

SENT TO LSU AGCENTER/LOUISIANA FOREST PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CENTER - FOREST SECTOR / FORESTY PRODUCTS INTEREST GROUP

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Spruce Beetle Infestation Nearly Doubles in B.C.

The spruce beetle, which is native to spruce forests and attacks the inner bark of these trees, continues to be a growing concern in B.C. It is a forest pest similar to the pine beetle which devastated much of the timber supply in B.C.

According to the province's latest aerial overview survey, the total infested area in B.C. has nearly doubled this year — from 283,083 hectares in 2016 to 501,873 hectares in 2017.

Over 8,100 hectares of forests have been damaged by spruce beetle in the Lakes timber supply area (TSA), a significant increase from 2016 when 1,200 hectares had been damaged, and from the 58 hectares damaged in 2014.

While the situation has gotten worse in the Lakes TSA, the Morice TSA has remained fairly stable. Over 2,900 hectares were affected in 2017 — similar to 2014.

The Lakes TSA extends from Tweedsmuir Provincial Park in the south to the Tildely watershed in the north. It includes Burns Lake, Decker Lake, François Lake, Grassy Plains and Danskin.

The Morice TSA extends from Babine Lake in the north to Ootsa and Whitesail Lakes in the south. The main community is Houston, while the remainder of the population lives in smaller communities such as Topley and Granisle.

The situation is much more severe in the Prince George TSA, where 275,108 hectares were affected in 2017 — almost double the 142,837 hectares affected in 2016.

The Prince George TSA stretches from near the Alberta border in the southeast to Tweedsmuir Provincial Park in the southwest and Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park in the northwest. It includes Prince George, the towns of Vanderhoof and Fort St. James, and several smaller communities such as Fraser Lake.

Bill Miller, chair of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, says the regional district has been “involved with this situation from early days” and has been engaging with the provincial government on how address the issue.

In addition to the annual aerial overview survey, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development plans to carry out detailed aerial surveys to do a refined aerial detection of infestations for follow-up treatment.

The ministry will also carry out ground surveys to identify spruce beetle populations and provide information for treatments. Other actions planned include encouraging co-operative action with licensees to target infested timber for extraction, as well as using trap trees to absorb beetle populations for removal after the next beetle flight.



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Spruce beetle outbreaks have historically lasted up to seven or eight years.

In a report to Smithers council last month, representatives from the Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation said they have been checking trees for spruce beetle infestations. They have so far found only a handful of trees to be affected.

Wetzin'kwa is a for-profit corporation is owned by the Town of Smithers and Village of Telkwa. Over \$1.5 million in community grants of up to \$10,000 for arts and culture, recreation, conservation, social services, and community economic development have been given out. Another \$650,000 in stakeholder donations has been given since tenure operations began 10 years ago.

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