



## Northern Wildfire Resiliency Initiative: Integrated Fire Management in British Columbia, Canada

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**ABSTRACT**– British Columbia, Canada just experienced two of the worst wildfire seasons in recent history - with climate conditions conducive to more severe fires forecast. This has led to a growing awareness by government of the need for a radically new approach to land management to protect resources and people. The goal of the **Northern Wildfire Resilience Initiative (NWRI)**, led by the Bulkley Valley Research Centre (BVRC), is to facilitate *forest and fire management paradigm shifts* required to develop *forest and community wildfire resilience*. Key elements include partnerships, practices, policies and planning. The NWRI is an umbrella for many initiatives and projects. In April 2019, with strong support and funding from government and industry, the BVRC brought together over 160 people from local, regional and provincial governments, First Nations, local communities, NGOs, and tenure holders including large forest industry to develop a collaborative approach to reducing the risks of wildfires. A regional pilot project was developed - based on an analysis of the historic fire regimes, predicted climate change and current conditions. The outcome is an integrated approach that places priority on wildfire management activities, including timber harvesting and reforestation, that enhance wildfire resiliency. Fire management actions focus on actions that help return the forests to a state similar that found prior to extensive fire suppression. This includes determining when and where to allow wildfires to burn, building strategic fire guards and increased use of prescribed fire. The BVRC, in partnership with universities and other research agencies, provides scientific expertise and leads research project designed to ensure a science-based approach to the pilot project. Collaborations include projects to determine historic fire regimes - including the structure and composition at various scales, effectiveness of treatments such as prescribed fire in reducing forest flammability, meta-analysis of the effects of fire on ecosystem elements, and a study of the obstacles to making needed changes. The BVRC also provides extension services and hosts a variety of social media platforms, workshops and webinars and produces written material for the public and practitioners to support the NWRI.

**Keywords:** Resiliency; landscape; collaboration; practices; policy; public