

British Columbia's Mountain Pine Beetle Response Team

Rod DeBoice, Provincial Bark Beetle Co-ordinator

As British Columbia's new Provincial Bark Beetle Co-ordinator, I'm honoured to supply the editorial for this special issue of the *BC Journal of Ecosystems and Management (JEM)*. I follow in the footsteps of my friend and colleague, Bob Clark, AKA the "Beetle Boss." Bob retired in February after an illustrious 35-year career with the B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range. During his tenure as Beetle Boss, he helped lay the foundations of British Columbia's Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan.

In October 2005, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman formed the Mountain Pine Beetle Response Team. The team, headed by Assistant Deputy Minister Ray Schultz, also includes two Community Economic Development Directors, Doug Macfarlane and Gord Borgstrom, Assistant Provincial Bark Beetle Co-ordinator Barry Dobbin, Executive Administrative Assistant Terry Olsen, Business Manager Harleen Price, and myself.

The key function of the team is to lead government's response to the growing mountain pine beetle epidemic. To that end, we're working with 11 other provincial government agencies on strategies outlined in our Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan, which is updated annually. The 2006–2011 version of the action plan will be released soon.

In the short time I've been with the team, we've already accomplished great things. One of the more significant achievements was reaching agreement with First Nations on managing aspects of the infestation, including the provision of about \$15 million to address specific areas of interest to the 97 First Nations in the infestation zone. As well, Dan George now serves as an Executive Officer, First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Response. His role is to enhance the ability of government to move forward with the New Relationship in the context of the pine beetle epidemic.

In May, we participated in a summit hosted by the Province of Alberta. Pockets of the mountain pine beetle are in Alberta's forests, and the province wanted to learn from British Columbia's experience. We were happy to share our knowledge. As you may already know, we've been partnering with Alberta on spread control efforts along the provincial border. This past winter, 4.1 million ha were mapped and over 45 000 infested trees removed.

Our two Community Economic Development Directors are working with the Cariboo-Chilcotin and Omineca Beetle Action Coalitions to assist them in developing their economic diversification strategies.

Despite the epidemic, forestry will continue to play an important role in Interior communities. To that end, the B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range is conducting research and developing strategies to mitigate the falldown in the mid-term timber supply. For example, we're finding that even in pine-leading stands, the understorey is regenerating and may be available in the mid-term.

The key to success in managing the economic and environmental impacts of the infestation is for all of us to work together—all levels of government, First Nations, forest licensees, scientists, and communities.

So, that's my perspective as the new Provincial Bark Beetle Co-ordinator. I now encourage you to read the other papers and points of view in this special mountain pine beetle issue of *JEM*.