

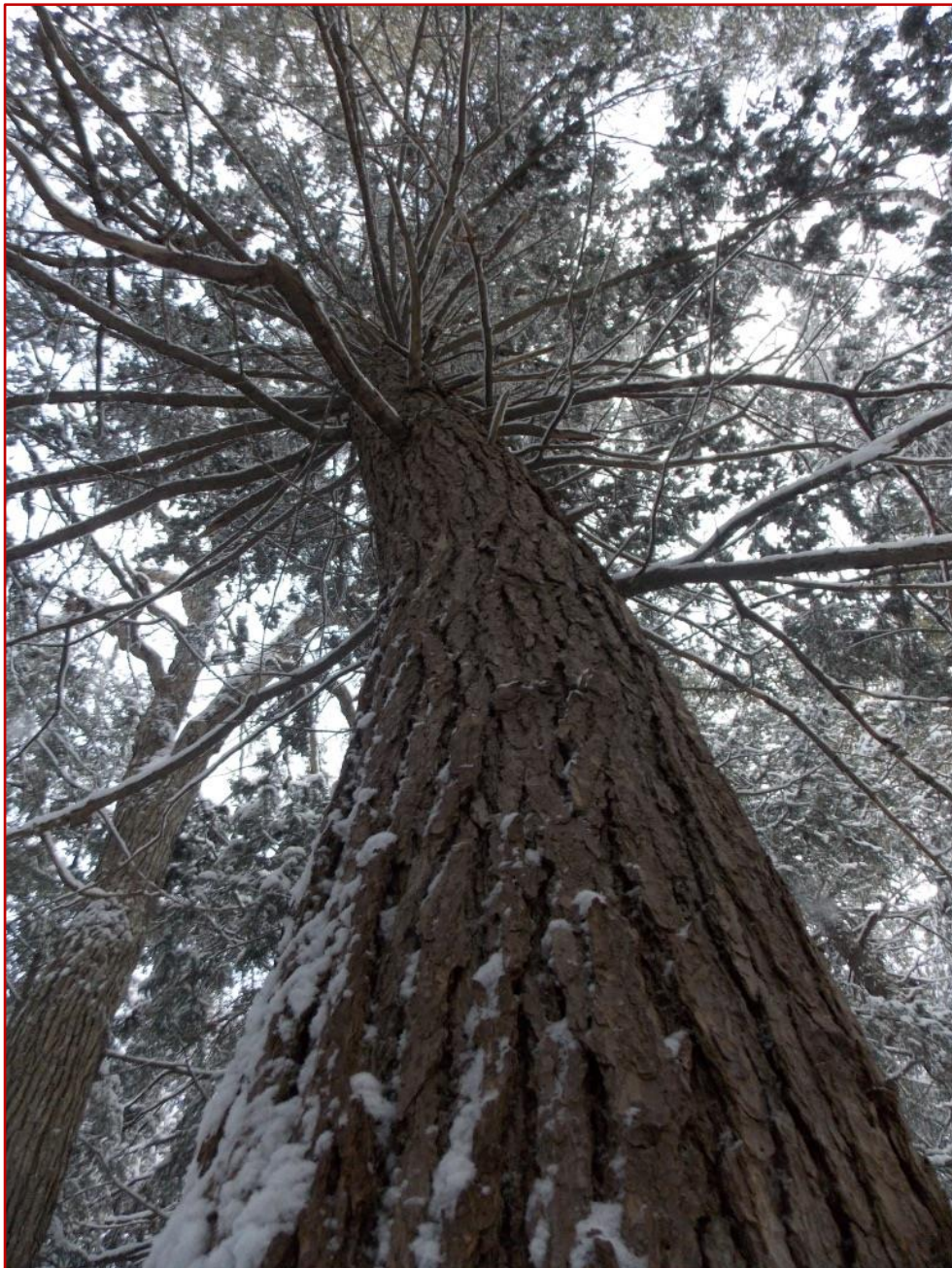
Stewardship of Primary Forests: **Opportunities to Protect Canada's Largest Eastern Hemlock Old-growth Forest at Catchacoma Lake, Ontario**

Research Report No. 47

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Introduction

Amid the current biodiversity crisis, growing the world’s protected areas is more important than ever. Global declines in biodiversity can mostly be attributed to habitat loss and fragmentation caused by human activity. Well-designed and well-managed protected places that provide intact, disturbance-free habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species are thus critical for conserving biodiversity (CPAWS 2021). The role of protected areas in conserving biodiversity and storing carbon has received recent global acknowledgement through the *30 x 30 Initiative*, a global target for governments to protect 30% of their land and ocean area by 2030. More than 150 countries including Canada agreed to adopt this target at the recent United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) that was held in Montreal, Canada in December 2022 (CBD 2022).

Despite Canada’s commitment to its protected places, the Catchacoma Old Growth Forest (the Forest), a forest known to have national natural heritage significance since 2019 (Quinby 2019a), remains unprotected. Since 2020, a group of local citizens that make up the Catchacoma Forest Stewardship Committee (CFSC) has been working to acquire protection for this unique and valuable forest. Located in Peterborough County, Ontario, the Forest is the largest documented old-growth eastern hemlock stand in Canada (Quinby 2019a). It is also an endangered ecosystem type in Ontario’s temperate forest region (Quinby 2019b), and holds numerous ecological, educational, recreational, and scientific values. Yet, it remains unprotected and open to contingency logging by Bancroft Minden Forest Company (BMFC).

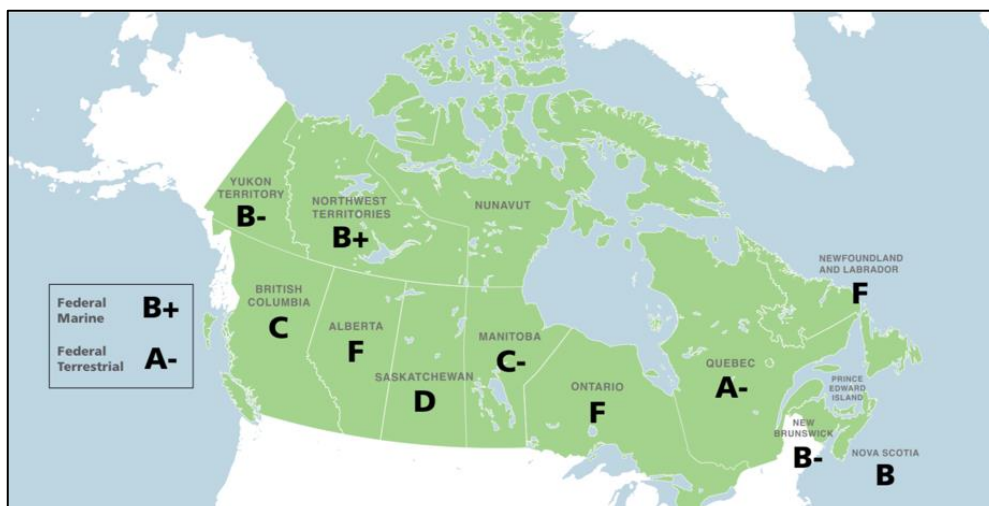
This report documents the CFSC’s experience to acquire protection for the Catchacoma Forest by engaging with private and government interests between November of 2019 and October of 2023. Filled with many challenges, this experience holds important takeaways for others pursuing forest conservation at the grassroots/field level and engaging with government.

Failings of Ontario’s Protected Areas Strategy

In 2010, Canada promised to protect at least 17% of its land and 10% of its oceans by 2020 as part of the 2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets (Government of Canada 2022). Though Canada met the ocean protection target—albeit with concerns about the quality of conservation measures in some areas – the country fell significantly short of the 17% terrestrial target, with only 13.5% of land and freshwater protected (CPAWS 2021, Government of Canada 2022).

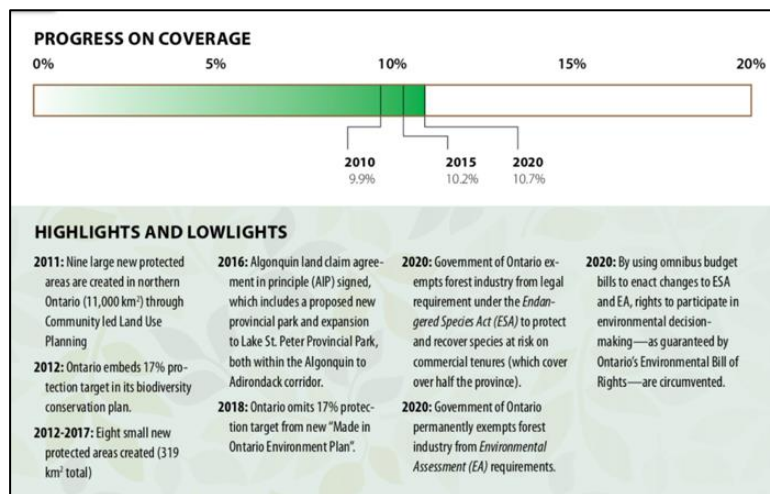
In 2021, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) released a report card that assigned letter grades to Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial governments based on their contributions to the 2020 terrestrial protected areas target (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Graded Results of Canada’s Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments’ Contributions to 2020 Terrestrial Protected Areas Target (CPAWS 2021)



The province of Ontario received an F, increasing its protected land by only 0.8% in a decade, from 9.9% in 2010 to 10.7% in 2020 (Figure 2; CPAWS 2021). In contrast, Quebec increased their protected terrestrial areas by 8.1% during this time, from 8.6% in 2010 to 16.7% in 2020.

Figure 2. Percent of Land Protected in Ontario in 2010, 2015 and 2020 (CPAWS 2021)



During this period, the Ontario government demonstrated little commitment to increasing protected lands, facilitated a dismantling of nature protection legislation (i.e. Endangered Species Act and Environmental Assessment Process), and proposed the delisting of protected areas (CPAWS 2021). This harmful anti-conservation action is continuing under the current provincial government, with the newest environmental attack being the proposed *Bill 23*, the “*More Homes Built Faster Act*”. Among other environmental violations, this bill aims to open development in the Ontario Greenbelt – a large, regulated area of green space, farmland, forests, wetlands and watersheds in Southern Ontario – after Premier Doug Ford promised never to do so (Ontario Nature 2024).

CFSC’s efforts to protect the Catchacoma Forest have been taking place in the context of waning environmental protection in Ontario (CPAWS 2021). As such, it is likely that the current state of Ontario’s environmental protections has contributed to the resistance against protecting the Catchacoma Old-Growth Forest from development including logging.

Policy/Management Mechanisms to Protect the Catchacoma Old Growth Forest

Background: Catchacoma Forest Discovery

In autumn 2019 using available information, Ancient Forest Exploration & Research (AFER) found that the Catchacoma Forest is the largest documented stand of old-growth eastern hemlock forest in Canada (Quinby 2019a). At the time of this discovery, AFER had partnered with Peterborough Youth Leadership in Sustainability (YLS) to conduct citizen science research in the Catchacoma Forest to better understand and characterize the old growth there. From this first visit, students and facilitators noticed yellow rings around many of the trees in the Forest and realized that much of this old growth was soon to be logged.

AFER and the YLS class acted immediately, sending letters to the general manager of BMFC and the Ministers of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). These letters described AFER’s recent findings of the significance of the Catchacoma Forest and urged the Ministers to instate a moratorium to halt upcoming logging in the Forest until further research could be conducted. Despite these initial letters in November and December 2019, logging in the Catchacoma Forest (block 1711) began that winter and continued for two years until 2021. We estimate that ~50 hectares of the Forest were logged during this time.

When it became clear that plans to log the Forest would not halt, research rapidly made its way into advocacy. With a focus on research and education, AFER realized that it was not equipped to spearhead the advocacy efforts - finding and collaborating with a partner that specialized in environmental advocacy would

be crucial. Aware of the advocacy work done by Katie Krelove at the Ontario Wilderness Committee (OWC), AFER approached OWC to form a partnership to address protection of the Catchacoma Forest. Since partnering with AFER, the OWC has led the advocacy efforts to protect the Forest.

The AFER-OWC partnership quickly led to the creation of the Catchacoma Forest Stewardship Committee (CFSC) in early 2020. The CFSC is a group of local citizens including landowners, cottagers, teachers, students, ecologists, naturalists, seniors, and representatives of the local Cottager's Associations, the local rate payer's association, AFER, and OWC. The primary goal of the CFSC is effective ecological stewardship of the Catchacoma Forest including protection from logging, and since its inception, the CFSC has met more than 100 times to work towards meeting this goal.

Decision Making

To make effective progress in forest conservation advocacy, there are certain regulatory bodies (government and non-government) that require engagement. No matter what country or region, there will always be government and private entities that have authority over land-use decision making. The first step in forest conservation and protected areas establishment therefore is to determine who the decision-makers are. In this case, the key decision-making bodies involved were the MNRF, MECP, BMFC, and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) of Canada.

The MNRF is an Ontario government ministry responsible for managing Ontario's Crown lands resources, such as water, oil, gas, forests and wildlife (MNRF 2023). The MECP is an Ontario government ministry responsible for protecting, conserving, and improving the quality of the environment in Ontario and coordinating the province's actions on climate change (MECP 2022). The BMFC is a private cooperative of 26 forest industries and logging companies for the Bancroft Minden Forest (Management Unit 220), located in the counties of Haliburton, Hastings, Peterborough, and Victoria, Ontario. The BMFC holds the Sustainable Forest License (SFL# 542585) for Crown land in the Bancroft Minden Forest, an area of approximately 250,000 hectares (BMFC 2023). FSC Canada is a non-profit membership organization that certifies forest companies worldwide based on responsible forestry standards (FSC 2023a). BMFC is an FSC-certified organization.

With the understanding of who the forest management decision-makers were, three main strategies were identified included: (1) holding BMFC accountable to FSC standards particularly *Standard 6.5* (identifying new protected areas), (2) engaging in public participation in forest management planning (enabled by legislation), and (3) facilitating land-use policy change for the Catchacoma Forest lands and waters. The application of these three strategies is reviewed here.

Forest Stewardship Council Standards Including #6.5

In February 2020, the CFSC met with representatives from the BMFC, MNRF, and Curve Lake First Nation, whose traditional territory overlaps the Catchacoma Forest, to address concerns with proposed logging in the Forest. This meeting was set up after members of the CFSC sent a letter to a representative of Curve Lake First Nation, who then requested a meeting to hear all points of view from the parties involved in this issue. No logging changes were made by BMFC based on this meeting leaving the Forest unprotected, and during the following months the CFSC began exploring different strategies for protecting the Catchacoma Forest.

During this exploration, the CFSC discovered a new FSC Forest Management Standard – *Indicator 6.5: Conservation Area Networks* (FSC 2023b), which came into effect on January 1, 2020. This indicator requires FSC-certified organizations including BMFC to

“identify and protect representative sample areas of native ecosystems and/or restore them to more natural conditions”.

These designated conservation lands are

“to be managed through the exclusion of forest management activities in recognition of their ecological and/or cultural values”.

The long-term objective of these designated conservation lands is to transition them to legal protected status by certified organizations who are required to work within their sphere of influence to achieve this objective. For forests managed on public land such as the Catchacoma Forest, the FSC *Standard 6.5* requires certified organizations to engage with self-identified stakeholders and local First Nations in a fair and inclusive process of identification and protection management.

Thus, in June 2020, the CFSC sent a letter to the BMFC identifying themselves and other signatories as *Standard 6.5* stakeholders and requesting to be informed of BMFC plans and processes to meet this new FSC standard as it applies to protecting the Catchacoma Forest. CFSC received confirmation that the BMFC had received this letter however it wasn't until all work for the biodiversity gap analysis had been completed in late 2023 that BMFC informed stakeholders of the "final" results at a meeting.

Prior to 2023 and after two months with no response from BMFC, the CFSC reached out to the FSC directly in August 2020 explaining the lack of response from BMFC after identifying themselves as stakeholders under *Standard 6.5*. CFSC requested that as such, the FSC require BMFC to create a plan to meet this standard and until completed, a moratorium on logging be instated for the Catchacoma Forest. The CFSC highlighted the numerous non-timber values of the Catchacoma Forest and recommended it be designated as conservation lands under FSC *Standard 6.5*. Around this time, the FSC was conducting an audit of the BMFC operations, which began in 2019 and ended in 2021. The letter also requested that the FSC audit investigate numerous issues of BMFC non-compliance with FSC standards.

For example, before receiving the species-at-risk locations to avoid from MNR, BMFC marked trees for cutting in the Catchacoma Forest logging block and built roads and landings for 2019-20 logging. According to a 2019 FSC audit report on BMFC lands (Nall and Robson 2019), the ignoring of species-at-risk habitats as set-asides in the cut block had happened many times previously. The audit states,

“in a significant number of cases in the last year the SAR polygons were delivered from MNR after the blocks had been laid out and marked (by BMFC)”

Other contraventions of FSC standards included *trees felled within the riparian protection buffer zone and the cutting of endangered black ash trees*.

The 2019-21 FSC audit report of BMFC addressed some of the CFSC's concerns, but overall, the outcomes of the audit were minimal and underwhelming. The audit relieved the BMFC of their obligation to consider the Catchacoma Forest as a candidate protected area, writing that,

“Regarding the dispute between (BMFC) and several interested stakeholders over selection harvesting in an older hemlock stand in Block 1711, there is already a 1307 ha hemlock reserve, the Clear Lake Conservation Reserve, established in 1997, on the Minden side of the forest... to be literal about criteria 6.5, language directs that the organization shall restore where representative sample areas do not exist or are insufficient. Representative sample areas of the type represented by Catchacoma Forest... are protected at 100% or greater of requirements achieved according to a 2019 MECP report.”

In other words, because eastern hemlock-dominant forests have already been protected in areas like the Clear Lake Conservation Reserve within the BMFC Unit, the FSC would not require BMFC to consider protecting Catchacoma Forest. This reasoning, however, perceives the Catchacoma Forest to be the same forest community type as other eastern hemlock forests that have already been protected without accounting for the ages of these forests and without any species and habitat field data/observations. By government standards, young hemlock forests are considered the same as old-growth eastern hemlock forests, when in fact, they are completely different ecosystems.

For decades now, it has been known that compared to young and mature forests, old-growth forests typically support more unique and diverse species communities and have greater carbon storage capacity, among other unique ecological traits (Stephenson et al. 2014; Law et al. 2018; Mildrexler et al. 2020; Messick and Davis 2022). Despite this current understanding of the ecological value of old-growth forests, forest industry and government continue to spin and ignore scientific information in support of logging old-growth forests.

It was at this time that the CFSC accepted the fact that old growth is not a factor that is taken seriously in Ontario forest management despite the province having an *Old-growth Forest Conservation Strategy* (OMNR 2003). Older-aged forests are not prioritized for protection in Ontario, nor is there any standardized government criteria for assessing old-growth forests in the field. The lack of a science-based approach to assess and consider old-growth in forest management has made advocating for the protection of a *significant old-growth forest* even more challenging and necessary.

In addition, the FSC audit was not critical of BMFC's lack of engagement with stakeholders like CFSC regarding the Catchacoma Forest under *Standard 6.5* writing,

“(BMFC) has engaged with interested stakeholders in an attempt to reach consensus on how (Catchacoma Forest) is administered. The company has developed a mechanism, the BMFC Issue Resolution Process, to seek to achieve that consensus on the selection of designated conservation lands... The company responded to the (CFSC) complaint in a timely manner and engaged its Issue Resolution Procedure, meeting the complainants on Feb 13, 2020, along with representatives of the MNRF and Curve Lake FN... Following a lack of progress toward resolution, the company moved to the next step in its Procedure, asking the MNRF to attempt resolution”.

In other words, the FSC had no issue with BMFC participating in only one meeting with interested stakeholders before ignoring other correspondences and transferring responsibility to the MNRF. The CFSC's observations of FSC oversight throughout this process indicates a clear bias towards forest industry. The FSC audit also states,

“A detailed response by a manager within the Regional Operations Division of the Southern Region of MNRF has clearly indicated that the certificate holder cannot identify and protect designated conservation lands within the scope of its Sustainable Forest License to manage forests on Crown land.”

This statement by MNRF clearly contradicts the objectives and spirit of *FSC Standard 6.5*. This kind of confusing double-speak is typical with forest management planning in Ontario, based on CFSC's experiences with the process.

A year later in September 2021, the CFSC sent another letter to the FSC requesting an additional audit of BMFC due to three major issues that do not comply with their *Sustainable Forest License* (SFL). These issues include: (1) BMFC failing to consider AFER's scientific field surveys as part of the “best available information” (*FSC Standard 6.0*), (2) BMFC's lack of response to CFSC's statement of interest as self-identified stakeholders regarding the Catchacoma Forest (*FSC Standard 6.5*), and (3) issues with the location and amount of logging that occurred in Block 1711 of the Catchacoma Forest. The CFSC, WC and AFER requested a meeting with the FSC auditor, both online and in the Catchacoma Forest. The online meeting with the auditor, a forester with industrial experience from the Pacific Northwestern United States, was unproductive leaving all CFSC concerns unresolved.

Forest Management Planning

In Ontario, legislation (*Crown Forest Sustainability Act*) provides an opportunity for the public to have input into forest management planning. Thus, CFSC became involved in the production of the 2021-31 BMFC *Forest Management Plan* (BMFMP). Every 10 years, MNRF is required to review and certify forest management plans (FMP) for each *Forest Management Unit* in the province. These FMPs outline the forestry operations proposed for that unit for the next 10 years. The plan details what areas will be logged, how they will be logged, how much of them will be logged, and when the logging will take place. The public can have input on drafting of these 10-year plans at five different stages of the drafting process (Table 1; Government of Ontario 2021).

Table 1. Five Stages of Public Consultation in the Process of Drafting a New FMP (MNRF)

<p>Stage 1: Invitation to Participate</p>	<p>In this stage, the public is invited to meet with the planning team, plan author, and local citizens’ committee to discuss their interests and knowledge of the forest in question and share values and important ecological features of the forest.</p>
<p>Stage 2: Review of the Long-term Management Direction (LTMD).</p>	<p>In this stage, the planning team analyzes all background information and then synthesizes long-term management direction (LTMD) for the FMP and establishes a maximum sustainable harvest area that cannot be exceeded during this FMP. The public has 15 days to review and comment on this proposed LTMD before it is approved by the MNRF regional director.</p>
<p>Stage 3: Review of Proposed Operations.</p>	<p>In this stage, the LTMD has been approved by the MNRF and now the detailed planning of forest operations for the 10-year period begins. The public is invited to attend an information forum to review and comment on the plan direction and operations.</p>
<p>Stage 4: Review of Draft FMP</p>	<p>After operational planning is completed, a draft FMP is prepared and reviewed by the MNRF and the public is invited to attend an information forum to review and comment on the draft FMP.</p>
<p>Stage 5: Inspection of Approved FMP</p>	<p>After the 60-day period for reviewing and commenting on the draft FMP, the plan is revised to address any comments that were received and is then submitted to the MNRF regional director for approval.</p>

At any of these stages, if the public raises a concern that has not been addressed to their satisfaction, they can request an *Issues Resolution* with the MNRF district manager. If the issue is still not resolved, the public can request another *Issues Resolution*, this time with the MNRF regional director.

The CFSC discovered the significance of the Catchacoma Forest and the logging that had begun while the new 10-year draft FMP for 2021-31 operations had just started. This meant that the CFSC had the opportunity to engage in the public consultation process for the drafting of the 2021-31 FMP. If the CFSC had discovered the Catchacoma Forest a year later, the public consultation period for the FMP would have been missed and the CFSC would have been forced to wait nine years to participate in the next FMP production process.

This raises the question: why is the public only consulted for proposed logging operations every 10 years? What happens if a landscape like the Catchacoma Forest is discovered with old-growth forest that is nationally significant and holds many unique ecological, recreational, and educational values, but is discovered shortly after FMP approval? Should interested stakeholders be required to wait years to provide public input and meanwhile stand by and watch the loss of old-growth forest from logging that could be carried out elsewhere to obtain the same amount of fiber (logs)?

From October 2020 - July 2021, the CFSC participated in the 2021-31 FMP drafting process for the BMFC region. The Committee also submitted comments to the long-term management direction (LTMD) draft and attended a meeting to discuss these comments in October, submitted comments to the 2021-31 proposed operations in February, and then submitted comments to the draft FMP in May. After discovering that the CFSC’s FMP comments were not being addressed, they engaged in an *Issues Resolution* process. In May 2021, the CFSC had a meeting with the MNRF district manager and other representatives from MNRF, BMFC, and Curve Lake First Nation to discuss the ongoing CFSC concerns with the draft FMP.

In June, the MNRF district manager shared the decision regarding the *Issues Resolution* process with CFSC. The decision included instating a one-year moratorium on logging in the Catchacoma Forest (now known as blocks 2749 and 3710) to allow AFER to carry out research and the MNRF to complete forest values

collection efforts in the harvest blocks. They also decided that after one year, block 3710 would remain a contingency block until the applicable amendment process brings it back into harvest, and block 2749 will be harvested under the selection harvest system where appropriate rather than the previously used shelterwood system, which is more destructive.

Though this decision was a step in the right direction, the CFSC felt that a one-year moratorium was too short and as such they requested another *Issues Resolution* that was sent to the MNRF regional director. The request was granted and the CFSC discussed their concerns at a meeting with the regional director. In this meeting, the CFSC re-iterated the numerous non-timber values of the Catchacoma Forest as determined by AFER's research, and then requested a moratorium on all logging in the Forest for a minimum of five years but ideally ten.

After this meeting, the CFSC received the final decision from the regional director that marked the end of the *Issues Resolution* process regarding the 2021-31 FMP. This decision was similar to the regional manager's (a one-year moratorium), however with the amendment that the 3710-contingency block may only be taken out of contingency once:

- the MNRF develops technical guidance for old-growth forest field verification and delineation,
- BMFC develops and incorporates silvicultural ground rules in the FMP,
- eastern hemlock stands over 130 years old in the BMFC region are identified, and
- the components of the FMP that support climate change mitigation are identified.

One immediate benefit that came from this decision was the MNRF commitment to develop a proper protocol for identifying and characterizing old-growth forests in the field. As previously explained, the CFSC learned early on that a standardized approach for assessing old-growth forest had not been developed by the Ontario government. Only when an effective field protocol is developed will commitments made to assess for old-growth forests in the province be met as set out in the *Ontario Old-growth Forest Policy* (MNR 2003). To date, this field assessment protocol has not yet been developed.

Land Use Amendment

As suggested by the MNRF, the CFSC plans to apply for a *Crown Land Use Policy Change* for the Catchacoma Forest. If the application is approved, the land use designation of the Catchacoma Forest would shift from “*general use*” to “*recommended conservation reserve/park*”. One option would be to annex the Forest to the adjacent Kawartha Highlands Provincial Park, which has been supported by the Park Superintendent.

Despite this support, the MNRF clearly stated that they would only consider the CFSC's application if it had support from the MECP, which means the Minister. As such, the CFSC has spent the past year and a half engaging with the MECP in an effort to attain this support. In September and October 2021, the CFSC had two meetings with representatives from the MECP where the CFSC was assured that their request for MECP's support of a *Crown Land Use Policy Change* proposal for the Catchacoma Forest would be considered by the Minister. The CFSC has not been contacted by MECP on this matter despite numerous follow-up communications and despite letters supporting Catchacoma Forest protection from the Municipality of Trent Lakes, the Cavendish Community Ratepayers Association, and the Catchacoma Cottagers Association.

In January 2022, the CFSC sent a letter directly to Minister David Piccini to brief him on the situation with the Catchacoma Forest and ask for a meeting, which was denied. Over the past year, the CFSC has requested a meeting with the Minister many times, and each time has been denied. Later in April 2022, David Piccini sent a response letter informing the CFSC that he had requested MECP to conduct further field assessment work in the Catchacoma Forest to inform his decision on whether or not to support CFSC's land use amendment proposal.

Finally in November 2022, the CFSC received a response from MECP. In a few sentences, this letter denied the CFSC's request for support with no explanation, rationale, or acknowledgment of the work done by the CFSC, AFER, and OWC over the past three years. In the time since this letter was received, the CFSC has responded with letters to various representatives of the MECP to ask for the rationale behind this decision, only to be met with a lack of explanation, accountability, or acknowledgment. To this day, the CFSC

remains unaware of exactly who made this decision and why.

In February 2023, the CFSC gave a presentation about protecting Catchacoma Forest at a Trent Lakes Municipal Council meeting. In this meeting there was a unanimous vote of support in favor of Council sending a letter to MECP Minister Piccini and MPP Dave Smith explaining the need to protect the Forest. Sent in March 2023, this letter renewed Council's support for the consideration of Catchacoma Forest as a *candidate protected area*, referring to how this would support the enhancement and addition of hiking trails and protected areas as promoted in Council's *Draft Open Space Plan* and Ontario's *Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan*, respectively.

In the letter, Council also acknowledges the lack of rationale given in the MECP's rejection of the CFSC's request for support and requests that MECP organize a meeting to discuss and reconsider this rejection with the CFSC. The letter also reminds MECP that under the *Public Lands Act* they are required to open an application for a crown land-use amendment with the MNRF, and that Council would like to actively engage in the ensuing consultation process. The municipal government is currently awaiting a response from MECP.

Federal-Level Considerations

To date, CFSC has engaged with the municipal and provincial governments, but has not yet engaged the federal government. This is not due to lack of authority – there are federal laws like the *Species at Risk Act* and *Migratory Birds Convention Act* that can impact provincial biodiversity conservation. Rather, it is because the provincial governments are responsible for managing their natural resources and creating natural heritage systems.

It is much more common for provincial parks to be created than for the federal government to create national parks. For example, there are currently 47 national parks in all of Canada compared to more than 330 provincial parks in Ontario alone (Parks Canada 2022). As such, federal protection strategies have not yet been considered a viable option by the CFSC for protecting the Catchacoma Forest. This does not, however, exclude exploring federal avenues of protection for the Forest as a possibility in the future.

Status

The one-year moratorium on logging in the Catchacoma Forest has now ended. This means logging could begin at any time once the MNRF has developed an effective old-growth field assessment protocol and the harvest blocks are potentially removed from the contingency logging category. Despite this loss of temporary administrative protection, the CFSC has continued to pursue its goals.

In December 2022, CFSC requested information from BMFC regarding the 2019-21 harvest in the Catchacoma Forest including maps showing where logging took place, the volume by species removed, and the entities who purchased the timber. As members of the public with concerns about the management of public (Crown) lands, the CFSC is entitled to this information. In response to this request, BMFC has refused to provide the information indicating that the request is not relevant to the management of the Catchacoma Forest, stating that the data would not “*do justice*” to “*enact change*”. The CFSC has since renewed the request for this information, highlighting that it is within their rights as members of the public, regardless of whether BMFC thinks the data will be useful to CFSC.

Finally, BMFC recently communicated that they were in the process of creating a protected areas gap analysis for conserving biodiversity in the Bancroft-Minden Forest region. Once completed, BMFC has committed to share the results with interested stakeholders. This approach of sharing the “*final*” results of a major regional conservation analysis ignores the standard public involvement principle of providing opportunities to stakeholders to participate from the beginning of the process. Stakeholder involvement processes typically include: (1) a group approach to setting analysis goals and objectives, (2) determining the methodology and datasets to be used, and (3) choosing the material to include in the final report. None of these three components were included as part of BMFC's gap analysis project.

Despite many roadblocks and challenges, CFSC remains hopeful that eventually the multiple values of the Catchacoma Forest will be recognized by government officials, the forestry company, and the public.

In the last year, education and outreach has continued to bring many people into the Forest to experience the unique landscape, learn about its old-growth forest, and get involved in advocacy efforts. AFER's research in the Forest has also continued including recent field studies focusing on the Forest's carbon storage (logged and unlogged); bird, insect, spring wildflower, and fungal communities; wetland ecosystems including fish; species and habitat inventories; and mother (old growth) tree distributions integrated into a GIS map-making and analytical database.

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