

BRANCHING OUT

FOREST RESOURCE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA (FRIAA) NEWSLETTER | APRIL 2015



President's Message



Murray Summers

Since its beginnings in 1997, FRIAA has continuously grown and evolved to meet the changing nature of Alberta's forests and the corresponding needs of Albertans who value and use them. This evolution has seen the development of several successful projects, including the FRIAA FireSmart Program and the Mountain Pine Beetle Forest Rehabilitation Program (MPBFRP).

FRIAA has remained highly relevant over the years by actively engaging its stakeholders and continually improving its programs, and this past year was no exception. During a recent trip to Grande Prairie, FRIAA had the opportunity to

meet with members and others involved in the MPBFRP. We engaged in insightful dialogue aimed at improving delivery of the program and achieving results. Participants were taken out to the field to tour an active project; they were invited to give FRIAA feedback on the strengths and challenges of the program and how we could better encourage the implementation of new projects.

We collected important feedback during this session on subjects such as the challenges of designing and delivering complex projects and improvements that could be made to our approval, monitoring, and reporting processes. We then summarized the information into a "What we heard" document to help us improve the MPBFRP and its delivery.

I wish to thank everyone who provided feedback. FRIAA looks forward to doing more of this kind of consultation in relation to other programs in the months and years to come.

I encourage you to read the profiles on FireSmart and the MPBFRP within this edition of *Branching Out* to learn more about the important role they are playing in sustaining Alberta's forests for all Albertans, now and into the future.

Murray Summers, President



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Branching Out

Branching Out is the newsletter of the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA). It 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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FireSmart Program

From May 11 to 15, 2011, wildfires swept across Alberta, endangering 23 communities. On May 15, 2011, two of these fires advanced upon communities in the Lesser Slave Lake Area, resulting in the loss of hundreds of homes and the life of helicopter pilot Jean-Luc Deba. In response to these tragic losses, the Government of Alberta's Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) created the Flat Top Complex Wildfire Review Committee. The committee's report has made several recommendations to improve Alberta's wildfire response and prevention programs.

ESRD's work on prevention has already enhanced the safety of several communities across Alberta. It aims to build on this success, ensuring that all communities have the tools and support they need to become “fire smart.” To further advance this work, ESRD provided funding to support the FRIAA-administered FireSmart Program. FRIAA has committed \$6.5 million to date and is actively preparing additional proposals for funding.

FRIAA's FireSmart Program supplements the work already done through the FireSmart Community Grant Program sponsored by ESRD. Both aim to:

- Support community involvement and ownership of the wildland/urban interface issues within municipal jurisdictions
- Provide financial assistance to communities that wish to reduce the threat of wildfire

FireSmart helps to protect the people, infrastructure, property, and environment of Alberta by supporting activities designed to prevent wildfires and reduce fire hazard throughout Alberta in seven ESRD-established priority areas:

- Planning
- Fuel management
- Education
- Legislation
- Development
- Interagency cooperation and training
- Emergency planning

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FireSmart is making a real difference in our province and was specifically named as a priority initiative in the mandate letter provided to the Minister of ESRD by Premier Jim Prentice in September 2014.

FRIAA issued a call for proposals on November 10, 2014, with a closing date of January 9, 2015. We received 30 proposals, and the following projects were approved under the noted FireSmart disciplines, totalling close to \$1 million in funding.

Planning

- FireSmart planning (Rocky View County)
- Bergen area wildfire preparedness guide (Mountain View County)

Public Education

- Chipping events (County of Grande Prairie)
- FireSmart (Gift Lake Metis Settlement)

Vegetation / Fuel Management

- Vegetation management, Zones 2 and 3 (Town of Whitecourt)
- Fire hazard reduction (Town of Hinton)
- Fuel reduction management (Peavine Metis Settlement)
- Vegetation management (Gift Lake Metis Settlement)

Through these projects, FRIAA FireSmart is making real strides in protecting Alberta's communities and forests from the ravages of wildfires.

Mountain Pine Beetle Forest Rehabilitation Program

The purpose of the Mountain Pine Beetle Forest Rehabilitation Program (MPBFRP) is to maintain and enhance the ecosystem function of Alberta's forests by providing funding for the rehabilitation of pine-dominated forests that have been impacted by the mountain pine beetle. To be eligible, stands must have been impacted to such an extent that they cannot be saved or rejuvenated in a timely manner without assistance. The MPBFRP is important in this province, making a difference by lowering the risk of wildfire, reducing risks to public safety, protecting water quantity, and helping recover species of special concern.

The MPBFRP supports the four core mandates of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD):

- Maintaining healthy environments and ecosystems
- Promoting sustainable natural resource development
- Supporting a vibrant forest sector that provides economic and social benefits
- Protecting the public and environment from the impact of natural events such as insect infestations and forest fires

The MPBFRP provides funding for industry to participate in activities related

to the rehabilitation of forested areas damaged or destroyed by mountain pine beetle infestation. Eligible activities include:

- Mechanical stand treatment, including thinning
- Burning and disposal
- Hand-felling
- Seed collection, testing, and processing
- Research
- Aerial photography, and
- Reporting

Since its introduction in 2013, the MPBFRP has funded 12 projects, resulting in over \$9 million committed to rehabilitating forest stands damaged by mountain pine beetle.

Canfor is currently implementing a complex project with a budget of \$3.5 million; 320 hectares will be treated, and many participants and complex work plans managed. This innovative project combines the efforts of government, industry, and researchers in a unique way that could impact how forestry projects look in the future.

The project will soon wrap up its first phase and move on to reforestation this spring, with planting to conclude by the end of summer.

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By then, the once-dead-and-dying forest with limited commercial value will have been replaced with young and active growing stands.

By experimenting with different reforestation patterns and techniques, the project will also allow researchers to undertake long-term research on future optimal reforestation practices that lower the risk of wildfire.

During a recent trip to Grande Prairie, FRIAA's staff and board members got to tour this innovative project. The tour, hosted by Spectrum Resource Group Inc. and the Canadian Wood Fibre Centre of the CFS, provided participants with a first-hand look at how this leading-edge project is supporting ESRD's core mandates and working to protect Alberta's forests.

This and other projects undertaken over the past year are making a real and measurable impact on mountain pine beetle damage in our province.



Employee Profile: Hillard MacDonald



FRIAA was established in 1997 to promote and initiate projects that enhance Alberta's forest resources for the benefit of all Albertans.

FRIAA would like to welcome new staff member Hillard MacDonald, who joined us on January 5, 2015.

Born in New Brunswick, MacDonald grew up in Cape Breton and graduated from the University of New Brunswick. He worked throughout the Maritimes before moving to Alberta 10 years ago.

He worked for three years at Foothills Forest Products as a silviculture forester before moving to Beckingham Environmental. At Beckingham, he concurrently held four different roles over four years: senior forester, environmental scientist, occupational health and safety coordinator, and operations manager in the Sherwood Park office.

After many years working in the field, MacDonald is looking forward to learning more of the business side of forestry. He is excited about learning from mentors like Byron Grundberg and Todd Nash and facing the challenges and variety that FRIAA brings through its programs. He enjoys travelling to complete FRIAA's

operational reviews and looks forward to getting back into the field every so often.

Even as a child, MacDonald loved to create his own maps to help explore his family's woodlot and for his outdoor activities. Today he maintains a strong interest in mapping, GIS, and remote sensing. He looks forward to bringing GIS to FRIAA and to having the opportunity to view spatial mapping.

MacDonald, husband to Amanda and father to five-year-old Cameron and two-year-old Amelia, is an avid fly-fisher who loves camping, hiking, and spending time outdoors. "I look forward to the variety FRIAA offers," says MacDonald. Also, with a team that supports one another, I will have the opportunity to take a summer vacation with my family. Previously that's not been possible because summer has been such a busy time with work commitments and responsibilities."

Down the road, MacDonald is considering working towards a project management professional designation and completing an MBA in forestry.

AGM will be on June 25. Details to be announced soon. Please visit friaa.ab.ca.