

**DATE:** May 25, 2018**FILE:** 7200-02**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Electoral Areas Services Committee**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer**R. Dyson****RE: Forbidden Plateau Fire Protection Feasibility Study**

---

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Electoral Areas Services Committee the final Forbidden Plateau fire protection feasibility study and to recommend that the regional district work to support local residents' efforts for fire protection.

**Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

1. THAT the Forbidden Plateau Road area residents (via the Forbidden Plateau Road Association – FPRA) be notified of any relevant community meetings and/or consultation opportunities associated with the Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the purpose of identifying future grant applications.
2. THAT Comox Valley Regional District be open to Forbidden Plateau Road Association funding applications for an eligible community project under a future intake of the Union of BC Municipalities' Strategic Wildfire Prevention FireSmart program.
3. THAT the Comox Valley Regional District be open to requests from the Forbidden Plateau Residents Association (or applicable organization) to help facilitate access to grant programs in support of community-led fire protection.

**Executive Summary**

In October 2017 the board approved that a feasibility study be conducted to explore options associated with fire protection services on Forbidden Plateau Road and up to \$15,000 be committed to the project. The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) retained the services of Defero-West Consulting to prepare a feasibility study which is attached to this report at Appendix A. The recommendations in this report are slightly modified from the Defero-West Consulting report in order to align with CVRD practices.

Prepared by:

***J. Warren***

---

James Warren  
General Manager of Corporate Services

Attachments: Appendix A – "Forbidden Plateau Fire Protection Feasibility Study, May 2018"



# Forbidden Plateau Fire Protection Feasibility Study

---

MAY 23, 2018

**PREPARED BY:**

Sarah Morden, Defero-West Consulting  
Sherry Hurst, Leftside Partners Inc.



**left***side* partners inc.

## Contents

1.0	Project Overview.....	2
2.0	Study Process .....	2
3.0	Study Area .....	3
4.0	Research Findings .....	6
5.0	Recommendations.....	8

### LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Backgrounder and Discussion Paper

Figure 2 – Recommendations Paper

Figure 3 – Courtenay Fire Protection District Service Boundary (map)

Figure 4 – Statistical Information (population estimates and assessment information)

### LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Backgrounder

Appendix 2 – Discussion Paper

Appendix 3 – Recommendations Paper

Appendix 4 – Resource Toolkit

## 1.0 Project Overview

In the fall of 2017, a petition signed by 42 Forbidden Plateau Road area residents was submitted to the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) requesting a study to explore options for fire protection, primarily beyond the current Courtenay Fire Protection District boundary (5200 Forbidden Plateau Road). The petition was received by the CVRD's Electoral Areas Services Committee in October 2017, and funds for a feasibility study were approved.

The purpose of the study was to explore options for fire protection services on Forbidden Plateau Road, including, but not limited to the potential expansion of existing fire protection boundaries, a first responder vehicle located on Forbidden Plateau Road, and/or a volunteer fire department, along with the impacts to existing and future land use activities.

## 2.0 Study Process

The consultants researched a range of service options in keeping with those specifically requested through the petition, as well as some alternatives for the community's consideration.

In developing the options, the consultants reviewed historical information, area information (land ownership, assessed values, population, infrastructure, etc.), key planning documents including the CVRD's Regional Growth Strategy, Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw, as well as the current service model utilized by the Courtenay Fire Protection District (CFPD) to serve properties up to and including 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road. Consultation was undertaken with the Forbidden Plateau Road Association, Courtenay Fire Protection District, Courtenay Fire Department, CVRD staff (Fire Services and Community Planning), Couverdon Real Estate (the real estate business of TimberWest Forest Corp.), and BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The consultants also examined fire protection service models in other rural jurisdictions, ranging from fire prevention initiatives to extinguishment. Preliminary costing of the options was estimated in consultation with the CVRD Fire Services department.

Based on the results of the preliminary research, the consultants prepared an information package containing two documents – a *Backgrounder* (see Appendix 1) and a *Discussion Paper* (see Appendix 2). The *Backgrounder* provided information about current local government services in the study area, how regional district services are established, what the CVRD community planning documents say about current and future land use in the Forbidden Plateau area, and an overview of fire protection as it relates to home insurance. The *Discussion Paper* focused on a range of potential service options



Figure 1 – Backgrounder and Discussion Paper

including preliminary costing, primarily for the upper (beyond 5200) Forbidden Plateau Road area. Both documents were posted on the study webpage ([www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/forbiddenplateau](http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/forbiddenplateau)) and mailed to residents in February of 2018. They were also used as the basis of discussion for a Community Conversation meeting held on March 11<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of the Community Conversation was to identify a short-list of options that best reflected the community needs and expectations – a summary of the key outcomes is provided in Section 4 of this report. Approximately 32 local residents attended the meeting.

At the Community Conversation meeting, residents indicated general agreement that a community-led initiative (as opposed to a regional district service) is likely best suited to the area at this time, perhaps through or in partnership with the Forbidden Plateau Road Association (FPRA). Though the original work plan for the study anticipated that the community meeting would be followed by more detailed research/costing of a short-list of CVRD service options, this was altered to reflect the community's feedback. Rather than undertaking any further research regarding establishment of a regional district service, the consultants developed a Recommendations Paper (see Appendix 3), which was mailed to residents in early April. A public comment period on the Recommendations Paper concluded on April 30<sup>th</sup> – one phone call was received during the public comment period, simply to discuss the study but not to offer any specific feedback on the recommendations. Brief comments were received by email from one resident connected with the FPRA, and the consultants were in communication with a resident from the upper portion who is actively pursuing a community-led initiative.

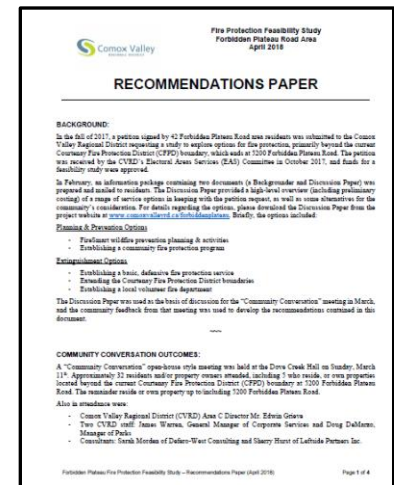


Figure 2 – Recommendations Paper

The recommendations contained in this Final Report – the final step in the study process – are based on the consultants' research findings combined with feedback from the community.

### 3.0 Study Area

Forbidden Plateau Road (approximately 15.5km in length) begins at Piercy Road in Courtenay, crosses the inland Island Highway and then transitions to a relatively steep, winding road travelling westward just north of Comox Lake. The road culminates at the Forbidden Plateau recreation area (formerly the Forbidden Plateau Ski Resort), part of the Strathcona Provincial Park. The area is comprised of a mix of rural residential properties and vacant, undeveloped land. Properties up to 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road pay for and receive fire protection through the Courtenay Fire Protection District. Properties located beyond 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road do not currently pay into or receive fire protection service. See Figure 3 for the current CFPD boundaries. Figure 4 on page 5 contains population estimates and assessment data.



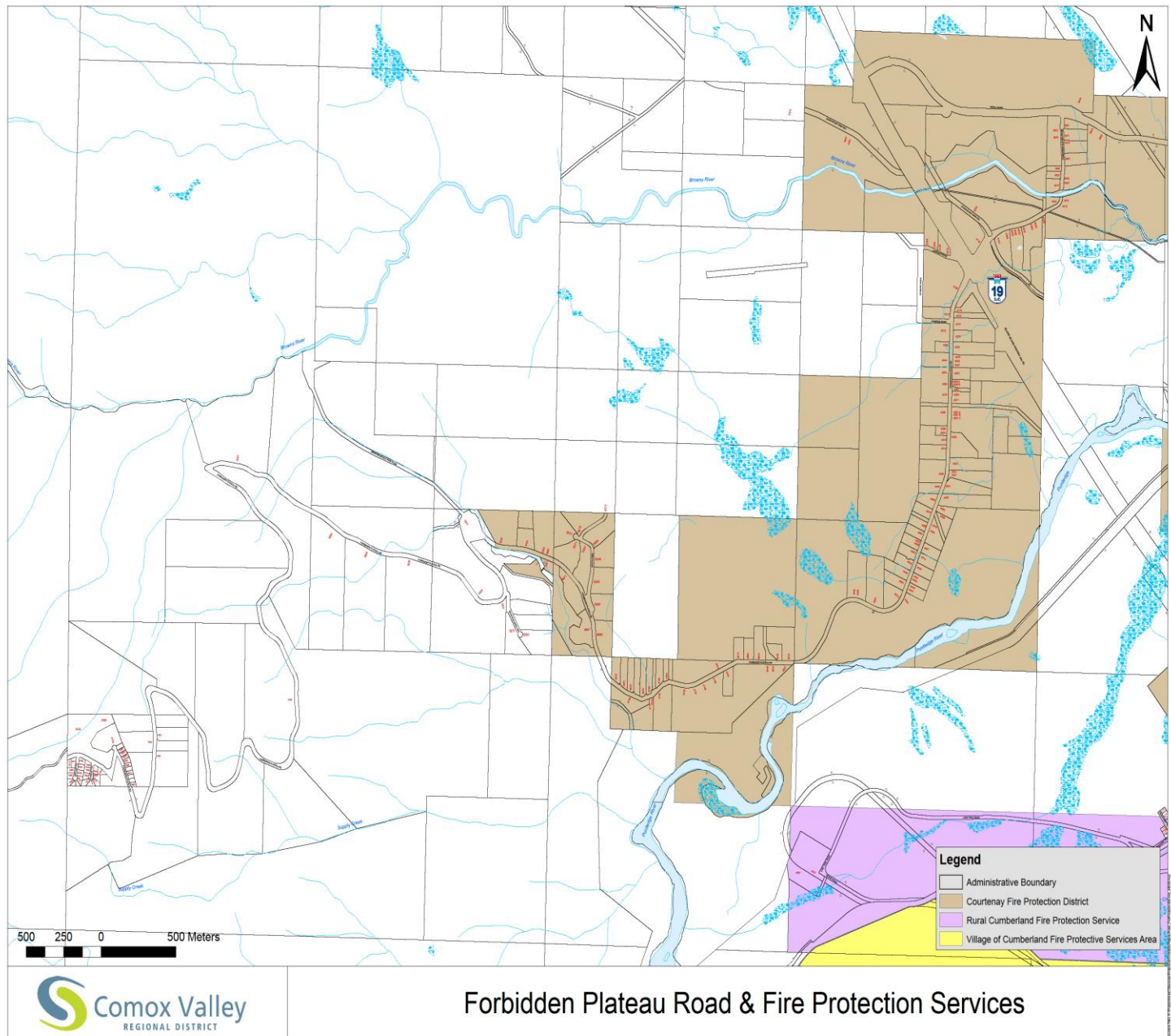


Figure 3- Current boundaries of the Courtenay Fire Protection District on Forbidden Plateau Road.

Under the CVRD's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), the Forbidden Plateau Road area is within a **"Rural Settlement Area"**, which encompasses all lands within the electoral areas outside of core settlement areas that are not otherwise designated as Agricultural Areas, Resource Areas, or Provincial Parks. The RGS emphasizes the importance of maintaining the rural character and function of these areas and sets out guiding policies with regard to land uses and lot sizes. The RGS also expressly acknowledges the "existing and ongoing pressure" to subdivide lands within Rural Settlement Areas for the purposes of

creating smaller lots of less than 4 hectares in size, which (according to the RGS) would begin to change the character of Rural Areas and could result in the unintentional conversion of those areas into estate residential areas, creating conflict between uses.

Under the Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan (OCP), the Forbidden Plateau Road area is again within a Rural Settlement Area. Policy objectives for Rural Settlement Areas include supporting rural lifestyles, restricting sprawl and parcel fragmentation, protecting working landscapes and minimizing the impact of new development on existing neighbourhoods. The minimum lot size for properties in the Rural Settlement Area is 20 hectares, unless there is space dedicated for public green space or environmental protection, and then (in accordance with the OCP policies) the minimum lot size may be reduced to as few as 4 hectares.

The current regional planning framework does not envision any significant development or growth in the Forbidden Plateau Road area, and no major reviews of the RGS or OCP are planned in the foreseeable future. Recent residential development projects in the area include Mountain Spirit and Mystic Rise, and a Couverdon application to rezone six parcels (to enable subdivision into the minimum parcel size) has been submitted to the CVRD. The K'ómoks First Nation has also been offered two Crown parcels (currently Class C Provincial Park) at the top of Forbidden Plateau Road as part of the treaty settlement process – though the parcels have been offered 'with protection' (mainly to ensure public access to Forbidden Plateau and Strathcona Park), the K'ómoks First Nation website indicates that they may be interested in developing the land in the future, if and when the Treaty is finalized.

All CVRD bylaws (including the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw), infrastructure and services must be consistent with the RGS. This alignment is very important to consider when any new services are proposed, including fire protection options for the Forbidden Plateau

## Forbidden Plateau Road Area

*based on data from the CVRD, BC Assessment and 2016 Census*

### Upper Forbidden Plateau Road

- # of properties – 70 (55 residential, of which 32 have improvements)
- Estimated population - 70
- Total assessed value - \$17,027,400
- Average assessed value - \$243,250 (\$327,000 for properties with improvements)
- # of properties represented on petition - 17

### Lower Forbidden Plateau Road

- # of properties – 103 (102 residential, of which 97 have improvements)
- Estimated population - 213
- Total assessed value - \$54,464,989
- Average assessed value - \$528,800
- # of properties represented on petition – 8

*Figure 3 – Statistical Information (population estimates based on average # of people per dwelling in the CVRD, Census 2016).*

Road area – services that are inconsistent with the RGS are unlikely to garner support from the regional board.

## 4.0 Research Findings

Fire protection in rural and remote areas can be logistically challenging and very expensive; however, there are other measures that a community can take to mitigate the risk of damage due to fire. The *Discussion Paper* that was mailed to residents provided a high-level overview (including preliminary costing) of a range of service options in keeping with the petition request, as well as some alternatives for the community's consideration. They included:

### Planning & Prevention Options

- FireSmart wildfire prevention planning & activities
- Establishing a community fire protection program

### Extinguishment Options

- Establishing a basic, defensive fire protection service
- Extending the Courtenay Fire Protection District boundaries
- Establishing a local volunteer fire department

## 4.1 Community Conversation Outcomes

A “Community Conversation” open-house style meeting was held at the Dove Creek Hall on Sunday, March 11<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 32 residents and/or property owners attended, including 5 who reside, or own properties located beyond the current CFPD boundary at 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road. The remainder reside or own property up to/including 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road.

Also in attendance were:

- CVRD Area C Director Mr. Edwin Grieve
- Two CVRD staff: James Warren, General Manager of Corporate Services and Doug DeMarzo, Manager of Parks
- Consultants: Sarah Morden of Defero-West Consulting and Sherry Hurst of Leftside Partners Inc.

### **Summary of key findings:**

- Though the petition and scope of the feasibility study focuses on options for fire services primarily for properties beyond 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road, fire protection and wildfire risk is a shared concern that transcends the CFPD boundary.
- Residents raised several concerns related to emergency planning, including the need to identify and mitigate high-risk areas, establish an escape route(s), identify and engage major stakeholders in fire prevention and enforcement activities (including TimberWest, BC Hydro, BC Parks, BC Forest Service, CVRD Regional Parks and BC



Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure), and address the ongoing impact/risk of increased recreational use throughout the area.

- Residents were keen to be engaged in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) that is currently being developed by the CVRD, including a community meeting(s) to provide input and participate in the planning process.
- There was broad support to pursue FireSmart funding and activities to reduce the risk of wildfire in the Forbidden Plateau Road area.
- Though residents within the CFPD already receive fire protection, concerns exist around response times and risk of fire spreading.
- Residents generally supported the recommendation to eliminate the option of a fully-recognized volunteer fire department in the local area; achieving fire insurance reductions is not a key goal of the community.
- A request was made to the consultants to follow-up with the CFPD and Courtenay Fire Department to determine their willingness to consider a smaller, incremental boundary expansion that would encompass properties up to and including those located on Mountain Spirit Way.
- The option of a CVRD local service area for a community fire protection officer/program did not receive support, nor did a CVRD local service area for a basic, defensive service.
- There was general agreement that a community-led initiative (as opposed to a regional district service) is best suited to the area at this time, perhaps through or in partnership with the FPRA. Such an initiative could be open to residents of the entire Forbidden Plateau Road area but may mostly involve residents/owners of properties outside of the Courtenay Fire Protection District.
- FPRA has indicated the organization may be willing to support the start-up of a community-led initiative. (Note - this is an advantage as the Association is a long-standing non-profit organization incorporated under the *Societies Act of BC*, which helps to enable access to grant funding.)
- There are residents in the local area with experience and expertise in fire extinguishment (including firefighter training) who expressed an interest in participating in a community-led initiative.
- There is interest in assembling firefighting equipment and apparatus as part of a community-led initiative. At the Community Conversation meeting, one resident

expressed willingness to allow their property to be used for central storage of equipment.

- In addition to being involved in the development of the CWPP, residents indicated that they would appreciate the support of the CVRD regarding firefighting equipment/apparatus selection, where to acquire affordable (perhaps used) equipment/apparatus and identifying funding/grant programs to support the initiative.

## 5.0 Recommendations

1. The consultants recommend that the following service options be eliminated, based on the preliminary research findings and/or feedback received at the Community Conversation meeting:
  - Volunteer fire department – this option is not currently feasible due to the anticipated costs, personnel requirements and inconsistency with CVRD community land use plans.
  - Expand CFPD boundaries – initial consultation with the CFPD and City of Courtenay Fire Department indicated that this option was not likely to be supported. Residents may opt to initiate a formal request to the CFPD to consider a smaller boundary expansion up to and including properties located on Mountain Spirit Way.
  - Community fire prevention program established as a CVRD local service area – this option did not generate any interest or support at the Community Conversation meeting.
  - Basic defensive service established as a CVRD local service area – residents expressed concerns regarding the anticipated costs and personnel requirements associated with this option.

The consultants further recommend the following:

2. THAT the Forbidden Plateau Road area residents (via the Forbidden Plateau Road Association - FPRA) be notified of any community meetings and/or consultation opportunities associated with the Community Wildfire Protection Plan so that local input can be incorporated into the planning and community assessment grants can be applied for as they become available.
3. THAT CVRD staff work with the FPRA to identify and submit a funding application for an eligible community project under a future intake of the Union of BC Municipalities' Strategic Wildfire Prevention FireSmart program. It is acknowledged that completion of the CWPP is a pre-requisite for application and that there are typically two intakes per year, but there is no guarantee.

4. THAT the CVRD generally support (where possible, within the broader context of regional priorities) requests from the FPRA (or applicable organization) to help facilitate access to grant programs in support of community-led fire protection where local governments are eligible to apply but non-profit societies and/or community organizations are not. This may include partnership applications and/or the CVRD acting as lead applicant for a project(s) proposed, developed and planned by the community.

As additional support to the community and its efforts to initiate community-led fire protection, the consultants have developed a **resource toolkit** (See Appendix 4) which includes information regarding possible grant opportunities, links to reputable sources for affordable equipment and apparatus, and a sampling of communities that have undertaken similar initiatives. For clarity, the CVRD would have no further direct involvement in a community-led initiative, except to the limited extent noted in the recommendations above.



# Forbidden Plateau Fire Protection Feasibility Study

---

## APPENDIX A



**Fire Protection Feasibility Study  
Forbidden Plateau Road Area  
February 2018**

# BACKGROUND

## ➤ Introduction

In the fall of 2017, a petition signed by 42 Forbidden Plateau Road area residents was submitted to the Comox Valley Regional District requesting a study to explore options for fire protection, primarily beyond the current Courtenay Fire Protection District boundary (5200 Forbidden Plateau Road). The petition was received by the CVRD's Electoral Areas Services Committee in October 2017, and funds for a feasibility study were approved.

The purpose of the study is to explore options associated with fire protection services on Forbidden Plateau Road, including, but not limited to, impacts to existing and future land use activities, the potential expansion of existing fire protection boundaries, a first responder vehicle located on Forbidden Plateau Road or a volunteer fire department.

It is important that the options evaluated in detail as part of the final report are aligned with the community's expectations, particularly in terms of level of service and cost impacts. This information package is designed to provide residents with important background information and an overview of a broad range of options for the community's consideration. Residents are encouraged to review the information and attend the Community Conversation meeting on Sunday, March 11th from 2pm to 4pm at Dove Creek Hall (3400 Burns Road) to share any thoughts and opinions. Residents who are unable to attend but would like to provide input to the study can contact Sarah Morden of Defero-West Consulting at 1-778-422-0913 or [smorden@defero-west.ca](mailto:smorden@defero-west.ca).

### Community Conversation

Sunday, March 11th  
2pm – 4pm  
Dove Creek Hall (3400 Burns Road)

## ➤ Study schedule

The study began in January and is scheduled to conclude in June 2018. Study-related documents will be posted on the CVRD website at [www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/ForbiddenPlateau](http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/ForbiddenPlateau).

This information package is based on the consultants' initial research and consultation with key participants and stakeholders. The Community Conversation is intended to identify the options that best reflect the community needs and expectations. During the next phase, the consultants will explore and compare the short-listed options in more detail for review by the CVRD and the community. A summary of the detailed research will be shared on the CVRD website and by email with the Forbidden Plateau Road Association and residents who sign up at the Community Conversation to receive updates. A comment period will follow, and residents are encouraged to submit feedback at this stage to the consultants by phone or email. The purpose of the comment period is to determine if the community has any strong preferences or concerns with respect to the options and/or to identify any further details or information that needs to be researched before preparing the final report to the CVRD.

## ➤ Local Government – who does what in the Forbidden Plateau Road area?

There are two local government authorities providing services in the Forbidden Plateau Road area – one is an improvement district (Courtenay Fire Protection District) and the other is a regional district (Comox Valley Regional District).

Improvement districts are a form of local government that typically look after a small number of services for communities that are not located within a municipality. Often these bodies were established prior to the creation of regional districts, which then became responsible for service delivery for areas outside municipalities. Now that regional



districts are in place, the Province no longer creates new improvement districts. In 2006 the Province developed the Policy Statement on Improvement District Governance. The provincial policy supports the continued gradual elimination of improvement districts, with municipalities and regional districts assuming the responsibilities of improvement districts over time.

The **Courtenay Fire Protection District (CFPD)** provides one service - fire protection - within its service area (see Figure 1 or digital version online at [www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/forbiddenplateau](http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/forbiddenplateau)), which includes properties up to and including 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road. Fire protection is provided to these properties through a service agreement with the City of Courtenay Fire Department. The CFPD was established in 1946 and is currently governed by three volunteer Trustees. The CFPD is a taxpayer funded organization, meaning that property owners pay for fire protection on an annual basis as part of their property taxes, and the total amount paid depends on the assessed value of their property. The net cost of the service to the CFPD

taxpayers on their 2017 property tax bill was approximately 43 cents for every \$1000 of assessed value. For home insurance purposes, these properties may qualify as “semi-protected”, and likely receive a discount on their home insurance accordingly. For those properties beyond 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road, the BC Forest Service Protection Program has wildfire fighting resources to respond to fires on wildlands (forest land, grass land), but does not fight structure fires.

The **Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD)** is one of 28 regional districts in British Columbia. Most regional district boundaries encompass municipalities as well as unincorporated lands, which are divided into smaller areas called electoral areas. The CVRD has three electoral areas – Electoral Areas A, B and C. All properties on Forbidden Plateau Road are within the boundaries of Electoral Area C. Each of the electoral areas has one representative on the CVRD Board of Directors - Area C is represented by Mr. Edwin Grieve. Municipalities within the region (City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of

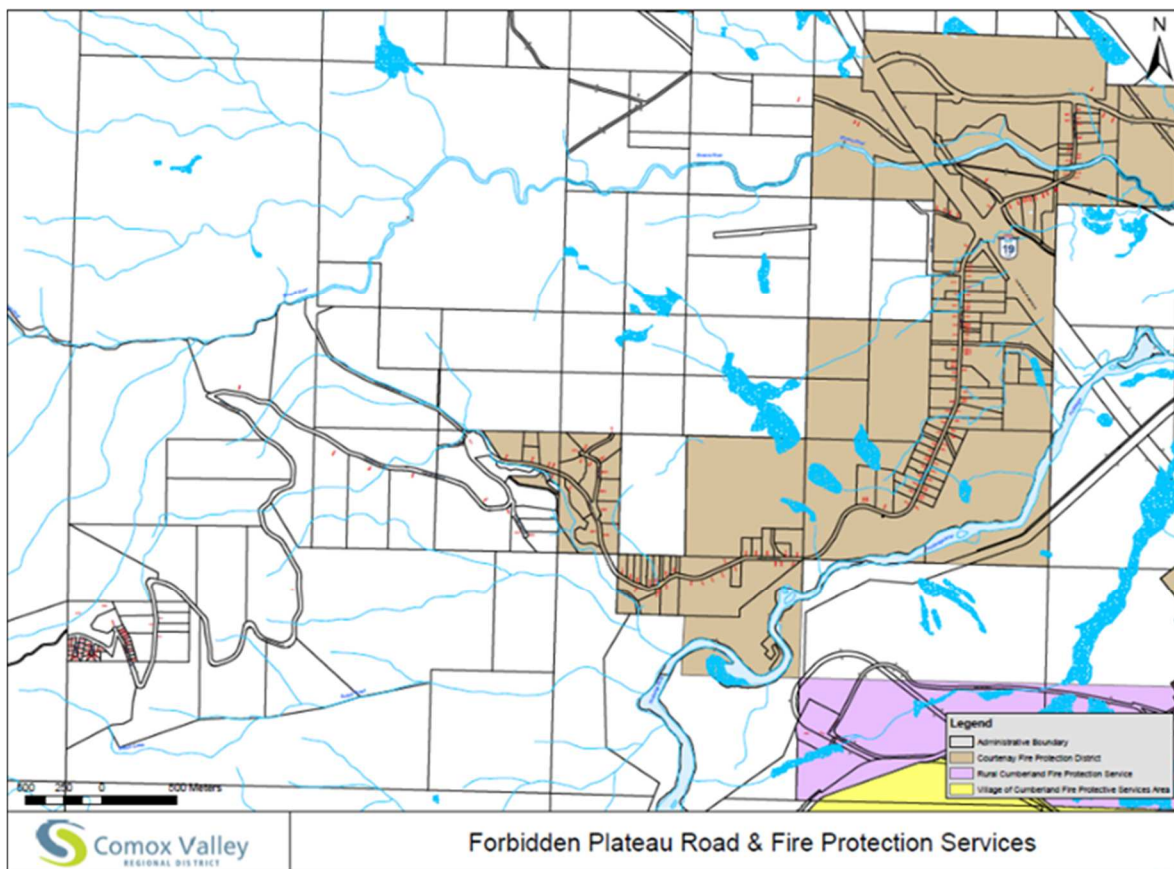


Figure 1 – CFPD Service Area Boundary on Forbidden Plateau Road

Cumberland) are also represented on the Board, which has a total of 10 Directors.

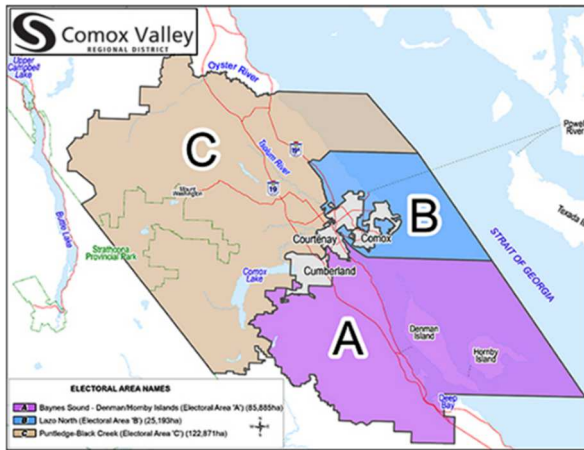


Figure 2 – CVRD Electoral Area Boundaries

### ► How are Regional District Services Established?

Regional districts are flexible structures that can provide a broad range of services, with the exception of a few provincially mandated services (e.g. roads, policing). Services offered are determined by the regional board, with the support of residents. Because the board only provides services that its members, or residents, agree the regional district should provide, the number and type of services varies by regional district and can be different within each electoral area or community. Some services, such as fire protection, may be provided on an area specific basis to a portion of an electoral area, or to a combination of electoral areas. Regional services are those that are provided to all electoral areas and municipalities.

To establish a new service, it must (in accordance with the *Local Government Act*) go through a process to determine its feasibility – this study is the first step in determining the feasibility of a fire protection service for the Forbidden Plateau Road area. If deemed feasible, a service establishing bylaw must receive support from the CVRD board. The bylaw must also be approved by the province's

<sup>1</sup> An alternative approval process (sometimes referred to as a counter-petition) is possible only if the service will not exceed 50¢ for each \$1,000 of net taxable value of land and improvements included in the service area. Otherwise, a referendum is required unless a petition meeting all of the requirements outlined in the *LGA* can be presented to the Regional District – this includes signatures from owners of at least 50% of the parcels in the service area, representing at

Inspector of Municipalities and supported by the residents that will participate in and pay for the service. Support can be demonstrated through an alternative-approval process,<sup>1</sup> referendum, petition or (in some cases) approval by an electoral area director on behalf of residents of that jurisdiction.

### ► What CVRD services does the Forbidden Plateau Road area currently receive?

Forbidden Plateau Road area residents pay for and receive the following CVRD services:

- Emergency planning and management (earthquake, tsunami, flood, wildfires)
- Community / land use planning
- Building inspection
- Bylaw enforcement
- Homelessness support service
- Recreation (Comox Valley Sports and Aquatics Centers)
- Regional parks
- Solid waste management
- Library<sup>2</sup>
- CVRD Governance / Administration

Residents pay for these services through property taxation and user fees where applicable (e.g. recreation centre fees and garbage tipping fees). In electoral areas, the Province collects property taxes. The Province then transfers funds to the regional districts to cover the cost of the services that the regional district provides, both region-wide and area specific. There is currently no area specific CVRD services that encompass all or part of the Forbidden Plateau Road area.

### CVRD Community Planning

The CVRD Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is an overarching, region-wide plan containing high-level policies to direct growth while preserving the region's quality of life. The RGS was mandated by the Province in 2008 as part of the establishment of the CVRD and was completed in 2011. **All CVRD**

least 50% of the net taxable value of all land and improvements in the service area.

<sup>2</sup> Library service is provided to CVRD by the Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL). Although not delivered directly by the Regional District, the CVRD participates on the library board and collects taxes on behalf of the regional library board.

**bylaws (including the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw), infrastructure and services must be consistent with the RGS.** This alignment is very important to consider when any new services are proposed, including fire protection options for the Forbidden Plateau Road area – services that are inconsistent with the RGS are unlikely to garner support from the regional board.

► **What do the regional plans say about the Forbidden Plateau Road area?**

Under the RGS, the Forbidden Plateau Road area is within a “**Rural Settlement Area**”, which encompasses all lands within the electoral areas outside of core settlement areas that are not otherwise designated as Agricultural Areas, Resource Areas, or Provincial Parks. The RGS emphasizes the importance of maintaining the rural character and function of these areas and sets out guiding policies with regard to land uses and lot sizes. The RGS also expressly acknowledges the “existing and ongoing pressure” to subdivide lands within Rural Settlement Areas for the purposes of creating small lots of less than 4 hectares in size, which (according to the RGS) would begin to change the character of Rural Areas and could result in the unintentional conversion of those areas into estate residential areas, creating conflict between uses.

The Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan (OCP) flows from the RGS - under this Plan, the Forbidden Plateau Road area is again within a Rural Settlement Area. Policy objectives for Rural Settlement Areas include supporting rural lifestyles, restricting sprawl and parcel fragmentation, protecting working landscapes and minimizing the impact of new development on existing neighbourhoods. The minimum lot size for properties in the Rural Settlement Area is 20 hectares, unless there is space dedicated for public green space or environmental protection, and then (in accordance with the OCP policies) the minimum lot size may be reduced to as few as 4 hectares.

► **What sort of development is likely to occur in the Forbidden Plateau Road area?**

The current regional planning framework does not envision any significant development or growth in the Forbidden Plateau Road area, and no major reviews of the RGS or OCP are planned in the

foreseeable future. Recent residential development projects in the area include Mountain Spirit and Mystic Rise, and a Couverdon application to rezone six parcels (to enable subdivision into the minimum parcel size) is currently before the CVRD. The K’ómoks First Nation has also been offered two Crown parcels (currently Class C Provincial Park) at the top of Forbidden Plateau Road as part of the treaty settlement process – though the parcels have been offered ‘with protection’ (mainly to ensure public access to Forbidden Plateau and Strathcona Park), the KFN website indicates that they may be interested in developing the land in the future.

► **Fire Protection and Home Insurance**

There are many different reasons that communities desire fire protection, a common one being to reduce the cost of fire insurance. Most insurance companies rely on the Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) to establish appropriate fire insurance rates for both residential and commercial properties. FUS classification and grading consider a variety of factors, including an area’s water system, fire department apparatus, number of trained/responding firefighters, and proximity to the firehall and/or hydrant.

The lower portion of Forbidden Plateau Road (up to and including the property at 5200) receives fire protection through the Courtenay Fire Protection District via a service agreement with the Courtenay Fire Department, which is a “recognized” service provider. According to FUS classification and grading systems, properties within the service area may qualify as “semi-protected” and may receive a reduction on their home insurance. Currently, properties located beyond 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road are considered “unprotected”, and do not qualify for reductions on home insurance. For those properties, the BC Forest Service has wildfire fighting resources to respond to fires on wildlands (forest land, grass land), but the BC Forest Service does not fight structure fires.



# Forbidden Plateau Fire Protection Feasibility Study

---

## APPENDIX B



**Fire Protection Feasibility Study  
Forbidden Plateau Road Area  
February 2018**

# DISCUSSION PAPER: FIRE PROTECTION OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES

## ➤ Introduction

In the fall of 2017, a petition signed by 42 Forbidden Plateau Road area residents was submitted to the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) requesting a study to explore options for fire protection, primarily beyond the current Courtenay Fire Protection District (CFPD) boundary (5200 Forbidden Plateau Road). The petition was received by the CVRD's Electoral Areas Services Committee in October 2017, and funds for a feasibility study were approved. The petition specifically requested the CVRD's assistance with reviewing the feasibility of a range of options, including (but not limited to) potential expansion of existing CFPD fire protection boundaries, a first responder vehicle located on Forbidden Plateau Road or a volunteer fire department. Fire protection in rural and remote areas can be logistically challenging and very expensive; however, there are other measures that a community can take to mitigate

the risk of damage due to fire. This *Discussion Paper* presents a high-level overview of a range of options in keeping with the petition request, as well as some alternatives for the community's consideration.

## ➤ Fulltime, Recognized Volunteer Fire Department

Establishing a full-time volunteer fire department in the Forbidden Plateau Road area is the only option that would qualify all upper Forbidden Plateau Road area residents for insurance reductions. Though the legislative mechanism exists through which the CVRD could create an area specific service for such a service, there are some significant challenges that erode the feasibility of this option.

**Cost** - the start-up capital and ongoing operational costs associated with this option are very expensive. Using the cost estimates from a 2003 FUS study for Mount Washington and applying a cost escalation multiplier, the annual cost for establishing and operating a similarly modest-sized/serviced firehall in the Forbidden Plateau Road area could easily exceed \$750,000 per year. These costs do not include land acquisition for a firehall, or construction of a waterworks system that meets FUS requirements, which would add hundreds of thousands to the capital cost. Further, the lower Forbidden Plateau Road properties already receive fire protection through the CFPD and City of Courtenay Fire Department, and therefore may be reluctant to share in the cost of this service. In the future, if the CFPD were to convert to a regional district service, there would be an opportunity to review the service boundaries and level of fire protection provided. The feasibility of including the upper portion of Forbidden Plateau Road could be reassessed at that time.

## Forbidden Plateau Road Area

*based on data from the CVRD, BC Assessment and 2016 Census*

### Upper Forbidden Plateau Road

- # of properties – 70 (55 residential, of which 32 have improvements)
- Estimated population - 70
- Total assessed value - \$17,027,400
- Average assessed value - \$243,250 (\$327,000 for properties with improvements)
- # of properties represented on petition - 17

### Lower Forbidden Plateau Road

- # of properties – 103 (102 residential, of which 97 have improvements)
- Estimated population - 213
- Total assessed value - \$54,464,989
- Average assessed value - \$528,800
- # of properties represented on petition – 8

Figure 1 – Study Area Statistical Information



**Population density** - an organizational structure consisting of fire chief, deputy chief, training officer and fire captains for a total of a minimum of 15 fully trained firefighters would also be required to meet the FUS fully protected status; additional firefighters are preferred. The upper portion of Forbidden Plateau Road currently has approximately 32 developed residential properties - using the average number of people per dwelling in the 2016 census profile for the CVRD, the population is approximately 70 people. At full development, in accordance with the current RGS and OCP, the population of the area is not likely to exceed 200 people in the foreseeable future. Sustaining a minimum 15-member, 24/7 volunteer fire department would be a significant, if not insurmountable, challenge for the community.

**Inconsistency with CVRD community plans** - The scale of infrastructure, services and population required to establish and operate a full-time volunteer fire department in the Forbidden Plateau Road area is, at present, inconsistent with the vision and policies outlined in the CVRD's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and Official Community Plan (OCP).

*It is recommended that this option be excluded from the next phase (detailed research) of the study.*

#### ➤ **Expand CFPD Boundaries**

The CFPD has been approached on at least two occasions in the past decade with a request to consider expansion of its service area boundaries to include the upper portion of Forbidden Plateau Road - once by area residents, and once by the CVRD on behalf of area residents.

The CFPD most recently (2013) declined to consider an expansion based on the following reasons, as outlined in a written response to the CVRD:

- *The current boundary is approximately 13.9 km from the fire hall using the Comox Logging Road as a route. This route currently runs*

*through private property and has been shut down for the Courtenay Fire Dept's use in the past.*

- *Most insurance companies won't provide a discounted insurance rate when you exceed 13 km's from a fire station, so there would be no financial benefit to the homeowner.*
- *Taking in more forested land would also increase the potential financial risk to the CFPD. If a large forest fire were to occur in this forest area, the Courtenay Fire Department would have to bring in the Ministry of Forest and possibly contractors to assist with the extinguishment and overhaul. This cost would then be passed on to the CFPD.<sup>1</sup>*

Preliminary discussions with the CFPD indicate that their position has not changed. Even if the CFPD were open to a possible boundary expansion, the Fire Chief for the City of Courtenay has indicated that the Department has no interest in sending its water tanker apparatus any further up Forbidden Plateau Road than the current boundary, which ends at 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road.

#### ➤ **Where does this leave us? Fire Protection Alternatives**

There are several other fire protection alternatives that may interest the community, depending on the local reasons for wanting fire protection. These alternatives range from planning/prevention activities to basic fire extinguishment response. (See Figure 2) It is important to note that none of the alternatives discussed in this section fully meet FUS standards for insurance reductions, though individual companies may sometimes be willing to offer reduced insurance premiums for more basic levels of extinguishment response.

#### **CVRD Service or Community Initiative?**

Different implementation mechanisms exist for each of the alternatives along the fire protection continuum. Generally, implementation will either be achieved through the CVRD (established as a

<sup>1</sup> It appears this concern is related to Division 2 of the *Wildfire Act*, wherein the Minister may issue an order requiring a leaseholder/occupier of Crown land OR owner/leaseholder/occupier of private land to pay fire control costs incurred by the BC Forest Service, and the possibility that an

individual receiving such an order could potentially then make a claim against the Improvement District for failing to provide sufficient fire protection service.

new area specific service), or as a community-led initiative - perhaps through the Forbidden Plateau Road Association, a newly formed community non-profit organization, or simply a group of residents wishing to work together.

One of the key benefits of establishing an area specific service through the CVRD is that the service is clearly defined by bylaw (e.g. service area boundaries, participating properties, service levels, etc.), and funded on a sustained basis through taxation. Community-led programs and initiatives depend on voluntary participation and financial contributions; however, residents sometimes prefer the flexibility and lower costs of community-led programs over regional district services. The focus of this study is to determine the feasibility of an area specific regional district service for fire protection. Recognition of where other community-led options may apply (including examples, where applicable) has been included but not researched or costed in any detail.

## ➤ Along the Continuum: Planning & Prevention

### FireSmart (Wildfire) Planning & Activities

FireSmart planning and prevention activities are intended to prevent/mitigate the impacts of wildfire to assets on community and private property. The CVRD is currently in the process of developing a region-wide wildfire protection plan as part of its emergency preparedness program, which will include the Forbidden

Plateau area. Once completed, the CVRD will become eligible to apply for grants to support FireSmart education initiatives and related activities (i.e. property risk assessments, vegetation management, etc.) through the Union of BC Municipalities' Community Wildfire Prevention Program. Regional Districts may submit up to three applications per funding intake, which is typically offered annually. Forbidden Plateau Road residents could approach the CVRD about a grant application to support FireSmart education and activities in the area. The project could involve just the upper portion, or all properties on Forbidden Plateau Road, as all properties pay into the regional emergency preparedness program. It would require some local coordination to work with the CVRD and undertake the project, which could possibly be overseen by the Residents Association. This option could be combined with any others in this Discussion Paper.

### Implementation & Cost Considerations

Due to the current availability of provincial funding, FireSmart planning and prevention activities is the lowest cost alternative for incrementally increasing fire protection in the community. Communities can request up to 100% of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$10,000 per project. Communities can re-apply to the program for additional funding/projects; however, first-time applicants receive preference.

This option would be undertaken in partnership with the CVRD, through the existing regional emergency planning program. As such, there

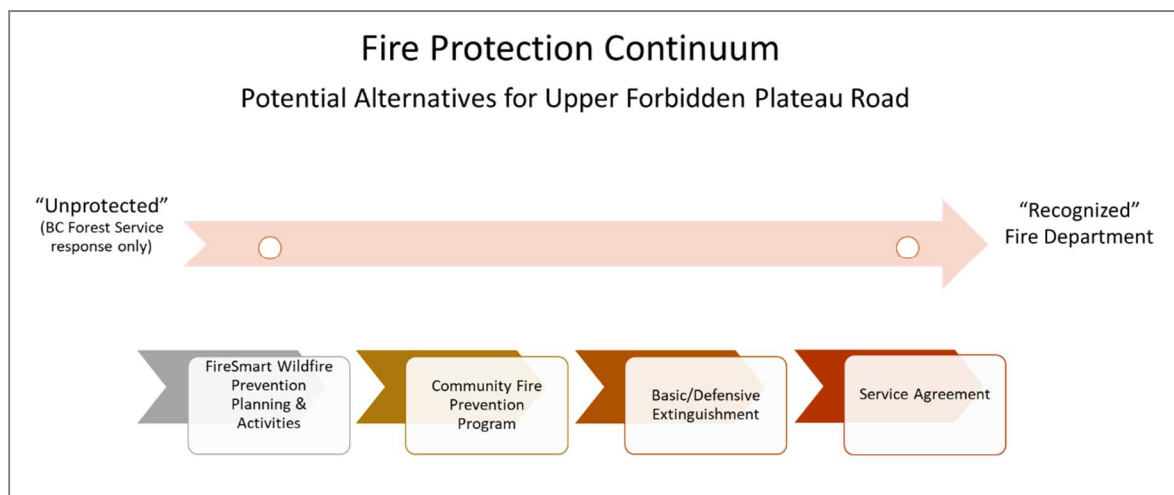


Figure 2 – Fire Protection Continuum

would be no need to create a new area specific service. The main benefit of this alternative is that it is an economical, pro-active approach to mitigating risk to life and property from fire. This option could be implemented relatively quickly, depending on the granting schedule and interest/availability of local residents in working with the CVRD on a FireSmart funding application and community project.

### **Community Fire Prevention Program**

A community fire prevention program could engage the services of a fire prevention officer to focus on designing and implementing a localized program for the upper portion of the Forbidden Plateau Road area. It is unlikely that properties in the lower portion would participate in this option as they already receive fire prevention programming through the CFPD / Courtenay Fire Department.

The program could include development of a fire protection plan that prioritizes fire prevention and life safety based on local needs. Given the area's rural, forested surroundings, the program could focus on reducing the risk of both **wildfire and structural** fires through education, inspections (on a volunteer basis) and fire safety initiatives. The fire prevention officer could be engaged on a term contract simply to develop a fire prevention plan, which could then be turned over to residents for implementation on an individual/community basis, or on a longer-term contract, or an ongoing part-time basis to develop and implement the plan in collaboration with residents.

### Implementation & Cost Considerations

This service could be established as a CVRD area specific service, or as a community-led initiative. An example of a community-led initiative that utilized this type of approach was at Mount Washington, where Strata 799 worked with a local Comox Valley fire chief to implement a fire protection strategy and various fire prevention measures.

For an ongoing program, preliminary research indicates that this option would cost approximately \$60,000 to \$70,000 per year, including a part-time fire prevention officer salary, a program budget to support fire safety initiatives for community benefit, and a used 4x4

vehicle for use/storage by the officer. If established as a local area service through the CVRD, a residential property valued at \$327,000 (average 2017 assessed value for the upper portion of the Forbidden Plateau Road area), could expect to pay approximately \$1,175/year for this option, plus a 5.25% provincial Surveyor of Taxes fee. Elector assent would need to be obtained through a referendum or petition. The program could potentially utilize grants, such as the FireSmart program, to support various aspects of the program.

### ➤ **Along the Continuum: Fire Extinguishment**

#### **Basic, Defensive Extinguishment**

This alternative includes establishment of a basic, defensive (exterior operations only) fire extinguishment response service aimed at preventing the spread of fire to adjacent properties/buildings/forest. As the lower portion of Forbidden Plateau Road already receives full fire protection, this alternative would again focus on the upper portion of the Forbidden Plateau Road area. The intent would be to provide an initial defensive response while waiting for the BC Forest Service to initiate operations (if applicable, though BCFS does not fight structural fires) and/or emergency responders if there is an immediate threat to life due to fire. Ideally, this option includes preparation of a community fire protection plan as a starting-point to the service.

### Implementation & Cost Considerations

This service could be established as a CVRD area specific service, or as a community-led initiative. **If established as a CVRD service**, certain minimum requirements would need to be met to fulfil various legal and administrative obligations, which unavoidably increases the cost of the service. The fire protection service recently approved for Mount Washington proposed a similar type of first-line defensive service. Key elements of that service that could apply to a similar service in the upper Forbidden Plateau Road area include:

- Construction of a double garage-style building, to post disaster standards and withstand snow load (estimate \$500,000)

- Two response vehicles appropriate for the mountain terrain (estimate \$70,000)
- Selection of start-up equipment (estimate \$60,000)
- Training for local volunteers to Level 1 Firefighter (estimate \$25,000 annually for CVRD-required minimum of 15 volunteers)
- Program administration (estimate \$10,000 annually)

Mount Washington benefited significantly from having dedicated land available (at no additional cost) for construction of the storage building, along with an existing Resort-owned water system and hydrants that met fire flow requirements. Underground fiberglass water storage tanks (see Figure 3) may be a possibility for the upper Forbidden Plateau Road area, but land would need to be acquired (or alternative arrangements made with willing property owners) for equipment/vehicle storage and installation of water tanks.



Figure 3 – Example of an underground, fiberglass water storage tanks for fire protection in rural areas

Allowing for another \$125,000 for purchase, engineering and installation of a 25,000-gallon tank (or series of smaller tanks) and \$275,000 for land acquisition (which would require rezoning), the annual cost of a defensive service established through the CVRD could be roughly estimated at \$155,000 per year.<sup>2</sup>

If established as a local area service through the CVRD, a residential property valued at \$327,000 (average 2017 assessed value for the upper portion of the Forbidden Plateau Road area),

could expect to pay in the range of \$2,435/year for this option, plus a provincial 5.25% Surveyor of Taxes fee.

Elector assent would need to be obtained through a referendum or petition. There are currently no major government grants available for capital costs related to fire protection, including firehalls, apparatus and/or equipment. This level of service would not meet FUS standards, meaning it is anticipated that no insurance premium reductions would apply. As well, a minimum of 15 volunteers would be required for a sanctioned regional district service. As outlined in the previous section, it would be very difficult for the area to support the 15-volunteer requirement, even at full development potential in accordance with the current RGS and OCP.

A **community-led approach** to this alternative would not be subject to the same legal requirements as a regional district service and could most likely achieve cost reductions through the use of private land, donations and/or in-kind contributions towards shared equipment and water-equipped apparatus (for example, water tenders with pumps), along with basic training of available local volunteers. While this is possible on an informal, neighbour-helping-neighbour basis, some communities (including Apex Mountain Resort) have opted to form not-for-profit societies to provide an organizational structure and fundraising capability. It is important to note, however, that not-for-profit status does not exempt organizations from the need to be compliant with WorkSafe BC regulations, insurance obligations and proper administration related to Society organization, training, maintenance and documentation. As well, with a not-for-profit organization, there may be a need to further investigate the possible financial risk referenced by the CFPD, related to cost recovery claims under the *Wildfire Act*.

If residents in the upper portion of the Forbidden Plateau Road area want to set up a community-led service - whether informally as neighbours or as a not-for-profit Society - Regional district staff and/or local Comox Valley fire departments may

<sup>2</sup> Capital costs financed over 10 years at 3.0% per annum; allocated to a capital reserve following debt pay down for equipment and apparatus renewal, replacement or upgrade.

be able to provide recommendations and guidance with regards to selection of fire service apparatus.

### **Service Agreement**

As outlined, the new fire protection service at Mount Washington was designed to have on-site infrastructure, storage of equipment and apparatus, along with trained volunteers for initial response. In addition to that, the service includes an agreement with the Oyster River Fire Department through which it was anticipated that a crew of approximately four trained firefighters would arrive in a four-wheel drive vehicle as soon as safely possible to assume responsibility at the scene, using the local apparatus and equipment.

In that instance, a service agreement was only feasible in combination with the on-mountain water system, storage building, apparatus and equipment to standards specified by the Fire Chief. It is reasonable to assume that similar requirements would apply if a Comox Valley fire department were willing to consider a comparable agreement with the upper Forbidden Plateau Road area residents. Their interest, however, is not guaranteed and must be balanced with the need to maintain service levels in their home communities. If there is any perceived risk in terms of insufficient infrastructure, availability of firefighter personnel and/or any other related service concerns, then an agreement would not be feasible.

### **Implementation & Cost Considerations**

Though it would require further research and consultation with CVRD staff and local fire chiefs, it is not anticipated that a service agreement would be possible at this time – lack of a local water supply system would undoubtedly be a significant concern for local fire departments, along with ensuring sufficient firefighter coverage in their home communities. At a minimum, it could be expected that the cost of an agreement could significantly exceed other areas due to the level of risk. For reference, the service cost is budgeted at \$90,000 annually for Mount Washington, which has a full water system and hydrants. The cost of a service agreement for Forbidden Plateau would be in addition to the costs outlined in the previous

section to establish on-site storage for firefighting equipment and apparatus, training for local volunteers, water storage tank(s) and land procurement. It still would not satisfy the published FUS standards and requirements for insurance reductions.

### **➤ Community Conversation – questions for consideration**

We need your input! Please plan to attend the **Community Conversation meeting on Sunday, March 11th from 2pm – 4pm at the Dove Creek Hall** (3400 Burns Road) where the consultants will work with residents to determine which alternatives are best aligned with community goals/expectations and require more detailed research. Questions that we hope to cover with residents include the following:

- What do you think about the recommendation to exclude a “fully recognized” volunteer fire department (to FUS standards) from the study?
- Preliminary conversations with the CFPD and City of Courtenay Fire Department indicate that there is not likely to be any consideration given to a boundary expansion – do residents have any follow-up questions or require any further information on this option? Should it be excluded moving forward?
- Which of the alternative(s) presented do you think best meet the goals and expectations of the community and warrant further research?
- Do you think your preferred alternative(s) is best pursued as a regional district service, or a community-led approach? Or perhaps a combination?
- Do you have any other ideas or information you would like to see included as part of the next stage (detailed research) of the study?





# Forbidden Plateau Fire Protection Feasibility Study

---

## APPENDIX C



**Fire Protection Feasibility Study  
Forbidden Plateau Road Area  
April 2018**

# RECOMMENDATIONS PAPER

---

## **BACKGROUND:**

In the fall of 2017, a petition signed by 42 Forbidden Plateau Road area residents was submitted to the Comox Valley Regional District requesting a study to explore options for fire protection, primarily beyond the current Courtenay Fire Protection District (CFPD) boundary, which ends at 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road. The petition was received by the CVRD's Electoral Areas Services (EAS) Committee in October 2017, and funds for a feasibility study were approved.

In February, an information package containing two documents (a Backgrounder and Discussion Paper) was prepared and mailed to residents. The Discussion Paper provided a high-level overview (including preliminary costing) of a range of service options in keeping with the petition request, as well as some alternatives for the community's consideration. For details regarding the options, please download the Discussion Paper from the project website at [www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/forbiddenplateau](http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/forbiddenplateau). Briefly, the options included:

### Planning & Prevention Options

- FireSmart wildfire prevention planning & activities
- Establishing a community fire protection program

### Extinguishment Options

- Establishing a basic, defensive fire protection service
- Extending the Courtenay Fire Protection District boundaries
- Establishing a local volunteer fire department

The Discussion Paper was used as the basis of discussion for the "Community Conversation" meeting in March, and the community feedback from that meeting was used to develop the recommendations contained in this document.

~~~~~

## **COMMUNITY CONVERSATION OUTCOMES:**

A "Community Conversation" open-house style meeting was held at the Dove Creek Hall on Sunday, March 11<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 32 residents and/or property owners attended, including 5 who reside, or own properties located beyond the current Courtenay Fire Protection District (CFPD) boundary at 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road. The remainder reside or own property up to/including 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road.

Also in attendance were:

- Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Area C Director Mr. Edwin Grieve
- Two CVRD staff: James Warren, General Manager of Corporate Services and Doug DeMarzo, Manager of Parks
- Consultants: Sarah Morden of Defero-West Consulting and Sherry Hurst of Leftside Partners Inc.

### Summary of key findings:

- Though the petition and scope of the feasibility study focuses on options for fire services primarily for properties beyond 5200 Forbidden Plateau Road, fire protection and wildfire risk is a shared concern that transcends the CFPD boundary.
- Residents raised several concerns related to emergency planning, including the need to identify and mitigate high-risk areas, establish an escape route(s), identify and engage major stakeholders in fire prevention and enforcement activities (including TimberWest, BC Hydro, BC Parks, BC Forest Service, CVRD Regional Parks and BC Ministry of Highways), and address the ongoing impact/risk of increased recreational use throughout the area.
- Residents were keen to be engaged in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) that is currently being developed by the CVRD, including a community meeting(s) to provide input and participate in the planning process.
- There was broad support to pursue FireSmart funding and activities to reduce the risk of wildfire in the Forbidden Plateau Road area.
- Though residents within the CFPD already receive fire protection, concerns exist around response times and risk of fire spreading.
- Residents generally supported the recommendation to eliminate the option of a fully-recognized volunteer fire department in the local area; achieving fire insurance reductions is not a key goal of the community.
- A request was made to the consultants to follow-up with the CFPD and Courtenay Fire Department to determine their willingness to consider a smaller, incremental boundary expansion that would encompass properties up to and including those located on Mountain Spirit Way.
- The option of a CVRD local service area for a community fire protection officer/program did not receive support, nor did a CVRD local service area for a basic, defensive service.
- There was general agreement that a community-led initiative (as opposed to a regional district service) is best suited to the area at this time, perhaps through or in partnership with the Forbidden Plateau Road Association (FPRA). Such an initiative could be open to residents of the entire Forbidden Plateau Road area but may mostly involve residents/owners of properties outside of the Courtenay Fire Protection District.
- The Forbidden Plateau Road Association (FPRA) has indicated the organization may be willing to support the start-up of a community-led initiative. (Note - this is an advantage as the Association is a long-standing non-profit organization incorporated under the *Societies Act of BC*, which helps to enable access to grant funding.)
- There are residents in the local area with experience and expertise in fire extinguishment (including firefighter training) who expressed an interest in participating in a community-led initiative.

- There is interest in assembling firefighting equipment and apparatus as part of a community-led initiative. At the Community Conversation meeting, one resident expressed willingness to allow their property to be used for central storage of equipment.
- In addition to being involved in the development of the CWPP, residents indicated that they would appreciate the support of the CVRD regarding firefighting equipment/apparatus selection, where to acquire affordable (perhaps used) equipment/apparatus and identifying funding/grant programs to support the initiative.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations outlined in this document have been developed based on the initial research findings and the discussion/feedback received at the Community Conversation meeting. Residents are encouraged to review the proposed recommendations and submit any comments by April 30<sup>th</sup> to Sarah Morden of Defero-West Consulting at 1-778-422-0913 or smorden@defero-west.ca.

1. The consultants recommend that the following service options be eliminated from further analysis based on the preliminary research findings and/or feedback received at the Community Conversation meeting:
  - Volunteer fire department – this option is not currently feasible due to the anticipated costs, personnel requirements and inconsistency with CVRD community land use plans.
  - Expand CFPD boundaries – initial consultation with the CFPD and City of Courtenay Fire Department indicated that this option was not likely to be supported. Residents may opt to initiate a formal request to the CFPD to consider a smaller boundary expansion up to and including properties located on Mountain Spirit Way.
  - Community fire prevention program established as a CVRD local service area – this option did not generate any interest or support at the Community Conversation meeting.
  - Basic defensive service established as a CVRD local service area – residents expressed concerns regarding the anticipated costs and personnel requirements associated with this option. (note - there is interest in a community-led initiative)

The consultants further recommend the following:

2. That CVRD staff and/or the consulting team leading the development of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) be requested to notify Forbidden Plateau Road area residents (via the Forbidden Plateau Road Association - FPRA) of any community meetings and/or consultation opportunities associated with the CWPP so that local input can be incorporated into the Plan.
3. That CVRD staff work with the FPRA to identify and submit a funding application for an eligible community project under a future intake of the Union of BC Municipalities' Strategic Wildfire Prevention FireSmart program. It is acknowledged that completion of the CWPP is a pre-requisite for application and that there are typically two intakes per year, but there is no guarantee.
4. That the CVRD generally support (where possible, within the broader context of regional priorities) requests from the FPRA (or applicable organization) to help facilitate access to grant programs in support of community-led fire protection where local governments are eligible to apply but non-profit societies

and/or community organizations are not. This may include partnership applications and/or the CVRD acting as lead applicant for a project(s) proposed, developed and planned by the community.

As additional support to the community and its efforts to initiate community-led fire protection, the consultants will include a **resource toolkit** with the final report that includes information regarding possible grant opportunities, a sampling of communities that have undertaken similar initiatives and links to reputable sources for affordable equipment, apparatus and/or training opportunities. The CVRD would have no further direct involvement in a community-led initiative, except to the limited extent noted in the recommendations above.

### **Public Comment Period**

Residents are encouraged to review the proposed recommendations and submit any comments by **Monday, April 30th, 2018** to:

Sarah Morden  
Defero-West Consulting  
1-778-422-0913 or [smorden@defero-west.ca](mailto:smorden@defero-west.ca)





# Forbidden Plateau Fire Protection Feasibility Study

---

## APPENDIX D



**Fire Protection Feasibility Study  
Forbidden Plateau Road Area  
May 2018**

# RESOURCE TOOLKIT

---

As additional support to local residents and their efforts to initiate community-led fire protection, this **resource toolkit** accompanies the Forbidden Plateau Fire Protection Feasibility Study final report. The toolkit contains information regarding possible grant opportunities, reputable sources for affordable equipment and apparatus, and a sampling of communities that have undertaken similar initiatives.

## **Funding Resources**

Application to the **Strategic Wildfire Prevention Program** (SWPI) for a community **Firesmart** project is included in the report recommendations, and therefore that particular funding source is not listed below. It is the consultants' understanding that the SWPI suite of programs is being reviewed based on the outcomes contained in the provincial report on the 2017 BC wildfires. It is possible that the funding opportunities available within the SWPI will change. Program details are available and updated on the Union of BC Municipalities' website.

More information: <http://www.ubcm.ca/EN/main/funding/lgps/strategic-wildfire-prevention.html>

### **Community Gaming Grant – Public Safety**

The Community Gaming Grants program distributes funds from commercial gambling revenues to not-for-profit community organizations throughout British Columbia. Community Gaming Grants are primarily intended to support programming, which is defined as an ongoing service or activity designed to achieve one or more specific objectives within the community that it serves. Public safety is one of the key sectors supported by the Community Gaming Grant program - organizations in this sector must deliver programs that enhance and support public safety initiatives, disaster relief and emergency preparedness within British Columbia (e.g. Search and Rescue, volunteer fire departments and community and restorative justice initiatives). Applications to the Public Safety sector are accepted on an annual basis, from July 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>. Local organizations may apply for up to \$100,000, though there is no guarantee of an award and amounts take into consideration the size and scope of the program. If a capital project has a total cost of \$20,000 or less and is essential to the delivery of an eligible program, it may be included as one of the program's planned expenditures. Unlike for capital projects (see below) that have a total cost of more than \$20,000, a separate application form for minor capital projects is not required.

More information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/gambling-fundraising/gaming-grants/community-gaming-grants>

### **Community Gaming Grant – Capital Projects**

The Government of British Columbia allocates a portion of the Community Gaming Grant funding to capital projects, undertaken by not-for-profit agencies, that have a total cost of more than \$20,000.

To be considered for funding, a capital project must fit into one of three categories – facilities, infrastructure or acquisitions. Acquisitions includes the purchase of fixed capital assets for long-term ownership and use by the organization (e.g. including vehicles and equipment). Eligible not-for-profit organizations may be approved for up to 50% of the total cost of a project, to a maximum of \$250,000. A possible source for matching funds is the CVRD Grant in Aid program – see below.

More information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/gambling-fundraising/gaming-grants/capital-project-grants>

### **CVRD Regional Grant in Aid**

Regional District grants in aid are intended to support non-profit community organizations operating in the Comox Valley, for benefit of the broader community. Grants are considered on a year-to-year basis and continuing support should not be anticipated. Grant-in-aid requests are usually considered by the board of directors in conjunction with the establishment of the current year's budget, and therefore it is strongly recommended that applications submit applications prior to the end of February of any calendar year.

More information: <https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/documents/grant-aid-guide-and-form>

### **Farm Canada Credit Agri-Spirit**

The Farm Canada Credit Agri-Spirit Fund is about enhancing rural communities. If your organization is raising money for a capital project (construction of or upgrades to a hospital, medical centre, childcare facility, rink, sportsplex, purchase of fire and rescue equipment, etc.) and your city or town has less than 150,000 people, your project may qualify for a donation between \$5,000 and \$25,000. Non-profit organizations are eligible to apply, but if they do not have CRA charitable status, they will need to partner with a municipal or regional government for the application. The regional government must agree to receive the money on behalf of the applicant and issue a receipt. Applications are accepted on an annual basis, usually beginning in February.

More information: <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/in-your-community/giving-back/fcc-agrispirit-fund.html>

### **BC Hydro Community Group Grants**

The BC Hydro Community Group “broad impact” grant program is offered annually - the next annual intake for applications opens February 1, 2019 and will run until March 29, 2019. Non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for funding to expand an existing program's reach OR to establish a new program. Applicants to the “broad impact” program can apply for up to \$10,000 to support programs in three focus areas, one of which is **public safety**, which includes emergency preparedness.

More information: <https://www.bchydro.com/community/community-giving/grants.html>

### **TimberWest Community Donations Program**

Every year TimberWest donates towards environmental conservation initiatives and community-based programs within their operating areas. They have three focus areas, one of which is “community benefit”, including promoting safety and supporting cornerstone community establishments. Donation requests are accepted via a simple online form on a year-round basis.

More information: <https://www.timberwest.com/our-neighbours-and-communities/#neighbours|1>

Further notes:

- Local service clubs, such as Rotary and Lions, also contribute to community programs. This usually involves attending meetings and providing a short presentation. Check with local clubs.
- The new Investing in Canada Plan, which involves participation by the Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia, will have a program component allocated to supporting projects in rural/northern regions of the province. The definition of ‘rural/northern’ has not yet been defined. There is a possibility that non-profit organizations may be eligible to apply, but this is not confirmed.
- CivicInfo BC maintains a grants database. Users can sign up to receive email notification of any new opportunities. Though CivicInfo BC primarily focuses on listing grants for local governments, non-profit organizations may be eligible to apply. See: <https://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/grants>

### **Equipment / Apparatus**

Two of the most commonly used websites for sourcing used fire protection equipment and apparatus in British Columbia are:

BC Bid: <https://www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca/open.dll/welcome?language=En>

CivicInfo BC: <https://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/bids>

Working with the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) (as a CivicInfo BC member local government) residents could post a “wanted/in search of” advertisement with CivicInfo BC’s Bids & Tenders service at no cost – this ad would also appear in their weekly email newsletter throughout the duration of the posting period. CivicInfo BC’s email newsletters are distributed weekly to thousands of recipients with an interest in local government, throughout BC and beyond. The organization also manages a LinkedIn discussion board for local governments to post questions – working with the CVRD, this may also be a useful tool for residents to source equipment/apparatus.

The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) owns several Structural Protection Units for use during wildfire season. The units include Type 1 semi trailers and a Type 2 cargo trailer. Type 1 SPU’s are equipped to provide protection for 30-50 structures, while a Type 2 SPU can provide protection 20-30 structures. The UBCM website indicates more information about the SPU’s, training and/or public education is available through the [Office of the Fire Commissioner](#). Forbidden Plateau residents may wish to find out more information regarding SPU contents, costing and/or sourcing.

The Forbidden Plateau Residents Association has advised that current private and crown road access maps have been developed and are available for use. There may also already be a considerable collection of equipment and apparatus in the local area – residents may therefore wish to start with development of a local resource list. Training resources have not been listed in this document as two local residents are fully certified to provide those services and have indicated a strong interest in coordinating and delivering a program.

### **Community-Led Fire Protection Programs**

The following is a selection of other BC-based, community-led, non-tax funded fire protection programs initiated and sustained by residents. Contact information is available by clicking on the links provided – Forbidden Plateau residents may find these communities to be a useful source of information and/or advice in establishing their own fire protection initiative.

Apex Mountain Fire Brigade (non-profit society)

More information: <https://www.facebook.com/apexfirebrigade/>

Gossip Island Volunteer Firefighters (informal, not incorporated as a non-profit)

More information: <https://www.facebook.com/gossipislandfiretruck/>

Gun Lake Fire Protection Society (non-profit society)

More information: <https://gunlakefire.ca/>

In addition, in the months leading up to the referendum to establish the new fire protection service at Mount Washington, the area’s largest strata development (Strata 799) was working with Village of Cumberland Fire Chief Mike Williamson on a fire protection plan, resident volunteer training and assembly of equipment/apparatus. The status of their program is not confirmed on their website; however, they may be another source of useful information with more local experience.

More information: <http://strata799.ca/>