



BRANCHING OUT

SEPTEMBER 2007
NEWSLETTER OF THE FOREST RESOURCE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA (FRIAA)



\$1.5 million available through Open Funds

FRIAA has announced another Open Funds offering for projects designed to maintain and improve Alberta's forest resource.

It's the sixth consecutive Open Funds initiative, and this year is worth a total \$1.5 million in funds for projects.

"The adjudication panel will look for the very best projects yielding information and practical results supporting better forest management," says Dave Kiil, chairman of the Open Funds panel and the public representative on FRIAA's board.

Applicants have until October 12 to submit proposals that support FRIAA's key objectives, which are to improve forest resources, encourage and enhance forest management, and promote integrated resource management in areas such as water, soil and education.

The Open Funds panel will review submissions through the fall and the successful applicants will be announced by the end of the year.

"The process can be very difficult, especially with the large number of quality proposals we receive," Kiil says.

FRIAA manager Todd Nash agrees the competition for funds is a good way to find fresh new ideas in forest resource management. "The projects are innovative and imaginative. There are some really great ideas that come out of this."

Open Funds are available as a result of interest and other revenues on mandatory industry dues paid into the Forest Resource Improvement Fund, administered



David Holehouse

Tree breeding programs have been past beneficiaries of Open Funds financial support

by FRIAA. Once again the funds will be available for province-wide projects (a total of \$1.3 million) and smaller local initiatives (\$200,000). Over the past six years, the funding has provided \$10 million for research and operational projects, much of it leveraged with additional dollars from other partners.

The initiative is responsible for a number of success stories in research and practice, ranging from new conservation strategies for woodland caribou to analysis of the impacts of mountain pine beetle-related harvesting strategies.

"It's very competitive," Kiil says of the Open Funds process. "Projects must meet some very high standards to be chosen."

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . .

FRIAA takes on additional responsibilities as our second decade begins

There was an extra note of celebration in the air for our annual general meeting in June, when we marked 10 years of service to Alberta.

We take pride in looking back at successes in managing major programs such as the Forest Resource Improvement Program, the Community Reforestation Program and the Wildfire Reclamation Program. Part of that success comes from recognizing that we can always find better ways to get the job done, and from constantly evaluating feedback and results so that we keep moving in the right direction.

We were glad the Minister of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Ted Morton, was able to attend our meeting and speak to us about some of his department's priorities. Chief among these is healthy forests, and it's plain there is a very close connection between a priority like this and the mandate of FRIAA.

This, and our track record of steady, prudent



Trev Wakelin

administration, are behind a couple of new programs and responsibilities that come as very welcome news.

First, the provincial government has asked us to help deliver a new wildfire program that stabilizes funding for regenerated cutblocks damaged by wildfire over the next 10 years. This announcement comes out of lengthy discussions and an ongoing concern over how industry might replant regenerated blocks that are damaged, sometimes repeatedly, by wildfire.

This new program brings an element of relief to forest managers, along with greater assurance for Albertans that every effort possible is being made to ensure forests are regenerated quickly and effectively.

On another front, FRIAA has been asked by the minister to help administer the program aimed at minimizing damage caused by the mountain pine beetle.

These new programs, coupled with Forest Resource Improvement and Open Funds

activities that continue despite drastically reduced dues revenues, suggest to me that FRIAA goes into its second decade with the respect of its stakeholders, and a healthy dose of new challenges, new directions and new opportunities to serve the owners and the users of the Crown forests of Alberta.



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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REFORESTATION . . .

Program will help cover replanting costs on burned-over forest sites

Funding will soon be available for the reforestation of replanted areas damaged by wildfire.

"Industry will very happy," says Todd Nash, manager of the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta. "But all Albertans should be happy as well, because the program is broader than just growing more trees, it's about returning the land to productivity, stabilizing the sites and restoring habitat."

Through the Wildfire Reclamation Program (WRP), applicants may claim \$1,723 per hectare to reclaim an area previously reforested, and bring the site back to a healthy, productive state. Retroactive to the beginning of the 2006 fire season, the funding is applicable to areas that were previously harvested and reforested but were subsequently burned by fires that damaged or destroyed the new growth. Nash says while the 2007 numbers are not in yet, just over 1,400 hectares of reforested land were damaged last year.

The program requires industry to meet reforestation standards on these blocks. Standards that indicate successful reforesta-

tion are reviewed and updated by government and industry professionals as more information and science is accumulated.

Companies applying for program assistance enter an agreement with FRIAA. The organization has experienced foresters look at the technical details, and then conducts follow-up with the companies to ensure the proper work is being done and the money has been spent appropriately. Finally, FRIAA compiles the results and reports back to the Alberta government.

Nash says there hasn't been a program like this in Alberta since 1998, when close to 30,000 hectares were destroyed in a fire season that he says



Replanting program helps ensure vibrant forest

was one of the worst on record.

FRIAA is accepting applications now, through the Wildfire Reclamation Program section on the website, www.friaa.ab.ca.

Alberta looks to FRIAA for admin support in mountain pine beetle battle

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development has engaged the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta to play a role in coordinating administration of some aspects of the province's response to mountain pine beetle.

Alberta resolved very early on that it would take a swift and aggressive approach to detecting incursions of the beetle, and to eradicate it wherever possible. It has added fire tower equipment, hired more than 30 seasonal detection staff, and placed pheromone baits in a grid pattern across the province in its campaign to monitor beetle movements. Infested trees on public land have been burned, or, when the timber lies within a commercial harvest area, companies have



Cut-and-burn campaign is part of beetle strategy

been encouraged to rearrange their harvest plans to remove vulnerable pine as quickly as possible.

A program leader with ASRD said there are five areas in which industry has indicated an interest and an ability in participating in the campaign. They are:

- aerial and ground surveys;
- pheromone baiting program;
- Level 1 control (single tree cut and burn activities);
- Protection of progeny sites and plantations;
- Collection of pine seed.

All proposals must follow departmental strategies and focus on the priorities set out by ASRD field offices. The intention is that all work be tightly linked. There is a strong desire to ensure there is no duplication between government and industry, and also no areas that fall through the cracks.

Once ASRD approves a proposal, the plan may be submitted to FRIAA for funding.

Eligible costs and funding priorities are still being worked out, but will likely include some of the hard costs such as surveys, Level 1 treatment of trees, pheromone baiting and the associated labour, equipment and helicopter time required to do the work.

For more information call the FRIAA office at (780) 429-5873.

PROJECT UPDATE . . .

Tree improvement contributes to forest resource improvement

Some of the trees in Alberta forests will be more productive and better able to adapt to environmental threats thanks to genetics work supported by the Forest Resource Improvement Program (FRIP).

Improvements in the genetic performance of some trees is brought about by traditional breeding methods that take a long time to bear fruit. But Leonard Barnhardt, site manager for the Alberta Tree Improvement and Seed Centre at Smoky Lake, is optimistic about long-term benefits.

“We know we can get genetic gains through controlled breeding programs, but we’re just not there yet in terms of operational verification,” he says. “We can certainly make gains in growth potential and pest and disease resistance. However, each area, species, and population can behave differently, so a lot of field testing and follow-up is required.”

Barnhardt says projects aim for increased fibre quantity and quality, increased pest resistance and adaptation to changing conditions, and overall improved forest health.

All of these qualities serve the end goal

of improved sustainability for forests, Barnhardt says.

Some improved seed from seed orchards is starting to be deployed.

Garry Ehrentraut, woodlands manager for Northlands Forest Products in Fort McMurray, says Northlands’ nine-year-old seed orchard produced spruce seed for the first time this year.

“Our ultimate goal is to try and improve the forest that we’re working in. When we’re looking at a better seed and a healthier stock, we can get a better forest out there,” Ehrentraut says.

As one of its newer projects, Northlands maintains the only jackpine genetics site in the province. While the five-year-old site hasn’t yielded results yet, Ehrentraut is keen on potential advantages.

“We’re hoping to gain productivity and get better growth – more cubic metres per hectare is the long term gain. The jackpine is especially important. If we can get a straighter pine tree, we can produce less waste and return to a tree-length harvesting



David Holehouse

Aspen propagated from “superior” parents

process,” Ehrentraut says.

Productivity is a common goal among FRIP’s genetics and tree improvement projects, according to Steve Blanton, woodlands manager with Manning Diversified Forest Products.

“We’ve managed to improve the productivity of our coniferous stands, and we’ve been able to improve our knowledge of the forest through our inventory projects,” Blanton says.

“If you have better knowledge of the forest, you’ll have better efficiency later on.”

Blanton points out that many FRIP projects have become collaborative efforts among groups of industry partners.

“There is a lot more co-funding or cooperation going on,” he says. “For an investment of \$25,000, you might share in \$250,000-worth of research if 10 companies are part of it. In that way, you can make better use of everyone’s resources for improving overall forest health.”



David Holehouse