



BRANCHING OUT

JUNE 2009

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



New FRIAA program reduces wildfire risks

The Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) has been handed responsibility for managing a new government-funded program.

Alberta developed the Fire Hazard Reduction and Forest Health Program this spring and approached FRIAA to look after administration and delivery aspects, says manager Todd Nash.

Funding has been kicked off with a \$2 million grant, with another \$6.5 million expected this fiscal year. Another \$6.5 million is in the works to support the program next year.

Nash says the new program has two aims relating to hazard reduction in the forest, especially around settled areas.

The first is to fund programs that reduce hazards caused by a build-up of wildfire fuels. Forestry companies and municipalities would work together to create proposals that safeguard the interests of both sides by reducing the likelihood of catastrophic fire. Activities would be aligned with the province's FireSmart guidelines, developed to reduce hazard levels for life and property.

The second focus is on keeping forests healthy after pest and disease outbreaks. These can leave dead timber that if not dealt with can become a wildfire hazard. Once again parties can work together to develop proposals for FRIAA consideration, with the aim of protecting life and property and keeping Alberta's forests healthy.

There is no commercial benefit to participating companies, Nash says. "This work generally won't deal with merchantable timber," he says. "It will usually be small and dead trees. If there is any timber to be salvaged, it would be sold competitively by the government through the normal auction process."

The new program adds to FRIAA's stable of grant-funded programs, including the Wildfire Reforestation Program, the Mountain Pine Beetle Program and the Incidental Conifer Program. Grant money and producer levies support the Community Reforestation Program, and producer dues fund the cornerstone Forest Resource Improvement Program.

For more information see www.friaa.ab.ca.



Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Hazard reduction at a variety of scales enhances safety within the forest and around communities



Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

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MPB PROGRAM UPDATE • BACKING GOV'T PRIORITIES

AFTER 30 YEARS . . .

Murray Summers brings lengthy career in Alberta forests to a close

Murray Summers has retired after a 30 year career with Blue Ridge Lumber, a Division of West Fraser Mills.

Summers was on the founding board of FRIAA back in 1998, and since that time has served as the organization's treasurer. Initially the provincial government created FRIAA as an arm's length or delegated organization to manage Forest Resource Improvement Program dues. Sound financial management by everyone on the board was key to assuring the government that its faith was well-placed, Summers says.

That faith has continued to grow over the years, with FRIAA being given increasing numbers of publicly-funded programs to administer.

"FRIAA's stature evolved as the government recognized its success, its ability to administer and operate various programs in a very efficient and effective manner," says Summers. "The whole board takes great pride in being able to administer very sophis-

ticated and complex programs on behalf of the public, at a very low administrative cost."

Another feather in FRIAA's cap was the finding by U.S. authorities that its programs really do benefit the people of Alberta by improving the forest resource, and do not benefit companies by subsidizing normal business activities. "The best thing for the people of Alberta is that FRIAA invests in research, inventory and field work that leads to a quality of forest we couldn't otherwise achieve," says Summers.

He worked at West Fraser's Blue Ridge Lumber near Whitecourt as a registered professional forester (RPF) and senior manager since 1974. He takes the role of RPF seriously, and along with the likes of Pete Murphy and Arden Rytz was among the founders of the Alberta Registered Professional Foresters Association more than 20 years ago - now evolved into the College of Alberta Professional Foresters.

His personal interests include working

with the Junior B Wolverines hockey team in Whitecourt and with Hockey Alberta as a coach instructor.



Murray Summers



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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BEETLE BATTLE . . .

Mountain Pine Beetle Program plays valuable role in controlling forest threat

Uptake has been strong for a FRIAA-administered program that provides support to government and industry efforts against the mountain pine beetle.

The \$10-million Mountain Pine Beetle Program was funded by the Alberta government and made available to forest-sector participants in 2007. Since then more than \$4.6 million has been disbursed for completed beetle control and detection activities. Current projects and expected annual operating and planning reimbursements represent another \$4 million-plus in approved funding.

Eligible activities include beetle population surveys, single-tree control treatments, pheromone baits and traps, log yard and seed orchard protection, seed collection and planning costs by eligible companies.

So far, says FRIAA manager Todd Nash, completed work includes:

- More than 1,700 hectares of ground surveys,
- More than 2,200 Lindgren traps being utilized in log yards throughout Alberta
- The protection of numerous genetic trials, orchards and research plots using more than 7,800 pouches of dispersal pheromone that encourages the beetle to stay away.

One more measure of the program's success, says Nash, is that more than 88 per cent of participants have utilized it for more than one project – indicating it is efficient and effective for them.

The MPB program is part of a \$50-million strategy developed by Alberta and backed by emergency funding to rein in a beetle incursion fuelled by a series of warmer winters and wind-borne flights over the Rockies from British Columbia. The strategy supports a proactive program of modified forest harvesting to reduce forest vulnerability as well as direct beetle control activities. Government crews have worked hand-in-hand with industry to manage populations in provincial and federal parks, as well as on the public forest landbase.

Key beetle population surveys are conducted in May and June. Federal scientists released results of some modeling earlier this year that suggested significant overwintering mortality thanks to extended periods of cold weather.

However Dan Lux, Alberta's beetle

management specialist, points out that continued overflights from B.C. mean Alberta's beetle populations are higher than local breeding and mortality patterns would suggest.

The good news is that beetle populations in north-east B.C. are expected to peak in 2009, meaning there should be a slowdown



in northern inflights to this province. On the other hand, populations in south-east B.C. will not peak until 2010-2011. Populations peak when breeding outpaces the availability of live host trees.

"In the meantime, the FRIAA program

has certainly been a help, especially in terms of controlling logyard populations – otherwise it could be a real hotspot when you have all those infested logs concentrated in one small area," Lux says.

B.C. estimates the volume of trees lost to mountain pine beetle will fall to less than five million cubic metres in 2020, after reaching a peak of 140 million cubic metres in 2004-2005.

FRIAA takes next step in legal journey to collect overdue CRP levies

The Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) has sent demand letters to about 120 timber permit holders who have failed to pay reforestation levies under requirements of the Community Reforestation Program.

It's the next step in a process that started with the filing of claims in court several months ago. For some it could lead to court hearings and associated penalties.

FRIAA manager Todd Nash said: "It's not a large number of people, but the amount outstanding is about \$4 million, and that's money we need to sustain the reforestation program on areas harvested by smaller operators. Some of it has been outstanding for years.

"The Board is taking this step because if we don't, the sustainability of the whole timber permit program is jeopardized."

The Community Reforestation 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. This results in lower costs than would be paid by individual operators acting alone.

Failing to pay the reforestation levy can lead not only to court action, but also the inability to obtain a timber permit from Alberta Sustainable Resource Development in the future.

"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."

Byron Grundberg, who manages the Community Reforestation Program file, said the letters giving permit holders 14 days to pay their debt have created an encouraging response in many cases.

"We have collected a significant amount of the money owing, and have been given a relatively firm commitment by a number of people," he said. "In quite a few cases they propose a payment plan that our legal team will evaluate as to whether it's realistic."

PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES . . .

FRIAA projects help Alberta move towards long-term goals

Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) dollars support programs that are strongly aligned with broad public priorities.

Those priorities for the provincial government include ensuring energy resources are developed in an environmentally sustainable way, in part through the Land-use Framework, and building the future through increased innovation, a skilled workforce and a healthy working forest.

“Our prime mandate is to enhance the forest resource for the benefit of all Albertans,” said Trevor Wakelin, president of FRIAA. “Working with land-use partners such as the energy sector, facilitating innovation and enhancing the diversity and productivity of forested landscapes are central to the majority of our projects.”

Research, inventory, operational and educational projects are funded by mandatory dues paid by companies harvesting timber in Alberta or by accumulated interest on FRIAA accounts. The projects are above and beyond normal operational requirements of the companies.

One example is a multi-year \$94,500 project in support of the Alberta Chamber of Resources Integrated Landscape Management Program. This contribution was led by Weyerhaeuser Alberta with partners ANC Timber, Sundre Forest Products and Tolko Industries. Forest companies wanted to join with partners in the energy and mining sectors in finding ways to better communicate with each other and reduce the size, duration and intensity of the industrial footprint.”

Wendy Crosina, project coordinator with Weyerhaeuser in Edmonton, said the project was valuable in providing the forest industry with some of the tools needed to meet the intent of the provinces new Land-use

Framework. “The project helped create links with other industries and facilitated the opportunity to exchange and discuss Best Management Practices,” she said. “Discussions such as these have the potential to address the issue of industrial footprint in the forests of Alberta.”

Another project directly related to ensuring a healthy working forest had to do with monitoring and control of mountain pine beetle incursions into west central Alberta. Led by Canadian Forest Products and Weyerhaeuser, this \$266,000 project brought proactive strategies to bear on beetle populations in east central British Columbia that could otherwise migrate into Alberta.

The provincial objectives of building a skilled workforce and protecting the environment are supported by a woodlands workforce training program. This \$625,000 project helps WOLF (the Slave Lake-based Woodland Operations Learning Foundation) develop and deliver environmental training for frontline resource, utility and municipal workers active on the forested landbase.

“The main objective is to protect and enhance Alberta’s forested lands,” said WOLF executive director Dave Blackmore. “The public interest is well served by developing knowledgeable workers who have



FRIAA project helped sectors work together on landbase

the environmental skills and knowledge to properly conduct their activities within the forest.”

Courses include water quality and crossings, spill response, forest stewardship, waste management, forest soils, fire prevention, weed control and more.

So far, says Blackmore, the project has exceeded expectations in every respect. In the first phase of the program, 11 courses were offered in 89 sessions to 2,011 participants, about a quarter of whom were from energy, mining and other non-forestry occupations.