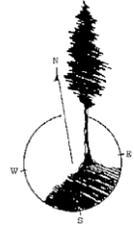


Ancient Forest Exploration & Research

Powassan Office: 3492 Memorial Park Dr., RR#4, P0H 1Z0

Peterborough Office: The Mount, 1545 Monaghan Rd., K9J 5N3

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November 4, 2019

Svetlana Zeran
Bancroft Minden Forest Company
27578 ON-62, Bancroft, ON

Dear Ms. Zeran,

We are contacting you to urge you to put a hold on plans to cut the old-growth eastern hemlock forest at the north end of Catchacoma Lake in northern Peterborough County. We are hopeful that we can find a time to speak with you about this forest before the end of next week.

For the past eight months, we have been working on locating and documenting old-growth forests in Peterborough County for our Peterborough Old-Growth Forest Project. Part of our work included five days of forest survey work in the eastern hemlock-dominated forest at the north end of Catchacoma Lake. During this survey work, we observed numerous marked trees and came to learn that contractors working for the Bancroft Minden Forest Company have plans to do a selection harvest in this area this winter.

We have identified many trees over 140 years old (using 40 cm DBH as a minimum) and estimated the age of several trees using an increment borer. Within the area scheduled to be harvested, we found a 73 cm DBH eastern hemlock tree that we estimate to be 349 years old that is marked to be cut. We also were in awe of the aesthetics of this old-growth forest and noted the many trails that link to the forest indicating the popularity of this area for recreation.

Upon further data analysis and research, we confirmed that this is an old-growth forest and at 550 hectares in size (1,375 acres), it is in fact the largest *known* old-growth eastern hemlock stand in Canada. In addition, natural eastern hemlock forests of all ages are endangered forest types in Ontario, and are likely endangered throughout the rest of eastern Canada as well.

Forests smaller than this (for example the Clear Lake Conservation Reserve (453 hectares) and Raganooter Lake Conservation Reserve (311 hectares)) are officially designated as provincially significant. It stands to reason therefore, that relative to these two old-growth eastern hemlock forests, the larger Catchacoma Old-growth Forest is also provincially significant.

The Catchacoma Old-growth Forest has a basal area and average tree size that are comparable to other nearby old-growth forests. For example, the average DBH and basal area for trees in our Catchacoma plots is 31 cm and 48.4 m²/ha, respectively, while the average DBH and basal area for trees in Mark S. Burnham Provincial Park (40 ha of old-growth forest) were lower at 26 cm and 35.9 m²/ha, respectively.

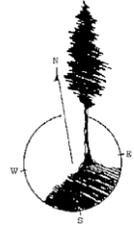
Through the iNaturalist app, we noted that five five-lined skinks have been identified within two kilometers of the proposed cut area. This species is identified as “special concern” under Ontario’s Endangered Species Act. Skinks in hibernation cannot evade logging equipment that is operating during the winter months.

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All of this suggests that there is much at stake. Given the significance of this forest at many levels, we are asking for a one-year moratorium on cutting in this block until further environmental and economic studies are done. Using the results of these studies, logging of this endangered ecosystem should be re-evaluated. These studies should include the following.

- An assessment of the natural heritage significance of this forest at the regional, provincial and national levels
- A comparison of the economic value of logging with the natural capital value of the forest including the increasing importance of old-growth forests as the best terrestrial ecosystem for capturing CO₂ and storing carbon; this sequestration and storage of carbon is critical for solving our climate crisis
- An assessment of how important this old-growth forest might be for the five-lined skink, as well as potentially many other species of risk that may use this forest (e.g., northern myotis, eastern whip-poor-will, Blanding's turtle, and others); field survey work to assess for these species-at-risk would have to wait until the summer months

We have also come to learn that many recreational users of this endangered old-growth forest and surrounding cottage owners are not well informed about logging operations in this area. We believe their input is important to consider the future of this unique endangered ancient forest.

We would very much like to speak with you at your earliest convenience about the Catchacoma Old-growth Forest and your cutting plans. Times that work for us include Tuesday Nov. 5 between 10 and 11am or 12 and 2:30pm, Wednesday, Nov. 6 between 10 and 11am, or Friday November 8th between 12:30 and 2:30pm.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Best regards,

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carling Dewar'.

Carling Dewar, M.Env.Sc.
Forest Ecologist & Public Outreach Coordinator
Ancient Forest Exploration & Research