

POWELL RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT Fire Services Review



Malaspina Volunteer Fire Department, circa 1973
Courtesy MVFD Archives

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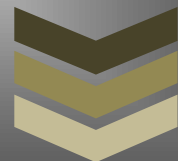


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PART 1

Introduction, Overview and Department Review

The Powell River Regional District (PRRD) has requested a Review of its fire services located at Savary Island, Malaspina, Northside and Lasqueti Island. All four were introduced as specified areas starting with Malaspina in 1973.

This Review demonstrates two very different kinds of service; those of the islands' fire departments and those of the mainland departments.

- The departments at Savary and Lasqueti Islands are unconventional rural departments in that they do not comply with the insurance industry's requirements for a Protection Grade (that offer homeowners a reduced insurance cost), nor have they focused on achieving that grade. Instead, they have focused on developing and delivering an emergency service (fire and medical) which best suits the respective demographics, access by water, road networks and water supplies. This has required improvisation and ingenuity and both have developed locally-respected services.
- The mainland departments at Malaspina and Northside are more consistent with rural fire departments in BC. They both carry recognition by the insurance industry and both are overcoming the challenges of growth to a given standard, with limited resources and aging equipment. Both offer the additional services of medical First Responder and Highway Rescue.

Not unlike other local governments, the PRRD has accepted that it has a fire service, but has allowed the four departments to grow during periods of changing liability environments and changing regulatory environments with very little oversight, leaving fire departments with a great deal of autonomy. Several risk exposures have been identified and prioritized for the Board's consideration. The greatest focus today in the fire service (and indeed any emergency service) is the safety of the delivering personnel and the Occupational Health and Safety Act of BC and its accompanying Regulations are succinct in that regard. By regulation definition, all volunteers providing a local government service are employees.

PRRD bylaws and Policies are weak in explanation of the types and levels of service provided. Given the varying standards of service, this is seen as an urgent undertaking.

The departments have not been party to a capital asset management and replacement program and, in some cases, have critically outdated apparatus, equipment and buildings. It is understood that financing can be difficult in rural areas, but by bylaw, the local government has established a service that demands currency in equipment, standards and safety.

It is clear from the review that existing staff capacity to oversee the function is inadequate and the services of an operational specialist are needed to complement the administrative services of the PRRD.

There are some very positive attributes to the service.

- Despite recruitment and retention difficulties, members of all four departments are eager to improve themselves and their service.
- Volunteers have demonstrated their commitment and ingenuity in the delivery of the best possible service under the circumstances.
- All four departments have expressed strong interest in the sharing of resources and expertise with other departments. The City of Powell River Fire and Rescue and the Van Anda and Gilles Bay Improvement District departments are also interested and willing to participate as they can. The opportunities for joint cooperation in the service are enormous and should be vigorously pursued.
- All are in agreement with common standards, common equipment types and common reporting.
- The recent acquisition by the PRRD of an Emergency Program Coordinator is a welcome addition and opportunity for the development of its emergency services.

This Review has been prepared on the basis of information provided by the PRRD, observations noted and comments received from the various departments.

Consultants Jack Blair and Doug Dymond are extremely grateful to PRRD staff members for their invaluable assistance and wish also to acknowledge the time, enthusiasm, support and information provided by PRRD Chiefs and Deputies and those of the City of Powell River Fire and Rescue and the Van Anda and Gillies Bay Improvement Districts.

The opportunity to assist the Powell River Regional District with this Review has been sincerely appreciated.

Savary Island Volunteer Fire Department

Site visit June 23, 2012. Consultants were accompanied by Chief Verne Rosenberg and Deputy Chief Doug Smith.

General

The fire department provides fire suppression and medical first responder services. Operations are based from a main fire hall and two satellite halls. Given the challenges associated with response, the department has developed innovative equipment, response criteria and public relations. The island is not connected to the grid and therefore electrical power is provided by individual generators. There are approximately 700 building structures on the island. There are no building or land-use regulations in place. Structural fire suppression service is limited to exterior attack only – no building entry is permitted and the department does not carry turnout gear. Because of vegetation types and density, an uncontained forest (interface) fire would pose the most significant risk of catastrophic loss, so the department has equipped itself accordingly. Very few homes



Access

Access to the island from Lund is provided by passenger water taxi service on a fixed daytime schedule. The transportation of vehicles and bulky loads is provided by special arrangement with the owner of a landing craft.

All roadways on the island are unpaved and narrow and while a portion of them are surfaced with crushed gravel, the remainder (notably at the east end of the island) are extremely narrow (often less than 3.5 metres), excessively steep in sections (over 12% in grade) with unmaintained surfaces. During the site visit, it was necessary to engage 4-wheel drive to negotiate grades, muddy surfaces and sharp corners on the tour vehicle. To further compound access issues, tree removal on or adjacent to travelled surfaces is not considered a priority by residents, further adding to safety concerns of emergency responders.

Only the surfaced sections are maintained by the Ministry of Transportation and rarely, very small portions of un-surfaced roads are afforded some minor attention.



Water supply

Given that fire-fighting water is scarce, the department has strategically placed several plastic reservoirs throughout the island and these are filled by the department's tanker (with hose relay) on an as-required basis. Procedures are in place for the use of seawater during emergencies which demand more water than is readily available.

Savary Shores, an Improvement District (established to facilitate water supply and development) located within Savary Island provides service through an apparently well-designed, small water system consisting of groundwater well, surge tank (for pressure), steel reservoir, a 100mm. diameter distribution system with hydrants. The department has located metal boxes at all hydrant locations and each contains 300 feet of forestry hose, a hydrant

wrench and hose wrenches, along with clear written instructions. Residents trained regularly and are urged to immediately action a fire using this equipment while the department is responding with manpower and equipment.



Hydrants are currently maintained by the fire department.

Fire Halls

Because of the unique access challenges, apparatus is housed at three strategically located buildings, the Main firehall and two satellite halls, Tom Rogers Hall and West Hall. All are located on lands owned by the PRRD.

The main firehall is an aging wood structure with three vehicle bays (one contained within a later addition to the building) and a large mezzanine, which serves as a community hall. Truck bays are cramped with low ceilings and poor ventilation. There is no fire separation between floors and little to prevent exhaust fumes from travelling upward into the meeting area. A separate building houses a pair of generators and construction of a fuel storage building is under way. The combined use of the building by the department and the community poses some conflict with scheduling. Fire halls must offer a secure and dedicated training area for its members.



The two satellite halls are newer, built to a common standard and are of sound design and construction, especially considering their application to house smaller response vehicles. Halls were clean and well maintained.



Apparatus

Given the known hazards and response challenges, the department has acquired and developed a unique and carefully considered fleet.

Main Hall

1997 GMC 7500 (gas) Pumper with 840 gpm. pump and 800 l. gal reservoir. Class A foam.

1969 GMC 960 (gas) Tanker with 670 l. gal reservoir

1999 Ford F250 4x4 (gas) utility pickup, equipped as an Interface Fire unit

Tom Rogers Hall

2007 Ford F450 4x4 (gas) custom built vehicle with compressed air/foam system and 430 l. gal reservoir.

West Hall

2008 Ford F450 4x4 (gas) custom built vehicle with compressed air/foam system and 530 l. gal reservoir.

2009 Ford F250 4x4 (gas) response and ambulatory vehicle (Vehicle owned by Savary Island First Responder Association)

The larger pumper and tanker apparatus are located where roadways are the widest and best surfaced. The department has, during practices, negotiated the more difficult roadways with this equipment, but neither apparatus was designed for the grades, corners and surfaces of the roads at the south of the island and their use here poses significant risk of equipment damage and operator injury. The tanker is dated and in need of replacement.

The smaller vehicles are ideally suited for the worst roads on the island and much thought has been incorporated into their design - the department should be commended for developing these. It should be noted, however that the two F450 units (Units 4 and 5) do not have ULC-approved decks (they were manufactured locally).



The first responder unit also has a custom-designed interior within the canopy.

No agreement between the PRRD and Savary Island First Responders Association was noted for joint operation/storage of this unit.

Extinguishers

The department has strategically located several weather-proof cabinets containing fire extinguishers throughout the island, encouraging public use during a fire emergency and while the department is on its way - again, a very innovative approach in a unique environment. Extinguishers are checked and maintained regularly. Although theft and vandalism do occur (primarily in the summer months), they are infrequent.

Equipment and Apparatus Maintenance

Apparatus and minor equipment are maintained against mechanical issues locally and pumps serviced on an as-required basis.

Dispatch and Radios

Savary Island is within the PRRD's 911 area and fire/ambulance dispatch is provided by the City of Campbell River. The department is completely satisfied with the dispatch service, but notes that it does not offer a records management service (except for basic call time and location of call).

Person to person communications via radio are occasionally affected by weather conditions and the island's topography creates some "dark spots" in radio coverage. These are not considered critical.

Boundaries

The service area includes the entire island. Under notation, however, the fire suppression area extends 200 metres beyond the High Water Mark to support a PRRD Open Burning Bylaw. However, this also implies response to marine fires and rescue, for which the department is not adequately equipped.

Manpower

Like the island's population, the department's roster fluctuates with seasons. The department carries a year-round average of 9 members to provide fire suppression and medical first responder services.

Training is carried out weekly. Most sessions are held in-area at the Main hall's training facility or at locations within the fire service area that warrant special attention. Members also attend occasional scheduled training sessions away from the area.

Members are not paid an honorarium and are not compensated for out-of-pocket expenses at this time. There is however a compensatory package for off-island training, through PRRD Board Policy.

Insurance Grading

The fire suppression area is currently classified as "Unprotected" because the department cannot comply with the Fire Underwriters' Survey requirements. In order to comply, a structural fire department must meet specific firehall, apparatus, manpower and operational

requirements. Given the fluctuating roster, limited structural fire response capability and the network of roadways, it is very unlikely that this will change in the foreseeable future.

Relations with the PRRD

The department is not enjoying a positive relationship with the PRRD at present for the following reasons:

- Key staff members at the PRRD are difficult to reach and communicate with.
- Communications are poor and there are significant delays with response to specific enquiries.
- Purchase Order requests from the department are very slow.
- The department was never notified of any changes in staff and responsibility structure at the PRRD.

Public Education

In a very unique environment, personnel have developed a customized response system that appears to meet the needs of the island. The department has established an extensive network of public information tools. These include a well written component on the PRRD's website, regular and detailed newsletters, strategically located signage (water taxi, dock, fire halls, intersections) and finally, exceptional self-help information at hose stations and fire extinguisher locations.

All works have been developed by volunteers and are thoroughly researched and well written. The responsibility for public education in emergency services however, rests with the service provider, the PRRD

Operations

The halls, apparatus and general readiness were assessed against the BC Fire Commissioner's Inspection and Audit Checklist (a process which should be conducted at every department every few years). The following items are noted and warrant attention and action in due course:

- There are no Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) in place. These should ultimately be developed by the PRRD recognizing each department's operating criteria and limitations. Many SOGs can also be common to all departments. This is an important item for risk management purposes.
- There is no formal Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) program in place at the department level or at the PRRD level on behalf of its fire departments. Safety matters

are discussed informally, but not recorded. This is a contravention of the OH&S Regulation of BC. Firefighter safety must become the highest priority in operations.

- The department does not enjoy a Records Management System (RMS) which would record and maintain records of event scene activities. RMS becomes a valuable tool for incident review and in a worst case, evidence. This a service-wide task for the PRRD.
- There is no Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) certification in place. Although limited, there is firefighter exposure to automotive fuels, foams and retardants and other specialized compounds. Certification is simple and benefits all members in all walks of life.
- This department's activities may warrant training of all firefighters in the following areas:
 - o Either NFPA 1001 standard, or BC Basic Firefighter Certification
 - o Incident Command and BC Emergency Response Management System
 - o Wild Fire S-100 for all members, S-200 for senior officers.
- All training records need to be filed and tracked for re-certification.
- The department's principal firefighting apparatus (main pumper and tanker) should not be permitted to operate in narrow, steep and unevenly surfaced roads. Neither vehicle was designed for such and operator safety becomes compromised in these situations.
- The tanker is aging, gasoline-powered and has a standard transmission. In the interests of currency and firefighter safety, it is recommended that it be replaced with a newer vehicle with automatic transmission and ideally, diesel engine.

Members of the department have worked tirelessly to develop an emergency response system that best fits the island and one that promotes public action and participation initially. The results are outstanding and well accepted by residents.

Key comments and recommendations are centered on currency, certification and above all, safety.

Malaspina Volunteer Fire Department

Site visit June 24, 2012. Consultants were accompanied by Chief Dave Keiver and Deputy Chief Jim Wyatt.

General

The Malaspina Volunteer Fire Department provides structural fire suppression, medical first responder and highway rescue services to a service area that extends from the eastern boundary of Powell River south to Thunder Bay. Rescue and first responder services occasionally leave the service area for specific tasks. The main fire hall is located adjacent to the highway and is fairly central to the suppression area while a second satellite hall is located further north on McLeod Road. The department is typical of older, rural fire departments in its growth, capacity and apparatus types. Malaspina enjoys strong volunteer participation due in part to a high standard of leadership and operating structure. The service area is quite heavily populated and Highway 101 extends through its entire length. There are no building or land use regulations in place.



Buildings

The Main fire hall has two bays in which four vehicles are housed – two pumpers, a tanker and a combined first responder/highway rescue unit. All vehicles need to back into their quarters which occasionally requires use of the adjacent highway for maneuvering. Truck bays are

cramped, but well utilized and a vehicle exhaust evacuation system is in place. Available space in the building has been carefully considered and well utilized with meeting area, training area, domestic areas and recreation area. The building is aging however and needed expansion will not be possible without encroachment on to neighboring property.

The Auxiliary fire hall is a newer, two-bay structure that houses a pumper and tanker. Construction is current and well-considered and the interior is clean, bright and well-maintained. The hall is well located to attend to emergencies in the northern part of the fire suppression area.

There is no domestic water service to the building.



Apparatus

Malaspina's fleet (average age is 19.5 years) is representative of an established and growing, rural volunteer fire department, with some current equipment and some in need of retirement and replacement. Nonetheless, the department has succeeded in developing the minimum apparatus requirements to achieve a semi-protected fire insurance rating for residents and businesses within the service area.

Main Hall 1

1997 Freightliner Hub Pumper with Hale 1050 gpm pump and 1000 gal reservoir. Class A foam.

1981 Ford 9000 Anderson Pumper with Waterous 1050 gpm pump and 1400 gal reservoir.

1984 Ford 800 Tanker with 1700 gal reservoir

2001 Ford F450 Econovan Responder/Rescue vehicle with custom interior.

Auxiliary Hall 2

2004 Freightliner American Lafrance Pumper with 1050 gpm Hale pump and 1000 gal reservoir. Class A foam.

1988 Ford custom Tanker with 2000 gal reservoir

Some apparatus is leased through arrangement with the PRRD and Municipal Finance Authority and the department is contemplating acquisition of a new tanker by leasing.

Equipment and Apparatus Maintenance

Basic mechanical works, such as routine oil changes and repairs, are completed by a local mechanic while fire pump maintenance and testing are completed by specialized firms on request and coordinated with other fire departments in the area to avoid excessive travel and response costs. Records were produced indicating currency of maintenance.

SCBA (some of which is leased) is maintained in-house to manufacturer's specifications.

Manpower and Training

The current roster stands at 24 for availability for all three functions of the department. This is a healthy number, but recruitment is on-going to ensure that there is no lapse in coverage in the event of a multi-incident situation. Recruitment, probation and discipline matters are all handled in-house to established policies and procedures.

The Chief and Deputy are Local Assistants to the Fire Commissioner.

Personnel are clear that fire response is the principal service, as established by bylaw.

Training is carried out weekly. Most sessions are held in-area, either at the Main hall's training facility or at locations within the fire service area that warrant special attention. Members also attend scheduled training sessions away from the area and occasionally in conjunction and cooperation with other departments in the area.

Despite the department's independence, records management and retention is well managed, given resources.



The department enjoys a mutual-aid agreement and a joint-response area agreement with the City of Powell River.

Water Supply

While there are some small water systems within the area, the department has developed a well-planned dependency on tankered water for firefighting. There are some high-pressure, high-volume hydrants available to the department at the north end of the area. The department has developed contingency plans for the use of seawater, if absolutely necessary.

Dispatch and Radios

The department is well-equipped with mobile and portable radios and enjoys an excellent dispatch service provided by the City of Campbell River in conjunction with the PRRD's 911 program. Unfortunately, the dispatch service does not include a records management system. There are no "dark spots" in radio coverage and no problems with service are apparent.

Boundaries

The area of most concern with this department's review is the matter of boundaries.

- The fire suppression boundary currently includes at least four properties just east of Cranberry Lake that are not contiguous to each other or to the main service area. This requires response not only through the City of Powell River, but also in and out of coverage areas en route.
- Response to emergencies east of the City of Powell River requires travel out of area and through the city. This matter however, is satisfactorily addressed with a joint-response agreement with the city.
- There are large blocks of unmanaged Crown Land within the department's boundaries for which there is no contribution for the service, yet an expectation for response.
- The department's medical first responder service is occasionally dispatched to areas south of the fire suppression boundary - to the Saltery Bay ferry terminal - representing a 9 km extension to the service area and a maximum travel distance of 18 km from the fire hall. This "new" area is even formalized by map held by the City of Campbell River Dispatch. **There is no legal authority in place for provision of this service outside the established fire suppression boundary.** To compound matters, BC Ferries has been in dialogue with the department, pressuring it to extend all services to the terminal.
- The department's rescue unit is also dispatched outside of the fire suppression boundary and provided that the department responds **only** with a BC Task Number in hand, this is acceptable. However, the service has recently been dispatched to a very remote location, many kilometers from the service area and dispatch information regarding the accident scene was inaccurate. **It must be remembered that other agencies are already in place to respond to these, such as the local Search and Rescue organization and the BC Ambulance Service.**
- In addition, the department offers contracted services to a First Nations settlement within its boundaries. No agreement was available for review.

Insurance Grading

The fire suppression area currently carries a 3B, "semi-protected" status which is typical of many rural departments in BC. This can only be improved if water systems in the area can be upgraded to meet Fire Underwriters' Survey requirements, or alternatively, if the department can achieve Superior Tanker Accreditation by shuttling water to any location in the area at a continuous rate of 200 gpm for a period of two hours (equivalent to a hydrant).

Public Education

Malaspina currently hosts an annual open-house for its residents and also participates in “Chief for a Day” programs in conjunction with area schools and groups. Department personnel agree that there is a strong need for more information to reach residents and businesses of the area. Topics might include driveways, house numbering, self-help, wood-burning appliance care, etc. The department’s section in the PRRD’s website is clear and current.

Relations with the PRRD

The department has always enjoyed a positive and responsive working relationship with the PRRD and most recently, with the arrival of newer, dedicated staff, further improvement is very noticeable.

Operations

The longest-established and largest (in terms of assessment) of the PRRD’s departments, Malaspina has developed into a very well structured service with strong leadership and internal structure.

Principal areas of concern, as noted earlier are boundaries (definition and levels of service) and the location of the Main Hall.

Extension of service beyond established and reasonable boundaries places the responders and the PRRD at risk.

- The first responder program is intended to provide a medical extension to an established fire department’s service, **inside** that service area. Like the fire service itself, there is no authority to respond to an unprotected area. By doing so, responders introduce liability risk, set precedent and deplete manpower and resources from the service area (which pays for the service).
- The Highway Rescue service, like most in the province, was developed to replace a service formerly provided by the BC Ambulance Service. In recognizing the provincial responsibility, the Province compensates volunteer agencies on a per-call basis, but responders must first request a BC Task Number for billing. Boundaries are not necessarily specific to the fire service boundary, but a clear and absolute maximum boundary needs to be established which reflects highest hazard area, reasonable response time and distance in all-weather conditions. Calls for service beyond that must be directed to the area Search and Rescue organization or to the BC Ambulance Service.
- Other boundary issues, as they apply to the existing service area, are discussed above.

The aging Main fire hall is very well located geographically. Unfortunately, its proximity to Highway 101 is such that apparatus returning to quarters (notably the larger fire apparatus) must travel into the highway corridor in order to reverse into the truck bays. This involves flagging to control traffic and while the procedure is routine and well-practiced at the department, it is nonetheless dangerous to volunteers and inconsistent with Ministry of Transportation policies. The procedure cannot be changed at this location.

The department scored very well against the BC Fire Commissioner's Inspection and Audit Checklist. Some areas warrant attention:

- Standard Operating Guidelines are in place, but the development of more is required. The department's current collection and format could well be used to develop a PRRD-wide standard for all departments.
- While the department has an OH&S group, record management could be improved and there is a need for a central PRRD filing area for all department OH&S minutes. This is a regulatory requirement.
- There is no Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) certification in place. Although limited, there is firefighter exposure to automotive fuels, foams and retardants and other specialized compounds. Certification is simple and benefits all members in all walks of life.
- The department has a Records Management System and uses FirePro, a software program dependent on operator entry. While acceptable in the interim, the PRRD, on behalf of all departments, should investigate a program which is interactive with the dispatch service.

In terms of apparatus, the department needs to upgrade its tanker fleet. Replacement units should ideally be diesel-powered, with automatic transmissions and air brakes.



Northside Volunteer Fire Department

Site visit June 25, 2012. Consultants were accompanied by Chief Jim Brown

General

The Northside Volunteer Fire Department provides structural fire suppression, medical first responder and highway rescue services to a service area which extends approximately from the northern boundary of the Sliammon First Nations Reserve to just north of Lund. A new four-bay fire hall is under construction with completion anticipated in August/September of 2012. The decommissioning of the former main hall has resulted in the temporary storage of displaced apparatus on private property and in some cases, unprotected from the weather. The new main fire hall is located close to the highway and is fairly central to the suppression area. Two auxiliary halls are located at Lund at the north end and at Klahanie Road at the south end. As with Malaspina, the Northside department is typical of older, rural fire departments in its growth, capacity and apparatus types. There is strong volunteer participation with strongest interest in the medical first responder field. Leadership is also strong in all services. The service area is moderately populated and Highway 101 extends through its length, terminating at Lund. There are no building or land use regulations in place.

Buildings

The new main firehall layout and location have been well considered and the multiple bays, training area potential, proximity to the highway and on-site parking are great assets to the department. Building structure is a pre-engineered, clear-span and metal-clad structure, offering great flexibility to the department and its development.



Photo courtesy of PRRD

The two auxiliary halls, best described as “garages”, are not well aligned to fire department operations. Both are spartan, wood-framed structures with poor ventilation and limited space.

1. The Klahanie No. 1 hall currently houses a single piece of apparatus, while the adjacent bay area is being used to store equipment pending completion of the new hall. Security provisions are poor and there is clear evidence of a rodent infestation. The bays are untidy, crowded and unmaintained. Following a mileage test from the Main hall, it would seem that this hall will not be necessary to the department as response distances from the new hall are within the insurance industry’s acceptable limits. The building is not located on PRRD land.



2. The Lund No. 3 hall houses two pieces of primary apparatus and is well located to respond to the community of Lund and surrounding areas. The interior is very cramped, with low ceilings and minimal maneuvering area for vehicles. Much of the hall is also being used for storage purposes while the new Main hall is under construction. Combustible fuels are currently being stored in the truck bay area. The building and property are owned by the PRRD.



Apparatus

The Northside VFD's fleet has an average age of 22 years and includes vehicles modified from other uses. Improvisation has been necessary to keep the fleet current and compatible for the department's operations. Medical first responder and highway rescue tools and components are carried in fire trucks.

Hall 1 Klahanie

1987 Ford 800 Hub Pumper with Waterous 750 gpm pump and 800 gal reservoir. No foam.

In storage, private property, covered

2005 Freightliner Hub Pumper with Hale 840 gpm pump and 1000 gal reservoir. Class A foam

In open storage, private property

1976 Ford Anderson Pumper with 625 gpm Waterous pump and 1400 gal reservoir. No foam

2001 Peterbilt custom Tanker with 1000 gal reservoir

Hall 3 Lund

2000 GMC Hub Pumper with 840 gpm Hale pump and 800 gal reservoir. Class A foam.

1978 IHC Tanker with 1000 gal reservoir

Many of the units are gasoline-powered and have manual transmissions.

Some apparatus is leased. The 2005 Pumper unit also carries highway rescue equipment. The department hopes to acquire a dedicated vehicle in the future. First responder equipment is carried in privately-owned vehicles.



Equipment and Apparatus Maintenance

Basic mechanical works, such as routine oil changes and repairs are completed by a local mechanic while fire pump maintenance and testing are completed by specialized firms, on request and coordinated with other fire departments in the area to avoid excessive travel and response costs.

SCBA (some of which is leased) is maintained in-house to manufacturer's specifications.

Manpower and Training

The department's origins as a loose-knit club have been overcome and re-structured by the current Chief with more formality and order in place.

The department carries a current roster of 18, plus the Chief. Recruitment is on-going, but is a challenge in a rural area with seasonal population fluctuations. The greatest recruitment draw is medical first responder program. Fire and medical Training officer (Kim Lehmann) is accomplished in both fields and carries strong qualifications in both.

The Officer appointment is very informal.

The Chief is a Local Assistant to the Fire Commissioner

Personnel are clear that fire response is the principal service, established by bylaw and that boundaries (and procedures) are to be respected at all time.

Weekly training is held at rotating locations around the service area for familiarity purposes, but also in the absence of a formal training area (the new hall will address the latter).

Records management is present, but not strong.

Northside participates in a formal mutual aid agreement with the City of Powell River. In addition, the department provides contracted fire suppression service to the Sliammon First Nations Reserve, although the terms and responsibilities for service are vague.

Water Supply

The Lund Waterworks District's system is recognized by the Fire Underwriters Survey. This and the fire department's hall location therefore provide Lund residents with a slightly higher insurance grading (3A – fully-protected). The system has hydrants and offers the department a refill opportunity for its tankers. For all other areas within the suppression boundaries, the department relies on tankered water.

The department utilizes a process of on-scene water transfer (tanker-to-pumper) known as "nursing". While this is a common application with hydrant use in larger urban areas, the process here presents a very real risk of pump damage in the event of water starvation. Alternatives for the department's consideration are discussed in the Operations section.

Dispatch and Radios

The department is well-equipped with mobile and portable radios and enjoys an excellent dispatch service provided by the City of Campbell River in conjunction with the PRRD's 911 program. Unfortunately, the dispatch service does not include a records management system. There are a few "dark spots" in radio coverage, notably with pager reception.

Boundaries

There are large blocks of unmanaged Crown Land within the department's boundaries, notably in the Lund area, for which there is no contribution for the service, yet a possible expectation for response.

The northern boundary includes an arbitrary, diagonal line leaving some large parcel partially inside the area.

There is an extension along Highway 101 southward into the Sliammon First Nations settlement in conjunction with a service agreement

Insurance Grading

The fire suppression area currently carries a general 3B, “semi-protected” status which is typical of many rural departments in BC. The exception, as noted earlier, is the Lund Waterworks Improvement District with its 3A rating. The 3B rating can only be improved if water systems in the area can be upgraded to meet Fire Underwriters’ Survey requirements, or alternatively, if the department can achieve Superior Tanker Accreditation by shuttling water to any location in the area at a continuous rate of 200 gpm for a period of two hours (equivalent to a hydrant).

Public Education

Northside currently hosts a periodic open-house for its residents and also participates in “Chief for a Day” programs in conjunction with area schools and groups. Department personnel agree that there is a strong need for more information to reach residents and businesses of the area. Topics might include driveways, house numbering, self-help, wood-burning appliance care, etc. The department’s section in the PRRD’s website is clear and current.

Relations with the PRRD

There were no relationship problems with the PRRD noted whatsoever. Enquiries and assistance requests are handled quickly and courteously. The situation has improved even further with the arrival of newer staff.

One identified area which could be improved is availability of fire suppression area boundary mapping showing road names, house numbers and actual boundaries.

Operations

The department is well established and has a comfortable roster of volunteers offering fire suppression, medical first responder and highway rescue services. Training is well-attended and the group is enthusiastic. Most enthusiasm appears to be with the first responder program.

The two primary concerns are department structure and apparatus fleet age.

- The present Chief has succeeded in transforming the department from a loose-knit club in its earlier days to a more responsible emergency response unit. Officer appointment and general administration are informal. It is strongly recommended that a more structured approach to operations be developed. Emergency services are inherently risky and an informal approach compounds risk and compromises safety.
- Northside's apparatus fleet is in desperate need of modernization and consistency. It appears as though the department has spent a great deal of time learning how to best operate old machinery, as opposed to concentrating on acquisition of safer and more modern equipment. The versatility is admirable (and likely perceived as necessary), but it is well known that older equipment (especially tankers developed in the pursuit of more available water) is often loaded beyond original design parameters – combined with older, vacuum-over-hydraulic braking systems and manual (often split-shift) transmissions, there is very little margin for error by volunteer operators. Consider also that the volunteers best trained on one piece of apparatus may not be available for response, leaving an inexperienced operator to manage the intricacies of an older technology.

The department also carries a range of truck types, technologies, fuel types and braking systems. As with Malaspina, Northside should consider moving towards an all diesel fleet with automatic transmissions and air brakes.

The department utilizes a water transfer (tanker to pumper) system known in the industry as “nursing”. Water is transferred to the pumper through small-diameter piping at the rate that the pump is delivering. This would be acceptable if high-volume hydrants were being used, but in their absence, a very minor miscalculation of flows or water availability in the tanker could lead to water starvation and cavitations in the pump, leading to a very expensive pump failure, removing the pumper from service. Further, the tanker cannot leave the pumper to replenish unless disconnected. A much simpler and more accepted method in rural firefighting involves the use of portable tanks, assembled next to the pumper's drafting tubes – tankers can then discharge their contents through large-diameter discharge tubes and immediately travel to replenish while another tanker is standing by to maintain levels in the potable tank.

The auxiliary fire halls are in poor condition and their limitations are compounded by the interim need for storage during construction of the new hall. Klahanie Hall 1 should either be substantially modernized or abandoned (its existence may not be necessary given the response times/distance from the new hall on its completion). Similarly, Lund Hall 3 is of spartan design and marginally satisfactory for its intended purpose. Its location however, is ideal. Storage of combustible fuels inside the truck bays should be discontinued immediately.

Against the BC Fire Commissioner's Inspection and Audit Checklist the following observations are noted:

- There are some Standard Operating Guidelines in place. This should be pursued in conjunction with a master set of PRRD SOGs.
- While significant attention is directed to safety, there is no formal OH&S process and no record retention. This is a regulatory requirement.
- There is overall, very limited record retention. On-scene record management would benefit greatly from a PRRD-wide system.
- Although a minor item, firefighters should carry WHMIS certification – a simple course with both fire department and personal benefits.
- Training should be administered in conjunction with a PRRD-wide standard training curriculum.

The department carries a focused and energetic Chief and Training Officer and membership is strongest in the first responder service. It is important to remember that the principal service, established by bylaw, is fire protection (suppression) and it is hopeful that the completion of the new Main hall will stimulate the fire department's development.

Lasqueti Island Volunteer Fire Department

Interview June 22, 2012. Telephone interview July 10, 2012. Site visit July 14, 2012. Consultants were accompanied by Chief Ross Thompson

General

The fire department provides fire suppression and medical first responder services. Operations are based from two fire halls, one at the north end of the island and the other at the south with a 10 km to 12 km separation. Given the demographics of the island, the department has developed response criteria that reflect the limited and aging apparatus and a dependence on public assistance during an emergency. The island is not connected to the grid and therefore electrical power is provided by individual sources. There are approximately 400 permanent residents on the island and there are no building or land-use regulations in place. Population increases to over 1,000 during summer months. Structural fire suppression service is limited to exterior attack only – no building entry is permitted and the department does not utilize breathing apparatus. Like Savary Island, the most significant risk of catastrophic loss stems from vegetation types, so an integral part of training includes wildfire response and suppression.

Access

Access to the island is provided by passenger ferry on a fixed daytime schedule from French Creek, near Parksville. The transportation of vehicles and bulky loads is provided by special arrangement. Island roadways fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and are gravel-surfaced and amply wide and suitable for emergency response apparatus.



Water Supply

Water supplies for firefighting are sparse. There are no documented water utilities on the island but a small, private system includes a single hydrant. Water volume and pressure at the hydrant are low, so the opportunity is only used to replenish tanks. During fire emergencies, the department relies on assistance from the public with manpower and with private water tanks. Procedures are in place for the use of seawater during emergencies which demand more water than is readily available.

Fire Halls

Fire hall 1 is a wood frame building with mezzanine located at the north end of the island. Truck bay floors are gravel and bay doors are “barn”-type. This hall also houses the department’s single ambulance vehicle for medical first responder service.



Fire hall 2, located at the south end is slightly better suited to the service with large bays, roll-up metal doors and concrete bay floors. A free store and a large quantity of baled cardboard are located close by posing an unsightly scene and fire hazard.



Apparatus

With the exception of the department's light attack vehicle, the fleet is very old, with one unit currently out of service.

Hall 1 North

2003 Ford F550 4x4 Hub Mini-pumper with 420 gpm Hale pump and 200 gal reservoir.

1984 former BCAS Ambulance unit*

Hall 2 South

1963 Mercury Thibault Pumper/Tanker with 1,200 gpm pump and 1,000 gal reservoir

1978 Chevrolet 3500 4x4 pickup with 320 gpm pump and 200 gal reservoir

In open storage

Older pumper/tanker unit under conversion to tanker-only role

*Department is anticipating delivery of a newer, retired BCAS ambulance from the Province imminently

The 2003 unit was acquired under lease, with approximately \$69,000 in payment remaining.



Equipment and Apparatus Maintenance

Apparatus and minor equipment are maintained against mechanical issues locally and pumps serviced on an as-required basis. Every effort is made to coordinate pump servicing with other fire departments to avoid excessive travel costs. No pump maintenance records were available for review.

Dispatch and Radios

Lasqueti Island does not utilize the PRRD's 911 emergency telephone service, or participate with a central dispatching service. Emergency fire calls are placed to a published, local number which, via telephone/radio interconnect, activates the department's pagers. A local dispatcher follows up to verify information and to confirm that resources are on their way.

The medical first responder service awaits dispatch by the BC Ambulance Service, which itself is contacted by a 10-digit, local phone number.

Use of the fire department's radio system is reported as good, but with some "dark" areas.

Boundaries

The service area includes the entire island. It is assumed that the boundary is limited to the tidal High Water Mark.

Manpower

The department carries a year-round average of 9 firefighters and 26 first responders.

Training is carried out weekly. Most sessions are held in-area at either of the halls or at locations within the fire service area that warrant special attention. Members also attend occasional scheduled training sessions away from the area. Training off-island is not desirable.

Members are not paid an honorarium and are not compensated for out-of-pocket expenses at this time. There is however a Chief's honorarium and a compensatory package for off-island training, both through PRRD Board Policy.

Insurance Grading

The fire suppression area is currently classified as "Unprotected" because the department cannot comply with the Fire Underwriters' Survey requirements. In order to comply, a structural fire department must meet specific firehall, apparatus, manpower and operational requirements. There is very little likelihood (nor is there any local expectation) of classification as "protected".

Relations with the PRRD

The department enjoys a positive relationship with the PRRD at present. The Chief has commented that the service has always been good, but the recent addition of key staff members has made it noticeably better.

Public Education

The department, because of its size and limitations, has developed some innovative and unique firefighting arrangements. Residents are encouraged to attend fire scenes, bring any mobile sources of water for firefighting and to participate in suppression activities at the instruction of the Chief. Residents are also encouraged to develop “pond scapes” as a part of landscaping which double as a source of firefighting water. Published information pertaining to emergency services is very minor, but the responsibility rests with the service provider, the PRRD.

Operations

Lasqueti Island’s emergency operations, like those of Savary Island, are unique to their respective environments. Personnel are to be applauded for tailoring a service to the needs of the community. Having said that, the PRRD established, by bylaw, a fire protection (suppression) service with responsibility for (and ownership of) apparatus and volunteers (employees, as defined under the OH&S Regulation) and therefore is responsible for a compliant and safe service.

Principal concerns are the relatively informal sphere of operations and a very old fleet of apparatus (average age 30 years).

Where practical and relevant, the BC Fire Commissioner’s Inspection and Audit Checklist was used as an assessment tool.

- No Standard Operating Guidelines are in place. While a master set needs to be developed by the PRRD, smaller departments need to clearly delineate procedures at an emergency scene – most especially if there is accepted participation by the public.
- Although safety issues are routinely discussed, there is no OH&S program in place, either locally or in conjunction with the PRRD.
- Record keeping in general is at a minimum. Because the department is not centrally dispatched, a universal records management system will not permit Lasqueti participation. A local system will need to be investigated.

- There is no Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) certification in place. Although limited, there is firefighter exposure to automotive fuels, foams and retardants and other specialized compounds. Certification is simple and benefits all members in all walks of life.
- This department's activities may warrant training of all firefighters in the following areas:
 - o Either NFPA 1001 standard, or BC Basic Firefighter Certification
 - o Incident Command and BC Emergency Response Management System
 - o Wild Fire S-100 for all members, S-200 for senior officers.

Whichever training system is chosen, it should be a part of a PRRD standard training curriculum. All training records need to be filed and tracked for re-certification. Because of the travel implications to and from the island, training should be delivered to the island to the greatest possible extent.

With the exception of the mini-pumper, the department's apparatus is extremely old and well in excess of available certification. As there is little or no chance of recognition by the insurance industry, the PRRD may wish to retire the Mercury pumper and replace it with a newer, light-attack vehicle, similar to the mini-pumper. Given the difficult water supply, priority should be given to newer tankers. Retiring tankers from other departments would serve the department well in the interim.

PART 2

Administrative Review – Fire Services

At the request of the Manager of Community Services, the Fire Services Review includes an Administrative overview to examine the Powell River Regional District's capacity and readiness to deliver a rural fire protection service.

Exposure to liability is higher with fire departments than with many other functions because of the inherent exposure to unsafe situations, use of heavy and/or specialized equipment and the volunteer element. Factors such as response conditions, adequacy of relevant training (especially in the area of firefighter safety) and overall leadership all play large roles in either mitigating or compounding risk.

General

The PRRD's fire departments can be divided into two categories. The islands departments (Savary and Lasqueti) and the mainland departments (Malaspina and Northside)

- The two island departments are similar in that they were established in the late 1970s and were compelled to adapt to unusual circumstances. Access and egress is by water vessel, roads are poor with some unsurfaced, populations soar in the summer months, there are no other emergency services, there are no building or land-use regulations in place and there has been little strategic guidance. The result is the development of a hybrid all-emergency service, with limited structural fire suppression capability (neither department will permit entry to a burning building), but with medical first responder and some rescue capability. Vehicles are comprised of older municipal fire-fighting apparatus and 4-wheel drive light response vehicles. It is remarkable to note that a core group of very dedicated volunteers has developed a response system that best suit the islands' needs.
- Malaspina and Northside departments are more typical of rural volunteer fire departments and have evolved as guidance and funding permit. Both have large suppression areas, municipal-style firefighting apparatus, offer medical first responder and highway rescue service, have rural fire protection insurance grading and enjoy participation by very dedicated and productive volunteers.

PRRD Capacity

Currently, responsibility for the fire service rests with the Manager of Community Services (which in itself is a relatively new position). The position also carries responsibility for solid waste management, utilities, transportation, emergency preparedness, 911 program, parks and recreation and cemeteries.

It is very clear that PRRD's fire departments have been allowed to operate and grow though changing regulatory and risk environments without the requisite support and leadership. This alone poses significant risk to the PRRD and its employees.

Add to that the very individualized (and relatively unsupervised) development of apparatus (owned by the PRRD) and operational techniques. Volunteer firefighters, by definition under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation of BC, are employees of the PRRD. Apparatus and assets are owned by the PRRD.

It is most strongly recommended that the PRRD acquire the services of a Fire Services Coordinator, reporting to the Manager of Community Services, as soon as possible. This could be a contracted position and would initially be well served on a half-time basis, but capacity should be afforded for an eventual increase to full-time.

The Coordinator's roles would include overall coordination of training, purchasing, safety procedures, inter-department (including non-PRRD departments) liaison/information sharing, development of common reporting and operational criteria and so on. The Coordinator would also serve as the Fire Service representative at an Emergency Operations Centre during an emergency.

Identified Risks

As can be seen from the respective site visits, there are several areas that warrant PRRD attention. These are summarized as follows:

Savary Island

- No clear definition of service level by policy
- No clear authorization by bylaw to provide other services
- Dangerous road conditions in some areas
- Inadequate communication with PRRD (procurement, vehicles leaving area)
- Custom-designed vehicles without certification
- Shared use/storage of first responder vehicle

- Shared use (and loss of control) of Main firehall
- Inability to attain fire insurance grading
- Aging apparatus
- No agreements in place for hydrant maintenance.
- Minimal OH&S program
- Boundary clarification required (HWM plus 200m)

Malaspina

- No clear authorization by bylaw to provide other services
- Boundary clarification and legal response issues
- Aging Main hall – vehicles maneuvering into highway/potential encroachment
- Aging fleet – no capital replacement program
- Response in and out of service area
- No formal agreement (found) for First Nations response area

Northside

- No clear authorization by bylaw to provide other services
- Aging fleet and quarters – no capital replacement program
- Vehicles in storage on private property – no agreements found
- Minimal OH&S program
- Minimal records management
- Informal internal structure

Lasqueti Island

- No clear definition of service level by policy
- No clear authorization by bylaw to provide other services
- No agreement with Province to provide first responder service
- Aging and obsolete fleet – no capital replacement program
- Minimal OH&S program
- Minimal records management

Fire Suppression Areas

Savary Island

While it is understood that the entire island is the service area, one map (PRRD website) suggests that the boundary extends 200 metres beyond the High Water Mark. This would imply that the department should be prepared for marine suppression and rescue service and callers within that area should expect a response. It is extremely doubtful that the department could deliver service in that zone, around the island – with the exception of the main wharf and the large beach area frequented by campers. A service area amendment is strongly recommended.

Roadways range from poor to terrible, from an emergency response perspective. If there is no appetite for improvement (by either residents or the Ministry of Transportation), the PRRD and its fire service should develop specific response policies – primarily in the interest of responder safety. Further, residents should be clearly notified by the PRRD of the limitations of service.

House numbers are rarely displayed and some driveways are marginally negotiable by vehicle – both are factors in delayed response and responder safety.

The area is not recognized by the Fire Underwriters Survey, so there is no protection grading. It is unlikely that a grading will be attainable in the near future.

A small, but well-managed water system exists at Savary Shores from which residents and the department can benefit. The department maintains the hydrants, but no agreement between the PRRD and Savary Shores was noted (the department is perhaps unknowingly, acting as an agent for the PRRD)

Malaspina

Malaspina's fire suppression area is a typically large rural area, but because of hall location, apparatus inventory and available manpower, the entire area enjoys a 3B fire insurance rating. Over time, with an increased and newer tanker fleet and in conjunction with Powell River's apparatus (under mutual aid), this may be expandable to a 3A grading.

There is confusion, at the department's and Dispatch's level, about response boundaries and responsibilities at the south end.

- Currently, the first responder group responds as far south as the Salter Bay terminal, 9 km beyond the fire suppression boundary – no authority has been found for the service to leave its area, which places the responders and the PRRD at significant risk. Further, the

department's presence outside of its area poses a perception that the department will respond outside its area in the future.

- The highway rescue service has also ventured well beyond a reasonable distance to calls which would have better been directed to Search and Rescue (a well-equipped and qualified group in Powell River) or the BC Ambulance Service. While rescue groups can apply for a provincial task number to respond outside the established fire suppression boundary, there should be an established and firmly complied-with maximum boundary.
- BC Ferries (BCFS) has been in contact with the Fire Chief, enquiring about "special" service to and at the Saltery Bay terminal. Firstly, enquiries of this nature should not be directed to a volunteer Fire Chief, but instead to the provider of the service and carrier of risk, the PRRD. Any subsequent agreement with the BCFS should be authorized by bylaw, include a fee-for-service arrangement, with response at the discretion of the Fire Chief (dependent on whether he/she can justify the requested apparatus leaving its area).

There are two or three large sections of un-managed Crown Land within the fire suppression area, at the south end. If at all possible, these should be excluded from the area because inclusion implies response and there may be access and apparatus limitations. This may be done if and when the area bylaw is amended for other reasons.

At the north end, coverage is such that the department must travel through Powell River to get back to its area. The PRRD has wisely entered into a joint-response agreement with the City for these areas. There are however, at least four individual properties, just east of Cranberry Lake, which are not contiguous with the fire suppression area, or with each other. Further, they are at the extreme end of the fire suppression area. These may be better served through a contracted fire suppression agreement with the City.

As with many rural areas, house numbers are sparse and some driveways poorly maintained. A public education initiative (by the PRRD, not the department) should be considered.

Northside

This fire suppression area is similarly large in area, but with larger parcels and a smaller population. The new Main hall, when completed, will be well-centered geographically.

The department is in critical need of a tanker renewal/replacement program. Units are gasoline-powered, many with standard and split-shift transmissions and one has air brakes – this requires that volunteers become specialized in their operation. This and the obsolescence of equipment are seen as a safety risk for operators and others.

The area enjoys a 3B fire insurance rating and the immediate area benefitting from Lund's water system enjoys a higher 3A rating.

Hose numbering and driveway management campaigns need to be considered by the PRRD.

The northern end of the area contains large sections of un-managed Crown land. This implies a response to an area which may not have satisfactory access or topography. These should be removed when the service area bylaw is amended next. In addition, the northern boundary includes a diagonal line bisecting multiple properties which is confusing for dispatchers and responders regarding inclusion. Once again, in conjunction with future bylaw amendments, the northern boundary should be re-aligned to follow existing property lines.

Lasqueti Island

It is assumed that the service boundary extends to the tidal High-Water Mark. If not, a bylaw amendment should be considered to avoid the perception (and possible tasking) of marine response capability.

No agreement between the Province and the PRRD was located which authorizes (and more importantly indemnifies) the PRRD and Lasqueti Island Fire Department to provide first responder services. In the absence of an agreement, individual responders, the department and the PRRD are underwriting all risks associated with a provincial program.

Firefighters are not trained or permitted to enter buildings during a fire and no active breathing apparatus is in its inventory.

Roadways are not paved, but are in good condition and are sufficiently wide for apparatus movement. Private driveways however, can be very challenging.

There is a single hydrant on the island, but flows and pressures are inadequate for firefighting purposes. The hydrant is only used for tanker and other storage replenishment.

The department's fleet is very old and there is no capital replacement program in place.

The area is not recognized by the Fire Underwriters Survey, so there is no protection grading. It is unlikely that a grading will be attainable.

Lasqueti is the only PRRD fire suppression area which also implements a parcel tax.

Bylaws

Local Service Area Bylaws

All four Fire Protection Specified Area Bylaws (not provided) have been converted to Service Area Bylaws and appear to be current in process. However, the bylaws do not stipulate which additional services are provided, such as Medical First Responder (all departments) and Highway Rescue service (Northside and Malaspina). Complementary policies should be developed which stipulate **levels** of service. Maps forming a part of the bylaws are of poor quality and information is ambiguous.

It is recommended that the PRRD develop replacement or consolidating bylaws which authorize the various services provided and which also contains provision to enter into agreements. The latter would eliminate the need for agreement-specific bylaws. Policies are discussed later.

All bylaws refer to Fire **Protection**. The PRRD does not offer inspections or other protective services and may wish to seek legal advice on the possible change of terminology to Fire **Suppression**.

Mutual Aid Authorizing Bylaw and Agreements

Authorizing Bylaw No. 370 is in place for the provision of mutual aid and joint response and is specific to the Malaspina and Powell River fire departments. No mapping was appended to the bylaw – clear mapping for joint response areas should be available for dispatch purposes. The Bylaw refers to the **District** of Powell River

The agreement itself is excellent. It is simple and succinct. No funds change hands (a true mutual arrangement). Agreement refers to the **District** of Powell River.

Authorizing Bylaw No. 231 is an older document authorizing a Northside/Powell River mutual aid agreement and includes a somewhat obsolete agreement. While the intent is clear, a new bylaw should be developed for currency and accuracy. Bylaw refers to the **District** of Powell River.

As above, it is recommended that the PRRD develop replacement (or consolidating) bylaws which authorize the various services provided and which also contain provision to enter into agreements (eliminating the need for future, agreement-specific bylaws).

Capital Reserve Bylaws

Only that of Lasqueti was submitted for review. It is assumed that bylaws are in place for Savary, Malaspina and Northside. Bylaw content and wording is reflective of its age, but intent is clear.

Contract Service Areas

Two contracted fire suppression services are in place between PRRD and First Nations settlements at Sliammon and Cokqueneets.

Fire suppression services at Sliammon are included within a 2009 to 2013 service agreement and apply to leasehold properties in the Klahanie Drive area. Levels of service to be provided by the Northside department are not detailed and no mapping was provided (the latter being extremely important for dispatch purposes). This agreement must not be construed as a mutual aid agreement, as the Sliammon Band does not own comparative equipment or resources.

No agreement was provided for suppression services at leasehold properties at Cokqueneets, which is serviced by Malaspina. Again, clear direction and mapping should be available to the department and dispatch.

Miscellaneous Agreements

A First Responder agreement between the Province and the PRRD was provided, but it does not name the Lasqueti Island Fire Department, which is known to provide service. This poses significant risk to personnel and the PRRD.

According to personnel at Savary Island, the Savary Shores water system hydrants are maintained by the PRRD. While no agreement was provided for review, it is important that an agreement between the PRRD and the utility be in place and further, Board Policy should be in place dictating terms and type of service. It is not known if the PRRD maintains Lund's system hydrants, but it is recommended and, again, agreements and Policy should be in place.

Board Policies and Fire Department Incentives

Board policies specific to the service have been reviewed. Given the nature of the service and the current reported difficulty with recruitment and retention, the Board may wish to consider the following:

- A primary policy that dictates the types (fire, first responder, highway rescue) and levels/limits of service (eg. limited fire suppression/no structural entry {islands}) provided by the PRRD and further stipulating that departments will not cross boundaries (mainland departments) unless

- a) a mutual aid agreement is in place;
- b) **and** the Chief of the requested department can justify release of equipment; and
- c) the Fire Services Coordinator is involved to oversee adequacy of resources.

Fire departments will not respond to incidents in unprotected areas unless

- a) under direct instruction of the BC Fire Commissioner (under provincial task number, in an emergency); and
- b) with the involvement of the Fire Services Coordinator to oversee adequacy of resources.

Highway Rescue*, should only leave the fire hall with provincial task number in hand and attend to a maximum (not to be exceeded) response boundary. Calls to areas beyond that response boundary to be immediately referred (by the dispatcher) to Search and Rescue and/or BC Ambulance Service. **

**Currently, Northside, Malaspina and Powell River all offer highway rescue service. This is a triplication of purchases, training and service. At some time in the future, it may be worthwhile investigating the amalgamation of this service to a single, centrally-based service with equal response time to Saltery Bay to the south and Lund to the north. There would be nothing to stop existing members joining the central service.*

***Although no agreement between PRRD and City of Campbell River dispatch was reviewed, it is imperative that the dispatch service **not** request PRRD services beyond established maximum boundaries and at no time should members of the PRRD's departments be communicating with any member of the public or any other agency reporting an emergency. Dialogue must be exclusive to Fire Department and Dispatch.*

- Policy 4.11 sets out Insurance Coverage for Firefighters. The policy has been reviewed and limits are reasonable. Given the recruitment and retention difficulties expressed by all

PRRD departments, the Board may wish to consider the addition of 24-hour member coverage and possibly 24-hour family coverage, at PRRD expense through each fire department's budget. The current policy is underwritten by the Chartis Insurance Company of Canada. Like all commodities, it often pays to investigate the offerings of other firms. Another similar firm which provides extensive volunteer coverage is Phoenix Benefits Solutions of Vancouver, for example.

- Policy 4.7 is somewhat onerous and need not be complicated or cumbersome. The introduction of a Fire Services Coordinator will dramatically reduce the burden on PRRD staff in this regard with scheduling, coordination and issuance of Purchase Orders. Firefighters are technically employees of the PRRD. The same corporate mileage rate (likely established by Policy) offered to office staff should be extended to firefighters. No firefighter should ever be out-of-pocket for travel, training or other PRRD business, which questions the need for any form of per-diem structure. A simple guideline could be developed identifying eligible expenses for reimbursement and ineligible expenses (alcohol, items and travel unnecessary for the fire service, etc)
- The current honorarium structure varies considerably with Malaspina receiving the highest and Savary Island receiving nothing. Malaspina's rigid and clear operating structure is evident and honorarium amounts are not unreasonable. It is recommended that the PRRD consider the two categories of departments mentioned earlier – the island departments and the mainland departments – and develop a common format for honorariums. In the interest of commonality, Northside's manpower categories and payment amounts should be the same as Malaspina's. Lasqueti Chief receives an amount set by Board Policy (only Lasqueti is identified in the Policy). Considering the Chief's role of managing and deploying PRRD equipment and employees, in a relatively isolated environment, the amount is very low. Savary Island's Chief and Deputy receive nothing and no out-of-pocket expenditures are reimbursed. Again, considering the work and accomplishments of this group in a most difficult environment, managing the assets and services of the PRRD, it would be close impossible to replace departing members. A common honorarium structure should be developed for the islands departments.
- Unless a clear agreement is in place between the PRRD and "Fireman's Clubs", requiring annual proof of financial disclosure, the practice of direct contribution from the budget should be halted. Clubs of this nature are typically funded through fund-raising initiatives and donations and are completely separate from the PRRD's duty to provide fire suppression services. The value of "Clubs" or "Associations" is agreeably important for firefighter incentives, recruitment and retention – however, funds raised should be specific

to firefighter well-being and purchases might include a pool table, a barbeque, specialized clothing and so on. Items required for firefighting (or enhancements) purposes should be included in the annual PRRD budget.

- Similarly, the practice of random distribution of residual honorarium funds should be halted. An established structure for practices and emergency calls would dictate actual payment with any surplus in that line item (as with other surpluses) going to reserves or funding shortfalls in other line items. The honorarium structure might however, include an amount for an annual dinner, jackets, hats, etc, subject to the concurrence of the Manager of Financial Services during annual budget preparation.
- A single payment item for cable services to Malaspina was identified. This should be included in the “Utilities” line item for that department.
- Another incentive item that the Board may wish to consider would be issuance of new-technology Smart Phones to fire Chiefs and Deputies. These offer several resources which would be of great value at incident scenes and the costs of personal calls would be minimal under a corporate plan.

Further Support

Because of the very limited flow of communication presently between the PRRD and its fire service, it is recommended that PRRD develop some simple instructional information for the various departments – perhaps a Fire Chief’s Handbook. Information would include a brief dialogue about regional districts and their ability (and limitations) to provide services, a purchasing procedure, a listing of incentives for volunteers for recruitment and information purposes, a contact list of PRRD staff and other relevant agencies and so on.

A service-specific public information kit should be considered, clearly identifying levels of emergency service, some self-help advice (Fire Smart info, extinguishers, etc) and a caution that poor house numbering and driveway management could delay response to an emergency.

Finally, the Board may wish to consider demonstrating its support and appreciation of the fire service by occasionally requesting a status report during open meeting from any one of the four chiefs and certainly, as often as possible, publicly acknowledging the hard work and dedication of the members of the PRRD’s fire service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations have been developed based on observations, collected verbal information and written material provided by the PRRD.

Priority of implementation has been assigned three levels, with Priority 1 seeing a need for urgent/immediate implementation, Priority 2 seeing urgent implementation as funds or resources become available and Priority 3 seeing implementation over the longer term

Abbreviations:

BCAS – BC Ambulance Service

LAFC – Local Assistant to the Fire Commissioner

OH&S – Occupational Health and Safety

SA – Savary Island Volunteer Fire Department

MA – Malaspina Volunteer Fire Department

NS – Northside Volunteer Fire Department

LA – Lasqueti Volunteer Fire Department

HWM – High Water Mark

PRIORITY 1

- **Engage the services of a Fire Services Coordinator.** PRRD fire department operational support, acting LAFC for the PRRD, acting OH&S coordinator, exploration and development of joint initiatives with other fire services, development of NS and MA to a common standard and SA and LA to a common standard. Report directly to Manager, Community Services.
- **Develop an Equipment/ Facility Replacement Capital Plan** to complement the PRRD's Asset Management Plan and Financial Plans. Avoid leasing where possible. Develop reserves to facilitate purchases. Initial priority is tankers. Possibly transfer retiring tankers to NS and/or LA for interim use.
- **Decline any service area inclusion requests in MA and NS** until tanker fleets are modernized and new bylaws/policies are in place.
- **Formalize the response boundary and policies** for the MA first responder and rescue service. Notify BCAS and Dispatch
- **Formalize agreement with Province** for LA first responder service
- **Rewrite service area bylaws** (consolidate where possible) and develop clear policy regarding types/levels/limits of service. Exclude large tracts of un-managed Crown Land and amend boundaries to follow existing property boundaries. Ensure that all properties have legal all-weather access.
- **Clarify SA boundary** – remove 200 meter beyond HWM limit where access not possible.
- **Refrain from use of heavy apparatus** in steep, narrow and poorly-surfaced road conditions, notably at SA.
- **Develop a "Fire Chief's Handbook"** containing service information, purchasing flows, personnel contacts, etc

PRIORITY 2

- **Formalize fire suppression agreement** for MA response to leased properties at Cokqueneets First Nations settlement.
- **Review Incentives and Honorarium structure** for all departments and develop policies.
- **Formalize agreement with SA Community Association** for use of Main hall and/or initiate plans for a replacement hall.
- **Explore transfer of suppression responsibility** of remote properties from MA to Powell River, by contract
- **Develop public information brochures** explaining levels and limits of PRRD fire service (notably at SA & LA) and fostering volunteerism, use of house numbers, fire safety tips, etc.
- **Abandon or completely rebuild NS Firehall 1.**
- **Equip NS tankers with rapid discharge plumbing & utilize portable tanks.**
- **Acquire a Records Management System** as a software item or as a service provided by dispatch.
- **Develop and provide detailed area mapping to** all departments showing house numbers, road names and boundaries.
- **Request increased level of service** by Min. of Transportation on SA and cite current dangers to emergency services.
- **Formalize hydrant maintenance agreement between SA and Savary Shores Improvement District**

PRIORITY 3

- **Formalize agreement with SA First Responder Association** for use of canopy on PRRD vehicle.
- **Decline requests for provision of open-burning regulatory bylaw** in the absence of building and land-use regulation
- **Negotiate the transfer and transition of Van Anda and Gillies Bay** fire departments to PRRD auspices.
- **Consider merging NS and MA** to a single fire suppression area when assets have been upgraded
- **Consider transferring highway rescue responsibility** and assets to a centrally (Powell River) located association, possibly the existing Search and Rescue organization

FIRE CHIEFS MEETING MINUTES

Powell River Regional District

Minutes of the Fire Chiefs' Meeting
Saturday, June 22nd, 2012
Commencing 11 am

In attendance:

Dave Keiver, Chief, Malaspina VFD
Verne Rosenberg, Chief, Savary Island VFD
Doug Smith, Dep. Chief, Savary Island VFD
Jim Brown, Chief, Northside VFD
Ross Thompson, Chief, Lasqueti Island VFD
Ken Taylor, Chief, Gillies Bay VFD (Improvement District, Texada Island)
Mike Craggs, Dep. Chief, Van Anda VFD Improvement District, Texada Island)
Dan Oulette, Chief, City of Powell River Fire & Rescue
Terry Peters, Dep. Chief, City of Powell River Fire & Rescue
Sean McGinn, Manager, Community Services, Powell River Regional District
Caroline Lukianchuk, Receptionist/Clerk, Powell River Regional District
Ryan Thoms, Emergency Program Coordinator, Powell River Regional District
Jack Blair, MJ (Jack) Blair Consulting Services
Doug Dymond, MJ (Jack) Blair Consulting Services

Minutes:

Sean opened the meeting, welcomed all in attendance and provided a brief overview of the Fire Services Review and its rationale. Generally, the process is intended to review the service, examine strengths and shortfalls, examine opportunities and prepare a report with recommendations for the Board's consideration.

Sean asked that all in attendance introduce themselves and provide a brief overview of their departments and responsibilities.

- **Jack and Doug** introduced themselves and briefly explained the process of proposed investigation with Jack focusing on operational, occupational and safety issues and Doug on administrative, communications and compliance matters.
- **Jim Brown, Northside.** New firehall under construction. Older equipment. Recruitment/retention becoming more difficult. Training is slow – department is striving for FF Level 2. Department is a Medical First Responder and Highway Rescue Responder in its area.
- **Ken Taylor, Gillies Bay.** Many retiring members and difficult recruitment/retention. Department would benefit greatly from integration with PRRD.

- **Mike Craggs, Van Anda.** Younger, inexperienced roster. Difficult retention. Enjoy great cooperation with all surrounding departments. Agree, department would benefit from integration with PRRD.
- **Doug Smith, Savary Island.** Older, retired members with seasonal influx of younger members (university students). Unique challenges.
- **Verne Rosenberg, Savary Island.** Endeavoring to establish structure. Solid core group. Given demographics and terrain, department is good. Good internal communications. Department is a Medical First Responder. Water supply is a challenge. Water access to island makes supplies management difficult. Difficulty dealing with BC Ambulance Service. Poor communications with and little assistance from PRRD.
- **Ross Thompson, Lasqueti Island.** Department is a Medical First Responder. Total number of med/fire calls is around 40/year. Recruitment/retention difficult. Members would not leave island for training, so training would have to be brought to Lasqueti
- **Ryan Thoms, PRRD.** Provides emergency services coordination for all areas of the RD is available as a resource for all emergency response services. Good inter-department and inter-jurisdictional communications and cooperation. Concerned about boundary compliance issues in Malaspina (recent event). Request from Board to examine open-burning regulation in rural area. Carefully monitoring wildland/interface exposures. Examining extended services.
- **Terry Peters, City of Powell River.** Very positive changes occurring in PRRD with introduction of staff. Excellent inter-department communication and cooperation and introduction of annual chiefs' meetings. City is anxious to play greater role to improve the service.
- **Dan Oulette, City of Powell River.** Aging community with diminishing population. Recruitment/retention difficult. Concur with positive changes in PRRD. Great opportunity for the sharing of resources and collective training/purchasing/ mechanical works, etc. Mutual aid agreements with PRRD are old and difficult to initiate. City currently charges for any mutual aid resources requested.
- **Dave Keiver, Malaspina.** Excellent relationship with PRRD, further improved with newer staff. Well-established department with strong training regimen. Good roster. Approx. 150 total calls/year. Department is a Medical First Responder and Highway Recue Responder also. Recruitment/ retention becoming more challenging. Positive changes in PRRD and this Review is welcomed.

Following introductions, Jack and Doug requested further information in specific areas.

- **Dispatch** – All but Lasqueti are direct-dispatched by Campbell River Fire & Rescue and service is 911 compatible. Dispatch offers on-scene assistance. City utilizes in-house dispatch for on-scene management also. All 911 pages are emailed to the respective departments.
Lasqueti utilizes a local emergency number Telus pager system with inter-connect to fire department radios.
- **Fire reporting** – Only the PRRD's Malaspina and Northside post reports to the Fire Commissioner's Office, but only reports involving loss.
- **Operating Guidelines** – Malaspina has some.
- **Occupational Health and Safety** – PRRD has no OH&S Committee overseeing fire departments. Malaspina has a Safety Officer and Safety Committee. Records kept but currently not transmitted to PRRD.
- **Training** – All departments recognized the need for more, closer and shared training.
- **SCBA** – All departments except Gillies Bay utilize Scott equipment and maintain same to Manufacturer's specs.
- **Hoses and Ladders** – All tested, but poor records management. Lasqueti due for ladder testing.
- **Community Education** – Savary Island yes, other departments very minimal. Definite need for more.
- **Halls** – Savary Island's has community hall attached, presenting conflicts. Malaspina's main hall aging and in need of relocation/replacement. Northside's satellite halls are marginally sufficient and equipment is being stored on private property pending completion of new hall.
- **Equipment Maintenance** – Local mechanics attend to vehicle and small engine maintenance on an as-required basis. City has in-house service. Inconsistent arrangements for pump maintenance.
- **Boundary Challenges** – Malaspina First Responder and Rescue boundaries are not contiguous to Fire boundary. Bad incident recently. Malaspina must traverse parts of City to re-access its own area – some joint-response agreements in place.

Prior to closure of the meeting, Jack and Doug thanked all in attendance for their input and participation and requested that departments sum up their three greatest operational challenges. All departments were unanimous in their selection of:

- **Recruitment and retention of members**
- **Inadequate coordinated training**
- **Inadequate inter-department communication and cooperation**

Additional challenges were also noted:

- **Firefighting water supply (Malaspina & Northside)**
- **Boundary/Responsibility clarification (Malaspina)**

All in attendance were grateful for the opportunity to discuss these matters and to see that this Review was underway.

Sean thanked all participants.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:10pm

MEETINGS WITH STAFF

Meetings with PRRD Staff

June 26, 2012

Sean McGinn, Manager of Community Services

- Principal contact for the Fire Services Review
- Carries experience in service function management (Columbia-Shuswap and Alberni-Clayoquot Regional Districts)
- As is typical with RD operational growth, fire department management is limited to available time and is specific to administrative support. There is currently no operational support for fire departments.
- Fire departments have been left to grow at local discretion and in the absence of a strategic plan. The RD and its fire departments need clear direction in the areas of fire service administration and operations.
- Time presently being spent on fire departments detracts from administrative management and governance roles for all Community Services functions.
- Aware that fire departments are not being afforded the time and assistance that they require. In many cases, this presents, or compounds liability exposure for the RD.
- RD has not done much with public information in the rural fire service.

Ryan Thoms, Emergency Program Coordinator

- Background in Forestry (planning, interface fire strategy and emergency management)
- Enjoying integration into a good management structure at the PRRD.
- Also enjoys excellent relationships with all government and emergency services in the area.
- City of Powell River is a participant in the program and is keen to be involved in the development and success of these services.
- Area fire departments appear to be keen to cooperate and share resources/expertise – but need guidance and management.
- Available to coordinate specific training in emergency scene management (Incident Command, Emergency Ops Centre, etc)
- Definite need to examine and improve mutual aid agreements.
- Boundaries need to be defined and clear policies/procedures developed (cited Malaspina incident). Procedures should include the further utilization of the local Search and Rescue group.
- Sean is overwhelmed and not capable of managing fire service to the extent it requires.

Linda Greenan, Manager of Financial Services

- Asset Management Plan in progress. Hoping that this review will identify strategic upgrading requirements for fire departments.
- 2012 tax rates for fire service range from \$1.15 (Northside, which is currently elevated to retire firehall construction costs) to \$0.28 (Savary)
- All RD departments are involved in apparatus and equipment lease/purchase arrangements through the Municipal Finance Authority. Highest outstanding lease balance is Northside's (\$130,000 for pumper acquisition) and lowest is Malaspina (almost retired).
- Malaspina contemplating acquisition of new tanker by lease, but RD is awaiting advice from this Review.

Mac Fraser, Chief Administrative Officer.

- Operational fire service issues are very taxing to Sean's time which would be better directed to strategic function management within his department.
- Possible partial capacity available though Ryan.
- Looking forward to Review and recommendations

MEETINGS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Meeting with Powell River Fire/Rescue

June 25, 2012

Chief Dan Oulette

Deputy Chief Terry Peters

- City, like all services in the area, experiencing difficult recruitment and retention factors.
- Would welcome more cooperation with regional district departments.
- Opportunities exist for joint training, mechanical services, purchasing and coordination.
- Excellent relationships with neighbors Malaspina and Northside. Mutual aid agreements are currently aged and restrictive. PR depends on tankered water in some areas.
- Possibility exists for purchase of specialized, joint-use equipment.
- Excellent and improving relationship with PRRD staff – notable inclusion of Ryan Thoms.

PROPOSAL

M.J. (Jack) Blair

5858 Sunnybrae – Canoe Point Road

Tappen, BC V0E 2X1

Cell: (250) 517-0507

Email *jblair@airspeedwireless.ca*

October 3, 2011

Sean McGinn, Manager of Community Services
Powell River Regional District
5776 Marine Avenue
Powell River, BC V8A 2M4

Via Email

Re: Fire Services Operational Review – Preliminary Proposal

Following up on our earlier discussions, I have prepared a work program which would examine the operational aspects of the PRRD's fire departments and offer recommendations in the form of a final report. I have also provided preliminary costs for your budgetary considerations for 2012.

Unless directed otherwise, the exercise would focus on the operational readiness of each department, their resources and their compliance with the Fire Underwriters Survey, the BC Fire Code and NFPA guidelines. Additionally, all departments will be assessed for compliance with the BC Occupational Health and Safety Regulations for firefighter safety.

The process would also include a review of equipment and apparatus (and their maintenance), training regimen commensurate with services provided, standard operating guidelines, response and on-scene protocols, record management, officer criterion, mutual participation with neighboring departments and so on. In addition to following the Office of the BC Fire Commissioner's Audit Checklist for BC Fire Departments, I will be including a number of focal points that I have established to compliment rural departments in all operational areas.

Provisions for an optional Administrative Review are also included for your perusal.

Personnel

Jack Blair would be principal contact. Jack carries extensive field experience with the fire service in BC having been a career firefighter with the City of Vancouver Fire and Rescue for some 28 years and while there, completed the highest levels of training in all theatres. Jack retired from the force in 2005 and began a second career in the capacity of Fire Services Coordinator with the Columbia Shuswap Regional District. In this role, Jack is responsible for the day to day administration and operations (and operational safety) of thirteen rural volunteer fire departments and has been instrumental in the development of a BC Justice Institute - approved fire training facility in Salmon Arm. Jack, an accomplished Training Officer, provides training at the facility and is also an adjunct Instructor for the BC Justice Institute. Jack has participated in several emergency services operational reviews.

Doug Dymond would participate in a supporting role. Doug retired in 2009 after serving with the Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD) in the capacity of Manager, Works Services for 23 years. In that role, Doug carried administrative responsibility for all external services, including the rural fire service. Doug assisted with the original development, design, preparation, referendums and purchasing for six of the CSRD's thirteen fire departments and was instrumental in developing mutual aid agreements and contracted fire service areas in cooperation with neighboring municipalities and First Nations settlements. Doug is a Civil Engineering Technologist and carries a General Certificate in Local Government Administration.

Scope of Work

The primary focus of this exercise would be to assess the operational strengths and shortcomings of each fire (rescue) department within the Powell River Regional District's auspices.

In any service of this nature, history has proven that the most effective and successful approaches to good service delivery, risk management and above all, firefighter safety are good equipment, sound management, training and clear lines of communication.

In addition to assessing compliance with the BC Fire Commissioner's Audit Checklist, the following would be reviewed:

- Fire hall (compliance/location/construction/maintenance/suitability)
- Apparatus and equipment (compliance/condition/maintenance)
- Manpower (compliance/training/structure)
- Training (compliance/relevance/frequency/recording)

- OH&S program (compliance/frequency/content/protocols)
- Response capability (times/area size/manpower)
- Emergency scene management (compliance/protocols)
- Communications (dispatch/radios & pagers/protocols)
- Record management (adequacy/frequency/storage)
- Management (accountability/protocols/officer criteria)
- Mutual Aid (practicality/compatibility/protocols)
- Water sources, Hydrants or Tankering (compliance/maintenance/protocols)

Proposed Time Allocation and Costs

For the purposes of this review, two trips to Powell River have been considered – a first to meet with PRRD personnel and to visit all fire halls and a second to present the final report to the PRRD Board of Directors.

Unfortunately, travel costs associated with accessing and leaving Powell River are high. Every effort would be made to reduce or economize, wherever possible.

Each fire hall (and/or) fire suppression area has been allocated a full day to permit a meaningful and detailed investigation of operational readiness and an assessment of the items listed above. It is hoped that the Fire Chief or a senior officer with detailed knowledge of the department's operation will accompany the consultant for at least 4 consecutive hours at each location. Several items on the check list will not require a local attendance for the full day.

Jack Blair	84 hours @ \$80	6,720.00
Doug Dymond	76 hours @ \$70	5,320.00
Travel, Ferries, Accommodation & Meals (2 trips)		4,325.00*
Miscellaneous (Postage, incidentals)		250.00

Total project **16,615.00**

*It has been assumed that the PRRD would require a consultant presence at the Board Meeting. If this is not the case, costs could be reduced by introducing telephone loudspeaker or tele-conferencing media, if preferred.

Optional Administrative Review

The PRRD may wish to consider an administrative review to satisfy itself that existing bylaws and agreements associated with the fire/rescue service are current and that fire suppression areas are manageable with existing internal and external resources.

Recommended components would include:

- Review of fire suppression areas to determine all-weather response times/distances and to determine if areas need not be included (un-managed Crown Land, inaccessible lands, etc)
- Review of fire suppression bylaws to ensure currency and that all services offered are clearly delineated.
- Review of Mutual Aid agreements and opportunities for newer agreements, if warranted.
- Review of Committee structure, if present, or inter-relation with Board of Directors.
- Review of any Board policies associated with the service.
- Review of initiatives for volunteer firefighters (honorariums or on-call payments, firefighter and family insurances, etc).
- Review adequacy of support from PRRD.
- Issue report and recommendations.

As this is purely a review and report process, no travel is anticipated, unless requested. If this option is selected, maps, bylaws and agreements would be collected during the Operational Review and any visual inspection of fire suppression areas would also be completed at that time.

Jack Blair	20 hours @ \$80	1,600.00
Doug Dymond	40 hours @ \$70	2,800.00

Miscellaneous	250.00
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Total project **4,650.00**

Closure

Thank you for considering me for this undertaking. As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Assuming that the Board wishes to proceed with this initiative in 2012, I would be able to mobilize any time after February 1st, with short notice. I would anticipate that the report would be available to the Board within 6 weeks of Authorization to Proceed.

Sincerely,

Jack Blair

M.J. Jack) Blair