



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Impact of Mountain Pine Beetle infestation Topic of Grande Prairie conference

Grande Prairie, July 16, 2007 – Over 200 representatives from forest dependant communities, industries and government departments are expected to meet in Grande Prairie on July 24 to discuss the impact the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) infestation will have on their local economies, communities and the environment.

The conference will provide the latest news on the progress of the infestation and an opportunity to discuss what this will mean for communities, citizens and industry.

The Mountain Pine Beetle Information and Networking Conference will take place on Tuesday, July 24, 2007 from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm at the Grande Prairie Inn, 11633 Clairmont Road.

Speakers include: Research Scientist Dr. Allan Carroll with Natural Resources Canada; Dan Wilkinson with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development; Dr. Barry Smit, Canada Research Chair in Global Environmental Change; Mayor Donna Barnett of 100 Mile House, British Columbia and Chair of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition; Neil Shelly with Alberta Forest Products Association; Jim McCammon with Alberta Newsprint Company in Whitecourt, Alberta; Don Podlubny with the Foothills Model Forest in Hinton, Alberta; Economist Dr. Harry Nelson from the University of British Columbia; and Bill White with the Northern Forestry Centre (Natural Resources Canada). There will be panel discussions on:

- Exploring the Realities, the Opportunities and the Alternatives – Meeting the Challenge of the MPB
- The Social Consequences of the MPB: Communities Building Sustainability

Registration packages may be obtained from either the GAER website (http://www.grandealberta.com/mountain-pine/upcoming_events.htm) or the NADC website (<http://www.nadc.gov.ab.ca/>).

The conference is sponsored by the Grande Alberta Economic Region (GAER), the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC), Community Futures from across Northern Alberta and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

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BACKGROUND

More than three million trees along Alberta's eastern slopes have been infested, following a beetle flight over the Rocky Mountains from British Columbia during the summer of 2006. That number is expected to drastically increase this year as the MPB continues its spread north and eastward.

The Alberta government has declared a state of emergency and has allocated \$50 million in funding to slow the beetle's growth and mitigate its environmental impact.

Alberta's forest industry is increasing its harvesting activities to help slow the spread of the infestation as well as extracting as much economic value from the infected pine as possible before it begins to deteriorate.

In the fall of 2006, GAER began its Mountain Pine Beetle initiative, recognizing that the threat of the infestation from British Columbia was a very real one – a threat which could potentially result in socio-economic and environmental damage for Alberta's forest dependent communities. At the same time, NADC came to similar conclusions and began examining the impact of MPB on communities in its region. With this in common, GAER and NADC have partnered to host a forum on Mountain Pine Beetle to provide current and authoritative information and to allow communities, industry, citizens and government to network and determine synergies in the face of the MPB infestation.

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