



Beetle-Killed Wood Could Supply Clean Energy in BC, says Study

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For Immediate Release

(Kingston, ON) — The BIOCAP Canada Foundation, a multi-stakeholder research foundation, released today a report showing that a portion of the trees killed by the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) could be a clean energy source. The trees could supply a climate-friendly fuel for a 300 megawatt electrical power plant at reasonable cost while creating jobs, contributing to a clean environment and helping Canada meet its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol.

The MPB infestation has reached epidemic proportions in BC, affecting an estimated 10 million hectares of forest. Vast areas of dead, standing timber create a significant fire hazard, and threaten the way of life for thousands of people in the affected communities who have relied on traditional forestry for their livelihood.

The lead author of the study, Professor Amit Kumar from the University of Alberta, summarized the team's work: "Our study shows that a large scale power plant using about 7 per cent of the tree biomass killed in the MPB infestation could provide central B.C. with 300 MW of power for the next 20 years. It would also help Canada meet its climate change commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, and put British Columbia in the forefront of biomass power generation in the world."

"The millions of hectares of dead trees are certainly a cloud, but the cloud has a silver lining," said David Layzell, CEO of BIOCAP. "The huge amount of dead biomass in a concentrated area creates a unique opportunity for the affected communities to make the transition to a sustainable, bio-based economy – an economy in which our forest and agricultural lands provide not only food and fibre, but the energy that we now get from fossil fuels."

Peter Flynn, another author of the study and the Poole Chair for Management for Engineers at the University of Alberta, notes that "This is a unique opportunity for B.C. that can be developed now, since the volume of dead trees far exceeds the capacity of current and future lumber, pulp and board plants. Large scale boilers using wood are commercially available today, and early development of a power plant will speed reforestation and prevent loss of useful tree biomass to decay."

The final report released today focuses on two sizes of power plant – 220 MW or 300 MW located in central B.C. where the beetle infestation is most severe: Quesnel and Nazko. Power distributors in B.C., including BC Hydro, are sourcing half of their new power from green sources. The estimated cost of the power, ranging from \$68 to \$74 per MW hour, is very competitive compared to other green sources; power cost includes a 10% return on investment. Federal green power subsidies and revenue from the sale of carbon credits could drive the price down even further. The study also noted that there is the potential to build more than one of these power plants.

Rich Coleman, B.C. Minister of Forests and Range, said "as part of our Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan, we're exploring new uses for beetle-wood to get as much economic value as possible from the trees. I'll be discussing this proposal with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources to see how it might fit into the new expanded Energy Plan to be released next year."

BIOCAP Canada Foundation is a federally funded, not-for-profit research foundation that is harnessing Canada's research capacity to find biologically-based solutions to climate change and clean energy.

The full report is authored by Amit Kumar and Peter Flynn of the University of Alberta, and Shahab Sokhansanj of the University of British Columbia, and is available at www.biocap.ca.

-30-

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