

Geophysical surveys take off in rural B.C.

Under-explored areas of the province get the benefit of electromagnetic scans that can “see through” rock

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As rural B.C. economies suffer under the onslaught of the mountain pine beetle, an ambitious geoscience project is underway to help stimulate much-needed new investment.

A new airborne electromagnetic survey – QUEST-West – has been launched by **Geoscience BC**, an industry-led not-for-profit society that’s hoping to unlock the mineral potential in under-explored parts of the province.

The survey will help exploration geologists better understand the geology and mineral potential of central B.C., according to the society’s president and CEO, **Lyn Anglin**, hopefully leading to increased mineral exploration investment in an area that has been heavily affected by the beetle.

The insect is estimated to have decimated 700 million cubic metres of timber, up from 582 million cubic metres around the same time last year, according to the **B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range**.

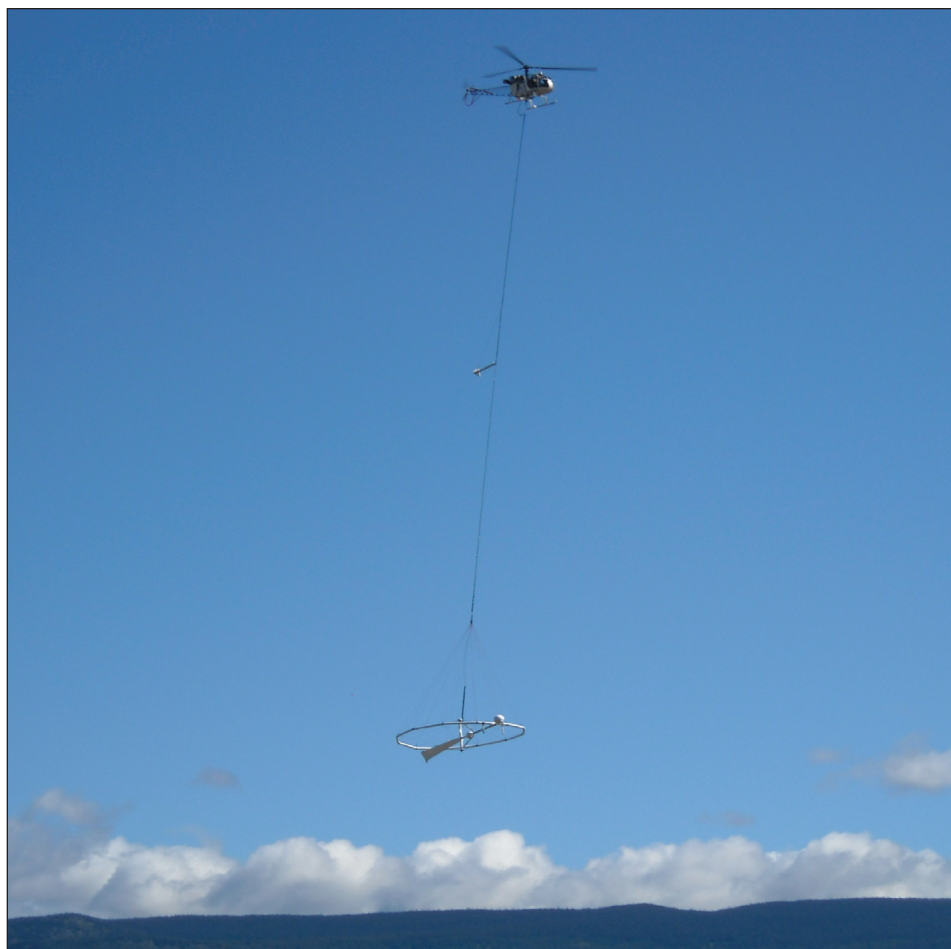
With approximately 1.35 billion cubic metres of merchantable pine on B.C.’s timber harvesting land base, it’s projected that 76% of pine volume – a little over one billion cubic metres – will be killed by 2015.

Forest dependent rural communities are reeling from the impact.

But Geoscience BC’s technical advisory committee believes that there is “good potential” for new mineral discoveries in much of the area of the pine beetle infestation, said Anglin.

“There are large parts of central B.C. that have been under explored, largely because little rock is exposed at surface, and therefore industry does not have good enough information about the geology, i.e. what the rocks are in these areas, to make investments in exploration there.”

By providing the basic “knowledge infra-



Aerial insight: Aeroquest’s airborne electromagnetic system collects data using a large loop suspended beneath a helicopter that flies at low altitude

structure” on the rocks through survey programs, exploration funds are sure to flow into the area, she said.

“Our airborne geophysical surveys are helping us to ‘see through’ the surface materials to determine what the rocks are that are not exposed at surface.”

These rocks may contain concentrations or deposits of metals and minerals of interest to exploration.

As well, the society’s lake and stream

geochemical survey programs are helping to target those areas that have unusual concentrations of metals at the surface, which Anglin said usually indicated something significant somewhere in the vicinity.

The QUEST-West region is believed to have great potential for copper, gold, molybdenum and silver mineralization.

The survey is being flown by **Aeroquest Ltd.**, a subsidiary of **Aeroquest International**, which has offices in various mining juris-

dictions around the world, including in Vancouver.

It will cover an area of more than 40,000 square kilometres of central B.C., including areas around Vanderhoof, Burns Lake, Houston, Smithers, Terrace and Kitimat. Aeroquest's proprietary airborne electromagnetic system collects data using a large loop suspended beneath a helicopter that flies at low altitude.

Providing geoscience information is a very cost effective way to stimulate exploration interest and investment in an area of prospective geology, said Anglin, as evidenced by the exploration industry follow-up to Geoscience's 2007 QUEST project.

Project geologist **Christa Sluggett** said that initiative led to 850,000 hectares of mineral staking in the survey area alone.

"A lot of the companies have gone back and they staked last summer, last fall and are going back in and doing follow-up work on the ground now," said Sluggett.

Among them is **Fjordland Exploration**

Inc. (TSX-V:FEX), a Vancouver-based junior mineral exploration company which has a 60% interest in the 42,238 hectare Woodjam gold-copper property in central B.C., and a 50% joint venture to explore 16 copper-gold properties totalling in excess of 97,000 hec-

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tares, also in central B.C.

Anglin said tax incentives, access to land for exploration, good road, rail and power infrastructure, and a positive relationship with communities and aboriginal peoples are other important positive drivers for in-

creased exploration investment.

"In addition, positive messages to the investment community from government, indicating that they are supportive of exploration and mining in their jurisdiction, can be an important driver," she said.

The investments in major exploration-related geoscience projects, Anglin added, are proving to be "very helpful" to exploration companies in their efforts to raise money, especially from international investors.

Other QUEST-West programs include an airborne gravity survey, which was recently completed by **Sander Geophysics Ltd.**, and a new ground geochemical survey, which will start later this summer.

The QUEST-West project activities were funded by a \$6 million grant from the province, and \$750,000 from the Northern Trust Pine Beetle Recovery Fund.

The results of the latest survey are expected to be available to the public in early 2009. ■

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