

Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan 2006-2011



September 2006

ACTION PLAN SNAPSHOT: COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Encouraging immediate and long-term economic sustainability for communities and First Nations is a key objective of British Columbia's 2006-2011 Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan.

Emergency measures to salvage and recover value from beetle-attacked forests have significantly increased the level of timber harvesting activity in many parts of the central Interior. However this busy period is short-term. Reductions to the allowable annual cuts are inevitable once the epidemic runs its course.

Many forest-dependent communities will have to diversify their economies to weather the effects of the beetle epidemic. To that end, the Province is providing leadership, funding and planning to help communities deal with the long-term challenges ahead.

The \$185-million Northern Development Initiative Trust was set up to act as a catalyst for small communities to begin economic development and diversification projects. Since September 2005, the Northern Trust has committed \$23.3 million for 47 economic development projects for central and northern British Columbia.

Similarly, a \$50-million Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust has been created to help provide economic diversification support for southern B.C. communities – many of which are just beginning to feel the effects of the expanding MPB infestation.

Government is also supporting regional groups such as the Cariboo-Chilcotin and Omineca beetle action coalitions with their regional development efforts.

With \$1.6 million to date from the Province, CCBAC is working on six economic sector development strategies (agriculture, tourism, log home building, increasing the population base, secondary wood manufacturing, and mining) and a number of other planning initiatives and projects.

CCBAC's northern counterpart the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition has received \$800,000 from the Province and is beginning work on recovery strategies for communities in the northern interior forest region.

As well, communities will see significant investment and job creation result from the temporary MPB cut uplifts and new tenure opportunities.

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The Province has awarded major forest licences to TallOil Canada to build up to four plants for producing industrial wood pellets.

Energy production is a new and innovative way to use pine beetle-attacked timber over an extended period of time. To take advantage of this potential opportunity, British Columbia is developing a wood bioenergy strategy to help meet electricity needs and to create jobs and economic growth.

To date, the Province has also committed more than \$3.5 million for research and development of new beetle-wood products. The wood is being tested in a variety of product applications such as laminated decking and flooring, structural panels and particleboard, and structural beams made of laminated wood.

Working alongside First Nations with traditional territories in the infestation zone is also a high priority. Government has committed \$7.9 million for strategic long-term planning to sustain First Nations cultures dependent on the forests, and \$2 million for wildfire protection and fuel management plans on Crown land surrounding First Nations reserves.

The Province has also made funding available for research priorities identified by First Nations, and added two First Nations representatives to the FIA-Forest Science Board.

In the spirit of the New Relationship, additional employment opportunities for First Nations will be provided through increased recruitment for firefighting crews, and contracts to perform Forests for Tomorrow reforestation work such as surveying and site preparation.

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