

# Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Whatì



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# 1 Introduction

In 2012, a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was developed for the Community of Whati to address the hazard and the risk to the community from wildfire. That CWPP was developed to provide practical and operational wildland /urban interface (WUI) risk mitigation strategies to reduce the threat of wildfire to the community.

The original CWPP was developed by Montane Forest Management Ltd. in cooperation with the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and Whati .

In 2018 the GNWT, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) updated the Whati CWPP by using the most recent information, science and expertise available. This included using standardized FireSmart assessment protocols and mitigative measures were developed based on the 7 disciplines of FireSmart.

1. Vegetation Management
2. Development
3. Legislation
4. Public Education and Engagement
5. Inter-Agency Cooperation
6. Cross Training
7. Emergency Planning

The update included:

- The FireSmart mitigation efforts completed around the community
- The change in hazard around the community.
- New recommendations or modification to existing recommendations

Whati, in cooperation with ENR, implemented some of the original recommendations but there is still work to do.

The update includes recommendations to assist in setting priorities to reduce the threat from wildfire. It is important to note that while implementing these recommendations will reduce the threat from wildfire to structures, it will never completely remove the threat.

This plan should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains a priority to the community and its residents.

## 2 Planning Area and Stakeholders

The planning area includes all lands within Whati and a two-kilometre buffer surrounding the community (Map 1).

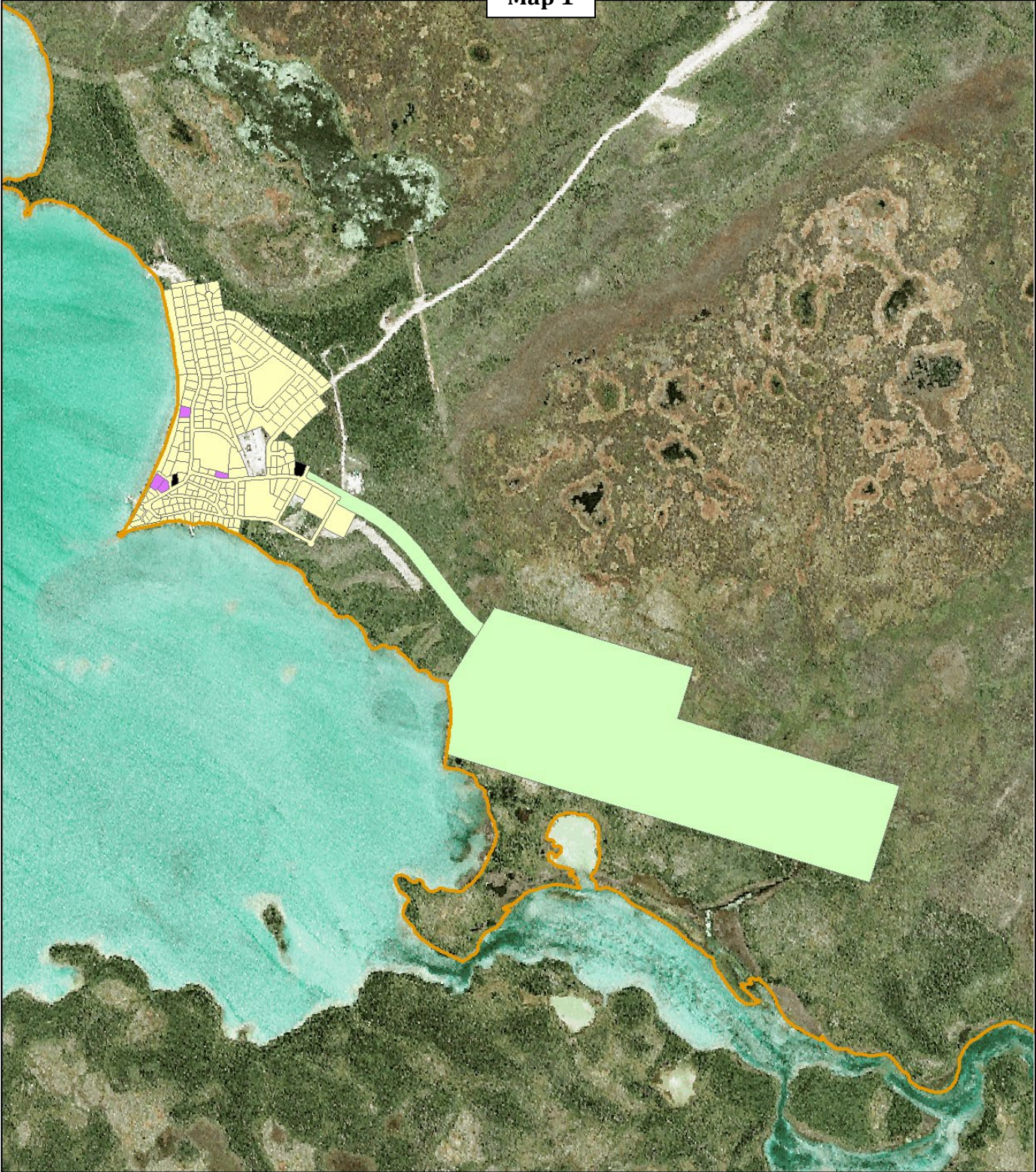
Stakeholders involved in the planning process included:

- Government of the Northwest Territories, Environment and Natural Resources
- Community Government of Whati

All lands are within the Tli Cho Land Claim Settlement. Land status authority is represented by the following (Map 1):

- Commissioner
- Federal
- Municipal
- Private

Map 1



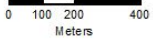
# Whati Land Status Authority

**Land Ownership**


 Municipal	 Planning Area
 Commissioner	 Private
 Federal	

N

1:20,000



0 100 200 400  
Meters



Northwest  
Territories Environment and Natural Resources

### 3 Hazard & Risk Assessment

In the original 2012 CWPP a hazard and risk assessment was undertaken to determine the potential impact wildfire could have on the community. This was based on an analysis of the historical wildfire ignition sources, fire incidence and the wildland fire potential of the forest surrounding the community.

#### 3.1 Wildfire Ignition Potential

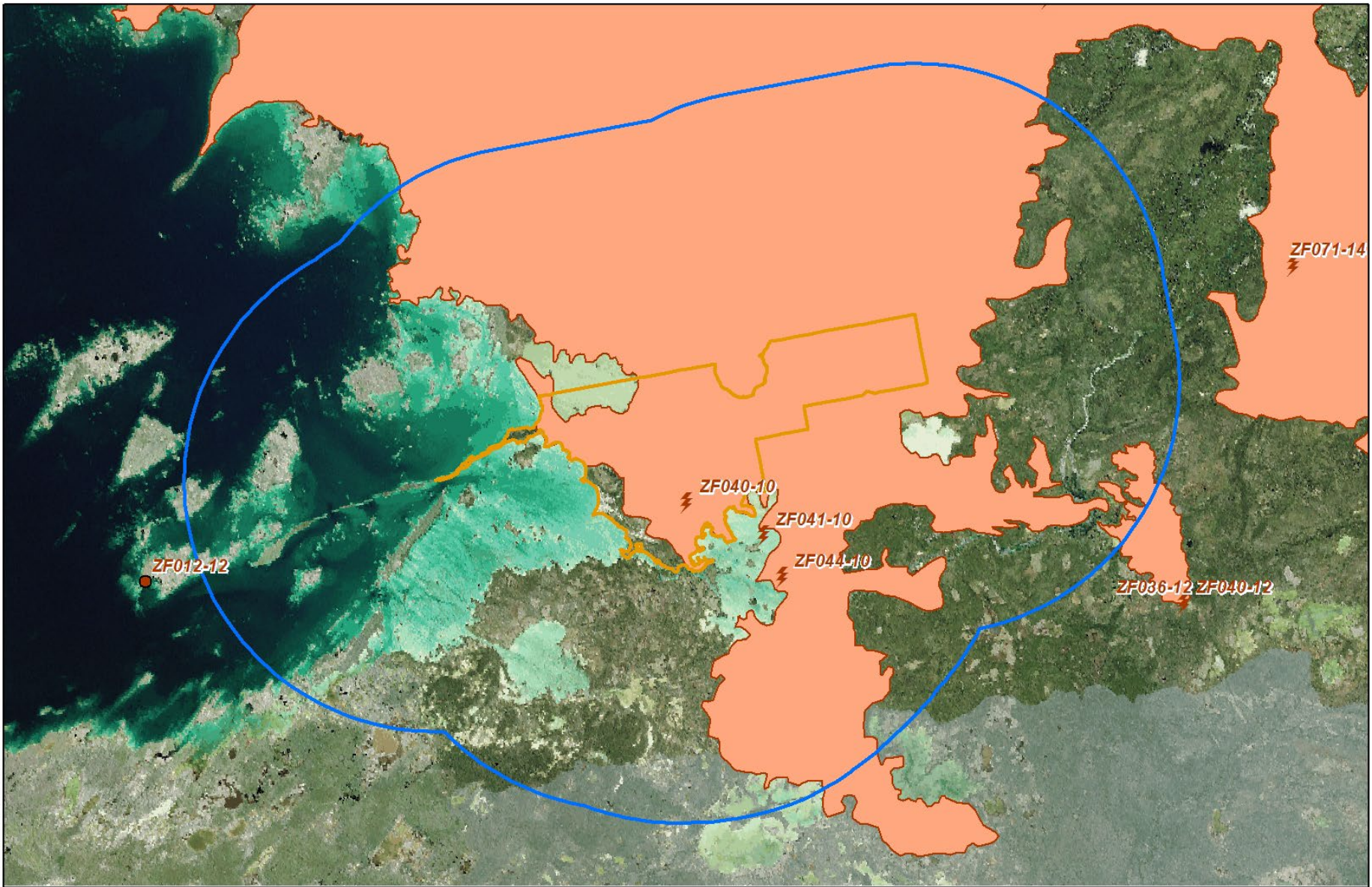
The assessment of recent fire incidence was completed using historical fire data from ENR for the ten-year period from 2009 to 2018.

Fire incidence data indicates that 4 wildfires were discovered within a 10 kilometre radius of the community, 100% were lightning-caused (Table 1). One large wildfire in 2014 burned close to the Community of Whati which triggered a burnout Operation by ENR to protect the Community (Map 2).







**Table 1: Fire Incidence by Cause (2009- 2018)**

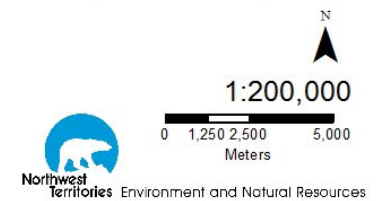
<b>General Cause</b>	<b>Number of Fires</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Human-Caused	0	0
Lightning-Caused	4	100
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100</b>

**The risk of wildfire in the planning area exists and primarily occurs as a result of lightning.**



## Whati Ten Year Fire History

- |   |                           |   |              |
|---|---------------------------|---|--------------|
|  | Planning Area 10km Buffer |  | Human Caused |
|  | Planning Area             |  | Lightning    |
|  | Large Fire History        |  | Unknown      |



### 3.2 FireSmart Hazard Assessments

FireSmart hazard assessments (Partners in Protection, 2003) were conducted on development areas and adjacent wildland fuel types within the planning area. New residential perimeter development on the east-side of Whati are at the highest threat to wildfire (Table 2 & Map 3).

**Table 2: FireSmart Hazard Assessments**

Development Area	Structure/Site Hazard (0 - 30m)
Whati West	Low
Whati East	High
Airport	Low

Hazard factor's for each of the development areas are discussed below.

#### Whati West

FireSmart hazard for Whati West is rated as **LOW**. Fuels primarily consist of non-fuel and cured-grass with adequate defensible space from coniferous fuels. Exterior structure materials are primarily asphalt shingle/metal roofing and wood or log siding. Access roads are all-weather loop design.



#### Whati East

FireSmart hazard for Whati East is rated as **HIGH**. Fuels primarily consist of boreal spruce (C-2) and mixedwood (M-1/M-2) with inadequate defensible space between the residential structures and coniferous fuel types. Exterior structure materials are primarily asphalt shingle/metal roofing and hardiplank siding. Access roads are all-weather loop design.



### **Airport**

FireSmart hazard for the Airport is rated as **LOW**. Fuels primarily consist of non-fuel and cured grass with significant defensible space between the terminal and wildland fuels. Exterior structure materials are metal roofing and wood siding.



**The highest wildfire threat for Whati exists in the eastern residential area at the interface with the coniferous forest fuels.**

## 4. Vegetation Management Options

The goal of vegetation management is to create a clear space between the community and the forest to reduce the intensity and rate of spread of wildfire approaching or leaving the community. Vegetation management options are proposed at the appropriate scale, based on hazard and risk, to reduce the threat of wildfire to developed areas. While fuel modification projects reduce the threat of wildfire to developments, they do not ensure structure survival under all hazard conditions.

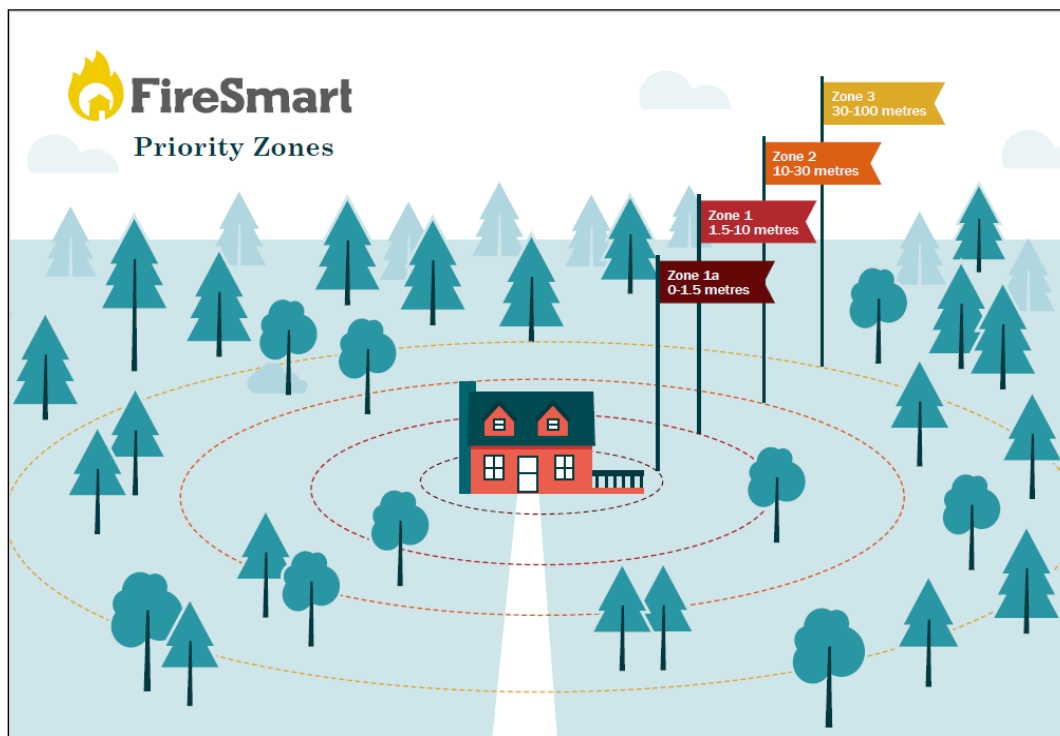
Vegetation management consists of one or any combination of the following options:

- Fuel removal (remove trees)
- Fuel reduction (thin and prune trees)
- Species conversion (plant less flammable trees)

Complete descriptions of the methods included in each of the above options are included in the link:

<https://www.firesmartcanada.ca/mdocs-posts/firesmart-priority-zones-2017/>

*FireSmart* standards refer to the interface priority zones with vegetation management for interface structures recommended in Zones 1 and 1a, 2 at a minimum and in Zone 3 based on hazard and risk.



**Figure 1– Interface Priority Zones (PIP, 2017)**

## 4.1 Existing Vegetation Management

40 metre wide fuelbreaks were constructed by ENR on the north and east sides of Whati during the winter of 2010/11 (Table 3 & Map 3).

**Table 3: Existing Vegetation Management Areas**

Name	Area (ha)	Year Established	Agency	Comments
North Fuelbreak	1.4	2010	GNWT	
East Fuelbreak	3.1	2010	GNWT	
FM1 NorthEast	13.7	2018	GNWT	
FM2 SouthEast	8.8	2018	GNWT	
<b>Total</b>	<b>22.5</b>			

## 4.2 Proposed Vegetation Management

### 4.2.1 Zone 14.2.1 Zone 1

Zone 1 and 1a vegetation management is inadequate for many of the residential structures and seasonal cabins, with a lack of defensible space from native grass, spruce, and pine fuels.



### 4.2.1 Zone 1a (0-1.5m) and Zone 1 (1.5m – 10m)

FireSmart Zone vegetation management is inadequate for many of structures due to encroachment of native grass fuels.

FireSmart Zone 1a vegetation management options include:

- Creating a noncombustible zone around structures by clearing vegetation and combustible material down to mineral soil within 1.5m of structures.
- Use noncombustible materials in this critical zone of 1.5m directly adjacent to your home such as gravel, bricks or concrete.
- Woody shrubs, trees or tree branches should be avoided in this zone and any that are present should be properly mitigated.

Zone 1 vegetation management is **inadequate** for many of the residential structures in East Whati, with a lack of defensible space from native grass and spruce fuels.

FireSmart Zone 1 vegetation management options include:

- Removal of flammable forest vegetation within 10 metres of structures.
- Removal of all coniferous ladder fuels (limbs) to a minimum height of 2 metres from ground level on residual overstory trees.
- Removal of all dead and down forest vegetation from the forest floor.

- Increased maintenance to ensure that all combustible needles, leaves, and native grass are removed from on and around structures.
- Establishment and maintenance of a non-combustible surface cover around the structure including the use of FireSmart landscaping species.
- Removal of all combustible material piles (firewood, lumber, etc) within 10 metres of the structure.

For more information on FireSmart Zone 1 standards refer to *FireSmart – Protecting Your Community from Wildfire* (Partners in Protection 2003).

**Recommendation 1:** Encourage residents to establish adequate Zone 1- 1a defensible space around their structures.

#### 4.2.2 Zone 2-3

Priority areas are recommended for Zone 2-3 fuels management based on hazard and risk (Table 4 & Map 3). Proposed fuels management areas are conceptual at this time and will require detailed fuels reduction planning to identify fuels management prescription, unit boundaries, and operational constraints.

**Table 4: Priority Fuel Modification Areas**

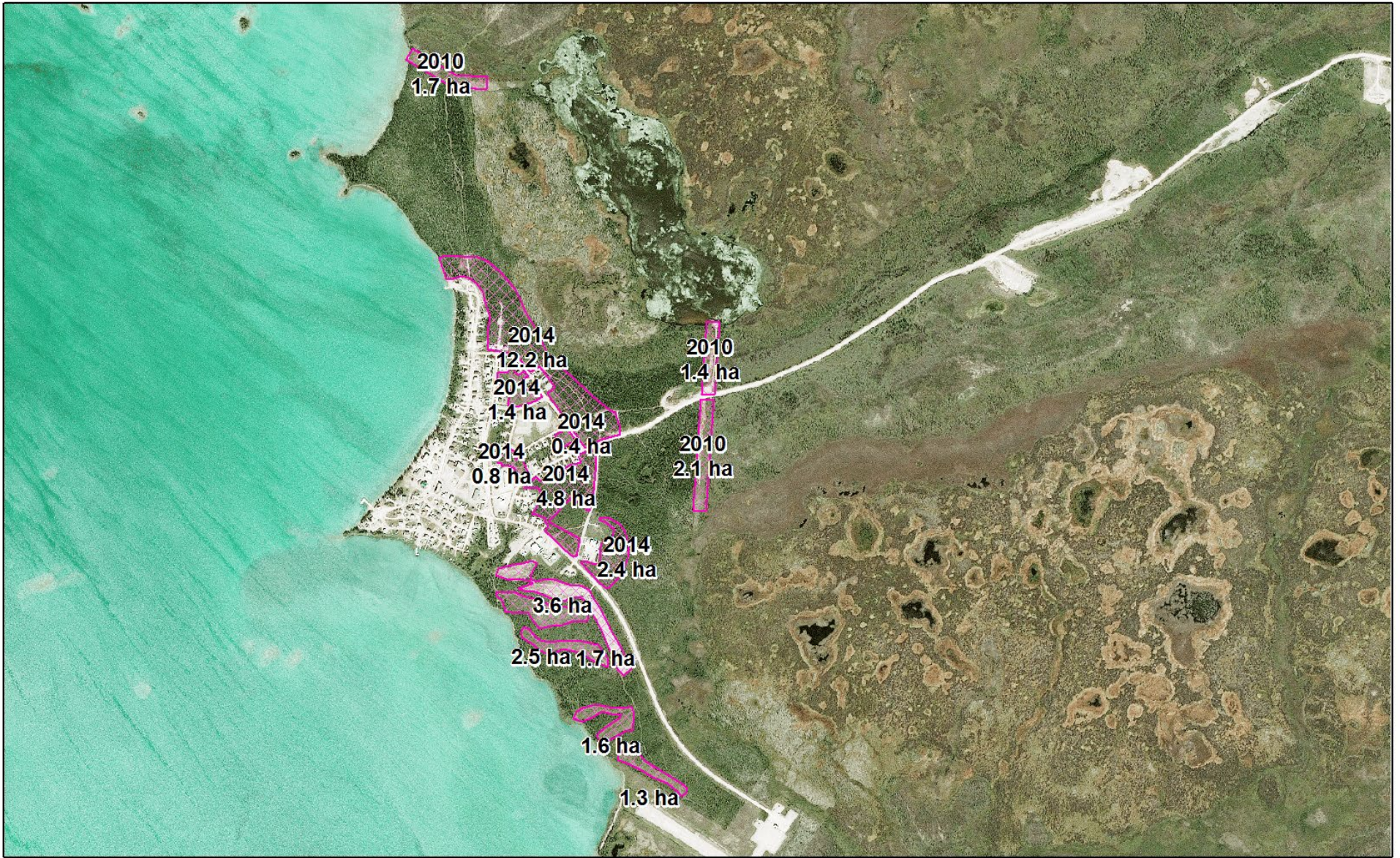
Priority	Area (Ha)	Proposed Fuel Modification Standards	Land Status Authority
NorthEast	13.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to remove all dead standing and dead &amp; down coniferous and deciduous</li> <li>▪ Remove willow shrub cover</li> <li>▪ Retain deciduous overstory stems</li> <li>▪ Prune limbs to 2 metres</li> <li>▪ Dispose of debris by piling and burning onsite or use as biomass or other product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ GNWT</li> <li>▪ Tli Cho Govt.</li> <li>▪ Municipal</li> </ul>
SouthEast	8.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to remove all dead standing and dead &amp; down coniferous and deciduous</li> <li>▪ Remove willow shrub cover</li> <li>▪ Retain deciduous overstory stems</li> <li>▪ Prune limbs to 2 metres</li> <li>▪ Dispose of debris by piling and burning onsite or use as biomass or other product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ GNWT</li> <li>▪ Tli Cho Govt.</li> <li>▪ Municipal</li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>	<b>22.5</b>		

**Recommendation 2:** Zone 2-3 fuels reduction and maintenance is the responsibility of the Land Status Authority holder(s) and should be implemented based on the priorities identified in this plan.

### 4.3 Vegetation Management Maintenance

Fuel modification area maintenance schedules depend on many factors including fuel type, soil and moisture conditions, and specific weather events. It is suggested that land managers provide periodic inspections of their fuel modification project areas and complete maintenance as required. It is projected that fuel modification maintenance will be required at least each five-year period.

**Recommendation 3:** Ensure that all existing fuel modification projects are inspected on a regular basis and maintained as necessary to ensure fuel modification effectiveness. Maintenance should be the responsibility of the land manager or landowner.

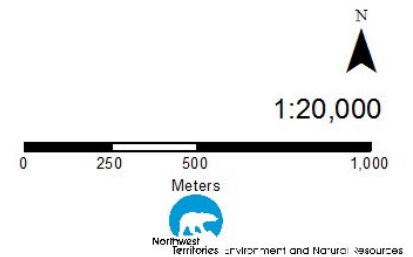


## Whati Fuel Modifications

Completed and Proposed

### Fuel Modifications

-  Completed
-  In Progress
-  Proposed



## 5. Development Options

Consideration of wildfire at the planning stage of new development is encouraged to ensure that wildfire hazard and appropriate mitigation measures are developed and implemented prior to development.

New developments may overlap or conflict with existing fuel modification resulting in a reduction in fuelbreak effectiveness and an increase in wildfire threat to the new or existing development in the area.

**Recommendation 4:** If a new development removes or reduces the effectiveness of any existing or proposed FireSmart mitigation measures or introduces new wildfire hazards, the area must be assessed and measures implemented to maintain the community protection standards.

### 5.1 Structural Options

Structural characteristics that contribute to a structure's ability to withstand wildfire ignition include type of roofing and siding material, and proper construction and maintenance of eaves, vents, and openings that can accumulate flammable debris and allow wildfire to gain entry to the structure.

The most common roofing materials in the planning area are asphalt shingle and metal.



Siding materials vary between non-combustible hardi-plank on newer structures and combustible wood and log on older structures.

Many structures have combustible debris piles (firewood, lumber, etc) immediately adjacent to the structure, increasing the threat of wildfire to the structure. Open decks and undersides are common.

### 5.2 Infrastructure Options

Infrastructure options include provision of adequate access standards to ensure quick and safe ingress and egress for residents and emergency responders during a wildfire, adequate and accessible water supply for structure protection and suppression, and utility installation standards that do not increase risk to emergency responders during a wildfire emergency.

### 5.2.1 Access

Access road standards throughout the planning area are mainly adequate for an interface community. Access roads are all-weather loop and dead-end design. There is no summer road access to the community.

### 5.2.2 Water Supply

Whati does not have municipal hydrant water-supply. All development areas rely on water-tender supply for structure protection activities. Each home is equipped with an in-house water tank.

### 5.2.3 Franchised Utilities

Franchised utilities affected by an interface fire include electrical power and heating fuel. Proper installation and maintenance of these services can minimize the risk to residents and emergency services personnel.

#### **Electrical Power**

Power distribution and residential service is provided through above-ground powerlines from the NTPC generation plant.

#### **Heating Fuel**

Heating fuel is provided by tank supply.



## 6. Public Education Options

Public education plays a key role in promoting and implementing FireSmart principles and projects. Residents, landowners, municipal administration, and elected officials all need to be aware of the risk of wildfires and the solutions to minimizing the risk, and need to become a partner in implementation of the solutions in their communities. If stakeholders understand the issues relating to wildland/urban interface hazard they will be more likely to take action on their own property or to support actions taken by other authorities.

Residents and stakeholders can refer to the GNWT ENR, Forest Management Division website at: <https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/services/be-firesmart> for further information on the GNWT FireSmart program, current wildfire updates, and other wildfire management related information.

### Key Messages

FireSmart hazard assessments identified the need for the following key messages to target audiences in the planning area.

#### Homeowners

Homeowners can increase resiliency of homes and make them less vulnerable to wildfire by development and maintenance of the FireSmart Non-Combustible Zone 1a (0-1.5 metres) and Zone 1 (1.5-10 metres) defensible space surrounding the home, by:

- Clearing vegetation and combustible material down to mineral soil within 1.5 metres of structures.
- Using noncombustible materials in this critical zone of 1.5 metres directly adjacent to your home such as gravel, bricks or concrete.
- Woody shrubs, trees or tree branches should be avoided in this area and any that are present should be properly mitigated.
- Storing firewood and other combustible materials more than 10 metres away from the home.
- Keeping roof and eaves clear of leaves and other combustible debris.
- Creating propane and fuel-tank FireSmart defensible space.
- Creating a non-combustible zone for underneath and around any trailers/vehicles and mitigate sheds and other structures to the same standards as those of your home.
- If possible and/or applicable maintain Zone 2 (10-30 metres) and Zone 3 (30-100 metres) recommendations, and work with neighbors in any overlapping Priority Zones.

## Communities

Communities can reduce wildfire risk and adopting FireSmart principles by:

- Holding a FireSmart Wildfire Community Preparedness Day or workshop.
- Using local government websites, social media and newsletters to promote FireSmart principles.
- Asking ENR staff what educational and/or promotional resources they have available, such as: wildfire information pamphlets, posters, educational resources, videos etc.
- Applying for the FireSmart Community Recognition Program. For more information visit: [www.firesmartcanada.ca/firesmart-communities/firesmart-canada-community-recognition-program/](http://www.firesmartcanada.ca/firesmart-communities/firesmart-canada-community-recognition-program/).



**Recommendation 6:** Public education on acceptable FireSmart Zone 1a and Zone 1 standards is recommended for all Whati residents.

## 7. Inter-Agency Cooperation and Cross-Training Options

Interagency cooperation and cross-training between all stakeholders is necessary to ensure cooperative and effective implementation of wildland/urban interface mitigation options and to coordinate an effective response to a wildland/urban interface fire.

Interagency stakeholders within the planning area include:

- Community Government of Whati
- GNWT

The Whati Fire Department is presently not active therefore cross-training would not be effective at this time. Should the fire department become active, cross-training for fire department members and ENR wildfire suppression personnel should include basic wildfire, wildland/urban interface fire, and incident command system training courses. The following cross-training courses are available.

### **Wildland Fire**

- Wildland Firefighter (NFPA 1051 Level I, S-131, or equivalent)

### **Wildland/Urban Interface Fire**

- Structure and Site Preparation Workshop (S-115)

### **Incident Command System**

- ICS Orientation (I-100)
- Basic ICS (I-200)
- Intermediate ICS (I-300)

**Recommendation 6:** Should the fire department become active, the fire department and the GNWT should partner on cross-training initiatives to ensure emergency responders are cross-trained to the following minimum standards:

- Wildland Firefighter
- Structure and Site Preparation Workshop (S-115)
- Incident Command System (I-100 to I-300) as applicable

## 8. Emergency Planning Options

Emergency preparedness is an important part of any disaster planning. The need for organization, clear chain of command, and an understanding of job responsibilities during an interface fire are of paramount importance.

The Whati Emergency Measures Plan is used to provide authority and direction during an emergency. This plan is scheduled for updating in the near future.

At present the community does not have a wildfire pre-plan to provide emergency responders with detailed tactical information with respect to values at risk and operational strategies and tactics to minimize losses during a wildland/urban interface fire. A suggested pre-plan outline is as follows:

- Planning Area Jurisdictional Authority
- Values at risk (life, structures, infrastructure)
- Fire operations plan (strategies/tactics, water sources, equipment, communications plan)

**Recommendation 7:** Develop a Community Wildfire Pre-Plan for the community to provide greater operational detail to emergency responders during a wildland/urban interface incident.

## 9 Recommendations Summary

### Vegetation Management

Issue	Recommendation	Responsible Agency
<b>Zone 1</b>	<b>Recommendation 1:</b> Encourage residents to establish adequate Zone 1-1a defensible space around their structures.	Comm. Govt. of Whati GNWT
<b>Zone 2-3</b>	<b>Recommendation 2:</b> Zone 2-3 fuels reduction and maintenance is the responsibility of the Land Status Authority holder(s) and should be implemented based on the priorities identified in this plan.	GNWT Tli Cho Govt. Comm. Govt. of Whati
<b>Maintenance</b>	<b>Recommendation 3:</b> Ensure that all existing fuel modification projects are inspected on a regular basis and maintained as necessary to ensure fuel modification effectiveness. Maintenance should be the responsibility of the land manager or landowner.	GNWT Tli Cho Govt. Comm. Govt. of Whati

### Development

Issue	Recommendation	Responsible Agency
<b>FireSmart Development Planning</b>	<b>Recommendation 4:</b> If a new development removes or reduces the effectiveness of any existing or proposed FireSmart mitigation measures or introduces new wildfire hazards, the area must be assessed and measures implemented to maintain the community protection standards.	GNWT Comm. Govt. of Whati

### Public Education

Issue	Recommendation	Responsible Agency
<b>Public Education Priorities</b>	<b>Recommendation 5:</b> Public education on acceptable FireSmart Zone 1a and Zone 1 standards is recommended for all residents.	GNWT Comm. Govt. of Whati

### Interagency Cooperation & Cross-Training

Issue	Recommendation	Responsible Agency
<b>Cross-Training</b>	<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> The fire department and the GNWT should partner on cross-training initiatives to ensure emergency responders are cross-trained to the following minimum standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wildland Firefighter</li> <li>▪ Structure and Site Preparation Workshop (S-115)</li> <li>▪ Incident Command System (I-100 to I-300) as applicable</li> </ul>	GNWT Comm. Govt. of Whati

### Emergency Planning

Issue	Recommendation	Responsible Agency
<b>Community Wildfire Pre- Planning</b>	<b>Recommendation 7:</b> Develop a Community Wildfire Pre-Plan for the community to provide greater operational detail to emergency responders during a wildland/urban interface incident.	GNWT Comm. Govt. of Whati