

# Homegrown approach to forest management

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lations and industry standards. Seedlings planted are raised in nurseries from seed cones collected directly from the ten community forests in the FMA.

"We do regular regeneration surveys to ensure the forest is coming back to the way it was before. If not, we'll go back and do it again," says Rutzki.

These regeneration surveys are aided by Mistik's new GIS mapping system. "By the end of this year, we'll have a newly completed state-of-the-art GIS-based forest inventory of our whole license, at a cost of about \$5 million. The GIS system keeps track of every piece of information – how many cubic metres have been harvested in a block, who the contractor is, what the harvesting costs are. We can also use it to keep track of forest blocks as they regrow," says Rutzki.

Mistik has had an active research program, working with specialists on all aspects of forest ecology, to keep on top of emerging forest issues. Mistik maintains ongoing relationships with a variety of forestry experts within Saskatchewan and across Canada who provide Mistik with specialized expertise with respect to addressing key forestry needs.

In August 2004, Mistik Management achieved ISO 14001 certification of its environmental management system, a further demonstration that Mistik is committed to constant improvement of its environmental performance. With the assistance and collaboration of its Public Advisory Group, Mistik achieved certification of its forestry activities to the CAN/CSA Z809-02 Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Standard in June 2005.

Mistik's forest harvest and renewal activities generate between \$40 to \$50 million in revenue annually. Approximately 77 per cent of Mistik's annual expenditures goes to local contractors and seasonal workers. Mistik creates 58,000 person days of work annually for northern residents, many who are Aboriginal.

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contractors to plant our trees, we have 12 tree planting contractors, spread throughout the FMA. Instead of using eight to ten contractors, we have 31 harvest contractors. These contractors create 750 seasonal jobs which extend full-time from May through March," says Rutzki.

These opportunities are creating individual success stories in northern communities. "I helped one contractor get a skidder in 1991. He went from one, to two, to three skidders – and now owns a full-blown multi-million dollar mechanical line of equipment. His son, who learned the business from his father, has now joined him in the forestry business as another one of our successful contractors," says Rutzki.

"One of our truck drivers started out with one trucking contract, then he got two trucking contracts and then passed one on to his son. His son is also one of our successful contractors involved in the forestry business. These types of success stories are very important to us, and are now being experienced by

a second generation."

In Dillon, many residents share in the success of the town's sawmill. Mistik sends logs harvested in the Peter Pond management unit to the small local sawmill, which employs 30 people, then trucks the lumber to NorSask Forest Products. The logs could be hauled directly to the Meadow Lake sawmill, but this way, vital employment is being created right in Dillon. "The impact of that sawmill is felt in local stores and throughout the town," says Rutzki.

Not only has Mistik given many contractors their start in business, the company does all it can to keep them up and running.

Balisky says, "For many years, Mistik was the bank and assumed all the risks. The banks wouldn't touch a lot of these contractors. On behalf of the mills, Mistik took all of the risk and made a tremendous outlay of money initially. Then to get contractors up to speed, dedicated staff went that extra mile to ensure they would succeed."

The company now assumes 50 per cent of the risk on a large number of Beaver River Community Futures Development Corporation-related loans to Mistik contractors. Mistik routinely provides financial management and administrative assistance for contractors.

Mistik's innovative methods are attracting attention across the country, from industry as well as First Nations. They come to learn about Mistik's highly regarded sustainable forest practices and unique socio-economic development policies.

"We've had a steady stream of people come here from across Canada to see how we do things over the past ten years, including many Aboriginal groups who are looking at the Mistik model as something they can transplant to their own context," says Balisky.



Softwood harvested by Mistik is used by NorSask Forest Products. Hardwood is utilized by the Millar Western Pulp Mill.