



EMEND 10-Year Milestone Celebrated

Boreal Research Institute hosts seminar that examines early lessons at EMEND and go-forward message

Frank Oberle, MLA for the Peace River constituency, recalled how about 13 years ago he and his company colleagues discussed how to develop some kind of database for harvest retention. At that time, MLA Oberle was a forester with Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd. in Peace River. Their conclusion was the need for a long term experiment.

That was the initial seed that grew into the world class, landscape level research project known as EMEND (Ecosystem Management Emulating Natural Disturbance), located 90 kilometres northwest of Peace River.

Now, with the partnership of Canadian Forest Products Ltd., Daishowa-Marubeni, University of Alberta and Canadian Forest Service, as well as support from several forest companies, post-secondary institutions and government agencies, EMEND has moved beyond a variable retention study to a high quality template that can host a variety of applications.

MLA Oberle was speaking at a seminar commemorating EMEND's first decade. It was held November 13 in Peace River, sponsored by EMEND's Technology Transfer partner, the NAIT Boreal Research Institute. More than a regular practitioner workshop, this seminar not only reviewed preliminary lessons from EMEND in terms of biodiversity, vegetative response, soils, deadwood and woody debris, reforestation and harvest economics, it brought together the original core members of EMEND along with EMEND leaders in industry, government, and academia.

Total attendance at the seminar was 85, with equal representation from industry, government and community/academia.



Photo: Mackenzie Report Inc.

FOUNDING MEMBERS OF EMEND

(LEFT TO RIGHT) DR. JOHN SPENCE, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA; STEVE LUCHKOW, DAISHOWA-MARUBENI INTERNATIONAL LTD.; DR. JAN VOLNEY, CANADIAN FOREST SERVICE; TIM VINGE, ALBERTA SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT; WAYNE THORP, RPF; MLA FRANK OBERLE, PEACE RIVER CONSTITUENCY.

Applications beyond variable retention

Keynote speaker Dr. John Spence, in his talk on the cultural heritage and advancement of the scientific method, noted how in the early years of EMEND the focus was on pattern and structure in the boreal forest, and how that has now shifted to a regard for process.

This was echoed by several speakers. Dr. Jan Volney noted the value of a long term experiment.

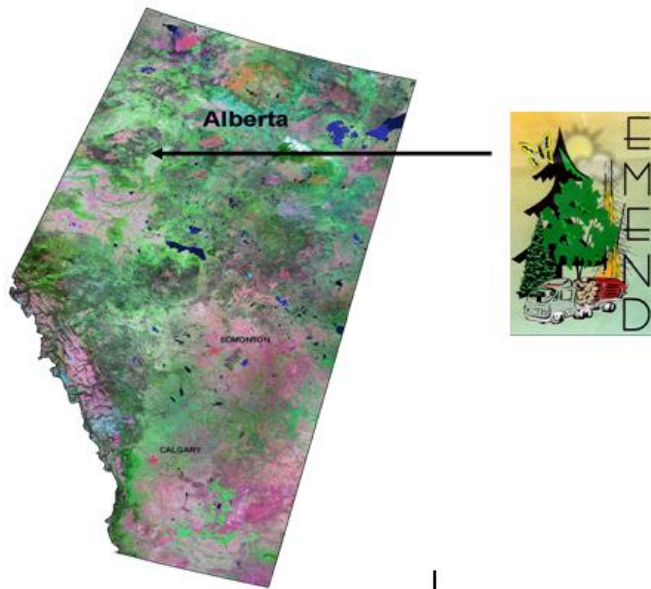
"As these long term experiments get older, the applications increase. A demonstration of good design is that there are applications that you never had in mind," he said.

Derek Sidders, with the Canadian Forest Service and the designer of silvicultural prescriptions at EMEND, noted how EMEND can be incorporated into the Canadian Wood Fibre Centre program, and John Stadt, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, said that strategies such as the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring program will need programs like EMEND.

He and Dr. Barry White, also with Sustainable Resource Development, referred to the Land Use Framework in Alberta, and how EMEND has a strong potential to contribute on this and other water, species-at-risk and landscape management strategies.

“EMEND brings every sector together,” said Berry Heinen, Peace River Deputy Mayor.

EMEND has also made a valuable contribution to student studies. Twenty-eight masters students from Alberta, Canadian and international institutions have utilized the project, and it has supported 132 undergraduates.



Biodiversity and refining the filter

The importance of biodiversity in monitoring the landscape was a recurring theme at the seminar.

“Biodiversity is a monitor that tells us the system is okay, it indicates a lot of things that might be unhealthy in the system,” noted Dr. Spence.

Dr. White noted the Forest Management branch’s discussions on resources planning and sustainable land management.

“Always they come back to biodiversity questions,” said Dr. White. “One of the principal contributions EMEND makes is understanding the connection between disturbance and landscape on biodiversity.”

Another focus was the refinement of initial coarse filter studies; such as dispersed retention versus aggregated retention and how to apply it, and the right kind of dead wood and woody debris to add real value to ecological management.

Dr. Ellen Macdonald, in her presentation on vegetative response, reinforced the focus on process over structure. She said the path forward at EMEND will be to examine how much retention to leave, how that will change over time and which responses will become important over the long term.

EMEND has moved beyond a variable retention study to a template that can host a variety of applications.

“AS THESE LONG TERM EXPERIMENTS GET OLDER, THE APPLICATIONS INCREASE. A DEMONSTRATION OF GOOD DESIGN IS THAT THERE ARE APPLICATIONS THAT YOU NEVER HAD IN MIND.” - DR. JAN VOLNEY

Stay the course

In his talk on the industry perspective, Jim Witiw, Daishowa-Marubeni, noted that long term research such as EMEND has a return on investment for forest companies, in terms of sustainable forest practices and clients’ expectations.

Since the inception of ecologically based forest management in the 1990’s, he said, companies are seeking low risk management policies that are anchored to natural disturbance.

“Customers want to know the research component of forestry practices by the company. Whether you’re going to have a customer, or not have one, makes it a really important driver in research,” said Jim.

Besides the chance to preview preliminary data, the core message from the seminar was: “stay the course”.

The new reclamation standards in Alberta, which require industrially disturbed land to be returned to equivalent ecological function, can get tremendous value from EMEND, said Tim Vinge of Sustainable Resource Development.

“We are now restoring ecological function to the land. How do we do that without understanding what the ecological functions are?” he said.

What the participants said

Participants evaluated the seminar, with the following suggestions on “What’s needed to make EMEND successful over the next 10 years.”

- Knowledge transfer - journals, notes, newspaper, demonstration sites, public tours;
- Continued openness to new opportunities in research and collaboration/partnership;

- Continued support from industry and strong leadership from the steering committee;
- Keep finding people who are as passionate about the project as those who started it; and
- Continue to make the science relevant to forest managers.

Presenters at the conference were Peace River Deputy Mayor Berry Heinen; MLA Frank Oberle; Dr. John Spence; Dr. Ellen Macdonald; Dr. Jan Volney; Jason Edwards; Derek Sidders; John Stadt; Eric Phillips; Jim Witiw; Dr. Barry White and Tim Vinge.

For transcripts of the presentations at the EMEND Decade 1 Seminar, click on the following link:
<http://www.nait.ca/47711.htm>



Photo: Jim Witiw

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