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PEST REPORT

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FOREST TENT CATERPILLAR AND LARGE ASPEN TORTRIX IN TREMBLING ASPEN IN THE PRINCE GEORGE FOREST REGION

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Forest tent caterpillar, Malacosoma disstria, populations decreased throughout much of the Prince George Region in 1991 but still defoliated trembling aspen over more than 92 000 ha. Large aspen tortrix, Choristoneura conflictana, increased for the second consecutive year to over 18 000 ha, mostly north of Mackenzie along Williston Lake and Finlay River.

Tent caterpillar populations in the Prince George Forest District decreased after five consecutive years of increase. An estimated 82 600 ha of trembling aspen were defoliated in the district; an almost fifty percent decrease from 1990. The only area of increase in the Prince George Forest District was along the south end of McLeod Lake from 5 000 ha in 1990 to 8000 ha in 1991. The largest area of decrease was in the Salmon and Willow River drainages where recorded defoliation declined by almost 35 000 ha to 28 00 ha 1991.

In the McBride Forest District the area and intensity of feeding increased by approximately forty five percent to 6 500 ha of severe defoliation. Newly defoliated areas were mapped along the north and south sides of the Fraser River between Horsey and Holliday Creeks and along the Fraser River northwest of McBride.

The area of trembling aspen defoliated in the Peace River area decreased by more than eighty five percent to 4830 ha. This is the eighth consecutive year that defoliation has been recorded in the Peace River area. Light defoliation occurred in scattered pockets near Taylor, Shearer Dale, Farmington and Pouce Coupe.

In areas around Prince George where defoliation has occurred for three to five years, top and branch dieback is evident although no whole tree mortality has been recorded. Continued defoliation promotes growth loss and increased susceptibility to attacks by other insects and diseases.

Large aspen tortrix populations increased for the third consecutive year in the Prince George Region. All defoliation, mostly moderate and severe, occurred in the Mackenzie Forest District. The majority of the damage, ninety three percent, occurred along the east and west sides of Williston Lake from Mackenzie north to Finlay Reach. The remaining 1200 ha of light feeding was mapped along the Finlay River from Fort Ware south to Williston Lake.

Very little tree mortality has been directly attributable to the large aspen tortrix; however, two or more successive years of moderate to severe defoliation by the tortrix will result in severe reduction in radial growth and may cause branch and twig mortality.

Populations, which are usually controlled by parasitism, disease or climatic conditions, will continued to be monitored. Egg surveys to forecast forest tent caterpillar populations for 1992 will commence this fall at selected locations. Results will be available in early October.

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