

Update- February 2009

North Whiteshell Windstorm Clean-up

Overview

The harvesting of stands of trees damaged during the large wind storm that swept through the north Whiteshell in June 2007 is wrapping up at the end of March 2009. Manitoba Conservation has employed a strategy to reduce the fire danger and reopen trails utilizing commercial logging operations and Manitoba Conservation staff. The first phase of the clean-up focused on salvaging timber from high use and strategic areas like campgrounds, cottage subdivisions and hiking trails. Then the harvesting moved to the areas severely damaged but further back off the roads and trails within the affected areas. The majority of this phase of the clean-up is complete. Current efforts have been refocused to manage debris and ramp up the Forest Renewal component.

Forest Management Activities

The challenge to harvest the last of the trees that were impacted by the Wind Storm is being met to the best of our abilities. The two greatest factors to overcome were access to markets for the wood harvested and time because the quality of the wood fiber quickly deteriorates. So any salvage had to keep these concerns in mind. The Forest Industry was one of the first to indicate that the downturn in the economy was going to be different and difficult this time. Some of the areas that we had hoped to clean up were never completed because there was no market for the wood resource due to mill closures and downtime. Added to that was the concern for wood quality. As the broken trees laid on the ground or stood broken and damaged for a second year they began to dry out and become attractive to insects that further damaged the wood quality and made them even less desirable for industrial use.

The processing and hauling of the wood that was harvested late in the winter season will continue into the summer and early next winter. Road restrictions put in place to protect the roads from damage will force the closure of the haul before all of the wood is out of the Park. This means that some of the winter roads to the harvest sites from 2009 will have to be opened again in 2010. There will be some truck traffic on the roads again this summer once the spring restrictions are lifted. Our plan is to have all of the hauling completed by the end of January 2010.

One of the benefits of having open winter roads in 2010 will be to get seedlings delivered and stored on site for the 2010 tree plant. This year we have snow cached (stored) about one million spruce and pine seedlings in close proximity to the areas that were harvested in 2007/08. We will see these seedlings planted in May and June near Meditation Lake, Big Whiteshell Lake and the Betula Lake Day Use Area. There will also be the need for heavy machinery to prepare the areas just harvested for tree planting and natural regeneration in 2010. Approximately one million seedlings have been ordered for planting in the storm affected area in 2010.

Finally this summer, with the last of the harvesting done the process to map and document all of this change can be completed. There will be those areas that have been logged and planted and those areas that have been logged and left for natural

regeneration. There will also be the need to map and monitor those areas that were severely impacted by the wind but were never salvaged. Then all areas that were salvaged will be monitored for the success of the renewal effort and if there are areas that need additional work we will be back to help them along.



This snow cache, near the Foresters Footsteps interpretive trail was constructed in February of 2009 by Manitoba Conservation staff. Boxes of seedlings were trucked into the area and placed on a prepared site. The boxes were then wrapped in plastic and covered with a thick layer of snow. Straw is spread on top to keep the snow from melting until the ground is ready for planting this spring. In the background a 50 year old pine plantation will offer shade to slow the melting process too.

I would like to take this time to thank all of the North Whiteshell residents and visitors for the patience and understanding that they offered during the clean up of this wind event. If you would like to offer any comments or concerns I can be reached at 345-1453 or by email at tim.swanson@gov.mb.ca.