BRANCHING OUT

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

President's Message

Murray Summers

I would like to start by thanking everyone for participating in the annual general meeting this past June in Edmonton. I think we can all agree that it was a success, giving us the opportunity to celebrate our achievements over the past year. I would especially like to thank our guests—Minister Oniel Carlier, Deputy Minister Jason Krips, manager of the Gift Lake Development Corporation Allan Lamouche, Gift Lake councillor Chris Lamouche, and FireSmart specialist Kevin Kuhn—for joining our group. Our members, stakeholders, and government partners are highly supportive of FRIAA's programs, and their involvement is key to achieving our goals related to the protection and sustainability of Alberta's forest resources.

Following the change in provincial government this past spring, FRIAA has begun building a relationship with a new department and minister. The recently created Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, led by the Honourable Oniel Carlier, is now home to the FRIAA portfolio and the Government of Alberta's commitment to sustaining and enhancing our forest resources. On behalf of FRIAA, we welcome Minister Carlier to his new role and look forward to working together toward common goals.

FRIAA's board of directors is responsible for setting a clear direction for our priorities as well as overseeing the delivery of our programs. This year sees a continuation of the roles of board members. By maintaining these roles, the board will continue to build on momentum from the previous year and work toward achieving established priorities. The current board is as follows:

President:	Murray Summers
Vice-President:	Norman Denney
Second Vice-President:	David Kiil
Treasurer:	David Wall
Directors:	Cliff Henderson
	Bruce Mayer
	David West

In this issue, you'll learn about some of the new projects FRIAA is funding. I encourage you to also read the story on what the community of Gift Lake is doing to protect itself from wildfire. Thank you for your support.

Murray Summers, President

Board of Directors

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David Kiil, Second Vice-President
Cliff Henderson, Director
Bruce Mayer, Director
David West, Director
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Mountain Pine Beetle Forest Rehabilitation Program

The Mountain Pine Beetle Forest Rehabilitation Program (MPBFRP) was established in 2013 in response to the growing threat of the mountain pine beetle (MPB) infestation in Alberta. The program is designed to allocate funding for rehabilitating forests impacted by mountain pine beetle and aims to restore ecosystem function. Since its introduction, over $8.6 million has been committed to maintaining and enhancing the ecosystems of pine-dominated stands through rehabilitation efforts.

Project Update

The Canfor-sponsored project in the Peace block of G15 and the Weyerhaeuser-sponsored project in the Saddle Hills block are the first two operational rehabilitation projects under this program. The project managers worked diligently with government and FRIAA to successfully deliver these innovative and complex projects, addressing operational requirements such as the extent of overstorey removal, salvage or disposal of overstorey trees, equipment configuration, and costing, just to name a few. Both of these projects completed the overstorey removal phase during winter operations in 2014–15. The G15 project was site-prepared and planted in the summer of 2015, and the Saddle Hills project was sprayed in 2015 to prepare the cleared areas for planting in 2016. We would like to thank Canfor, Weyerhaeuser, and their contractors, Spectrum Resource Group and Canadian Wood Fibre Centre, for their hard work and innovative approach to delivering these projects.

New MPBFRP Projects

This past July, FRIAA established a new two-phase process for soliciting new MPBFRP projects. A request for expressions of interest was published, and successful applicants were invited to submit a detailed project proposal. Six projects were ultimately recommended for approval, totalling just under $1.9 million in funding commitments. These projects are:

- **Rehabilitation of MPB Stands, Peace Block**—Canadian Forest Products (Canfor) is partnering with Spectrum Resource Group to remove damaged overstorey and re-establish coniferous regeneration on approximately 83 hectares of MPB-damaged stands in the Peace block of management unit G15. The project is expected to run from November 2015 to September 2017.
- **Reforestation of Modified Level 1 MPB Bunch and Burn Areas**—Weyerhaeuser is partnering with Spectrum Resource Group to re-establish conifer regeneration on approximately 380 hectares of MPB-damaged stands where previous control activities in 2011–12 and 2012–13 funded by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AAF) have effectively removed the majority of overstorey trees. The project is expected to run from May 2016 to September 2017.
- **Ground seed collection AP 1.1**—Northlands Forest Products is partnering with Tojoluma Resources Inc. to collect 300 hectolitres of cones from seed zone AP 1.1 and extract and process the seed for AAF's seed inventory. The project is expected to run from November 2015 to June 2016.
- **West Fraser Cone Collection**—West Fraser, through Edson Forest Products and Hinton Wood Products, is aiming to collect 859 hectolitres of cones from four seed zones and extract and process the seed for AAF's seed inventory. The project is expected to run from November 2015 to March 2016.

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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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- **Millar Western Cone Collection**—Millar Western's objective is to collect 400 hectolitres of cones from one seed zone and extract and process the seed for AAF's seed inventory. The project is expected to run from December 2015 to December 2016.
- **Canfor Cone Collection**—Canfor's objective is to collect 400 hectolitres of cones from one seed zone and extract and process the seed for AAF's seed inventory. The project is expected to run from December 2015 to December 2016.

Forest Resource Improvement Program

Tracing its beginnings to 1997, the Forest Resource Improvement Program (FRIP) is FRIAA's cornerstone program, dedicated to the improvement and long-term sustainability of Alberta's public forests. The FRIP Funds Initiative was first introduced in 2002 to allocate specific levels of funding to FRIP projects through a competitive process. This reflected an appreciation for a wide range of projects that might not be proposed under the regular FRIP process.

In July 2015, FRIAA issued a request for proposals for the 2015 FRIP Funds Initiative, with a total of $3 million allocated for forest resource improvement projects. The themes identified as a priority include:

- Integrated land management
- Public involvement, education, and awareness
- Climate change adaptation strategies

FRIAA received 33 project proposals, 11 of which have been funded for a total of $3,047,416. The approved projects include:

Empirical Post-Harvest Stand Growth Assessment—Millar Western Forest Products This project will pull together data from a number of sources, including the Provincial Growth and Yield Initiative database, representing post-harvest data from several programs that extend back to the early 1980s. Analyzing this data will help improve the understanding of how juvenile post-harvest stands change over time and what effects silvicultural treatments have on these stands.	**Linkages between Forestry Practices, Ungulate Abundance, and the Habitat Use and Performance of Grizzly Bear in and Adjacent to Woodland Caribou Habitat—Weyerhaeuser Company** The project aims to improve the understanding of grizzly bear ecology in relation to forestry practices and broader land management decisions, particularly regarding the availability of critical food resources in non-harvested and harvested areas and their effects on grizzly bear populations and caribou populations in west-central Alberta. The key question being addressed is how forestry practices affect ungulate populations (moose, elk, white-tailed deer, and mule deer) and how this in turn affects grizzly bear populations.
Expanded Provenance and Progeny Trials for Climate Change Adaptation in Alberta—Blue Ridge Lumber Inc. This project expands on the Tree Species Adaptation Risk Management (TSARM) project, funded by the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation (CCEMC) and delivered by Tree Improvement Alberta, by carrying out activities regarding trial design, field layout, seedling production, planting, and measurement that allow the results of the TSARM project to be implemented.	**Urban Forest Education Project—Millar Western Forest Products** The project represents a partnership with Inside Education and involves both in-field and in-school delivery of education and outreach to students and teachers in urban areas that is related to timber and non-timber forest resources and values. It aims to enhance the awareness of our youth in urban areas of forestry and forest resource to help create a well-informed body of future land-use decision makers.
Southern Rockies Watershed Project: Sediment from Harvesting and Road-Stream Crossings in Front-Range Eastern Slopes Watersheds—Canadian Forest Products Ltd. This project relates to the Southern Rockies Watershed Project and involves partial funding support of the suspended sediment data collection from road-stream crossings. The focus is on characterizing sediment production from harvesting and road-stream crossings during harvest and after road retirement.	**Establishment of Realized Gain Trials–Conifer—Canadian Forest Products Ltd.** The objectives of this project are to support the Controlled Parentage Programs and assist with validating the expected gain from deployment of improved stock through the installation of operational realized gain trials. All seedlots to be tested and produced from these programs, and their associated seed orchards, are for operational deployment with the intent of enhancing the value of the forest resources in Alberta.

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Harlequin Duck Migration and Connectivity Project—Hinton Wood Products Ltd.

This proposal will investigate the linkages between Harlequin Duck inland breeding streams and their coastal wintering areas using satellite push-to-talk transmitter (PTT) and light-level logger (geolocator) technology. This proposal supports current work by Dr. Sean Boyd, who is using PTT technology on harlequins in coastal B.C. to assess migration patterns between wintering, breeding, and moulting areas as well as site fidelity patterns. Results will test a theory of potential risk associated with site fidelity on breeding and wintering grounds. This project will also provide an opportunity to evaluate the use of geolocators to describe large-scale winter range (e.g., Salish Sea vs. Haida Gwaii).

EMEND Projects Suite: Quantification of Carbon and Other Biodiversity-Based Ecosystem Services, Associated Core Re-measurements and 10-Year Synthesis—Daishowa Marubeni International Ltd.

The project involves supporting the overall EMEND project by providing funding for three primary areas:

- Completing the 15-year post-harvest core data remeasurement for coarse woody material and carbon pools
- Developing a carbon budget useful for assessing carbon implications of variable retention harvesting
- Completing a draft of the EMEND 10th-year synthesis document, which synthesizes the first decade of research under the project

A 25-Year History of the Foothills Model Forest / Foothills Research Institute: Sustainable Forest Management Research for the 21st Century—Hinton Wood Products

The 25-year history of the Foothills Research Institute will be of value to forestry and natural resource professionals who are interested in, or responsible for, the application of sustainable forest management research to improving practice in their areas of responsibility. The book will provide an overview of the wide-ranging and award-winning work of the Foothills Model Forest / Foothills Research Institute (FMF/fRI) over its first 25 years, and how that research and sustainable forest management tool development has been and could potentially be applied. It will point them to where they can get further information on work that has value to them, through direct contact with fRI management and researchers, or through references such as research papers and results to be found on the fRI website.

Forest Resource Improvement Regeneration Survey Training Modules and Development of a Certification System and Registry—Daishowa Marubeni International Ltd.

The project involves the development of a series of regeneration survey training modules designed to ensure consistent, high-quality, repeatable, and efficient regeneration surveys. Training modules will be available for use by any FRIAA member hiring regeneration surveyors or any regeneration surveyor seeking to perform regeneration surveys on Alberta's forested lands, including those lands managed by FRIAA members. The project involves the development of an examination-based certification system and architecture for a registry for regeneration surveyors in Alberta. Examinations would be specific to a survey (establishment or performance) and would include both written and practical (field) components.

Using spatially explicit capture-recapture techniques in a collaborative, interdisciplinary science-based team to integrate grizzly bear and land management strategies in Northwest Alberta—Daishowa Marubeni International Ltd.

This project will build on the past decade of collaboration within an active and diverse local industry-government team working to gather foundational grizzly bear and habitat data in Bear Management Unit 1 – Northwestern Alberta. This project is interrelated with other projects that make up the program and involves DNA collection to map out the genetic distribution of grizzly bears across the landscape to provide insight into which areas are of special interest. This will help identify the implications that relate to population interconnectivity and gene flow across the landscape, which can then help manage linear footprint and other features.

FRIAA FireSmart Program

The genesis of the FRIAA FireSmart Program came from a specific recommendation by the Flat Top Complex Wildfire Review Committee following the devastating 2011 Slave Lake wildfires. The existing FireSmart program was developed by wildfire managers in the Government of Albert and focused on grassroots and community-based efforts. The FRIAA FireSmart Program aims to provide additional access to funding for communities at risk from wildfire to carry out FireSmart activities.

In May 2015, FRIAA published a request for expressions of interest and received 52 submissions in response. Of these, 39 applications were shortlisted and asked to respond to a full request for proposals. In October 2015, all 39 detailed proposals were approved, resulting in a funding commitment of approximately $3.6 million. The approved projects are listed in the table below:

Wildfire Mitigation Strategy and Preparedness Plans for the Town of High Level	FireSmart Plan for Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement	FireSmart Community Champion Workshops for the County of Grande Prairie
Stoneworks Creek—Fuel Modification (Vegetation Management Treatments) for the Town of Canmore	Peaks of Grasi—Fuel Management for the Summer Village of Island Lake	Fire Hazard Reduction for the Summer Village of Island Lake
Community FireSmart Day for the Summer Village of Whispering Hills	Fire Hazard Reduction for the Summer Village of Whispering Hills	Fuel Management for the Town of Rainbow Lake
Curbside Hazardous Fuel Roundup for the County of Athabasca	Town of Sundre Community FireSmart Plan	Municipal District of Bighorn Mitigation Strategies
Phase 2 East Prairie Métis Settlement for Fuel Management	FireSmart Education: Red Earth, Wabasca, and Sandy Lake	Wildfire Mitigation Strategies: Red Earth, Wabasca, and Sandy Lake
Wildfire Mitigation Strategies: Peerless Lake, Trout Lake, and Chipewyan Lake	Fuel Management for Red Earth Creek	Fuel Management for Sandy Lake
Fuel Management for Wabasca	Fuel Management for Trout Lake	Gift Lake Fuel Management
Gift Lake Métis Settlement Wildfire Education	Gift Lake Rural Fuel Management	Wildfire Protection Planning for 23 Summer Villages with the Association of Summer Villages of Alberta
FireSmart for the Oil and Gas Industry, Brazeau County	Public Consultation Fuel Management for the Town of Whitecourt	2016 Fuel Management for the Town of Whitecourt
FireSmart Planning Cochrane Parks and Open Spaces	2016 Fuel Management for the Town of Hinton	Wildfire Mitigation Strategy for the Town of Hinton
Repeat Photography—Mountain Legacy Pilot Project, University of Victoria	Town of Fox Creek FireSmart Plan	Fox Creek Fuel Management
Fire Hazard Assessment Pilot Project—Sawn Hills, Slave Lake, and Marten Beach	Wildfire Mitigation Strategies and Operational Planning Waiparous—MD of Bighorn	Pincher Creek Regional FireSmart Threat Assessment and Planning
Lac Ste. Anne Wildfire Protection Planning	Vegetation Management—Peerless Lake	Urban Wildland Interface Identification and Mitigation Plan—City of Airdrie Fire Department

Gift Lake Community Embraces FireSmart

While Slave Lake was the community hit hardest by wildfire in 2011, the Gift Lake Métis Settlement north of High Prairie was also severely threatened that year. Residents were evacuated and spent 10 days wondering whether they were going to have homes to come back to.

"After that, there was a lot of concern from the community about what we'd do if it happened again," says chairman of the Gift Lake Settlement Council Howard Shaw. "We got involved with the FireSmart Program and developed a mitigation strategy. This being our third year of a five-year program, we are now seeing benefits."

A Government of Alberta initiative, FireSmart provides communities with the ability to work with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AAF) (formerly Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development) wildfire rangers to determine what needs to be done to best protect the community from wildfires.

"It's difficult to stop a wildfire once it gets rolling," explains Paul Courtorielle, a wildfire ranger with AAF who's based in Gift Lake. "You can't completely prevent fires, but you can make plans and do things that will allow you to hold the fire at a certain point."

Courtorielle helped the community identify areas of concern, and Gift Lake secured grant money from FRIAA. Their first step was to work with Mistik Environmental Services Ltd. to develop the mitigation plan. Then,

Fuel hazard reduction in the Hinton area

with other FRIAA funding, they began implementation, making fire lines, and removing dead and downed timber and doing trimming and mulching in strategic areas.

"The FireSmart Program gives you a huge opportunity to fight fire because you are able to go in through the treated areas with a lot more ease," says Allan Lamouche, FireSmart program manager for the Gift Lake Development Corporation. "Also, by removing the dry fuel, the timber, you're removing the opportunity for a wildfire to go through there, and that's a huge benefit to our community."

Gift Lake has also held educational events and a community cleanup.

Kevin Kuhn, project manager, Mistik Environmental Services, says there are two underlying reasons for Gift Lake's success with FireSmart. "The community buys in to the program, in part because it employs local people and they have built strong partnerships and relationships in order to continue to build on completed projects. Their ability to implement the projects locally is a significant benefit."

There's also been an economic benefit, with 18 to 20 seasonal jobs created in an area where the unemployment rate is high.

Residents like the appearance of the areas that have been cleaned up, and the work is alleviating fears about wildfire. "We'd like to thank FRIAA for giving us the opportunity to come up with the fire mitigation plan and hope to keep working with them and Agriculture and Forestry," says Shaw. "We strive to be recognized as a FireSmart community, and that's not something a lot communities can boast about."

FRIAA is very happy to be involved with the Gift lake Métis Settlement. "They are great to work with, and we appreciate their professionalism and their commitment to the FireSmart program," says Todd Nash, FRIAA general manager.

FRIAA is funding three more FireSmart projects that will kick off in Gift Lake this winter.

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

Did You Know?

Nearly 60% of Alberta is forested, totalling approximately 38 million hectares.[1]

[1] https://albertaforestproducts.ca/resources/facts-and-figures