



Annual Report 2024 and Annual Work Schedule 2025



2024 ANNUAL REPORT ON ACTIVITY IN THE DUFFERIN COUNTY FOREST

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dufferin County Forest is a conglomeration of 14 tracts which have been combined into the 1,066-hectare forested area that is owned and managed by the County of Dufferin. The Dufferin County Forest services the community by supporting the economy with a variety of timber products, maintaining important ecological functions, and providing a location for recreational opportunities to both Dufferin County residents and visitors.

The following are some highlights from the previous year:

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

- Tendered timber sales of over \$260,000.00
- 46 hectares of previously sold timber harvested

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 3,540 m² of Dufferin County Forest treated for invasive species removal.
- 50 + Endangered tree saplings were planted at the Main and Randwick Tracts

RECREATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 18 Events requiring permits with a total of almost 900 attendees
- Updates to the Dufferin County Forest Trail Maps will be completed in 2025

ANNUAL WORK SCHEDULE 2025

- 31.7 hectares of timber has been designated to be marked and tendered in 2025

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Dufferin County Forestry Division is to sustainably manage these lands by pursuing a balance between the potentially conflicting economic, environmental, and social societal values that the Dufferin County Forest provides for our community. Using these three separate yet equally important objectives as a “lens” through which all forest management activities are measured, helps to ensure that the benefits of the Dufferin County Forest will still be available for future generations to enjoy. The following is a summary of the efforts made by Forestry Division staff to maintain that sustainable balance in 2024.

2.0 ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Forest operations occur annually in the Dufferin County Forest, as outlined in *Our Forest, Our Future: Dufferin County Forest Management Plan 2016-2036*. Within that management plan there was a report, *Sustainable Timber Management of the Dufferin County Forest*,

created by a computer modeling program. It was commissioned in 2014, to analyze the Dufferin County Forest inventory data, and project that optimal sustainable timber harvesting could occur on average of 30 hectares per year in a harvest cycle of 120 years. The 2024 timber sales maintain that trend. Timber harvest operations intentionally occur during the fall and winter months, to minimize ecological damage and disruption of recreational use.

2.1 Timber Sales

Timber sales for 2025 harvest activities were advertised in November of 2024. Successful bids were received for all three of the compartments being tendered, taking place in three different Dufferin County Forest tracts. All three tenders were won by the same bidder, Penguin Pole, from Wallenstein, Ontario. A sales summary is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Tendered Timber Sales for 2024

Tender Number	Tract & Compartment	Volume (m³)	Number of Trees	Species	Area (Ha)	Revenue (\$)
CF-24-01 A	Randwick 2ac	1210	9 1053	White Pine Red Pine	14.0	\$141,755.00
CF-24-01 B	Main 16b	188	304	Red Pine	3.0	\$7,500.00
CF-24-01 C	Mono 39a-2	1039	55 882	White Pine Red Pine	8.4	\$111,855.00
Totals		2437	2303		25.4	\$261,110.00

2.2 Harvesting

The timber harvests occurring in 2024 took place at the Randwick and Mono Tracts on approximately 46 hectares of Dufferin County Forest. The Randwick Tract harvesting began in the fall of 2023, and carried over into the late winter of 2024, with compartments from both 2022 (5a, 6a) and 2023 (5b) tender sales being harvested at that time. Harvesting at the Mono Tract began in December 2024, on compartments sold in 2023 (39a-1) and 2024 (39a-2), and concluded in February 2025.

3.0 **ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Dufferin County Forest management policy is intended to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Dufferin County Forest, while simultaneously providing a variety of social and economic benefits to the public. Monitoring and controlling the spread of

invasive species, while continually inventorying and evaluating other values, as well as contributing to genetic and species biodiversity through tree planting, was some of the work completed in 2024 to maintain the ecological integrity of the Dufferin County Forest.

3.1 Invasive Plant Management

Invasive species are non-native organisms which may be harmful to the environment, the economy, or human welfare, and are the biggest threat to the health of forests in Dufferin County. The population of introduced plant species in Ontario continues to rise, which leads to increased competition for native plants, the inhibiting of natural tree regeneration, and the alteration of ecosystems. In the Dufferin County Forest, invasive species are a threat to biodiversity, habitat quality, resilience to insects, pathogens and climate change, the productivity of proximal agricultural land, recreational and aesthetic values, and timber production.

Since 2023, Forest Division staff have been implementing an invasive plant management strategy to inventory, manage, and monitor invasive plant populations in the Dufferin County Forest, as well as on other County-owned properties. From May to August of 2024, staff managed 20 invasive species in 30 forest compartments, as well as at the Museum of Dufferin. This included the manual removal of plants, cutting to prevent seeding, and pesticide application (where appropriate). High-priority invasive plants were foliar sprayed by contractors in four County Forest tracts.

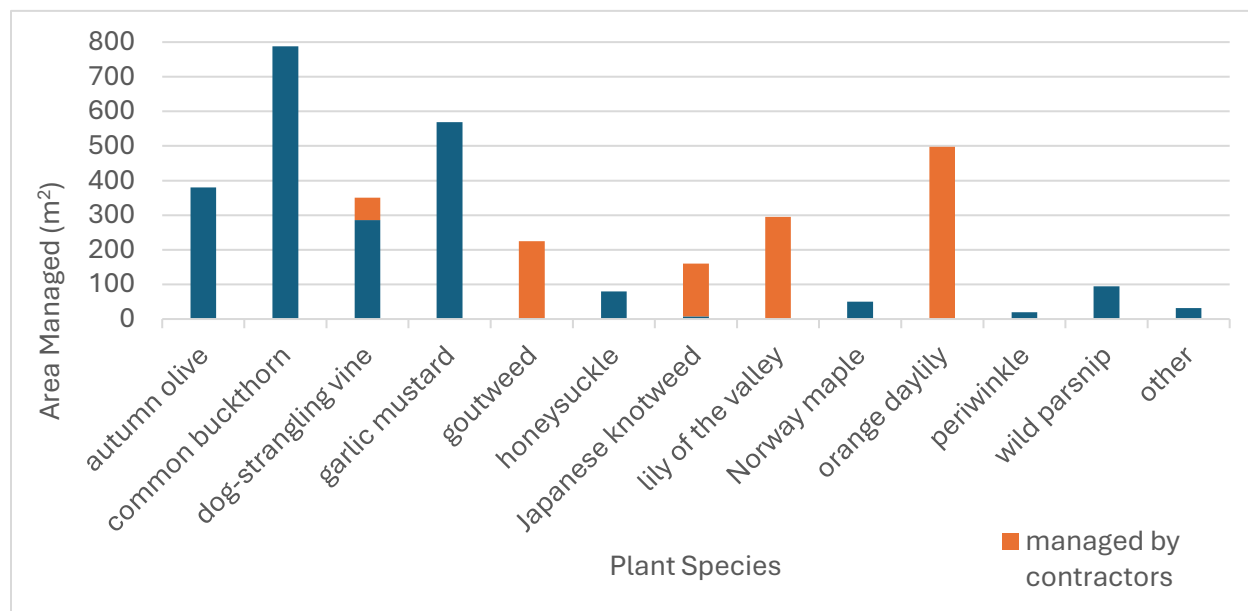


Figure 1. Area of invasive plants managed in the Dufferin County Forest in 2024.

Figure 1 displays the estimated coverage of invasive plants managed in the 2024 field season, with approximately 2,310 m² managed by staff and 1,230 m² by contractors.

In support of the effort to protect the Dufferin County Forest from invasive plants, staff have secured additional resources, including volunteer labour and grant funding. Three volunteer events were held in the Main and Mono Tracts in 2024, where volunteers helped to remove garlic mustard and autumn olive. The Forestry Division also obtained a \$2,500 grant through the Invasive Species Action Fund which will be used to treat common buckthorn in a 4.4 ha area of the Mono Tract in January 2025.

Communications have been initiated to prevent the continued introduction of invasive plants by visitors to the Dufferin County Forest. “No Dumping of Yard Waste” signs were installed at problematic locations in four County Forest tracts, as members of the public may be unaware that their yard waste contains seeds and other plant materials that can become problematic in natural areas. A brochure titled “Invasive Plant Species in the Dufferin County Forest” was also created for educating the public regarding this issue.

3.2 Inventory and Monitoring

Forest inventory sampling occurs continually in the Dufferin County Forest, with compartments being inventoried in anticipation of a harvest, within 18 months of the conclusion of harvesting operations, or if an area has not undergone management for at least 15 years. The data collected helps to assess the over-all condition of the forest, regrowth, lower vegetation, pathogens, invasive species, and wildlife habitat. Nine stands totalling 75 hectares were surveyed as a part of the pre- and post-harvest evaluations.

An additional monitoring activity that took place was the annual measuring and assessment of the American chestnut plantations at the Main and Little Tracts. These trees were planted as part of a selective breeding program to help restore the population of American chestnut, which is currently functionally extinct. Seedling survival from 2023 to 2024 appears to have benefitted from changes to the herbivore protection measures.

Sampling of fixed-location plots in the red pine demonstration area at the Main Tract also continued in 2024. This demonstration area consists of eight harvest blocks which have been subject to varying management intensities since 1997, enabling landowners and the public to see the impact of thinning on a conifer plantation. Results show that opening the canopy will promote tree regeneration, vegetative diversity, and increased timber growth.

Annual monitoring relating to forest health includes surveying for garlic mustard and oak wilt. Garlic mustard sampling conducted in three permanent plot locations demonstrated a minor fluctuation, and the oak wilt surveying that was initiated at the Main Tract upon positive provincial detections of the disease in 2023, revealed no findings along the fixed survey route.

3.3 Tree Planting

In the spring of 2024, Forest Division staff planted 30 endangered butternut seedlings at the Randwick Tract, that were donated to the Dufferin County Forest by the Rideau Valley

Conservation Authority as part of their butternut recovery program. These seedlings were cared for with assistance from staff from the Operations Division to ensure that they were sufficiently watered, and wire cages were placed around each tree for protection from predation. There was a 100% planting survival rate, and all the seedlings survived the summer months, with winter mortality to be evaluated in the spring of 2025.

In November of 2024, a fall planting of approximately two-dozen American chestnut seedlings occurred to replace the ones that previously died or had been eaten the previous winter. Additional wire cages and plastic mesh guards were installed to assist with protecting these seedlings from rodent and deer predators.

Figure 2. Bareroot stock butternut seedling.



Figure 3. Caged butternut with leaves.



4.0 SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Residents and tourists of Dufferin County enjoy visiting the Dufferin County Forest for a variety of reasons. Whether it be individually or with groups of friends and/or family, recreational users may be found year-round in the Dufferin County Forest, and therefore

Forest Division staff continually work hard to maintain a safe and clean ecologically sound environment for events, engage with users for customer satisfaction, and improve navigation with upgraded forest trail maps.

4.1 Forest Event Permits

Non-profit groups wishing to hold an event/tour for more than 30 people in the Dufferin County Forest will be required to obtain a County Forest Event Permit. For profit/commercial groups of any size wishing to hold an event/tour in the DFC will be required to obtain a County Forest Event Permit. Table 2 is a summary of the 18 events requiring a permit that took place in the Dufferin County Forest in 2024, which generated approximately \$2600 in revenue for the County from close to 900 participants. Event Permits are a useful tool for helping to avoid conflict between different recreation groups and allow Forest Division staff to regulate activity in the Dufferin County Forest.

Table 2: Dufferin County Forest Permitted Recreational Events 2024

Date of Event	Event Organizer	Number of Attendees
April 13	Substance Projects	133
April 19 – April 21	1849 Orangeville Army Cadets	28
May 3 – May 5	Ontario Competitive Trail Riding Association	26
May 10 – May 12	Chesley Saddle Club	14
May 17 – May 20	Ontario Trail Riders Association	12
May 25	Lount & Miller Inc.	132
June 1	North of 89 Outdoors Inc.	121
June 7 – June 9	Ontario Competitive Trail Riding Association	51
June 8 – June 9	Substance Projects	242
June 16	Eglington and Caledon Hounds	N/A
June 21- June 24	Ontario Trail Riders Association	3
July 17 – July 22	Ontario Trail Riders Association	25
August 2 – August 5	Toronto Orienteering Club	N/A
August 2 – August 5	Ontario Trail Riders Association	19
August 24 – August 25	Substance Projects Inc.	N/A
August 27 – September 2	Ontario Trail Riders Association	16
Sept.13 – Sept.15	Chesley Saddle Club	18
October 4 – October 7	Ontario Competitive Trail Riding Association	41
	TOTAL	881

4.2 User Surveys

Since 2023, in-person surveys have been conducted by Forest Division staff to gather data concerning visitors to the Main Tract. This survey was designed to learn about who is

visiting the County Forest, their chosen activities, where they are visiting from, and how they may be spending money in the County during their visit. These surveys are scheduled for one week during each quarter of the year, with two 3-hour survey periods during three days of those weeks. The 2024 fall survey period was not completed due to staff illness; however, 301 visitors were tallied during the winter, spring, and summer survey periods. The methodology was updated to improve from the first year of the project, with changes being made in collaboration with the Development & Tourism team, so that data of value to their work could be integrated with information they currently collect. The updated survey will take place bi-annually moving forward.

Preliminary conclusions from the first two years of user surveys include the following:

- Over half of the people surveyed were mountain bikers, with the second most popular activity being walking/hiking.
- Half of those surveyed had visited other tracts, Mono Tract being the most common.
- Most respondents did not spend money on their trip to the Dufferin County Forest.
- 71% of the respondents traveled less than 40 km to the Dufferin County Forest.

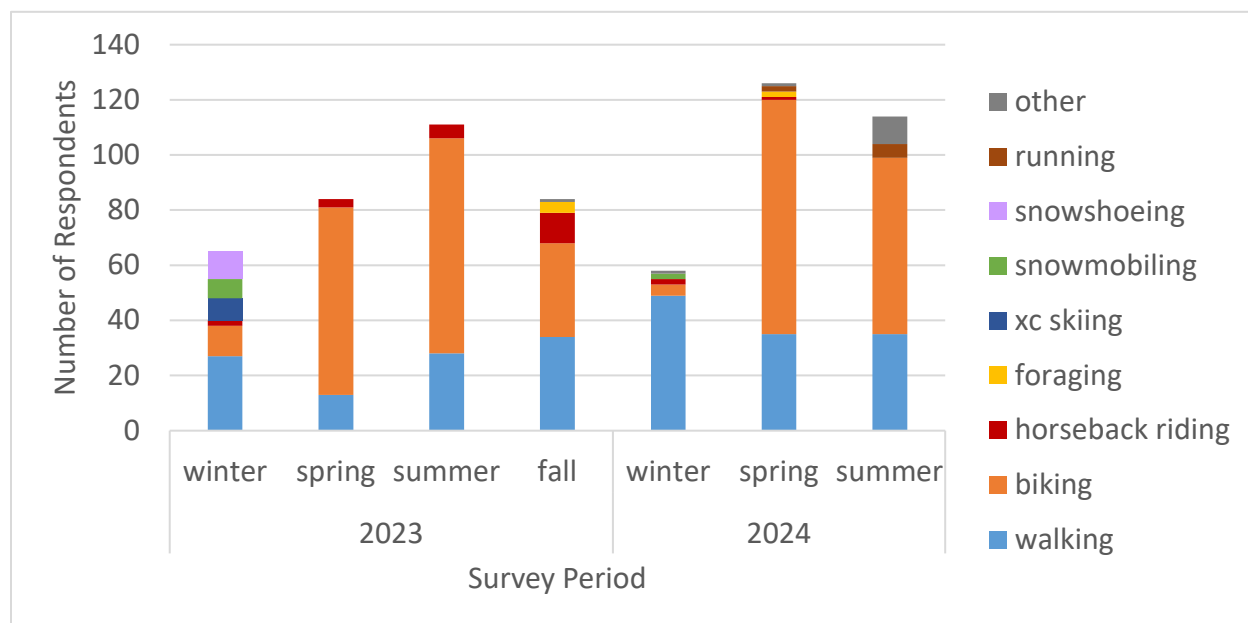


Figure 4. Number of Survey Respondents by Season and Activity

4.3 Hunting Permits

A total of 55 Dufferin County Forest hunting permits, valid for both the autumn of 2024 and spring of 2025 hunting seasons, were purchased in 2024. These permits grant permission to the purchasers to hunt within the appropriately signed Dufferin County Forest tracts.

4.4 Trail Mapping

An update to the Dufferin County Forest trail maps is currently underway, with improvements to the Main Tract trail map, and a new map of the Mono Tract trails. In 2024, GPS data and open-source map resources were used to correct inaccuracies on the Main Tract map and add previously unmapped trails for both tracts. Re-design work to the Main Tract map for improved readability is almost complete, and the finished products will be posted and distributed at the Main and Mono Tracts and online sometime in 2025.

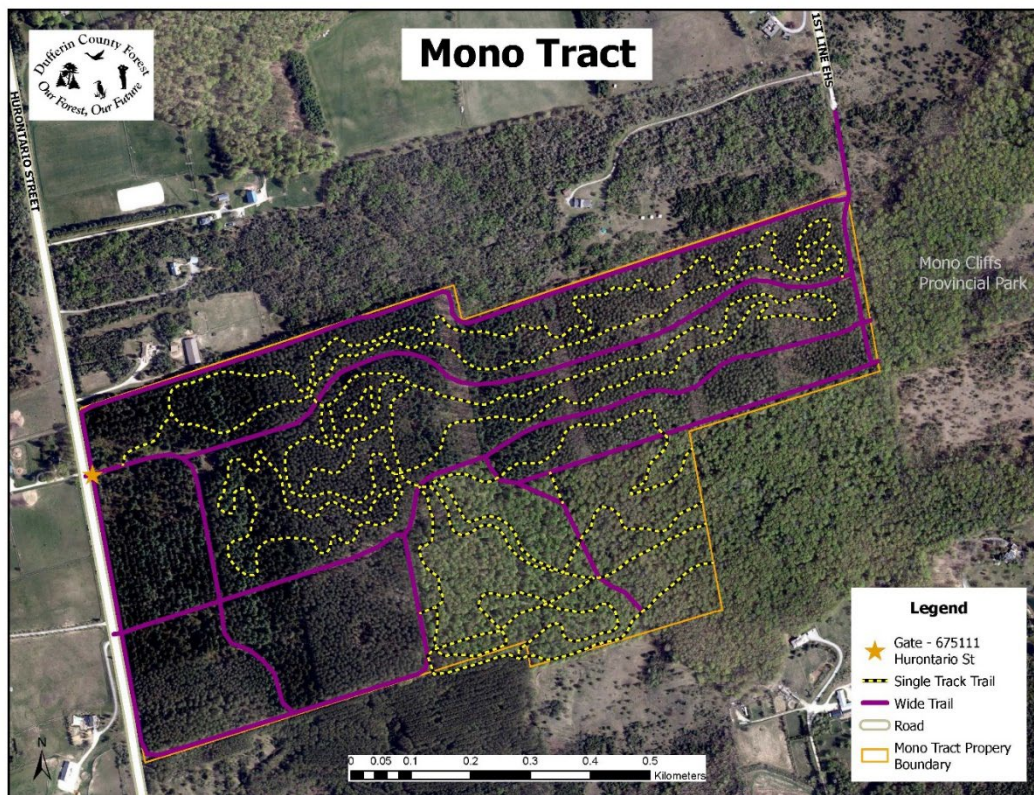


Figure 5. Preliminary trail map of the Mono Tract.

4.5 Staff Forest Tours

In collaboration with the People & Equity department, Forestry staff lead three forest tours in 2024 for Dufferin County employees. The tours are targeted at staff new to the County, with opportunities for other staff who have never participated in a Dufferin County Forest tour to join as well. Tours took place in the spring, summer, and fall, with seven to ten participants on each tour. County staff had the opportunity to visit the Main and Little Tracts and learn about forestry, sustainability, and nature in the context of the history and current management of the Dufferin County Forest. The Forestry Division received very positive feedback from the attendees, finding the tour informative and recommended it to any staff who had not yet had the opportunity to experience the tour.

4.6 Community Outreach Events

The Forestry Division was invited to attend several community events, where staff would set up an interactive display table, to showcase the many positive attributes of the Dufferin County Forest. Staff were also available to speak with anyone wishing to learn about forests and forestry, and answer questions or concerns people had relating to forest health, insects and diseases, or any other problems with their woodland properties. Table 3 contains a summary of all the events that Forest Division staff attended in 2024.

Table 3. Community events attended by Forest Division staff in 2024.

Date of the Event	Event Name
February 4	Town of Mono - Winterfest
April 5 - 7	Town of Orangeville Lion's Club Home & Garden Show
May 4	Town of Mono – Make Mono Shine
June 8	Multicultural Day at the Museum of Dufferin
July 20	Town of Orangeville Rotary Ribfest
November 18	Youth Climate Action Committee Solutions Fair

5.0 DUFFERIN COUNTY FOREST ANNUAL WORK SCHEDULE 2025

The Forest Division staff anticipates having 31.7 hectares of timber marked in 2025, which is summarized by tract and compartment in Table 4. The actual volume of timber to be harvested will not be determined until after tree marking has taken place. The standing timber will be publicly tendered in the autumn of 2025.

Table 4. Planned areas for timber marking in 2025

Tract & Compartment	Species	Area (ha)
Main 8a	Red Pine	2.7
Main 11a & 11b	Mixed wood	20.0
Main 23c & 24c	Red Pine	9.0
Total Area		31.7

Other work occurring in the Dufferin County Forest throughout 2025 includes:

- Repairs and maintenance to signage, gates, fences, and trails particularly at the Main and Mono Tracts; however, a full inspection at all the tracts will take place.
- The continuation of the Invasive Species Management Plan with additional removal efforts and monitoring of the previously treated areas.
- Updating the forest inventory to include the recently harvested areas.
- Creating the next Dufferin County Forest five-year operating plan for 2026-2031.
- Fulfilling requests to attend community outreach events whenever feasible.