



FOR RELEASE #06-074

April 1, 2006

ONE MILLION CUBIC METERS IDENTIFIED FOR HARVEST IN BEETLE AFFECTED FOREST OF SOUTHWEST YUKON

HAINES JUNCTION – The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Yukon government have accepted a recommendation for the harvest of up to one million cubic meters of beetle affected timber over the next ten years in the Champagne and Aishihik traditional territory. The recommendation also includes a final draft Integrated Landscape Plan.

The timber, mostly impacted by the spruce bark beetle, will provide forest industry companies with the opportunity to capture economic value from the wood before the volume becomes unusable or destroyed by forest fire.

“The Champagne and Aishihik Strategic Forest Management Plan, signed in 2004, was the first such management plan to be completed in the Yukon,” Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Archie Lang said. “Today we are achieving another milestone with a harvest level determination that could provide economic opportunities for industry while helping to restore a healthy forest and environment for future generations.”

“We can all be proud of the hard work and dedication of the steering group and the technical working groups that led to this important and significant decision,” Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Chief James Allen said. “We are looking forward to the employment and other economic opportunities that an active forest sector could bring and we are also very interested in forest activity that will mitigate the growing fire hazard around our communities.”

The recommendation was made by a steering group made up of members from the Alsek Renewable Resources Council, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Yukon government.

Two rounds of public meetings were held during 2005 in Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Champagne, Mendenhall and Silver City at which residents were able to comment on “where” and “how much” timber could be harvested. This critical information was then used to identify a land base and a harvest ceiling. The areas identified for possible harvesting represent less than 10 percent of the forested land base in the Champagne and Aishihik traditional territory.

The final draft Integrated Landscape Plan is available for review and comment on the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Forest Implementation website at www.caforestry.ca.

The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Yukon government will be offering timber to the forest industry through Request for Proposals that could see wood available as soon as early this summer.

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