

# Bugs & Diseases

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## New Co-chairs Appointed to the IIASWG

The purpose of the Interdepartmental Invasive Alien Species Working Group (IIASWG) is to coordinate, align, and provide recommendations to the Alberta Biodiversity Steering Committee on the Alberta Government's actions to address the threats of invasive alien species.

Under the direction of the Alberta Biodiversity Steering Committee (SC), the Working Group (WG) undertakes to coordinate, align and, where possible, consolidate Government of Alberta legislation, policies, programs, communications and partnerships addressing the impacts of invasive alien species. The WG also provides advice and support towards the Government of Alberta's implementation of the National Invasive Alien Species Strategy and action plans and other related federal legislation, policies, and programs.

Regular monthly meetings are held and co-chaired by Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) and Agriculture and Rural Development. The WG may establish task-oriented subgroups with specific responsibilities, such as background research, preparation of work plans and preparation of draft documents. Subgroups may include individuals that are not members of the WG, but must include at least one full WG member.

Working Group members work in a spirit of cooperation and respect, seeking to ensure effective involvement and input from all participating GoA departments and program areas. Regular feedback is sought from the SC by the WG at key decision points in the specific project development process. The WG ensures an effective design and delivery of consultations with key stakeholders and the general public, including oversight and management of contracts that may be required to support this activity.

The WG consists of professionals who represent the interests of all participating GoA departments. Active committee members are represented from the following AB departments: Agriculture and Rural Development, Environment, Tourism, Parks, Recreation & Culture, Transportation & Infrastructure, and SRD's Lands and Forestry Divisions.

Just recently two new chairs have been appointed. Congratulations to **Gayah Sieusahai** from Agriculture and Rural Development and **Andrea Sharpe** (SRD) who will be co-chairing this committee.



### Alberta's eye on forest health

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## A Hidden Limber Pine Stand

Limber pine grows in some rugged places and we're used to getting dropped off by helicopter in those 'hard-to-reach' spots. But a couple of weeks ago a few of us did it the adventurous way.

Kris Heemeryck, Kevin Gagne (Area Forester), and myself went out with retired Sundre Forest Officer Rick Smee to check out a limber pine stand up the aptly named "Boulder Creek." The drainage is in the vicinity of the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch along the Red Deer River corridor and the limber pine stands were ravaged by the Dogrib wildfire of 2002. We'd tried to arrange this trip in previous years as Rick was the only one who knew the way in.

Depending on the time of year and rainfall, this trip can be very wet or very icy. We managed to hit it right in between. It hadn't really rained since late August and there was only a skiff of snow that fell two nights before.

Boulder creek lies in a sharp canyon – more like a chasm - with stone 'steps' to effect the change in elevation. It is a drainage that narrows quickly with only one way in or out. Bear tracks were keenly noted in the snow on the way up making everyone wonder, should we continue? It was decided to carry on, as the tracks were small and didn't look

fresh. A few short steps later and adding to the one way in one way out and bear tracks, a couple small blood spots were noted in the tracks but nowhere else – probably a bear with a hang nail!

A necessary tool for this trip is a 16-foot ladder to make it over those steps, and we needed every foot of it. Without the snow a person could have crab-crawled over the rock at certain points, but that little bit of snow made it too risky. Kris didn't have much of a problem but the rest of us have a little age on us and difficulty pulling our carcasses over snowy ledges.

The last of these steps is a big bowl of a cave, carved smooth and round by years of snowmelt. You can either climb the ladder up over the lip of the then-trickling waterfall or squeeze up through tube-like cave on the side. The only part that wasn't super-cool about the cave was the pack rat poop and urine along the stony ridges (throwing those gloves away). Once above the cave the limber pine stand appears and it's a short goat-scramble up top, clinging to juniper. First thing you notice is how tall the some of the trees are. There are plenty of young trees coming up in clumps, likely from seed caches. And everyone looks healthy.

The descent was a little easier but every bit as risky, and just where was that bear?



*Marian Jones - Clearwater*



## The Silver Serpentine....

In the Peace and Upper Hay Areas, 2011 marked one of the more intense years of forest insects in recent time. Although populations of spruce budworm declined from the effects of an early June snowfall and freezing temperatures, other insect populations continued to expand and note their presence on the landscape. Willow leafminers were everywhere, mountain pine beetles continued to spread north and east, forest tent caterpillars exploded and now threaten the residents of Peace River, Neodiprion sawflies were abundant on local pine trees and a lesser known insect also exploded throughout the north....the aspen serpentine leafminer (*Phyllocnistis populiella*).

Aspen trees throughout the Keg River, Rainbow Lake, Zama City and Meander River areas took on a silvery appearance due to severe infestations of this tiny insect. The silvery appearance is caused by the feeding (mining) action of the larvae as they weave their way back and forth in the leaf causing a “serpentine” pattern and leaving only the cuticle behind. In severe years, the silvery appearance is visible from the air and can be mapped during forest health aerial surveys. By mid-July, the larvae spin silken cells within the mines to pupate and later emerge as tiny adult moths with a wingspan of only 5mm. The adults probably hibernate in the duff and re-emerge the following spring to mate and lay eggs on the following year’s new foliage. The feeding causes the leaves to dry out and may lead to premature leaf drop but all in all causes minimal damage to the tree.



*Aspen Serpentine Leafminer damage near Adair Tower*



*Silvery aspen by Rainbow Lake*

## Mountain Pine Beetle Program Goes International

In October, Dan Lux from the Forest Health Section travelled to the Black Hills of South Dakota to present Alberta's MPB Action Plan to the Dakota Society of American Foresters.

Established in 1900 to advance the science, education, technology, and practice of forestry, the Dakotas Society of American Foresters represents all segments of the forestry profession in North and South Dakota -- including public and private practitioners, researchers, administrators, educators and forestry students.

Over 300 people attended the event at which Dan spoke, including a couple of local newspapers and TV crews.

The conference was held in the historic town of Deadwood which, according to Wikipedia, began in the 1870s. Colonel George Custer led an expedition into the Black Hills and later announced the discovery of gold, triggering the Black Hills Gold Rush and giving rise to the lawless town of Deadwood. The town gained notoriety for the murder of Wild Bill Hickok, is the final resting place of Hickok and Calamity Jane and was known for its wild and almost lawless reputation.

The Black Hills are dominated by mature Ponderosa Pine trees, with a few aspen and white spruce. The beetles have been spreading in the area since 2002. Local landowners, the State of South Dakota, the US Forest Service and the local forest industry have been deliberating how to develop a MPB management strategy and were impressed with Alberta's approach.

"It is very encouraging to see that a government agency can work with industry to lay out and implement an effective MPB strategy," said Paul Pierson, Dakotas Society of American Foresters, Chair-elect. "The Alberta MPB strategy is comprehensive enough to be effective and lucid enough to implement."

Overall the presentation was well received and since the conference the local industry has prepared a management strategy proposal for the US Forest Service. The proposal is based on the concepts used in Alberta.

*Dan Lux — Edmonton*



*The Black Hills, Courtesy the USDA Forest Service*

## National MPB Workshop Win!

On November 15-17, forest health professionals from around Canada gathered in Edmonton to learn and strategize about mountain pine beetle (MPB) and its spread across Canada. On the first day of the workshop, participants were introduced to beetle biology, Alberta's MPB management strategy and current status. Following the morning session, guests boarded an "executive minibus" (a slight exaggeration on the part of the bus company) to the Hinton Training Centre.

On day two of the workshop, a field trip north of Edson exposed professionals to MPB in their natural habitat. Local Forest Officers treated the group to a demonstration of survey techniques and level 1 control operations (including falling, burning and peeling of infested trees). The demonstration made for the perfect setup for a smoky lunch by the fire... the highlight of the day!

Richard Briand (Hinton Forest Products) and Jim Stephenson (Canfor Grande Prairie) joined the field trip for the afternoon to discuss some of the challenges and successes of MPB management in Alberta from an industry perspective.

The last day of the session was focused on new research related to the risk of spread, and how to quantify the effectiveness of beetle control.

### National Forest Pest Strategy

Alberta acted as a fine host for the workshop, although special thanks goes out to the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, National Forest Pest Strategy (NFPS) initiative for providing funding to help make the workshop possible.

The intent of the NFPS is to develop nationally integrated programs to enhance the protection of Canada's forests from forest pests, and is based upon a risk-analysis framework. MPB is one risk assessment case study being undertaken as part of the strategy. The initial MPB risk assessment (2007) concluded that there were few biological impediments to MPB moving east through Alberta and across Canada's boreal and eastern pine forests.

In mid-October this year a meeting was held in Victoria, to revisit and update the original risk assessment in light of the current MPB population status and recent research findings. This soon-to-be published 2011 re-assessment echoes the original assessment's conclusions, although there is now less uncertainty of the risk.

### *The smoky and beetle roast*



*Christie Ward & Mike Undershultz —Edmonton*

## 2011 Golden Beetle Award

This year's Golden Beetle award goes to an industrious fellow who gets a lot of work done and helps move the Forest Health crowd forward in a quiet, unassuming way.

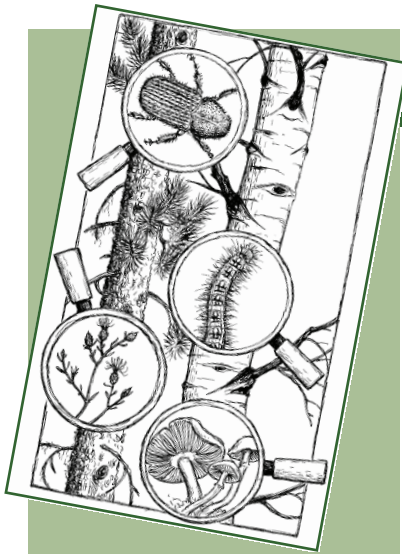
The recipient, **Mike Undershultz**, has been with the Forest Health Section for a long time and has always made significant contributions to the program.

Mike has been acting in the Senior Forest Health Officer role and his commitment to updating the Mountain Pine Beetle contracts and procedures is appreciated by Edmonton and all the field staff.

Congratulations Mike!



*Dale Thomas —Slave Lake*



## Take off Together One Day Sung to the tune of “Sleigh Ride”

We came all uninvited, but  
Now that we’re sited, we’ll stay.  
We’ll hope for balmy weather,  
Then take off together one day.

We’ve shown some great persistence,  
On more than one instance, it’s true.  
Maybe from just surviving,  
To downright thriving, we’ll do.

Giddy-yup, giddy-yup, giddy-yup  
Let’s go  
Let’s put on a show

We’ll stay despite the cold and snow

Giddy-yup, giddy-yup, giddy-yup, It’s grand  
Right here where we stand,  
We’re stickin’ about, tough it out,  
In this wintery, prairie land.

Right now, we’re real cold hardy, and  
We’ll be ready to party – July,  
Let’s hope for lovely weather, and  
We’ll take off together and fly.

*Tom Hutchison—Athabasca*

*Guitar Accompaniment—Mike Undershultz*

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Please click play button to hear audio version of poem! Once window open, select white forward button.