

Private Woodlot Certification: Stories from Eastern Ontario



Over 90 percent of the forest cover in Eastern Ontario is owned by private landowners. These “woodlots” may be part of larger working farms or they may be predominately forested parcels of land. Either way, landowners bear the full responsibility for the stewardship of their properties and most want to leave it in better shape for those who will come after them. Here is where organizations like the Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) offer assistance and guidance in adopting best management practice in an effort to create and maintain healthy forested landscapes for the benefit of us all – now and into the future.

Benefits: A healthy and sustainable forest provides many benefits to the landowner as well as to the flora and fauna that live within it, travel through it, and to the surrounding community. A range of benefits include those that may be broadly defined as providing value in the economic, environmental, social/recreational, and spiritual/cultural realms. Some users may be most interested in enjoying the peace and quiet and well as the privacy and contentment that a walk in their own forest can bring – while enjoying the occasional economic benefit as they sustainably harvest trees selectively from their woodlots or pursue other forest-related businesses. Other concepts of value may include the knowledge that they’re providing habitat and protection for living creatures big and small, in flight and earthbound. Still other values may include the ability to walk out your door and enjoy recreational, artistic, or hunting and gathering pursuits. Being able to pass on a legacy and perhaps a few “woody” focused family traditions to a future generation is often a motivating factor for woodlot owners to seek out information and advice on how to adopt or improve sustainable management practices. No matter what the value or where the emphasis is placed, private landowners are most often relieved to hear that there are groups out there willing to help them better manage their woodlots – both for today and for tomorrow.

Shared Concerns: Just as different woodlot owners may share common interests and reasons for wanting to own and maintain a private forest, they also may share common risks, challenges and threats. For example, forest health is an ongoing concern. A variety of natural diseases and pests can attack trees and impact normal ecological functioning, eventually killing trees and often threatening long-term economic sustainability when marketable species are affected. Invasive plant species can compete with more desirable seedlings or trees and threaten to take over. Downturns in the demand for locally grown wood and manufactured wood products means reduced ability to sell both higher-value sawlogs and lower grade chips for domestic or export markets. These economic factors may contribute to pressures to find new uses for forested land. The environmental and socio-economic challenges, and opportunities, facing woodlot owners can be addressed through smart and sustainable forest management practices.

Private Woodlot Certification: To help address this myriad of benefits and concerns, the Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) Forest Certification Program provides an opportunity for private woodlot owners to become certified to the internationally recognized standards for responsible forest management developed by the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®).

Here are a few stories from woodlot owners in our program.



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Neil Carleton (right) points out features of the tall red pines in 2007 that his late mother and his father Gilbert Carleton (left age 92) planted in the 1970s. Photo by grandson Ian Carleton.

“If you’re a woodlot owner in eastern Ontario and not a member of the EOMF, I encourage you to join.”



Tony Bull

“Caring for the bush and its inhabitants and outdoor experiences in all seasons and weather, both severe and benign, has greatly enriched our lives, if not our pocketbooks.”

Carleton Family Forest

The 65-acre property near McDonald’s Corners was originally a working farm, as evidenced today by the old stone piles found under a tall red pine plantation. When it was purchased in 1970, the land included cleared fields that were separated by a stream and wetland valley, along with rugged hardwood ridges. Conifers were planted in the fields under Woodlands Improvement Agreements between 1972 and 1980. The trees on the property, growing in shallow to moderate soil over metamorphic marble bedrock of the Canadian Shield, include balsam fir, bur oak, plantation red pine, poplar, sugar maple, white birch, white cedar, white pine, and white spruce.

A management plan for the property was created in 2005 when the next generation of the family became more actively involved. The next year, an intergenerational transfer of the property was completed with the establishment of a Family Trust. Our interest in joining the EOMF certification program in 2006 was to continue learning more about the conservation of our forest, and practising sustainable woodlot management. Since 2004 we’ve been attending workshops of the EOMF, EOCFO, and OWA.

Lucy Carleton, a Trustee with the Carleton Family Trust, shared the following: “The benefits of EOMF membership and certification include access to a remarkable wealth of knowledge and experience through staff and other members. This expertise guided us through the first thinning of our plantation red pines, and has helped us to make informed decisions on other aspects of our property management”.

Tony and Ann Bull

In 1985 we purchased a property in Renfrew County near Eganville to fulfill a desire we had to own a piece of treed land. Why? We like trees and the bush; we both had lots of experience of natural environments in our childhoods. I studied forestry at university and wanted a “forest to play in”. In addition to working in the bush we hike and ski on our trails, and enjoy the solitude and privacy that comes with a substantial area of land.

Our property has about 30 ha of established bush and some open fields. The year after we bought the place we had 6 ha planted in red pine thanks to the Woodlands Improvement Agreement. The bush is quite varied; stands of red pine, white pine, poplar, and many mixed stands. Over the years we cut enough wood to heat the house and sell a small amount that we did not need. We cut trees of inferior quality and those that competed too successfully with red pine, which need full light.

We joined the local woodlot association and I became involved with the Canadian Institute of Forestry and the EOMF, through the Eastern Ontario Certified Woodlot Owners. Why become certified? It seemed like a progressive step, and I liked the people involved. Membership in these organizations led to learning more about woodlot management. In preparing a management plan we became convinced that the established forest was in need of an improvement thinning. A local horse logger conducted the operation under contract with Laverne Heideman and Sons. Our interest was in the state of the bush after logging, number one, and a fair price. We felt that we achieved both.

Most recently the red pine planted in 1986 was due for a first thinning. This was done in the autumn of 2011, partly by us, with the participation of Dan and Brian Baker and partly by Hokum and Sons with their big harvester. By this time Hokum (and other local mills) had achieved chain of custody certification so our logs became product that is destined for Rona; a company whose policy is to sell all their lumber from sustainably managed forests.



Achille and Marie-Andrée Drouin

My wife Marie-Andrée and I own two woodlots in the United Counties of Prescott and Russell. One of these was certified in 2004 and is 50 acres in size. The other one is in the process of being certified and is 100 acres in size. These two woodlots consist of partly abandoned marginal farmland and partly high-graded woodlots.

With a cynical smile, I like to say that, once we got into certification we handcuffed ourselves with respect to what we could do in our woodlots. Although there is a little bit of truth to that statement, in fact, the reality is much rosier! We handcuffed ourselves to the knowledge and assurance that because we follow prescribed management guidelines we will not do anything that has a negative impact on the forest that one day will belong to our children and grandchildren.

We consider that maintaining a healthy forest with as much biodiversity as possible is of major importance. This type of forest has great future as it is equipped to face hardships such as climate change, invasive plants and pests. This type of forest provides good habitat for many animals, which sadly have not much voice in our society. Finally, I hope, this type of forest will offer and provide all sorts of benefits on a sustainable basis, today as well as tomorrow.

In being certified, we receive recognition for being good stewards. In being certified, we hear about the best forest practices, we abide by them, and we tell others that it is the way that we manage the forest on our property. Special thanks to the Eastern Model Forest, which has made feasible the certification of private woodlots.

Gerry Lee

My wife Marilyn and I own a 1000-acre woodlot centered on Indian Creek a few kilometers southwest of Pakenham. The forest is based on somewhat sparse soils overlaying Canadian Shield outcrops. The forest cover is predominantly white pine and red oak with a host of other soft and hardwood species making up the balance. Past fires left a few relic pines that tower above the rest; some have been measured at over 150 years in age. Indian Creek has yielded evidence of early logging in the area, including a pike pole as well as horseshoes and iron rings in the rocks to tether log booms. The focus of forest management efforts on our woodlot has been on forest wildlife habitat creation, retention, and maintenance.

For us, joining the EOMF Certification Program was not a difficult decision to make. Our wildlife habitat management initiatives would necessarily include tree harvesting, and doing it the “right way” only made sense. This meant harvesting in accordance with an approved forest management plan, and in conjunction a certified chain of custody network that extended beyond our woodlot to the mill. As a bonus, we would enjoy the benefit of tendering advice, cut layout and tree marking advice, and monitoring by EOMF staff. Additional membership benefits have accrued from two winter Human Resources training programs that saw several days of labour crews thinning balsam fir stands and creating forest access trails. And last but not least, we were able to affiliate with an EOMF partner, the Eastern Ontario Certified Forest Owner group (EOCFO), and through them share in an ongoing continuing education program designed for forest woodlot owners.

“As a forest nation, Canada is both the envy and the target of the world. Envy because of what we still have in the way of forested landscapes and natural biodiversity, the target because of the world’s concern that we do a better job of managing than they might have.”



Achille and Marie-Andrée Drouin

“Special thanks also for your ongoing support through workshops and special projects such as the Chain of Custody certification program.”



Gerry Lee

“Certification standards reflect what they expect from us; certification of our woodlots demonstrates we hear them and invites them to follow.”





Albert 'Bert' Treichel

“Another highly significant woodlot management benefit to us of the certification process has been the services provided through the EOMF sponsorship of the certification process and the resulting EOCFO group.”

Albert and Shirley Treichel

This property is 167.75 certified acres located in the Lanark highlands and within the Mississippi Valley watershed. It is bounded by Robertson Lake on the east end, privately owned hardwood forest on the south and government-owned hardwood forest on the north and south. The Treichel property constitutes about ¼ of the total lake shoreline and therefore has a significant effect on the ecology of the 50-hectare lake and on the visual landscape from the lake and the heavily cottaged east side of the lake.

The Treichel's are also lake stewards representing Robertson Lake on the Mississippi Valley Watershed Lake Steward Network. Through the generations the family has pursued a range of activities, including farming, hunting, trapping, maple syrup production, reforestation of vacant land, and harvesting for fuelwood and timber. They are interested in nature, environmental protection and sustainable forest management and are keen to demonstrate sound forest and lake front property management to friends, neighbours and visitors and particularly young people – through example, observation and discussion.

Bert shared some benefits from certification including:

- improved forest sustainability from required use of certified tree markers for selection improvement timber harvesting;
- annual sale of certified firewood and the occasional sale of timber harvests as certified saw logs;
- riparian boundary protection for lakefront, vernal pools and wetlands provides broader environmental protection and ensures a continuing natural landscape view for the Robertson Lake cottage community;
- wildlife habitat protection maintains thriving populations of deer, moose, bears, foxes, coyotes, beaver, otters, various hawk varieties, wild turkeys, loons, partridges, owls, pileated woodpeckers and more.



The mark of
responsible forestry

About Private Woodlot Certification and the Eastern Ontario Model Forest

The Eastern Ontario Model Forest has become a leader in small-scale forest certification in Canada. The EOMF manages an FSC group certificate on behalf of private woodlot owners in Eastern Ontario. Our collaborative program makes the whole certification process easier, more affordable and more accessible by allowing numerous landowners to share the benefits and costs of FSC certification by certifying their lands under our “group” certificate. Check out EOMF's YouTube video *Forest Certification: Private Woodlots*.

For more information on the EOMF and our Forest Certification Program please visit:
eomf.on.ca/certification



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