

News Release

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For immediate release

Edmonton, AB – As part of their commitment to maintaining a healthy environment, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc. (Al-Pac) is contributing \$1 million toward an innovative approach to resource management that will provide a new framework for wise land use decisions in the province's boreal forest.

The funds are being used to develop the Boreal Conservation Project (BCP), a new partnership between Al-Pac and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), Canada's leading wetland conservation company. The project will create a watershed-based conservation plan for a 115,000-square kilometre area of northeastern Alberta, including Al-Pac's 58,000-square kilometre Forest Management Agreement area.

"This financial contribution is evidence of our serious commitment to this project, and to the long-term health of our water systems, forests, wildlife and communities," says Al-Pac president and chief operating officer Bill Hunter.

And while it may seem like an unusual partnership to some, teaming up with DU Canada in such a bold new initiative makes perfect sense to Al-Pac, says Hunter.

"One of Al-Pac's goals is maintaining biodiversity, and that means understanding and conserving important ecological functions like water cycles," he says. "By pooling our resources with Ducks Unlimited and other partners who have an interest in the conservation and sustainability of the boreal forest, we will increase our understanding and from that, develop new and better ways of doing business."

Gary Stewart, DUC manager of conservation programs for the western boreal forest, says the project is the first of its kind in Canada, and it could become a world-wide model in helping businesses and communities improve their land use practices through a better understanding of watershed-based ecology and conservation.

"We all want a healthy environment, but we also need the employment and other economic benefits generated by the development of our natural resources," says Stewart. "The Boreal Conservation Project will apply common sense conservation and management concepts to address all those needs."

Through the BCP, additional studies of the region will be initiated to find out more about what plants and animals live there, what natural processes exist there, and how the area is used by industry, Aboriginal peoples and communities. As a result, new decision-making tools and best practices will be developed for land users.

Stewart says that the conservation of forest and wetlands, as well as water quality and supply, is of vital interest to everyone.

"The boreal forest is a source of clean water for much of this province, so everyone has a stake in the project," he says. "We can't do this alone."

The project has already begun with the identification of watersheds in the study area, and the initiation of a five-year research plan.

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Ducks Unlimited Canada
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