



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 27, 2017

## **The NRRM is Open for Wood-based Manufacturing Business**

**FORT NELSON, B.C.** – A small community in BC’s largest (geographically) municipality, Fort Nelson is struggling with the loss of two wood manufacturing plants and a massive reduction in local natural gas operations over the past decade. Reviving a sustainable forest industry is the most promising approach to stabilize the local economy and bring jobs back to the community and the Northern Rockies Regional Council is taking an active role and using a multi-pronged approach to help this revitalization.

One of the biggest hurdles to revitalizing the local forest industry is the lack of a guaranteed timber supply, a concern consistently expressed by prospective investors. Though the region is relatively untouched by the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic that decimated interior forests, seventy-five percent of the allowable cut volume in the Fort Nelson Timber Supply Area (TSA) is licensed to an inactive tenure-holder. The NRRM continues to hear from interested forestry investors such as Jilin Forest Products Group, who recently sponsored a small municipal delegation to visit their operations in China. “The efficiency of Jilin’s operations is impressive,” delegation member Mayor Bill Streeper remarked, “They don’t waste any of the fibre they harvest.” Regular discussions continue between the NRRM and Jilin company officials.

Regional Council has also had some success in bringing the community’s forestry concerns to the attention of the Provincial Cabinet. During recent face-to-face meetings between the NRRM and the honourable Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD), the Minister was made acutely aware of the barrier being presented by the lack of available timber licenses. In the Legislative Assembly on October 17th, he stated, “We made it clear that if there is a viable business opportunity, our senior staff (is) made available to speak with the investors ... about potential fibre supply for that. We’re really anxious and keen to hear from the investors about their potential business investment.” Referring to discussions with Minister Donaldson, Mayor Streeper commented, “We felt that the Minister understood our situation and our points were well received and listened to. We’re encouraged and look forward to cooperating with the government to help get the legs back under the forest industry in the Northern Rockies.”

The Province of BC’s Boreal Caribou Restoration Implementation Plan (BCRIP) also has implications where the habitat of the threatened species intersects with resource areas. “The NRRM recognizes the need to conserve this iconic Canadian species,” comments Mayor Streeper, “but there are still questions to be answered about the science that formed the basis of the Plan (BCRIP).” During discussions at the Union of BC Municipalities convention in

September, Minister Donaldson restated the province’s commitment to the NRRM’s “deep involvement” during plan consultations.

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, The Northern Rockies and the Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN) hosted an open house community forum, to educate constituents on the benefits of a joint Community Forest Agreement (CFA), chief amongst which is control over timber rights in the CFA lands. Earlier this year, former Minister of Forests, Steve Thomson, invited the NRRM and FNFN to submit Community Forest applications, which the two organizations have chosen to pursue as a partnership opportunity. This joint venture has the potential to generate revenue and create local employment, ensuring that the forest provides the greatest economic benefit for their collective communities. Preparation of the Community Forest application required specialized expertise, and is being facilitated in large part by \$100,000 Rural Dividend Program funding, received in 2017 for that purpose.

The northeast of BC is home to mixed coniferous and deciduous forests, which has traditionally presented challenges given the limited markets for deciduous fibre. To develop markets for the marginalized fibre, the Northern Rockies initiated a two-phase study in early 2017, which revealed promising data about the quality and yield of the deciduous forests abundant in the Northern Rockies. Phase 2 of the *Maximize the Economic Returns from Aspen Forests* study is being funded by a \$300,000 Rural Dividend Fund grant. With forest sector research and development support from FPIInnovations, investigation is planned into a variety of products based on the findings from Phase 1 from the study, in addition to targeted marketing and industry identification that will create awareness of the world-class aspen resource in the NRRM.

“Forestry is the best prospect to help our community thrive and I think we’re headed in the right direction,” says Mayor Streeper. “We’re committed to doing everything within our power to make it happen.”

– 30 –

Find more information at [NorthernRockies.ca](http://NorthernRockies.ca) > Quicklinks > Forestry  
or contact:

Jack Stevenson  
NRRM Special Projects Officer  
E: [JStevenson@NorthernRockies.ca](mailto:JStevenson@NorthernRockies.ca)  
P: 250.774.2541 extension 2041

Mike Gilbert  
Regional Development Officer  
E: [MGilbert@NorthernRockies.ca](mailto:MGilbert@NorthernRockies.ca)  
P: 250.774.2541 extension 2043