

Clearwater Times

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It appears that local woodlot licensees and community forests will benefit from a new provincial partnership being called Bridges II.

The program will focus on two sub-regions in the mountain pine beetle epidemic zone: the McBride to Barriere corridor, and the west Kootenay Lake corridor region centered around Kaslo.

"The project could bring together woodlot licensees and small value wood processors in the Valley to discuss and identify potential business arrangements that will match timber availability with the needs of the small value-added wood businesses," said Warren MacLennan of the Clearwater Woodlot Association. "This will enable woodlot licensees to further maximize their revenues and potentially enable the identification of new forest products. This could be a win-win for small tenure holders and value added sector."

The project will focus on improving fiber utilization, facilitating collaboration and business relationships, developing new markets and business opportunities and fostering information sharing.

Bas Delaney, of the Health Forest-Healthy Communities local committee commented, "The Healthy Forest-Healthy Communities public dialogue Session held in Clearwater in November 2011 identified 'more sustainable and stable employment' as a key concern and called for efforts to be directed to promote secondary manufacturing and value added specialty timber products. This initiative may be an important first step to create new, on-going and diverse jobs in the forest industry"

During the recent [McBride - Barriere Regional Economic Investment Pilot](#), the consultations recognized that if community forests and woodlots could increase their collaboration on a sub-regional scale, they could benefit from several synergies and increased economies of scale.

According to a Bridges II project summary, the former Headwaters Forest District (between McBride and Barriere) has five community forests and over 25 woodlots and with a combined AAC (annual allowable cut) of 197,443 m³. If community forests and woodlots can increase their collaboration on a sub-regional scale, they could benefit economically from several synergies and increased economies of scale.

"Our government's BC Jobs Plan continues to unlock the economic potential for the interior regions of the province, bringing our unemployment rate down and providing jobs for families," said Kamloops-North Kamloops MLA Terry Lake.

The \$200,000 funding for the project includes \$60,000 each from the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, the Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition (SIBAC), the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition and \$10,000 each from the BC Community Forests Association, and the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations. The project will be managed by SIBAC on behalf of the other project partners.

"This program isn't about finding more fiber, it's about finding partnerships and strategic linkages to better utilize the fiber that's already available and allowing businesses to take advantage of opportunities to create more jobs in the zones that are most affected by the mountain pine beetle," said Pat Bell, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister responsible for Labor.

The first phase of the Bridges Project was successful in consulting with representatives of small tenure holders and value-added sectors, identifying impediments to increase business activity, and the successful creation and launch of the WoodSourceBC.com website.