



Newsletter

April 2010

Congratulations on Appointment

In the summer of 2005, several local government leaders across the Omineca Region asked the provincial and federal governments to support their efforts to work together across the region's communities and with professionals to generate ideas and take action at a regional scale in response to the anticipated challenges of the mountain pine beetle epidemic.

Since its inception, OBAC has been blessed with a solid team of staff and consultants and Al Gorley has been an active and integral part of this team in various capacities along the way. In the beginning, this group of local government leaders relied upon what was then the McGregor Model Forest Association led by President Al Gorley for strategic and administrative support. And so began the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition and a long and very rewarding relationship between the OBAC and Al. Without his involvement in the beginning, it's debatable whether the Coalition would have launched successfully and without Al's involvement certainly in the last six months, OBAC's negotiation of a next phase and a future would also be questionable.

But this is not the beginning of Al's relationship with this region. Al's personal and professional roots are in this region and his career path has never wavered from a clear commitment to leading positive change that contributes to the well being of the people and the land here in the north.

So on behalf of the OBAC Board of Directors and staff, both past and present, and also personally, I thank Al for his generous care and commitment to our region and to the OBAC endeavour. We all wish Al the best in his next undertaking and we look forward to Al's continued leadership in his role as Chair of the Forest Practices Board effective May 1, 2010.

Don Bassermann
Chair, Omineca Beetle Action Coalition

Coalition meets with Parliamentary Secretary for Pine Beetle Community Recovery

On February 12, 2010, the Board met with Donna Barnett, Parliamentary Secretary for Pine Beetle Community Recovery. Ms. Barnett congratulated the Coalition on the approval of its 2 Year Business Plan. A contract between the Province and the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition was signed, enabling continued work on implementation of the regional strategies. Ms. Barnett expressed excitement about the regional strategies and the implementation that is currently underway. She also encouraged the region's input and recommendations to assist her in her role as a Rural Parliamentary Secretary.



Al Gorley, Chair of the Forest Practices Board



Donna Barnett, Parliamentary Secretary for Pine Beetle Community Recovery

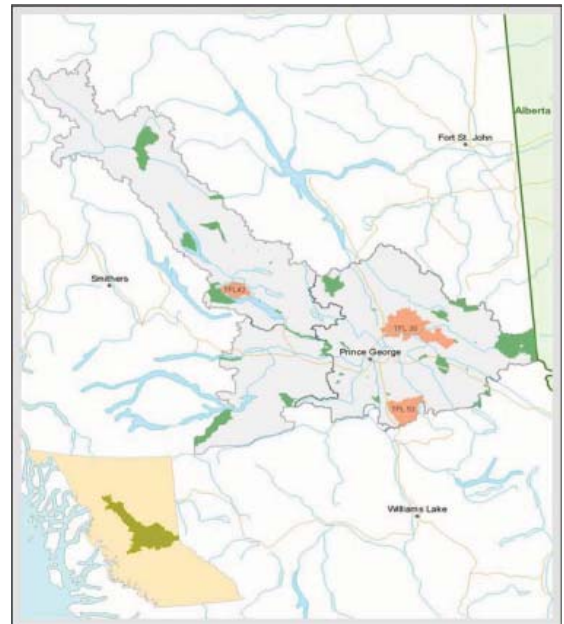
From Plans to Action: Implementing Resilience



An implementation working session with regional initiatives, academia, key local government leaders and economic development staff was held on April 20, 2010. The session successfully strengthened awareness of our “blueprint” for economic diversification and community resilience; information on initiatives, programs and projects was shared; and opportunities and priorities to work together effectively were identified. The Board found it valuable to hear the perspectives of others and was encouraged that there is a recognized need for regional collaboration. The Coalition hopes to host another such event next year and to include an even broader group of organizations.

TSR Pilot Project

Early in 2009, the Coalition began a pilot project with the Ministry of Forests and Range aimed at testing a stronger role for local governments in resource management decisions. The project focused on the Prince George Timber Supply Review and subsequent Allowable Annual Cut determination. The OBAC established a working group of local government representatives from the Prince George and Lakes Timber Supply Areas. The working group met once on June 30th 2009 and subsequently submitted a document entitled Preliminary Input to the Allowable Annual Cut Determination for the Prince George Timber Supply Area (TSA). This document was included as Appendix 3 in the Ministry’s Prince George TSA Public Discussion Paper. On March 5th 2010, the OBAC Working Group met with Ministry staff in Prince George to receive a briefing and discuss the content of the Ministry’s Public Discussion Paper and, on April 15th 2010 members of the Working Group met with Jim Snetsinger, Chief Forester to discuss their input before it was finalized and submitted on April 26th. The Chief Forester commented that he has found the input valuable, and has encouraged other regions to consider a similar approach. A final report on the project will be completed later this year.



Project Implementation

The Board has approved work on three projects that support implementation of the regional strategies

1. Community Social Services and Supports

Support for The Feasibility Study for Shared HR Services submitted by The United Way of BC and Sarah Cunningham, S.L. Cunningham Consulting Ltd. Several recommendations coming from the two Social Service Strategies pertain to the idea of a “rural lens”. *The “rural lens” will be a set of principles developed through engagement with stakeholders in the region which will guide social services program design, policies and delivery mechanisms and help to ensure that they are meeting the actual priority needs of the region in an efficient and flexible manner.* The model described is an example of looking at the OBAC region through this lens and supports the specific recommendation to strengthen social service delivery in the region and advocate for the development of a “rural lens”, which will help to guide senior government’s social services policies and programs.



2. Alternative Energy Strategy

Approval in principle was given to the project *Green Clean Energy as a Rural Economic Development Tool*. This project has two major objectives: (i) to identify rural business development and labour force opportunities associated with Green Clean Energy development in the interior and (ii) to assist at least three small MPB “at-risk” communities to develop a full business plan to implement a Green Clean Energy project in their region. The Board of Directors supported the selection of the Village of Burns Lake as one of the communities to be a demonstration site. Several organizations will partner in the project.



3. Agriculture Strategy

Approval was given to continue to convene and provide secretariat services to the agriculture working group for the remainder of this fiscal year and next. Approval was also given to support the development of a funding proposal package to Northern Development and the Investment Agriculture Foundation.

Community Highlight - Vanderhoof

Vanderhoof, with a population of 4064 (2006 StatsCan), is located 100 km west of Prince George on Highway 16. We are proud of our designation of being the “Geographical Centre of BC”. Vanderhoof straddles the banks of the Nechako River and lies within the interior plateau of BC, with terrain that is dominated by gently rolling hills, covered with pine and spruce forests and fertile agricultural lands. Such natural features are of significant influence on Vanderhoof’s economic development, particularly in agriculture, forestry and tourism.

The District of Vanderhoof has just finalized its Economic Development Strategy providing goals and initiatives that will lead to facilitating a positive environment for existing businesses as well as new business development, advocating for new and improved local infrastructure and establishing programs and partnerships that contribute to a sustainable and diversified economy. We plan to begin implementing some of the priority recommendations from this report.





These include the following:

- Focusing on economic initiatives with an educational component: development and delivery of the commercial pilot training program; training opportunities specific to mining and training opportunities for rural health professionals in Vanderhoof;
- Assisting with manufacturing business development;
- Fostering business development at the airport;
- Improving the business climate: developing a "Business Care" program and updating the community profile;
- Increasing investment readiness and attraction: completing a Municipal Land Inventory and developing a policy for brownfield redevelopment;
- Enhancing community tourism marketing.

We look forward to achieving significant results for our community in the coming 12 months.



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