



Partner Perspectives

Government managers benefit from institute's leadership in science and technology transfer



Partner Perspective

ALBERTA
SUSTAINABLE
RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT

"The institute excels at technology transfer, which is how good science is put into practice in regulations and in day-to-day operations."

Dave Ealey, APR, P. Biol.
Issues Manager,
Communications Branch,
Alberta Sustainable
Resource Development

OCTOBER 2009 – Alberta Sustainable Resource Development is responsible for public land that occupies about 60% of Alberta. Dave Ealey, issues manager with the department's communications branch, says science provides the knowledge and understanding required to make good decisions about managing dynamic and intricate ecosystems for long-term sustainability.

The Challenge

Alberta's forested landscape is largely publicly-owned, and must be managed for the benefit of all Albertans. This means ways have to be found to balance multiple uses for economic and recreational purposes with long-term sustainability of ecological goods and services such as water and wildlife habitat.

"The public expects us to base our management policies on good science," says Ealey, "We need to understand what's really happening, for instance, with the various levels and accumulations of disturbance. Do they mimic the natural disturbance patterns that gave us the forests we enjoy today? If something goes beyond a natural disturbance, such as a stream crossing, what do we have to do to bring it in line with long-term sustainability?"

An additional challenge, says Ealey, is making sure new knowledge and practices get into the hands of planners and operators on the ground.

"What's needed is effective technology transfer that passes the science on to the people on the ground, in the form of practical planning and procedural tools."

The Solution

With a partnership that brings government, industry, academia and community representatives to the table, Foothills Research Institute is an ideal forum for the kind of information-sharing required. In addition, its program of seminars, workshops, tech notes and instructional tools makes it an organization that excels in tech transfer, Ealey says.

"Effective tech transfer requires a fair bit of networking, and that's a big part of the value we see in this institution - that nexus of people with different perspectives, developing solutions for industry and government," he explains.

"Government is not the implementer of all this new knowledge, industry is. We are the policy developers, but actual practice has to change relative to what's realistic on the landscape and the tools available. Solutions developed by Foothills Research Institute are focused on the practical and the realistic, and on tools that enable us to achieve the results Albertans desire."

The Results

The department's own staff members make full use of tools such as the grizzly bear resource selection function maps created by the Institute. For the first time they have very accurate and reliable predictions of where bears will be, and when, and for what reason. "That's a real value to us when we're asked to evaluate proposals for the siting of new industrial facilities in grizzly territory," Ealey says.

"I also believe the value of science and technology transfer will become abundantly clear when it comes to implementing regional plans based on the Land-use Framework."

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