



Town of Small Point to Adams Cove What We Heard - Town Hall #8 Meeting Summary

July 30th, 2026

Thank you to everyone who attended our recent Town Hall. Your participation, questions, and feedback continue to play an important role in shaping the recovery and future of our community. For those who were unable to attend, recordings of the Town Hall are available on the [Town's Facebook page](#). We encourage everyone to take some time to [watch the presentations and discussions](#) to stay informed about the latest updates. These stay archived on Facebook for 30 days.

The evening began with a welcome from our Mayor Curtis Delaney, who thanked everyone for attending both in person and online. Residents were provided with an overview of the evening's agenda, which included updates on recent community events and recovery initiatives, such as an updated Emergency Management Plan, Broad Cove Park naming contest and the Broad Cove Park Development. followed by presentations from **Dr. Carissa Brown, Professor of Geography at Memorial University**, and **Jason Gloade, District Ecosystem Manager, from the Department of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands (FAL)**.

Having recently travelled from Thunder Bay, Ontario, where communities were also experiencing significant wildfires, Carissa explained that her work at Memorial University is focused on conducting research that directly benefits the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. She emphasized that the research taking place on the North Shore is intended not only to better understand the impacts of the 2025 wildfire but also to help communities prepare for and recover from future wildfire events.

Graduate students are monitoring several study sites across the North Shore, collecting soil samples, measuring seed dispersal, documenting vegetation recovery, and tracking the return of native and invasive plant species. These long-term monitoring sites will allow researchers to better understand how the landscape changes over time and what factors influence successful forest regeneration. Residents were also encouraged to leave research equipment undisturbed if they encounter it while hiking, or simply place any overturned seed traps back upright if they have been blown over.

Carissa explained that wildfire behaviour is influenced by three key factors: **fuel, weather, and topography**. Fuel includes anything capable of burning, such as forests, grass, shrubs, wood piles,

and even structures. Weather conditions—including drought, low humidity, and strong winds—greatly influence how easily fires ignite and spread. Topography, or the shape of the landscape, also plays an important role, as fires naturally move uphill more quickly because the heat dries and preheats vegetation above the flames. She encouraged residents to think about these factors when considering vegetation management around their own properties.

Providing historical context, Carissa explained that wildfire is a natural part of Newfoundland's ecological history. Research using pollen preserved in lake sediments and charcoal buried in soils has shown that forests have experienced wildfire for thousands of years. She noted that while fire is a natural ecological process, the conditions experienced during the summer of 2025 were far from typical. Exceptionally dry weather, prolonged drought, and strong winds created ideal conditions for large, fast-moving wildfires, resulting in the severe impacts experienced across the North Shore.

One of the most encouraging messages shared during the presentation was that the landscape is already showing strong signs of recovery. Fireweed, ferns, mosses, mushrooms, liverworts, and many native plant species are returning throughout the burn area, while some trees that initially appeared dead are producing new growth. Black spruce, one of the province's most fire-adapted tree species, is also beginning its natural regeneration process by releasing seeds from cones opened by the heat of the fire.

Carissa also explained that not every area will recover at the same pace. Locations that burned twice during both the May and August fires experienced much more severe damage, consuming much of the organic soil layer that normally supports regeneration. These areas are expected to recover more slowly and may ultimately develop into different types of landscapes than those that existed before the wildfire. Ongoing research over the next several years will help determine how these areas evolve.

Jason Gloade – Forestry, Agriculture, and Lands (FAL)

Jason Goode, District Ecosystem Manager with FAL, provided an update on the environmental recovery efforts, focusing on reforestation, forest regeneration, and how residents can become involved.

Wildfire Impact

The wildfire burned approximately 10,000 hectares, including roughly 4,500 hectares of forested land. In the months following the fire, some affected areas were opened for additional domestic wood harvesting to allow residents to safely use burned timber while helping clean up damaged forests.

Because the fire affected both Crown land and privately owned properties, restoration planning has required close coordination with landowners and careful assessment of each site.

Reforestation Program

The Department of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands (FAL) has completed detailed mapping to identify the areas most suitable for reforestation following the wildfire. Rather than using the traditional planting density of approximately 2,500 trees per hectare, FAL is planting about 700 trees per hectare. This lower-density approach helps reduce the risk of future wildfires by creating forests that are less densely packed, while also allowing natural regeneration to occur alongside planted seedlings. The goal is to create a healthier, more diverse, and more resilient forest over the long term.

The reforestation program includes a variety of native tree species, including spruce, larch, pine, birch, and maple. FAL is also increasing the production of hardwood seedlings to further improve forest diversity and strengthen the ecosystem's resilience to future disturbances.

Tree planting is being carried out by seasonal forestry crews, students, and wildfire personnel. Planting methods are tailored to each site based on soil conditions, the amount of natural regeneration already occurring, annual regeneration surveys, and other environmental factors. Rocky terrain and the preferences of private landowners also influence where planting can be completed safely and effectively.

Jason explained that restoring the forest is a long-term process and that several challenges remain. These include rocky or unsuitable terrain, some private landowners choosing not to participate in the program, and periods of hot, dry weather that have resulted in the loss of some newly planted seedlings. To address these challenges, FAL is gap-planting in areas where seedlings have not survived, shifting more planting activities to the spring and fall seasons when conditions are more favourable, and continuing to increase the production of hardwood seedlings.

Monitoring the forest's recovery is an essential part of the program. Restoration does not end once trees are planted. FAL conducts annual regeneration surveys, soil assessments, monitoring for invasive species, and ongoing evaluations of tree survival and natural forest regeneration. The information collected each year helps guide future planting efforts and ensures that restoration activities continue to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Jason also encouraged residents, community groups, and local organizations to become involved in the recovery process. Community members can request free tree seedlings for local planting projects and receive guidance from FAL on selecting appropriate tree species, proper planting techniques, and ongoing tree care and maintenance.

Information gathered each year helps guide future planting efforts and ensures restoration work adapts to changing conditions.

Community Participation

Jason encouraged residents, community groups, and organizations to become involved in local restoration efforts.

Community members can request free tree seedlings for planting projects and receive guidance on:

- Appropriate tree species.
- Planting techniques.
- Tree care and maintenance.

Residents are encouraged to plant trees within their own property boundaries and may request specific species where available.

Those interested in obtaining seedlings can contact FAL by phone at **709-729-4180** or submit a request through the provincial seedling request program on the [Government of Newfoundland and Labrador website](#).

Looking Ahead

The town is looking ahead to strengthening community bonds, advancing recovery and resilience planning, improving infrastructure and amenities, supporting housing needs, and enhancing public safety and connectivity. There is a clear focus on learning from the wildfire experience, building a more resilient future, and ensuring that all residents can participate in and benefit from these efforts.

Questions & Answers with Dr. Carissa Brown

- **Q:** How long before we see the various berries (e.g., blueberries) return after the fire?
- **A:** Blueberry plants are already responding well; fire stimulates their growth. The third year after fire is typically the best for blueberry crops, but some areas are already seeing flowers and berries, especially where the fire was less intense or burned in the spring. Burned areas from August may take until next year to produce berries.
- **Q:** Are the rocks exposed by the fire being seen for the first time since the glaciers retreated?
- **A:** Not necessarily. Many barrens in the area are the result of historic human-caused fires, and some rocks may have been exposed by previous fires or land clearing. Some barrens are natural, but others were created by early settlers burning forests for agriculture.
- **Q:** How long does it take for caribou moss (lichen) to recover after fire?
- **A:** It usually takes decades for caribou moss to return. Caribou adapt by feeding elsewhere until the lichen recovers, but shrubs (which regrow quickly) provide food in the meantime.
- **Q:** How is fire-driven change different from the normal year-to-year changes in meadows?
- **A:** Fire resets the system much more rapidly than natural competition. Plants with fire adaptations have an advantage after fire, and the disturbance allows new species to establish more quickly than through gradual change.

- **Q:** How does mulching and tree removal along roadsides affect new growth? Should trees be artificially planted?
- **A:** Removing trees, especially black spruce, removes potential seed sources. Planting is recommended if tree regrowth is desired. Mulch can act as a barrier to regrowth, so active restoration may be needed in mulched areas.
- **Q:** Is there value in leaving some dead trees standing?
- **A:** Yes, dead trees provide nutrients, habitat for birds and small mammals, and shade for regrowing plants. While safety is a concern, leaving some dead wood mimics natural post-fire conditions.
- **Q:** What role does peat moss play in fire spread, and how is this changing with climate change?
- **A:** Peatlands usually act as fire breaks, but the 2025 fires burned some bogs due to extreme conditions. Most burns were surface-level, and there is no evidence of deep-burning 'zombie fires' in this region.

Questions & Answers with Jason Goode (FAL)

- **Q:** If you plant 100 trees, how many actually grow?
- **A:** Normally on cut-overs, about 90% survive. Annual regeneration surveys are conducted, and gap-planting is done if needed. Typically, 80-90% survival is expected.
- **Q:** Why not wait until spring to plant trees, given seedling losses in hot weather?
- **A:** Planting started in spring and continues through summer and fall. Spring and fall are preferred due to cooler, wetter conditions, but summer planting was tried to see how seedlings would fare. Adjustments will be made based on observed survival rates.
- **Q:** How can individuals or groups get seedlings for planting?
- **A:** Contact the forestry office at 729-4180 or use the online form at gov.nl.ca/FAL seedling request. Community groups can request seedlings for team-building or restoration projects.
- **Q:** Is there guidance available for people planting trees on their own land?
- **A:** Guidance can be provided and posted on community social media. In the past, instructions were included with tree bags, and similar resources can be made available.
- **Q:** What types of trees are being planted?
- **A:** Spruce, larch, pine (including white and red pine), and hardwoods like birch and maple are being planted. Hardwood availability is increasing as nurseries expand production.

- **Q:** Why are some live trees being removed during ditch clearing and mulching?
- **A:** The focus is on safety and sightlines. Some live trees in ditches are removed as part of routine maintenance, especially if they obstruct sightlines or are mixed with dead trees.

- **Q:** Does domestic wood cutting increase fire risk, and are there best practices?
- **A:** Domestic cutting is generally not allowed during fire season without a permit. Most fires are not caused by domestic cutting, but precautions (like having water or extinguishers on site) are required. Cutting can help with fire mitigation by removing older wood and promoting younger growth.

- **Q:** What is the impact of invasive species like Japanese larch after fire?
- **A:** Japanese larch planted in the 1970s has spread in some areas. The impact of fire on these stands is being assessed, and monitoring will determine if they become more dominant post-fire.

- **Q:** How large do planted trees (e.g., pine, larch) grow, and what should be considered for property boundaries?
- **A:** Pines and larches can grow 20-30 feet or more. When planting near boundaries, keep trees within your property to avoid disputes with neighbors.

- **Q:** Is there guidance for planting trees as property boundaries?
- **A:** Guidance can be provided by the forestry office or posted online. It is recommended to keep trees within your property lines.