

Brutal cold helps pine beetle fight

by UPI

CALGARY, Alberta -- Alberta environmental officials are hoping brutally cold snaps this winter will turn back the east-moving tide of pine beetles that killed millions of trees. Duncan MacDonnell, spokesman for Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, told the Calgary Sun that despite human discomfort, the cold was a lifesaver for pine trees. "To stop the beetle, you need 12 hours of minus 40 degrees -- if you can stay at minus 40 for 12 consecutive hours, that's enough to kill the beetles," MacDonnell said. "We had two cold snaps in January and early February, and in both cases, we hit that mark." The burrowing insects are moving east from British Columbia, where officials have said 32 million acres of pines, or about 78 percent of that province's total, are doomed, the Sun said. Alberta officials estimate some 3 million lodgepole pines are doomed or already dead, the report said. The Alberta government has spent \$138.5 million in the past two years in eradication efforts along with \$200 million spent on Western Canada's beetle war by the federal government, the Sun said.

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