

FIA-FSP Funds Research & Extension in B.C.

The Forest Investment Account – Forest Science Program (FIA-FSP) has allocated over \$50 million since 2004 for forestry and range-related research and extension to improve sustainable forest management in British Columbia. It is guided by a 14-member Forest Science Board and several advisory committees that recommend strategic direction and priorities in their specific areas. The Board also oversees a provincial forest extension program that is designed and delivered in collaboration with the Forest Research Extension Partnership (FORREX).

Program strategies for *Sustainability* and *Timber Growth and Value* identify research issues of interest to those who plan and manage BC's forestlands. The advisory committees rank these, based on criteria such as size of knowledge gap and urgency to determine priorities. Areas of high priority remain eligible for funding for several years, with the aim of building a comprehensive body of research on specific topics. For example, 24 projects have been funded under the *Timber Growth and Value Program* topic 4.1 "Stand and forest dynamics following mountain pine beetle", which has been eligible for funding since 2004. The *Sustainability Program* topic 1.4 "Effectiveness of stand level structures in maintaining biodiversity and rangeland habitats typified by grass and shrub cover" has likewise been considered a high priority for the last four years, and 36 projects have been funded. In the future, these topic areas will be priorities for synthesis to ensure that comprehensive research results are extended to the operational community.

In 2006, the Forest Science Board initiated a process to harmonize First Nations interests in land-based research and extension with the FIA-FSP. To date, the harmonization process has brought First Nations advisors onto the Board and advisory committees, involved First Nations in identifying research priorities and determining eligible topics for funding in the annual Call for Proposals, and included First Nations in setting guidelines for and participating in the review of research Letters of Intent. The Board has also championed a new three-year pilot project to fund graduate students at British Columbia universities. The Graduate Student Pilot Project provides \$125,000 annually; it is currently supporting ten masters and PhD students. Through linking students with industry representatives and scientists, the program ensures that the students conduct scientifically rigorous research that is well grounded in real-world issues.

For more information on FIA-FSP, including research program strategic plans and investment priorities, lists of completed projects and a searchable database of ongoing research, see www.fia-fsp.ca.