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Trent researcher receives \$540,000 research award

Dr. Jim Buttle leads national research team to create a Canadian forest management watershed framework

Peterborough, Ontario Principal Investigator Dr. Jim Buttle will receive \$540,000 over three years to help forest managers develop more accurate indicators to assess water storage and movement in various forested landscapes across the country. “Water is critical to sustaining forest ecosystems and communities living in forest areas, and information on its storage and movement is essential for forest managers. While some hydrologic information is available, it isn’t enough to help managers put specific research results into the proper context,” says Buttle. “Where you are in the country determines if you should focus on processes related to surface water, groundwater or water held in features such as peat bogs. Knowledge of these key processes will help forest managers to answer properly site specific questions regarding forest operations.”

Buttle’s research team aims to create a database of relevant forest and water research conducted throughout the country. This will be supplemented by data on factors such as climate, geology, soils and forests across Canada, and model simulations of water dynamics under varying forest conditions. This information will allow the research to be placed in a national framework so that researchers and forest managers will be better able to determine the key processes relevant to answering their particular forest and forest management questions. It will provide a mechanism for upscaling information obtained through traditional Aboriginal and academic knowledge. Ultimately, this national framework will allow forest managers to make decisions relevant from site specific stands to whole forests, and to translate that information between different stands as well as different forest landscapes for specific operational and climatic conditions.

Dr. Buttle’s proposal went through an extensive scientific peer-review process. His project received significant support from the Governments of Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Ontario, Natural Resources Canada – Canadian Forest Service as well as forward-thinking forest industries including Abitibi-Consolidated Inc., Louisiana-Pacific Canada Ltd., and Tembec Inc. The project was also supported by Ducks Unlimited Canada and Moose Cree First Nation.

Dr. Buttle will be supported by the Canadian Forest Service (in the national database creation), and by Drs. Fred Beall and Irena Creed, University of Western Ontario, Drs. Kevin Devito, Carl Mendoza and Uldis Silins, University of Alberta, Dr. Dan Moore, University of British Columbia, Dr. André Plamondon, Laval University and Dr. Paul Sibley, University of Guelph.

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