



# BRANCHING OUT

MAY 2010

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



## Strong uptake for forest funding program

The last round of funding under the Fire Hazard Reduction and Forest Health Program was allocated in late April, with 23 projects receiving a combined total of more than \$5.6 million.

Proposals approved by the Board of the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta are expected to result in an estimated 573 person-months of employment being generated, 37 businesses being created or sustained, and 1,500 ha of forestland being treated.

Funding partners Western Economic Diversification Canada and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development allocated \$30 million for the program, created last year with the specific aims of supporting employment in hard-hit forest communities while tackling important FireSmart and other hazard reduction activities.

April's 23 approvals were for projects that will reduce wildfire risks in and around communities. They vary from preparing FireSmart plans to conducting fire hazard assessments to reducing fuel loadings by removing, for example, blown-down timber. Communities that will benefit range from eight First Nations in the north to Kananaskis, Banff and Cypress Hills in the south.

Earlier funding rounds supported projects that also focused on forest health, through mountain pine beetle and spruce budworm surveys and decision-support systems, the collection of pine cones for seed collec-



*A mulcher engaged in FireSmart work in west-central Alberta*

tions, or the thinning of regenerated stands.

The latest round of submissions carried a price tag four times higher than the funds available, presenting the Board with some tough choices. However, public representative Dave Kiil said outcomes will benefit all Albertans.

"One of the impressive things about this last round was the number of proposals from different areas and jurisdictions around the province," he said. "Successful proposals include federal land, First Nations land, industrial sites, municipalities and towns . . . it indicates to me that there is thinking about enhanced forest health and fire hazard reduction in many places, not just on provincial lands."

For more information check [www.friaa.ab.ca](http://www.friaa.ab.ca).

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY . . .

# FRIAA operations help government meet its goals

The Alberta government has relied upon FRIAA to administer forest improvement programs funded with dues generated from publicly-owned timber resources for more than 10 years.

The Board carries a heavy responsibility to the public to administer these programs efficiently and effectively, and as the government's representative I have found it not only accomplishes these goals, it also supports many of the broader objectives of the provincial government.

FRIAA activities support, for instance, Sustainable Resource Development's vision of "Stewardship of Alberta's lands, forests, fish and wildlife that benefits both present and future generations of Albertans." They directly support government goals of building a prosperous economy, sustaining the high quality of Alberta's environment, and keeping Alberta a safe place to live, work and raise families.

Two of the department's core business



Doug Sklar

goals are that Alberta's public lands will be managed to remain healthy and sustainable, and that Alberta's forests will remain healthy and productive, and sustain healthy ecosystems.

In this context, it is easy to see how the ever-expanding mix of programs administered by FRIAA benefits the policy vision and ultimately the people of Alberta.

As one example, the \$10-million Fire Hazard Reduction and Forest Health

Program, funded by Sustainable Resource Development and the federal government, has made great strides in sustaining the economic benefit derived from forestlands in tough economic times, and in improving forest condition right across the province.

FRIAA has delegated authority to administer certain programs on behalf of the government. Sustainable Resource Development has good people doing good work on the ground – but their role in some cases is to steer, while FRIAA does the rowing. And

FRIAA helps us meet our goals as a government because their operations are efficient and cost effective, they follow their plans correctly, and they meet the objectives that have been established for them. When public money is involved, it is critical that there be this level of accountability, reliability and expertise of management.



## 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.

Undeliverable copies should be returned to MediaMatch West Communications Inc., #4, 10028-29A Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T6N 1A8

For more copies of this issue or to be added to the mailing list, please contact FRIAA in Edmonton  
Phone (780) 429-5873  
Fax (780) 428-5190

ISSN: 1703-1044

Editorial material in this newsletter may be reproduced and disseminated with the following credit attached: "Courtesy of Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta."

Canada Post Corporation  
Agreement # 40009376  
Customer # 01056026

# FRIAA Board of Directors, 2009-10

**President:**

Trevor Wakelin, Millar Western Forest Products Ltd., Edmonton

**Vice-President:**

James Bocking, Hinton

**Second Vice-President:**

Doug Sklar, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Edmonton

**Treasurer:**

Murray Summers, Blue Ridge Lumber Inc., Whitecourt

**Directors:**

Dave Kiil, Public Member, Edmonton

Bruce Macmillan, Weyerhaeuser Company Ltd., Edmonton

Jurgen Moll, Whitecourt

Dwight Weeks, Canadian Forest Products Ltd., Grande Prairie

**Manager:**

Todd Nash, Edmonton

**FRIAA administration:**

Phone: (780) 429-5873

Fax: (780) 429-4026

E-mail: [admin@friaa.ab.ca](mailto:admin@friaa.ab.ca) • Website: [www.friaa.ab.ca](http://www.friaa.ab.ca)

## Detective work resolves reforestation accounts

FRIAA administrator Anna Williams completed the mammoth task this spring of reconciling accounts under the Community Reforestation Program.

The program, funded with a levy on the volumes of timber harvested by smaller operators, coordinates and finances the reforestation of harvested areas. It allows for areas to be grouped together and replanted by professional crews, resulting in first-class regeneration at affordable prices.

It may be a simple concept, but the administration of the program can be a challenge, says manager Todd Nash.

“Operators are liable to FRIAA based on the the volume of timber that they harvest – but FRIAA has no involvement in tracking logging activities, and hence no direct record of what volume any individual might be harvesting.”

As a result, FRIAA must base its invoices on figures from at least five sources: Sustainable Resource Development records in Edmonton, government field officers,

the permit holder’s own records, holders of Forest Management Agreements and Quotas who purchase timber from smaller operators, and FRIAA’s own in-house databases.

As of 2009, the books carried about \$4 million in unpaid levies and it was time to set the record(s) straight.

Ms. Williams identified about 830 active permit holders among 1,500 names “in the system.” Of those, 622 today have a zero balance, 78 are in a credit position and 130 owe money – down from 216 last November.

The amount of unpaid levies is still around \$4 million, but at least there’s a clear picture now of exactly who owes what. Quarterly statements will keep permit holders up to date on their position regarding FRIAA levies.

Also in the cards this year is a proposal by FRIAA to explore the concept of levies based on area held within a permit, rather than on reports of the volume of timber harvested. “We would like to run a pilot project, and will work with Sustainable Resource Development to identify a suitable area,” Nash says. “The



Anna Williams

objective is to improve transparency and efficiency of reforestation levy collections. It might be a bit of a change in business model for the operators, but it would at least let them know up front what their reforestation costs will be.”

## Federal funds boost reforestation program

The federal government has committed more than \$6.8 million to fund additional jobs and projects under the Community Reforestation Program.

Rob Merrifield, minister of State for Transport and Member of Parliament for Yellowhead, announced the funding on behalf of Western Economic Diversification as a signal of the government’s desire to strengthen economic opportunities in Alberta’s forestry communities.



Regen activities ensure ongoing forest renewal

The Community Reforestation Program is administered by the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA). Under the program, smaller timber operators pay levies to FRIAA which in turn arranges for professional contractors to come into an area and ensure the forest is regenerated to top-notch standards.

Additional WED dollars will allow FRIAA to order additional silvicultural work over and above basic requirements. It’s expected the funding will support additional activities that support the care and development of forests on 6,000 hectares of cutblocks on publicly-owned land.

“FRIAA is excited by the opportunity to carry out additional field activities that enhance Alberta’s forests and help to sustain forestry dependent communities,” said Trev Wakelin, president of FRIAA. “This is the type of initiative that provides direct employment in the forestry sector and makes tangible improvements to the public forest.”

The government says that in addition to creating immediate employment opportunities and contributing to the continued sustainability of Alberta’s forestry sector, the project will also provide long-term economic benefits by increasing the productive value of the forests. Furthermore, environmental and ecological benefits, such as the enhancement of wildlife habitat and protection of watersheds, will also be realized through the reforestation and afforestation activities.

Federal funding of \$6,825,000 is being provided to FRIAA as part of Canada’s Economic Action Plan.

The federal government will provide a combined \$306 million over two years to support the most affected western Canadian communities, such as those that are heavily reliant on resource-based industries – for instance forestry, mining, agriculture and fisheries, and communities that depend on the manufacturing industry. Western Economic Diversification Canada is delivering the fund in the four western provinces.

## Beetle battle brings multiple players together

Dealing with the mountain pine beetle is a marathon, not a sprint, and authorities and contractors in Alberta say key tools in the ongoing battle are vigilance and collaboration.

The Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) administers two programs designed to facilitate both tactics.

Under the Mountain Pine Beetle Program, funded with \$6.2 million in provincial money this year, participants are helped with the cost of activities such as ground surveys, the setting and monitoring of traps in logyards, and the protection of genetics trials, orchards and research plots using a dispersal pheromone that encourages the beetle to stay away.

A second program is the \$30-million Fire Hazard Reduction/Forest Health Program (see page 1 of this newsletter), which combines federal Community Development Trust money with provincial funds to support enhanced forest condition as well as employment in communities suffering economic hardship because of the downturn. It all adds up to a concerted effort by industry, government, academia and consultants to monitor, mitigate and – where necessary – salvage. “It’s great what can be accomplished when everyone is working together on a problem,” says Jerry Bauer, a consultant who has worked on FRIAA-funded beetle projects in northern Alberta.

Surveys to determine this year’s reproductive success among overwintering beetles were to be done in May, and aerial surveys of forest condition will be done in August. By fall managers will be able to assess the 2010 situation and plan ways to move forward.

Canadian Forest Products, or Canfor, is using a slow improvement in commodity prices and fibre from adjusted harvest plans to keep its Grande Prairie sawmill running at pre-downturn levels, as opposed to the



occasional shutdowns implemented in the last several years.

Brian Martell, Canfor’s operations superintendent in Grande Prairie, says the company has amended its strategic forest planning to align with the provincial Healthy Pine Strategy, and as a result prioritizes harvest sites according to their vulnerability to beetle attack.

“We aim to remove the stands already hit by the beetle, and the stands likely to be most susceptible,” Martell says. “The Peace Block, south of the Peace River and the quota areas north of the Peace are already heavily infested, while south of Grande Prairie the infestation is relatively minor. In general, however – where there is any pine, there are beetles.”

We aim to remove the stands already hit by the beetle, and the stands likely to be most susceptible,” Martell says. “The Peace Block is already heavily infested, while south of the river the infestation is relatively minor. In general, however – where there is any pine, there are beetles.”

About 85% of Canfor’s harvest is pine, and all of the timber is eventually concentrated in the company logyard in Grande Prairie.

Martell says the logyard control method, which involves trapping and killing any beetles that make the trip into town, is very important – and successful.

“In 2008, we counted 100,000 beetles,” he says. “Last year it was 40,000. This year – I don’t know, but the winter was pretty mild and I think their survival rate was probably quite high.”

Canfor also baits forest stands, to attract beetles to trees that are just about to be felled. It is one of three Grande Prairie mills that bid on timber brought in by contractors using the Fire Hazard Reduction and Forest Health Program.

Martell says all of the activities under the various beetle programs are important, even if they just hold populations at bay until a hard-killing winter comes along. “It’s a daunting battle, but these programs are killing beetles,” he says. “The nice thing about Alberta is that we have chosen to attack the problem early and in a very aggressive fashion. I have some optimism that we will be successful.”