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PEST REPORT

FIDS 91-6-2

FOREST TENT CATERPILLAR

IN THE PRINCE GEORGE REGION

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Forest Insect and Disease Survey

Defoliation of trembling aspen and other deciduous hosts by forest tent caterpillar, Malacosoma disstria, in and around the City of Prince George is expected to continue, but be less widespread and generally less severe. Defoliation is also expected near Stoner, Vanderhoof, McBride and Valemount. In 1990, stands over nearly 200 000 ha were defoliated.

The decline, as forecast by Forestry Canada - FIDS, is due mainly to a naturally occurring nuclear polyhedrosis virus which was present in larval populations near Prince George in 1990 and again this year. Dried and shriveled larvae infected by the virus occurred in five of seven sites surveyed, up significantly from 1990. The number of egg masses found in late 1990 had declined by half, mostly in northern areas, but remained high enough elsewhere to cause significant defoliation this year.

Very high populations and severe defoliation are expected in the City and surrounding areas, including College Heights, Cranbrook Hill, Pineview, Fisher Lake, and the McBride Forest Road area. Defoliation is likely to be less severe and widespread in areas north of the City near Nukko and Chief lakes. Populations remain active in stands north of Stoner, east of Vanderhoof, and near McBride, where populations were common in 1990. Larvae were mostly third and fourth instar and still feeding at the time of these assessments in early June, so further defoliation can be expected.

Further assessments of natural parasites and disease levels, as well as ground and aerial surveys, will continue throughout the summer. These will be followed by surveys to determine the extent and incidence of top-kill and dieback caused by defoliation, and by egg mass surveys to determine population trends for 1992.

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