

## **'We need to protect rare ecosystems', National Post, Feb. 6, 2021**

**Re: 'Support loggers, don't vandalize them. They're environmental heroes harvesting a renewable resource', by Peter Kuitenbrouwer, Feb. 3**

Response by *Katie Krelove*, Ontario Campaigner for the Wilderness Committee

The logging industry in Ontario likes to feel good about sustainable forestry even as it lobbies for exemptions from the province's Environmental Assessment and Endangered Species laws, both of which were granted last year. Sustainable forestry is only as good as the data it relies on and the MNRF's information on remaining old growth forests is lacking. The field work done by Ancient Forest Exploration & Research in the Catchacoma Forest found it is much older than indicated by the aerial data forest management uses. Old growth forests are not renewable resources — if you cut down the oldest trees every 30 years, you stunt the forest from achieving its ecological potential. These forests are rare and endangered, but hemlock is among the lowest valued timber trees — no one is building houses out of hemlock.

Yes, sustainable forestry is needed to supply the products we depend on, but we also need to protect rare ecosystems. Protected places contribute to biodiversity and the economy. In 2011 Canada Parks reported that protected areas in Ontario support more than 6,400 full-time jobs, create \$305 million in labour income, generate \$48 million in tax revenue, and contribute more than \$466 million to the province's gross domestic product. Ontario is failing in commitments to add to the conservation network — adding only 0.003 per cent over the past five years. AFER should be commended as heroes for doing the work that the province is failing to do, and the Catchacoma forest should be a prime candidate for conservation.