

**The Great
Canadian
Wheat Board
debate**

**Keep an eye
on your pine**

**Riparian areas
rife with life**

Western Farm & Forest

Sustainable Land Management Opportunities

SUMMER 2007

PICTURE BUTTE



**Landowners
gear up for
beetle battle**

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WRAP and WAA members!
This is your official membership magazine!
Please see inside for association news



We've got mail!

Keep up the good work

Thank you for mailing us the Spring 2007 issue of *Western Farm & Forest*. By coincidence, the PFRA Prairie Shelterbelt Program article (in the magazine) came less than a week after our son finished tagging eight to 10 acres of previously forested land. The purpose of tagging was to designate planting sites for more than 20 species of herbaceous and woody perennials provided in May under the shelterbelt program. His remaining 90 acres of white spruce woodlot continue to thrive under a program of careful selection and horse-skidded logging.

The area to be planted will include walking trails and plant-name signs on metal stakes. Hopefully, over-wintering birds and animals will make use of the variety of food sources provided. Likewise, adults and children hiking the trails will benefit from the outdoor experience.

The bush telegraph told us recently that word of the above project reached some folks in the Rimbey area who are interested in forming a Junior Forest Wardens Club. We have invited them to come and meet our local JFW members and to tour the John Stelfox Jr. "Woodlot Walking Trails" site.

Remember us to Louise Horstman, Gordon Kerr and Dennis Quintilio - we unfortunately are not able to attend Woodlot Association of Alberta gatherings as much as we used to.

Keep up the good work.

Dave Stelfox
Rocky Mountain House



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Western Farm & Forest

Western Farm & Forest magazine promotes innovation and sustainability on farms and woodlots in Canada's four western provinces. It is mailed four times a year to private landowners and to related equipment suppliers, government departments and officials.

The mission of the magazine is to inform and inspire landowners about the economic, ecological and social opportunities available to them through sustainable, integrated management of their resources. We promote the objectives of the Woodlot Association of Alberta, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, and other organizations consistent with our mission.

Submission of articles and photos on any aspect of innovation or management on the farm or woodlot is welcomed. Please contact the Publisher for information on length and desired subject matter.

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Mountain pine beetle – the tip of the iceberg

The *Western Farm & Forest* magazine has been publishing articles regarding the epidemic outbreak of the mountain pine beetle (MPB) in British Columbia and Alberta for over a year.



The invasive forest pest

Our objective of this focus was to alert landowners who have significant lodgepole pine inventories, and to inform the general reader about the aggressive provincial eradication program.

What's been missing in the writings to date is the serious multiplier effect of MPB mortality on the long term integri-

ty of our Canadian forests and a subsequent reduction of the many public benefits of a healthy and thrifty forest ecosystem.

In this issue we have included an article that describes the domino effect of the MPB invasion into Alberta and the unfortunate possibility of an epidemic that could eventually reach eastern Canada. Although MPB is a native forest insect that is historically common to western North America, a continent wide epidemic would have immediate, and long-term, social and environmental impacts.

You may be surprised as you read this issue how one small beetle could upset the proverbial applecart; on the other hand you may also be underestimating the value of our Canadian forest land base to future generations.



**Dennis
Quintilio,
WAA**

Farmers are adaptable people

The winter of 2006–2007 will go down as one that was pretty hard to kill off in most parts of Canada.

As we seed another crop, we face new challenges and uncertainties but there is renewed optimism in the industry.

There always seems to be a new twist to farming. We are all more informed about bio-fuels, there is a renewed level of respect for rusty grain beetles, and farmers from all across Western Canada are busy interpreting what "Marketing Choice" really means. Farmers are adaptable creatures – we roll with the punches and do what needs to be done to survive in this tough business. As the

federal and provincial governments finalize APF II, one thing has become abundantly clear – surviving is not adequate.

Agriculture needs to thrive. It is time to look for ways to build this industry. Safety net programs are not meant to do that for farmers.

They are a survival technique and we need to look beyond stabilization programs to methods of promoting strategic growth.



**Bill Dobson,
Wild Rose
Agricultural
Producers**

**Main cover: A summer day in Picture Butte (Sarah Seinen)
Index photo: Barda Equipment (David Holehouse)**

Grant program enables municipal fight against mountain pine beetle

By SARAH SEINEN

Landowners in parts of Alberta are losing some of their beloved pine trees in order to reduce the spread of the mountain pine beetle infestation.

For some, the pine trees have sentimental value while for others, the trees represent significant commercial value or even a retirement fund, said Jerry Bauer, mountain pine beetle coordinator for five municipalities in the South Peace region.

Mountain Pine Beetle

“Anyone with pine trees in this area seems to have at least one with beetles,” said Bauer. “The infestation is more widespread and intense than we ever expected.”

As of mid-April, crews working for the South Peace Municipalities had surveyed just over 800 individual parcels of land (from acreages to quarter sections), identified and marked 60,000 infested trees and removed 13,500 trees. Another 6,000 trees are in the process of being controlled by landowners.

While the province is implementing an aggressive Mountain Pine Beetle

Action Plan to curb the spread of pine beetles on Crown land, it is also battling the forest pest on private land primarily through Alberta Sustainable Resource Development’s (ASRD) Mountain Pine Beetle Municipal Grant Program.

Under this program, municipalities apply for funding to carry out survey, control and educational activities. The program began in 2005 and was revamped in 2006, when beetle populations really started to increase; since then, 16 municipalities (including towns, villages, municipal districts and counties) have requested funding.

The province has responded by granting more than \$5 million to municipalities with beetle-infested trees, said Bruce Mayer, director of ASRD’s Forestry Business Services Branch.

Due to the huge influx of beetles into the South Peace area late last summer, the County of Grande Prairie, the Municipal District of Spirit River, Birch Hills County, Saddle Hills County and the Municipal District of Greenview joined forces to apply for funding, forming the largest mountain pine beetle task force on private land in the province. They received \$4.7 million.

“The South Peace group is a

great success story of the program,” said Mayer. “By working as a group, the municipalities are able to be more efficient and effective in attacking mountain pine beetle infestations, and that’s the result that counts most.”

While the Forestry Business Services Branch coordinates contracts and administrative processes for the province’s beetle operations on public land. Furthermore, it also looks after the administration of the municipal grant program.

Like other municipalities, the South Peace municipalities submitted a management plan along with their joint application in November 2006. They received funding just before Christmas and have been conducting surveys and doing control work throughout the winter.

Everett McDonald, Reeve of the County of Grande Prairie and member of the Minister’s Mountain Pine Beetle Advisory Committee, said the province’s strategy of having municipalities take the lead on controlling the infestation on private land has been effective. The County of Grande Prairie is the managing partner of the South



Mountain pine beetle-infested trees are marked for removal in a homeowner’s front yard



Jeff East

Small-scale equipment used to chip trees



Jerry Bauer

Peace municipalities mountain pine beetle project.

“Dealing with mountain pine beetle is a 20-year project,” said McDonald. “We’re not going to stop it in one year, but at least we’ve been active since the get-go.”

The five municipalities hired Jerry Bauer to implement the management plan. He has been responsible for detecting and removing infested trees on close to one million hectares (although a large portion of that is agriculture land without trees). The area extends south from Peace River to just south of the Wapiti River, and from the British Columbia border east to Valleyview.

Since January, as many as 49 surveyors have conducted ground surveys on private land. All surveyors completed a one-day training course provided by ASRD. Many of the workers came from local forestry consulting firms or the oil patch; some came from as far away as British Columbia and the East Coast.

About a dozen contractors began control work – such as fall and burn, salvage logging, whole-tree chipping, debarking and composting of residues –

“Dealing with mountain pine beetle is a 20-year project. We’re not going to stop it in one year, but at least we’ve been active since the get-go.”

- Everett McDonald,
Reeve of the County of Grande Prairie

at the end of January and continued throughout the spring. A power line company and arborists, as opposed to loggers, were used to remove trees near fences, buildings and power lines.

“When we have the opportunity, we try to salvage the wood,” said Bauer. “Burning is the last option.”

For any survey or control work, the county needs to obtain written consent from the landowner, a process that is easier said than done.

Bauer said that most landowners understand the need to remove the trees, but getting in touch with them is the difficult part. Many acreage owners are at work during the day and some do not even live on their property.

Another hurdle was the amount of snow that fell in the South Peace region this winter. “We had snow from day one and it never left,” said Bauer. Surveyors needed snowshoes to get close enough to each tree to inspect it for pine beetle.

Smaller logging equipment was used to reduce the impact on the land. As a result, the machines were less productive than expected, thus increasing control costs.

Bauer said that since there was not much frost before the snow came, the ground should soak up the water faster and dry out more quickly than normal, making it easier and cheaper for machines to access infested trees.

Under the control agreement, landowners can choose a variety of options for tree removal. In all cases, the

procedure or process for the disposal of infested trees must have the approval of the county and ASRD.

The program includes a bounty for landowners who want to remove their own trees on their own property for personal use. ASRD will pay \$25 for each infested tree that the landowner removes. The beetles in these trees must be destroyed in an approved manner, such as removing the bark, before the beetles fly in July.

“The rider, however, is that bounty trees can’t be sold to a commercial mill facility because that could be construed as a subsidy under the Softwood Lumber Agreement,” said Mayer.

As provincial and municipal surveys are completed this summer and as trees start to fade to shades of yellow and red, strategies and programs will be reviewed and adjusted accordingly, said Mayer.

He said ASRD is working on an approach for areas where the trees are already red and dead, and continues to prepare for the next grant season which coincides with the “beetle year” of July 1 to June 30.

To report infested trees, call the provincial beetle hotline at 310-BUGS and a local official will be in touch within two weeks to confirm the report.

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Exploring the multiplier effect of pine beetle

How much do we value our forests?

By **DENNIS QUINTILIO**
WAA Director

The extensive public interest around the invasion of the mountain pine beetle (MPB) into western Alberta provides an opportunity to reflect on the value of our forests on both crown and private land.

Forests are complex associations of flora and fauna that are essential to a healthy environment and economy, and we perhaps take their silent but invaluable contributions for granted on a daily basis.

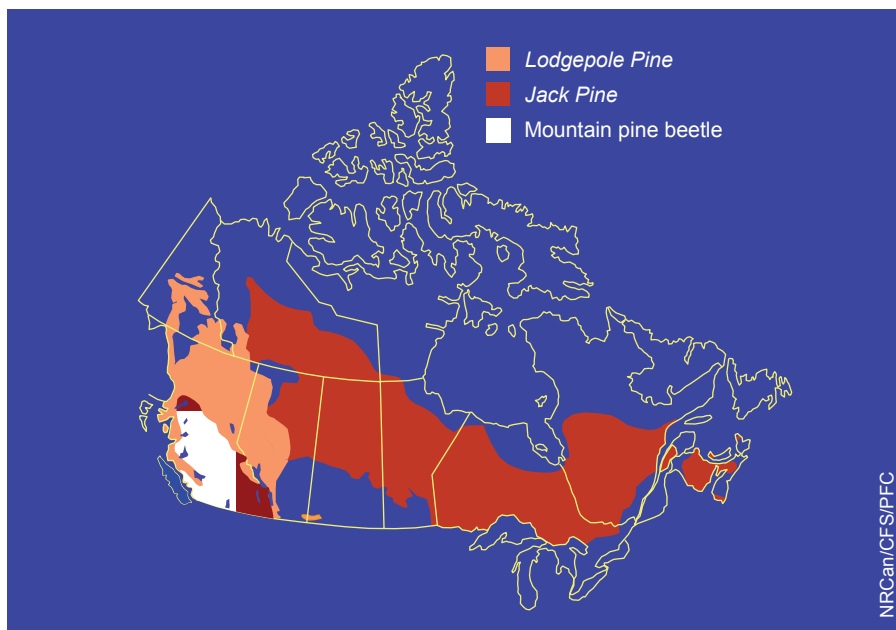
If the beetle is successful in moving from the lodgepole pine to the jack pine in northern Alberta there are no biological or climate barriers to interrupt the spread to Eastern Canada. This article

Mountain Pine Beetle

will describe the long-term implications to our Canadian forest landscape if the beetle succeeds in invading Alberta and continues through to our eastern provinces.

Most of us are familiar with the extent of MPB mortality in B.C. – if you have not seen it first hand you have probably have heard stories of the province-wide “red” forest. At this point, about three million trees are infected in western Alberta from the southern Rockies north to the Peace River country. This situation is a result of a major wind event that coincided with the beetle flight in B.C., which transported an unprecedented and unexpected population of adult beetles into Alberta last year.

In Alberta alone, over six million hectares of pine forest are at risk and the economic value is over \$27 billion. One of the interesting multiplier effects of the increased transportation of pine beetle killed wood in B.C. is a \$30 million



There are no biological or climate barriers to prevent the mountain pine beetle from moving across the country

annual rehabilitation cost for roads used by logging trucks. We would expect a quick economic calculation of the forest industry loss if the pine beetle invasion turns out to be the worst case scenario, but public and environmental impacts are more subtle.

Wildfire in Canada has historically been the primary forest disturbance and renewal agent. On average, since 1980, 8,600 wildfires have burned 2.5 million hectares each year, which is a disturbance rate of approximately 0.6 per cent per year for the 400 million hectares of forested land in Canada. This disturbance rate is a benchmark for healthy, thrifty forests with aggressive provincial fire protection programs.

It doesn't take rocket science to conclude that thousands of hectares of dead pine forests will burn more aggressively than live healthy forests and in B.C. a safety concern is emerging for firefighters working in pine beetle-killed stands. If the pine beetle damage alone continues across Canada at the current rates in both B.C. and Alberta, it could exceed the fire disturbance rate.

Beetle numbers in Alberta

The following table shows the current estimate of infested trees in Alberta. The surveys are continuing and numbers are expected to increase.

Southern Rockies	10,070
Foothills	100,000
Woodlands	50,000
Smoky	2,550,000
Peace	150,000
Lesser Slave	50
Total	2,810,120

The additive effect then of increased fire risk in dead pine forests will accelerate the fire disturbance rate, and the combined disturbance rate would be ecologically unprecedented.

Now let's examine the environmental and social implications over and above the economics of timber loss and road costs. The protection of watersheds in Alberta's eastern slopes of the Rockies has been a government priority since the 1930s, and their integrity is a function of healthy forests. Significant pine beetle mortality of the lodgepole pine in the eastern slopes followed by severe fires will have a number of negative hydrological consequences.

Increased snowmelt rates as a result of forest canopy reduction will in turn

allow earlier, stronger peak spring stream flows and increased annual flow. Downstream water tables will be higher as a result of reduced photosynthesis and stream temperatures will also increase as a result of reduced shading.

As the watershed integrity decreases so will wildlife habitat which is a function of an intact forest canopy. Thermal cover for ungulates will diminish and snow depths will increase with pine forest mortality. Furbearers such as squirrel, martin and fisher are all susceptible to large scale forest disturbances and caribou are particularly vulnerable as the terrestrial lichens they feed on are associated with older, stable forests.

On the social side many Canadians choose to work and live in a forest environment while the rest certainly enjoy the recreation opportunities associated with healthy forests. What Canadian hasn't sat around a campfire and enjoyed the natural sites and sounds of the forest. You can't put a true dollar value on this contribution of forests to our Canadian lifestyle.

If you believe Al Gore's forecast of global warming outcomes in this century the last thing we need are extensive dead and burned forests. If nothing else Gore's rhetoric emphasizes the importance of healthy forests around the world even if his projections are suspect.

This article has attempted to project the significant long term implications of a small and natural forest insect on the local, provincial and national integrity of our forest if the mountain pine beetle population continues to progress eastward at epidemic levels.

In simple terms, mother nature has designed ecological processes across the Canadian landscape that contribute to our high standard of living, however we have to be very alert and proactive when these processes are at risk. The Alberta government is funding the most aggressive pine beetle control program in history and hopefully our eastern provinces appreciate the effort.

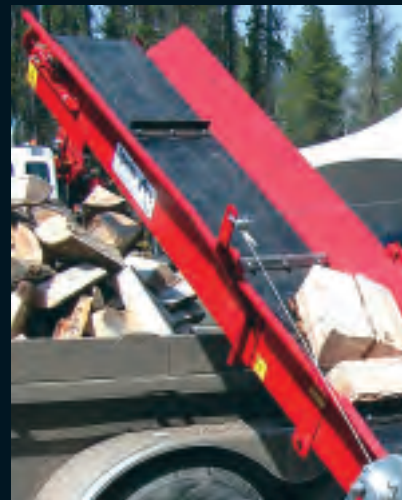
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Equipment to help cope with mountain pine beetle



Seen at the Northern Alberta Forestry Show in May, from top: Cut it, with Barda Equipment; saw it, with Hud-Son Forestry Equipment; split it, with Apache equipment; skid it, with Impact Power equipment; burn it, with PA Hydronic furnaces and water heaters.

Photos by David Holehouse



Private landowners play a critical role

By DAVID HOLEHOUSE

Private landowners in northern Alberta have a critical role in slowing the mountain pine beetle's eastward advance into the boreal forest.

The beetle has reached epidemic proportions in British Columbia, and in some parts of northwestern Alberta. Aggressive action is being taken to identify and remove attacked trees before the beetles can fly to new targets, with a particular focus this year on the region west of Fox Creek – Grande Prairie.

Mountain Pine Beetle

At a two-day mountain pine beetle information session organized by Natural Resources Canada's Canadian Forest Service (CFS), Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) and FPInnovations – FERIC Division, consultant Jerry Bauer told the *Western Farm & Forest* magazine that private land east of Grande Prairie provides "connectivity" to the boreal region. "The beetle has to go through farmland before heading east," said Bauer, who is on contract to manage beetle control programs with municipalities and private landowners. That puts privately-owned pine trees and woodlots on the firing line as the beetle sets its sights on jack pine forests that spread all the way to the east coast.

Participants at the information session in Grande Prairie in May were told that landscape connectivity is a key element in beetle movements. Bill Riel, a CFS researcher based in Victoria, said potential beetle spread can be mapped or modelled according to physical features on the landscape, such as areas of susceptible forest and distances between likely habitat.

The result shows "hotspots" of connectivity, where the likelihood of beetles vaulting from one area to another is

greatest, Riel said. Forest and woodlot managers can use this detailed information to test various scenarios, and plan treatment strategies for the most vulnerable areas of the landscape.

Forest companies have detailed forest inventory information that can be loaded into the computer models, but so far there is no comprehensive inventory of forest cover on private land. Even so, general trends would become apparent with the CFS maps and models.

The information session came just as more than 90 individuals graduated from an ASRD training program and deployed to the regions for beetle survey and control work. Don Harrison, director of ASRD's Forest Protection Branch, said the beetle represents the biggest change agent that will be seen "in our lifetime" in the management of forest lands. Alberta takes the position there is no choice but to respond aggressively to beetle outbreaks, and that means a massive detection program coupled with action to reduce susceptible crown land pine stands.

The private land program is another component, with 16 municipalities using \$5 million in provincial funding to help landowners confirm and eliminate beetle infestations. Landowners can remove trees themselves and receive \$25 per tree, so long as they don't sell it for commercial use. Consultant Tom Brewer said thousands of trees have been removed in counties around Grande Prairie so far, with the biggest cut being 3,000 trees on



Portable sawmills, like the Wood-Mizer line from Salmon Arm, help landowners turn beetle-killed and other timber into products with value

one property.

Canadian Forest Service researcher Les Safranyik said Alberta is right in treating the onslaught seriously. "For successful suppression you have to keep populations at low levels (as indicated by small groups of infested trees)." Providing some numbers, Safranyik said if you take an infestation of 10,000 trees in which the population is doubling each year, and if you removed (treated) 80 per cent of the trees right away and 80 per cent of the remaining infestation in each of the following years, it would take 10 years to reduce the infestation to just one tree. If 95 per cent are treated, the same result could be reached in two or three years. "The sooner you begin, the larger proportion of trees you can treat, and your success in suppression will increase exponentially," he said.

For information on other CFS speakers and topics, contact the Northern Forestry Centre at (780) 435-7210.



Tom Brewer

Natural protection against pine beetle

With the enormous influx of mountain pine beetles into Alberta's forests, many are wondering what will become of their pine trees. Removing infested trees and disposing of them by chipping or burning as suggested by the Alberta Department of Sustainable Resource Development is a good first step. However, many Albertans want to protect their trees from the beetles and not just see them die one by one.

Fortunately, there is a real solution—Pherotech International, a Delta, BC based company manufactures a synthetic pheromone that mimics the Mountain Pine Beetle's own "antiaggregation" or repellent pheromone.

The pheromone comes in a convenient plastic pouch that can easily be stapled onto a pine tree. When placed on susceptible pine trees, the pheromone sends a "No Vacancy" signal (i.e. makes the beetles believe that the tree is already fully occupied so they must go elsewhere) to incoming beetles with the result that invading beetles avoid the area entirely. Because the effect is so pronounced, Pherotech International has named the pheromone **No Vacancy!**

Pherotech International has been working on the Mountain Pine Beetle pheromone with researchers from the United States for over 20 years. In 2006, No Vacancy was registered for use in Canada and was used extensively in the

Kelowna area of B.C. for the first time with excellent results. For more information, contact Techmist Spray Solutions, Abbotsford, B.C.

The proper use and placement of the No Vacancy pouch is as follows:

Individual tree placement: one–two pouches/tree on the north tree face at 2–3 m height. Staple at the top flap and do not puncture the center of the pouch.

Large forested property placement (0.5 ha or larger): one– two pouches per tree in a grid pattern at 10 m centres on the north tree face at 2–3 m height.

For best results, remove and destroy all mountain pine beetle infested pines on property before application.

Protect your valuable pine trees from mountain pine beetle before it's too late!

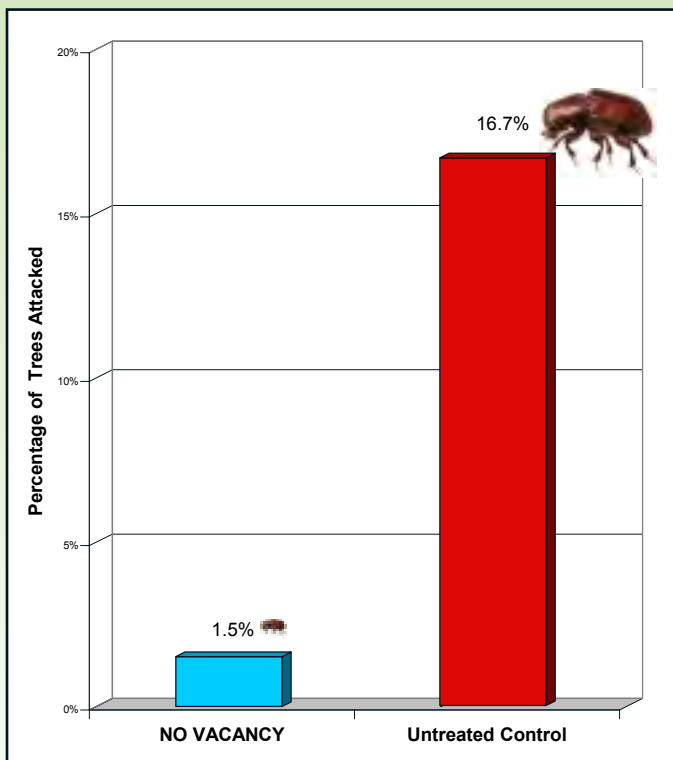
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Graph shows results of using No Vacancy compared with no treatment near Kelowna in 2006



Proper placement of the No Vacancy pouch

Beetles will attack young trees

By **DAVID HOLEHOUSE**

Just because your pine trees are less than 80 years old, don't assume they're safe from attack by mountain pine beetle.

Entomologist Lorraine Maclauchlan from Kamloops told a workshop sponsored by FPInnovations – FERIC Division and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development that while the beetle does prefer older, bigger lodgepole pine, it will attack younger trees. In previous infestations, the beetles being found in young stands was evidence of a population collapse.

With today's massive population numbers in B.C., however, and long dispersal flights aided by updrafts and wind currents, the beetle is not unusual in stands that are 20 to 55 years old, she

Mountain Pine Beetle

said. The younger trees may not be their favourites, but if the beetles land there because of climatic serendipity or adjacent infestations, they will colonize and kill the trees.

"We have two million hectares of young lodgepole pine-leading (over 80 per cent composition) in B.C., and infestations were prevalent in 2006," Maclauchlan said. "This was our mid-term timber supply (to keep industry going when the mature stocks are depleted and less abundant)."

There are also implications for wildfire managers, she said, because normally vigorous stands in buffer zones between mature patches would provide some barrier to fire spread. However, if the young stands are also dead, then there is less of a barrier to wildfire spread.

If there's any good news, it is that brood success is not as high in young trees due to overcrowding and thinner bark. However, the presence of mountain pine beetle brings other insects that damage the tree, along with woodpeck-

ers that rip off the bark and cause the stem to dry and split.



Dave Jorgenson

Logging contractor Dave Jorgenson described the soft-foot-print selection cutting method he has used to salvage beetle infestations in B.C. stands while leaving non-pine species to grow and provide future timber supply. One of his major challenges has been to find the right kind of equipment, and in some instances he had to design and commission his own.

Brian Pate of West Fraser in Chetwynd said mountain pine beetle presents forest managers with a multitude of problems. "We have been taking out complete stands, because the 'snip and skid' approach caused slash and fire problems, and higher water tables caused our equipment to get stuck. We couldn't keep cutting smaller-diameter stands because of the market downturn, so we went back to focusing on the bigger stands." In addition, infested logs

can't be hauled through a beetle suppression zone and beetle wood has to be cleared from the mill yard by a certain time, making for tight inventory situations.

"Our piece size dropped 12 per cent in 2004–2005, our 2x10 recovery went down, and our grade recovery went down," Pate said. He spoke of companies with timber three years dead, and leaving 20 or 30 per cent of the felled volume as waste, because of stem dryness and breakage. Site treatment costs for reforestation are up about \$1 per cubic metre because of increased slash. Splits in the wood have closed off sales to the plywood sector.

"The biggest impacts from mountain pine beetle seem to come after the wood is three years dead," he said. "Or even sooner in drought conditions." After that time, mills must consider investing in new equipment to handle log defects in innovative ways.

Contact:
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Farmers should be calling the shots on grain marketing

Farmers have had their say on the future of barley marketing in Western Canada.

Despite the controversy around consultations, gag orders, wording of plebiscite questions, voters lists, the firing of Adrian Measner, director appointments and interpretations of the Canada Grain Act, it appears that barley will probably be removed from the Canadian Wheat Board August 1, 2007. It is a significant development. We have spent a considerable amount of our time over the past few months defending our policy position which is that farmers should



Photo courtesy of Alberta Agriculture and Food, with permission

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers continues to defend its policy position that farmers should decide on changes to the marketing of grain through the Canadian Wheat Board

ue to defend the position of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers as discussions turn to wheat. That position is that farmers should decide on changes to the marketing of grain through the Canadian Wheat Board.

APF II

We are drawing nearer to the “unveiling” of APF II. It will be interesting to see what the appearance of the new framework will be. It is my guess that the format will be somewhat changed and that existing programs will carry on but be lined up into different spots. The consultation has been extensive. Farmers have had an opportunity to provide input either directly or through farm organizations and commodity groups. Personally, I have been to three industry single-pillar consultations, one public meeting, a province-wide consultation with Minister Groeneveld and an appearance before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I expect that we will receive an invitation to the final consultation which will probably be a sneak-peak at the concept of the final product. Hopefully, the effort that farmers have put into this advisory role will not be

wasted. There was a considerable amount of skepticism expressed by many folks at all of the meetings I attended. Over the years, we have all experienced meaningless consultations where the final report appeared to have been written before farmers had any opportunity for input. I’m optimistic and very supportive of the Agricultural Policy Framework. Hopefully, I am not going to be disillusioned.

Fertilizer supplies

The last few week have seen fertilizer prices skyrocket. The cost of urea has basically doubled since last fall and there is also a question of the ability of dealers to be able to supply. Are we getting ripped off? It is hard to accept that we aren’t, but I suppose that the rather rapid rise in grain prices has put the fertilizer manufacturers in a somewhat difficult spot. They did not anticipate the demand that there would be for fertilizer when suddenly the economics worked out for the production of grains and oilseeds. The price of corn is the real culprit, of course. I’m sure that if prices of grain remain at the current level, we can plan that fertilizer manufacturers will produce enough so that

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Bill Dobson



be the ones who make significant changes to the Canadian Wheat Board. It has not always been easy to interpret whether the actions of Minister Strahl have satisfied our expectations. I have written a separate article for this magazine that will provide a more in-depth look at the CWB issue. We will contin-

the cost will drop back to acceptable levels by next year. (Just kidding, of course!)

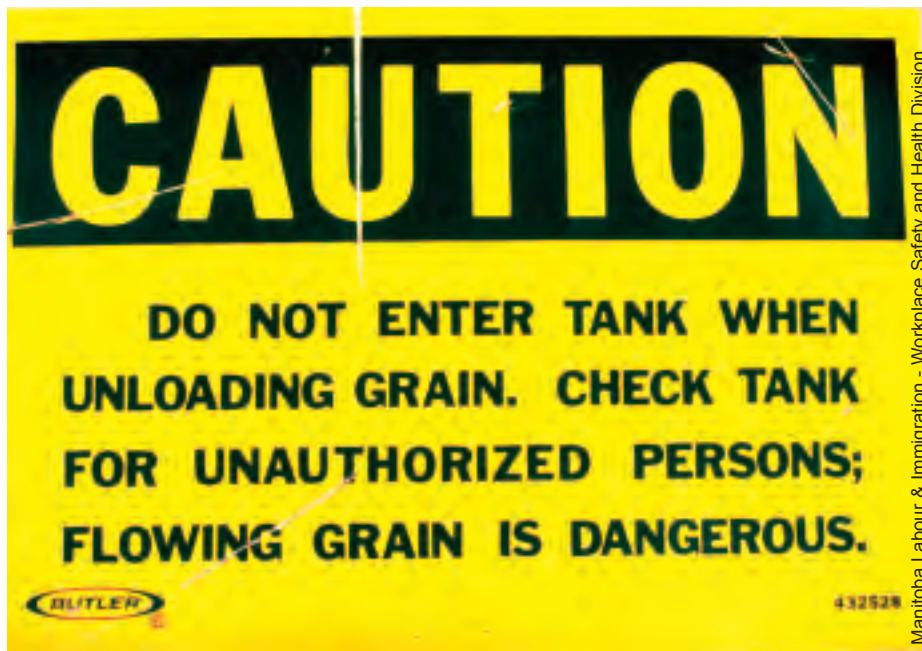
Bio-fuel initiatives

The agricultural community remains excited about the emergence of the bio-fuels industry. The expected demand for feedstocks has pushed all grain prices somewhat higher over the past few months. This is very good news for grain producers, not so good for the animal feeding industries and consumer groups who are concerned about the cost of food in the future. It is easy to scoff at these concerns when one considers how cheap feed and food have been over the last few years. It feels like time for grain producers to catch up. However, these are legitimate concerns that we need to work through together. We have built a significant cattle and hog feeding industry on grain prices that have been well below the cost of production. We all need to be profitable so it simply means that the cost of food will have to increase. This leads to the second concern, the increasing cost to consumers. On average,



Photo courtesy of Alberta Agriculture and Food with permission

The expected demand for feedstocks for bio-fuels has pushed up grain prices, making it more expensive to feed animals



Manitoba Labour & Immigration - Workplace Safety and Health Division

Post caution and warning signs where needed – the life they save could be yours! Farm safety remains a major issue

food is a bargain to North American citizens. The fact that some people cannot afford groceries is really a social issue, not an economic problem. That does not mean that we can afford to ignore the fact. We, as farmers, are going to face an enormous challenge in the very near future. There will be an expectation that we will feed the world, clothe the world and fuel the world. I hope I see the day! Wild Rose Agricultural Producers supports the concept of producer ownership and is exploring ways to make that happen.

Farm safety

I know that I sound like a broken record but my final word is once again on farm safety. At the Canadian Federation of Agriculture board meeting this week, we received a presentation from the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association. One of my fellow directors, in his comments, silenced the

room when he said “his family was one person smaller due to a farm accident.” I think we can address some of the problem with a personal safety audit on our farms. Although this process could be formalized in many ways, I would challenge everyone who reads this column to walk around your farm and record (and address) every potential safety hazard that you see. The sad fact is that most of the time when there is an incident, farmers know very well that preventative measures could have been taken. Do it today!

Finally

We are living in a country of great potential when it comes to agriculture. The future is exciting. I always appreciate your support and interest in our organization. On June 25, at our Summer Council meeting in Camrose, we will be hosting a workshop on the future of farm organizations in Alberta. Your attendance would be welcomed. Wild Rose Agricultural Producers is at your service and we always appreciate your comments. Have a great year everyone!



The great debate continues . . .

I am sure that we have all read a thousand and one articles and letters about the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) this past winter. I'm aware that everyone has heard enough! For that reason, I am somewhat reluctant to write anything about the CWB but maybe we could try to take a high-level look at the issue. How in the world can relatively clever people have such opposing views on this subject and be so

adamant about their positions? There seems to be no common ground, so what will be the final outcome of this great debate?

COMMENTARY



Bill Dobson

adamant about their positions? There seems to be no common ground, so what will be the final outcome of this great debate?

People look at the CWB from very different perspectives. There are two reasons that people oppose the board – one is the personal freedom that is sacrificed and the other is the question of economic value provided by the single-desk function of the marketing agency.

It is hard to argue that the mandatory nature of the CWB infringes on individuals' rights to market their own products. This controversy is not new. I have read that even back at the beginnings of the CWB, Alberta farmers voted for an optional pooling agency. Any type of structured marketing does take away people's ability to sell on their own. The question then becomes whether the economic benefit of joint marketing outweighs the freedom that one has to sacrifice. That is where the real argument begins.

I think that the different viewpoints that people take stem from one very simple matter. It all depends on whether you look at the CWB as the buyer or seller of your grain. You don't need to have a Ph. D in economics to understand that multiple sellers are good if you are the buyer and multiple buyers are good if you are the seller. It is very clear that people have a differing opinion on exactly what the CWB is. So who is right? I suppose both sides are when you think about it. The CWB is really a kind of wholesaler that markets the entire crops of Western Canadian wheat and barley destined for human consumption. The theory is that by having control of the total supply they can negotiate a higher price and then divide

the returns with all farmers on a pooled basis. I suppose that you could say that they buy the grain from farmers at that point too. There isn't really much difference. If you are selling any commodity through a wholesaler, you should be hopeful that they will receive the highest price from the end user.

Milling wheat and malting barley are two commodities that enable the CWB to receive any premium. When you have a product that has special qualities that make it attractive to buyers, it seems obvious to me that you want control of the supply to enable maximizing return. That is the entire basis of single-desk selling. This is the point where it is very important to decide if the CWB is a buyer or seller. Feed barley is not a grain for which foreign buyers will usually pay high prices. Domestic prices will almost always be higher than the export price. This is simply because feeders need the barley and will pay whatever it takes to get the product.

Farmers have divided themselves on this matter for three quarters of a century and have become so entrenched in their thinking that there is little chance of meaningful debate that would actually lead to changing anyone's mind on the issue.

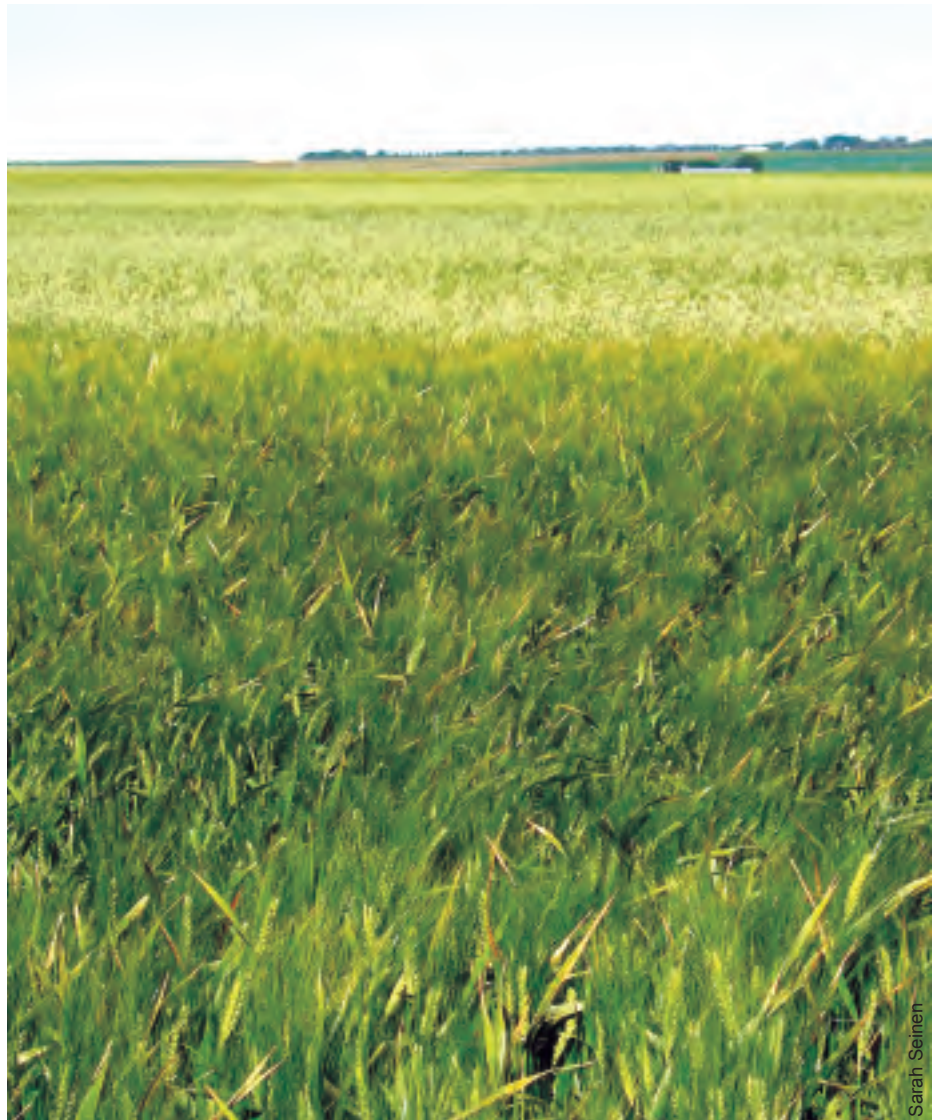
There are some very unfortunate

How in the world can relatively clever people have such opposing views on this subject and be so adamant about their positions?

consequences that are a result of the actions of the government over the past year. The issue has become more and more politicized. Political parties love to get mileage from something like this so they have attempted to get people to think that if you are a Conservative you are against the CWB and if you are a Liberal or NDP you are in favour. It stands to reason then that when the Conservatives finally got back into

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers

office after the Reform/Alliance/Unite the Right process, they were literally salivating to end the single-desk selling privileges of the board. I'm sure that Mr. Harper and Minister Strahl completely underestimated the backing that there would be for the CWB, given the high level of support that the Conservatives enjoy politically on the Prairies. Anyway, there was obviously some careful strategy developed as to how the monopoly status of the CWB could be removed. It appeared that from the very beginning there was not an objective of going through any type of process that would give farmers and politicians a better understanding of the marketing of grain. The "marketing choice" phrase was reminiscent of the Alberta government's "Freedom to Choose" motto. Statements were consistently made that farmers would have the ability to sell to any buyer including a "strong Canadian Wheat Board." Although there was originally to be no plebiscite, strong farmer pressure from



Sarah Seinen

many corners convinced Minister Strahl that it was inevitable that farmers needed a say.

So where are we now? Well it appears that we are headed for "marketing choice" in barley. How strong an endorsement did that choice really get? It is true that 48 per cent supported an optional CWB and 14 per cent voted for no involvement by them at all. However, the dual market question implied that a strong CWB would be included in that "marketing choice". So how many of that 48 per cent would have not voted that way if the CWB has no role. It may have been 47 per cent or it may have been 24 per cent or less. We will never know and that is the sad result of the inclusion of the dual market question. The CWB has asked producers these very questions in their annual surveys and for barley the split has been

almost 50/50 when the scenario pointed out no CWB involvement. The Conservative government has promoted a "dual market" but the Wheat Board has never blinked on giving that possibility any credibility.

It has not been a pretty year for democratic process. I hope that if we do remove barley from the Board, we take some time to analyze the impact before heading down the same path with wheat. It is a much different commodity and the impact of its removal will be very significant. The CWB has been in transition for over 70 years. We could be close to seeing its demise if we allow ourselves to go through the same process with wheat that we have just been through. Have we learned anything during the great barley debate of the last year? Time will tell...

Education and awareness key to maintaining healthy riparian areas

By SARAH SEINEN

Improving the health of riparian areas just became easier with the publication of a new brochure, *Riparian Areas – Important Natural Assets*.

The brochure, produced by the Lands Division of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD), describes stewardship and best management practices for grazing in riparian areas. It was distributed this spring to more than 6,000 grazing disposition holders in the province.

Riparian areas, the strips of green vegetation along bodies of water, are valuable natural assets. They maintain or improve water quality, reduce flood damage and provide sources of abundant forage and habitat for livestock and fish and wildlife. About 80 per cent of fish and wildlife species in Alberta rely on riparian areas.

ASRD and “Cows and Fish,” a non-profit organization that promotes voluntary land stewardship, are fostering education and awareness of these important areas.

“Riparian awareness and education, the application of best management practices and monitoring will help maintain the ecological health of these areas for present and future generations,” says Gerry Ehlert, head of the Range Resource Management

Program, Lands Division. “Maintaining clean water, habitat and forage in these areas is vital.”

Riparian areas cover about two per cent of the land base in southern Alberta and about five per cent in the northern and central portions of the province, said Norine Ambrose, Cows and Fish program manager.

“Although riparian areas are only a small part of the landscape, their importance cannot be understated,” she said.

Ambrose said the amount of riparian areas in the province generally doesn’t change much, with the exception being the loss of wetlands through development. It’s the health of the areas that varies.

“Riparian areas are defined by the presence of water over the long term,” she explained. “Even if a water body is dry, it’s still a riparian area. What we do on the land, in combination with natural disturbance, determines if it will be a healthy one.”

There’s lots of room for improving riparian health, Ambrose said. “It’s important for people to recognize that not all areas are going to be 100-per cent healthy all the time, but we do live on the landscape and should be aiming to minimize our impacts.”

To manage for sustainable and healthy riparian areas on public grazing lands, rangeland agrologists use a variety of tools and information, such as plant community guides, best management practices, rangeland health assessment, and assessment methods developed by Cows and Fish. The organization helps communities and landowners implement voluntary stewardship programs on private land. It also works in



Cows and Fish

Riparian areas are a small, but very important part of the landscape in Alberta

partnership with government agencies to increase awareness and education about the importance of riparian areas and stewardship on public land.

Mike Willoughby, a science and research agrologist with the Lands Division, said that in addition to conducting riparian health assessments, ASRD is working towards a better classification system for ecosystems and a better understanding of the effects of grazing on riparian vegetation.

This work will help grazing managers to identify and adopt “best practices” for management of these valuable areas for the benefit of both the grazing user and the ecosystem. When riparian areas are healthy, they tend to produce more forage on a stable basis than land at a higher elevation, especially during drought.

To read the *Riparian Areas – Important Natural Assets* brochure, visit: <http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/lands/managingpublicland/rangemanagement/managementeducation.aspx>. To learn more about Cows and Fish, visit www.cowsandfish.org.

Gerry Ehlert can be reached at (780) 427-3595 and Norine Ambrose at (403) 381-5538.



Cows and Fish

Fish and wildlife find refuge in riparian areas

By SARAH SEINEN

Riparian areas offer a safe haven for fish and wildlife, providing shelter, food and a rich source of water.

However, in southern Alberta natural and human forces are putting more pressure than ever on these vitally important areas, said Norine Ambrose, program manager of Cows and Fish, a group that works with communities and producers on riparian awareness.

Riparian areas cover about two per cent of the land base in southern Alberta. In the northern and central regions of the province, these areas comprise about five per cent of the landscape, but there is less pressure in these regions than the south because of the lower human population.

“Although riparian areas make up only a small fraction of the landscape, they are disproportionately important to fish and wildlife, recreation, agriculture, and society in general,” said Ambrose.



About 80 per cent of mammals and birds rely in whole or in part on riparian areas. All fish species in Alberta benefit from the nutrients, habitat, shade and food that these areas contribute to aquatic environments.

Fish species in Alberta use riparian areas as travel corridors and breeding grounds. Larger mammals and migratory birds use riparian areas for travel, since these areas form a network of “paths” across the province.



Deer and moose are drawn to willows or other vegetation that grow in and near bodies of water.

In grassland and parkland areas, riparian zones offer much-needed cover and protection for fish and wildlife.

Ambrose said the Cows and Fish Report No. 6 from 2000 shows that during migration, birds focus on riparian areas. “A riparian area is like a supermarket or gas station on the way south,” she said. “Birds can’t fly all the way to Texas without a fill-up.”

Amphibians associated with water bodies, such as frogs and salamanders, also rely heavily on riparian areas for reproduction, shelter and food.

Statistics from a few years ago show that about two-thirds of endangered species in Canada rely in whole or part on riparian areas.

In addition to supplying shelter and habitat for livestock, wildlife and fish, these zones provide abundant forage and a buffer and filter to improve and maintain water quality. Riparian areas also act as a “sponge” to hold water.

Although an unhealthy riparian zone may still support trees, there is usually a lack of structural diversity; the result is lower biodiversity. In comparison, a healthy riparian zone is a tangle of shrubs, trees and other

lush vegetation.

David Park, a fisheries biologist with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, said healthy riparian areas support high levels of biodiversity, meaning they support a variety of species, genes and ecosystems.

“In a general sense, a healthy riparian area is one that hasn’t been altered by us,” said Park. “Any time we alter it, we run risk of making some change incompatible with the natural ebb and flow of things.”

There are natural processes, such as drought, water and fire, that also affect the health of a riparian area, but those changes tend to be temporary, Park said.

High levels of biodiversity relate to greater ecosystem stability. The more diverse a system is, the better the ability to cope with environmental stressors such as floods or drought.

“Our goal is to increase understanding and appreciation of riparian areas, to manage their health, and to provide good information to landowners,” said Ambrose. “Thoughtful management, such as grazing strategies will go a long way in ensuring sustainable riparian areas and agricultural operations.”

Further information is available at www.cowsandfish.org. Norine Ambrose can be reached at (403) 381-5538 or nambrose@cowsandfish.org. David Park can be contacted at (780) 427-8347.

What are riparian areas?

Riparian areas are those thin, green lines along streams, rivers and wetlands. They are formed as a result of water, soil and vegetation interacting with one another. They are also sometimes known as floodplains or green zones.



Ken Glover
Chief Administrator

Around the woodlot

...news about woodlots across Canada

Burning wood for residential fireplaces (an article from the Ontario Woodlot Association)

Almost 3.2 million Canadian households burn wood in fireplaces, stoves and furnaces. By any measure, wood is an important residential energy resource, especially in rural areas. Heating with wood is about more than just simply home heating. It is a tangible expression of self-reliance, of the courage to buck the trends and to resist the appeal of sedentary, push-button convenience. Heating with wood reinforces links to the land and is a willing submission to the cycle of the seasons. It provides stability and security in a turbulent world. Fuel wood is the ultimate populist energy resource, the most easily accessed and affordable of all renewable energies. The major environmental impact of wood heating is visible for all to see in the form of smoke emissions, making everyone who uses it instantly accountable for their actions. The families that heat with wood and those that supply them with fuel do so privately, without fanfare or acknowledgement. It seems they wouldn't want it any other way. Heating with wood is its own reward.

Atlantic report verifies forestry and woodlot jobs are disappearing (CBC news)

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council released a report that says 4,300 jobs have vanished in Nova Scotia, 2,900 in New Brunswick and 1,300 in Newfoundland and Labrador over the last two years, mostly from sawmills and woodlots. Part of the problem is competition from cheaper suppliers in China and South America and a sudden

drop in the demand for lumber in the United States.

Local allowable cut increased but not for woodlots (Williams Lake Tribune)

The B.C. government gave a substantial uplift to the amount of timber that can be harvested in the Williams Lake Timber Supply Area from 3.78 million cubic metres per year to 5.7 million cubic metres in response to the pine beetle epidemic...the new uplift doesn't include more wood for community forests or woodlots.

Only BC Timber Sales, First Nations, renewable and non-renewable forest licenses, and possibly small-scale salvagers will benefit from the extra volume of wood.

Trees illegally cut at Green Gables Golf Course in P.E.I. National Park (CBC)

A contractor hired to demonstrate sustainable forestry practices within a woodlot cut trees on the Green Gables Golf Course adjacent to the water. Environmental regulations on P.E.I. forbid cutting trees within a buffer of at least 10 metres from a watercourse. But the trees along the stream in the national park were cut right to the waterline. The Department of the Environment issued a stop work order and a fine of \$1,000.

Birch syrup offers woodlot diversification opportunity (Quesnel Observer)

Co-owner Ted Traer of Moose Meadows Farm with its sugar shack and a stainless steel evaporator transforms

birch tree sap into syrup right on the spot.

The more it's heated, the darker the syrup gets. The syrup is later finished, then bottled, ready to sell. It's a bolder taste than maple syrup. People come from across Canada to the annual Moose Meadows workshop on tree and sap physiology, supplies and equipment, legislation and marketing, and other products that can be made from the birch tree.

Tapping birch sap is considered agro-forestry and the sap itself is a non-timber forest product.

There are only 10 known existing commercial producers across Canada. Making birch syrup is a lengthy process. One hundred litres of birch sap will only produce one litre of syrup. That's compared to a 40-to-1 ratio with maple syrup.

Traer taps 107 birch trees at Moose Meadows Farm in late March or early April and continues until late April. They get four litres (of sap) per tree per day varying by tree. Trees are usually tapped 20 cent up from the base of the tree and once collected, the sap is processed into syrup in a wood-fired evaporator.



Mountain pine beetle-killed trees in B.C.

Sarah Seinen



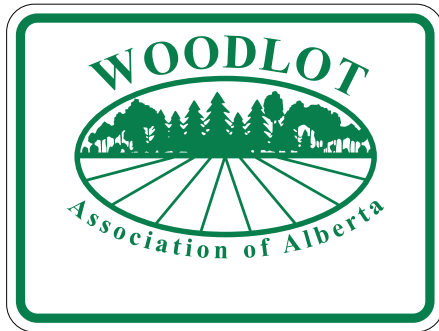
2006-2007 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



The Board of Directors for the Woodlot Association of Alberta:

Top row (l to r): Dan Reesor, Louise Horstman (secretary), Juri Agapow, Conn Brown, Peter Mills (president), Gordon Kerr (past president).
Bottom (l to r): Hamish Kerfoot, Pieter van der Schoot (vice president), Mathieu Bergeron
Missing: Dennis Quintilio, Jamie Giberson (treasurer), Lorne Carson

New woodlot gate signs are available



Here's how to order. . .

Each Woodlot Association of Alberta member (in good standing) is eligible for one free woodlot gate sign. The sign is free and can be picked up at the WAA's office at no charge. Members wanting additional signs may purchase them at \$25 for each additional sign. The WAA initiated the new gate sign to recognize members and give greater profile to the WAA. The gate sign is high-gauge aluminum and 24" W x 18" H with reflective lettering and logo. To receive your gate sign complete the Woodlot Association of Alberta Membership & Materials Order Form (in this magazine) and fax, mail or e-mail this form to the WAA. If you want the gate sign mailed direct, there will be a \$17.50 postage and shipping fee. We encourage members to make arrangements to pick up their signs from the office or at Association events.



2007 Canadian Forestry Business Directory now available. Special WAA rate by using the order form on the next page

Woodlot & agro-forestry extension events

The Woodlot Association of Alberta is planning a major Alberta Woodlot Tour to Peace River in late August 2007 (date TBD). In 2006, the WAA hosted a woodlot tour to the Cypress Hills, which was well attended and very successful. Tentatively the Peace River Woodlot Tour will entail a visit to a bush chipping operation, a conventional logging operation, hybrid poplar plantation, small-scale sawmill operation, a larger sawmill visit, a woodlot tour and evening social and barbeque. To register your interest, please call the WAA at (780) 489-9473.



Order your copy today!

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Woodlot Association of Alberta

Membership & Materials Order Form



Name: _____ Company: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

Province: _____ P/Code: _____ Ph: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____

E-mail Address: _____

Woodlot Size _____ ha / ac. Legal Description: _____

Woodlot Objectives: Timber Revenue - Forest Products - Wildlife - Aesthetics - Conservation

\$30.00 One Year Membership	\$ _____.
\$50.00 Two Year Membership	\$ _____.
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<u>NEW</u> \$17.50ea Postage and Shipping for Woodlot Gate Sign	\$ _____.
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\$40.00ea '07 Forestry Business Directory (Includes Shipping & Handling)	\$ _____.
\$30.00ea <i>Alberta: A Centennial Forest History</i> (DVD) (Includes GST, Shipping & Handling)	\$ _____.

Total (GST EXEMPT) \$ _____.

- Payment made by cheque enclosed
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Mail or fax this form to the Woodlot Association of Alberta office.
 Make cheques payable to:

Woodlot Association of Alberta

18008 - 107th Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5S 2J5
 Ph: (780) 489-9473 Fax: (780) 489-6262
 Web: www.woodlot.org E-mail: fisla@fisla.com

Private land owners could be at forefront of bioeconomy

By SARAH SEINEN

Owners of private land are well positioned – literally – to tap into future opportunities in the bioeconomy.

“Woodlot owners and those with marginal farm land are going to be unique in terms of location,” said Dave Patterson, an Alberta Sustainable Resource Development employee seconded to the Forest Research Institute of Canada (FERIC) as a senior researcher in biofuels, bioenergy and bioproducts.

Initially, bio-based industries will locate as close as possible to a desired feedstock, meaning regional suppliers of other types of biomass will also benefit, Patterson said. As an example, he cited several companies planning to build near Edmonton to utilize the city’s wood waste and construction debris.

Forest Business

“Ideally, they want minimal cost for feedstock so they are not going to start hauling long distances until nearby low-cost waste is used first,” said Patterson.

At some point those companies will expand or build other plants in or near rural forested areas to access green biomass, he noted.

Because companies will again be looking to reduce transportation costs, they will target the closest sources possible. For companies near Edmonton, that could mean nearby woodlots and marginal farm land since integration of a variety of closer biomass sources makes more economic sense than hauling longer distances.

“The greatest opportunities for producing dedicated energy crops such as willow or hybrid poplar are on marginal land, which is a more acceptable land use than conversion of high-quality agricultural land,” Patterson said.

Industries looking to convert biomass to fuel will most likely locate

plants where they can source both agricultural and forest fibre, he added.

Agricultural feedstocks could include corn stover, wheat straw and switchgrass, or willow and hybrid poplar crops. Forest and other cellulosic feedstocks include timber harvesting residues, mountain-pine-beetle-killed wood, industrial clearing and wildfire salvage, FireSmart and Enhanced Forest Management treatment residues, hog fuel, sawmill wastes, pulp sludge, pulping liquors and wood pellets. For some biomass conversion processes, these feedstocks could also be combined with demolition waste or solid municipal waste.

Most bioindustries are able to utilize a variety of feedstocks, but some have specific needs in terms of consistent quality or preferred characteristics.

“It’s important for private land owners looking to supply the bioindustry to line up the feedstock with the biomass conversion technology,” Patterson said.

New systems are able to utilize more of the wood than ever before, he noted. “We’re not just burning wood to produce electricity anymore. We now have the capability to produce a variety of liquid transportation fuels, to produce a bio-alternative to natural gas and to supply the chemical and fertilizer industries with their feedstock needs as well.” These new bioindustries can also simultaneously produce additional biopower from the waste heat generated by the thermochemical processes.

More than 60 per cent of Alberta’s land base is public land, classified as one of two categories or zones. The Green Area, or forested portion, includes most of northern Alberta as



Most bioindustries are able to utilize a variety of feedstocks, but some have very specific needs



well as the mountains and foothill areas along the western boundary of the province. The White Area, or settled portion, consists of the populated central and southern parts of the province and the Peace River region. In the White Area, public land is part of the agricultural landscape.

Private land in Alberta makes up less than 30 per cent of the land base. These areas are owned by individuals, groups, companies or others. The remaining 10 per cent is federal land, consisting of national parks and reserves.

Contact
Dave Patterson
780.422.4565
dave.patterson@gov.ab.ca

Agricultural fieldmen key to woodlot extension success

By **MARTINE BOLINGER**

The combination of interested landowners, and the work of agricultural fieldmen with Woodlot Extension Program (WEP) specialists creates a chain reaction for change. Toso Bozic has been working as Woodlot Specialist for Alberta Agriculture since 2000. He says, "The toughest part of my job is changing people's minds toward woodlots. When that happens, a large portion of my job is done."

For Kim Nielsen, agricultural fieldman in Clearwater County, WEP and its specialists are "catalysts to our attempts to bring the stewardship message to local people. Their messages bounce off us to the ratepayers, their passion for this subject shows."

I had the chance catch up with Kim Nielsen and talk more about farms and forest in his area outside Rocky Mountain House. Kim says, "The greatest impact of WEP is helping private woodlot owners discover what is on their property." That is, the true value and potential of their forests. There is so much more than just liquidation of the forest. He sees diversification, protection of watersheds and real estate values all connecting to healthy, managed woodlots. When farmers do sustainable timber harvest from their own woodlot with equipment they already own, it is an additional revenue stream to their existing farm operations.

Stewardship and watershed groups work collectively to maintain and improve water quality. Private woodlots exist along the riparian zones in many municipalities, and the trees slow down the run off of water. Biologically, the woody vegetation acts as a filter. There is a shift taking place in our society – value is increasingly being placed on natural capital. Landowners have a greater appreciation for wildlife and the beauty of the forest than twenty years



Kim Nielsen

ago. This translates into higher real estate values for properties with healthy woodlots onsite. There is a willingness to change farming and land management practices for the good of the environment.

Woodlands County is just outside of Whitecourt, Alberta. Dawn Fortin, director of Agriculture Services, had many good things to say about her work with WEP: "We worked together on our demonstration forest/woodlot site. We have done several joint tours. Anytime

I have a question, I am on the phone to Toso Bozic. He has helped us with unending resources and contacts to get our questions answered. Interest in woodlot management has increased since we started six years ago. Mountain pine beetle is going to be huge in the years to come."

What exactly is an Agricultural Service Board?

Agricultural Service Boards (ASBs) are unique to Alberta, first established by Alberta Agriculture in 1945. The need was to provide local authority over the growing problems of weed infestation and soil erosion. The *Agricultural Service Board Act* allowed rural jurisdictions to set up local boards to deal with weeds and soil erosion, with agricultural fieldmen hired to carry out the board's programs.

Since 1967, all ASBs from across Alberta have come together during their annual provincial conference to discuss and take action on shared issues of regional, provincial, national, and international concern. This year's tour will be held in Yellowhead County near Edson during July. WEP will be there to connect with our municipal partners, which make much of the program's



Woodlot Extension Program

Dawn Fortin of Woodlands County and Toso Bozic see the forest for the trees and so much more

work possible.

If you are interested in participating in workshops and tours to learn more about beneficial management practices, value-added woodlot products, climate change, agro-forestry, riparian area management, and/or woodlot management planning in your area, ask your local ASB and agricultural fieldman about WEP.

For specific questions about woodlots, contact the woodlot/agroforestry specialists directly. For the Peace Region, call Doug Macaulay (780) 624-6425. Elsewhere in the province, call Toso Bozic (780) 415-2681. To read more about woodlots online type <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify> into your web browser and follow the Agri Fibre and Agri Forestry – AF Woodlot Extension Program link.

A New WEP Program Manager

The Woodlot Extension Program would like to welcome **Keith Ebbs** to the team. Keith's office is Drayton Valley, within the Lands section of Sustainable Resource Development. Prior to this exciting assignment, Keith worked for Weyerhaeuser, holding a variety of positions. He has also worked in the forestry industry in both Alberta and Ontario. His leadership skills go beyond his day-to-day work. He is involved with Drayton Valley Town council, NAIT and coaching soccer, baseball and basketball.

Training tomorrow's professionals

By DAVID HOLEHOUSE

Forest Technology is a career that puts young men and women at the forefront when it comes to real-world environmental management, practitioners and instructors say.

The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology is accepting entrants to its two-year Forest Technology program right through to August 13, and assistant program head Brian Adams says the program welcomes anyone with an eye for excitement and a heart for good stewardship.

“For anyone with an interest in the forest ecosystem, and any concern for the environment, this program is a very good place to start,” he says. “Our graduates are among the front-line decision-makers when it comes to ensuring forest sustainability, managing impacts of threats like the mountain pine beetle or wildfire, or ensuring the energy and recreational sectors achieve balance in how the landscape is used.”

Students have impressive success finding work between study terms and following graduation. A wave of boomer retirements in government and industry, and a growing recognition across sectors that forest health underpins environmental throughout the country, mean that skilled graduates are in high demand. In fact, 94 per cent of the 2006 graduating class was employed full-time shortly after graduating.

But the jobs come later. First comes Camp. “Within days of registration, the new students are packing their things onto a bus and heading out to Kidney Lake, near Swan Hills,” says silviculture instructor Dan MacPherson. “We run a six-week field school at some excellent facilities there, and it’s a great time for everyone to get know each other, have some fun, and take in lots of new infor-



NAIT forest techs are Canada Safety Council ATV Safe Rider certified

mation about the forest ecosystem.”

A winter survival lab, a logging lab and frequent day trips to NAIT’s training forest near Hinton add to the practical aspect of the course. Things have changed since MacPherson took the program way back when – when jobs

like forest surveys were done with old-fashioned transits and a good pair of walking boots. Now technologists get around by helicopter and quad, using satellite-supported GPS systems and hand-held computers to record resource data. The NAIT program provides each student with a lap-top computer, IPAQ PDA and training in all the latest technological wizardry.

There’s complete gender equality in today’s Forest Technology, with more than 35 per cent of the program filled by women. All students have equal opportunity to excel in the multitude of job areas that await – from field staff to forest officers to harvest planners and



Spacing work by NAIT students

supervisors, land-use planners and reclamation specialists. Some of the country’s largest consulting firms, not to mention many government and NGO offices, are based in Edmonton, so the forest technologist can usually work into whatever mix of outdoor and office life is desired.

The Forest Technology program, says forest ecology instructor Alan Pollock, gives young people a career path with room to grow. For those who want to pursue a degree in forestry, the program provides one year of transfer credit to the BSc program at the University of Alberta.

Contact Kelly Friesen at NAIT’s School of Resources and Environmental Management, (780) 471-8646, or visit www.nait.ca.



Students learn GPS skills

WILD ROSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS DIRECTORY OF OFFICIALS 2007

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Farm numbers shrink: Census of Agriculture

In May, the Census of Agriculture counted 49,431 farms in Alberta, a 7.9 per cent decrease during the past five years. This is slightly higher than the 7.1 per cent decrease at the national level. On Census Day, there were 9,576 fewer farms in Alberta compared to 1996. A census farm is an agricultural operation that produces an agricultural product intended for sale.

Alberta accounted for 21.6 per cent of Canada's 229,373 farms in 2006, comparable to the share in 2001. Alberta's total ranked second in Canada, after Ontario.

At the same time, Alberta reported 71,660 farm operators, a 6.0 per cent decline from 2001.

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Farm area

Farms in Alberta averaged 1,055 acres of land in 2006, up from 970 acres five years earlier.

The total area of land on farms in Alberta increased less than one per cent between 2001 and 2006 to 52.1 million acres in 2006. It has 31.2 per cent of the total farm area in Canada.

Farmers reported 23.8 million acres of cropland in Alberta in 2006, down from 2001. The province accounts for 26.8 per cent of all cropland area in the nation. Cropland is the total area in field crops, fruits, vegetables, sod and nursery.

Farm finance

Alberta's total gross farm receipts were \$9.9 billion in 2005, while operating expenses reached \$8.8 billion.

Government-funded program payments contributed significantly to gross farm receipts. Farmers themselves contribute to many of these programs by paying premiums much like any insurance plan. According to Statistics Canada data on direct program payments to agriculture producers, in 2000 for Alberta, 6.7 per cent of receipts were from program payments; by 2005 the proportion had grown to 11.0 per cent.

The actual value of these payments increased from \$662.6 million to \$1.1 billion (in current dollars) during this period.

According to the farm input price index (FIPI) and the farm product price index (FPPI), the prices farmers had to pay for the inputs they purchased rose 9.6 per cent while the prices they received for the products they sold dropped 2.6 per cent. At the Canada level, farm input prices rose 8.6 per cent while farm product prices rose only 1.7 per cent.

Overall, improved efficiency, increased program payments, and higher production have helped to keep the ratios between expenses and receipts relatively stable. Alberta operators were spending an average of 89 cents in expenses (excluding depreciation) for every dollar of receipts in 2005, about 1 cent less than they spent in 2000.

The number of farms with less than \$250,000 (at 2005 constant prices) of gross farm receipts declined by 10.7 per cent between censuses and those with \$250,000 or more (at 2005 constant prices) increased by 12.2 per cent. There were 7,497 of these larger farms in Alberta in 2006, and while they only represented 15.2 per cent of farms in the province, they accounted for 76.1 per cent of total provincial gross farm receipts reported for the year 2005.

Organic farms

According to the census there were 2,629 farms with organic production in Alberta on census day, 5.3 per cent of all farms in the province. Nationwide, 6.8 per cent of all farms reported organic production.

For the first time, farmers were able to report on their census forms the status of organic products grown or raised. Of the 2,629 farms reporting organic prod-

ucts in Alberta, 8.7 per cent produced certified organic products, one per cent were in transition to becoming certified and 91.5 per cent produced organic products but were not certified by a Certifying Agency. Farms can indicate more than one organic status.

The predominant group of organic products grown in Alberta was hay or field crops. They were reported on 60.5 per cent of the province's organic farms.

Farm operators

Of Alberta's 71,660 operators in 2006, 30.0 per cent were women, up from 28.4 per cent five years earlier. Nationally, 27.8 per cent of farm operators in 2006 were women.

In 2005, about 43.6 per cent of farmers worked more than 40 hours a week on their farm operations, down from 46.3 per cent five years earlier. Nationwide, 46.7 per cent of farmers worked more than 40 hours per week on their farms.

About 54.6 per cent of all farm operators had an off-farm job or business in 2005, compared to 49.2 per cent in 2000. At the national level, 48.4 per cent of farm operators had an off-farm job or business.

Statistics Canada would like to thank the farming community of Alberta for their participation and assistance in the 2006 Census of Agriculture. For more highlights of agriculture in Canada, visit www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm.

Contact:
Peter Liang
Communications Officer
Statistics Canada
Western Regions and
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888.799.0050



EFP program makes major inroads in Alberta

Five years and 10,000 farm plans since it was first introduced, the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program has become a key tool and resource for Alberta producers wishing to make environmental improvements on their farms and ranches.

“By completing millions of dollars in on-farm environmental improvements, farmers have made the EFP program a success at a time when environmental issues are very high profile, which positions us very well for the future,” says Mike Slomp, executive director of the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP), which delivers the EFP program in Alberta.

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers

Although it has enjoyed strong producer and industry support since its inception, Slomp says the EFP program faces a challenge in developing a funding framework that will keep it viable into the future. “The fact is that we’re at a crossroads,” he says. “As the Agriculture Policy Framework enters its second generation, we will need the ongoing support of the agricultural industry as we search for adequate and appropriate ways to fund on-farm environmental improvements.”

Farmer driven process

As the EFP program was being introduced in 2002, producers made two things clear. First, they wanted the program to offer a free, confidential tool for measuring environmental strengths and weaknesses on their farms and ranches. Second, they wanted a program structure driven by producers themselves.

“In short, the EFP program has been designed by producers, for producers,” says Slomp. “It’s their way of sending the message that the agricultural industry is taking action to achieve meaningful action on its environmental issues without the influence of regulation.”

The EFP program operates on a

regional basis and at a community level. Free EFP workshops, the attendance of which acts as the first step in the process of developing an EFP, are delivered by regionally-based workshop facilitators who are usually local producers. Seven hundred and ninety EFP workshops were held throughout Alberta in the fiscal year ending March 2007.

Once an EFP is completed, a facilitator presents the plan anonymously to a regional review committee. The committee, which is also made up of local producers, then provides constructive feedback on the EFP. Once concerns have been addressed, the plan is deemed to be appropriate. At that point, participants are eligible for up to \$50,000 in funding and technical assistance for 26 categories of on-farm environmental improvements through the Canada-Alberta Farm Stewardship Program (CAFSP).

Funding and technical assistance key

Stewardship funding and technical assistance have been key drivers of the EFP program, says Slomp. In the most recent fiscal year, Alberta producers submitted nearly 2,000 applications requesting \$8.4 million for 26 categories of on-farm environmental improvements. “This represents nearly \$20 million spent by producers on the beneficial management practices covered by the CAFSP cost-sharing initiative,” says Slomp.

EFP participants also have access to the program’s broad network of technical assistants (TAs). “TAs are available to help producers make the on-farm environmental improvements identified in their EFPs,” he says.

Information for producers

One of the cornerstones of the EFP program has been providing quality information to producers, says Slomp.



Farm gate signs reinforce sustainable practices

Producers have access to a broad range of information on the EFP program through the AEFP Web site at www.AlbertaEFP.com.

“This site has been designed to offer program news, producer success stories, up-to-date workshop listings and times and locations of trade shows featuring EFP representatives. It also includes contact information for local workshop facilitators as well as the AEFP toll-free number to reach our head office in Edmonton.”

Funding challenge

Financial and in-kind support of the EFP program from the agricultural industry has been critical to the successful operation of the program. “We will continue to need the support of the industry as we go on to examine funding alternatives,” says Slomp.

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (WRAP) is an example of an organization which continues to support the EFP program and its ongoing need for funding, he says. “WRAP has been on board since EFP’s conception, with Robert Filkohazy, the director of WRAP, also serving on AEFP’s board of directors. We value their support and the support of other organizations which have helped make AEFP the leading organization it is today.”

Contact:
Alberta Environmental
Farm Plan Company
866.844.2337
info@AlbertaEFP.com

Young farmers learn to think like CEOs

By **LEONA DARGIS**

In April, 50 young agricultural entrepreneurs attended the Alberta Young Farmers' Forum (AYFF) Annual General Meeting in Red Deer. The agenda was full of dynamic speakers.

From Carman, Manitoba, Brent Vankoughnet delivered a fantastic morning session titled, "Thinking Like a Farm CEO." He spoke in a manner that illustrated realistic situations on business planning and management scenarios. The results were similar of a personal think tank.

After lunch, Bill Dobson, president of the Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, gave a few words and emphasized the importance and impact

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers

of a group like AYFF. He also gave us some background on Wild Rose and welcomed any who were interested in becoming a member now or in the future.

The afternoon was structured to provide a more interactive environment. We invited four individual producers who have diversified their operation and a fifth individual who owns and operates a private landscaping company.

After each panel member gave a brief introduction, they broke out into three groups. The members were to circulate in three larger groups to each panel group of two. This one-on-one opportunity gave the members a chance to discuss specific issues.

It was very entertaining to hear what a beekeeper, a 17,000-acre man (no doubt from Saskatchewan), and the other two who were in the business of raising goats and sheep had to say describing their practices.

In having the landscaping representative there, Brent wanted to emphasize the similarity of non-farm companies and the day-to-day issues that they have to deal with.

To look at the bigger picture, Chris Kletke, chairman of the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum (CYFF), explained to the crowd what the role of



Saskatchewan Labour Farm Safety Program

Young farmers can learn a lot from their elders in the industry

this national organization is and their future plans.

Sharon Eistetter of Farm Credit Canada (FCC), presented some facts about farm management styles and Reg Shandro shared personal stories of farm operations that have failed and have succeeded in farm succession. As an agricultural consultant, Reg says that dealing with the transfer of farm assets is not as complicated and critical as dealing with everyone's personal feelings, wants, and needs.

Also during this time the AYFF AGM took place. The election of a new executive and three additional board member positions were fulfilled. These individuals are enthused to be working together as a team and share their diverse agricultural backgrounds.

President Cody LaRocque will bring his experience in governing boards and effective leadership skills to guide this energetic group to new heights in the upcoming year.

Vice-President Lee Townsen brings his unique business and marketing skills to the board. Andrew Froland and Drew

Thevenaz are the newly elected treasurer and secretary. They have both shown interest in taking initiatives in getting involved and with the AYFF their contribution will be valued.

Tanner Polack has agreed to commit his time as past-president and will play a key role in continuing consistency of information within the group. The nine board members are from all corners of the province and will continue to support and create new opportunities for the association.

To complete this brief report on the AYFF AGM, all feedback from this event was very positive and I look forward to having another successful AGM next year. With potentially organizing events with neighbouring provinces, the Canada's agricultural industry will be sure to prosper!

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Auditor General, farmers call for change to income stabilization program

To avoid giving the wrong impression I want to say from the start that, in my many years working with governments to represent farmers, I have met a lot of truly dedicated, hard-working and client-focused civil servants.

There really are many people working in our federal and provincial agriculture ministries who listen to stakeholders and realize that, in the design and delivery of programs, the first priority is meeting the needs of Canadian farmers.

That being said, you can have a whole group of well-intentioned individuals and still have an overall corporate culture that makes process and bureaucracy the first priority and places higher emphasis on budget lines than meeting people's needs. That culture is exactly what our national Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, spotted and criticized in her analysis of the Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization (CAIS) program.

COMMENTARY

*Bob Friesen
President, CFA*



Nothing in the Auditor General's report really comes as a surprise to farmers. If anything it's a validation of everything we've been saying since the start of CAIS. We all know you need to be a psychic to predict if and when your CAIS payment's going to arrive, and you need an advanced accounting



The culture of bureaucracy needs to change: Bob Friesen

degree to figure out your CAIS statement if and when it does show up. We all know that if you get an overpayment the administration's on you like a starving dog on a bone, but if you're underpaid you're on your own to sort it out – that is if you're actually able to decipher the calculations on your statement enough to realize you've been underpaid.

All of that is what led the CFA to demand more predictable and bankable safety nets programs. It's what led us to suggest an accounts-based program like the old NISA for the top tier of income loss, a suggestion the government listened to and enacted. But more than simply making new programs, what the Auditor General's report is telling us is we need to change the culture in our agricultural bureaucracy. In the design and administration of our programs we have to refocus their priorities.

The Farm Income Protection Act says the CAIS program's objective is to protect the income of producers. But what Ms. Fraser noted was, when it comes to the people who administer the program, their objectives are to crank through as many applications as quickly

as possible and to protect their bottom line, all at the expense of accuracy. They see themselves as guard dogs whose job is to watch the government's money and not spend one penny more than they have to.

Now these are taxpayer dollars, so there is absolutely a need to be accountable for how they are spent and to ensure there is efficiency and little waste. But if the program objective – protecting the income of producers – is not being met, there's a bigger problem right from the start.

So the challenge our government faces, that we as an industry need to help with (because farmers need to be involved in making the programs that affect them), is not simply making better programs, it's fixing the culture of the people who design and administer our programs. And it's not me saying this, it's the Auditor General.

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers

Contact:
**Canadian Federation
of Agriculture**
613.236.3633
info@cfaca.ca

Coming to a trade show near you...

Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF) has been around the block for years, 25 to be exact, and is proud of all it has come to accomplish. This time of celebration brings with it a time for reflection. Looking to the past, and to future. Identifying what needs to be changed and what can be improved. To this, one answer jumps to the forefront - communication to our key stakeholders, farmers.

The WGRF is farmer funded and directed. Set up in 1981 to fund research that directly benefits prairie farmers, the WGRF has an annual funding base in the range of \$4 to \$5 million.

Those research dollars are invested into public breeding programs across Western Canada that work towards the development of new wheat and barley

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers

varieties for farmers to grow. The WGRF also funds shorter-term research projects through our Endowment Fund which are selected based on scientific merit and direct benefit to farmers.

With all of the break-throughs coming out of the research that is being funded, it is easy to see why communicating that message to farmers is important. "We not only want farmers to hear about the exciting research that is taking place, but we also want to encourage a two-way communication where we share information with them, and they respond by telling us their thoughts on issues facing farmers today," said WGRF Communications Manager Amanda Soulodre.

One mechanism to facilitate this information share is a trade show. "This medium allows us to tell farmers one-on-one about the research that is taking place, the varieties that have been developed with their support, and hear what they have to say," says Soulodre. "The information is then taken back to our



Western Grain Research Foundation continues to develop new varieties of wheat and barley for farmers to grow

board and used when making important decisions for the future."

This is the first year that the WGRF has hit the trade show circuit, and the next show they are attending is the Farm Progress Show in Regina from June 20 to 22. Soulodre is encouraging anyone planning to attend the show to come by: "The booth number is 3401 in Banner Hall. We encourage you to pop by and

say hello. If you have questions about us this is the perfect time to have them answered, if you have comments we want nothing more than to hear them. Hope to see you in June."

Contact:
www.westerngrains.com
306.975.0060

Alberta opens first Canadian incubator for agri-food entrepreneurs

Alberta's agri-food entrepreneurs now have the opportunity to gain new business skills, technical expertise and the physical space needed to grow their businesses and bring new food products to the plates of Albertans and others around the world.

George Groeneveld, Minister of Agriculture and Food, says the new, state-of-the-art 6,875-square-meter Agrivalve Processing Business Incubator in Leduc will help Alberta's agriculture industry stay competitive and become a global leader in value-added food processing. "There is no shortage of new ideas, new products and innovation in Alberta's food processing sector. Our goal with this facility is to develop those ideas and bring those products forward, into the market, and help our industry to grow," says Groeneveld.

The incubator is the first Canadian facility of its kind dedicated to growing the food processing sector. It provides up to eight businesses with the use of a privately accessed, fully serviced processing suite. The incubator builds on the success of its neighbouring Food Development Processing Centre and helps businesses in the scale-up and commercialization of new products and technologies.

FireSmart your property

By SARAH SEINEN

A little extra spring cleaning could save your house and yard from wildfire this summer.

Most landowners rake leaves and clean up dry grass as soon as the snow disappears, but there are many more ways to reduce the risk of wildfire on your property.

“Yard maintenance is the easiest thing to do, but changing the materials used on your house is really effective and the most applicable for residents in or near forested areas,” said Dana Kroetsch, communications officer for Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) in Whitecourt.

Forest Protection

Alberta’s FireSmart program works to reduce the likelihood of large, high-intensity, high-severity wildfires in the province and also provides information on reducing the risk of wildfire to homes and communities. ASRD staff provide landowners with wildfire hazard assessment forms, checklists and information, free of charge.

By doing an inspection with a FireSmart checklist in hand, landowners are able to determine the risk of wildfire to their site, structures and area. If particular questions arise, landowners should contact their local ASRD office for help.

“While wildfires are healthy for the forest, they can easily move from forest, bush or grassland areas into populated areas. If you FireSmart your property, you will help protect your home in the event this occurs,” said Kroetsch.

Wildfire feeds on vegetative fuels, whether they are in the forest, in your community or in your yard.

Kroetsch offers the following FireSmart tips for minimizing risk in



FireSmart treatments could save your home from wildfire

your yard:

- Keep lawns watered and mowed. This prevents fire from moving along the ground towards the house or other structures.
- Clean up cured grass and debris to prevent the fire from passing from treetop to treetop and jumping to the house or other structures.
- Prune tree branches within one or two metres of the ground.
- Keep trees, shrubs and wood piles at least 10 metres from the house or other structures.
- Place trees at least three to four metres from the side of the driveway. This helps to create a fire guard and also clears a path for emergency vehicles.
- Choose deciduous trees instead of conifers (that is, select poplar, birch, aspen over spruce, pine, fir). Conifers tend to catch fire quicker and burn more intensely.
- Thin trees so treetops don’t touch.

The Home Owner’s FireSmart Manual, available online or at local ASRD offices, offers many structural modifications for reducing the threat of wildfire to your home or business.

Some of these tips are:

- Use only fire-retardant roofing rated Class A, B or C.
- Keep roof and eaves clear of debris.
- Use fire-resistant material for siding, such as stucco, brick, cement shingles

and rock.

- Clear vegetative fuels that are within 10 metres of windows unless there are solid shutters to cover the glass, and use small, thermal-pane windows made of tempered glass for greater protection.
- Build balcony and deck surfaces of non-combustible or fire-resistant materials.
- Keep a round-point shovel, a grubbing tool and a water source readily available from the exterior of the building during fire season.

Of course, most of these FireSmart solutions are easier and less expensive to implement prior to building a house or developing a site, said Kroetsch, but many can be added to long-term maintenance or renovation plans.

Landowners can also reduce loss by having an emergency plan and fire insurance.

For woodlot owners and agricultural producers, reducing risk might include planting a mix of tree species or developing evacuation plans for livestock.

Check out the FireSmart website at www.srd.gov.ab.ca/wildfires/firesmart.

Contact:
Dana Kroetsch
780.778.7273
dana.kroetsch@gov.ab.ca



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Woodlot Information: Fred Radersma
Silviculture Superintendent
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- Buck and split up to 14" diameter
- Split up to 1.5-2 cords per hour
- PTO or motor drive options



Top selling processor in Canada



Apache Log Skidder

Ideal for small logging operations or for hard-to-reach places.

- Up to 400' winch line
- Uses 2-8 chokers
- Works from 3-point hitch
- For 16-150 hp power

Apache
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