
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests
Chief Forester's Office

CUT LEVEL INCREASED IN RESPONSE TO BEETLE EPIDEMIC

VICTORIA – The total allowable annual cut for the three north-central B.C. timber supply areas most affected by the mountain pine beetle epidemic will increase by 27 per cent to 23.4 million cubic metres, chief forester Larry Pedersen announced today.

The allowable annual cuts in the Prince George, Quesnel and Lakes timber supply areas will go up in total by about 4.9 million cubic metres, effective Oct. 1, and the increase will focus on salvaging pine forests with moderate to high levels of mortality as a result of the beetle.

“This extraordinary action is essential in the face of what has become a catastrophic epidemic,” Pedersen said. “The increases will allow the capture of economic value from dead trees in a way that maintains the highest environmental standards possible, speeds up regeneration and restores the productivity of the impacted forests. In making my decision, I reviewed analyses that accounted for all forest values, as well as recognizing that beetle-killed wood may be merchantable for a longer period of time if it is used for purposes other than traditional lumber.”

The annual increase and total harvest for each timber supply area is:

- 2.7 million cubic metres to about 14.9 million cubic metres for the Prince George.
- 2 million cubic metres to about 5.3 million cubic metres for the Quesnel.
- 200,000 cubic metres to about 3.2 million cubic metres for the Lakes.

Pedersen conducted the expedited timber supply review following requests by local resource managers and a commitment in government’s updated action plan for managing the impacts of the epidemic.

“I knew from the outset that this would be a difficult, complex decision with wide-ranging impacts,” Pedersen said. “I also knew that decisive action was needed because the infestation poses an immediate and severe risk to the standing timber supply, the future timber supply, countless other forest values and communities in infested areas.”

The determinations reflect the principles of existing land use plans and forest practices legislation, as well as recommendations in a recent research report that examined ways to conserve forest values as more of the infested areas are harvested. Ministry of Forests staff will continue to monitor the infestation and advise if it either subsides or expands beyond projected levels, which may require further examination of one or all of the determinations.

While mountain pine beetle epidemics are natural events in B.C., mild winters and abundant sources of mature lodgepole pine trees have led to an outbreak unprecedented in the province's recorded history. Research released in June by the Ministry of Forests and the Canadian Forest Service concluded that the current infestation may peak in 2008 and under current conditions has the potential to kill 80 per cent of the merchantable pine in B.C.'s Interior. More information on the mountain pine beetle is available at www.for.gov.bc.ca

The allowable annual cut rationales are available from the local forest districts or the Ministry of Forests website at <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hts/>.

Under B.C.'s comprehensive timber supply review, the chief forester must determine how much wood can be harvested in each of the province's 37 timber supply areas and 34 tree farm licences at least once every five years. Each determination is an independent professional judgment based on information ranging from technical forestry reports and public input to government's social and economic objectives. The chief forester can determine new allowable annual cuts earlier in response to abnormal situations such as the mountain pine beetle, or postpone a decision for another five years if a harvest level is not expected to change significantly.

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