BRANCHING OUT

JANUARY 2019 NEWSLETTER

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 forest resources of Alberta for the benefit of all Albertans. It encourages improved forest management activities over and above those required by government regulation. It is, uniquely, an organization able to collaborate with academia, government, municipalities, industry and the Ministry. It has supported practical and applied research, on-the-ground forest improvement strategies, and innovative approaches to forest inventory and planning. These activities help Alberta manage its forest resources in a sustainable manner.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The FRIAA team enjoyed connecting with community members at events throughout last fall, including at the Canadian Institute of Forestry (CIF) AGM in Grande Prairie, the Alberta Forest Products Association (AFPA) AGM in Jasper and at the FireSmart Community Series in Fort McMurray. We're excited to consider what is to come in 2019.

Our many thanks to long-time board member Dave Kiil. Dave has been a committed contributor, not just to FRIAA, but to his community, and we'll miss having him at the table. On behalf of everyone here at FRIAA, we'd like to wish him all the best and express our gratitude for his many years of service.

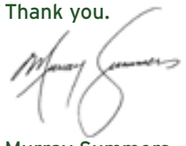
We continue to see innovative and collaborative projects being proposed and completed. We highlight a few of those recently approved projects in this issue, but they are really just the tip of the iceberg.

As we begin a new year, we're excited to announce a number of new funding opportunities. Read in this issue about Request For Proposal opportunities under the Caribou Habitat Recovery Program and a Request for Expressions of Interest under FRIAA's FireSmart Program. Stay tuned to our website in the next couple of months for an upcoming announcement in the Mountain Pine Beetle Control Program.

We've recently made a few tweaks to our website and continue to work on improvements to help you find what you need quickly and easily. We're also excited to share that we are now on Twitter, and you can follow us @FRIAA_AB for funding and news announcements.

We look forward to this new year with all of your ongoing support and interest. As always, please reach out to us any time with your feedback and input.

Thank you.



Murray Summers
FRIAA President

FAREWELL, DAVE KIIL

This month, FRIAA is saying goodbye and good luck to one of our longest-serving board members. Dave Kiil, our Second Vice-President, is stepping down after more than 20 years of service.

Dave graduated from the University of Toronto in 1960 and began his 32-year forestry career as a forest fire researcher in the Northwest Territories. In 1962 he transferred to Calgary with his family, where he began a fire research program at the request of the Province of Alberta. He then earned a post-graduate degree from the University of Montana. Following a few years at the Northern Forestry Centre in Edmonton, he spent several years in Ottawa as a Technical Specialist-Fire at the CFS HQ and as Forest Protection Coordinator for Yukon and Northwest Territories. He came back to Edmonton to manage a diverse portfolio of research projects for the Northern Forestry Centre. When he retired in 1994, he had spent a decade as the Regional Director General for federal forestry programs in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories.

Soon after his retirement, Dave was invited to join FRIAA's Board of Directors, on which several of his former colleagues also served. He says that his involvement with FRIAA was "like a second forestry career" in which he could keep contributing to forest management improvements in Alberta. During his tenure, he also chaired and participated in several committees that prioritized project proposals from the forest industry, universities, private organizations and government agencies, and advised project proponents on implementation to give their projects the best chance of success.

Looking back on his time with FRIAA, Dave says he is proud of the way the organization has fulfilled its mandate – programs and activities were prioritized and delivered effectively, and he was able to make a positive impact on Alberta's forest resource management through his service. Going forward, Dave plans to keep in touch with FRIAA members and forestry colleagues, while also completing his family history, contributing material on the 120-year history of Alberta's Estonian pioneers to the Provincial Archives, and visiting his birthplace in Estonia with his family.

We wish Dave all the best and thank him for his years of unwavering dedication to improving Alberta's forest resource for all Albertans.

THE HARLEQUIN DUCK MIGRATION AND CONNECTIVITY PROJECT

Sustainable and responsible forest management is about so much more than trees. FRIAA works with researchers, industry and policy makers to help enhance and protect all parts of a healthy forest ecosystem, and sometimes that means studying species at risk.

So, it made perfect sense when Beth MacCallum, a biologist with Bighorn Wildlife Technologies Ltd., and Dr. Rick Bonar, Chief Biologist for West Fraser, approached FRIAA to support a study into the migration patterns of the harlequin duck through a Forest Resource Improvement Program (FRIP) Open Funds project.

The harlequin duck is classified as a Species of Special Concern by Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee. This means that without human intervention, the harlequin duck may become threatened with extinction.

Most parts of the year, the harlequin duck lives in coastal marine environments. Spring draws them to fast-flowing rivers where they breed and build nests. They'll dive to the bottom of freshwater stream beds to forage for insects, fish and marine invertebrates. Due to this type of habitat, the harlequin duck is very sensitive to fluctuations in water levels, water quality and food supply.

According to Beth MacCallum, the harlequin duck is considered an indicator species because their breeding habitat requirements are so specific.

"A good population of harlequins is representative of a fairly healthy stream because they need clear water and access to invertebrates on the gravel and cobble bottom of the stream," said MacCallum.

They have specific requirements for their breeding location and one of their preferred streams is close to West Fraser's Hinton operations. Known as the Harlequin Duck Migration and Connectivity Project, the study uses satellite transmitters (PTTs) and geolocators to monitor mated pairs' migrations and movement patterns between their wintering and breeding habitats.

According to MacCallum, it can be difficult to determine what has caused the harlequin duck's decline in numbers because they breed and winter in two different locations.

"The harlequin duck actually flies east-west, they don't go north-south," said MacCallum. "They breed in clear-flowing mountain streams and then fly west and moult and winter on the Pacific coast."

> ***"The long-term monitoring will help give some information on whether the [harlequin duck's] overall decline is due to coastal factors or inland factors."***
>
> *-Beth MacCallum*

The Harlequin Duck Migration and Connectivity Project is collaborative, bringing together researchers from across North America.

Initial reports from the project have indicated that most of the ducks stop at the stream for breeding and quickly migrate out to the coast for wintering and moulting without stopping inland. Still, there is more work and research needed to remove the Species of Special Concern label from the harlequin duck. MacCallum said she feels

fortunate to be a part of this study and work with so many partners trying to find a way to help the harlequin duck.

"FRIAA allows me to build on and join research... and then go the next step and publish it," said MacCallum. "We're learning brand new things through this study, and we'll be able to contribute to the scientific community."

For more information, please visit https://www.westfraser. com/responsibility/stories-responsibility/harlequin-duckmigration-connectivity-project

PROJECT AWARDS

CARIBOU HABITAT RECOVERY PROGRAM (CHRP) AUGUST 2018 RFP - *EXAMPLES OF APPROVED PROJECTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CARIBOU HABITAT RESTORATION IN THE COLD LAKE CARIBOU RANGE*

Company: Cenovus Energy Inc.
Objective: This project involves the planning and operational implementation of forest habitat restoration treatments in the northwest corner of the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range, in an area designated as the "West Clyde" area, adding an additional 21,890 ha of intact caribou habitat.

Company: Woodlands North
Objective: This project will develop a treatment for the restoration of about 100 km of legacy seismic lines in the Cold Lake caribou range and implement the treatment plan.

CARIBOU HABITAT RECOVERY PROGRAM (CHRP) – REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

Restoration of legacy features, particularly seismic lines, is a key step in restoring habitat in caribou ranges within Alberta. The successful proponents of these RFPs are required to use the Government of Alberta's draft "Provincial Restoration and Establishment Framework for Legacy Seismic Lines In Alberta" and the "Visual Guide for Implementing the Restoration and Establishment Framework in Woodland Caribou Habitat in Alberta" that outline a clear approach and restoration objectives for restoration programs within woodland caribou ranges.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CARIBOU HABITAT RESTORATION IN THE A LA PECHE CARIBOU RANGE

The ultimate goal of this RFP is to achieve habitat restoration in the A La Peche caribou range.

The A La Peche caribou range is located in west central Alberta and a treatment plan for 69 km of legacy seismic lines has been identified.

The deadline for proposals is February 21, 2019.

INVENTORY OF LEGACY SEISMIC LINES FOR CARIBOU HABITAT RESTORATION IN THE BISTCHO CARIBOU RANGE

The ultimate goal of this RFP is to develop an inventory of legacy seismic lines in the identified caribou range within FMU F20 and a portion of FMU 26, to facilitate the next step of operational planning for habitat restoration. The Bistcho caribou range is located in northwest Alberta and the project will inventory approximately 52,350km of seismic lines.

The deadline for proposals is February 19, 2019.

Visit friaa.ab.ca for more information on FRIAA's Caribou Habitat Recovery Program and these RFPs.

PROJECT AWARDS

FRIAA FIRESMART PROGRAM (FFP JULY 2018 RFEOI) - EXAMPLES OF APPROVED PROJECTS

The July 2018 FireSmart Program Request For Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) received 45 applications requesting $4,308,475.

- Two Interagency
- Two Legislation
- Nine Planning
- Nine Public Education
- Twenty-three Fuel / Vegetation Management

Twenty-nine projects were approved, for a grant funding commitment of $3,094,810.

Several successful project examples follow:

1. **Gift Lake Métis Settlement Mitigation Plan Update (Gift Lake Métis Settlement)**

- FireSmart Discipline: Planning
- Term of Project: January 2019 – July 2019
- The objective of this project is to update the 2013/14 Mitigation Plan, identifying new vegetation management areas and areas where maintenance may be required.

2. **Castle Valley Wildfire Preparedness Guide (Pincher Creek Regional Emergency Services Commission)**

- FireSmart Discipline: Planning
- Term of Project: January 2019 – July 2019
- The objective of this project is to develop a wildfire preparedness guide for the Castle River valley area to provide responders with strategic and tactical information to improve emergency response during an interface wildfire.

3. **Regional Mock Exercise (Westlock County)**

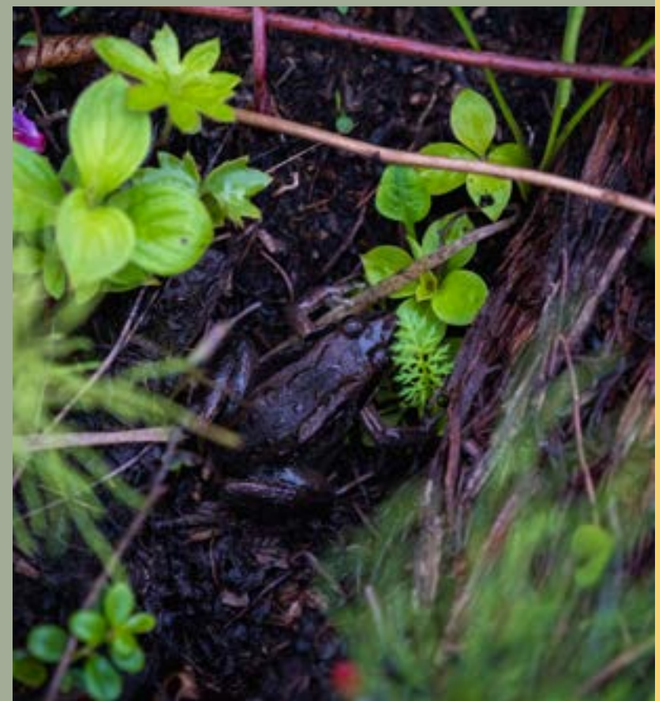
- FireSmart Discipline: Interagency Cooperation
- Term of Project: December 2018 – November 2019
- The objective of this project is to prepare for a wildfire by staging a mock wildfire exercise. This project will determine the capacity for operational coordination among several regional jurisdictions to improve interagency response.

4. **Sunchild Vegetation Management (Sunchild First Nation)**

- FireSmart Discipline: Vegetation Management
- Term of Project: January 2019 – July 2019
- The objective of this project is to treat areas identified as the highest risk in the Sunchild First Nation FireSmart Community Plan. Activities will include thinning of selected stems; mulching of selected stems; removal of dead, down and dead-standing; pruning limbs of residual stems and debris disposal.

5. **Athabasca County Public Education Campaign (Athabasca County)**

- FireSmart Discipline: Public Education
- Term of Project: May 2019 – October 2019
- The objective of this project is to complete Home Hazard Assessments in areas of greatest wildfire risk. Additionally, public communication events will occur in four priority communities.



FRIAA FIRESMART PROGRAM JANUARY 2019 – REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (RFEOI)

FRIAA is requesting Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) for FRIAA FireSmart Program funding. Submissions will be reviewed by an independent committee and evaluated based on a number of criteria, with priority given to projects that:

- mitigate incoming wildfire to a community;
- bring together multiple partners and consider landscape level planning or activities within 10 km of the community zone outside of the applicant's direct jurisdiction;
- propose to work on high-hazard fuels or on other priority activities as recommended in the mitigation strategy;
- are supported by a wildfire mitigation strategy.

The RFEOI is open to municipalities; Métis settlements, co-operatives or enterprises; Alberta First Nations; and non-profit societies.

The deadline for submissions is February 22, 2019. Visit friaa.ab.ca for more information on FRIAA's FireSmart Program and this RFEOI.

WILDFIRE RECLAMATION PROGRAM – OUTSIDE OF ANZAC

Tree planting in the rain has its benefits, according to Summit Reforestation & Forest Management Ltd. crew supervisor Jonathan Brushett. With 13 years of experience working in the reforestation industry, Brushett knows what he's talking about.

Consistent rain has made the ground in forests south of Anzac soft and pliable, making it easier for tree planters to dig deep enough to anchor seedlings. And with 1,400 stems per hectare to plant in 15 cutblocks, totalling more than 698 hectares, the planters need all the breaks they can get.

Such high levels of rain would have been useful two years ago, when this area was ravaged by an out-of-control wildfire. The 2016 Alberta wildfire burned 590,000 hectares of land, including cutblocks utilized by forestry companies.

Alberta has strict reforestation standards. Forestry companies have a 14-year obligation to get cutblocks back to the regulated performance level. If wildfire damages or destroys the cutblocks, industry is typically relieved of their responsibility. Companies can request a reforestation waiver from the provincial government, but they then lose timber yield as the area is removed from their productive land base.

That's where FRIAA's Wildfire Reclamation Program (WRP) comes in. Since 2006, the Government of Alberta has delegated authority to FRIAA to help with the reforestation

and reclamation of Alberta cutblocks impacted by wildfire.

The area Brushett and his crew are planting was recently acquired by Northland Forest Products Ltd. just prior to the 2016 fire season. Northland has taken on the reforestation responsibility with funding from WRP.

And it is a responsibility. Once a company commits to overseeing the reclamation, the cutblock's 14-year clock is reset, regardless of previous reforestation investment.

"As long as I've been here, we've been actively pursuing cutblocks," said Garry Ehrentraut, former woodlands manager turned consultant,

hired by Northland to oversee the Anzac WRP project.

Ehrentraut worked for Northland for 20 years prior to becoming a consultant. He is currently responsible for overseeing all Northland silviculture operations.

According to Ehrentraut, the Anzac project is just a fraction of Northland's current reforestation commitment. Under WRP alone, Northland is responsible for overseeing the reclamation of about 250 cutblocks, or 5,450 hectares.

"It's very cyclical," said Ehrentraut. "It's all based on how bad the fire season is in any given year."

Next year, Northland will plant 3 million seedlings in Alberta, with 2.25 million going to WRP sites.

After that, WRP tree planting requirements should decrease and Northland will be back to the standard cutblock reforestation practices.

Until then, Brushett and his crew, and other tree planting subcontractors like Summit, will be busy, tracing their way through Alberta's forests, carefully planting seedlings, checking and re-checking their growth, rain or shine.

"We all are working towards the common goal of planting these trees to a good quality and to a specific density to make sure they're going to pass [regulated regeneration] surveys in the future," said Brushett.

"All Albertans benefit from having a thriving forest and we're doing our part to help make sure future generations have the same opportunities we enjoy now."

-Jonathan Brushett

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