

Ontario Woodlot Association holds meeting in Bancroft



By Nate Smelle

Members of the Bancroft chapter of the Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA) gathered at the Faraday Community Centre over the weekend for their annual general meeting. The OWA is a not-for-profit organization with a network of regional chapters located across the province that brings together woodlot owners to share ideas and learn about forest management. The meeting was held on Saturday, May 9 and featured a line-up of guest speakers discussing everything from species-at-risk to new technologies being used by foresters to harvest trees more efficiently.

President of the Bancroft chapter of the OWA Fred Werner kept things moving along, acting as a MC for the meeting. The annual gathering is not only a chance to become informed on new developments in the forestry industry it is also a chance for old friends to reconnect, said Werner.

The Bancroft Area Forestry Industry Association's (BAFIA's) president, Larry McTaggart was this year's keynote speaker. BAFIA is an organization that was formed in 2001 as an association to help promote a more profitable and sustainable local forestry industry. "The OWA and BAFIA are boots on the ground in our area, and we are discovering what's going on and how we can improve our biosphere," McTaggart said.

"Economic and physical diversity makes our forests strong."

Stressing the importance of biodiversity, McTaggart gave the example of how Chicago's urban forests have been decimated by an invasive species known as the emerald ash borer. Deciding to plant all of its streets with only species-ash trees-the city facilitated the destruction of most of its urban forests by making it easy for the emerald ash borer to thrive.

"They [the ash tree] are a cheap urban tree to grow and they made the city looked good, but with only one species it only took one invasive species to ruin a big chunk of suburbia in Chicago," he said.

"A lot of urban areas now have changed policy based upon that in order to get more biodiversity in their urban forests. They're even recognizing that they need their own urban forestry department. They cannot depend on the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Canadian Forest Services Association to look after their problems. They have to be aware and take ownership of them."

Urban forest planners need to factor in these types of considerations if they want to be sustainable, he told the group. Sustainably

managing forests makes good sense for both the environment and the economy, according to McTaggart, because it means that that resource will still be around for future generations to enjoy and benefit from. Getting equipment like a [Skid steer forestry mulcher](#) is important for the OWA to keep going and helping the surrounding forestry area.

"We are all environmentalists in this room," said McTaggart.

"We are not extremists, but we are all environmentalists. We are concerned about what happens in our forests. We are not here to cut down every tree in Ontario and make money off of it. We are here to harvest and manage forest properties in a way that they will be here for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It is succession planning."

Speaking about his role as general manager at Jan Woodlands Inc. he described how the industry faces pressures on the global free market to expand in an unsustainable manner. Qualifying as a sustainable forester means not caving in to these pressures.

"We have been affected by global trade and we have been encouraged to seek the lowest price when we are looking for wood products, but I will not buy Michigan red pine," said McTaggart.

"I will only deal with Ontario Red Pine and people from the Ontario Woodlot Association. It makes sense for us to support each other, rather than to look south of the border. Eventually sales of the border will get bored with us and start looking somewhere else. Then all of our local family businesses are now out of business."

Roger Kelly was up next speaking on behalf of the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council (BASC). Updating the his fellow OWA members on what the council has planned for 2015, Kelly highlighted BASC's partnership with the OWA, BAFIA, Harvest Hastings and the Hastings Stewardship Council in the annual Forestry Day. Forestry Day is an annual event that takes local Grade 7 and Grade 8 students into the forest to help them reconnect with nature and better understand how the forestry industry works. This year's event will take place at Ohara's Mill in Madoc on May 29. For more information on the Ontario Woodlot Association visit www.ont-woodlot-assoc.org.