

Forest Fertilization Program Communications Plan

1. Context

The most recent outbreak of the mountain pine beetle has caused widespread mortality of lodgepole pine throughout the British Columbia Interior. The mountain pine beetles had infested 9.2 million hectares of lodgepole pine forests by late 2006, over one-third of the province's Timber Harvesting Land Base. The high mortality and time-limited value of dead lodgepole pine have led to an accelerated harvest of beetle-killed pine to salvage dead timber before it loses its commercial value. Based on projected mortality levels of 80 percent and other factors, salvage harvesting is projected to reduce mid-term harvest levels by up to 45 percent. Options to help offset the timber supply shortfall expected in 10–80 years include fertilizing established forests to help them become merchantable sooner and mitigate the timber supply.

The expanded fertilization program is based on research trial results and operational experience. The program requires effective communications to ensure that a wide audience is aware of, and supports, its purpose and intended outcomes. Furthermore, addressing concerns about the different effects of fertilization on waterbodies, the forest understory and forest health should begin as early as possible, and maintained through the program's duration.

For more information, please refer to the Forest Fertilization Strategy (2006–2009) on the Forests for Tomorrow website.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the fertilization communications program are to:

1. Inform land users, forest licensees, First Nations and the public that a large-scale provincial fertilization program is a means to increase timber volume in the mid term.
2. Encourage forest licensee participation in program delivery.
3. Provide technical information about fertilization and its stand- and landscape-level effects to practitioners, Forests for Tomorrow regional specialists, forest licensees, implementation contractors and others who are interested.

3. Audiences

Communications about the fertilization program will address different audiences, some of which overlap in their information needs. Audiences include:

- Practitioners (forest professionals, biologists, technologists and other resource managers) working for government and forest licensees;
- Program managers in provincial and federal government resource management agencies (Ministry of Forest and Range, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and Fisheries Canada) and the forest industry;
- First Nations;

- Implementation contractors;
- Land managers, including woodlot licensees, community forest managers and ranchers;
- Local groups;
- Community leaders; and
- Interested members of the public.

4. Communications Tools

Five key communications tools are available or proposed for the forest fertilization program as described below.

4.1 Synopsis

The fertilization synopsis is a four-page, colour publication that provides a general overview of the fertilization program and websites for further specific information. The synopsis was developed by technical specialists in forest fertilization, including staff from the Ministry of Forests and Range regions and Forest Practices Branch, forest companies and consulting firms.

The synopsis was designed as a comprehensive update on the key points of the forest fertilization program. Five thousand colour copies were printed. Preliminary distribution to regional specialists and forest licensees was completed in early July, 2006, with further distribution since then.

4.2 Forests for Tomorrow Website

The Forests for Tomorrow website provides a wide variety of information relating to program administration and technical aspects of the different activities. The fertilization program has its own program tab on the right-hand side of the screen, from which different types of information are available under the top tabs, including:

- Related documents and websites;
- Stand selection guidelines;
- Material Safety Data Sheets for fertilizers;
- Contacts;
- Forests for Tomorrow policy documents;
- Guidelines and standards;
- Monitoring;
- Environmental protection;
- Application procedures;
- Return on Investment; and
- Other tabs relating to associated meeting summaries, PricewaterhouseCoopers and additional sources.

The Forests for Tomorrow website is a “one-stop shop” for information on the forest fertilization program, from policy and administration information through to the details of ensuring environmental safety. The website should be regularly maintained to ensure that it provides current information and remains a valuable reference source.

4.3 Media

Interest by local media in the forest fertilization program can significantly help to inform a community about forest management activities. This is particularly important in Interior communities where residents are highly aware of the mountain pine beetle epidemic and its impacts, along with the expected mid-term timber supply shortfall and the ensuing effects on the community's economic base and overall future prospects. Inviting the media to active fertilization operations is expected to help result in informative reporting about the program.

News releases should be issued on a provincial and local basis to notify the media of program activities and opportunities for field viewing.

Contact with the local media may be best initiated by the local district or license "champion" who is involved in the program, and knowledgeable about past and planned future work as well as forest fertilization operations.

4.4 Presentations

The role of the forest fertilization program needs to be broadcast to a variety of groups and audiences, including:

- Cariboo-Chilcotin Beetle Action Committee;
- Omineca Beetle Action Committee;
- MoFR Mountain Pine Beetle Emergency Response staff in Kamloops;
- Elected officials in the provincial legislature, regional districts and municipalities;
- First Nations groups;
- Community groups (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Rotary);
- Woodlot associations;
- Cattlemen's associations;
- Outdoor recreation groups; and
- Practitioners at technical workshops (e.g., Northern and Southern Interior silviculture committees [NSC and SISCO]).

PowerPoint presentations have been developed in the last one to two years which, with some updating, would provide a good information base. The updated presentation would serve as the foundation for presentations by local speakers who are knowledgeable about past and planned future work, and preferably familiar with the audience. The presentation should cover:

- Program purpose;
- Achievements to date;
- Program goals;
- Operations – what actually happens when forests are fertilized (before, during and after); and
- A concluding question-and-answer session.

Presentations should emphasize the program's intended outcome of helping to address the mid-term timber supply falldown and the resulting beneficial effects on the economy of Interior communities. The presentation would be available as a stand-alone addition to the website, but would best be delivered by an experienced program specialist who can answer questions easily and credibly.

4.5 Local Contact

Personal contact by local specialists with First Nations, stakeholders, interested members of the public and other individuals (beyond the required consultation for field activities), is a valuable way to communicate information about the forest fertilization program. Contact may be:

- Written, through correspondence from the Ministry of Forests and Range or the forest company about the program;
- Onsite, through field trips to candidate stands, treated area and active operations; or
- Face-to-face at a local office or community meeting place.

Not only can specialists address questions about program planning, and alleviate concerns regarding site selection and operations with interested local community members, but they are also able to share local comments, questions and concerns with other specialists. This will help to ensure that external concerns are considered and addressed as easily as possible on a consolidated basis.

5. Proposed Schedule for 2006 and 2007

Tool	Activity	Responsibility	Target Date
Synopsis	Distribute publication further after initial distribution on July 10, 2006.	Local champions (MOFR and forest industry staff)	Done
	Post on FFT website.	Jane Perry requests Nigel Fletcher to do.	Done
Website	Maintain fertilization tab contents by reviewing and updating quarterly.	Mel Scott and Jane supply revisions and additions and request Nigel Fletcher to update website.	Quarterly
Media	Provincial news release about the forest fertilization program	Jane with Ralph Winter and Mel based on Public Affairs Branch guidance	September
	Local news releases about the local program and planned or completed activities	Local champions with help from Jane if required	Fall
	Obtain guidelines for news releases from Public Affairs Branch.	Jane with Vivian Thomas, PAB	August
	Field tours of active operations	Local champions coordinate	Fall
Presentations	Develop an updated, comprehensive overview of the forest fertilization program.	Done by Ralph, update later as required.	Done
	Present as opportunities arise.	Local champions, Ralph and others	Ongoing
	Post on FFT website.	Nigel Fletcher via Ralph	Ongoing
Local Contact	Assess local support for forest fertilization, and pursue as required.	Local champions with assistance from Mel, Jane and Ralph	Ongoing