



[Proposed] Huronia Community Forest Owners Co-operative Project Outline

This document outlines a project to establish a Community Forest Co-operative in the Huronia region of Simcoe County. The co-operative will be managed by the Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA) in partnership with the local Huronia chapter of the OWA and The Couchiching Conservancy.

Landowners interested in participating should contact any one of the project advisory team members listed at the end of this document.

What is a Community Forest Owners Co-operative?

The OWA's Community Forest Owners Cooperative Project will bring together forest landowners within geographic regions of Ontario (Fleetwood near Peterborough and Huronia in north Simcoe County near Orillia & Midland), to develop economies of scale where under-utilized wood fibre in currently orphaned and fragmented conifer plantations or hardwood stands can be harvested for commercial use by forest industry. Best management practices (BMPs) will be applied that help participating landowners to carry-out partial harvests (thinnings) that improve the productivity and health of their forests—with revenues realized from what is initially harvested, and over time through the continued application of these BMPs. Through subsequent thinnings, plantation owners will realize greater economic value, while at the same time establishing healthy and biologically diverse hardwood and mixed wood forests. The fibre produced through this process will be available for commercial use as determined by quality and best potential use. By “clustering” operations in several adjacent plantations and hardwood forests, economies of scale can be achieved to the benefit of the landowners, forest service providers (management planning, harvesting), and forest industry (saw and pulp mills, pellet manufacturers, etc.). In addition, invasive species control and management will be undertaken as required on the forest properties. All activities undertaken on participating properties present a practical way to create educational opportunities and materials (including digital video) for landowners, communities, First Nations, industry, and students.

A youth-intern will be hired to coordinate all project activities. Willing landowners will be engaged to evaluate the application of BMPs within their plantations and mixed forests. The partnering Land Trust agencies (Kawartha Land Trust and The Couchiching Conservancy) will help lead this component as they are recognized as the forest stewards of their regions and have local knowledge and expertise. A Registered Professional Forester (RPF) will visit properties to check for invasive species, evaluate forest



ecosystem condition including wildlife habitat, and determine management prescriptions required. College students from Algonquin and Fleming will undertake before and after data collection to assist with monitoring. The OWA will arrange for reliable forest service providers and a harvesting contractor. The OWA will also assist with arranging the sale of fibre with net earnings returned to the Cooperative landowners. Data on both the economic and ecological (including carbon) benefits will be compiled and analyzed by a University of Toronto Masters of Forest Conservation (MFC) Student to produce peer-reviewed publishable papers; all project participants, especially volunteers and landowners will be engaged and tracked to garner helpful citizen science data. The Cooperative model will be communicated and applied to other parts of Ontario in need of similar beneficial BMPs.

The OWA and partners will ensure that processes are in place for professional stewardship of the properties, including forest management planning, harvesting/thinning and invasive species control, and potentially Carbon marketing, Gypsy moth control or enhancement of endangered species habitat. The vision is for the Forest Owners Cooperative to be established as a multi-decade entity to ensure that non-productive forest land becomes healthy and productive over time.

Project Objectives

The primary project objective is to group smaller unmanaged plantation/woodlots together in order to introduce good forest management practices and attract commercial interest for logging. Such practices will ensure that thinning can realistically be achieved before it is too late and plantations become over-mature, reducing their economic and environmental functions.

Other objectives include:

- Forest management education
- Develop/identify markets for small plantation/woodlot products
- Hands-on assistance with/management of the harvesting process
- Promote positive ecological outcomes/ biodiversity in the face of climate change
- Develop a community of dedicated landowners working together for future collective conservation and stewardship
- Increase participation in the MFTIP
- Increase membership in the OWA
- Support the forest industry as part of the post-pandemic economic recovery in Ontario



Typical Woodlot/ Plantation Characteristics

A participating woodlot/ plantation should have the following characteristics:

- Privately-owned
- More than 5 acres
- Not actively being managed as part of another initiative
- Forest type can include conifer plantation, hardwood or mixed
- Requirement for thinning
- In proximity to other participating parcels (or in proximity to another larger cut, such as a Simcoe County forest thinning project)
- Easily accessible for large equipment (or a viable harvest plan alternative)

The landowners will benefit by participating in a program that will permit their small woodlots/plantations to be managed to address immediate concerns (thinning, invasive species, condition of forest ecosystem).

Depending on the value and quality of the wood harvested, the landowners may also realize immediate economic benefits. Longer-term benefits will result from the development of a forest management plan and participation in the future management activities of the co-operative. Other benefits include:

- Access to a team of experienced forestry professionals (OWA will enter into all contracts and manage the harvest process)
- Access to a variety of forest management education and training materials
- Increase in biodiversity and wildlife habitat
- Longer-term enhancement of economic value

Current Status of Fleetwood Project

The Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA), in partnership with the Kawartha Land Trust, has commenced a community forest co-operative program in the Fleetwood watershed area near Peterborough.



The Fleetwood project (comprising 3 landowners and 62 acres of conifer plantation) has engaged a forestry consultant and partnered with an interested sawmill and pesticide applicator. The preparatory work of plantation assessment and inventory was done by volunteers during summer 2020. Next steps include development of a harvest prescription, tree marking and preparation of contracts between the OWA and sawmill, landowners and consultants. The invasive species control will take place in the spring in partnership with the Land Trust; tree thinning will take place in August 2021.

Proposed Huronia Project

The rural areas of Huronia in north Simcoe County feature many government and privately owned woodlots comprised of both mixed hardwood/conifer forests and conifer plantations. In fact, the Simcoe County forest at 33,000 acres is the largest municipally-owned forest in Ontario.

There is an active logging and milling industry in the area that relies heavily on the forest managed by Simcoe County and on properties registered under the Ontario Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP). There are currently 1,073 properties in Simcoe County participating in the MFTIP comprising 53,908 acres.

There are, however, many smaller privately-owned woodlots that are not under a proper forest management plan. Without proper management, these parcels face issues related to overcrowding, disease, eventual tree fall and insects (e.g. emerald ash borer). Total forested area in Simcoe County is approximately 412,500 acres⁽¹⁾. Excluding the MFTIP acres (53,908), the Simcoe County Forest (33,000 acres) and the Copeland Forest (4,400 acres), there remains in excess of 300,000 acres of potentially unmanaged forest.

Managing small parcels is generally left to the property owner as such projects are not commercially viable for loggers. These small properties often fall prey to unscrupulous operators who offer cash to small forest holders and end up highgrading or clearcutting the forest in order to cover their costs.

Approximately 200 acres of potential small forest parcels have been identified for the Huronia project on a preliminary basis. Significantly more acreage is expected to be identified once local landowners are made aware of the project.

(1) A good overview of the forests and habitat in Simcoe County can be found in the county planning document entitled Simcoe County Forests 2011-2030 at <https://www.simcoe.ca/Forestry/Documents/SCF%20final%20report.pdf>



Huronia Project Partners

The Huronia project will be managed under the leadership of the OWA. The OWA will be a party to all contracts with participating landowners. For the Fleetwood project the OWA is proposing to enter into one contract with the logger and forester, and individual contracts with landowners. This means that the costs of the project can be shared among multiple properties to achieve savings for all.

The Couchiching Conservancy and the Huronia Woodland Owners Association (HWOA - the local chapter of the OWA) will provide local support to the OWA by assisting in the following roles:

- Participation on project advisory team
- Assistance in identifying potential parcels
- Promotion of project awareness and education with its members
- Assistance to support the success of the lead project manager (see below)

These roles and responsibilities of the Project Partners will be outlined in a memorandum of understanding with the OWA.

The OWA is also attempting to attract sponsors who may provide financial assistance with certain aspects of the project (e.g. education).

Project Advisory Team

An advisory team has been formed to manage the overall project and provide direction/ assistance to the Lead Project Manager (see below). Membership on the Project Advisory Team comprises:

- OWA President – Paul Robertson
- OWA Fleetwood Lead – Eleanor Reed, RPF
- OWA Executive Director – John Pineau
- HWOA Representatives – Jack McFadden and Doug Frost
- Couchiching Conservancy Representatives – David Hawke, **others?**
- Sandy Agnew, Managed Forest Plan Approver
- Lead Project Manager **[to be identified]**
- Simcoe County Forests representative **[to be identified]**
- First Nations representative - Dean Assinewe, RPF



Role of the Lead Project Manager

The role of the Lead Project Manager is critical to the success of the project. As a registered professional forester (RPF), the Lead Project Manager will have primary authority and responsibility for the following areas:

- Identification of potential parcels (working with the project partners and advisory team)
- Meet with landowners to assess the suitability of their properties and solicit their participation
- Prepare an estimate of the volume of product for each site along with a financial budget
- Explain the project to local loggers, mills, tree markers and managed forest plan approvers
- Identify/ educate local landscapers/ arborists who might handle smaller projects or may wish to purchase wood products
- Negotiate contracts between landowners, the OWA and industry partners (loggers, tree markers)
- Co-ordinate the logging projects between parcels to achieve economies of scale
- Ensure proper property clean-up post cut
- Promote landowner participation in the Ontario MFTIP and co-ordinate with plan approvers

The Lead Project Manager will be a paid position (funded out of the woodlot project budgets) as outlined in an agreement with the OWA.



Project Timeline

February 2021 – Agree on draft project outline

March 2021 – Partner organizations (HWOA & The Couchiching Conservancy) confirm their participation

March 2021 – Initial Project Advisory Team meeting

April 2021 – Presentation at HWOA annual general meeting

May 2021 – Identify Lead Project Manager

May 2021 – Develop detailed work plan identifying responsibilities and required resources

June 2021 – Presentation to local industry

June 2021 – Prepare project information package for landowners and HWOA members

July/ August 2021 – Initial identification of properties/ owner meetings

August 2021 – Advisory team property visits

September 2021 – Promote online OWA education videos

Fall 2021 – Enter into landowner agreements and commence marketing to industry

Summer 2022 – Initial cuts

Summer 2022 – Identification of further properties

Fall 2022 – Report on progress



The following table sets out a sample timber harvest budget based in 25 harvestable acres of either conifer plantation or mixed hardwoods. Actual revenues will depend on the quality and quantity of harvestable timber and other factors, such as ease of access.

Expenses are based on hourly rates and assume that there are no issues or need to control invasive species.

	Conifer Plantation	Mixed Hardwood
Revenue	\$6,250	\$7,500
Expenses:		
Initial tour/ inventory/ bylaw	200	200
Tendering	50	50
Contract preparation	75	75
Herbicide/ invasive mgmt	0	0
Tree marking	1,375	1,375
Supervision	200	200
Assessment & report	50	50
OWA Administration	938	1,125
	2,888	3,075
Net profit	\$3,363	\$4,425



Huronia Project Advisory Team - Contact Details

Name	Organization	E-Mail Address	Phone #
Paul Robertson	OWA President	paul@treesunlimited.ca	905-650-7963
John Pineau	OWA Executive Director	john.pineau@ontariowoodlot.com	705-358-4261
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Jack McFadden	HWOA	jimcfadden@sympatico.ca	705-534-0138
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