



NRCE Forum assists natural resource practitioners to continue their education

Improving access to continuing education for British Columbia's natural resource practitioners is the goal of a collaborative effort called the Natural Resource Sector Continuous Learning Forum.

The Forum was established to address challenges associated with supporting continuing competency of British Columbia's natural resource practitioners. "The continuing education needs of BC's practitioners are diverse, with many possible ways to address them," said project leader and FORREX's Chief Executive Officer, **Chris Hollstedt**.

Forum team member, **Brian Robinson** of the Association of BC Forest Professionals, said the Forum is one way to address those needs. "The Forum is a collaborative initiative that works with employers, government, regulators, educators and associations to develop efficient and effective solution for this diverse sector," he said.

The goal of the Forum is for natural resource practitioners throughout BC to have access to a highly effective system of continuing education, providing timely, relevant, and affordable learning opportunities. The Forum will also provide:

- sound, accessible information about current and emerging continuing education needs and priorities;
- access to relevant, affordable learning opportunities; and
- an efficient framework for collaboration between stakeholders.

"Continuous learning and collaboration are critical to the future of BC's natural resource sector," said **Jim Snetsinger**, Chief Forester with the BC Ministry of Forests and Range. "Continuous learning is not only integral to the success and sustainability of professional reliance, it's essential to the success and sustainability with which all of BC's natural resources are managed."

"By working together, education providers will be able to ensure professionals and practitioners have access to the ongoing training and education they need to steward BC's natural resources, both for the near and the long term," Snetsinger said.


Ensuring educators, employers, and practitioners have information about current and emerging continuing education needs will be accomplished by comparing the core competency requirements of BC natural resource practitioners to the existing

delivery capacity and identifying the gaps. Current employer and practitioner needs will be analyzed, along with resource management issues and emerging needs. This information will be communicated to existing and potential continuing education providers and natural resources sector professionals and practitioners.

Improving access to learning opportunities will be accomplished via an information portal; by analyzing and receiving public policy; by identifying and encouraging practitioners to use innovative solutions and mechanisms; and, finally, by monitoring and reporting trends. A Continuing Education Catalogue prototype is now available at <http://nrceforum.forrex.org>

Setting up an efficient framework for collaboration between primary stakeholders will require leadership and facilitation, said Hollstedt. The Forum will encourage the fostering of a shared commitment and goal achievement, develop and maintain a business plan for action, monitor progress, and create pathways for communication and collaboration.

Participation in the Forum is open to all natural resource agencies, employers, professional associations, education providers, and practitioners. Co-ordination and Secretariat services are provided by FORREX with initial funding from the provincial Forest Investment Account–Forest Science Program. A leadership team guides strategy and business plan development, funding recruitment, and effectiveness evaluation. **Al Gorley** (Triangle Resources Ltd) provides secretarial support. The Ministry of Forests and Range's Continuing Education Advisor, **Judy Carter** (Judy.L.Carter@gov.bc.ca), is available full time to answer inquiries about the Forum and to work with the partners to address continuing education gaps.

"We're moving from problem definition to solution implementation," said Hollstedt. "The Forum has agreed to work at a strategic level, conducting needs assessments at least once every five years, acting as a Think Tank on emerging trends in continuous learning for natural resource practitioners, developing common goals, and working collaboratively on innovative continuing education solutions. We hope that by sharing goals and strategies, NRCE Forum collaborators will be better able to address the complexity and diversity of learning needs of natural resource practitioners." 

The NRCE Forum is...

Representatives on the Leadership Team are presently provided by :

- Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC APEGBC–Division of Geoscientists in Forestry
- Association of BC Forest Professionals
- BC Institute of Technology
- College of New Caledonia
- First Nations Education
- FORREX Forum for Research and Extension in Natural Resources
- Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
- Ministry of Forests and Range
- University of British Columbia
- Triangle Resources Inc. (Secretariat)