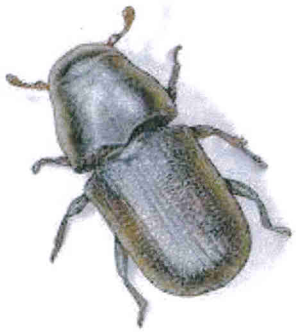
DEPARTMENT UPDATES



Mountain Pine Beetle in the Community Forest

As you are probably aware mountain pine beetle has had a serious impact on lodgepole pine forests in the province for over five years and has been a major issue here in the Okanagan for the past 3 years.

The pine beetle population has grown to its current epidemic populations due to the abundance of mature lodgepole pine, its chief food source, warmer winter temperatures that allow it to successfully survive the winter, drier summers that weaken the host tree making infestations even more successful.

We were fortunate enough to have only a limited spread into the Community Forest in 2005 and in 2006 but in the summer and early fall of 2007 mountain pine beetle moved into the Community Forest in a very big way.

With pine making up approximately 46% of the species composition on the Community Forest, what management tools do we have to lessen the impact of the beetle infestation? Unfortunately, due to the life cycle of mountain pine beetle, we have very few options.

The beetle over winters under the bark of pine and in the summer tunnels its way out to the surface. It then takes flight looking for a new tree to attack which it is usually able to find in just a few hours. Once it finds a new host it quickly burrows beneath the bark, lays eggs and starts the process all over again.

The only meaningful way to address the infestation is either to harvest pine before the beetle arrives (the proactive approach) or harvest pine stands that the beetle has already attacked (the reactive approach). Starting in the winter of 2005/06 we followed the proactive approach by harvesting older pine stands that research said were the most at risk to attack.

In the fall of 2007, when we noticed our first massive influx of beetle, we shifted to the reactive approach and began to target stands that had recently been infested. We anticipate that the beetle will eat through virtually all pine stands on the Community Forest in the next 3 years. From what we have seen in other parts of the province and elsewhere here in the valley the beetle will move much faster than we will be able to respond.

Be prepared to see red and grey pine stands over the next few years. Although they may not be as attractive as lush green forests they do provide important habitat for a range of species and of course the forest will recover in time.

Where we have been harvesting in pine stands, we have been experimenting with a range of harvesting and silviculture techniques. Although we want to remove as much pine as possible before it dies, we also want to leave behind a range of habitats and tree retention to help us manage for a range of values including wildlife requirements, water values, visuals and retention of shrub species. The next page shows two examples of harvest techniques we have been trying since June of 2007.

If you have any questions about WFN's forestry program, feel free to contact Grant Thompson at 769-5671, via email at Grant.Thompson@wfn or drop in to our office in the basement of the firehall.