



Newsletter

July 2007

OBAC Bioenergy Speakers Series - Next Steps

OBAC 'hit the road' June 26-28 visiting communities with its Bioenergy Speakers Series. More than 115 community and business leaders and media from nine communities and two Regional Districts heard information from a panel of four speakers and discussed: bioenergy opportunities in BC; how to assess opportunities at a local level; how to develop a community energy plan; details about the Community Energy Initiative in Nakusp; and, challenges facing the provincial government as it develops a Bioenergy Strategy expected to be released later this year. This Speaker Series was one part of a broader process to create an Alternative Energy Strategy for the OBAC region, looking at not only bioenergy but also how to grow wind, small scale hydro, geothermal and solar energy opportunities across the region.

Participants appreciated the opportunity to hear from and ask questions of 'experts' visiting their community and are looking forward to using the information to start or continue local discussions and action. A number of communities are already underway with bioenergy and other alternative energy activities and several communities expressed interest in assessing local opportunities and building relationships around bioenergy and other forms of alternative energy. At the conclusion of the Speakers Series session in Burns Lake, Mayor Bernice Magee announced that her community will convene an Alternative Energy Discussion Group to work with Council to explore opportunities to utilize available biomass and to look at energy sustainability for the long term.



OBAC expects to complete strategies for the 11 current priority topics by the 2008-2009 operating year but stresses that OBAC and its members are not waiting for the strategies to be finalized to begin taking action. Following on the heels of the Bioenergy Speaker Series and responding to individual communities' interest in this topic, OBAC will support local discussion groups to assess opportunities at the local level and where an interest and opportunity ignites, the development of community energy plans and projects. Alongside of looking for immediate opportunities, work will continue through the summer and fall on the OBAC Alternative Energy Strategy including developing chapters on bioenergy, wind and geothermal power and small scale hydro power. OBAC's work on the bioenergy chapter of the Alternative Energy Strategy at a regional scale will be informed by the community level work. The presentation of a first draft of the Alternative Energy Strategy to the OBAC Board is planned for by Christmas with a push for a final version of the Alternative Energy Strategy by March 2008.

This fall OBAC will pick up where it left off sharing knowledge and generating discussion with communities in the eastern OBAC area. The Bioenergy Speakers' presentations and discussion notes from the June sessions will be posted soon on the OBAC website at www.ominercoalition.ca

OBAC Bioenergy Speakers Series - Speaker Highlights

Did you know that Canadians are among the highest energy consumers in the world and spend about \$4300 a year per person on energy, with much of these dollars leaving the community? Michael Wilson the Senior Energy Planner for the Community Energy Association of BC reports that the benefits of developing community energy plans include: improved energy security and price stability; improved air quality and livability; healthier ecosystems; reduced greenhouse gas emissions; and local energy supply and systems helping to keep money in a community that would otherwise leave. The Community Energy Association of BC offers a toolkit to guide communities' development of a Community Energy Plan www.communityenergy.bc.ca.



Certainly biomass energy is an attractive idea but Martin Tampier of ENVINT Consulting www.envint.ca is quick to observe that, "It takes a lot of energy to create a bioenergy development". The availability of wood supply; harvesting and transport costs; and, competition for available wood fiber from established industries rank are some of the hurdles to overcome. Martin is an energy consultant working with BC's Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources and a federal organization called BIOCAP Canada to author *A Primer on Pursuing Biomass Energy Opportunities and Technologies in British Columbia*. The *Primer* will guide communities and individuals through the complexities of biomass energy assessment and development including: an overview of eight technologies that use biomass feed stocks for generating energy; funding sources; finding vendors and consultants; and, an overview of the development process for determining whether a biomass energy project is viable in a specific area. Tampier encourages communities to investigate the opportunities and notes that partnerships are key to the success of a development.

Some years ago, a group of people in the community of Nakusp, BC decided that they wanted to do something useful with the 'waste wood' from the region around their community. Ray Greene of Sustainable Energy Systems was part of that group that looked into what options were available. With the support of the community they decided to install a 'hot-water heat from biomass' energy system at the Nakusp Secondary School. The school eliminated burning 100,000 litres of propane each year. Greene says the small community of 1600 residents is proud of its first 'green energy' project and is currently looking to expand the project to deliver hot-water heat to the nearby elementary school. Eventually he sees the entire community of Nakusp being heated by available waste wood biomass instead of using conventional fossil fuels. Ray believes that "small is beautiful" and he teases that, "If Nakusp can do it, any BC community can do it!".



There are a number of vested interests in our wood fiber and while all of our speakers point out that wood is not the only biomass available to us as an energy source and encouraged us to be open to other fuel source possibilities, they all agreed that wood fiber is probably the most obvious choice in our region right now. Doug Macfarlane the Director of Community Economic Development in the Mountain Pine Beetle Response Team of BC's Ministry of Forests and Range says developing a Bioenergy Strategy for the entire province is no easy task and it will take time to get it right. The province must balance a wide variety of interests in the available fiber supply. The province sees a bright future for biomass energy development in BC and is working to develop a strategy for the sector so that it can grow and develop alongside of the existing and evolving interests in wood fiber.

Who's Doing What? - A Listing is Now Available

The largest beetle epidemic in recent history has resulted in many different people and organizations working on various aspects of the issue. OBAC, along with a number of other organizations, often receives inquiries from people wanting to know “who is doing what?” on mountain pine beetle and economic/community development.

So, with assistance and input of staff from FORREX, First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative, 16/97 Economic Alliance, College of New Caledonia and BC Ministry of Economic Development, OBAC has taken a first crack at generating a listing of the organizations that have a responsibility, interest, and mandate for response to the social and economic aspects of the mountain pine beetle epidemic.

This initial listing is almost completed and will be posted on the OBAC website soon. The listing currently includes almost 50 public organizations that have a mandate for funding, programming, sharing expertise and knowledge on community and economic development and mountain pine beetle response. The listing will not promote organizations or advertise private businesses. It will simply be a quick reference that identifies public organizations, provides contact details and presents the organization's stated mission statement and program mandates. The listing will be on the OBAC website and will be updated periodically. This resource will be available to anyone interested in it, and will rely upon our network to keep it up-to-date. If you know about a public organization that we have missed or of information needs to be corrected please let us know in an email to info@ominecacoalition.ca.

New Mountain Pine Beetle Programs on Knowledge Network

A new two-part Mountain Pine Beetle program produced by Westland Television for the Knowledge Network is set to be broadcast in August (Part I August 11 & 15 and Part II August 18 & 22). OBAC is pleased to be one of the diverse range of program sponsors and contributors from around the province including: Kootenay Wildlife Heritage Fund; Weyerhaeuser; BC Wildlife Federation Okanagan Region; Cariboo-Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition; Pope and Talbot; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Forests and Range; Council of Forest Industries; and, the Beef Cattle Industry Development Fund. Earlier this year, producer Terry Halleran interviewed people from across the province including a number of people in the OBAC region to present a broad number of perspectives about the impacts of the beetle epidemic and the future of the regions affected in the wake of millions of cubic meters of dead pine left behind. Halleran says he was surprised at how optimistic most people are about the future of the areas impacted by the beetle. The portions of the production relevant to the OBAC region will be made available in a 4-5 minute video which OBAC will distribute to communities' libraries and other agencies to encourage informed discussion about the challenges and opportunities in our region in the forest sector and beyond. Visit the site at: [http://tvschedule.knowledgenetwork.ca/knsch/KNSeriesPage.jsp?seriesID=14100318&seriesTitle=westland2007\[2\]](http://tvschedule.knowledgenetwork.ca/knsch/KNSeriesPage.jsp?seriesID=14100318&seriesTitle=westland2007[2])



Forest Communities Program Welcome to Our Region

On July 7th, the Honourable Peter MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, announced on behalf of the Honourable Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources that the Integrated Resource Management Partnership of BC will be funded as one of eleven Forest Communities Program groups across Canada for the next five years (http://www.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/media/newsreleases/2007/200761_e.htm?rss). The Forest Communities Program replaces the Canadian Model Forest Program, which is scheduled to wrap up in September 2007, after 15 years in operation.



The IRM Partnership's proposal is entitled *Applying Community Needs to Managing the Land*. The proposal was submitted by a broad group of organizations interested in exploring concrete ways to strengthen resource sector-integration to benefit the regional business climate and investment opportunities and, retain and return wealth in local communities. OBAC is pleased to be one of the organizations in this partnership along with: the McGregor Model Forest Association as the interim secretariat ; Council of Forest Industries (Northern Operations); Association for Mining Exploration in BC; Mining Association of BC; GeoScience BC; Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers; Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board; Council of Tourism Associations of BC; Province of British Columbia, Northern Interior Interagency Management Committee; and the University of Northern BC.
<http://www.mcgregor.bc.ca/mmf/396/irm+partnership>

OBAC region residents say they expect resource development to continue to be an integral part of our more diverse future. Infusing the integrated development of our natural resource wealth with the vision and needs of our communities whose economies and social fabric are dependent upon that resource wealth is a central focus for the OBAC and of the Forest Communities Program. Together we will be better at supporting resilient communities, diversifying and rejuvenating this region's economy and, improving certainty across sectors and, time is of the essence. As such, OBAC looks forward to working with the other members of the Integrated Resource Management Partnership of Northern BC to seek new opportunities for the forest industry and the broader suite of resource development interests to find positive ways for the variety of diverse land base industries to work together on the landbase and to diversify opportunities for our communities and region.

Discussions in Victoria Very Encouraging - Federal Financial Support Adds Positive Momentum to the Effort

Meetings in mid-July in Victoria with senior provincial government staff turned up a wealth of opportunities and a real willingness to contribute to OBAC strategy work, knowledge sharing leading to enablement and capacity building for communities. Work on identifying policy needs and opportunities is another area where senior provincial government staff will be assisting OBAC's and our region's efforts to increase the success of the diversification planning and action in the region. This work will also be helped greatly by the recent announcements of beetle funding made by the federal Minister of Natural Resources (http://www.wd.gc.ca/mediacentre/2007/jul18-02a_e.asp) . Many great ideas are already emerging in our region that will benefit from the expertise, program and financial support of the two senior governments. OBAC will report regularly through the e-newsletter and website on the progress that flows in the months ahead from these and future meetings and announcements.



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