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COLUMNISTS

OPINION

Peterborough guest column: Catchacoma Forest logger deserves conservationists' respect

By **Peter Currier** Guest Columnist

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Having read Curtis Bain's [Dec. 12 column](#) about his disheartening logging experience in the Catchacoma Forest, I was fortunate when, on Dec. 16, I found him and two of his crew at the logging site.

As a member of the Catchacoma Forest Stewardship Committee (CFSC) I am one of a group of local residents, professionals, and scientists who are attempting to save the forest's unique old-growth hemlock. And I wondered about the reception I would get.

When I arrived, Bain was out in -8 C weather, bare hands coated in frigid oil from a ruptured line, attempting to repair the huge log grappler, cutter and stacker that had been vandalized, yet again, the night before. Perhaps because of the stacker being sidelined, we were surrounded by a 20-foot, horizontal stockade of piled-up, recently logged hemlock.

Bain could've been surly, dismissive, and blaming with me but wasn't: I found him approachable, and forthright about the logging, his job, the location, and the many frustrations he had encountered in pursuing his trade.

And it was impossible not to note and respect his competence both with the machinery, and in the often dangerous and always exacting logging process itself. While he is seasonal logger, he is also a quarry man, with the air of someone who when he has a job to do, gets it done. No matter what.

Bain himself knows that CFSC members weren't the vandals. The course of action by the CFSC has been meticulously straight shooting and above board. And note in big letters that CFSC efforts are not to stop all logging, but to have the Catchacoma Forest operations moved elsewhere in the Bancroft Minden Forestry Company's considerable preserve. (When I suggested security measures to Bain, he said that he had ensured they were already in place.)

Much has been made of previous area logging, but Bain's crew told me that back in the 1980s, the cutting was white pine, and that logging was sparse. No one would look at inferior hemlock back then. Now, from a marketability perspective, it's a default species: it makes poor lumber, valuable only as pulp or skid wood, and is much more valuable as a sustaining ecological resource.

The Examiner recently ran an excellent [article](#) on wetlands, and their per-acre value to water purity infrastructure and flood control. While hemlock may be commercially inferior, like wetlands, it enhances the environment both as regards water quality and modulated spring run-off. Add to that, carbon sequestration, recreation and education.

Bain indicated his intention to truncate the BMFC's logging preserve and save hundreds of old-growth hemlock acres.

If he does that he deserves huge respect from those far-sighted conservationists who see the forest's many-splendoured benefits.

Peter Currier is a member of the Catchacoma Forest Stewardship Committee.

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