

BuMo PODs Workshop: Summary Report

Hudson Bay Lodge, Smithers | February 12th, 2026

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1. Workshop Purpose and Objectives

On February 12th, 25 participants gathered for a workshop on the Bulkley-Morice PODs Pilot Project. The workshop included discussion on the background of the BuMo PODs pilot project, a review of the first iteration of PODs maps, and collaborative work to edit and improve these maps to better reflect the region and its unique features, using participants' broad on-the-ground knowledge and experience.

The workshop objectives were:

1. Establish a shared and precise understanding of PODs in the Bulkley-Morice context
2. Jointly analyze and 'stress-test' preliminary PODs using local expertise
3. Generate documented insights to improve both the POD outputs and the POD process for future iterations.

The workshop built on the 1st 'iteration' of POD lines, prepared in advance by a small technical group in three case study areas. The core principles for these initial POD lines were: 1) prioritizing access for suppression opportunity, versus access for treatment or PCF strength, 2) utilizing high ridgelines or other natural features where possible, and 3) not be limited by lack of knowledge of values, which will be considered later, as this PODs pilot project does not include making land use decisions.

2. Key Directions for the 2nd Iteration of PODs

Based on plenary discussions, case study presentations, and breakout groups, workshop participants were broadly aligned on the next steps for the PODs pilot project. The following directions represent the most consistently repeated priorities and considerations for the next iteration of POD maps (to be completed, potentially with additional support, from 2026 onwards in the BuMo PODs pilot area):

- Maintain large, strategically simple PODs as the foundation, while selectively introducing sub-PODs only where they clearly add value (e.g., near communities, evacuation corridors, etc.).
- 'Phase 2' will shift from *where lines are* to *what happens within* PODs, including suppression options, treatment opportunities, and long-term landscape management objectives.

- Systematically attribute POD boundary lines, documenting rationale, intended function, confidence, and limitations. (Attribution and rationale will be documented where possible in the current phase of work—however, future work will take this information further to build recommendations for treatments, mitigations etc. in PODs.)
- Treat PODs as containers for multiple management pathways, not fixed control lines; emphasize redundancy and optionality rather than single “perfect” lines. Technical team members were also encouraged to identify strong PCFs within PODs, especially if or where the PODs are large and suppression operations will need additional options within the ‘container’.
- Advance a clear Phase 2 methodology that integrates fire behaviour, access, road condition, and operational feasibility and more using various additional spatial layers.
- Strengthen communication, documentation, and metadata, ensuring that future users can understand the logic, intent, and assumptions behind each POD without relying on institutional memory.
- Proactively engage additional partners and licensees (industry, Parks, municipalities, First Nations) to align POD refinement with other planning and management processes.
- Treat PODs as living products, with future annual reviews and updates that include recent disturbance, treatments, or new operational knowledge.

3. Project Background: General Questions

Early discussion focused on how PODs fit within existing planning and governance structures, and what expectations should (and should not) be placed on the tool.

It was consistently reiterated that PODs are not a regulatory or legally binding instrument, but rather a decision-support framework. It was emphasized that PODs should not be over-sold as enforceable boundaries, but instead positioned as a way to improve clarity, preparedness, and coordination across wildfire and forest management.

Key points raised in the project background included:

- PODs do not replace provincial land use plans, LRMPs, or WUI planning, but may expose gaps and misalignments between those frameworks.
- Maintenance and updating of PODs should mirror their dual use:
 - a strategic / proactive planning stream, and
 - a response-oriented / tactical stream.
- Annual or iterative refinement of PODs can be the ‘lighter lift’, with the first iteration being the ‘heavy lift’.
- Participants cautioned against assuming that all POD boundaries can or should be treated as fuel breaks; instead, key boundaries should be prioritized based on risk, feasibility, and operational value.
- It was also noted that there is a need for eventual POD management or implementation to better reflect cultural values, Indigenous land use, and non-timber forest values, noting that fire can both threaten and propagate values depending on context.

4. ‘Phase 2’ Management and Considerations

Through the day, the group agreed that it was helpful to segment the PODs pilot into two ‘phases’. Phase 1 refers to the stage we are now, where preliminary PODs are developed using mainly large landscape features and connecting lines to create a higher level and likely larger average size set of PODs. Phase 2 would be the stage where refining and some ‘wiggling’ of POD lines would take place, driven by more specific modelling and GIS layers (such as fire behavior, wind patterns, etc.) as well as potentially the documentation of values in each POD. Phase 2 was widely described as ‘where PODs become truly useful’.

Key elements include:

- Adding operationally relevant layers such as road condition, access quality, and fire behaviour pathways.
- Identifying internal “wicks,” pinch points, and priority control features.

- Engaging partners to align planned harvesting, fuel treatments, and access maintenance with POD objectives.
- Using PODs to inform proactive fire use, prescribed burning, and long-term resilience, not only suppression.

5. Case Study Presentations

5.1 Adam Burdett: Smithers area

Adam’s case study centered on the Smithers area, displaying an extensive first iteration of PODs. Adam noted how quickly and intuitively PODs emerge once drawing begins, particularly when guided by access and topography. Adam worked on the case study with Brett Leversage and Derek Forbes.

Common themes from this presentation included:

- PODs were delineated primarily using visual interpretation and local knowledge, rather than GIS analysis.
- Size and configuration were driven by:
 - proximity to communities and values,
 - availability of control features (especially roads), and
 - some consideration of expected fire behaviour (e.g., fire weather and prevailing wind direction in the area).
- PODs were grouped conceptually into WUI, transition, and backcountry, each with different expectations for suppression, treatment, and tolerance for fire.
- Design logic included asking: *If a fire starts here, how would we realistically put it out?*
- Adam stated the directional bias in the POD design, with boundaries oriented to slow or redirect fire away from communities, rather than assuming containment everywhere.
- He also pointed out that not all boundaries are intended to stop fire; some represent backup or contingency control areas.
- A participant commented that firefighter safety and operational feasibility, during urgent response, often overrides what may appear logical on a map.
- The treeline was used as a logical upper elevation PCL and POD boundary. This is common attribute in the western and southern portion of the project area.
- Redundancy was also accounted for in design—multiple possible lines rather than a single “best” line—particularly helpful under extreme fire weather.

5.2 Wesley Bender and Brad Blackwell: Houston to Granisle

Wes and Brad produced a set of PODs near and south of Granisle.

Key learnings and participant comments included:

- Initial POD delineation relied on obvious, durable features, especially lakes, highways, and major resource roads.
- Larger PODs were intentionally chosen to allow flexibility and multiple internal options for suppression and management.
- WUI considerations were acknowledged but not over-emphasized at the boundary stage, given existing treatment work already underway.
- Internal road networks and harvesting history were seen as opportunities within PODs and not drivers of initial boundaries.
- Strong overlap between these PODs and modeled control features, reinforcing confidence in a simple, feature-driven approach.
- The importance of documenting primary and secondary control lines, and distinguishing between boundaries and internal operational features and control options.

5.3 Brad Martin: ‘the Back 40’

Brad’s case study focused on the southern portion of the Morice TSA, south of Houston, a more remote landscape with fewer immediate life and property values, emphasizing uncertainty and variability.

Key themes included:

- High levels of uncertainty around fuels, treatment history, and road condition.
- Reliance on strong, permanent features such as major roads and water bodies, while treating many secondary features as conditional or optional.
- Explicit recognition that some boundaries may do little under extreme fire behaviour, prompting discussion about whether and how they might be enhanced.

Plenary discussion following the case study presentations included the following:

- Participants appreciated the clarity around limitations, reinforcing the value of PODs as a time-saving, pre-thinking tool, even when answers remain uncertain.
- A recurring concern was communication—ensuring that future users understand why a community might appear to sit within a large POD, and what that implies for response and mitigation.
- Presentation of alternative boundary options (e.g., road versus river) as a way to surface trade-offs rather than prescribe a single solution.
- Iteration was framed as essential: starting with big, defensible containers and progressively adding detail as capacity and clarity increase.

6. Breakout Station Flipchart Notes

Across all stations, several consistent themes emerged:

Design and scale

- Start big, then ‘split’
- Avoid creating small or complex PODs unless they clearly support decision-making—or leave this for ‘Phase 2’. At this point, smaller PODs could be used where there are high values or a high concentration of values to provide increased options for suppression and mitigation actions.
- Use major, landscape-defining features as anchors.

Attribution and documentation

- Document rationale for POD lines, including the intended objectives (e.g., absorb fire, redirect fire, provide access).
- Communicate confidence and limitations explicitly.

Integration with other planning

- Align PODs planning with WUI and land use planning (without assuming WUI boundaries must drive PODs)—where possible. At this stage, POD boundaries are not considering these aspects of land management or jurisdiction.
- Consider municipal, private land, and Parks interfaces early (likely at Planning tables, not in this early technical stage of work).

Data gaps

- Updated road condition and classification were repeatedly identified as critical missing information.
- History of treatment on the landscape will require greater specificity to inform confidence in POD lines.

Communication

- Public understanding and socialization of the concepts in wildfire management were seen as essential to long-term legitimacy (but not necessarily in the scope of this project).
- PODs require clear legends, typologies, and plain-language explanation.

7. Round-the-Room Reflections

Final reflections reinforced strong alignment across various jurisdictions and organizations. Common themes included:

- Broad agreement that the approach is consistent with emerging provincial thinking.
- Recognition that PODs help bridge silos between wildfire management, forestry, and land use planning.
- Emphasis on consistency, clarity, and phase definition as the project scales.
- Strong support for continued iteration, testing, and collaboration.
- PODs can provide a unifying framework—so long as the focus remains on practical use, clear communication, and continuous learning rather than static products.

8. Participant List

Event Convenors

- Emma Griggs (Project Coordinator, Facilitator)
- Geoff Recknell (Project Manager, Facilitator)
- Kevin Kriese (Project Policy Lead)
- Brett Tripp (GIS Consultant Support)
- Reine Vizcarra (GIS Consultant Support)

Case Study Team

- Adam Burdett
- Brad Martin
- Wesley Bender
- Brad Blackwell

PODs Advisory Committee Members

- Steve Taylor
- Cam Bentley
- Kit O'Connor
- Jeff Walsh

All Other Participants

- Shannon Irvine
- Derek Forbes
- Sebastian Bichlmaier
- David Dewitt
- Sarah Smith-Tripp
- Phil Burton
- Matt Sear
- Tyson Sommerville
- Shane van de Water
- Ian Meier
- Colin Vandergaag
- Brett Leverage

9. Full Workshop Objectives

1. **Establish a shared and precise understanding of PODs in the Bulkley-Morice context:** Build a common baseline among project advisors, possible practitioners, and partners regarding the purpose, terminology, assumptions, and methodological steps of the BuMo Potential Operational Delineations (PODs) Pilot Project. This will include PODs as both a planning tool and operational tool, in both forest and wildfire management, how they relate to existing forest and landscape planning frameworks in the region, and what they are—and are not—intended to deliver.
2. **Jointly analyze and ‘stress-test’ preliminary PODs using local expertise:** Use diverse, ‘on the ground’ participant knowledge to examine case study POD boundaries, the spectrum of underlying data layers, and key considerations in POD design, identifying strengths, gaps, uncertainties, and areas of disagreement, with particular attention to how well the approach reflects current and future on-the-ground conditions and operational realities in the BuMo region.
3. **Generate documented insights to improve both the POD outputs and the POD process for future iterations:** Capture lessons learned about terminology, data inputs, scale, and decision-making that can inform refinement of the current POD set and guide the design of the next iteration of PODs, which should include considering the ‘end users’ and how PODs will be implemented using hypothetical scenarios.