



## COUNCIL REPORT

To: Paul Gipps, CAO

Date: December 13, 2022

From: Jason Brolund, Fire Chief

Subject: **2023 FireSmart Grant Application and Wildfire Mitigation Update**

---

### RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** Council consider and resolve to direct staff to apply to the Community Resiliency Investment Program requesting the maximum grant contribution of \$200,000 to conduct community FireSmart activities and support wildfire mitigation operations in 2023; and

**THAT** Council consider and resolve to authorize the Mayor and the CAO to execute the agreement; and

**THAT** Council consider and resolve to direct staff to allocate funding as generally outlined in this report; and

**THAT** Council consider and resolve to authorize staff to include \$200,000 in the 2023 Operating Budget for FireSmart activities and wildfire mitigation operations, subject to funding from the Community Resiliency Investment Program.

### STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

**Foster Safety and Well-Being** – We will pursue through direct action, advocacy, and partnerships with Westbank First Nation and local service providers, investments in community health, needs-based housing, emergency preparedness, policing, and other services that foster safety and well-being in West Kelowna.

### BACKGROUND

This report continues the series of annual updates that staff provides to Council on activities and progress to reduce wildfire impacts in the City of West Kelowna and seeks approval to apply for a grant under the 2023 Community Resiliency Investment Program.

Mitigation through forest fire fuel reduction is an important annual activity involving City staff, contractors, and the general public. Mitigation activities are driven by scientific direction outlined in the 2018 West Kelowna Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update, which Council adopted in December 2018. To view the plan, visit:

[westkelownacity.ca/en/city-hall/resources/Documents/CWPPUpdate-26OCT2018.pdf](https://westkelownacity.ca/en/city-hall/resources/Documents/CWPPUpdate-26OCT2018.pdf)

Since 2019, the Province of BC has provided support funding through the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) and FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Programs, and Council has invested budgeted City funds.

Based on success in 2022, staff propose to continue to depart from complex prescription and treatment works and instead suggest that 2023 grant funding be requested to fully support a term FTE FireSmart Community Coordinator alongside two FireSmart Labourer positions.

Staff also propose to update the CWPP into a Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan in 2023 under the grant funding.

## DISCUSSION

Under the CWK FireSmart and Wildfire Mitigation program, duties are split between the Parks Department and WKFR teams. FireSmart activities (including public education and public grants) are coordinated by WKFR. Mitigation activities (treatments and prescriptions) are carried out by Parks. A committee manages the program overall.

### 2022 Mitigation Activities (Public Land)

Two FireSmart Labourers were employed by the city from May to the end of August. This 100% grant funded initiative was deemed highly successful. These term staff undertook hands-on fire mitigation work including clearing, limbing, chipping, trimming, raking, pruning and raising of the forest canopy in the following areas:

City Parks treated – 26

Road Right of Way treated – 9

The crew responded to 5 specific resident complaints of fire hazards on City owned lands.

Contract, grant funded treatments were completed by a contractor in the following areas:

Priority	Geographical Details	Treatment Area (ha)
14	Jonagold Park	1.94
30	Shannon Way park	2.82
48	Casa Palmero park	6.78
<b>Total Area</b>		<b>11.54</b>

### 2022 FireSmart Activities (Private Land)

Local governments have limited statutory authority to enforce fuel mitigation and fire prevention activities on private land. Consequently, public education and awareness of FireSmart principles remain the primary focus of our public wildfire prevention and mitigation efforts.

Our TV commercials, in partnership with Global Okanagan, continued to be successful in raising awareness. In 2022 we were able to significantly increase the reach and frequency of our commercials by partnering with the District of Peachland.

In 2022, 50 FireSmart public grants were approved, exhausting the available funds under the program.

Neighborhood FireSmart Plans were renewed for 2 neighborhoods and 1 new FireSmart neighbourhood was added (Sunview).

Debris disposal bins were placed in 3 neighborhoods and 109 yards of debris was removed from high fire hazard areas.

WKFR staff worked with Byland's Nursery to implement the FireSmart plant tagging program. Plants that are recommended as FireSmart are visibly identified at the nursery, helping the public make safer choices when selecting their landscaping.

The 2022 FireSmart Family Day was a success, after a 2 year pandemic hiatus. Nearly 1000 residents visited Fire Station #31 in May. Staff also participated in several other activities including Westside Daze, to promote the FireSmart message.

In late November 2022, the city's first Wildfire Mitigation and FireSmart Specialist was hired. The full-time, term position is 100 per cent grant funded. Creating this key role will ensure the City successfully concludes existing grant funded projects and will add capacity to explore future grant funding.

The position takes the lead on all FireSmart activities throughout the City and coordinates fuels management and public education work being completed under outstanding and future FireSmart grants. The position liaises with other levels of government such as BC Wildfire Service and with UBCM to ensure opportunities to complete FireSmart projects are maximized and seek new FireSmart and fuels management grant opportunities.

### 2022 Public Communications

The Communications Department assisted getting word out to the public about FireSmart initiatives in 2022. These efforts resulted in:

- 2,179 unique page views for the FireSmart main page on the city website
- 6,179 email impressions promoting FireSmart Family Day
- 47,534 Facebook impressions for FireSmart Family Day, plant tagging program, public grants

### 2023 Planned Mitigation Activities (Public Land)

A section of crown land located on Mt. Boucherie (near Hudson Rd Elementary) will be treated in 2023. This is an outstanding project from 2022 which was delayed for consultation with stakeholders.

Priority	Geographical Details	Treatment Area (ha)
39	Mt. Boucherie Crown Land	1.03

Staff proposes to continue the 100% grant funded FireSmart Labourer term positions in 2023. These staff will continue to focus on public lands identified in the CWPP, including parks and road right of way.

The ongoing operational budget allocation of \$50,000 for mitigation activities will continue to support operational prescriptions and treatments, as well as ad-hoc contract fuel mitigation work on city owned lands.

### 2023 Planned FireSmart Activities (Private Land)

New criteria have been announced for future CRI grant submissions. This includes the creation of a mandatory “FireSmart Committee” and the establishment of a “FireSmart Coordinator” position to continue to be eligible for grant funding. CWK already meets these requirements in the following way:

1. Fire Smart Coordinator – through the newly created Wildfire Mitigation and FireSmart specialist position. 100% grant funded.
2. FireSmart Committee – an internal committee consisting of CWK staff from Parks, WKFR, Communications, Finance and WFN staff meets regularly. WKFR also participates in an Okanagan-wide FireSmart coordination committee. Chief Brolund is the co-chair of the Fire Chief’s Association of BC province-wide FireSmart and Mitigation Committee.

In 2023, the following FireSmart activities will be undertaken:

- TV Commercials
  - FireSmart Family Day
  - Plant Tagging
  - Neighbourhood Recognition
  - Residential Grants
  - Debris Collection
- 
- 3 new neighborhoods will pursue their FireSmart Neighbourhood recognition in 2023. This includes Rose Valley Rd, Glenrosa and Starlight Crescent.
  - West Kelowna has taken the lead in the region to administer and coordinate a partnership between Okanagan cities in 2023. This partnership will see Vernon, Lake Country, Kelowna, RDCO, West Kelowna, Peachland, Summerland and Penticton jointly submit grant requests for a FireSmart Media Campaign and a shared FireSmart “Ember” mascot costume.
  - We will ensure continued support for Westbank First Nation and activities in the community forest surrounding the community.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

In 2022, staff from Financial Services and WKFR worked together to create a new financial tracking system for our CRI Grants. This new tool, linked directly to our financial system, will help ensure that use of our grant funds is maximized, all costs are accurately tracked and make grant recoveries smoother.

While subject to change, staff anticipates allocating the 2023 grant funding as follows:

<b>2023 CRI Grant Application</b>	
\$130,000	FireSmart Coordinator FTE; two FireSmart Labourers (mandatory coordinator component)
\$2,000	FireSmart Family Day (mandatory public education component)
\$28,000	Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWPP Update)
\$20,000	Public Grant Program
\$8,000	FireSmart BC Conference; four staff @ \$2,000 each
\$5,000	Regional Media Campaign (\$40,000 total)
\$4,000	Public debris removal
\$1,500	FireSmart Staff Training
\$860	Regional Purchase of Ember Mascot (\$6,000 total)
\$750	Vehicle Decals
<b>\$200,110</b>	<b>Total 2023 CRI Grant Application</b>

<b>2023 CWK Operating Budget Funding</b>	
\$50,000	Mitigation and prescriptions (Parks Dept.)
<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>Total 2023 Operating Budget funding</b>

Some grant funds remain unspent from 2022. These will be carried forward into 2023. This includes overall amounts of less than \$10,000 for tools, equipment, trailer rental and signage.

Grant funding is listed in the Five-Year Financial Plan as both revenue and expenses.

#### **REVIEWED BY**

Warren Everton, Director of Finance/CFO

Allen Fillion, Director of Engineering & Operations

Corinne Boback, Legislative Services Manager/Corporate Officer

#### **APPROVED FOR THE AGENDA BY**

Paul Gipps, CAO

PowerPoint: Yes ☒ No ☐