

Bugs & Diseases

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*Alberta's
eye on forest
health*

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Spring beetle update

Surveying and control of mountain pine beetle (MPB) infested trees continues in Alberta. Provided here is a summary of the status of operational activities as of March 29.

Smoky Area

Control operations in Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park began on March 7. Crews are falling and burning the identified infested trees and are expected to complete work in this area by April 7.

Foothills Area

Ground surveys and control operations are continuing in the Willmore Wilderness Park. Approximately 100 people are currently working on the operation. Surveying is expected to continue until the end of April. Control operations will continue into May.

Southern Rockies Area

Survey and control operations in all accessible sites on Crown managed lands are completed. Due to hazardous snow

conditions, infested trees in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park, areas in the Crowsnest Pass and upper Oldman River will be surveyed and controlled when conditions permit.

It is the department's goal to treat 100% of MPB-infested trees that are detected.



Burn beetles burn!

Note the characteristic ring of blue stain fungi in the sapwood of this MPB-infested log.

See page 2 for an update of the latest survey and control numbers. For future MPB updates visit the forest health website (www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/forests/health/mpb.html).

Erica Lee

MPB survey and control status (March 29)

Location	Survey Status	Trees to Cut & Burn	Green:Red Ratio	Trees Cut & Burned	% Controlled
Smoky Area					
Kakwa Provincial Park	Completed	275	0.84 : 1	230	84%
Foothills Area					
Willmore Wilderness Park	Ongoing	6213	2.4 : 1	919	15% of detected trees
Southern Rockies Area					
Bow Valley	Completed	315	1.2 : 1	315	100%
Spray Valley	Completed	909	2.7 : 1	909	100%
Oldman	Completed	102	0.8 : 1	81	80%
Crowsnest (North)	Completed	1226	2.1 : 1	1176	96%
Peter Lougheed	Postponed	17	4.7 : 1	17	Postponed
Total		9057		3647	

The new faces of forest health

Over the past few months there have been a number of new additions, and movement in Alberta's forest health program. Here are the details, starting in the north...

Ft. McMurray: Warren Oates has accepted the Forest Health Technician position in the northeast. Originally from Newfoundland, Warren migrated west and has worked with SRD over the past 2 years. With experience in MPB surveys and control from the Willmore operation, part of Warren's duties will be assisting with MPB operations throughout the province. The remainder of his time will be spent performing various forest health related activities in the Northeast Region.

Peace River: Natalie Henneberry began work in Peace River on April 3 as the Northwest Region's Forest Health Technician. Arriving from New

Brunswick, Natalie brings to this position a Master's degree in forestry and environmental management, and a variety of entomology and forestry experiences and skills.

Edmonton: As the new Information Management Technologist, Aaron McGill is now providing forest health GIS and modeling services out of Edmonton. With GIS and forestry related education, and work experience with Timberline and Canfor, he will be an asset to the forest health program.

A couple of position shifts within the forest health program have recently landed two new bodies in the Edmonton office. Dan Lux has moved from Rocky Mountain House and is the Provincial MPB Coordinator. And arriving from Edson, Erica Lee is now the MPB Prevention Officer.

Hinton: The new Forest Health Officer responsible for the Woodlands and Foothills areas is Brooks Horne. With a forestry diploma, a BSc in forest business management, and 15 years of experience with the forest industry in BC, Brooks bring a wealth of knowledge to Alberta's forest health program.

Also new to Hinton is Forest Health Technician, Christie Messier. Christie has a diploma in forest resource technology, and a BSc in natural resource management. She has gained much forestry experience with the BC forest industry, with her work focusing on silviculture.

Calgary: Not new to the department, but new to the forest health team, Bart McAnally recently accepted a the job of Forest Health Technician. Since 1982 Bart has worked his way across the province as a

forestry tech, guardian, and most recently Forest Officer with the Southern Rockies Wildfire Management Area. Congratulations on your official bug guy status Bart!

Blairmore: Rupert Hewison has taken up the southern most post of Forest Health Technician. Originally from Ontario, Rupert began working as a forestry technician in 1981. He joined SRD in 1994 as a Forest Officer in Rainbow Lake, and eventually moved to Blairmore. Rupert has much experience in timber management in Alberta, and is a welcomed addition to the crew.

On behalf of the entire forest health team, congratulations to all, and welcome aboard!

*Mike Maximchuk, Christine Kominek
& Mike Undershultz*

Invasives take root in northwest Alberta

Invasive plant issues in the Northwest Region are growing...literally.

Since the implementation of a regional strategy in 2004, it has become quite clear that invasive plant species are spreading into many areas of the Northwest Region at alarming rates. The key elements of the strategy are to survey all high access areas within the forested area, notify and work with occupants and local municipalities to control infestations, and to educate stakeholders on the benefits of prevention.

Through analysis of the survey data, trends have become apparent. The good news is that some occupants are trying to control infestations. Within the Peace Area, some occupants averaged as high as 60.0% in terms of their infested dispositions being either clean or treated. However as a group this percentage is much lower. Of the 131 dispositions found to have invasive plants in 2004, 35.9% of the dispositions re-inspected in 2005 were clean or had been treated. Regionally, the 2005 survey data also reveals that very few sites inspected are clean or free of invasive

plants; 21.7% clean in the Smoky Area, 20.6% clean in the Peace Area and 19.6% clean in the Upper Hay Area.

The most common invasive plant species found in the Peace Area is perennial sow-thistle. It was found on 30.9% of inspected sites in 2004 and 45.7% of inspected sites in 2005. The next most common species was scentless chamomile (21.0%). In the Upper Hay Area, perennial sow-thistle was the most common species and found on 70.7% of all sites. In the Smoky Area, Canada thistle was the most common species found in 2005 with 39.1% of the sites surveyed having the presence of this species.

It is apparent that there is a lot of work ahead to control the spread and establishment of these invasive plants. A fundamental change in current practices and increased awareness are needed to reduce invasive plant population levels and unintentional spread.

Mike Maximchuk

“A fundamental change in current practices and increased awareness are needed to reduce invasive plant population levels...”

Get to know your forest health officer

In this edition of the “get to know your FHO” series, I chat with veteran forest health officer Mike Maximchuk. Mike has been battling forest pests in the Northwest Region for 13 years.

I caught up with Mike over coffee at a highway 35 diner near Dixonville.

Undershultz: I think we’ve known each other for about 12 years. I know you are 37 years old, and were born and lived in Edmonton until making the trek to the Peace country. Correct?

Maximchuk: Yeah, pretty much. Before I moved north, I lived in Edmonton all but the two years I attended college and played baseball in La Grande, Oregon and Tarkio, Missouri.

Undershultz: So you began studying for a career in managing Alberta’s forest pests in Oregon and Missouri?



Forest Health Officer, Mike Maximchuk enjoying lunch beneath a spruce tree.

Maximchuk: Not exactly Scoop. I attended the University of Alberta for 3 years before heading south for 2 years. After returning to Edmonton, I was back at the U of A where I received a BSc in zoology.

Undershultz: I’ve been known to ask about nicknames in these interviews, but it is no secret that you are also commonly known as Maxi. So what did young Maxi want to be when he grew up?

Maximchuk: Professional baseball player.

Undershultz: Sorry that didn’t work out for you. But having landed a career in forest health, there must be a special forest pest that you hold close to your heart?

Maximchuk: I think my favorite forest pest is the spruce bud midge. Unlike most forest pests, their presence and damage usually go undetected. You

“I think my favorite forest pest is the spruce bud midge.”

really need to know what to look for. These little guys just go about their business and are seldom noticed.

Undershultz: You know we’ve had our share of good times as bug guys, but what would you say is your best forest health related experience?

Maximchuk: The best would have to be fall spruce budworm L2 surveys. You can’t beat walking and flying around the colorful boreal forest on a warm fall day with few mosquitoes.

Undershultz: What about the worst?

Maximchuk: Again, fall spruce budworm L2 surveys. It’s a kind of a double-edged sword. After collecting all the samples, you sit in a garage on a nice fall day processing spruce branches in a haze of sodium hydroxide. The evening campfires, guitar playing and beverages always helped ease the pain.

Undershultz: You mention guitar playing. I know that is one of your hobbies/interests. What else would you add to that list?

Maximchuk: Refereeing basketball, golf and traveling.

“You can’t beat walking and flying around the colorful boreal forest...”

Undershultz: If you were re-vegetating a deserted island, what Alberta plants would you choose?

Maximchuk: With climatic suitability aside, I would have to pick feather mosses so that I have a nice comfy place to lie down, soak up some rays and watch the waves. Another would be lodgepole pine, keeping in mind future cabin plans.

Undershultz: What is the best and worst thing

about being a forest health officer?

Maximchuk: The best part is working with the seasonal staff. And honestly, there is nothing bad enough about my job to warrant it being on the record.

Undershultz: Well Mike, I guess we’ll wrap it up on that positive note. Thanks for taking the time to meet with me and answer a few questions.

Maximchuk: No problem buddy.

Mike Maximchuk & Mike Undershultz

MPB Impact On Caribou

While there is no incidence of mountain pine beetle in the caribou zone outside of a protected area to date, that time may be fast approaching.

SRD sponsored the “Impact of Mountain Pine Beetle on Caribou Habitat” workshop on January 27, 2006 to facilitate open communications with land managers on the issue. One hundred and thirty eight industry, government and interest group representatives attended the workshop.

Workshop presentations are posted on the SRD forest health website (www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/forests/health/mpb.html).

Erica Lee

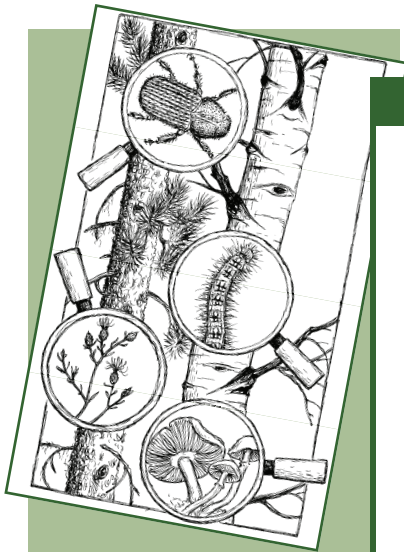


Teacher’s resource for MPB complete

To engage teachers and students on mountain pine beetle (MPB) issues in Alberta, a Junior High science teacher’s resource manual has been developed. The Strategic Directions Council, an inter-agency/inter-provincial task force for the management of MPB, created the “Mountain Pine Beetle Mania” manual with Inside Education.

This resource can be downloaded from the SRD website (www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/forests/health/mpb.html), ordered from Inside Education (www.insideeducation.ca) or the Alberta Information Centre (email: srd.infocent@gov.ab.ca).

Christine Kominek



Forest Health Officers:

Mike Maximchuk

Peace River
780.624.6221
Mike.Maximchuk@gov.ab.ca

Tom Hutchison

Athabasca
780.675.8234
Tom.Hutchison@gov.ab.ca

Brooks Horne

Hinton
780.865.6969
Brooks.Horne@gov.ab.ca

Christie Ward

Rocky Mountain House
403.845.8307
Christie.Ward@gov.ab.ca

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Editor: Mike Undershultz

Assistant Editor: Sunil Ranasinghe

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Innovative approaches in beetle battle

Recently SRD contracted Dr. John Borden (Professor Emeritus, Simon Fraser University) to evaluate the pheromone use in mountain pine beetle (MPB) management operations in Willmore Wilderness Park (WWP). In 2005, line baits of aggregation pheromones were established across valleys east of the continental divide in WWP in an attempt to intercept the flow of beetles from west to east.

John visited WWP and provided a report with several recommendations to improve the pheromone-baiting program. In view of the unprecedented nature of MPB occurrence in WWP, John recommended continuing use of pheromone line baiting with some adjustments. He concluded that line baiting is an innovative idea; however, the density of baiting was too high. Establishing bait lines 300-500 meters apart was recommended. John also stressed the importance of effective follow-up action to

remove all the baits and resulting infested trees.

John cautioned SRD to keep an open mind and monitor this program closely



MPB aggregation pheromone.

in view of its potential flip side, i.e., the tendency of baits to congregate and conserve beetles that may have otherwise got lost in dispersal.

Sunil Ranasinghe

Beetle went a lookin'

A beetle went a lookin'
He was lookin' for love.
When he heard some stridulation,
Like the cooing of a dove.

He smelled a sweet perfume,
Wafting in the air.
And he zoned in on a mate.
He knew they'd make a pair.

A pair they did become.
And a gallery they did fashion.
To house all the eggs,
From their nuptial passion.

The winter was warm.
So the offspring they bore,
Emerged that summer,
Fully two score – or more.

Around them, all the neighbours,
Had similar success.
Now the whole darn forest,
Is in a terrible mess.

So the moral of the story,
Is that love ain't always good.
Especially if we're planning,
To utilize the wood.

Tom Hutchison