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**NEW PROGRAM WILL ENHANCE FOREST HEALTH AND RESEARCH**

WHITEHORSE – Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Archie Lang today announced a new silviculture program to monitor the need for seedling stock, conduct research and to monitor the health of Yukon forests.

“We are continuing to make tremendous progress in forest management since we took responsibility over from the federal government,” Lang said.

Silviculture is not just planting trees, it is the science and practice of caring for forests, understanding how trees grow, reproduce, and respond to environmental changes. The program will provide vital research, information and knowledge to enhance forest management plans throughout the Yukon.

“Through partnerships with First Nations we are cooperatively managing Yukon’s forests,” Lang said. “The forest management plan is complete for the Haines Junction area and we are in the process of implementing many of the recommendations in that plan that will enhance forest health and provide jobs for Yukoners.”

Work continues on forest management planning in other areas as well. Energy, Mines and Resources hopes to complete the forest management plans for the Watson Lake and Teslin areas this summer.

The silviculture program funding will also be used to expand the forest survey and annual forest report undertaken for the Yukon government by the Canadian Forest Service by including information on the northern forests around Old Crow. These reports are valuable tools for monitoring infestation potential, effects of global warming and overall forest health.

The research forest strategic management plan, currently under review, will provide the guidelines for additional research projects that will be identified by the silviculture program harvest assessments and survival surveys.

“The Yukon government is continuing to promote sustainability and healthy forests throughout the Yukon with a view to developing made in the Yukon forest legislation,” Lang said.

The 2005-06 budget includes \$250,000 for the new program.

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