

Question 3

Responses to the Commission to study Public Lands:

At the meeting on next Tuesday, I can present an over view of our budworm plan. A major part of the program has been ongoing for years and that being reducing the percent of fir on Public Lands through commercial harvesting. While Public Lands has been somewhat successful, the land base carries more fir/acre than private lands. This is not due to poor management. The higher volumes are a result of carrying higher volumes/acre of spruce and fir than other landowners.

Increasing the road budget significantly is allowing stands having a high risk of budworm damage to be accessed and treated more timely.

A more recent development has been to allow, Public Lands to reduce the fir component at a time the stands are about 12 years old through a process called Pre-Commercial Thinning or PCT. This project was not undertaken in the past because of budget constraints. Also, Public lands is now allowed to harvest stands heavy to fir but not truly able to carry all the harvesting costs.

A very significant project is underway to determine the pros and cons of conducting a spray program using biological agents (BTK). A panel is being put together to answer this question. The use of this information would logically be used to formulate a public policy. The panel will have a report ready by late winter or early spring.

The former “Budworm Statute” was modified by the Legislature last winter and Rule Making is scheduled to take place. Deliberately, certain parts of the forest landscapes were exempted from the modified statute, hence the need to tailor a very specific response on Public Lands.

The review next Tuesday will be more informative than the brief synopsis above.