

Newsletter for the year 2016/17

February 24, 2017

The association has been involved in a number of events and policy discussions with Yukon Government and other organizations. The highlights are provided below.

Council of Canadian Forest Ministers meeting in Dawson

All of the provincial Forest Ministers from across Canada met in Dawson City in June 2016. The association was represented at the meetings by Arctic Inland Resources, YWPA president Ron Johnson and the executive director. Rural and northern community economic development was discussed in the context of innovative approaches to using forests. This included using biomass heating and energy production as a way to improve climate change impacts while creating local jobs. We can see some movement in this area in Yukon with biomass combustion boilers being installed in Teslin and increasing interest by the public and private sectors in the Yukon. This is a developing area for the forest industry and represents a significant area of growth in economic activity for the industry.

Fuel Abatement Planning

The Fort MacMurray fire in 2016 caused a number of our members to become concerned about the building fuel loads in forests around communities in the Yukon. A 2005 evaluation of the 2004 fire season in Yukon identified Watson Lake, Whitehorse and the Southern Lakes wildland urban interface areas as the most at risk areas in the territory. Member Bill Klassen and Myles Thorp initiated a number of meetings with senior government management and members of the legislature in June to talk about the current forest and the building risk of a catastrophic fire event in the Whitehorse Southern Lakes and Watson Lake. There is concern but the planning processes for implementing an intensive fuel abatement program may be out of sync with the degree of risk around these communities. This has a lot to do with the ability of government agencies to convince the public that there is a serious problem developing.

The boreal forest likes to burn and ours is at the age where it is preparing for a significant ecologically forest fire driven reset. As a wise old fire fighter said to me a number of years ago "the further you are from the last catastrophic fire in the boreal forest the closer you are to the next one." Well, we are about 100 years from the last major disturbance event in both communities. In Watson it was a huge fire in the 1870's in Whitehorse Southern Lakes it was the logging for fire wood to heat Whitehorse, and fuel for steamboats and the White Pass Railroad.

If and when the fuel abatement planning gets completed and implemented we as an industry will be called upon to remove the timber and utilize it. Hopefully, we will be ready to respond with biomass boilers and even some sawmilling capacity to use the timber.

Forest Policy

The association provided some feedback to Forest Management Branch on preliminary discussions with regard to silviculture strategies, timber allocation policies and fire prevention clauses for forest tenures. We are waiting for an invitation to review the close to final drafts of these policies. We wrote a letter to FMB regarding the fire prevention clauses and made the point that the forest industry appears to be getting singled out through our licensing arrangements. Some of the requirements should affect other industries and these additional requirements would likely be best administered through a pan Yukon regulation rather than overloading an already clause intensive cutting permit.

Forest Management Plans and Timber Supply Analysis

During the run up to the election last fall the planning process for Whitehorse Southern Lakes FRMP was slowed down. We are anticipating becoming reengaged in this process sometime this spring.

The Timber Supply Analysis for Haines Junction and Dawson has been proceeding and the association is anticipating an opportunity to provide our views with regard to outcomes shortly.

Meetings with Government Leaders

During the election campaign the association met with political leaders and senior government officials. These meeting outlined the Associations mandate and our industry with an emphasis on policy concerns, fuel abatement and the potential of expanding locally driven economic activity in the form of biomass heating solutions.

City of Whitehorse

There were a few letters and follow up meetings with the City of Whitehorse with regard to the potential for biomass heating solutions in the new operations building complex under consideration. We are pleased to report that the City will be installing a junction pipe into the heating system that would allow relatively easy connection to the buildings for a biomass system. They are not interested in owning or operating a biomass combustion boiler but are interested in an arrangement for private sector biomass heat sales into the building.

FPInnovations Workshops

We co-hosted a biomass and log storage workshop with FMB on the 1st of February this year. The workshop was well attended by over 30 participants. We are looking forward to more of these types of workshops in the future.

Executive Board Meeting

The YWPA boards met on December 1, 2016 a number of topics were on the agenda and the minutes are included with this package. The highlights are listed below:

- Meeting and what we could talk to the premier and new minister
 - Carbon Tax position
 - Fire smart and economic value of wood from these projects
 - WSL FRMP and consultation
 - YESAB comments on THP's

- FMB matters
 - road side/landings.....soil conservation or wildlife management
 - fees and cost recovery ...

- City of Whitehorse letter

The Minutes to the meeting are attached to this package.

As you can see there has been a lot of activity and we anticipate that the coming year will be active and busy as well. Please feel free to contact Myles Thorp or any of our board members if you have any questions.

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