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The Fraser Basin Council in Action: Debris Trap Funding Secured for the Sixth Year in a Row

Imagine a pile of wood debris as big as a football field and as high as a 13 story office tower. Now imagine the damage that amount of wood – 100,000 cubic metres – would cause if it were allowed to flow unfettered downstream from Hope to the Strait of Georgia. The Fraser River Debris Trap, a unique facility near Hope, captures up to this amount of debris *each year* as uprooted and fallen trees careen down the Fraser River from as far away as Mount Robson in the Rocky Mountains.

Without the debris trap, this mountain of wood debris would threaten public safety, interfere with commercial and recreational navigation, damage infrastructure such as docks, dikes, bridges and submarine cables, clog sensitive habitat and hinder foreshore access. As Patrick Reid, Chair of the Fraser Basin Council notes, "The solution today, as it was when I was Chair of the Vancouver Port Corporation a decade ago, is for those responsible to contribute fully to its upkeep. It is very much a case of pay a little now, or pay a great deal more later."

For the sixth year in a row, the Fraser Basin Council (FBC) has worked with government and private sector partners to ensure that funds are in place to operate the debris trap during the 2004 Fraser River spring freshet, from approximately early May to mid July.

"While keeping the Fraser River free from debris, the trap also provides economic opportunities by using the waste wood for hog fuel and chips," said Forests Minister Michael de Jong. "This is clearly an example of B.C. innovation and demonstrates the benefits of a collaborative partnership – in this case between the federal and provincial governments, the coastal forest industry and the Fraser Basin Council."

This year, the \$540,000 annual operating budget for the 2004/05 debris trap program will be met through contributions from the coastal forest industry, BC Ministry of Forests, Western Diversification Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, BC Ferry Corporation, Fraser River Port Authority, BC Ministry of Transportation, Parks Canada, Translink/Albion Ferry, and the District of West Vancouver.

Recently, open burning at the debris trap has been dramatically reduced in response to air quality concerns. Through the efforts of the trap contractor, Jones Construction and NorskeCanada, 95% of the debris that used to be burned is now processed into wood chips and hog fuel for use in pulp mills. According to FBC Regional Manager Bob Purdy, "This effort has resulted in a significant decrease in particulate emissions from the trap. Although this represents a significant accomplishment, work continues to further minimize emissions and also ensure that the facility is properly funded to deliver its significant public benefits over the long term."

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The Fraser Basin Council is a non-profit society established in 1997 to bring people together to find solutions to long-standing issues and conflicts, and take advantage of opportunities in the Fraser River Basin. The mandate of the Council is to ensure that the decisions we make about the Basin today will protect and advance its economic, environmental and social sustainability into the future.