



# Annual Report 2023 and Annual Work Schedule 2024



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dufferin County Forest consists of fourteen tracts that together form a 1,066 hectare (2,636 acre) forested area owned and managed by the County of Dufferin. The Forest serves important functions in terms of erosion and water control, natural heritage protection, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and support of the rural economy through timber production and employment opportunities.

From the first purchase of land in 1930 until the mid-1990s, the Forest was managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) through agreements made under the Forestry Act. In 1995, the County completed a long-term, comprehensive management plan for the Forest properties, the first County in Ontario to do so. Following completion of the plan, a County Forest Manager was hired to implement it.

In 2013, work began on a new twenty-year forest management plan. *Our Forest, Our Future: Dufferin County Forest Management Plan 2016-2036* was approved by County Council in March, 2016. In 2020, an operating plan for the period 2021-2026 was developed and approved.

In 2022, an outdoor recreation plan, for both the County Forest and the Dufferin Rail Trail, was developed and approved.

In 2022, a new full-time permanent position of Forest Assistant was approved and filled.

The following are some highlights from the past year:

### Environmental Sustainability

- i. 26.4 hectares of conifer plantations were marked for selection harvesting; and
- ii. work began on the implementation of the comprehensive Invasive Species Management Plan.

### Economic Sustainability

- i. timber sales of over \$115,000.

### Social Sustainability

- i. work began on the implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Plan that was passed in 2022 with the posting of new pictographic prohibited and permitted uses signs; placement of portable toilets in two locations at the Main Tract and plowing of the main Main Tract parking lot in the winter of 2023-24;
- ii. seventeen larger-scale recreational events; and
- iii. the magnetic sign and the information kiosk at the Main Tract were updated throughout the year.

In 2024, implementation of the comprehensive Invasive Species Management Plan will continue. In addition, there will be signs posted, tendered timber sales, monitoring of harvesting

operations, and monitoring of recreational use. In person recreational events and the activities of the Friends of the Dufferin County Forest will continue in 2024.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Dufferin County Forest consists of fourteen tracts that together form a 1,066 hectare (2,636 acre) forested area owned and managed by the County of Dufferin. The Forest tracts are located in all of Dufferin's rural municipalities: Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Grand Valley, Melancthon, Mono, and Mulmur. The largest single area is the Main Tract (607 hectares, 1,501 acres) in Mulmur Township. Figure 1 shows the locations of the individual tracts within Dufferin County.

The Dufferin County Forest serves important functions in terms of erosion and water control, natural heritage protection, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and support of the rural economy through timber production and employment opportunities.

Although the Dufferin County Forest is, and always was, owned by the County of Dufferin, from the first purchase of property in 1930 until the mid-1990s, the Forest was managed on behalf of the County by what is now the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF).

In the mid-1990s, Dufferin was the first County in Ontario to take the lead in developing a management plan for its forest properties. The County decided to develop a comprehensive management plan due to increased demands on the forest properties, as well as changes to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's (MNRF) Agreement Forest Program.

On June 8, 1995, Dufferin County Council approved *Our Forest, Our Future: Dufferin County Forest Management Plan 1995-2015*. Throughout the process, there was participation from the MNRF, a Forest Advisory Team, and the general public, all of whom provided valuable input and comments.

In 2001, the County was recognized for its management of the County Forest, and for its partnership with the Dufferin Simcoe Land Stewardship Network, with a national award – the Forest Stewardship Recognition Program award.

In 2005, the Dufferin County Forest celebrated its 75th anniversary.

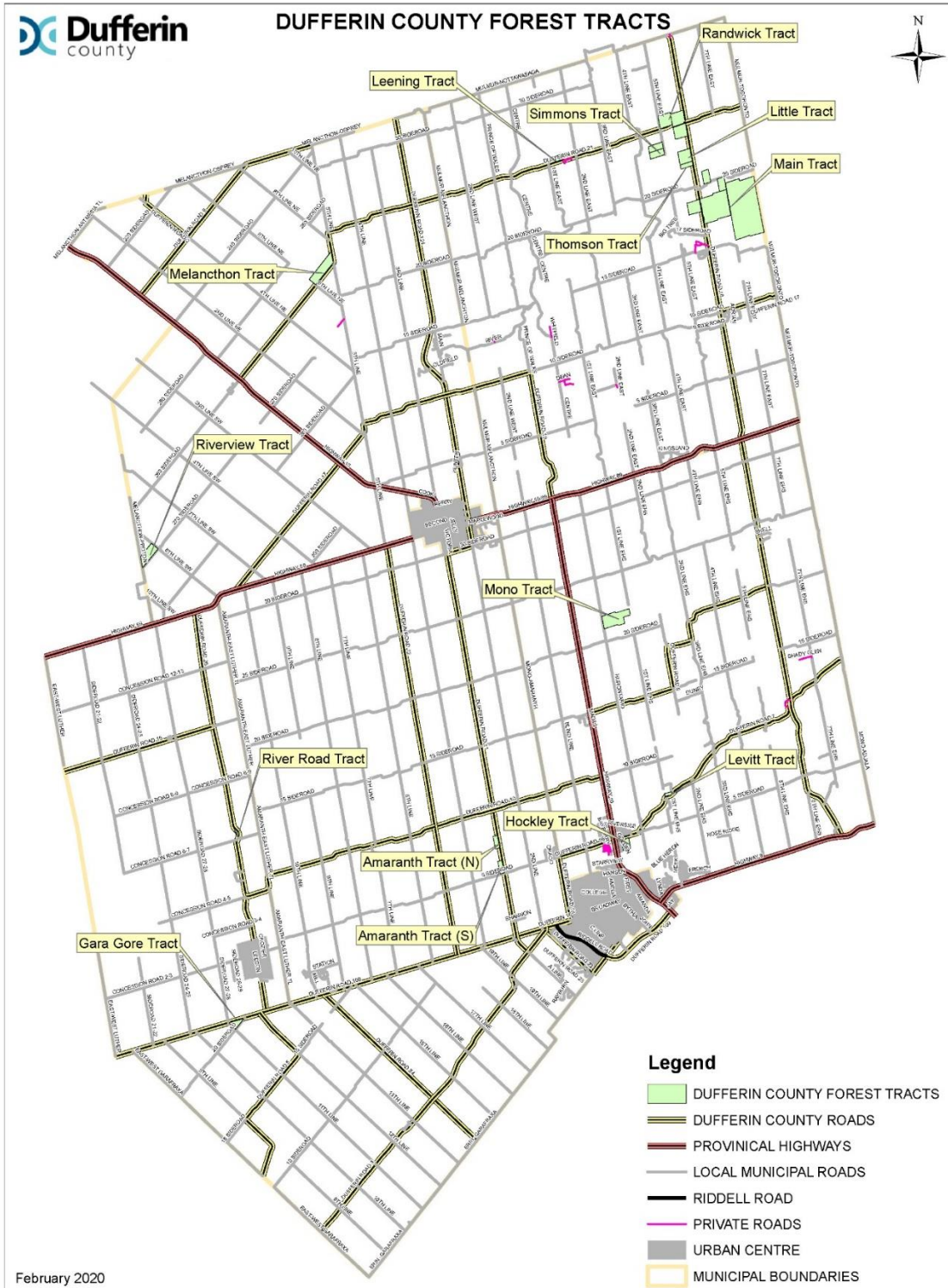
With the impending expiration of the management plan passed in 1995, in 2013 the County began work on a new long-term management plan for the County Forest. By this time, the recreational use of the forest properties had grown to such an extent that it was decided that a separate recreational use policy for the County Forest was necessary. The consultative process involved County Councillors, members of the County's Forest Plan Advisory Team and Forest Operations Review Committee, residents adjacent to the Forest properties, and the general public. *Our Forest, Our Future: Dufferin County Forest Management Plan 2016-2036* was approved by County Council on March 10, 2016. The recreational use policy for the County Forest was approved on May 11, 2017.

In 2020, a five-year operating plan for the period 2021-2026 was developed and approved.

In 2022, an outdoor recreation plan, for both the County Forest and the Dufferin Rail Trail, was developed and approved.

In 2022, a new full-time permanent position of Forest Assistant was approved and filled.

**Figure 1: Tracts of the Dufferin County Forest**



## 2.0 DUFFERIN COUNTY FOREST ANNUAL REPORT

### 2.1 Goal

To protect the quality and integrity of ecosystems in the Dufferin County Forest, including air, water, land and biota; and, where quality and integrity have been diminished, to encourage restoration or remediation to healthy conditions; while providing a variety of social and economic benefits to the public.

### 2.2 Land Use

Other than the addition of the Thomson Tract, the land use classes shown in Table 1 are unchanged from those outlined in *Our Forest, Our Future: Dufferin County Forest Management Plan 2016-2036*.

**Table 1: Land Use Classes for Dufferin County Forest Tracts**

<b>Tract (Compartments)</b>	<b>Land Use Class</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>Conservation Value</b>	<b>Standard Forest Management<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Amaranth (42a), Laurel Wetland Complex</b>	natural	12	provincially significant wetland	no
<b>Amaranth (43b, 43c), Farmington Swamp</b>	natural	10	locally significant wetland	no
<b>Amaranth (43a)</b>	managed	2		yes
<b>Gara-Gore (44a)</b>	managed	15		yes
<b>Hockley (49), Orangeville Wetland Complex</b>	natural	20	provincially significant wetland	no
<b>Leening (50)</b>	natural	8	Niagara Escarpment Rural Area; donor restrictions	no
<b>Levitt (51)</b>	natural	4	Niagara Escarpment Natural Area; donor restrictions	no
<b>Little (48)</b>	natural	47	developing old growth	no
<b>Main (7-10, 12-19, 21a, 22, 23a, 23b, 24b, 24c, 25b, 25c)</b>	managed	316		yes
<b>Main (11, 20a, 21b, 23c, 24a, 25a, 26-30, 31a, 31d), Oak Ridges South Slope Forest</b>	natural	266	life science ANSI	no
<b>Main (31b, 31c)</b>	natural	24	locally significant wetland	no



Tract (Compartments)	Land Use Class	Area (ha)	Conservation Value	Standard Forest Management <sup>1</sup>
Melancthon (32a, 32b, 32c, 33a, 33b, 33d)	managed	12		yes
Melancthon (33a, 33c, 33d, 34a, 35a), Melancthon 1	natural	48	provincially significant wetland	no
Mono (39-40, 46)	managed	68		yes
Randwick (1-4c, 5-6)	managed	115		yes
Randwick (4d), Walker's Creek Wetland	natural	2	locally significant wetland	no
River Road (45)	managed	3		yes
Riverview (36, 37b, 37c, 37d, 37e, 38a, 38b)	managed	27		yes
Riverview (37a, 38c, 38d), Melancthon 2	natural	13	locally significant wetland	no
Simmons (47)	managed	42		yes
Thomson (52)	managed	12	creek	yes
<b>Total</b>		1066		

<sup>1</sup>In areas designated as "no" removal of hazard trees and invasive species may occur, as well as forest management activities that maintain or enhance notable features.

### 2.3 Environmental Sustainability

#### *Sustainable Timber Harvesting*

Annually, wood is harvested on a sustainable basis from the Dufferin County Forest. The wood is sold by open public tender. Table 2 shows the stands tendered for sale in 2023.

**Table 2: Tendered Timber Sales 2023**

Tender Number	Tract and Compartments	Volume (m <sup>3</sup> )	Number of Trees	Species	Area (ha)	Value
CF 23-02-A	Randwick (5b)	742.4	829	red pine	14.0	\$ 68,733.70
CF 23-02-B	Main (15b, 16b)	116	128	red pine	4.0	\$ 6,032.00
CF 23-02-C	Mono (39a-1)	505	582	red pine	8.4	\$ 41,915.00
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>1363.4</b>	<b>1539</b>		<b>26.4</b>	<b>\$116,680.70</b>

The tenders were all awarded to Penguin Pole of Wallenstein, Ontario. Two stands of red oak/tolerant hardwoods (15c & 16c) were not tendered due to the three finds of oak wilt in Ontario in the summer of 2023.

#### *Evaluation of Insect and Disease Populations*

The County of Dufferin assesses insect and disease populations based on information provided

by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's (MNRF) Forest Health Technicians, County Forest staff, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Oak wilt, emerald ash borer, Asian long-horned beetle, spongy moth, beech bark disease, butternut canker, and red pine decline are of primary concern. With the exception of oak wilt and Asian long-horned beetle, these are all known to be present in the Dufferin County Forest. Monitoring of these key insects and diseases will continue and management strategies will be developed as necessary.

### ***Oak Wilt***

Oak wilt is an exotic invasive disease that kills all species of oak, preferring those in the red oak group (red oak and black oak). Infected red oak trees can die in as little as 30 days. Red oak is a significant component of a number of stands in the Dufferin County Forest, particularly in the Main Tract. Many of these stands are also part of the Oak Ridges South Slope Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, which is recognized in part for its oak component. In addition, in 2005 red oak was declared as the official tree of Dufferin County.

In the summer of 2023, oak wilt was found in three locations in Ontario: Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Springwater Township.

Now that oak wilt has been found in Ontario, a County oak wilt policy will be developed to address timing of pruning and harvesting of oak for all County staff and contractors and an expanded public education campaign targeting private landowners, local municipalities, and the general public.

Once oak wilt is found in the Dufferin County Forest, management strategies such as trenching to break root grafts will likely have to be implemented in order to eradicate or contain it.

### ***Emerald Ash Borer***

In 2013, the presence of emerald ash borer (EAB) was confirmed in Dufferin County, at the south end of Orangeville. Public education regarding this pest is ongoing through events, information at the County Forest office and on the website, and responses to inquiries. The number of ash succumbing to EAB attack has noticeably increased over the last five years. Dead or dying ash that are considered to be hazard trees due to their proximity to trails will be removed as soon as possible after they are identified. Stands with an ash component will be managed in accordance with the strategies outlined in *Managing Ash in Farm Woodlots; Some Suggested Prescriptions* (Williams & Schwan, 2011). At this time, it is not clear how the seedling ash present in large numbers in many stands in the County Forest will fare in the long-term as EAB populations fluctuate and biological controls continue to be implemented.

### ***Alien Invasive Plants***

Invasive species are non-native organisms which are harmful to the environment, the economy, or societal values like human health. Invasive plants are one of the most pressing and immediate threats to forest health in Dufferin County, as there are an increasing number of introduced plant species in Ontario which are able to rapidly outcompete native plants, prevent tree regeneration, and dramatically transform ecosystems. In the County Forest, invasive species

threaten biodiversity, habitat quality, resilience to stressors like disease and climate change, productivity of proximal agricultural land, recreational and aesthetic values, and timber production.

Prior to 2023, invasive plant management in the County Forest was limited to opportunistic monitoring for invasive species while conducting other work as well as manual control of some high-priority populations. Due to the increasing threat of invasive plants and the increase in staff resources in the Forest Division, the development and implementation of an invasive plant management strategy was a major priority in 2023. The Invasive Species Management Plan was updated and supporting documents were created to include evidence-based control procedures, prioritization guidelines, and strategic- and operational-level guidance. County Forest properties were surveyed for invasive plants, which were documented via newly developed County Forest mapping tools and procedures.

The implementation of control measures resulted in the removal or chemical treatment of several thousand plants belonging to over twenty species. The populations treated were those which both pose the greatest threat to the County Forest and have the greatest chance of successful eradication or containment. Common buckthorn, autumn olive, and dog-strangling vine were the species which received the bulk of the control work in 2023, with most of this work taking place in the Main, Mono, Leening, and Levitt Tracts. Other priority species treated included Japanese knotweed, periwinkle, and invasive honeysuckles. Manual removal by digging, pulling, and cutting was used where possible, with herbicide applied where manual control would be ineffective or beyond the scope of available resources. Chemical control in 2023 was limited to the highly-targeted application of herbicides to the cut stumps of woody species.

## **2.4 Economic Sustainability**

### ***Financial Stability***

One of the County's objectives for the Dufferin County Forest is that it generate revenue to support operations. At the same time, it is important to remember the non-monetary contributions of the Dufferin County Forest:

- i. the Forest provides significant ecosystem services;
- ii. the Main Tract is one of few, large, publicly-accessible natural areas in Dufferin County available for a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities; and
- iii. the Dufferin County Forest properties add to the value of the areas in which they are located both in aesthetic and monetary terms.

For revenues generated from timber sales in 2023, refer to Table 2. Timber sale revenues are supplemented by land use, forest use, and recreational event permits. For details of the budget, please refer to the County of Dufferin's Budget for 2023.

## 2.5 Social Sustainability

### *Infrastructure*

With the approval of an updated Outdoor Recreation Plan and associated funding for 2023, portable toilets were placed at both parking lots at the Main Tract. The main parking lot will have a toilet year-round, the field parking in the non-winter seasons. Additionally, the main parking lot will be plowed during the winter. Once a suitable location is determined, a portable toilet will be placed at the Mono Tract.

During 2023, the event field at the Main Tract continued to be accessible for parking when there were no events taking place. This has been very successful, especially as the large area makes it easy for horse trailers to manoeuvre. In the absence of issues, the event field will be left accessible for parking other than when it is being used for events.

### *Friends of the Dufferin County Forest (FDCF)*

The Friends of the Dufferin County Forest held two work party days for trail maintenance and garbage pick-up, on April 29, 2023 and July 22, 2023. As part of an expanded program to control invasive species, the Friends had a work day on October 14, 2023 to remove autumn olive and common buckthorn from around the main parking area at the Main Tract. More events will be planned in 2024. The Friends of the Dufferin County Forest is a volunteer group comprised of individuals who are committed to supporting approved activities within the properties collectively known as the Dufferin County Forest.

### *Dufferin Outdoor Recreation Advisory Team (DORAT)*

With the passage of the new outdoor recreation plan in 2022, the Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team (DCFAT) was disbanded. A new advisory group, the Dufferin Outdoor Recreation Advisory Team, was established. This team will have explicit representation from the main recreational user groups and will be able to advise the County on matters dealing with both the Dufferin County Forest and the Dufferin Rail Trail.

### *Recreational Events*

Table 3 gives details of the seventeen larger-scale recreational events that took place in the County Forest in 2023. Unless otherwise noted, the events took place at the Main Tract. In total, the events generated revenue of about \$2,300 for the County.

**Table 3: Larger-Scale Recreational Events 2023**

<b>Date of Event</b>	<b>Event Organizer</b>	<b>Number of People</b>
<b>April 28-30</b>	1849 Army Cadets	16
<b>May 5-7</b>	Ontario Competitive Trail Riders Association	56
<b>May 12-15</b>	Ontario Trail Riders Association	30
<b>May 26-29</b>	Chesley Saddle Club	19
<b>June 3</b>	North of 89 Outdoors Inc.	101
<b>June 9-11</b>	Ontario Competitive Trail Riders Association	11

Date of Event	Event Organizer	Number of People
June 10	Substance Projects (Mono Tract)	195
June 16-19	Ontario Trail Riders Association	26
June 23-25	Ontario Competitive Trail Riders Association	58
July 4-10	Ontario Trail Riders Association	25
July 29	Dufferin Emergency Search and Rescue	
August 4-7	Ontario Trail Riders Association	15
August 26	Substance Projects	109
September 1-4	Ontario Trail Riders Association	20
September 15-18	Chesley Saddle Club	11
September 22-25	Chesley Saddle Club	12
September 29-October 1	Ontario Competitive Trail Riders Association	53

**Forest Use Permits (Hunting)**

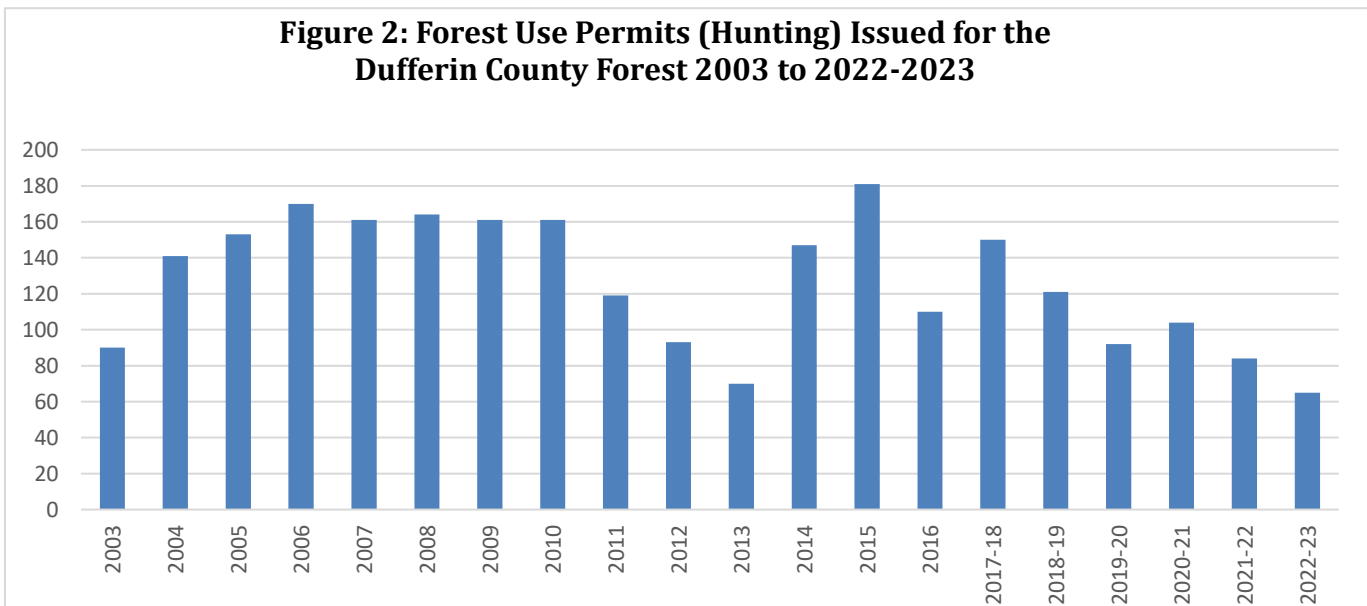


Figure 2 shows the number of Forest Use Permits (Hunting) issued in the last twenty years. In 2018, the permits transitioned from January 1-December 31 to October 1-May 31. For the transition year, the number of permits sold from January 1, 2018-May 31, 2018 was added to the number sold during 2017. In the last year, the permits generated revenue of about \$2,000 for the County.

**Mansfield Outdoor Centre**

The Mansfield Outdoor Centre leased cross-country ski trails in the south portion of the Main Tract for the 2023-2024 season.

**Human Health**

Information about west nile virus, lyme disease, and poison ivy continues to be available on the

County Forest website, at the information kiosk at the Main Tract parking lot, and by request.

### **Main Tract Information Kiosk**

In the spring of 2018 an information kiosk was installed at the Main Tract parking lot at 937513 Airport Road. The kiosk includes information about upcoming events in the Main Tract, a large-scale trail map, and numerous information brochures about the County Forest. The information at the kiosk is updated and expanded on an ongoing basis.

### **Signs**

In 2023, new pictographic signs showing main permitted and prohibited uses were posted at all of the County Forest tracts.

Temporary signs were posted at the tracts where hunting is permitted (Gara Gore, Melancthon, Randwick, Riverview, Simmons, and south portion of Amaranth) showing the dates of the spring wild turkey hunt, the fall wild turkey shotgun hunt, and the two five-day periods of the fall deer shotgun hunt. This was done to inform users that there would be a concentration of hunters in the Forest during those periods. Additional signs urging hunters to “Exercise Extreme Caution” are posted around the southern section of the Randwick Tract.

The local Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) member clubs (Dufferin, Orangeville, and Alliston & District) posted signs indicating the location of the OFSC trails through the Main, Randwick, Simmons, Riverview, and Mono Tracts of the Dufferin County Forest.

### **Information Products and Information Dissemination**

To make non-hunting users of the Dufferin County Forest aware of the main hunting seasons, notices advising of increased hunting activity were placed in the Orangeville, Shelburne, Creemore, Dundalk and Alliston newspapers as follows:

- i. prior to the beginning of the spring wild turkey shotgun hunt;
- ii. prior to the beginning of the fall deer and fall wild turkey archery hunt;
- iii. prior to the beginning of the fall wild turkey shotgun hunt;
- iv. prior to the first five-day period of the deer shotgun hunt; and
- v. prior to the second five-day period of the deer shotgun hunt.

### **The Hunting in the Dufferin County Forest**

brochure/information package was distributed to the hunters who purchased forest use permits, at the Main Tract information kiosk, as well as on a request basis. Email inquiries were first directed to the website for information.



**New prohibited and permitted uses sign for the Main Tract.**

Numerous phone and e-mail requests for information on the Dufferin County Forest and forests and forestry in general were answered. The information that was distributed consisted mostly of the Dufferin County Outdoor Recreation Plan, Dufferin County Forest pamphlets, maps of the Main Tract, and information on various insects and diseases that affect trees, oak wilt and emerald ash borer in particular.

The County Forest information on [www.dufferincounty.ca/services/forest](http://www.dufferincounty.ca/services/forest) was updated throughout the year to provide forest users and other interested members of the public with timely information about events and activities.

### ***Interpretive Trails***

The interpretive trails at the Main Tract, Little Tract, and Hockley Tract were maintained.

## **3.0 MONITORING**

In 2023, the primary monitoring activities were:

- i. inspections conducted during commercial harvesting operations;
- ii. monitoring of signs and gates at the forest properties and arranging for replacement when and where necessary;
- iii. monitoring of hunting activity (particularly during the two five-day deer shotgun hunt periods); and
- iv. monitoring of general recreational use.

Harvesting inspections were done to ensure that the contractors complied with the terms and conditions of the tenders. There were no significant violations of tender terms and conditions in 2023.

Forest inventories were conducted to determine which stands would be subject to forest management operations, as well as for stands that had recently undergone forest management operations.

Monitoring of invasive plant species was conducted as part of both forest inventories and other field work. As occurrences were found, monitoring was expanded in order to delimit populations.

In 2020, the County began a program to measure recreational use of the Forest, particularly at the Main Tract. This program was to include three main elements:

- i. in-person counting/surveying of users;
- ii. trail counters; and
- iii. traffic counters.

Beginning in early 2023, in-person user surveys were conducted to gather data about visitors to the Main Tract of the County Forest. The survey was designed to find out more about who visits the County Forest, how they use the Forest, where they are visiting from, and how they are spending money in the County during their visit. The surveys took place during four separate weeks over the year, i.e. one week per season. Surveys were conducted during three two-hour survey periods on the Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday of these weeks, for a total of 18 survey

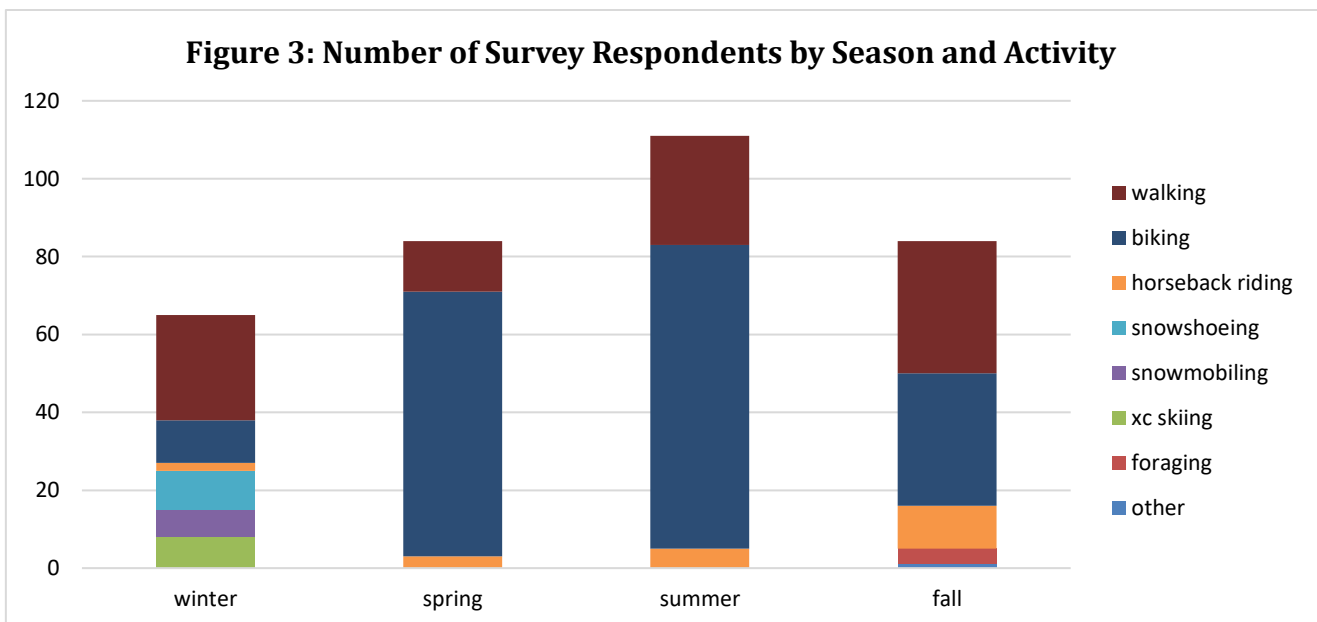
hours during each of the four weeks. Over these survey periods, Forestry Division staff counted 492 County Forest visitors, 344 of whom were surveyed. Figure 3 shows the number of users surveyed by season and activity.

Preliminary conclusions from the first year of the user surveys include the following:

- mountain bikers make up over half of survey responses, with the second most popular activity being walking;
- visit frequency is split nearly evenly between those visiting daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly;
- in almost half of the surveys, respondents reported having visited the forest for ten or more years;
- the majority of respondents had not spent money in the County on their trip to the County Forest; and
- 81% of responses were from visitors travelling less than 50 km to the County Forest.

Surveys will be repeated in 2024, with some minor changes to improve the quality of the information collected. The surveys are planned to continue in future years so that patterns in user behaviour can be detected over time.

Since 2020, trail counters have been collecting trail visitor data at two of the most frequented Dufferin County Forest tracts: the Main Tract and Mono Tract. Six counters are located at the Main Tract: one to capture hikers on the main trail from the main parking lot, two to capture horseback riders on trails from each of the two parking lots, and three to capture mountain bikers at different bike trail locations. At the Mono Tract two counters are positioned to capture



all user types at two separate entrances. The trail counters do not cover all of the many entrances to the two tracts, and so the resulting data can be used to analyze trends but not to represent total visitor numbers.



A few trends are visible in the data over the three and a half years the trail counters have been in use. Visit frequency is much higher on Saturdays and Sundays, with nearly half (46.8%) of visits occurring on weekends. At the Main Tract, the bicycle counters all detected more trail use than the counters for pedestrians and horseback riders. These numbers are supported by the 2023 in-person user surveys, in which mountain bikers make up the highest proportion of visits to the Main Tract compared to those engaging in other activities. At this point, it is likely too early to detect year-to-year changes in trail use, particularly because some trial and error have been required to ensure that the counters are collecting accurate and useful data. Some challenges which have impacted the data include vegetation interference and two stolen counters.

Three periods of traffic counts were collected at the Main Tract in 2023: May 15-23 (Victoria Day weekend), July 31-August 8 (Civic Holiday weekend), and October 2-10 (Thanksgiving weekend). Unfortunately, due to equipment malfunctions, complete counts for the main parking lot are not available for the May 15-23 and October 2-10 periods. Despite this, it appears that compared to prior years the field parking area is being used more relative to the main parking area. Not surprisingly, the traffic counters show that highest visitation is on weekends and holiday Mondays.

A self-reporting user survey was posted on Join in Dufferin at the end of October, 2021 and promoted with a sign at the Main Tract information kiosk. The survey includes questions about recreational activities and economic impact and is the same as will be used for the in person surveys. To date, eleven people have completed the self-reporting survey.

**4.0 THE FUTURE OF THE PLANNING PROCESS**

In 2020, an operating plan for the period 2021-2026 was developed and approved. Two additional five-year operating plans will be written to fulfill the management plan; for the periods 2026-2031 and 2031-2036. The operating plans will be supported by Annual Reports and Annual Work Schedules.

Toward the end of the twenty-year management plan, a new twenty-year plan will be written for the period 2036-2056. This plan will include a five-year operating plan for the period 2036-2041.

**5.0 DUFFERIN COUNTY FOREST ANNUAL WORK SCHEDULE**

The main activities for 2024 are described in the following sections.

**6.1 Environmental Sustainability**

It is anticipated that there will be 26.5 hectares of conifers marked in 2024. The breakdown of the areas is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Areas Planned to be Marked 2024**

<b>Tract (Compartment)</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
<b>Randwick (2a, 2c)</b>	red pine	14.0
<b>Main (16b)</b>	red pine/white pine	3.0

<b>Mono (39a-2)</b>	red pine	9.5
<b>Total Area</b>		<b>26.5</b>

As in the past, the number of trees and the volume to be harvested will be known once the tree marking is completed. Stands will be publicly tendered in the fall of 2024.

Information about oak wilt and emerald ash borer and how to manage trees and woodlots in their presence will continue to be distributed to the general public.

In 2024 Forest Division staff will continue to treat known priority invasive plant populations, monitor treated populations, apply follow-up control where needed, and conduct additional surveys to inventory invasive plants in unsurveyed areas. External funding opportunities will be investigated for controlling invasive plant populations too extensive to address with current resources. Plans to inventory and control invasive species on other County properties and promote a consistent approach across County departments will also be further developed.

**6.2 Economic Sustainability**

For details of the budget, refer to the County of Dufferin’s Budget 2024.

**6.3 Social Sustainability**

Animal-proof garbage receptacles will be placed at both parking lots at the Main Tract.

The Main Tract will host a number of recreational events and the Mansfield Outdoor Centre will lease cross-country ski trails in the Main Tract.

Development of signs describing the historical significance of specific locations in the County Forest, with a focus on Indigenous history, will begin in 2024.

The interpretive trails at the Main, Hockley, and Little Tracts will be maintained.

Working with the County’s Communications Manager, information about the Forest will be disseminated through the County’s various social media accounts and more extensively through traditional media avenues.

**6.4 Monitoring**

In 2024, the monitoring program will focus on five broad areas:

- i. inspections conducted during commercial harvesting operations;
- ii. monitoring of terrestrial invasive plant species as part of the implementation of the Invasive Species Management Plan;
- iii. monitoring of signs and gates at the forest properties and arranging for replacement when and where necessary;
- iv. monitoring of recreational events; and

- v. monitoring of general recreational use through self-reporting, in-person surveys, trail counters, and traffic counters.

**For more information:**

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