



Partner Perspectives

Collective effort pays off for forest managers



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FOOTHILLS GROWTH AND YIELD ASSOCIATION

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Bob Udell
Operations Director
Foothills Growth and Yield Association

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Overview

Nine companies holding Forest Management Agreements on the Eastern Slopes came together in 1999, with the support of the Foothills Research Institute, to create the Foothills Growth and Yield Association. The group focuses on co-operative forecasting and monitoring of managed stand growth and yield in Lodgepole pine. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and the Foothills Research Institute participate as non-voting members, with the Institute acting as the coordinating agency.

Challenge

Forest management in Alberta is based on establishing a level of harvest that is achievable on a sustainable and perpetual basis. The intent is that the "bank account" of timber will never diminish. Putting actual numbers on each year's harvest volume thus requires reliable ways to predict growth rates into the future, for today's forest and for newly-regenerated sites. Lodgepole pine is a common and important species on the Eastern Slopes, which is why the growth and yield association focuses on how this species grows in various sites and conditions in the foothills.

Solution

With administrative support from Foothills Research Institute, the self-funded association meets managers' needs in forecasting development of Lodgepole pine in the early years after planting, developing and validating yield forecasts and forecasting the trees' response to treatments such as weeding, thinning and fertilizing. A huge amount of research on special trial plots is required, along with in-depth analysis of results, and participants agreed from the start that common goals could best be met through collective and collaborative efforts.

Results

"After 10 years of collective activity, the association's efforts are really beginning to pay off for the partnership," says Udell. "We're seeing the delivery of data, models and planning tools for members and other professionals to forecast the growth and yield of lodgepole pine more reliably, as well as forecast its response to cultural treatments." The year 2010 will see a steady flow of deliverables, from regeneration models to predict the establishment and performance of planted and naturally-regenerated Lodgepole pine, to a technical note on the effects of climate on tree mortality, to an update on monitoring and decision support for forest management in a mountain pine beetle environment. "If an individual company tried to do this work all by themselves, it would be pretty tough," Udell says.

Learn more at www.foothillsresearchinstitute.ca