

Beetles on the way

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The mountain pine beetle is coming soon to a forest near you and the Grande Alberta Economic Region (GAER) wants to make sure its member communities are prepared.

GAER is an alliance of 14 municipalities stretching from Drayton Valley and Brazeau County in the east to Jasper and Grande Cache in the west. Forestry is an important industry in the area and it's an industry to which the mountain pine beetle poses a significant threat.

As the beetle begins to spread into west central Alberta GAER has launched an initiative to help its member communities prepare for the beetles' arrival. The plan is to assess the risk posed by the beetle to the area's economy and to help communities prepare and adapt.

"We need to understand the socio-economic impact that the mountain pine beetle could have on our member communities," says GAER chair Glenn Taylor, who is also mayor of Hinton. "This study will help us understand what we, as forest-based communities in Alberta, will need to do to continue to have viable, vibrant economies post beetle infection."

As a first step GAER has launched a web page devoted to the beetle found at grandealberta.com/mountain-pine. The web page contains details of the GAER initiative and provides links to news, research and data on the beetle.