

## BACKGROUND

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Sept. 2005

Ministry of Forests and Range

### **MOUNTAIN PINE BEETLE - COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

The Province of British Columbia is committed to mitigating the impacts the mountain pine beetle infestation is expected to have on Interior First Nations and communities.

As part of government's goal to provide communities with the funding, control and ability to create new opportunities for sustainable economic growth and more jobs, the province has created a number of regional development trust funds. Of the \$185-million Northern Development Initiative Trust Fund, \$30 million is designated for mitigation of beetle impacts. Similarly, the \$50-million Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust will also provide communities with funds to pursue new opportunities.

Government is also enabling community associations and First Nations to determine their future by preparing regional recovery strategies. These include:

- \$1.6 million to the Cariboo Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition, comprising the communities of 100 Mile House, Williams Lake and Quesnel.
- \$800,000 to the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition, comprising the communities from Smithers to Prince George.

These funds are in addition to those being made available by the federal government. The Mountain Pine Beetle Emergency Response: Canada-B.C. Implementation Strategy directs federal funds to the following:

- \$24.8 million to reduce the risk of interface forest fires by conducting fuel management treatments around communities and First Nations in mountain pine beetle-infested areas, and
- \$13.2 million for economic development planning and diversification for impacted communities and First Nations.

As well, the Chief Forester has increased the allowable annual cuts, based on updated timber supply analyses. This has resulted in a surge in forestry activity in the hardest-hit areas, with harvesting contractors and processing facilities working at full-capacity to salvage beetle-killed timber before it loses its value. Inevitably, there will be declines in allowable annual cuts once the infestation runs its course and merchantable pine has been salvaged.

To make the best use of temporary increased harvest levels, the Province is creating new tenure opportunities for processors making products other than dimensional softwood lumber. Two companies have expressed interest in building an oriented strand board plant and up to four industrial pellet plants. This new capital investment will bring new jobs and revenues to communities in the beetle-infested areas and will help diversify the forest sector.

Through economic diversification planning and funding support, the province is giving communities the tools they need to help determine their future and ensure long-term sustainability.

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