

# Province blind to old-growth forests being cut down in Algonquin Park

**For Immediate Release - Thursday May 11, 2006**

Researchers have found that old-growth forests – forests that started growing at the time of Samuel de Champlain - are being logged in Algonquin Park. Ancient Forest Exploration and Research (AFER) released a report today that showed there are numerous old-growth forest stands throughout Algonquin Park that are poorly mapped and many are likely to be cut down.

“Algonquin Park contains thousands of hectares of old-growth forest that could potentially be lost to logging” said researcher Mike Henry of AFER. He went on to say that they have “discovered 375 year old hemlock trees in old growth stands that could be logged. If the province is aware of these forests, why haven’t they made any effort to locate and protect them?”

“These very old forests in Ontario’s first provincial park remain largely un-documented” said co-author Dr. Peter Quinby. “Of greater concern is the continued logging of old-growth forests in Algonquin. Only 23% of the park is protected from logging, risking thousands of hectares of old-growth forests”.

The continued logging in and around the park has profoundly changed the species of trees growing in the area. The report found that:

- White Pine has declined up to 88% in mixed and hardwood stands in the Park
- Hemlock has declined by almost 75% in the landscape adjacent to and west of the Park
- Yellow birch, American beech and red oak forests have also declined

The report focuses on very specific areas of Algonquin and found a general lack of in-depth information available from the province. The AFER researchers concluded that the following steps should be taken to address the lack of adequate public information:

1. A complete assessment of old-growth forests throughout Algonquin Park
2. Immediate field work to determine the conservation value of old-growth forests like the Erables Lake Area identified in the study.
3. All old-growth forests in the ‘logged area’ of the park should be protected from cutting.
4. Old-growth stands that have been selectively logged should now be managed to maintain features that are typical of Algonquin’s old-growth forests.
5. A province-wide conservation strategy for hemlock forests and yellow birch forests should be developed, and a ban on harvesting of these two species in the Park should be considered.

Henry concluded by saying that “many old-growth forests in Algonquin Park have been logged since the province created the Algonquin Forest Authority (AFA) in 1974. Obviously, if we lose these forests we can't replace them, even in our great grandchildren’s lives.”

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**Complete Report is available at:** <http://www.ancientforest.org/algonquin.pdf>

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Background:

## Ancient Forest Exploration & Research

Ancient Forest Exploration & Research (AFER) is an organization dedicated to the scientific study of ancient forest ecosystems. This knowledge helps complete human understanding of how natural forests work, and helps to build the case for their protection. Since 1992, AFER has been conducting research and educating people about Ontario's ancient forests, with the goal of helping to understand and to preserve some of the last truly natural forest left in eastern North America. AFER is a research and education organization; it is not an advocacy group.

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Michael Henry began studying old growth forests in Ontario in 1994, as an ecologist with Ancient Forest Exploration & Research. He has worked in Temagami, the Spanish River Forest, and Algoma. Since 2003 he has been researching and writing the book *Ontario's Old-Growth Forests*, to be published next year, and as part of this research he has visited many old-growth sites across the province.

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Dr. Peter Quinby has been studying forest conservation in Ontario since 1982 when he began his Ph.D. thesis work at the University of Toronto, focusing on forest ecology in Algonquin Park. He created Ancient Forest Exploration & Research in 1992 and is best known for his studies of old-growth red and white pine in Temagami, Ontario, which established that these forests are endangered ecosystems. He also studies forest ecology and conservation in northwestern Pennsylvania where he is Director of the Pymatuning Laboratory of Ecology, University of Pittsburgh. He has been designing wildlife corridors connecting northern New York with central Ontario since 1997.