



ONTARIO  
**WOODLOT**  
ASSOCIATION



## **Huronian Community Forest Owners Co-operative Pilot 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 initially as a pilot project by the Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA) in partnership with the local Huronia chapter of the OWA.

Landowners interested in participating should contact Jim Eccles, Project Manager, or 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.. 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



ONTARIO  
**WOODLOT**  
ASSOCIATION



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



ONTARIO  
**WOODLOT**  
ASSOCIATION



### **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



ONTARIO  
WOODLOT  
ASSOCIATION



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 Fall 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<sup>(1)</sup>. 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>



ONTARIO  
**WOODLOT**  
ASSOCIATION



### **Huronian 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 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)

Other local partners will be added for both project support/publicity and to identify potential parcels. Initially these include The Couchiching Conservancy and the Simcoe County Forestry Department.



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



ONTARIO  
**WOODLOT**  
ASSOCIATION



### **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 Vice-President – Faye Johnson
- OWA Fleetwood Lead – Eleanor Reed, RPF
- OWA Executive Director – John Pineau
- HWOA Representatives – Jack McFadden, Doug Frost and Sandy Agnew
- Lead Project Manager – Jim Eccles, Eccles Forestry

OWA staff resources supporting the team include Erica Dixon (Media) and Shan Shukla (Project Data & Structure).

### **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.



ONTARIO  
**WOODLOT**  
ASSOCIATION



## **Role of the OWA**

The Ontario Woodlot Association, through its network of local chapters, brings people together to share ideas and learn about forest management. To ensure the viability of non-Crown Land forests for future generations, we promote sustainable forestry management and advocate on behalf of woodlot owners.

More information on the OWA, including resources available to its members and how to join, can be found at [www.ontariowoodlot.com](http://www.ontariowoodlot.com)

Initially, the OWA will be the sponsor of the forest co-operative initiative and be the party to all contracts with landowners, harvesters and other service providers. The following lists some of the OWA responsibilities and the benefits of OWA sponsorship:

- Financial Management of Cooperative revenues and expenditures under the OWA's established administrative system (includes annual third-party audit)
- Contract Development and Management with landowners, forest service providers, and harvesting companies
- Excellent forestry knowledge and experience from a growing membership that includes an array of forest professionals
- Understanding of the reputation and standing of forest service providers and contractors; ensures excellence in work undertaken on all properties
- Clear and open communications and quick response to any issues or concerns by landowners (OWA staff, contractors, and volunteers)
- Liability insurance to a maximum of \$5,000,000
- Internships and student collaboration to assist with data collection and analysis of Cooperative members' properties, and other special related projects
- A partnership network of likeminded organizations (Canadian Institute of Forestry, Forests Ontario, Ontario Professional Foresters Association, Ontario Forest Industries Association)
- Potential access to special funding and grants that help to inform and enhance the operation and management of the Cooperatives
- Promotion and Communications that help grow Cooperative membership (The Ontario Woodlander, E-newsletter, Media Releases, Website, Social Media)

Once established, it is likely that the forest co-operative will operate within its own legal structure with all participating landowners holding a membership interest. The OWA will assist in developing structuring alternatives and assist with the conversion.



ONTARIO  
WOODLOT  
ASSOCIATION



### **Project Timeline**

April/May 2021 – Initial identification of properties/ owner meetings

May 2021 – Initial property visits

August/September 2021 – Follow-up visits and landowner contract finalization

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

Sept/ Oct 2021 – Presentation to local industry

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

Fall 2021 – Promote online OWA education videos

Spring 2022 – Initial cuts

Summer 2022 – Identification of further properties

Fall 2022 – Report on progress



ONTARIO  
**WOODLOT**  
ASSOCIATION



### Timber Harvest Budget

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.

Note that all co-op revenues and expenses during the pilot phase will be managed by the OWA. Net profit will be allocated to the participating landowners annually with reference to the value and volume of timber harvested from their individual properties.

<b>Sample Timber Harvest Budget</b>				
<b>(25 harvestable acres)</b>				
	<b>Conifer Plantation</b>	<b>Mixed Hardwood</b>		
Revenue	\$6,250	\$7,500		
Expenses:				
Initial tour/ inventory/ bylaw	200	200		
Tendering	50	50		
Contract preparation	100	100		
Herbicide/ invasive mgmt	0	0		
Tree marking	1,250	1,250		
Supervision	200	200		
Assessment & report	50	50		
OWA project management	938	1,125		
	<b>2,788</b>	<b>2,975</b>		
Net profit	<b>\$3,463</b>	<b>\$4,525</b>		

