



Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition

c/o PO Box 189, 2185 Voght St., Merritt, BC V1K 1B8

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
November 9, 2009

BC Southern Interior – The Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition (SIBAC) announced today the release of the SIBAC Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) Assessment and Mitigation Plan. SIBAC has submitted the Plan to the Provincial Government.

SIBAC is a coalition of southern interior Local Governments and First Nations that formed in 2006 to provide a local perspective on the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) epidemic and its impact on the southern interior.

“We feel that our report provides a very good analysis of the challenges that the MPB epidemic presents, but more importantly, provides recommendations on how we could mitigate those impacts” states Rhona Martin, SIBAC Chair. “We look forward to working with our member organizations and the federal and provincial governments in collaboratively meeting the challenges and seizing the opportunities that the MPB epidemic presents.”

For the past two years, SIBAC has been engaged in studying the current and expected impacts of the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) epidemic in the southern interior on the forest sector, the socio-economic health of communities, the environment and First Nations. To complete their report, SIBAC commissioned several major studies including a Forest Sector Trend Analysis, a MPB Socio-Economic Assessment, First Nations MPB Impact Assessments, and a MPB Environmental Scan Report. To ensure public input into the SIBAC final report and recommendations, SIBAC held 13 community consultation sessions throughout the Southern Interior. The SIBAC final report includes 24 recommendations to mitigate the anticipated impacts of the MPB epidemic.

“In the community meetings, the same theme areas of concern were consistently raised – concern about the potential impacts of MPB on the environment, economy, communities, First Nations and jobs.” noted Ms Martin “Our final report and recommendations reflect these concerns.”

While the completion of the SIBAC final report is an important milestone, the organization believes it is just the start to the real work of taking action that will mitigate the impact of the MPB epidemic. “We believe all levels of government – local, First Nations, provincial and federal - must work collaboratively if we are to be successful in dealing with the impacts of the MPB epidemic.” notes Ms Martin. “The southern interior region is a very large land area, in some areas they have been dealing with MPB for some time while in other parts of the southern interior the impacts of MPB are just now visible. What we do know is that we will be dealing with these effects for at least a decade. The SIBAC Board believes that SIBAC is in the best position to guide and implement the many recommendations included in the MPB Assessment and Mitigation Plan.”

SIBAC will be requesting funding from both the Provincial and Federal Governments in order to begin to implement the SIBAC recommendations and to fund MPB mitigation projects and activities throughout the SIBAC region.

For more information on SIBAC and copies of the Final Report, please visit our website “www.sibacs.com” and view our Video – titled ***Fighting Back***.

Contact: Dalyce Brandt, SIBAC Administrator
Phone: 250-378-1929 Email: admin@sibacs.com

BACKGROUND

The Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition (SIBAC) was created in 2006 as a result of growing concern among southern interior communities and First Nations about the impacts of the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) epidemic. SIBAC is an incorporated not-for profit society with a membership that includes all nine (9) Regional Districts in the southern interior of the province; six (6) First Nations Tribal Councils and the Central Interior First Nations Community Futures Development Corporation.

SIBAC received funding from the Provincial and Federal governments to prepare a report that identified and analyzed potential MPB impacts and made recommendations to all levels of government on actions to mitigate these actual or predicted impacts. To identify and analyze probable MPB impacts on the southern interior, SIBAC commissioned several analysis studies including a Forest Sector Trend Analysis, MPB Socio-Economic Assessment, SIBAC Member First Nations MPB Assessment, and MPB Environmental Scan Report. Additionally, SIBAC held 13 community consultation sessions throughout the Southern Interior and supported several external MPB related projects.

Although at the provincial scale the rate of spread of the MPB epidemic has now peaked, many of the impacts on the southern interior region are just now starting to be experienced. These impacts will be felt for a least a decade into the future. Therefore SIBAC believes it has an important role in continuing to champion MPB solutions for the Southern Interior.

While SIBAC believes that all of the recommendations contained within this Plan are important, based on community consultations the following six SIBAC recommendations are seen as the most urgent priority in the short-term:

Recommendation #1 That the Province work with communities and First Nations to assess consumptive watersheds at high risk of negative water quality impacts as a result of the MPB epidemic and undertake appropriate mitigation activities.

Recommendation #5 That the Province should work with local Governments and First Nations to continue to seek methods that maximize value from the timber supply through innovation, partnering and access to fibre.

Recommendation # 17 That the Province, Municipalities, Regional Districts and First Nations work collaboratively on wildfire hazard reduction.

Recommendation # 18 That the Provincial Government develop new methods of regional resource revenue sharing with Local Governments and First Nations.

Recommendation # 21 That the Provincial and Federal Governments dedicate funding for rural economic development in BC.

Recommendation # 24 That the Provincial Government provide implementation resources to MPB at-risk communities and Tribal Councils.