



BRANCHING OUT

JUNE 2008

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



FRIAA-managed beetle program ramps up

A \$10-million program created last year is providing important back-up support to government and industry crews fighting the mountain pine beetle.

Alberta beetle coordinator Dan Lux says the FRIAA-managed Mountain Pine Beetle Program makes a valuable contribution to the battle.

"It allows us to remove much of the 2007 brood before the young beetles have a chance to grow and spread, and also reduce the risk of spread from logyards into uninfested areas."

Preliminary overwintering mortality tests taken in February and March showed mixed results, with some areas experiencing a high beetle mortality rate and others very low. Lux says it's too early to assess the situation until the results are back from a new round of comprehensive surveys across Alberta scheduled for May and June.

He says Alberta Sustainable Resource Development is already predicting hot spots for the upcoming year. "The beetles are likely to have a higher survival and risk of spread in southern Alberta, but the continued inflight of beetles from B.C. in northern Alberta is also a cause for concern."

FRIAA manager Todd Nash says \$1.5 million of the program's \$10-million budget has been spent or committed so far. Spending covers a variety of activities, including surveys, single tree control treatments, pheromone baits and traps, log yard and seed orchard protection, seed col-



Crews conducted mortality surveys in Willmore Wilderness in spring 2008

© Gavin McLaughlin

lection and planning costs by eligible companies. With new proposals being submitted, activities and spending are now ramping up significantly, Nash says.

The program is part of Alberta's recent announcement of a \$50-million boost in emergency funding to control the beetle outbreak. Nash calls the commitment a critical component of the combined efforts of industry and government to control beetle populations in the forest. "It's great news," says Nash. "I think it shows a real commitment on the part of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development to fight the Mountain Pine Beetle and mitigate the potentially devastating effects it can have on our forests."

For more information visit www.friaa.ab.ca or <http://srd.alberta.ca/forests/health/pestalerts/mountainpinebeetles.aspx>.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . .

FRIAA considers options for maintaining Forest Resource Improvement Program

Continuing financial stresses in the forest sector across Canada continue to hit home with significant impacts for members of FRIAA's Board of Directors.

Our organization's flagship program, the Forest Resource Improvement Program, is funded entirely by industry dues that rise and fall in step with market conditions. Our FRIP dues revenues have now all but dried up.

Efficient administration and careful stewardship in previous years means we have been able to approve and fund FRIP projects through to completion. With no new funds coming in, however, we now have to look at our options.

Hoping for a quick end to the current market collapse is not one of those options. We won't see improvements until the U.S. mortgage and housing crisis is over, hopefully later in 2009. Better days could be 12 months away or more, and that's a long time for FRIP projects, the very reason FRIAA was created



Trev Wakelin

in the first place, to be put on hold.

These projects go far beyond the day-to-day expectations of forest companies. They support research and work to ensure Albertans receive full value from the forest resource, whether in terms of more productive wildlife habitat or cleaner drinking water or more accessible recreation and much more.

The program is another example of just how critical

a healthy forest industry is to every single Alberta, even those who live in the downtown cores of our cities. Water, recreation, environmentally-friendly building supplies, wildfire and pest management would become a huge cost to the public were forest companies not able to shoulder the burden.

Some might think it a good thing if trees were no longer harvested, but the reasons just provided show why this would in fact be a bad thing for society. And in the era of climate change, the impacts of leaving our vast

forests to burn and decay are unthinkable.

At the moment, our options to maintain the Forest Resource Improvement Program are not clear, but this newsletter, our website and any of the Directors will keep you updated as developments occur.



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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WILDFIRE RECLAMATION . . .

Grant-funded replanting ensures burned seedlings are replaced without delay

The Wildfire Reclamation Program is helping fund the replanting of nearly 3,000 hectares of young forest damaged by fire over the last two years.

FRIAA is delegated by the Alberta government to administer the program, and will be reimbursing companies for work done.

Companies are provided with \$1,723 per hectare to retreat earlier plantings that were destroyed by wildfire. The dollar figure will be periodically updated for inflation until 2017.

"In 2006 and 2007, 1,497 and 1,485 hectares of newly replanted forest were damaged, respectively. A good portion of the land burned in 2006 has already been replanted, and work on last year's affected areas should get underway shortly," says Marc Bosse, program manager.

The program requires participating companies to meet a set of performance standards to support objectives of sustainable forest management.

It's not unusual for Alberta's newly-replanted forest areas to be swept by wildfire. Some replanted areas have been burned over

and replanted multiple times. One of the worst fire seasons on record occurred in 1998 when a total 30,000 hectares of forest were burned.

The Wildfire Reclamation Program contributes to sustainable, productive and diverse forests by ensuring burned-over areas of forest are promptly replanted. Alberta regulations already ensure that logged areas are reforested without delay.

"Replacing lost growing stock and maintaining the productivity of the forest is essential," says Bosse. "Any plantation that has been reforested and subsequently destroyed by wildfire, can be replanted again with this program."

For more information, check the website at www.friaa.ab.ca.



Program helps maintain reforestation standards

Payment of dues and levies supports two very important programs

The Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta funds two of its programs with mandatory dues and levies submitted by companies or individuals harvesting timber in the province.

The Forest Resource Improvement Program is funded by dues paid by the forest industry harvesting crown timber in Alberta. These companies are then able to apply to use a portion of these funds for projects that improve the resource for all Albertans, and that go beyond the normal responsibilities of sustained yield forest management imposed by legislation and regulation.

Proposals must meet the expectation of enhancing, improving or benefiting at least one aspect of the forest resource, and past activities have addressed everything from forest sustainability to water quality to wildlife habitat. Eligible activities can include academic research or operational fieldwork.

Since FRIAA was established in the spring of 1997, nearly \$172 million has gone to fund completed FRIP projects. Another \$21 million has been committed to projects not yet completed.

FRIP dues are paid to FRIAA at the same time that production records and crown dues are submitted to Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. This is also true for the reforestation levies payable to FRIAA by smaller operators who harvest timber under permits granted by the government.

These levies are collected under the Community Reforestation Program, set up to provide proper reforestation of areas logged by the permit holders. Pooling levies allows for efficient and effective reforestation, as opposed to expecting each individual operator to meet stringent standards on his or her own.

When submitting reforestation levies, permit holders are required to send in a completed timber return, including their permit number and the period upon which they are reporting, along with their payment.

To date, FRIAA has planted more than 36 million seedlings on 23,000 hectares of crown forest under the Community Reforestation Program.

For more information call FRIAA in Edmonton at (780) 429-5873.

OPEN FUNDS SUCCESS . . .

Wet-area mapping tool benefits environment and the bottom line

A research project supported with FRIAA Open Funds will yield tangible results this fall, with the unveiling of maps that show hidden wet areas on the landscape.

Forest companies already plan road building and harvest activities around visible water bodies, streams and rivers. This new technology takes them a step further in locating hidden or seasonal moisture that can affect road layout and environmental protection efforts.

The mapping tool is in use at J.D. Irving in New Brunswick, where foresters credit it with “surprise-free forestry,” according to Barry White, forest management specialist with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. White learned of the tool’s development at the University of New Brunswick, and was successful in bringing it to Alberta.

“It’s not just about improved road building practices,” Whitesaid. “It helps reduce challenges such as sedimentation in water, which is good for fish populations and downstream human users of our water supplies.”

A workshop was held in Edmonton on June 27 to allow UNB researchers to present the results of the FRIAA funded study more fully, and further training sessions will be held throughout the southern forested area this coming fall.

Initial application of the wet-area mapping tool will be on seven million ha. of foothills forest from near Grande Prairie south to the border. The area coincides with one of Alberta’s major mountain pine beetle infestation zones, and is the chief source of water for many of Alberta’s major cities.

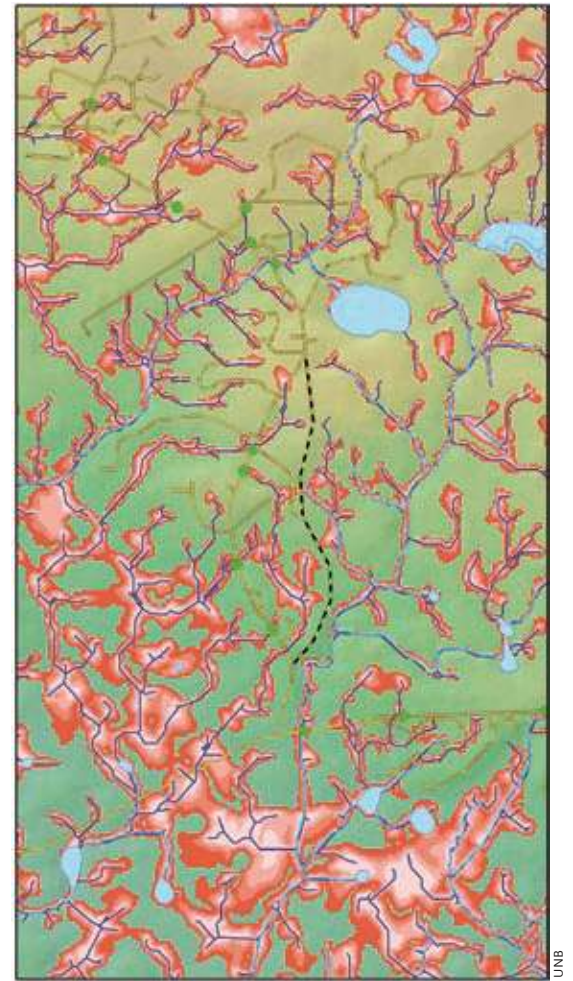
The model takes existing maps of Alberta’s landscape and adds a visual representation of likely wet areas. There’s 80-per-cent accuracy with maps under development, and completion of Alberta’s new LIDAR maps will

increase that rate to 95 per cent in the coming year. The result is knowledge about the location of more aquatic habitats and areas where water is close to the surface up front in the planning process, and the ability to incorporate these into plans that will protect them.

As an example of the benefit, White said forest companies will be able to plan roads that go between unseen wet areas, instead of over them. The roadbed will be more stable, and fewer culverts will have to be installed. “We estimate a 30-per-cent reduction in culvert use, and that brings advantages in less fragmentation of aquatic habitat.” Summer ground will be easier to identify and soil disturbance can be minimized.

The wet area mapping model may also be coupled to a road-planning model that will lay out the best possible route for resource roads. Sustainable Resource Development’s new forest hydrology specialists are working with UNB to refine these models for the southern Alberta landscape.

“We hope that, eventually, everyone working on the landscape will have this model on their laptop so they can incorporate wet-area information into their planning,” White said. “It could show how to position an oil or gas well so that it’s away from wet areas and water flows. Emergency response teams could use of it to see which way a spill would travel. Environmental, energy, transportation, agriculture, conservation, parks and recreation, municipalities – they could all get as much value from this as forestry will.”



Model’s red coloring shows approximate depth to sub-surface water, overlain with roads and trails

The mapping tool will help with the approvals process for forest harvest planning, and also contribute to improved forestry practices, White said.

For more information contact barry.white@gov.ab.ca.