

New coordinator will lead an ambitious program

This year's hiring of an Aboriginal Coordinator supports Foothills Model Forest's ambitious multi-partner Traditional Culture Knowledge Study initiative in west-central Alberta.

Bob Phillips is Metis and has 20 years' experience in the oil and gas industry. For the last 11 years he provided industry-aboriginal liaison working with more than 30 communities in Alberta, northeast B.C. and the NWT around oil and gas and telecom activities. His ultimate aim today is to help develop an aboriginal community/industry referral protocol process that would offer Alberta a workable consultation process.

The Traditional Culture Knowledge Study initiative will be guided by an Aboriginal Steering Committee under the Foothills Model Forest umbrella, made up of several aboriginal communities, plus industry and government representatives. The communities will gather some of the information and knowledge that are important when sensitive aboriginal-area disturbance issues arise. Additional knowledge will be gleaned from projects completed by Model Forests in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Phillips says conflicts over disturbance issues on sensitive lands within aboriginal communities aren't going away, and he hopes a protocol developed through the Steering Committee's work will provide a means of communication and understanding. The Traditional Culture Knowledge Study initiative goes far beyond simple mapping. "It's meant to capture aboriginal knowledge in conjunction with the land," Phillips explains. The study captures traditional knowledge "such as spiritual areas, gravesites, berry



Aboriginal Coordinator Bob Phillips

and food gathering areas, trapline locations . . . details of the community way of life and how it's attached to the land." The program will also help improve capacity within communities to help deal with disturbance issues and, most important, educate future generations, Phillips points out.

Seventeen aboriginal communities have been identified with interests in the research area. While the Foothills Model Forest is leading the initiative, the program is firmly community-driven. Results will be the exclusive domain of aboriginal communities, though it's hoped the project will ultimately present ways for communities, industry and government to come together over some common goals.

"What we're really talking about here is the common theme of sharing the land," Phillips says. "I don't believe industry wants to steamroll over a way of life. It's just the opposite - they want to better understand the situation and contribute towards a solution. It's in everyone's interest to resolve issues through a peaceful process such as this."

Five research projects accepted under the \$1-million FRIAA Open Funds Initiative this year include two proposed by the Foothills Model Forest, relating to grizzly bears and natural disturbance.

Foothills Model Forest president Bob Udell and consultant Dave Andison will reach a large international audience with papers at the 12th World Forestry Congress in Quebec this September.

Foothills Model Forest stakeholders were treated to two days of project updates and information at a special forum and research update in Hinton in June. A total of 15 presentations were given.

DID YOU KNOW...



Grizzly bears . . .

Cameras take research to a higher resolution

Next time you take a photo of a grizzly bear, don't be surprised if he turns round and takes one of you.

The Foothills Model Forest Grizzly Bear Project, headed by Gord Stenhouse, has plans this summer to equip two grizzlies in the west-central Alberta research area with digital cameras. It's a whole new take on research guaranteed to provide new insights and perspectives on the bears' life. The cameras will be linked to the Global Positioning System (GPS) collar worn by study subjects.

"It's a unique step in Foothills Model Forest research, and something that's never been done before with grizzlies," says Stenhouse, provincial grizzly bear specialist.

"We're hoping to learn more about what the bears see and experience," Stenhouse says. "The imaging will provide so much more than just their location. We will better understand how the bears use their habitats, what are they eating, whether they have cubs, how they interact with other bears and people."

Foothills Model Forest is in partnership with Naser El-Sheimy and Andrew Hunter of the University of Calgary's Geomatics Engineering Department,

who designed the camera.

A total of 23 bears are equipped with GPS systems in the Foothills Model Forest research project. Stenhouse says another 10 will be added as the study area expands this year (north of Highway 16 toward Grande Cache and south to the Clearwater River). The cameras will be put on bears already equipped with a GPS collar, on multiple-use lands, Stenhouse says. "Evaluating the human disturbance and its influence on the grizzly is one of our goals," Stenhouse says. The cameras will take pictures every hour, during daylight only, until the end of October. Stenhouse says the collars will be remotely triggered to fall off the bears, then retrieved by researchers who will download the photos.



Digital cameras will provide new view on grizzlies' world

"This is Phase One of a much larger project," Stenhouse says. "We want to test the camera, and make sure it works in all the elements. Eventually, we hope to be able to digitally transmit the images to satellite and back to our computers in real-time."

Since 1999, the Foothills Model Forest Grizzly Bear Research Project has played a leadership role in creating a cohesive and integrated approach to grizzly bear research in Alberta.

Award recognizes strong community service

Dave McPhee, president of the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation (AWN) and a partner in Foothills Model Forest's Aboriginal Enhancement programs, has been presented with the Queen's Jubilee Award.

There are many who say it's high praise well earned. "Dave and his immediate staff have gone beyond the call of duty, and then some," says Foothills Model Forest Aboriginal Coordinator Bob Phillips. Dave McPhee, along with Rachelle and Doris McDonald, have always had the best interests of their community in mind regarding: community service/relations, economic development and securing agreements with industry and government."

One of Dave's biggest accomplishments for the community has been the Traditional Culture Study that AWN has

been working on for roughly five years, says Phillips. About 80 per cent complete, the study brings a lot of experience to the new joint study announced between Foothills Model Forest and the AWN. The AWN will focus on Jasper and Willmore Parks areas of interests, having in the past confined study activities mainly in the Grande Cache area.

The AWN, of which David McPhee is president, has six communities (co-ops) near Grande Cache. The AWN office is located in the town of Grande Cache. McPhee also helped start up Aseniwuche Developments Corp. involved with forestry and oil & gas-related construction services.

Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Queen's reign, the Golden Jubilee Medals recognize accomplishments that take place outside the ordinary bounds of employment. Medal recipients represent



Dave McPhee

all regions of Canada and are active in government, national professional, educational and cultural organizations, the military, veterans' groups, sports associations, and philanthropic and charitable bodies.

Tools developed to improve aquatic habitats

Crossings over coldwater foothills streams are critical to sustainable forestry management, and like any infrastructure, and can fall into disrepair.

Rich McCleary, fish biologist with the Foothills Model Forest, has spearheaded development of a seven-step process to guide remediation efforts.

“The program was developed to help crossing owners, such as Weldwood of Canada, identify and track stream crossings that have fish-passage issues,” he explained.

“We needed a co-ordinated approach that includes all crossing owners to secure the most effective way to ensure restoration of fish passage to existing habitats,” McCleary explains. Development of a strategic process will help to increase the awareness of stream crossings with potential environmental issues and help to prioritize those that may require remediation. McCleary added the process includes assessment standards; availability of road, stream and fish inventory data; and development of training programs.



Stream crossings can have an impact on habitat sustainability

Development of the remediation process grew out of an earlier assessment of some 14 watersheds involving 302 stream crossings. Four structures that currently present a full barrier to upstream fish migration within known fish-bearing streams were identified. Another 18 crossings that present potential partial barriers to upstream fish migration in known fish bearing streams were identified.

The findings were incorporated into the Weldwood Stream Crossing

Remediation Program. But a variety of other agencies, including oil and gas sector companies, railways and the provincial government, are responsible for stream crossings within the study area. “A co-ordinated approach within individual watersheds that includes all crossing owners would be the most effective way to ensure conservation of fish passage,” McCleary said.

McCleary is now producing a manual he hopes forestry technicians across the province will use in evaluating their options for new stream crossings in the future. “It will be a practical guide, building on existing manuals and identifying key environmental factors with best practices to conserve habitat and fish passage.”

“Foothills Model Forest doesn’t own any of these stream crossings, but what we can do is increase awareness of the importance of crossings,” McCleary said. “We can develop tools for owners to use to address problems, and our new manual will help ensure construction of the crossing is done right the first time, to conserve habitat and fish passage.”

Fresh Water celebrations on tap



Looking for fish - and new knowledge

The 2003 International Year of Fresh Water is well under way, and Foothills Model Forest has participated in the United Nations program by sharing information generated by its watershed research projects.

Foothills Model Forest is a strong supporter of research that will help society maintain the quality and quantity of fresh water, says general manager Don Podlubny. Its researchers have supported the Hinton-based Hardisty Creek Restoration Project and numerous studies that are helping industry minimize its effects on mountain watersheds.

The International Year of Fresh Water How celebrates the fact that water shapes not only our landscape but also our cultural and ecological heritage. In

Canada it is sponsored by the federal Department of the Environment and Parks Canada as well as the tourism community in and around national and provincial parks, protected areas and multiple use provincial and territorial forest lands. Activities will celebrate the importance of the great river systems that have their origins in the Rocky Mountains - the Athabasca-Peace-Mackenzie, the North and South Saskatchewan, and the Fraser and Columbia river systems.

One of the goals is to promote leading-edge Canadian initiatives aimed at efficient water management and use, water quality improvement and aquatic ecosystem restoration.



Communicating . . .

Projects take knowledge to the streets

Four Foothills Model Forest initiatives have tackled the task of communicating the organization's complex science and management solutions to the public in an informative and engaging way.

Within Growling Distance

Within Growling Distance, a museum exhibit that profiles Foothills Model Forest's grizzly bear research project, played to appreciative crowds totalling more than 5,500 when it was featured at the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives last summer. Now, it may be going "on the road" with Penticton and other communities expressing an interest in hosting it, says Jasper Yellowhead Museum Manager Glenn Charron.

The exhibit has proved very appealing to the public, Charron says. A majestic grizzly bear specimen anchors the exhibit, augmented by grizzly jaw and claw castings as well as a variety of props associated with the project, such as snares and collars used by researchers. Charron hopes the exhibit, which earned the prestigious Jasper Heritage Tourism Award for communications, will eventually tour Canada.

Wild Alberta Gallery

Another museum exhibit set to profile some of the work of Foothills Model Forest will open at the Provincial Museum of Alberta in Edmonton this fall.

The Wild Alberta Gallery (part of the revamped Habitat Gallery)

promises to be a crowd-pleaser with its use of special effects, models and the latest in computer technology to lead visitors on new voyages of discovery. The Wild Alberta Gallery will feature a grizzly bear diorama and a fish-and-streams segment, using material from researchers at the Foothills Model Forest.

Electr-O-fying Fish

A new interpretive program, Electr-O-fying Fish, not only raised awareness of the Fish and Watershed program at the Foothills Model Forest, it also raised awareness of the importance of aquatic systems within sustainable forest management practices. The interactive campfire program, which ran on 11 occasions last summer, attracted nearly 240 national and international visitors. Foothills Model Forest communicator Miriam Prins says the program offered hands-on experience for visitors in an intimate setting. Participants competed with one another in an interactive fish competition (Glubbers and Splashers). "It really gives people a chance to get involved and learn about fish diversity in an engaging way," said Prins. "Audience mem-



Bear exhibits are popular

bers enjoyed trying on the electrofishing backpack and were amazed by how effective the backpack is at catching fish."

GIS data management

Approximately a dozen technical committee members and contractors — representatives of the Foothills Growth and Yield Association — came from across Alberta to attend a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data management workshop in Hinton last November.

Christian Weik, GIS co-ordinator for Foothills Model Forest, said the data management workshop was very successful and generated enough interest to warrant a second, already in the works for this fall.

The workshop was staged to educate members how to use the database software to retrieve and make use of tree measurement data. The data comes from two years of records gathered by the Foothills Growth and Yield Association.

"The goal of this kind of workshop is to teach owners of the data how to retrieve the appropriate amount of information so the pieces that are important to them can be analyzed," Weik said.

The GIS team at the Foothills Model Forest has designed databases for other specific users, such as researchers involved with the grizzly bear project.

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Canada has taken the lead in researching ways to sustain and enhance our forests. The government of Canada, through the Canadian Forest Service, initiated the Model Forest Network in 1992. It introduced this system of 11 Canadian and a number of international research sites "dedicated to building partnerships locally, nationally, and internationally to generate new ideas and on-the-ground tools for sustainable forest management." This process has brought together hundreds of partners including academia, industry, government, communities, aboriginal peoples, the public and other stakeholders.

Alberta is represented in the Canadian Network by the Foothills Model Forest in Hinton. At 2.25 million hectares (2,200 square kilometres), the Foothills Model Forest is the largest model forest in the world. It includes Jasper National Park, Westwood of Canada Limited's (Hinton Division) working forest management agreement area, Willmore Wilderness Park and other provincial crown lands.

