

## **Incorporating Whitebark Pine Recovery into your Forestry Practice**

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In 2012, whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) became the first western tree to be declared endangered under Canada's Species at Risk Act (SARA). This five-needled pine is widespread across central and southern BC, but, sadly, most trees and seedlings are in poor and declining condition. If you are a BC forest professional whose work is not restricted to Vancouver Island or the outer Coast, chances are that your work encompasses current or future whitebark pine habitat and you have an opportunity to find ways of incorporating whitebark pine recovery into your forestry practice.

For the past decade, a small band of dedicated whitebark pine enthusiasts across BC and Alberta has been building expertise in whitebark pine silviculture and restoration, exchanging and adapting information with our colleagues across the border in the western U.S. through the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation ([www.whitebarkfound.org](http://www.whitebarkfound.org)) and its Canadian offshoot ([www.whitebarkpine.ca](http://www.whitebarkpine.ca)). The time has come shift these efforts from research to operational forest practice and we need forest professionals across BC to play their part.

**Observe, record and report:** Learn to identify whitebark pine reliably from a distance as well as close-up and ensure that your coworkers and contractors can do the same. Large holes in the distribution map still occur, notably on the mid-Coast, across the Fraser Plateau and at the species' northern limits. Novel occurrences can be reported to BC's Conservation Data Centre (online) or to a Ministry ecosystems biologist in your region. Finer-scaled information is needed to improve inventory maps and day-to-day forest management. For example, whitebark pine seedlings can often be found at the base of beetle-killed lodgepole pines and require protection during salvage and restoration operations.

**Help collect cones:** The biggest limitation to whitebark pine recovery efforts is a shortage of registered seeds gathered from trees showing resistance to infection by the deadly whitebark bark pine blister rust fungus (*Cronartium ribicola*). Whitebark pine cone collection is expensive and good crops are intermittent. Foresters can participate by monitoring and reporting on upcoming cone crops and by contributing in-kind or financial support to helicopter surveys and access, cone cage construction, tree-climbing, cone caging, cone collection, cone and seed processing, storage and registration, including providing professional advice to novice cone collectors.

**Update strategic and Forest Stewardship Plans to include whitebark pine:** Although whitebark pine is not a commercial tree species, it often grows in and among units of merchantable forest and, like woodland caribou, spotted owls or other Species at Risk, must be factored into forest planning. Landscape scale species composition benchmarks were established in 2014 for several central BC Timber Supply Areas that include targets of 1 - 5% whitebark pine in appropriate ESSF ecosystems. In the Bulkley TSA, for example, at least one forest licensee has prepared amendments to its Forest Stewardship Plan to meet that commitment.

**Protect, release and plant whitebark pine in harvest and silviculture operations:** Silvicultural best practices guidelines are currently in development for whitebark pine. Forest licensees and community forests at several locations across BC are moving forward with projects that incorporate whitebark pine into current and future high elevation planting programs. Ensuring that mature whitebark pine trees, saplings and seedlings are protected during road construction, harvest, silvicultural and wildfire management activities is an important first step that begins with accurate pre-harvest mapping and

appropriate prescription development.

**Participate as a proponent or partner in restoration projects:** Forest professionals have many opportunities to become involved in whitebark pine enhancement or restoration in areas damaged by wildfire or mountain pine beetle, either as a project leader or by partnering with local groups, agencies and First Nations. The BC Forest Enhancement Society and Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation are two examples of agencies that can be approached for funding.

**Speak up for whitebark pine recovery at meetings and with coworkers and employers** Whether you are a senior forest manager or just starting your forestry career, there are opportunities to advocate for better whitebark pine management. Why not include a whitebark pine tour stop on your next field trip or sponsor an employee to attend the next Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation workshop. Discuss with colleagues how they are incorporating whitebark pine into their management prescriptions.

Please contact [Sybille.Haeussler@unbc.ca](mailto:Sybille.Haeussler@unbc.ca) or another member of the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada if you have questions about how to participate in your region.