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News Release

Municipality Takes Action on Wildfire Protection

The Municipality of Jasper is moving ahead with FireSmart work around the town site to improve community wildfire protection and remove hazardous trees from public lands. Highly visible work will take place along the southern and western edges of town, including along the Discovery Trail on Connaught Drive. The project will target pine beetle affected trees and other forest fuel located within approximately 250 meters of residential areas (see attached map).

A comprehensive plan identifying priority areas has been developed with the intent to expand the project scope as more funding becomes available. The first leg of this project will be funded through a Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) FireSmart grant. Work is expected to start next week.

Customized work standards have been developed to address unique conditions in each area. The goal is to reduce the impact a wildfire would have on the town, its infrastructure, ecosystem and landscape.

"From 2004 to 2011, extensive FireSmart work took place around Jasper. We had reduced the amount of forest fuel to an acceptable level, but with more fuel accumulating over time and with the impact of the mountain pine beetle on our forest, we need to supplement those efforts to improve community protection in the event of a wildfire" says Jasper Mayor Richard Ireland.

Municipality of Jasper Fire Chief and Director of Protective Services Greg Van Tighem is the project lead. "We were fortunate to receive some base funding through the FRIAA FireSmart Grant Program, however we are actively seeking more funding opportunities" says Van Tighem. "The more funds we receive the more forest fuel reduction work we will be able to complete; this is all about community safety, and as such is an extremely important initiative. Residents and visitors will see a drastic change in the forests immediately surrounding the town site."

The Municipality is working with community partners, corporate and institutional, to expand the scope of work and encourage collaboration in community protection. This project is a collaborative effort between the Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada, who will provide two project surveillance officers as well as financial support towards the initiative. Parks Canada is also working on additional forest fuel reduction in areas further from town.

FireSmart work will have an impact on local trails, namely the Discovery Trail and a number of trail connectors immediately around the town site. Signage will be in place, and up-to-date information will

be available through Jasper National Park's trail office. Wood burning will be kept to a minimum to lessen the impact on air quality in the community. All monies collected for trees harvested for lumber will be reinvested in the project to expand the treatment areas.

The FireSmart project is one of several initiatives of the Municipality of Jasper to ensure community safety in the event of a wildfire. Emergency preparedness, including a detailed emergency management plan, public information initiatives, extensive staff training and inter-agency collaboration are examples of how the Municipality is working to keep our community safe.

– 30 –

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Jasper: FireSmart Fuel Maintenance Treatment Zones

