Model forest renamed

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What's in a name? Plenty, according to a local research group.

The Foothills Model Forest was officially renamed the Foothills Research Institute on April 30.

While the group is a model forest, its activities have expanded since it was founded in 1992.

"The reason (for the name change) was to reflect out diverse partnerships," said Tom Archibald, General Manager for the Foothills Research Institute.

Having the word 'forest' in the name of the organization implies a narrow, forestry-only focus, said Archibald.

In the past few years, the group has been expanding its partnerships with government agencies and oil and gas companies, said Archibald.

As a result, the institute's research projects have evolved to include issues outside of forestry alone.

The new name reflects the institute's broad range of activities, he added.

The group does research relating to forests, land, wildlife, water and climate change.

There are currently 37 research projects within 13 programs underway at the institute.

In addition to ongoing projects, the group also offers services to the community.

"We teach a lot of courses and give workshops," said Archibald.

The Foothills Research Institute will also be holding a global forum for the International Model Forest Network in June 16 to 21.

Over 160 delegates from 20 countries are expected to attend the forum at the Hinton Training Centre.

Though the institute is expanding its focus, only the name is changing. The main business of the organization will stay the same.

One of the institute's goals is to be a key player in building Alberta's reputation for sustainable forest management.

As the second largest model forest in the world, the group has garnered much respect from its peers across Canada and internationally.

The group's new website is still under construction, but will be up and running soon at www.foothillsresearchinstitute.com and www.foothillsresearchinstitute.ca.

For more information, visit www.fmf.ca.