 PVC cap, 2.54 cm diameter
- PVC cleaner, primer and glue
- Epoxy
- Enamel or PVC paint in black, white and red.

### Instructions

1. Cut the PVC pipe into two 1-m-long pieces.
2. Use the PVC cleaner and primer on the inside walls of the unthreaded male and female connectors.
3. Use the PVC cleaner and primer to prepare one end of one piece of PVC pipe and both ends of the other piece of the PVC pipe. These pieces will become the top and bottom halves of the Robel pole respectively.
4. Glue a female connector to a prepared end of each piece of pipe.
5. Glue the male connector to the remaining prepared end of the bottom pipe.
6. Drill a 1.3 cm hole in the center of the flat end of the threaded male plug. Insert the spike through the hole until the spike head is firmly seated against the inside of the plug. Inject epoxy into the plug, covering the spike head and filling the plug. Ensure that the spike is straight, and allow the epoxy to harden.
7. Assemble the Robel pole by screwing the top and bottom halves together, and screw the plug with the spike into the female end of the bottom pipe. Tighten connections until they are snug, but do not over tighten. Attach the remaining PVC cap (unglued) to the open end of the top of the pole.
8. Measure the cover pole and mark the top end at the 2-m mark.
9. Remove the cap and trim the open end of the top pipe to produce a 2-m-long (cap to plug) pole.
10. Reassemble the pole. Paint alternating 10-cm white and black segments, with every fifth segment painted red as depicted in the diagram to the left.



## Appendix D - Photo Guide Template

**SITE INFORMATION**

**Plot #**

Date Sampled:

Coordinates: General Location:      N xx° xx' xx.xx",      W xx° xx' xx.xx"

Photo Direction:

FBP Fuel Type:

Slope (%):

Aspect (deg.):

Elevation (m):

Canopy Closure (%):

Average Forest Floor Depth (cm):

|  |
|--|
| <b>Surface</b>   |
| <p>[Photo]<br/>(with link to large size for details)</p> |
| <b>Ladder</b>  |
| <p>[Photo]<br/>(with link to large size for details)</p> |
| <b>Crown</b>   |
| <p>[Photo]<br/>(with link to large size for details)</p> |

**Appendix E - FBP Fuel Type Change Rationale**

**FBP Fuel Type Change Rationale**

|                                 |      |  |
|---------------------------------|------|--|
| Location                        | Date | Assessor/<br>Professional<br>Designation |
| Coordinates:                    |      | Coordinate system<br>used and format     |
| PSTA Threat                     |      | FBP Fuel Type                            |
| Assessor's FBP Fuel Type:       |      | Ownership:                               |
| Assessor's Fuel Type Rationale: |      |  |

Attach at least six representative photos and/or images (google earth, orthographic maps) that support the fuel type rationale change. If a field review has occurred; there should be at least two photos of each part of the forest stratum: surface fuel, ladder fuel (present or absent) and the crown fuel.

## Appendix F - Section 3 Assessment Procedure of the Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Threat Assessment in B.C. (from 2013 Wildland Urban interface Threat Assessments in B.C.)

### 3.1 Uses of the WUI Wildfire Threat Assessment System

This WUI Wildfire Threat Assessment Guide and Worksheet have four intended uses.

1. They are intended to assess the wildfire behaviour threats of unique polygons of forest land in interface and non-interface areas.
2. They are intended for both pre and post fuel management treatment assessments to quantify the wildfire threat reduction achieved through the fuel management treatment.
3. They allow for rating of wildfire behaviour threats of undeveloped forest land before development occurs, to determine the expected wildfire threats to the developments and whether fuel management activities will be required.
4. They provide a Wildland Urban Wildfire Threat Score and a Total Wildfire Threat Score that will assist in the prioritizing and funding decisions for fuel management treatment areas.

### 3.2 Completing a WUI Wildfire Threat Assessment

This WUI Wildfire Threat Assessment System was not developed as a fuel hazard rating tool for licensees to meet Wildfire Act hazard assessment and abatement requirements. A WUI Wildfire Threat Assessment involves documenting the ability of a unique area of forestland, usually located adjacent to, surrounding or abutting a community, group of buildings or individual structures, to support a wildfire. The assessment is designed to provide an estimate of the wildfire threat posed by the unique area of forestland based on the forest fuel within the area, local topography, general weather conditions, and position of the forestland relative to the development.

This assessment system is designed to coincide with the Priority Interface Zones 2 and 3 as specified in the FireSmart program. The assessment does not quantify house characteristics or yard maintenance. It also does not address wildfire emergency response, or water availability. Justification of the assessment content is discussed in Appendix C.

Assessments are best completed under snow free conditions when vegetation has fully flushed to accurately measure the duff, surface fuel and vegetation subcomponents. Heavy snow loading can limit the user's ability to accurately estimate or measure the first five subcomponents (#1 to #5 of the Fuel component). Timing and deliverables for WUI Wildfire Threat Assessments are often dictated by the proponent. Snow and other conditions that prevent complete or accurate assessments must be discussed with the proponent to ensure they understand the limitations.



## 3.2.1 Define the Study Area

The study area is generally defined by the proponent of the proposed project. It will typically be the area of responsibility for the proponent or a specific area within their responsibility that causes them concern. For example, a Fire Department may wish to access their entire Fire Protection Area (FPA) or may only be interested in certain subdivisions or groups of homes. A Regional District or City may want an overview of their entire area or an assessment of a specific, closely-defined location.

A WUI Wildfire Threat Assessment should be completed on the entire study area, regardless of land ownership or status. This provides to the client a complete picture of where wildfire behaviour threats and Wildland Urban Interface wildfire threats exist. Most WUI Wildfire Threat Assessments also include the perimeter of the study area to capture any wildfire threat issues or challenges that are immediately adjacent to the study area. This outside perimeter can extend up to two kilometers past the study area boundary.

## 3.2.2 Organize the Maps

Map scales required for the field assessment will vary with the size and complexity of the assessment area. Map scales in the 1:5 000 to 1:10 000 scale range provide the most detail and allow for the most accurate mapping. Map scales greater than 1:20 000 are typically not suitable for detailed WUI Wildfire Threat mapping in the field.

Orthographic maps usually provide the most accurate base for WUI mapping. An orthographic (ortho) map is a composite of aerial photographs. They provide detail about the size and shape of forest polygons much better than a topographic or forest cover map. Orthos also allow for the identification of houses and other structures that are sometimes difficult to locate in the field.

Overlaying Cadastral or TRIM data, such as land ownership or lot boundaries, water with their classification (i.e. S6 stream) and roadways onto an ortho map, is valuable for mapping purposes. These boundaries may not be very accurate depending on the quality of the ortho map base and the compatibility with the overlaid data.

The accuracy of the ortho map will also depend on the age of the data. Land clearing, house construction and other activities that affect the forest land base, conducted after the aerial photographs were taken, will not show up on the ortho map. Older ortho maps will be less accurate than ones developed from more recent aerial mapping flights.

WUI mapping can also be completed using TRIM data with forest cover, or topographic style maps. Again, the age of the data will directly affect the accuracy of the mapping.

## 3.2.3 Polygons

This WUI Wildfire Threat Assessment System is polygon based. The forest land within a study area must be divided into polygons for assessment purposes. Polygons are areas of relatively homogenous forest cover, surface plant composition and topography that will likely exhibit similar wildfire behaviour under the same weather conditions. There will always be natural variation within any polygon and the assessment is meant to capture the average conditions within a relatively homogenous area. To complete an assessment of a polygon requires a thorough walkthrough of the area. Most information can be collected informally through visual estimates and such attributes as crown closure and surface cover estimates can be aided by the tables included in Appendix B of this manual.

Polygons may be defined by site attributes such as:

- **Forest Cover** – a similar forest cover, whether a homogenous layer of even-aged trees, or a relatively consistent mixture of tree species and height and diameter size classes.
- **Topography** – minor variations in aspect, slope or terrain are acceptable.
- **Surface Vegetation** – surface plant communities of relatively consistent species composition, and coverage.
- **Location of the polygon relative to the community** - similar forested areas above and below a community should be treated as separate polygons.

Polygon size will depend on the intensity of the assessment and the size of the study area. Assessment of a small, unique area proposed for fuel management treatments immediately adjacent to a community may be divided into polygons of less than 0.5 hectares. Maps at 1:5 000 would be required for this intensity of assessment. Polygons for an overview assessment of a large area, or those located a significant distance from any developments, may be in the four to five hectare range, or even significantly large, using up to 1:20 000 scale field maps. More variation may be acceptable within polygons of forestland a significant distance from any developments. Polygon located immediately adjacent to communities or developments where fuel management activities may be considered should have much less variation. The smaller the polygons, the more accurate the assessment will be generally. The intensity of the assessment should be discussed with the proponent.

Most polygons will include minor variability, including gaps in the forest canopy, or areas of dense understory that are too small to identify as a separate polygon (smaller than the agreed upon polygon size). The user should assess the polygon based on the representative stand/fuel type for that polygon.

### 3.2.4 Delineation of Assessment Polygons

The delineation of assessment polygons may occur several ways.

#### A. User-defined

The user will need to conduct an office review of the study area to determine the total area requiring assessment. Using air photos, ortho photos, forest cover information, stand location, aspect, topography and any other distinguishing data, the user can roughly delineate the area of interest into polygons of similar forest cover, topography and position relative to the community/structures. This will greatly speed up the assessment in the field. All polygons will require a field review to ensure the current site condition reflects the predicted condition on the maps or photos.

If a field review reveals that a delineated polygon has too much variability within it (i.e. contains more than one stand/fuel type), then the polygon may need to be stratified further and a separate assessment worksheet completed for each resulting polygon as required. Similarly, the field review of the study area may result in unique polygons identified in the office being grouped together as one polygon.

#### B. GIS Analysis

A GIS analysis can be used to determine potential wildfire behaviour using forest cover information, TRIM data, and wildfire behaviour algorithms. The resulting output can be layered with interface location and pre-

determined buffer distances (100 meter, 200 meter, 2 kilometer, etc.). The analysis will produce interface polygons of specific fire behaviour rankings and the user can use these polygons for determining where to conduct assessments. For areas where a large number of polygons are produced, the user can choose a minimum wildfire behaviour for which they will conduct assessments (i.e. moderate fire behaviour and above). Forest professionals employing this strategy for stratification require a strong understanding of wildfire behaviour.

GIS analysis is very useful where a large area (i.e. entire Regional District) is being assessed. The analysis will identify the communities/areas that require assessments. This approach varies significantly from the entire study area approach described above. The intensity and style of the WUI Wildfire Threat Assessment study must be agreed upon with the proponent and documented thoroughly.

Similar to above, a field review may result in some polygons being stratified further or in additional polygons being delineated. All assessment polygons will need to be field reviewed to ensure that the base data used for the GIS Analysis accurately reflects the site conditions found in the field.

### **3.2.5 Number of WUI Wildfire Threat Assessment**

The number of worksheets required will vary with the intensity of the assessment and the number of polygons in the study area. In an assessment consisting of a small to moderate number of polygons (i.e. the amount of work is manageable and the budget permits), each polygon should be completely assessed with a worksheet completed for each polygon and photos taken that capture the polygon.

For an assessment area containing dozens or possibly hundreds of polygons it may be too cumbersome, or expensive, to complete an assessment worksheet for each polygon. In this case, the assessor may choose to complete enough full assessments to accurately reflect the total variation identified within the assessment area. After that is completed, similar polygons can be grouped together and mapped using a colour code system based on site specific definitions developed for each of the Wildfire Behaviour Threat Classes.

Whether the assessor completes one assessment per polygon or groups similar polygons together, they should ensure that all polygons immediately adjacent to a community receive a full worksheet assessment and that enough assessments are completed elsewhere that the assessor is comfortable that the variability of the subject area has been captured and groupings are accurate.

***3.2.6 Wildfire Threat Class Definitions and 3.2.7 Wildland Urban Interface Threat Class Definitions sections have been removed.***