

BC LOCAL NEWS

Government to launch forest resilience pilot project

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The provincial government plans to launch a pilot project on boosting forest resilience in the Burns Lake region.

The project in the Lakes Timber Supply Area (TSA) “will focus on sustainable forest management, including wildfire risk reduction,” as Dawn Makarowski, spokesperson with the ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) told *Lakes District News*.

“The Lakes District land base has been significantly impacted by the mountain pine beetle infestation and the catastrophic wildfires of 2018. The project is focussed on increasing the ability of the landscape to resist and recover quickly from these types of impacts.”

Details such as a timeline and budget were not yet known.

The pilot comes in response to the concerns raised at the Northern Conference for Wildfire Resiliency held April 24-26 in Burns Lake, where the need for changes to forestry was widely discussed.

“To be successful, the project must be undertaken as a partnership between the province, First Nations, the forest industry, the ranching sector and the broader community,” Makarowski said.

For Frank Varga, General Manager of the Burns Lake Community Forest (BLCF), the pilot project is long overdue.

“The landscape has changed drastically since the mountain pine beetle infestation took place in the early 2000’s and baffles me that this review has not happened a longtime ago,” he said.

“The pilot objectives are many of the key landscape considerations that BLCF has been working on – as part of our Mountain Pine Beetle Mitigation Plan, and has been communicating to public and shareholders to try to demonstrate the opportunities that do exist for long term sustainable timber supply for an area base tenure.”

FLNRORD has held information sessions on the pilot with First Nations, industry and community groups and representatives of local government, including with directors of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN).

But at the RDBN’s Nov. 7 board meeting, the directors said they left the sessions with more questions than answers. The board agreed that in the near future an FLNRORD representative would be invited to do a presentation for the board on the pilot project.

The Lakes TSA project is among several landscape-level pilots that the government plans to undertake across the province.

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