



BRANCHING OUT

DECEMBER 2008
NEWSLETTER OF THE FOREST RESOURCE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA (FRIAA)



FRIAA allocates seventh round of Open Funds

The Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta allocated \$1.5 million in research and development funds to 11 proponents in early December.

Successful projects range from community educational initiatives to technical wildlife and forest productivity programs.

Recommendations were made to FRIAA's board by a special review panel that assessed a short list of 18 candidate projects. Panel chair Dave Kiil said it was a highly competitive process, with many more proposals received than could be funded.

"We ranked proposals on the basis of criteria established by FRIAA, with an emphasis on projects that clearly addressed benefits to Albertans, enhanced resource management, and were operationally focused."

This year – the seventh in which Open Funds have been made available – successful projects had to do with wildlife management, reforestation, environmental and technical training for practitioners, and public education.

Provincial projects received a total \$1.3 million, while locally-focused proposals were funded to the tune of \$200,000.

Kiil said the Open Funds Initiative, designed to provide additional funding support for projects that enhance all of Alberta's forest resource values, continues to attract high-quality proposals.

"In the past we have received funding requests that totaled six times as much as the funds available," he said. "This year the proposals represented about twice our \$1.5



A multi-stakeholder approach to ensuring quality stream crossings was one of the winning proposals in the latest Open Funds Initiative.

Proppolis Research Institute

million, and they were all very good. It's a very competitive process."

"The quality of proposals, once again, was very high. There were no easy choices," said Kiil. "And the initiative itself, with how much funding it provides for applied forestry research, compares very favourably with anything I know of across the country."

The initiative's core concept, according to Kiil, is improved integrated resource management: "We want the projects to provide better information, so responsible people can make better decisions, based on solid evidence, about forest resource management."

For a complete list of approved projects, see the panel on page 3 of this newsletter.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE . . .

Company rep voices strong support for Forest Resource Improvement Program

DWIGHT WEEKS

**Large-Operator
Representative**

FRIAA Board of Directors

I have been a director of FRIAA for about three years, and for probably two thirds of that time the organization has seen little or no revenue coming in for the Forest Resource Improvement Program.

The reason is that FRIP dues from larger companies are based on lumber market prices, and for quite a while now that has meant close to zero income for this particular program.

Equally interesting, however, is the fact that FRIAA has managed the substantial dues income it received four or five years ago in such a way that even this year, it is able to fund FRIP projects worth close to \$10 million.

FRIP really is a keystone program for FRIAA, and for the forestry companies and the public stakeholders of Alberta. It allows companies and the research community to go far beyond basic forest management and



Dwight Weeks

reinforce those values that everyone holds dear.

Working with the woodlands management staff at Canfor in Grande Prairie, I have been involved in designing and managing FRIP programs since FRIAA was created 11 years ago.

Some examples include FRIP projects in support of caribou population recovery plans, a regional forest educator, a huge multi-disciplinary study called Ecological Management Emulating

Natural Disturbance, and much more.

I hope we can tell the success story of FRIAA's management of this program even in the darkest economic times to as wide an audience as possible. It's a story of prudent financial management, and of a commitment to taking care of the forests that Albertans value so highly.

Even more important, we must face the reality that our reserves will not last forever. FRIP activities cannot continue indefinitely without a return to more healthy revenue

streams. FRIAA and the provincial government will at some point have to decide if there's alternate funding, or alternate programs, we need to look at. But it is certainly my hope that our flagship FRIP program will, in some form or another, survive.



BRANCHING OUT

BRANCHING OUT is the newsletter of the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA)

BRANCHING OUT is published quarterly to communicate the objectives and activities of the association to members and other interested parties.

The purpose of FRIAA is to enhance the timber and non-timber forest resources of Alberta for the benefit of all Albertans. It encourages improved forest management activities over and above those required by government regulation.

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PROGRAM LEVIES . . .

FRIAA steps up efforts to ensure reforestation program is fully funded

The Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) is stepping up efforts to collect reforestation levies that are owing and have not been paid. This includes taking legal action where operators have gone beyond all reasonable delays in paying their levies to the Community Reforestation Program.

The program, funded by levies paid primarily by commercial timber permit operators, allows FRIAA to contract professional reforestation contractors to carry out the reforestation work. Reforestation operations are coordinated so that contractors can treat cutblocks to be reforested under the Community Reforestation Program along with other, larger areas at one time, resulting in lower costs than would be paid by individual operators acting alone.

Todd Nash, manager of FRIAA, pointed out that for small-operator timber harvester, paying the levy is much more cost effective than having to carry out the 14-year reforestation obligation themselves. Small operators do not have the economy of scale or silvicultural expertise to meet strict provincial standards. Nash also stressed that the program can only work if everyone involved pays their "fair share" of reforestation levies as required.

"In addition to actively engaging individuals to ensure that reforestation levies are paid, legal steps are being taken to protect FRIAA's right to collect these dollars if they are not submitted voluntarily, and to help sustain the reforestation program," he said. The Board has decided that there has to be a limit on how long payments can be delayed, Nash said.

Many operators pay the reforestation levy promptly. A number of operators have paid their levies after being notified of the statement of claim; another incentive put in place is that Sustainable Resource Development withholds permits to harvest timber in the coming year if an operator's dues are in arrears. "It's a fairly simple relationship," said Nash. "If we don't collect enough levies, we don't have enough money to carry out all the reforestation work required. Everyone loses."

Mark Miller, with his son Duane, has been cutting timber in Alberta for 30 years, and has paid the levies to FRIAA since the organization took over management of the program from the government in 2000. Their company, Mark's Trucking of Ashmont, splits time between hauling gravel and sawing lumber in the summer, and logging in the winter.

This year, the Millers expect to cut around



200,000 board feet, and Mark says FRIAA's system works. "We pay as we sell, on a volume basis, which is good because we're too small to reforest the small forest area where we operate. It's better to have contractors come and do it properly," said Mark.

"Every penny counts", said Nash. "The amount of timber cut varies from one operator to the next, but we need those levies in order to properly reforest the land. Every payment counts," he said.

FRIAA Board approves latest round of 2008-2009 Open Funds applicants

Provincial projects:

1. Forest Resource Environmental Education
Submitted by Woodlands Operations Learning Foundation
2. Alberta Grizzly Bear Research to Support Forest Management Planning
Submitted by the Foothills Research Institute
3. Establishing the Alberta Forest Growth Institute
Submitted by the Mixedwood Management Association
4. Empirical Post Harvest Stand Growth Assessments: Multiple Measurements Throughout The Regeneration Phase
Submitted by Hinton Wood Products, a Division of West Fraser Mills Ltd.
5. Inside Effects of a Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Stream Crossing Mitigation on Fish and Fish Habitat-A Watershed Monitoring Project
Submitted by the Foothills Research Institute
6. Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Research and Monitoring Program to Support Sustainable Forest Management
Submitted by the Alberta Caribou Committee Research and Monitoring Subcommittee

Local projects:

1. Boreal Educator
Submitted by Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory Society
2. Tools to Improve Operational Understanding of the Importance of Genetics in Forest Growth, Diversity, and Conservation
Submitted by the Alberta Forest Genetics Council
3. Gateway to the Boreal Natural Resource Education Project
Submitted by the Northeast Natural Resource Education Society
4. Beaver Boardwalk-Phase Three
Submitted by Hinton Wood Products, a Division of West Fraser Mills Ltd.
5. Sulphur Lake Interpretive Walking Trail
Submitted by Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd.

HAPPY TRAILS . . .

Forest company enhances the public's recreational experience

Forest Resource Improvement Program (FRIP) dollars are helping wilderness enthusiasts enjoy the outdoor experience while also protecting Alberta's forest environment.

Hinton Wood Products, a division of West Fraser Mills, has received Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) approval to use some of its FRIP money to maintain more than 300 camping sites and 80 km of trails for almost a decade.

Aaron Jones, stewardship and public affairs coordinator with Hinton Wood Products, said the recreation program began in earnest in 1999, when the company realized the need for better control over where and how members of the public enjoyed parts of its million hectare Forest Management Agreement area.

After provincial recreation areas were privatized in the mid 1990s, some people who were unwilling to pay the higher prices took their tents into the bush, becoming a group known as "random campers" and a challenge for managers responsible for looking after the landscape. The Hinton company took action after a random camper left an unattended fire that went on to destroy more than 100 ha. of forest.

In 1999, the company began a process of gaining operational control of campgrounds and trails within its forest are. The campaign included making the campsites more attractive and affordable to campers, educational efforts to improve camping attitudes and habits, and increased coordination with provincial conservation officers regarding security and enforcement.

"We were able to intervene before the problem got out of hand, but the experience did open our eyes to the problems that can come with unsupervised random camping,"

said Jones. The company now looks after 16 campgrounds, three of which it has built since 1999, and eight hiking trail systems. Benefits for visitors include better sites and trails, free firewood and less expensive camping.

Campsite upkeep is contracted to the aboriginal-owned Fox Creek Development Association, which has a long relationship with Hinton Wood Products. Conservation officers are paid for by the company and assigned by the Alberta government.

The recreational facilities are not financially self-sustaining, which is where FRIP funds come in. Jones said most campsites rent for \$10 a night. Yearly collections total around \$100,000, all of it reinvested in recreation maintenance and patrols. FRIAA funding provides an average \$200,000 per year, allowing for sustainability of the program and improvements such as campground expansion, information posters and public surveys.

Visitor response has been positive, with the number of users increasing in each year since 1999.

Jones said managing recreational access for the public's benefit is an important part of the company's commitment to forest



Program helps company maintain campsites and safeguard the forest

sustainability.

"It's a big project, and it's handled in a very professional manner by all parties," he said. "For our company, it's a visible way of showing that sustainable forest management means managing all the values in the forest, not just commercial trees but also animals, plant life and public recreation."