

*For landowners  
who care*

# Western Farm & Forest

Sustainable Land Management Opportunities

WINTER 2006



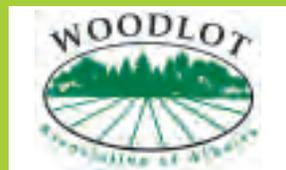
Wild Rose's  
annual convention

Land access and  
compensation

Municipalities  
tackle beetle



**Willow: a  
winner for  
biomass  
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**WRAP and WAA members!**  
This is your official membership magazine!  
Please see inside for association news

# B.C. woodlot survival: sink or swim in a sea of red

By FBCWA

From September 28 to 30, 2006, the Nadina Woodlot Association hosted the annual general meetings of the Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations and the Woodlot Product Development Council (FBCWA).

The village of Burns Lake, which is located northwest British Columbia and home to about 2,000 residents, welcomed close to 200 visitors to their community.

The theme of the meeting: *Woodlot Survival: Sink or Swim in a Sea of Red* was evident throughout the entire weekend. From the red name tags to the beetle-killed pine trees that adorned the speakers' stage, one could not overlook the impact of the mountain pine beetle. There are 240 woodlot licences within a 150 kilometer radius of Burns Lake, and most have been significantly impacted by the pine beetles.

On the first day of the event, the participants selected one of three field trips. Tour one visited the Cheslatta Forest Products Mill on Ootsa Lake. The mill is a partnership between Carrier Forest Products, the Cheslatta Carrier Nation and the local community. The impetus for construction of the mill came from the need to utilize large volumes of beetle wood.

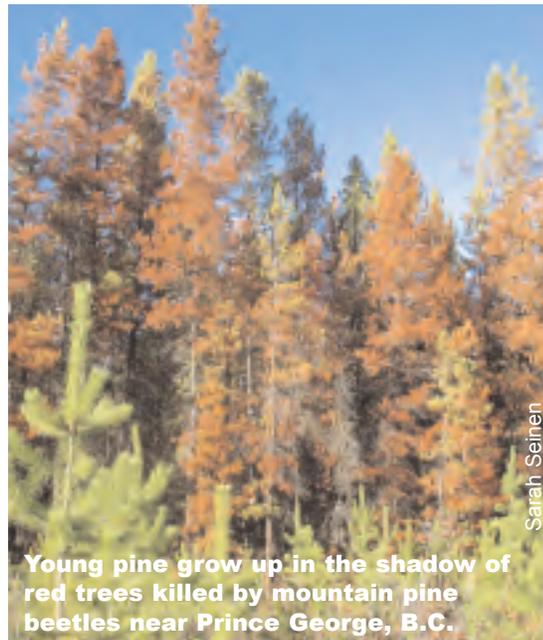
Tour two viewed Canfor's Houston sawmill, which is currently billed as the largest sawmill in the world. While there, visitors learned that there is a surplus of smaller diameter logs, mostly beetle-killed pine, while the mill has a demand for larger diameter logs that is not being met. From there, the group visited Carl Szydluk, a woodlot licensee who is

facing a dilemma on how to manage his woodlot that has 70,000 cubic metres of beetle-attacked timber.

Tour three took in the Omineca Ski Club and the Community Forest Trail System. Both are faced with challenges to maintain recreational and economic values from the areas they manage as the pine beetle infestation continues unabated.

On the second day, panel discussions and speaker presentations covered topics such as silviculture, hydrology, financial management and legal issues as they relate to woodlots affected by pine beetle infestations. On Saturday evening, the Minister of Forests and Range, Rich Coleman, spoke to a crowd of 180 people all wanting to hear a favourable resolution to the timber pricing and administrative streamlining for woodlot licences.

While an immediate answer to the future strategy for woodlot holders is not easily attainable, one thing is for certain. With the positive attitude of the local woodlot holders and the strong community spirit, they will not sink. Yet even the strongest of swimmers needs a break sometimes to survive.



Sarah Seinen

Young pine grow up in the shadow of red trees killed by mountain pine beetles near Prince George, B.C.

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**Main cover: A lone bison settles into winter in southern Alberta. Photo by Sarah Seinen**

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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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## Elections galore!

I am writing this article during the last week of November. This weekend the Alberta provincial PC leadership vote is taking place, the federal Liberal party is electing a new leader in Montreal and the Canadian Wheat Board director elections close.

These are all significantly different elections but each one has the potential to have a profound effect on agriculture in Alberta.

We rely on production, marketing, policy development, science, research and government-aided stability to make this industry prosper.

Farmers pride themselves in their independence but really we are a part of a team. Every member of this team has to do their part well for the next person to have any chance of success.

Considering that we have this reliance on each other, we seem to have a very difficult time communicating and co-operating with each other. Is this not one role of a strong General Farm Organization?

Bringing the players together and building strength throughout the entire industry definitely needs to be our primary focus.



**Bill Dobson,**  
**Wildrose**  
**Agricultural**  
**Producers**

## Beetle committee links to WAA

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development recently appointed a Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) Advisory Committee in response to the concerns of a potential epidemic beetle flight from British Columbia.

Although the Woodlot Association of Alberta does not sit on the Advisory Committee, we have a direct link to the Secretariat which sponsors one page per issue of our magazine, dedicated to updates on MPB detection and eradication programs.

At the November meeting of the Advisory Committee, Les Safranyik, a renowned MPB expert from B.C., presented an overview of mountain pine beetle ecology and management strategies applicable to Alberta.

In 1966, Safranyik was studying beetles near Fairmont Hot Springs, B.C. I worked for Les as a university summer student that year and we were falling mature infected lodgepole pine, peeling the bark and documenting the larvae travel under the bark.

Forty years later the beetle has

succeeded in establishing a foothold in western Alberta via the infected B.C. forests. Our vast lodgepole pine stands along the eastern slopes have reached the mature and over-mature age class preferred by the beetles and

winter weather has recently been favourable for their survival on our side of the BC border.

The beetles over-winter in large-diameter pine trees at about 1.5 metres from the ground and are susceptible only to -40 C weather for an extended period as they have a natural antifreeze solution in the larvae

stage. For mother nature to limit the eastern spread of the beetle, we need insulating snow depths of less than 1.5 metres and a stretch of seriously cold days. The suggestions that Safranyik left with the Advisory Committee focus on long-term management of lodgepole pine, in association with beetle control programs.

Fundamental to success is a reliable hazard-risk rating system, a continuous detection system, aggressive treatment and a continuous commitment to the control program.



**Dennis**  
**Quintilio,**  
**WAA**

# Municipal program helps residents battle the beetle

By SARAH SEINEN

With more mountain pine beetles in Alberta's forests than ever before, the province's beetle advisory committee is calling on landowners to scout and report infested trees on their property.

## MPB Advisory Committee

"As the beetles continue to spread into forests on municipal and private lands, we need to rally everyone together to aid the provincial government in its control efforts," said John Irwin, Mayor of Crowsnest Pass and chair of the Mountain Pine Beetle Advisory Committee.

A mass attack of beetles in northern Alberta in late summer has bumped up the number of estimated infested trees to more than 800,000.

The committee, created in May and representing a wide cross-section of stakeholders, is spreading the message to communities that pine beetle infestation is a serious threat to Canada's forests.

"Beetle populations seem to be fairly stable in the south but in the north, due to the huge beetle flight from British Columbia into the Peace region, populations are growing rapidly," said Erica Lee, a provincial pine beetle specialist. "We're estimating a significant increase in the number of infested trees—potentially, this could be the largest beetle year in

Alberta's history."

To deal with the mountain pine beetles on Crown land, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) has hired additional staff to conduct ground surveys and cut and burn activities. It is also planning prescribed burns in the provincial parks and working with forest companies to alter harvesting plans to target susceptible stands of pine.

As for infestations found on private land, the province is providing financial assistance for survey and control costs through a municipal grant program, explained Dan Lux, provincial pine beetle coordinator, at



Dan Lux at a press conference

the Woodlot Association of Alberta's annual meeting in October.

He said the advisory committee supports the province's aggressive approach to beetle control and is eager to work with municipalities to deliver the program.

Municipalities in Alberta applied for funding through the grant program in November. The

funds will support public education campaigns, and the municipalities will work with ASRD to facilitate control efforts.

"Your local municipal district or county representative is your main contact," Lux said. "Let them know if you think you have infested trees on



Doug Macaulay

## Detection is the first step to control

your land, or call 310-BUGS, and ASRD will follow up."

A municipality does not have the legal authority to go onto private land and cut and burn infested trees without the landowner's permission, but no one has denied access thus far, he said.

Under section 28 of the *Forest and Prairie Protection Act*, the Minister may "carry out on any land any control measures that the Minister considers advisable for the prevention and control of injurious forest tree pest infestations or non-indigenous invasive species infestations."

Lux said the province does not want to go that route and prefers to have local municipalities work with rate payers to treat infested trees.

Woodlot owners who have beetle-attacked trees on their property and who do not want to have their infested trees cut and burned can recover the timber by felling the tree and removing (and burning or burying) the bark before the beetles fly in the summer.

"Educate yourselves, look for evidence of infested trees and report any infestation," said Lux. "And if you're planning on harvesting, consider removing some of your big old pine trees as a priority."

For more information, visit [www.srd.gov.ab.ca/forests/health/mpb.html](http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/forests/health/mpb.html).

# Biotechnology boosts defence against beetle

By DAVID HOLEHOUSE

A Delta, B.C., company has received Canadian registration for a pheromone that when applied to trees sends a “No Vacancy” message to invading mountain pine beetles.

Ralph Nevill of Pherotech International says the company’s product, dispensed in pouches that are hung on susceptible trees, has been used successfully in the U.S. for five years. Now its use in B.C. has shown protection levels of up to 70 per cent, and well over 90 per cent when used in conjunction with Sevin Turf and Ornamental (T&O) insecticide.

“Our pheromone Verbenone is totally natural—it’s the signal the beetles use to disperse themselves evenly throughout a tree and the forest,” said Nevill. “They use it when populations

reach a point at which incoming beetles should keep moving and find another tree.”

Researchers have been working with the pheromone for 20 years, and more recently Pherotech became involved in the quest to commercialize the product.

The result is pheromone repellent pouches that can be hung singly or in pairs on high-value trees around a home, or on a 15-metre grid pattern through larger stands. The cost is infinitely smaller than the expense of cutting, removing, disposing of and replacing a high-value tree.

Pherotech recommends a six-stage process for any land owner or manager concerned

with mountain pine beetle in his or her stands—whether it’s a small acreage planting or a large forested area.

- Diagnosis: Know the signs of beetle attack, and make a correct diagnosis of problems in your trees before planning a response.

- Disposal: All beetle infested trees on your property or in your community must be removed and disposed of before beetles emerge in the summer.

- Spacing: Thinning to four or five metres between trees has been found to deter beetle attacks.



Placing the pheromone pouch on a healthy tree is like hanging a “No Vacancy” sign for beetles



- Pesticide: Sevin T&O can be applied to the trunk and up into the crown from April to early June.
- Protection: Use Verbenone pouches on healthy trees.
- Monitor: Check trees at the end of October after beetle flight has ceased. If infested trees are found, plan to repeat the protection program next year and as needed.

The Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) website has complete information on how to identify mountain pine beetle attacks: [www.srd.gov.ab.ca/forests/health/mpb.html](http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/forests/health/mpb.html).

**Contact:**  
**Pherotech**  
**604.940.9944**  
**[www.pherotech.com](http://www.pherotech.com)**

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Evening Banquet-Entertainment  
Wednesday, January 10, 2007  
Continental Breakfast  
Lunch & AGM  
Cost: \$100.00

EXTRA Banquet Tickets: \$35.00 per person

# THE AGENDA

## Day One Tuesday, January 9, 2007

8:00-8:30	Registration and Coffee
8:30-9:00	Introduction and Welcome Bill Dobson, President, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers
9:00-9:45	Richard McConnell, Consultant, Dymac "Individual Area Based Insurance, A concept for the future?"
9:45-10:30	Speaker TBD "The Water for Life Strategy: How does it relate to Risk Management?"
10:30-10:45	Coffee Break
10:45-11:30	Laurel Aitken, Farm Safety Co-ordinator, AAFRD Doug Beever, Agrium "Farm Safety and Risk Management, Now and Into the Future."
11:30-12:10	Speaker
12:10-1:10	Lunch
1:10-2:10	Cher Brethour, Senior Research Associate, George Morris Centre (tentative) "Beneficial Management Practices"
2:10-2:45	Bob Friesen, President, Canadian Federation of Agriculture "The Canadian Farm Bill"
2:45-3:00	Coffee
3:00-4:00	Doug Wright, Vice President, Cooperative Business Development, The Co-operators RCMP Representative "Preventative Risk Management for the Farm"
4:00-4:30	Susan Church, Executive Director, Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) Question and Answer
4:30-5:00	Wrap-Up
6:00	Banquet and Silent Auction

## Day Two Wednesday, January 10, 2007

7:45	Breakfast - Speaker TBA
8:45	Welcome and Call to Order Bill Dobson, President Approval and/or Additions to the Agenda Call for acceptance of the Minutes of the Tenth Annual Convention as circulated Nominations Open President's Report
9:10	Board of Directors' Report
9:20	Executive Director's Report
9:25	Financial Report Presented by Rod Scarlett Motion to Approve Submitted Financial Statements Motion for the Ratification of the actions of the 2006/2007 Board of Directors
9:30	Discussion & voting on 2007 Resolutions
10:30	Coffee Break
10:45	Discussion & voting on 2007 Resolutions - continued
12:15	Nominations Close
12:30	Lunch
1:15	Close of Resolutions
1:30	Presentations/Election of 2007/2008 Board of Directors (if necessary)
1:45	Discussion & voting on 2007 Resolutions - continued
2:00	Election Closes
2:30	Election Results Coffee Break Board Meeting
3:30	Executive Announced Discussion & voting on 2007 Resolutions - continued
4:00	New Business Summary - President Elect
4:45	Motion to Adjourn

# Timber marketers must be innovative

*Despite the grim outlook for wood products, opportunities exist for savvy woodlot owners*

By SARAH SEINEN

Next year could be one of the toughest on record for Alberta's wood products manufacturers, but that doesn't necessarily spell disaster for woodlot operators.

"It looks as if there is going to be an appetite for deciduous timber in Alberta with the new oriented strand-board capacity coming online in

## Forest Business

northern Alberta," says Ziggy Bahde, a commodity market analyst with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

Despite increased capacity, however, market demand remains the key to profitability.

Ultimately, the profitability of Alberta softwood lumber producers depends on one of two things: production cutbacks in other jurisdictions like British Columbia, Eastern Canada and the United States, or rebounding consumer demand in the form of housing starts in the United States that stabilize and then recover to healthier 2005 levels.

North American softwood lumber production declines did not keep pace with the sudden and rapid drop in consumer demand in the second half of 2006. As a result, supply exceeded demand to the point where prices fell to unsustainable levels by the fourth quarter. A drop in new housing starts in the United States is to blame for slower softwood lumber sales.

"Western Canada and, in particular, Alberta's housing starts, remained resilient for most of 2006, but recently we're starting to see even those numbers slide slightly," says Bahde. "Regardless of the housing start numbers, since Western Canada is a regional market and we can only soak up a small percentage of what we produce, what happens in the American softwood lumber market is what really determines the health of our producers."

A strong Canadian dollar and export taxes assessed on softwood lumber exports into the United States are expected to stress Alberta softwood lumber producers well into 2007, says Bahde.

Despite the bleak summary of solid wood markets, some business opportunities exist for innovative woodlot owners, says Juri Agapow, forest operations extension specialist in Alberta for the Forest Engineering Research

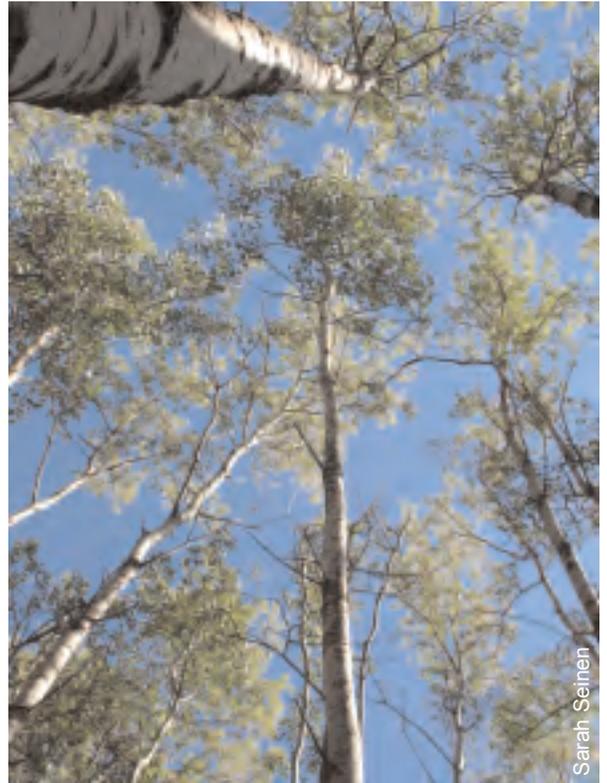
Institute of Canada (FERIC) and a director of the Woodlot Association of Alberta.

"What woodlot owners should concentrate on are value-added products, specialty markets and non-timber forest products—there's more than just wood in the forest," Agapow says. "In the long run, biomass production for bioenergy or biofuels might become another option."

The Peace River woodlot owner says the demand for products is growing in the north as the population and industry expands. "Find a niche market, push your products and do value-added marketing in your own area," he urges.

Agapow points to one small sawmill in the Peace River area that can hardly generate enough 3x10 oil-field planking from coniferous or deciduous timber and to other operations in northern Alberta that produce wood pellets, birch flooring and log cabins as examples of niche markets.

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Sarah Seinen



Tony Kryzanowski

# ASRD staff travel to China to study grassland practices

## By ASRD STAFF

Alberta's knowledge of grassland management is taking to the international stage.

Gerry Ehlert and Helen Newsham, agrologists with the Rangeland Management Branch of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD), travelled to Ningxia Autonomous Region of China from September 20 to 30.

The 10-day trip was the first part of a grassland management policy project, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

### Public Lands

Ningxia is located in north-central China and has a semi-arid and arid grassland climate. Grazing resources are critical to the local agricultural economy and way of life. Ningxia's policy makers and public land managers want to develop an implementation plan to support recent regulations that better protect their grasslands.

The plan will address goals of increased environmental protection and grassland health, reduced soil erosion and desertification, balanced



Rice harvesting in Ningxia, China

grazing levels and increased economic returns for farmers. Ehlert said Ningxia has a strong desire to better harmonize their environmental, social and economic values.

Chinese officials face a number of challenges, including an ongoing grazing ban on grasslands, developing a grazing management program that

will reintroduce grazing on an accountable and sustainable basis, and development of regulations for the collection and marketing of wild medicinal plants such as licorice and ephedra.

Alberta will assist Ningxia by sharing experiences and information about our grassland legislation, regulations, policy, technology and management practices. The federal government and other provinces will also share their grassland knowledge and experiences with the Chinese.

And Alberta officials have also learned from the experience.

"It reaffirms that we are on a positive track when laws and practices help protect and sustain grasslands, and help prevent overdevelopment, overgrazing and pollution," said Ehlert.

The next step in the project is to have a work plan approved by CIDA, which will include two missions to Alberta by Chinese officials in the spring and summer of 2007 and a return trip to Ningxia by ASRD officials in fall 2007.



Gerry Ehlert and Helen Newsham with their Chinese hosts

# Willow studies power up

By SARAH SEINEN

Fast-growing native willows for biomass production could increase the diversity, profits and viability of farms across Canada, experts say.

“Biomass has the potential to make a significant contribution to energy supplies, both nationally and worldwide,” says Bill Schroeder, head of research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada - Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration

## AAFC-PFRA Biomass Project

(AAFC-PFRA) Agroforestry Division’s Shelterbelt Centre at Indian Head, Saskatchewan.

The AAFC-PFRA Agroforestry Division is partnering in a three-year research project to study short-rotation willow plantations and agroforestry systems for biomass and bioenergy generation.

“Our goal is to create agroforestry knowledge for practical use by producers and land managers, so they can manage their land resource sustainably while also benefiting from the production of biomass and its energy potential,” says Schroeder.

Biomass is any renewable organic matter such as trees, crops, feeds or agricultural residues, and can be used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and produce energy for final end uses such as heat, fuel and electricity.

Historically, biomass commodities (such as wood) were the main source of heat for many Canadian homes, farms and businesses.

“New conversion technologies are resulting in renewed interest in biomass production for energy. This process is capable of generating both sustainable energy and environmental benefits—it’s a two-for-one deal,” says John Kort, a researcher with the AAFC-PFRA Agroforestry Division.

Funded by the Technology and

Innovation fund of the Canadian Biomass Innovation Network, the agroforestry biomass project consists of two sub-projects with study sites in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and Prince Edward Island.

The sub-projects are: agroforestry systems for energy production and native willows for biomass production.

Under the agroforestry systems sub-project, researchers are evaluating willow alley-cropping and riparian buffers. At the alley-cropping sites, they are studying willow interactions with herbaceous biomass crops to see if improved moisture availability and other microclimate effects increase total biomass production compared to monocultures while reducing net car-



**Mature willow**

bon emissions.

The riparian study sites will test the hypothesis that willow-based riparian buffers provide high biomass yields while providing environmental benefits (that is, erosion reduction, nutrient interception and improved soil and water quality).

Willows are ideally suited for riparian buffers because they are naturally found in riparian zones and they have the ability to readily develop an extensive root system which forms an effective biofilter and soil stabilizer.

Furthermore, the economic feasibility of willow biomass and conversion technologies are being studied by researchers with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan).



**AAFC technicians at new biomass riparian planting project**

A part of the willow sub-project, NRCan is selecting native willows from across Canada, with the intent to choose species and clones that can be further developed for biomass production through breeding and/or selection. Its goal is to find willows that grow faster and produce more biomass.

“Willow has a very high biomass production potential; its energy value per dry tonne is similar to other hardwoods,” says Kort. “Furthermore, it easily establishes with unrooted cuttings and re-sprouts vigorously after each harvest.”

These projects will identify what biomass production advantages agroforestry systems have compared with herbaceous (grass/forages) or woody monocultures (poplar farming).

In this project, AAFC-PFRA Agroforestry Division researchers are working in partnership with: Indian Head Agricultural Research Foundation, University of Saskatchewan, University of Guelph, Institut de technologie agroalimentaire, Canadian Forest Service (Fredericton, Ste-Foy and Edmonton), Prince Edward Island Soil and Crop Improvement, Jardin Botanique de Montreal and the Saskatchewan Research Council.

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# Hybrid poplar manual will aid farmland growers

By **DAVID HOLEHOUSE**

Planting hybrid poplar on the right sites is a good option for farmers in the Canadian West, a silvicultural consultant says.

Case van Oosten has recently completed the Hybrid Poplar Crop Manual for the Prairie Provinces, a comprehensive web-based guide for establishing and managing short rotation intensive culture hybrid poplar crops on the prairies. The manual was compiled through the Saskatchewan Forest Centre's Forest Development Fund for 2005.

"Some people are still clearing land for crops and losing money," van Oosten said. "From an economic point of view, hybrid poplar can be a more

competitive crop over a 15-year rotation."

The new manual with its 10 modules gives growers everything they need to know to grow poplar, including the top three pieces of advice: pick the best sites, use the best planting stock and control the weeds for the first five years.

Commodity markets may be slack right now, van Oosten says, but value-added

manufacturing with poplar could be big business, especially if several growers combine resources to guarantee steady supplies of top-grade saw logs and veneer logs.

Production of the manual was a

*"From an economic point of view, hybrid poplar can be seen as a more competitive crop over a 15-year rotation."*

*Case van Oosten,  
Manual's author*



David Holehouse

**Case van Oosten checks poplar growing in research trials across the northern prairies**

collaborative effort which saw contributions from several government and private sector agencies. These included the Canadian Forest Service and Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food along with Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc. and the Poplar Council of Canada. Ten other agencies were involved in the project.

The consultant also headed up the Forest Development Fund's report on Crop Density for Hybrid Poplar in the Prairie Provinces report. This project ties crop densities and pruning regimes to end products and discusses tree spacing in the context of maximizing crop value per acre.

Both information products are available on the Saskatchewan Forest Centre web site at [www.saskforestcentre.ca](http://www.saskforestcentre.ca) and on the Poplar Council of Canada web site at [www.poplar.ca](http://www.poplar.ca).

**Contact:  
Saskatchewan  
Forest Centre  
306.765.2840**



## Hybrid Poplar Crop Manual for the Prairie Provinces

**A practical and comprehensive "how-to" guide for landowners interested in the intensive culture of hybrid poplar as part of their agroforestry operations.**

**Accessible at no charge from the Saskatchewan Forest Centre website:  
[www.saskforestcentre.ca](http://www.saskforestcentre.ca)**

# Researchers seek star performers

*Scientific breeding program and research orchards yield poplar with improved traits*

By **DAVID HOLEHOUSE**

Researchers are seeing some encouraging results from their efforts to maximize a variety of desirable traits in Alberta's aspen and poplar populations.

There's no scary science—no hint of GMOs. Rather, the talk tends to be about encouraging the trees to have sex early and often, and with the right partners.

Successes (and disappointments) of this arboreal amor were evident on a recent tour of test sites maintained by members of the Western Boreal Aspen Corporation (WBAC), a cooperative group supported by Daishowa-Marubeni International, Footner Forest Products, Ainsworth Lumber and Weyerhaeuser Company. The

## Alberta Forestry Research Institute

companies harvest 4.5 million cubic metres of deciduous timber a year - 90 per cent aspen and 10 per cent balsam poplar, to supply three oriented strandboard mills and one pulp mill. Their aim is to be proactive in addressing the fact that fire, pest and drought reduce fibre availability within quota and FMA areas, and other land uses continue to make more forest areas unavailable to the industry. Anticipated climate change could affect fibre supply still further.

The Alberta Forestry Research Institute (AFRI) has provided support to WBAC, for some of the breeding and silvicultural trials. The studies support one of AFRI's strategic directions, which is to promote the sustain-

ability and productivity of Alberta's forest resource.

The following is how a specialist in quantitative genetics explains some of the mechanics of "tree improvement" to the lay person.

### What is poplar?

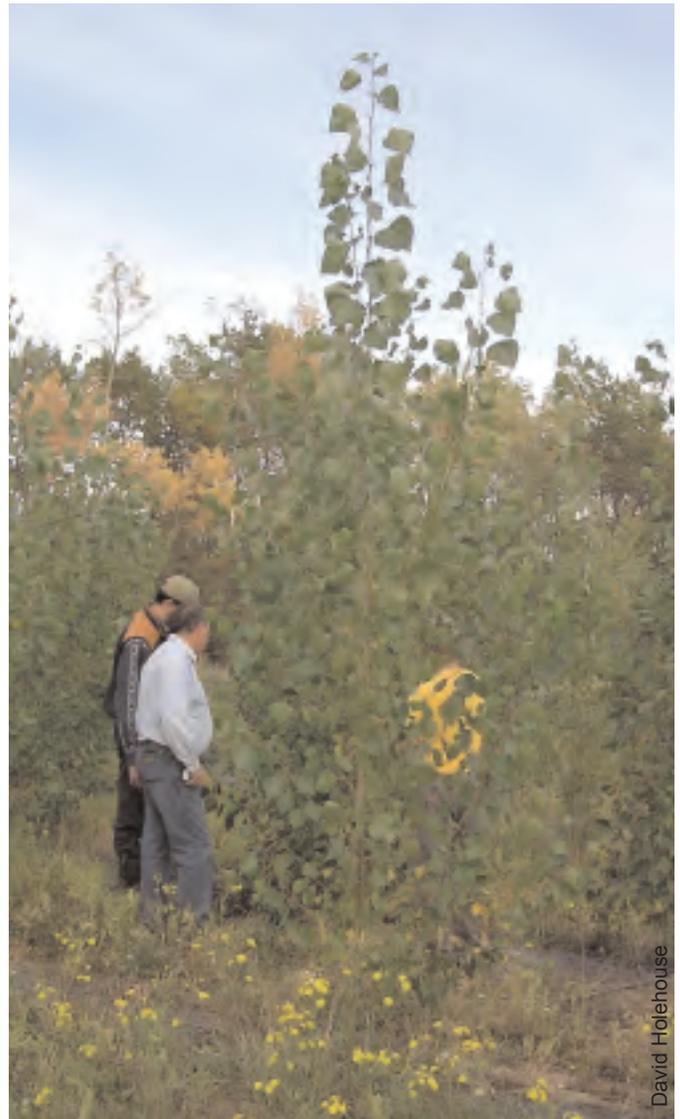
Jean Brouard, genetics advisor to WBAC, says it is of the genus *Populus*, a tropical plant dating back 58 million years and since established widely throughout the northern hemisphere. Alberta's native representatives of the genus include aspen (*P.*

*tremuloides*) and balsam poplar (*P. balsamifera*). Agriculturists have been improving poplar for use on farms for more than a century in Canada; work on aspen improvement in Alberta stretches back just 10 years.

### What are the breeders' goals?

First, to improve native aspen and poplar for use on crown land. Second, to identify, develop and propagate strong-performing crosses and hybrids for use in private-land forestry. Three qualities are required in an improved population of trees: genetic diversity, adaptation and performance.

**Diversity:** Genetic variation must be maintained for future evolution and adaptation to new environ-



David Holehouse

### Orchards around Alberta clearly show the most promising poplar parents and progeny

ments. It is insurance—developing and deploying just one strain with just one set of genes, no matter how desirable today, would pose a huge business risk if that strain is susceptible to some future disease or environmental threat.

**Adaptation:** Trees have adapted over time to their localized conditions—they set bud in the fall and flush in the spring according to trends in day length and weather conditions. There's no point working with strains that are not adapted or cannot adapt to one of Alberta's environmental conditions.

**Performance:** The aim is to find parents and offspring that can produce harvestable timber in 25 or 35 years,

*There's no scary science—no hint of GMOs. Rather, the talk tends to be about encouraging the trees to have sex early and often, and with the right partners.*

rather than nature's norm of 65 or 75 years. At the same time, the trees must be able to withstand current and unknown future stresses while providing good-quality fibre.

**How is it done?** "All we do is selection," says Brouard. The first task is to select wild trees on the basis of their own performance in vegetatively propagated trials. Next superior parents are selected and crossed to produce a variable array of offspring for further testing and selection.

All testing occurs in designed experiments at several Alberta locations. These tests on a variety of sites help show which trees actually have good genes, instead of having benefited from chance superior growing conditions in the forest.

"Aspens generally begin having sex at seven to 10 years in the wild, but we have been able to induce flow-

ering in trees that are just two years old," says Brouard. Mating, seed collection and propagation of offspring can all be done within one growing season, and results of growing trials can be assessed after only seven years—making for an overall process that is much quicker than that used for conifers.

When "good parents" are confirmed, they can easily be replicated by propagating suckers from their roots.

**Crosses and hybrids:** Crosses are offspring of two closely-related parents within a species. Hybrids are offspring of two more distant and dissimilar species. Hybrids produce more variation, not all of which is desirable—but with selection, they can yield more dramatic gains.

**Are there any rules?** Provincial standards say that if improved material is to be tested on crown land, each block planted must include at least 18 different strains to preserve diversity. No GMO trees may be used on any land.



David Holehouse

**Poplar is easily propagated in the nursery**

**Are we close to deployment?**

Weyerhaeuser would like to test improved stock on 17 hectares of crown land next year, after going through an extensive regulatory process. Ainsworth wants to work with farmers to plant four quarters to improved stock on private land next year. Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries, which is not a member of WBAC, has been working with farmers to grow trees for some years.

**What comes after breeding?**

Finding promising parents is not enough. WBAC has recognized that research into propagation and silvicultural techniques is critical to the success of the tree improvement program.

The Alberta Forestry Research Institute was established by the Government of Alberta to serve as a resource to government and industry in the development of research priorities for forestry innovation.

**Contact:**

**AFRI**

**780.427.2567**

**don.harrison@gov.ab.ca**

**WBAC**

**wbac@telusplanet.net**



David Holehouse

**Trials demonstrate the value of keeping plantations weed-free for the first five years**

# When the oilpatch comes calling . . .

Get everything in writing and do your homework about land compensation

By SARAH SEINEN

Land compensation is an unavoidable issue these days, especially if you are a landowner in Alberta and the oilpatch is knocking on your front door.

The Woodlot Association of Alberta (WAA) geared its annual meeting towards addressing landowner concerns about land compensation and property rights in October.

The following sections cover the main areas of discussion:

## The agent

The best way to deal with land agents is to think like one, says Terry Jewell, a licensed surface land agent and project coordinator for HMA Land Services Ltd.

"Educate yourselves—we would much rather deal with experienced landowners than with rookies," said Jewell.

He urges landowners to obtain a copy of Directive 056 from the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (AEUB).

This directive outlines the public consultation requirements and procedures for filing a licence application to construct or operate any petroleum industry energy development that includes facilities, pipelines or wells.

Although the three-inch binder full of applications and requirements might intimidate some landowners, it is a useful reference guide. Directive

056 is also the land agent's handbook.

"Spend the \$100 and you'll have everything you need to know about land agents," he said.

A pared-down version of the directive is available on the AEUB website. To order a hard copy, call the AEUB at (403) 297-8311.

Two sets of rights exist in surface access and development matters—those of the farmer/landowner and those of the hydrocarbon company.

Jewell said the most important acts for the landowners to be aware of are the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, the *Water Act*, the *Land Agent Licensing Act* and those acts pertaining to soil, energy, pipelines and forest.

Land agents do not get any bonuses if they get the company a 'good' deal, contrary to what some people think, said Jewell. Agents are paid by the hour plus expenses.

"It's to our benefit to tell things straight out—the moccasin telephone is alive and well, since neighbours and communities talk to each other," he said.

If landowners have a problem with a land agent,

they should contact the Land Agents Registrar at (780) 415-4600.

## The land

If a company wants access to private land, it's usually for seismic exploration, well drilling or pipelines.

Most people only have surface rights. For seismic, the landowner does not have to grant access for companies. For well drilling and pipelines, however, the landowner is required to allow access—but compensation can be negotiated.

"In either case, you cannot keep the surveyor off your land," said Mary Griffiths, environmental policy analyst at the Pembina Institute. The independent, not-for-profit organization seeks to advance sustainable energy solutions through innovative research, education, consulting and advocacy.

Landowners who decide to allow



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seismic exploration should consider the following questions: What route will the proponent follow? How wide will it be? What type of line? Is it near wetlands?

Griffiths said that it's important to test water wells prior to any activity since seismic involves ground disturbance.

When negotiating compensation for access, include penalties and make sure that all conditions are written into the permit agreement.

For well drilling or pipelines, landowners need to think about: type of project; depth of project; how the proponent deals with debris; tree preservation; impacts on water, air quality, tree growth; how drilling waste will be handled; reclamation; pre-construction assessment.

"Put everything in writing," said Griffiths. "Ask for more time, if necessary, before signing the lease agreement. There are different versions of the standard lease agreement – make sure its applicable to your site, and read the fine print."

She said that if a property changes hands, the agreement carries on so it's necessary to think about long-term adverse effects such as increased blow-down in open spaces.

The AEUB handles all disputes related to physical impacts, while the Surface Rights Board deals with all issues relating to compensation on private land.



**Know the values that are important to you when talking to the land agent about land access**

**The law**

Even though the landowner can negotiate an agreement for seismic, pipelines, well sites and transmission lines, sometimes things don't turn out as expected.

Shauna Finlay, a lawyer with Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP, outlined some of the options that landowners have when "things go wrong."

If it's a compensation issue, contact the Surface Rights Board. It will pay the landowner and collect from the company. "You shouldn't deny access where the company has legal access rights—speak to the Surface Rights Board," said Finlay.

For concerns regarding operational practices, the landowner should deal with the AEUB or Alberta Environment.

If a breach of lease or damage occurs, negotiate

with the company, enter a dispute resolution process or submit a statement of claim to the Surface Rights Board.

For spills or pipeline breaks, notify the AEUB and Alberta Environment.

When landowners are unhappy with the signed agreement, they have three options: amend the agreement; litigation; or, involve the regulator.

"Before you sign anything, get any verbal representations of what's going to happen in writing," said Finlay.

In addition to seeking advice from law firms, landowners can contact the Farmer's Advocate at (780) 427-2433.

**The call**

"Before you dig, whether it's for fence posts, a water well, deep tillage or any other purpose, call at least three days in advance to find out the exact location of pipelines and other utility installations," said Ian Jerrard of TransCanada. "Dig safely—you don't want to put your family or employees at risk."

There is no cost for the call or the work required to locate underground facilities.

Alberta OneCall can be reached at (800) 242-3447.

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**Ken Glover,  
Chief Administrator**

# Mountain pine beetles in your woodlot:

*To cut & sell or not? . . . that is the question*

Over 8.7 million hectares of forest are infested with mountain pine beetle (MPB) in British Columbia. The rice-sized pest has ravaged its way across British Columbia consuming and killing private and public land pine forests in its path. Since the first MPB detection in Alberta, the pest has moved faster than anticipated and is confirmed in the Crowsnest Pass, throughout the Peace region, and in Fox Creek.

Despite early efforts of detection and spot destruction, the Alberta government only slowed down the aggressive advance of the MPB. Recently, the Alberta government has worked with industry and modified harvest sequences to manage the age class of lodgepole pine on Crown (public) forestlands.

The Alberta MPB Advisory Committee has established a funding mechanism with Alberta Municipal Districts and Counties for private landowners' infested trees to be cut, piled and burned.

Essentially, a landowner with MPB on their land can contact their local municipality who in turn may contract the services of a logger to cut, pile and burn the infested private trees with no remuneration or rehabilitation support for the landowner.

Conversely, in B.C., private landowners are eligible for funding and support from the Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative ([http://mpb.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/index\\_e.html](http://mpb.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/index_e.html)) for early control efforts and rehabilitation or reforestation.



Sarah Seinen

**Bluestain on a beetle-infested lodgepole pine tree in British Columbia**

## Options for private woodlot owners in Alberta

Harvesting and selling infested pine trees is definitely an option for Alberta private landowners. In addition to the Association's regular advice and precautions for selling private timber, landowners must also understand the current marketplace.

The bottom line for private landowners is that private timber prices have dropped considerably for a number of reasons including:

- Government direction to priority harvest public infested forests, resulting in oversupply of logs.
- Poor commodity prices have resulted in manufacturing curtailments.

Selective chemical pheromone treatments to uninfested individual or

patches of pine trees may be another option for landowners. The use of Verbenone is a definite and viable option for landowners for protecting individual or relatively small patches of pine trees. Essentially Verbenone sends a message to other beetles in flight that there are no more potential attack sites or trees.

Utilization of infested pine is another option for private landowners.

By either utilizing a portable sawmill or third party, landowners can find niche markets for MPB wood. The characteristic blue stain is desired and utilized among log home builders, flooring and furniture manufacturers, and other architectural applications. Smaller markets may prove effective for private landowners seeking the sale of their beetle kill logs.

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**The Board of Directors for the Woodlot Association of Alberta:**

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*Missing:* Dennis Quintilio, Jamie Giberson (treasurer), Lorne Carson

## In the world of woodlots . . .

### Alberta's newest Alberta Woodlot Association member

The Association would like to congratulate the Giberson Family, dad Jamie (WAA Treasurer) and mom Juanita, who welcomed Koal Thomas Giberson (8 lbs, 8 ounces) into the world on October 21, 2006.

### Highlights from WAA's annual meeting

The unofficial theme of the Association's 11th AGM, Clinic and Show centred around oil and gas development and compensation issues on private land. Presentations helped address questions and concerns related to the ever-mounting problems private landowners have been experiencing across Alberta. An update on mountain pine beetle in Alberta and a presentation on non-timber forest product opportunities provided interesting and relevant information for landowners. To view some of these presentations visit [www.woodlot.org](http://www.woodlot.org).

### New 'Sustainable Woodlot' gate signs coming soon

Stemming from membership input at the recent AGM, the Woodlot Association is close to a decision on a new gate sign that will recognize members of the woodlot Association of Alberta who demonstrate sustainable woodlot management. Although still under development, the eligibility criteria to receive a gate sign might entail membership within the WAA and a completed management plan.

### Income tax regulation changes value of management plans

In general, a taxpayer may now make an intergenerational transfer of a (commercial) woodlot on an income tax-deferred rollover basis where the owner of the woodlot is engaged in the management of a woodlot as outlined in a Prescribed Forest Management Plan. The Association will cover this topic in the next edition of *Western Farm & Forest*.

### 2006 Woodlot Extension Program Annual Meeting

**Thursday, December 14, 2006**

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**For information, contact Doug Macaulay at 1-780-624-6425**

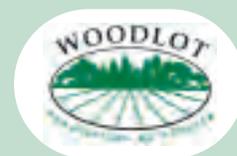


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# Woodlot Association of Alberta

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## PART 1:

# Mushrooms offer a tasty sideline

By KEN FOSTY

For the past 15 years, I've grown mushrooms on logs in my woodlot. Two of my favourite mushrooms are the Oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) and the Shiitake mushroom (*Lentinula edodes*).

The following article will focus on growing Oyster mushrooms. Stay tuned for Shiitakes in the next issue of *Western Farm & Forest*.

There is a unique relationship when a fungus is introduced to wood, that being that the fungus will eat the wood. The trick here is to deliberately inoculate the fungus into the wood using spawn. After a log is inoculated, the fungus will travel through the wood cells digesting and breaking down the wood. When the fungus is well-fed and environmental conditions are right, mushrooms will be born. For those of you woodlot owners who have access to fresh-cut firewood, you can try growing your own mushrooms.

**Oyster mushrooms:** These delicious, edible mushrooms are often found on dead standing trees or on fallen logs throughout the Prairie provinces. The name "oyster" mushroom is derived from the oyster shell-

like shape of the mushroom. These fragile, shell-shaped mushrooms have a flavour subtly reminiscent of autumn rain and fallen leaves. Often harvested from the wild, most would agree

fresh-picked oyster mushrooms far surpass supermarket offerings in flavour, texture, and shelf life.

During the spring or early summer firewood-size pieces of freshly cut aspen (poplar) or birch can be inoculated by applying a thin layer of oyster mushroom spawn to the log ends. Aluminum foil is then secured overtop of the logs to prevent drying.

The logs are put in a black plastic garbage bag and placed in a garage or shed for approximately three months. The logs will have sufficient time to become colonized with the mushroom spawn during this incubation time period. Following the incubation period the logs are removed from the plastic bags and unwrapped.

The logs are placed outside permanently in a shallow trench approximately six inches deep. The location should be protected from the wind and in a well-shaded area of your woodlot under a canopy of trees. Soil is gently packed around the logs. A shallow layer of woodchip mulch or leaves will help keep the soil surrounding the logs in a damp condition.



Ken Fosty

### Oyster mushrooms are a tasty addition to any woodlot

Oyster mushrooms will appear in the fall when cold temperatures arrive. Depending on log size and location, mushrooms will continue for approximately five years from the original logs. Large clusters will usually form at the base of the log where moisture conditions are high. Quite often mushrooms will also appear at the top of the log. Oyster mushrooms can be harvested by hand or by using a knife. They should be stored in paper bags in the fridge. Prior to cooking, they should be thoroughly washed. They can be enjoyed with meats, pastas or soups.

If you're a hands-on "adventurous woodlotter" and would like to begin growing oyster or shiitake mushrooms in your woodlot, cottage lot or urban backyard, consider purchasing a five-log mushroom growing kit. Each kit has everything you need (except the logs) to grow mushrooms. To purchase a growing kit or obtain more information, you may contact Ken Fosty at (204) 586-1365 or visit [www.gourmetmushrooms.ca](http://www.gourmetmushrooms.ca).

---

*Bio-Ken Fosty is a forestry technician with the Manitoba Forestry Association's woodlot program. He manages his own woodlot in southeast Manitoba.*



Ken Fosty

### Poplar logs inoculated with mushroom spawn

# Watersheds need a little R&R too

By **MARTINE BOLINGER**

When we are tired and overworked, we need a little rest and relaxation—it makes all the difference in how we feel. When the banks of rivers and streams are overused, they also need ‘R & R’, rest and restoration.

## Riparian reforestation— putting back the trees

Trees are the rebar of riparian areas. They add strength and structure to stream banks. They provide the framework for riparian habitat, making the environment favourable for plants, insects, birds, fish and other aquatic

### Woodlot Extension Program

organisms.

Cattle prefer riparian areas too. Cows will spend most of their time where they are most comfortable—close to shade, water and food, in the trees near the stream. Cattle have to be managed otherwise they have a tendency to overuse riparian areas.

Often when riparian areas are overgrazed for many years, they lose their woody component and are in need of rest. Fencing creeks and streams is the first step to the recovery process. Planting trees and shrubs along the banks of streams and creeks is the next step. You need to allow time for the trees to establish before letting the cattle back in. When the watersheds start to recover, improved water quality is the reward.

Because trees and shrubs filter ground, surface and streamwater in riparian areas, they act like the kid-

neys of the water system. When a forested riparian area loses its trees, it loses a great deal.

“Ultimately we want to show our producers they can graze riparian areas without destroying them,” says Audrey Gall, agricultural fieldman for Northern Sunrise County.

Doug Macaulay, woodlot extension specialist from Peace River, says, “Riparian areas are an excellent source of forage for cattle when used as part of a grazing system. Some producers keep the riparian in reserve for times when there isn’t food elsewhere. Problems arise when there are too many cattle for too long.”

## Creation of a demo site

Demonstration sites are the result of teamwork. Last spring, Doug teamed up with Audrey to tackle riparian reforestation in the Heart River watershed. “It wouldn’t have happened without everyone’s help,” says Audrey.

Audrey had a cooperator and site in mind. “There are lots of examples of overgrazed areas around,” she says. “We chose the Harder site because it was highly visible from the main road.” The process was made easy for the local co-operator, Vern Harder. The area was fenced a year prior to the plant. Doug coordinated planting activities.

Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd. (DMI), Boucher Bros. and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development donated trees. A combi-



**Overuse leads to unhealthy watershed**

nation of hybrid poplar and white spruce, with a few Siberian larch and maple, was planted over two days by staff from DMI, Northern Sunrise County, the Woodlot Extension Program (WEP) and the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESAs) program. Signage for the site was covered by AESA and WEP.

The Heart River watershed is located in northwestern Alberta, with its headwaters approximately 70 kilometres north of High Prairie. The Heart River drains into the Peace River at the town of Peace River. The Heart River Watershed is the source water for Nampa and the Northern Sunrise County’s rural regional water supply system.

## Working together

Doug knows that things are always better when we work together. Since there are only two specialists in the province of Alberta dedicated to woodlot extension, much can be gained from collaboration with program partners and local municipalities.

To find out more about working together on woodlot-related projects, talk to Doug.

**Contact:**  
**Doug Macaulay**  
**780.624.6425**  
**doug.macaulay@gov.ab.ca**



**Audrey Gall replants a riparian area with hybrid poplar**



**Before and after: FireSmart activities involving the removal of fuels such as brush or over-mature trees**

## FireSmart grants will help reduce risk of wildfire

By SARAH SEINEN

Alberta's FireSmart Community Grant Program will be helping 11 communities reduce the risk of wildfire next year.

The grant program is a joint initiative between Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD), Alberta Municipal Affairs and Emergency Management Alberta, and

### Forest Protection

it applies to communities in the Forest Protection Area of Alberta. This year, ASRD provided a total of \$250,000 in FireSmart funding to the successful applicants to engage in work that includes emergency planning, vegetation management and public education.

Last year, as a pilot program, \$198,870 was supplied to seven communities for similar activities.

"Everyone has a role to play in community protection," said Adam Gossell, FireSmart community planning specialist with ASRD. "The intent of the program is to provide financial assistance to those who would like to do some FireSmart activities within their administrative boundaries—it's all about partner-

ships."

Successful applicants include municipalities (cities, towns, villages, and summer villages), municipal districts, counties, Métis settlements and registered non-profit societies such as community leagues and church groups.

For 2006–2007, the following groups received grants: Gift Lake, the Municipal District of Big Lakes, Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement, the Town of Edson, and the summer villages of South Baptiste Lake, West Baptiste Lake, Waipirous, Island Lake, Larkspur, Island Lake South and Whispering Hills.

The maximum grant amount per applicant is \$50,000 per year.

FireSmart activities typically include preparation planning to reduce the risk of wildfire, removal of fuels such as brush or over-mature trees, planting more fire-resistant species, public education and communications, emergency planning and inter-agency cooperation and cross-training (such as staff from the municipality and staff from ASRD doing a home and site hazard assessment together, meeting the homeowner face-to-face and working collaboratively).

"This year's activities are a mixed

bag, though a lot of them focus on vegetation management," Gossell said. Some of the projects blend several activities, such as emergency planning, public education and cross-training.

Gossell encourages applicants to be specific in what they are trying to achieve. He also reminds applicants about ASRD funding priorities. "Projects that occur in high-hazard wildland-urban interfaces are at the top of the list, as are those with community support and a strong commitment to hazard reduction and long-term maintenance," said Gossell.

The provincial government provides successful applicants with expertise, but the communities are responsible for lining up a workforce to complete FireSmart activities.

Grant applications are due by June 15 each year. Successful candidates are contacted by August 15 and grant funding is delivered soon after.

### Contact:

**Adam Gossell**

**780.644.5521**

**[adam.gossell@gov.ab.ca](mailto:adam.gossell@gov.ab.ca)**

# Bat myths busted

By SARAH SEINEN

Bats are not the spooky creatures of Halloween decorations or ghost stories. Actually, the flying mammals are unique and quite helpful, says one biologist who is eager to dispel the myths about bats.

“For centuries, bats have been getting a bad reputation simply because people don’t know much about them,” says Lisa Wilkinson, a species-at-risk biologist with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development in Edson.

## Fish and Wildlife

One of the major myths about bats is that they will get caught in your hair, especially if it’s curly!

This is not true, says Wilkinson, but bats will fly around your head looking for bugs. “They manoeuvre very well and are much too smart to fly into us. They are actually doing us a favour—some bats can eat up to 600 mosquito-sized insects in an hour,” she says. They also eat forest and farm insect pests.

Another myth is that bats are blind. Bats have eyes and many can see well. Insect-eating bats rely on sound waves and very good hearing (called echolocation) to find food and to get around in the dark.

Some people also believe that bats have rabies. Like all mammals, bats can contract rabies but few ever do. “Bats don’t show aggressive



The long-eared bat



Bats should be welcomed residents of Alberta woodlots

behaviour but it’s important to remember that they are wild animals. Never handle a sick or injured bat because it will bite in self-defence,” says Wilkinson.

Bats are classified as mammals because they have fur and the females bear their young as live pups and nurse them with milk. There are about 1,000 species worldwide and they are found everywhere except the Arctic and Antarctica. They eat insects, fruit, nectar, fish and some small animals. The three species of vampire bats eat blood.

Humans are the biggest threat to bats but their natural predators include owls, hawks, cats and snakes.

In Alberta, there are nine species of bats. All of them eat insects and most weigh less than a toonie.

Most of Alberta’s bats make their home in big old trees with cavities from woodpecker activity or loose bark. Some bats become more adapted to living around people and will roost under shingles or within structures.

During the winter, bats leave their

summer homes and migrate to caves or go south to warmer destinations.

“Trees are not a good choice over the winter—they’re not warm enough for bats,” says Wilkinson. Consequently, in terms of bat habitat, it’s better for woodlot operators to harvest their trees in the winter than during the summer. Also, it’s important to leave some trees for wildlife habitat.

In Alberta, some hibernating bats have been found in natural caves in the mountains. However, it is not known specifically where the majority of the province’s bats spend the winter.

The Alberta Bat Action Team, a group of people interested in bats, meets twice a year to talk about issues affecting bats. Wilkinson says that one of the biggest issues facing bats in North America is wind turbines; in some places the turbines cause quite high mortalities for migrating bats and birds.

More information about bats in Alberta is available online at [www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fw/bats](http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fw/bats).

### Contact:

**Lisa Wilkinson**  
**780.723.8556**

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# Some hope for the coming year

*As we head into another long cool winter, there is renewed optimism in the grains and oilseeds sector with some concern in the livestock feeding industry.*

It always seems like one segment of agriculture builds at the expense of another.

An absolutely devastating drought in Australia has pushed world grain prices to levels that have not been seen for some time. The higher

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*Bill Dobson*



feed grain price has put some uncertainty into the livestock industry.

The development of biofuels has given hope to the grains and oilseeds farmers that they might be looking at a sustained period of profitability. The livestock industry has very legitimate



Sarah Seinen

### Higher feed grain prices have caused some uncertainty in the livestock feeding industry

concerns that the development of biofuel will mean high demand for feed grain forever.

It seems impossible to have good conditions for all segments of agriculture. That remains our ultimate goal as a general farm organization—to see all parts of farming in a profitable and sustainable state. Let us all live to see that day!

#### APF consultations

The consultation process for the next phase of the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) has just begun. Despite the challenges and frustrations that we have felt over the past five years as the first APF was developed, I think that the entire procedure was revolutionary.

Finally, agriculture was recognized by federal and provincial governments as an industry that deserved special consideration.

The APF framework provided the basis of an ongoing commitment. It is very important that during APF II consultations we work together as an industry to convince these governments of the significance of agriculture. There will always be a need for

help and we need to ensure that the assistance is most strategic. The production of food is vital to our existence as a society and we simply cannot fail.

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers is involved in the preliminary consultations. The public will have an opportunity later in the winter to provide input. We welcome any comments that you might have on what improvements you might have regarding APF II.

As part of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, we feel that it is imperative to develop a Canadian Farm Bill that will put us on a level playing field with farmers from the United States.

#### Canadian Wheat Board (CWB)

It is almost impossible to be at any farm gathering these days without having a discussion about the CWB.

If the current controversy has done nothing else, it has forced farmers to really think about what the Board is and what value it has to their operations.

It is the policy of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers that it is farm-



Sarah Seinen

**The wheels of change continue to roll through the Canadian Wheat Board**

ers who should make the decisions on changes of significance to the CWB.

I have defended that policy with vigour over the past few weeks. For some folks it is not a question of what the majority of farmers want but a question of freedom.

Even if one farmer wishes to sell outside the board he should be able to do so. I think it is obvious that if any structured marketing system is going to be viable everyone needs to abide by the rules. Minister Strahl has announced that there will be a non-binding plebiscite on barley marketing early in 2007.

The current director elections will also be pivotal to the future of the Board.

I suppose the one thing that I would challenge farmers to think about is whether it is the structure of the CWB or their performance that is of concern.

If it is performance, we need to

work on changes that will fix the problems. The federal government is not talking about fixing; they are talking about permanent changes which are irreversible.

We joined with other prairie farm organizations to compile a list of questions that farmers need to ask themselves about the future of the board. That report is available on our website.

**Regional meetings**

During November and December, we held regional meetings throughout the province. These meetings are vital for the development of our policy. We pride ourselves on the way that we democratically formulate our positions on agricultural issues.

I have already attended a few of these meetings and the attendance has been quite good. This report will likely be published after the meetings are over but hopefully you had an oppor-

tunity to partake in one of these important events.

**Annual meeting**

I would like to encourage you to attend our annual meeting on January 9 and 10 at the Royal Executive Inn, just east of the Edmonton International Airport. We always have a very interesting program and I'm sure that you would find it very worth your while to attend. Details are outlined on pages 6 and 7 of this publication.

As my third term as President comes to an end, I thank the Board of Directors, Regional Directors, staff and you, our members, for all of the support that I have received during the past year. Although I have felt some frustration, I have also experienced a great deal of satisfaction and met a lot of very good people. Have a Merry Christmas and let us all look forward to a wonderful New Year!

# Consumer confidence in farm food safety goes a long way

*If there was an upside to the BSE crisis Canadian farmers faced, it was the high level of confidence Canadian consumers expressed in Canadian-produced food.*

Canada stands alone as the only country where, in the face of a domestic case of BSE, consumption of domestically-produced beef actually went up.

The beef industry is by no means unique in its consumer support. Canadian consumers have a very high level of confidence in the safety and security of Canadian-produced food. It's a confidence Canadian farmers

of the border have made the headlines in recent weeks. Although the problem did not originate in Canada's fields, its impact was felt on Canada's grocery shelves and, justified or not, will affect consumer confidence in the entire food system. The strongest consumer confidence will be shaken if exposed to repeated stories of food concerns whether from Canada or abroad.

As an industry we continue to work to ensure food safety from the farm gate. Since 1997, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) has worked in close collaboration with other national producer groups working to establish a voluntary national food safety system. To date, 30 national commodity-specific farm food safety programs have been developed, covering 99 per cent of primary agriculture production in Canada. We have one of the most advanced national and government-recognized on-farm food safety systems in the world. As a result, Canada is internationally recognized as a leader in the production of high quality, safe and innovative food, and it enjoys one of the highest levels of domestic consumer confidence in the world. That is something Canadian consumers can have confidence in. But to have confidence, they have to know.

CFA and its partners in on-farm food safety have been proactive in promoting Canada's food safety initiatives at the national and international levels. We work extensively trying to do what we can to get our message out and to correct incorrect messages



**Home-grown beef consumption actually increased in Canada in spite of a domestic case of BSE**

appearing in the media, but we need grassroots farmers to play a part, too. We need you, Canadian farmers, to help communicate the message of what is been done at your level in the area of food safety to promote food safety confidence in Canadian consumers. What can you do? Promote your efforts on food safety to create awareness in your community. Watch your local media. When stories appear that contain misinformation about food safety, or that question food safety in Canada, respond to them. If you have an on-farm food safety plan in place on your farm, tell your local media about it or invite them to come out for a tour if appropriate.

To help you get the right information to consumers and media in your area you can contact the CFA national office at (613) 236-3633

Year after year polls show that farmers are one of the three most trusted professions in Canada. If consumers hear from their local producers about the work being done to ensure the safety of their food, they will continue to have confidence in their food and they will continue to buy Canadian.

## Canadian Federation of Agriculture

*Bob Friesen,  
President*



have earned through hard work and vigilance. Unfortunately, it's easier to lose someone's confidence than to gain it. Unfortunately, with the right combination of crisis and lack of public understanding of issues, consumer confidence is easy to lose.

Food safety has been very much at the centre of negative public attention lately. A series of cases of contaminated produce originating south

# New marketing entity raises many questions

The federal government plans to transform the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) to a voluntary marketing entity operating in an open market.

In order to do this, the single desk function of the CWB must be removed. Effectively, this change would be irreversible and will impact the entire industry.

This article has been prepared to provide farmers with some of the questions we must ask ourselves during this time and to encourage everyone to get involved in the debate.



Photo courtesy of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, with permission

## Removal of the single desk function of the Canadian Wheat Board could impact the entire industry

### Farmer returns

**Price premiums:** When you market your crops throughout the crop year, will you be able to obtain premium prices from an open market?

**Price pool viability:** Has price pooling been an important risk management tool for your farm? Without a single desk, is price pooling still viable?

**Marketing options:** Does the CWB currently provide enough marketing options to meet the needs of your farm?

**Branding Canada:** In an open market, would there be an incentive for any company to continue the Brand Canada activities that have provided so many benefits for farmers?

**Research and innovation:** Staying on the leading edge of a commodity-based industry requires continuous investments in innovative research.

In an open market, who will continually invest in research and innovation over the long term, while main-

taining a focus on the interests of farmers?

### Transportation

**Transportation advocacy:** In an open market, who will be the advocate for all Western farmers on transportation issues?

**Linkages between port terminals and inland elevators:** Many groups, including producer-owned inland terminals, producer-car groups and the proposed new marketing entity, do not own port facilities. In an open market, will the grain companies provide competitors with cost-competitive access to their port facilities?

**Producer cars and shortlines:** Board grains accounted for 99 per cent of producer car shipments in 2004–2005. How confident are you that you will continue to be able to use producer cars as effectively in an open market? Given that most traffic generated on short lines comes from producer cars, what will be the future of the network of short line railways in

an open market?

### Value-added

How will current value-added activities and growth be impacted by a move to the open market?

### Grain handling

**Access to the commercial elevator system:** Given that the commercial elevator system can only hold 10 per cent of the crop at any one time, what would your delivery opportunities be in an open market? How would base levels be affected if the CWB were no longer using contract calls to allocate access to the handling system?

**Independent grain elevators and inland terminals:** Given that farmer-owned facilities could have difficulty in obtaining cost-competitive access to port facilities, combined with the need to finance all inventories at commercial rates; can smaller companies remain viable in an open market?

### International trade

In an open market, who will be an effective advocate on behalf of farmers in trade disputes? If Canadian grain truck movements to the U.S. increase in an open market, will there be more trade disputes with the U.S.?

### Open market

What's the difference between the proposed new marketing entity and a commercial grain company? Why would competitors move the proposed new marketing entity's grain if they could move their own?

**“What will be the impact on your farm?”**

# WILD ROSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS DIRECTORY OF OFFICIALS 2006

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## Choose A or B: farm leaders call for plebiscite on grain marketing

Bill Dobson, President of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, and the presidents of Keystone Agricultural Producers and the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan met with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in October.

During the meeting, the farm leaders called on the Minister to respect Section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) Act,

which states that grain producers are entitled to vote on how their grain is marketed.

The farm leaders are calling on the government to put forward a plebiscite which asks producers to select between realistic choices. To move the plebiscite forward, the group is offering clear questions on wheat and barley marketing.

Farmers would be asked to choose

between the following options for wheat (a similar question would be asked for barley):

A) I wish to maintain the ability to market all wheat, with the continuing exception of feed wheat sold domestically, through the CWB single desk system

B) I wish to remove the single desk marketing system from the CWB and sell all wheat through an open market system



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