

Expansion

*Thanks to growth spurt,
model forest includes Jasper*

CARRIE HUTTON
Progress '96

The Foothills Model Forest underwent a growth spurt in 1995.

The FMF project, one of 10 model forests under Canada's Green Plan, originally took in 1.2 million hectares of land in this area. But that was before Jasper National Park was added to the research area last September. With the addition of the national park, the model forest doubled in size.

In addition to the park, the model forest area includes the forest management area of Weldwood of Canada, Hinton division and several Crown management areas.

Rick Blackwood, planning and operations forester for the model forest, said it only made sense to officially include Jasper as part of the research area.

"You can't manage the park as an island and you can't manage Foothills Forest as an island," he said.

Expanding the boundaries of the Foothills Model Forest to include Jasper is beneficial, said Bob Udell, president of the model forest.

"It adds longevity and continuity to the program," he said.

Federal government funding for the model forest has been earmarked until March

1997.

But model forest staff and sponsors are hoping it will continue on past that date.

Principle sponsors of the program, which started in late 1992, are Weldwood, the Environmental Training Centre and the provincial government. Other partners include oil and gas companies, coal mines, the tourism industry and towns in the area. Blackwood said representatives of the model forest should know sometime this spring if federal government funding will continue past 1997.

"The program is undergoing a national evaluation. A consulting firm has been hired to go across Canada and evaluate each model forest on their goals and how well they have lived up to the national objectives," he said.

A national advisory committee will report to Anne McLellan, minister of natural resources, on the findings. Some model forests may have funding extended for a five-year period past 1997. If that doesn't happen, it doesn't necessarily mean the end of the program. "We've got some fairly strong indications from Weldwood and other partners that they're willing to step in if federal funding is gone," Blackwood said.

Model forest continues on page 27



A model forest tour followed a signing ceremony last September. Among those on hand was Anne McLellan.



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Model forest includes more than 50 projects

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"They're anxious to see it continue."

And if the FMF is granted more government support past 1997, it will undoubtedly be on a declining scale.

The model forest program is working toward local self-sufficiency.

Many partners, such as Weldwood, are actively using the research and project information that has come from the Foothills Model Forest.

Weldwood is using ELDAR — the ecological land data acquisition resource

— which gives the company a better idea of what kind of vegetation grows in certain conditions.

The ecological land classification program offers predictions and gives analysis through computer.

The model forest has about 50 different projects on the go.

The research projects provide information that can be very helpful to the local mill and mines.

Paid staff, as well as university students working toward their degrees, have

been researching various birds and animals and their habitats.

They've also been compiling data on other subjects such as comparing harvesting versus the effects of fire on a forest.

"The model forest program tries to address interests that are very current, as well as developing tools. It does produce results that can be used immediately," Blackwood said. Having Jasper National Park as part of the model forest can move research ahead in some areas.

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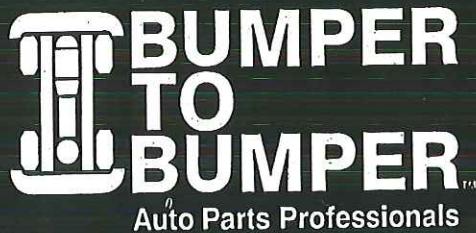
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Peace

Community trails protect culture while encouraging recreation

Some scenic local trails were connected last year, thanks to a joint venture between Weldwood of Canada Limited and the Town of Hinton.

The venture will assist in the preservation and interpretation of historical and cultural sites in and around Hinton as well as promote recreation.

There are some excellent scenic spots along the new trail constructed between Thompson Lake subdivision and Robb Road.

The trail extends the existing trail network and connects the new subdivision with the current town trail system.

There are many sites along the town trail system that identify the early settlement and economy of the early days of Hinton.

The town trail system now also connects to the historic Bighorn Forestry trail that runs from Hinton south to the Gregg River.

The two trails are now linked from the town trails at Maxwell Lake to the trailhead of the Bighorn Trail along Cold Creek Road.

The Bighorn trail was one of many trails used by the Dominion Forest Service at the turn of the century.

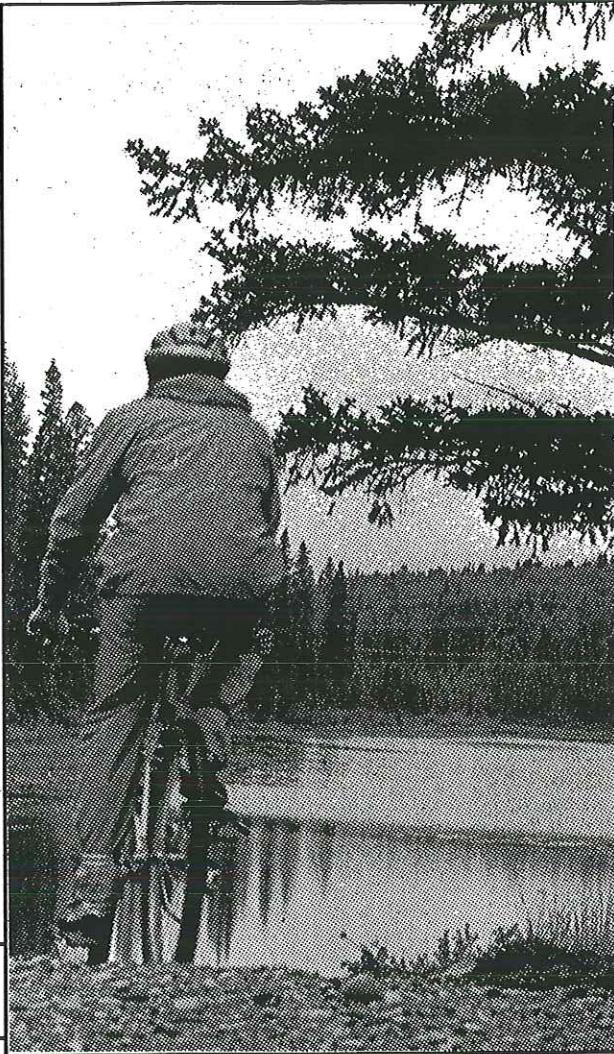
Cabins were built along the trails for use by the forest rangers as they patrolled the trails on horseback.

The cabins were typically situated one day's ride apart.

One of these cabins, the Gregg river Cabin, is located along the Bighorn Trail 22 km south of Hinton.

This historic cabin, situated at the crossing of the Gregg River, was built in 1911.

Trails in Hinton not only identify early settlement. They also offer serenity for local recreationalists.



Forest program twinned with Mexico since 1994

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"A large protected area gives us a benchmark," said Blackwood.

Projects underway now that Jasper is part of the program include work on carnivore conservation involving grizzly bears.

On a world scale, the Foothills Model Forest has been twinned with the

Chihuahua Model Forest project in Mexico since May 1994.

Both areas are mountainous with pine forests. Both programs focus on wildlife conservation, watershed management, eco-tourism and the application of new information technologies to forest management.

Eighteen Mexican foresters from the Chihuahua Model

Forest spent two weeks studying advanced forest management at the Environmental Training Centre in September.

They were able to actually go out into the field and compare the Foothills Model Forest area with their own in northern Mexico. A goal of the Foothills Model Forest is to improve the level of public involvement in the next six

months. "We've actually formed working groups for the major subject areas. The level of involvement depends on the person's own comfort level," Blackwood said.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the model forest or sitting on a working group can call Bryan Millar, communications department at 865-8342.