

BRANCHING OUT

DECEMBER 2020



WORKING TOGETHER TO MANAGE OUR VITAL FOREST RESOURCES

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 that collaborates with academia, government, municipalities, industry, and the Government of Alberta ministry responsible for forestry. It has supported practical and applied research, on-the-ground forest improvement strategies, and innovative approaches to forest inventory and planning that helps Alberta manage its forest resource sustainably. Editorial material in this newsletter may be reproduced and disseminated with the following credit: "Courtesy of Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta".

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President's Message

Like our forest, the people of Alberta are resilient. We are adaptable and tenacious. Like our forest, we keep finding ways to thrive and overcome adversity. FRIAA is proud to support the important projects that help make our forests more sustainable, our organizations more economically viable, and our skills more diverse.

This year FRIAA delayed our AGM from the end of June until October 29, 2020. It was held as a virtual business meeting only. We are very much looking forward to next year when we hope to come together in person again. Stay tuned for more details on this. With the AGM we saw a transition in the board of directors. It is with great fondness that we thank Cliff Henderson for his years of service on the board as he steps down. FRIAA is pleased to welcome M.J. Munn-Kristoff to the board. If you don't already know M.J., I invite you to get to know her, or know her better, by reading her introduction in this edition.

FRIAA would like to take this opportunity to highlight some recent project awards in several of our programs. Getting people to work and sustaining the forest resources are top priorities. FRIAA FireSmart, the Community FireGuard Construction Program, the Enhanced Reforestation of Legacy Disturbance (EnRLD) Program, and the Caribou Habitat Recovery Program (CHRP) all made project awards in the past few months.

The Mountain Pine Beetle Control Program (MHBP) and the CHRP are currently accepting proposals and expressions of interest (EOIs). FRIAA FireSmart will request EOIs starting in mid-January. To facilitate receiving and processing program submissions, FRIAA has launched a new program submission portal on our website. Read on for more information.

We are always excited to share our project stories with you. This time we share an inaugural look at the EnRLD Program, where CCI Inc. has deployed the use of aerial video to assess and prescribe regeneration treatments. Our second story showcases Tolko's aerial seeding project, under the Forest Resource Improvement Program (FRIP).

Please share your feedback on this newsletter and our programs and service delivery. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,



Murray Summers
President, FRIAA



“ As a person who’s been receiving money and doing the work and reporting back to FRIAA, I know what it’s like to depend on those funds for your job. ”

M.J. Munn-Kristoff

The Board Welcomes M.J. Munn-Kristoff

- **This fall, FRIAA welcomes the latest addition to our board of directors, M.J. Munn-Kristoff. M.J. brings more than 35 years of forestry experience and knowledge as well as 19 years in forestry education to benefit our organization, its stakeholders, and the province.**

M.J. graduated from the University of Alberta with a bachelor of science degree in forestry in 1984. She spent several years with the Alberta Forest Service and played a key role in documenting the history of forestry in the Slave Lake region.

In March of 2000, M.J. began working for the Lesser Slave Forest Education Society (LSFES), a non-profit registered charity created to deliver forest education programs to schools, community groups, and the general public. "I was very lucky; it was sort of a dream job for me," says M.J. "I started at its infancy so I had a hand, along with the board members and others in forestry, in making it a worthwhile organization."



M.J. is very familiar with FRIAA, our grant process, and our goals. The Forest Resource Improvement Program funded many of the LSFES projects, and the work of the LSFES led to the development of FireSmart education programs. In June 2019, she retired from her position as the LSFES's executive director.

"I have a different perspective from some of the other board members," says M.J., reflecting on what she hopes to contribute. "I'm looking at it as a person who's been receiving money and doing the work and reporting back to FRIAA. I know what it's like to depend on those funds for your job. I'm hoping that will make a difference."

Since retiring, M.J. and husband Terry were able to spend several weeks in New Zealand before COVID hit. As well as volunteering with FRIAA, she's exploring contract work to stay involved in the industry.



FRIAA FireSmart Program (FFP) – Project Awards

In July 2020, FRIAA published a request for expressions of interest (RFEI) for FireSmart projects. Fifty-one expressions were received, asking for a total of \$4,483,265 in grant funding. The disciplines applied for included:

- 12 for FireSmart planning;
- 6 for public education;
- 3 for inter-agency cooperation and cross-training; and
- 30 for vegetation / fuel management.

In November 2020, 36 projects for a FRIAA funding commitment of \$2,437,513.25 were approved, consisting of:

- 9 for FireSmart planning;
- 5 for public education;
- 3 for inter-agency cooperation and cross-training; and
- 19 for vegetation / fuel management.

Three example projects are described on page 8. The full list of awards is available at friaa.ab.ca.



■ Garden River Community FireSmart Planning

FireSmart discipline: FireSmart planning

(Little Red River Cree Nation)

Term: November 2020 – September 2021

Objective: To develop a wildfire hazard and risk assessment with vegetation management options. The plan will identify high-risk areas and provide a practical work plan for future vegetation management in high-priority areas. A wildfire preparedness guide will be developed so the community has a clear emergency response plan.

■ Crowsnest Pass Inter-Agency Exercise

FireSmart discipline: Inter-agency cooperation and cross-training

(Municipality of Crowsnest Pass – Crowsnest Pass Fire Rescue)

Term: May 2021 – October 2021

Objective: To ensure operational understanding and effectiveness of a recently developed structural protection plan and guidelines. The Municipality of Crowsnest Pass emergency personnel and mutual aid partners, including representatives from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, RCMP, Pincher Creek Emergency Services Commission, Willow Creek, Sparwood, BC, and Elkford, BC, will conduct a table-top exercise followed by a “live” event in 2021.

■ Sandy Beach Vegetation Management

FireSmart discipline: Vegetation / fuel management

(Summer Village of Sandy Beach)

Term: December 2020 – June 2021

Objective: To treat two conifer and mixedwood forest areas on the north and east side of the Summer Village of Sandy Beach to slow down or prevent a wildfire from spreading into the community. Dead and down trees will be burned, trees will be pruned to two meters, and the coniferous understorey will be manually hand-thinned or removed. This work is aligned with the wildfire and mitigation plan that was completed in July 2015.



FRIAA facilitates a key objective of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry and works to implement the provincial FireSmart program to help protect Albertans, their homes and communities, critical infrastructure, and natural resources from the threat of wildfire.

Request for Expressions of Interest – New Funding

FRIAA is pleased to announce that we expect to post a new expression of interest under the FRIAA FireSmart Program. The full information package will be available on our website in mid-January, with submissions due about February 22, 2021. Stay tuned for details.

A photograph of a forest with bare trees and sunlight filtering through the branches. The sun is visible on the left side, creating a bright glow and lens flare. The trees are mostly without leaves, showing their intricate branch structures against a bright sky. The overall tone is warm and hopeful.

Helping Our Forests Regenerate



- **When Alberta's boreal forest areas are impacted by wildfire, they can take decades to regenerate. During this time, our province misses out on the carbon sequestration and other benefits these forested areas once provided. Thanks to FRIAA's Enhanced Reforestation of Legacy Disturbance (EnRLD) Program and some pretty cool technology, one Alberta company is helping forested areas recover more quickly so we can once again harness their benefits.**

CCI Inc. is a leader in aerial reforestation prescriptions for the energy and forestry sectors. One of their innovations is the creation of high-quality aerial videos for use in treatment implementation.

"We're in a unique position here in Cochrane. The global head office of Garmin is right across the parking lot, so we used their GPS camera technology to collect all our videos on our flights," explains Cam Rollins, project manager, CCI. "You can watch the video and see where you are on the map at the same time, which makes it really easy to use it in the future by whoever is implementing the plan next time."

The videos will reduce the amount of field trips required in the future. Less time on the road and in the sky means fewer greenhouse gases are being produced, making the technology environmentally friendly as well as economically efficient.

CCI's project ran from April 2020 to June 2020 in the Slave Lake, Peace River, and High Level forest management areas.



The team first flew over the entire area, collecting video and photography and identifying areas that didn't need their attention. "It came down to optimizing the amount of money that we had in order to create areas that could be vegetated faster and grow trees sooner," says Rollins.

The results of the project will be a long-term fibre supply for the forestry industry and carbon storage for all Albertans as well as economic and environmental sustainability. Says Rollins: "Forest management is not just about planting *these* trees; it's about having a diversity of species and ages. By allowing us to reforest these areas with the EnRLD Program, we can assist with that."

FRIAA's EnRLD Program promotes collaboration with the public, Indigenous communities, and industry to build public trust in Alberta's Forest systems.



Program Awards Updates

Enhanced Reforestation of Legacy Disturbance (EnRLD) Program – Project Awards

In August 2020, FRIAA published an RFEOI and subsequent invitation for an RFP for EnRLD reforestation projects resulting from the 2020 site assessments of the 2019 wildfires.

Six proposals were received.

The project in F11 (Chuckegg Creek Fire, High Level Forest Area) was awarded to:

Apical Forestry Consulting Ltd. to reforest 147 hectares.

The project in S17 (McMillan Complex Fire, Slave Lake Forest Area) was awarded to:

Bushmen Enterprises Ltd. to reforest 283 hectares.

■ **FRIAA is pleased to announce a new funding opportunity under the Mountain Pine Beetle Control Program (MPBP) for level one control projects.**

All the details, supporting documents, application form, and updates can be found at

<https://friaa.ab.ca/uncategorized/friaa-mountain-pine-beetle-program-rfp-december-2020>

Proposals will be accepted until December 28, 2020 16:00 hrs.

Caribou Habitat Recovery Program (CHRP) – Project Awards

In July 2020, FRIAA published an RFP for CHRP – **Seed Collection** in the Little Smoky/A La Peche, Red Rock, and Narraway Caribou Ranges. Two proposals were received. The project was awarded to:

Tree Time Services Inc.

In July 2020, FRIAA published an RFP for CHRP – **Survival Assessments** in the A La Peche Caribou Range.

Five proposals were received. The project was awarded to:

Silvacom Ltd.

In September 2020, FRIAA published an RFEOI and subsequent invitation for an RFP for CHRP – **Implementation of Caribou Habitat Restoration** in the Little Smoky Caribou Range.

Four expressions of interest were received. The project was awarded to:

CCI Inc.

FRIAA'S CHRP
delivers effective
stewardship
of Alberta's
environmental
resources through
implementation of
targeted strategies
and frameworks.



Request for Expressions of Interest – New Project Funding

FRIAA is pleased to announce a new caribou habitat restoration project expression of interest under our CHRP. The full information and application package is available for download on our website.

<https://friaa.ab.ca/current-funding-opportunities/caribou-habitat-recovery-rfeoi-little-smoky-restoration>

Submissions will be due January 21, 2021.

An aerial photograph showing a vast landscape. In the foreground and middle ground, there are patches of green grass and low-lying vegetation, interspersed with areas of brown, charred earth and dead, standing trees. In the background, a dense forest of tall evergreen trees stretches towards the horizon under a clear sky. The overall scene depicts a natural recovery area after a wildfire.

Seeding the Forest from On High

FRIAA's Forest Resource Improvement Program supports Agriculture and Forestry's objective of enhancing the health of Alberta's forest resources to provide social, economic, recreational, and cultural value to Albertans.

■ In the spring of 2019, wildfire raged through the Chuckegg Creek area near High Level, Alberta, burning more than 350,000 hectares of boreal forest. Although wildfires are a natural renewal process for forests, they result in the loss of recreational and environmental benefits, including carbon sequestration. To return those benefits to Albertans as quickly as possible, Tolko Industries Ltd. engaged in an aerial seeding project—the first large-scale aerial seeding initiative in many years.

"When reforestation standards changed, we had to start planting stock instead of seeding in order to meet our reforestation objectives more quickly," explains Norm Livingstone, project lead. "This was a way to use the seed and to get this area reforested as quickly as possible after the wildfire."

Intense wildfires destroy the roots, seeds, and soil needed for reforestation with planted stock. But they also remove most

of the woody material and duff, making the area a good candidate for seeding. Seeding works well if it is done as soon as possible after the disturbance, so time was of the essence. In May of 2020, over 500 million seeds were dispersed over 3,260 hectares.

Feedback from the community of High Level was positive. "People were impressed that we had done that big of an area so quickly and happy to hear that we chose an area closer to town as well," says Livingstone. "It's close enough to town that the reforestation will offer recreational benefits to people, as well as the opportunity to hunt, and they'll get to enjoy those activities sooner rather than later."

The \$1.7-million project was done under FRIAA's Forest Resource Improvement Program. It will result in an increase in carbon uptake and storage and the rehabilitation of habitats for wildlife.

*** NEW: Program Submission Portal ***

on our website at <https://friaa.ab.ca/program-submissions>

Use our new, centralized submission portal to submit proposals; progress, final, and financial reports; and deliverables. You can also submit payment status requests and other project inquiries here.



Community Fireguard Construction Program (CFCP)

In September 2020, FRIAA invited communities to submit proposals under the CFCP. Proposals were accepted on an ongoing basis while program funds were available.

Projects focused on protecting communities from the threat of wildfire, engaging local employment, and planning for long-term vegetation management through grazing (where feasible). Detailed work plans were developed to ensure a high likelihood of successful project

implementation. Engagement with the appropriate regulatory contacts appeared to be the best approach to achieving well-developed proposals.

With the most recent funding approval, the grant has been fully committed. The measurable outcomes of the program are expected to be approximately 2,712 ha of fireguard, including 2,056 ha of grazing. Thirteen communities are involved in the fireguard program, which has successfully put people and equipment to work.

Community	Forest Area
Bigstone Cree Nation – Chipewyan Lake	Slave Lake
Dene Tha First Nation – Bushe River	High Level
Dene Tha First Nation – Chateh	High Level
Dene Tha First Nation – Meander River	High Level
Loon River First Nation	Slave Lake
MD Opportunity – Calling Lake	Lac La Biche
MD Opportunity – Red Earth Creek	Slave Lake
MD Opportunity – Wabasca	Slave Lake
The Town of Rainbow Lake	High Level
Stoney Nakoda Nation – Morley	Calgary
The Town of Swan Hills	Whitecourt
Tsuut'ina First Nation	Calgary
Whitefish Lake First Nation #459	Slave Lake



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