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PEST REPORT

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FIDS PEST REPORTS 95-8

July 1995

FOREST TENT CATERPILLAR

PRINCE GEORGE FOREST REGION

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Forest Insect and Disease Survey

Forest tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma disstria*, defoliated almost 55 000 ha of trembling aspen up from 41 000 ha in 1994.

In the Prince George Forest District tent caterpillar populations increased for the third consecutive year (Map 1). Aspen trees were severely defoliated over more than 45 000 ha from McLeod Lake in the north to Ahbau Creek in the south, up from 33 000 ha last year.

In the Robson Valley Forest District the area of defoliation increased to almost 7 000 ha after a decrease was noted last year. Complete defoliation of aspen stands was mapped over 114 separate infestations from west of McBride to McNaughton Lake. Various other deciduous trees and shrubs have also been defoliated. Larvae crossing roads in masses and covering sides of buildings have caused concerns among local residents.

Populations increased in the Dawson Creek Forest District defoliating trees in and around Taylor for the third consecutive year. The area of recorded defoliation exceeded 2700 ha up from 1500 ha in 1994. Small scattered patches of tent caterpillar defoliation often in conjunction with the large aspen tortrix, *Choristoneura conflictana*, occurred throughout the district in aspen stands.

For the first time in over 15 years the tent caterpillar has caused serious defoliation in the Fort Nelson Forest district. Patches totalling some several hundred hectares were reported around Fort Nelson and north along the Liard River.

../2

Continued defoliation for several consecutive years leads to branch dieback, top-kill, growth loss and susceptibility to attacks by other insects and disease. In some areas of the Prince George Forest District aspen stands have been defoliated for 5 consecutive years.

Controlling the tent caterpillar is difficult due to the size of infestations and height of some infested trees. In urban settings egg masses can be clipped off host trees during the winter and colonies removed in the spring. The biological insecticide *Bacillus thurigiensis var. kurstaki* which is available in most garden outlets can be used to control populations.

Increases in populations were predicted by the Forest Insect and Disease survey from egg mass surveys last fall. FIDS will continue to monitor forest tent caterpillar populations this fall to provide a forecast for 1996.

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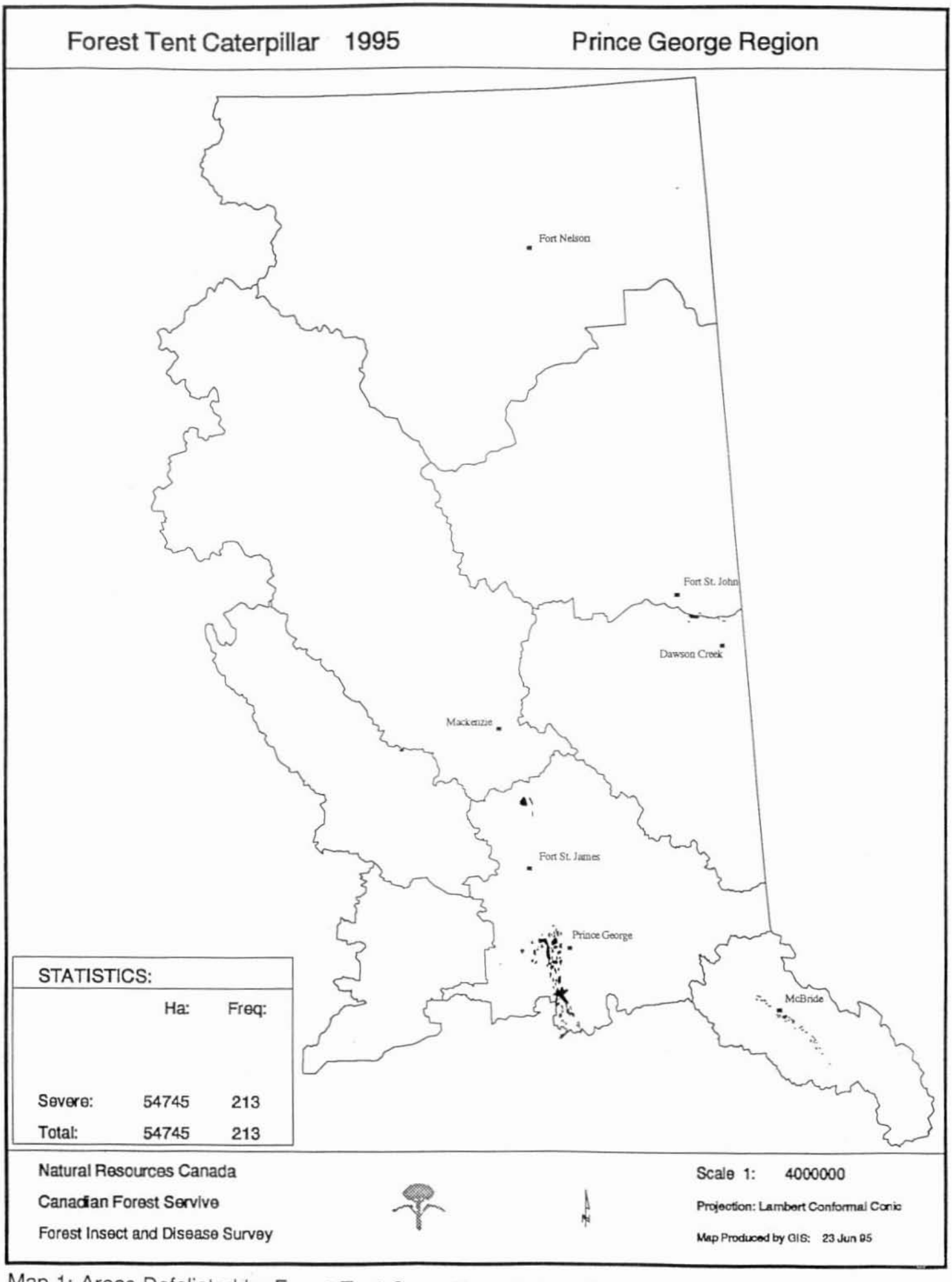

Map 1: Areas Defoliated by Forest Tent Caterpillar in Prince George Forest Region, 1995.