

## Battling mountain pine beetle with helicopters

- Canmore Leader staff  
Wednesday May 02, 2007

Helicopters have many practical uses and on that list is a process called rotory wing assist, one of the techniques being used to battle the spread of mountain pine beetle (MPB) in the Bow Valley.

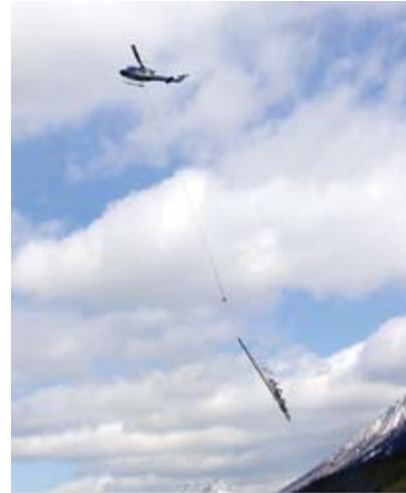
The process involves falling trees and transporting them via helicopter to a burn pile location where all trunks of the trees are burned to kill the MPB larvae living under the bark.

Helicopters have been removing trees infested with MPB from Spray Lakes provincial park for the past two and a half weeks. It adds to a long list of tools that Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and its partners are using in the fight against MPB.

The beetle is considered the most serious enemy of mature pine in western Canada. It lives under the bark, leaving pitch tubes (small pockets of creamy resin) as the only sign of infestation in live trees. Next summer, these trees will die and the characteristic red needles will be left. By this time, the beetles have already moved onto another victim.

In Spray Lakes, there were a total of 5,282 infested trees surveyed, up from just over 800 infested trees last year. Using rotory wing assist, 4308 of these trees were controlled in just over two weeks.

Officials believe that the majority of these beetles have flown in from British Columbia as populations of MPB are growing adjacent to the park. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development is working closely with Banff National Park, B.C. Parks, B.C. Ministry of Forests and Alberta Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture collaborating on tactics to limit the spread of these infestations east into Alberta.



**photo submitted by SRD A helicopter slings logs to a site for burning to eliminate mountain pine beetle larvae in the Spray Lakes area last week.**