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# PEST REPORT

Pacific Forestry Centre • 506 West Burnside Road • Victoria, B.C. • V8Z 1M5



FIDS PEST REPORT 95-23

September 1995

## SUMMARY OF FOREST PEST CONDITIONS IN THE YUKON TERRITORY FOREST REGION, 1995

R. Garbutt
Forest Insect and Disease Survey

Infestations of **spruce beetle** mapped for the second consecutive year in the southwest, expanded by 50% to cover 57 000 ha in 1995. As in 1994, activity was centered primarily in the Alsek River Valley north of Goathead Mountain, and in the Shakwak Valley between Haines Junction and Kluane Lake. Nearly half of the infested stands fell within Kluane National Park. In some stands 100% of the mature trees have been killed by repeated attacks since the infestation began. Significant levels of current attack were seen in all trees examined in June and August, and the area covered by the infestation is expected to continue expanding for at least another year. Stands throughout the area are composed entirely of white spruce, most of which are in the mature and over-mature stage of development and highly susceptible to attack. Many stands also contain a healthy immature understory which will grow up to succeed the dead overstory. Spruce beetle is also suspected to be one of the agents responsible for the death of many mature white spruce along the LaBiche River in southeastern Yukon. The area was surveyed from the air for the first time this year, but the damage has been ongoing for five or more years, as most of the trees are grey. Beetle populations have now largely collapsed, but some activity in the form of current attacks was seen during a ground check of one stand. Very few red trees (killed in 1994) were visible in the stands. **Eastern spruce budworm** which has repeatedly defoliated these same stands over many consecutive years is thought to be the primary agent of attack in the LaBiche River stands, predisposing them to spruce beetle attack. However, only trace levels of budworm defoliation were seen in the area this year. Decreased budworm populations in the Irons Creek area near the BC-Yukon border, also caused trace levels of defoliation.

../2

For the fifth consecutive year **pine needle cast** caused widespread mortality of year-old lodgepole pine needles throughout the southeast. The most visible damage was again in young stands in the Watson Lake area, where up to 80% of the 1994 needles were lost on open growing and roadside trees. Dead leaders in young pine caused by **lodgepole terminal weevil** attacks were again widespread in the southern part of the Territory, east of Whitehorse. As in 1994, incidences of attack were low, averaging less than 1% of the trees, except in young stands along the Atlin Road near the B.C. border, where up to 10% current attack levels were seen.

An annual assessment was completed of the forest **Biomonitoring Plot** established in 1992 in the Takhini Forest reserve, to monitor the effects of acid rain and airborne pollutants on the growth and vigour of trees, shrubs and ground cover. No damage was found.

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