



Annual Report 2022 and Annual Work Schedule 2023



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 what is now 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.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic continued in 2022, impacts on the County Forest operations were reduced as in person recreational events resumed, along with a spring Friends of the Dufferin County Forest event.

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. 44.0 hectares of conifers were marked for selection harvesting.

Economic Sustainability

- i. sales of conifer plantations of over \$150,000.

Social Sustainability

- i. a new outdoor recreation plan for the County Forest and the Dufferin Rail Trail was developed;
- ii. there were sixteen larger-scale in person recreational events; and
- iii. the magnetic sign and the information kiosk at the Main Tract were updated throughout the year.

In 2023, implementation of a comprehensive invasive species management plan will begin. 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 2023.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION	7
2.0 DUFFERIN COUNTY FOREST ANNUAL REPORT	9
2.1 Goal	9
2.2 Land Use	9
2.3 Environmental Sustainability	10
Sustainable Timber Harvesting	10
Evaluation of Insect and Disease Populations	10
Spongy Moth (formerly European Gypsy Moth/LDD moth).....	11
Oak Wilt	11
Emerald Ash Borer	12
Alien Invasive Plants.....	12
2.4 Economic Sustainability	13
Financial Stability	13
Donations	13
2.5 Social Sustainability	13
New Routes: Dufferin County Outdoor Recreation Plan: Refresh Regrow Recreate	13
Friends of the Dufferin County Forest (FDCF).....	14
Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team (DCFAT).....	14
Recreational Events	14
Forest Use Permits (Hunting)	14
Mansfield Outdoor Centre	15
Human Health.....	15
Infrastructure	15
Main Tract Information Kiosk.....	15
Signs	15
Information Products and Information Dissemination.....	16
Presentations, Schools, Walks, and Tours	16
Interpretive Trails	16
Cultural Heritage Resources	16
3.0 MONITORING	17
4.0 STAFFING	18
5.0 THE FUTURE OF THE PLANNING PROCESS	18
6.0 DUFFERIN COUNTY FOREST ANNUAL WORK SCHEDULE	18

6.1 Environmental Sustainability.....	18
6.2 Economic Sustainability	19
6.3 Social Sustainability.....	19
6.4 Monitoring.....	19

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Land Use Classes for Dufferin County Forest Tracts	9
Table 2: Tendered Timber Sales for 2022	10
Table 3: Larger-Scale Recreational Events in the Dufferin County Forest 2022	14
Table 4: Areas Planned to be Marked in the Dufferin County Forest for 2023	18

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Tracts of the Dufferin County Forest	8
Figure 2: Forest Use Permits (Hunting) Issued for the Dufferin County Forest 2002 to 2021-2022.....	15

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.

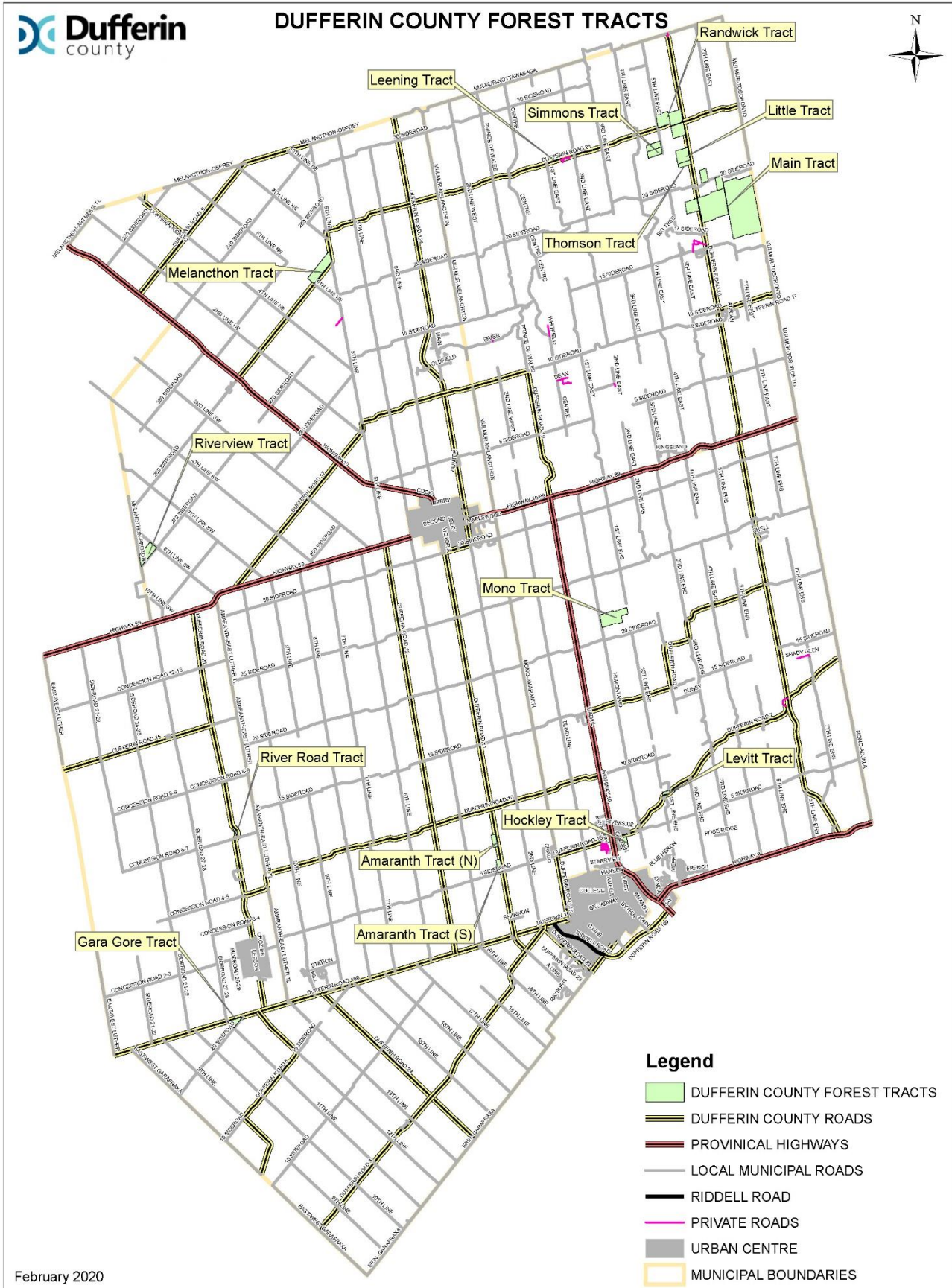
With the impending expiration of the management plan passed in 1995, in 2013 the County began work on a new long-term management plan for the County Forest. By this time, the recreational use of the forest properties had grown to such an extent that it was decided that a separate recreational use policy 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.

This annual report is divided into sections that correspond with those in the 2021-2026 operating plan.

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

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

Tract (Compartments)	Land Use Class	Area (ha)	Conservation Value	Standard Forest Management ¹
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
Total		1066		

¹In 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 2022.

Table 2: Tendered Timber Sales for 2022

Tender Number	Tract and Compartments	Volume (m ³)	Number of Trees	Species	Area (ha)	Value
CF 22-01-A	Randwick (1a north)	343	246	red pine	6.0	\$22,755.00
CF 22-01-B	Randwick (1a south)	886	607	red pine, white pine	14.0	\$63,755.00
CF 22-01-C	Randwick (5a & 6a)	944	1788	white pine	12.0	\$15,750.00
CF 22-01-D	Main (15c)	53	137	hardwoods	15.0	No bids
CF 22-01-E	Main (16c)	68.9	207	hardwoods	14.0	No bids
CF 22-01-F	Main (24b)	837	495	red pine	12.0	\$63,555.00
TOTALS		3040.8	7484		105.8	\$165,815.00

The tenders were all awarded to Penguin Pole of Wallenstein, Ontario.

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 (MNR) Forest Health Technicians, County Forest staff, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Emerald ash borer, Asian long-horned beetle, Sirex woodwasp, spongy moth (formerly European gypsy moth/LDD moth), beech bark disease, butternut canker, and red pine decline are of primary concern. Spongy moth, beech bark disease, butternut canker, and red pine decline 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.

Spongy Moth (formerly European Gypsy Moth/LDD moth)

Spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar dispar*) is a non-native insect pest that has become established and naturalized in Ontario over the last 40 years or so. Outbreaks of the pest occur approximately every 7-10 years. Spongy moth is considered to be a deciduous tree stressor, not a tree killer, which means that usually tree mortality will result only if trees are subjected to multiple stresses over multiple years. Severe defoliation of coniferous trees may result in mortality after just one season.

In 2020, there was extensive defoliation of the red oak (the preferred food source of the spongy moth larvae) in the Main Tract of the Dufferin County Forest. To a lesser extent, other tree species, in particular white pine, were affected. This was the first year of heavy spongy moth defoliation in the Main Tract since 2009. Observed defoliation during 2021 was much lower than in 2020. Spongy moth egg mass surveys (a predictor of the following year's population) were conducted in the fall of 2020 and 2021.

In both 2020 and 2021, large numbers of larvae died from either the fungus *Entomophaga maimaigi* or the Nucleopolyhedrosis virus, which are both naturally present in spongy moth populations. The levels of the fungus are weather dependent (the fungus spreads more readily during a wet spring), while the virus spreads more easily and rapidly when populations are at high densities.

During the 2022 field season, spongy moth defoliation was not visible to the casual observer. As a result, it was clear that spongy moth populations had collapsed. No surveys for spongy moth egg masses were done in the fall of 2022.

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). The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (the lead agency in dealing with exotic invasives) is working hard to keep oak wilt out of Ontario, but it is currently only 500 m from the border (on Belle Island in the Detroit River). Infected red oak trees can die in as little as 30 days. Red oak is a



Spongy moth larvae dying before pupation in the summer of 2021.

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.

Prior to oak wilt being found in Dufferin County, the following strategies are being implemented:

- i. public education to increase the number of people able to identify oak wilt and therefore increasing the chances of finding it and identifying it before it is widespread;
- ii. public education regarding the dangers of moving firewood, therefore reducing the chances of oak wilt arriving in Dufferin County through that avenue;
- iii. in the Dufferin County Forest, no harvesting of stands containing more than 5 m²/ha of red oak between April 1 and July 31. During this time of year, the sap-feeding beetles, which spread oak wilt and are attracted to open wounds on oak trees, are most active; and
- iv. public education to discourage private landowners from pruning or harvesting red oak between April 1 and July 31.

Once oak wilt is found in Ontario, a second phase of restrictions will be introduced. These will likely include changes to the period during which pruning or harvesting of red oak is not permitted, as well as an expansion of pruning and harvesting restrictions to County operations outside of the County Forest (e.g. contracts for roadside tree pruning and removal) and increased public education.

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

During the 2022 growing season, ongoing monitoring and removal of the dog-strangling vine at the Mono, Main and Randwick Tracts was conducted.

Scots pine was removed in conjunction with field work and litter/garbage pick-up.

Data was collected on the garlic mustard plots at the Melancthon, Mono, and Randwick Tracts. These plots were established in 2016 to monitor the growth of garlic mustard.

One of the first duties of the newly-hired Forest Assistant is to develop a comprehensive invasive species management plan, focusing on terrestrial plant invasives. The plan will be a working document whose implementation will commence in 2023.

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 contributes 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 2022, refer to Table 2. There are many factors that affect the value of the timber sold from the Dufferin County Forest, some of which are difficult to predict from year to year. These factors include the price of wood locally and regionally; the location, size and species of trees offered for sale; and the supply of wood of various species and sizes in a given year. 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 2022.

Donations

A secure post was installed beside the Main Tract kiosk to collect cash donations toward the work of the Friends of the Dufferin County Forest (FDCF). Donations to the FDCF can also be made online through a QR code/website address. The amount of money collected to date is not significant, but it is expected to increase as the FDCF is able to resume functioning post-COVID.

2.5 Social Sustainability

New Routes: Dufferin County Outdoor Recreation Plan: Refresh | Regrow | Recreate

During 2022, the recreational use policy for the County Forest was updated. *New Routes: Dufferin County Outdoor Recreation Plan* is broader in scope than the previous recreational use policy in two ways:

1. it includes permitted uses not just for the County Forest, but also for the Dufferin Rail Trail, the former rail corridor owned by the County of Dufferin; and
2. it includes a number of items related to both the County Forest and the Rail Trail for the County Forest were previously part of the forest management plan and not the recreational use policy. These include signs, communications, and infrastructure.

The uses for the County Forest remained largely unchanged and the document established use guidelines for the Rail Trail which were previously non-existent. Additional infrastructure in terms of portable toilets, signs, and parking lot plowing was outlined for both the County Forest and the Rail Trail.

Public consultation during the development of the document was split into two stages – an idea generation stage and a draft review stage. Unfortunately, the volume of public input was relatively small during both stages. The final version of the plan can be accessed [here](#).

Friends of the Dufferin County Forest (FDCF)

As COVID-19 restrictions were loosened, the Friends of the Dufferin County Forest held a work party day for trail maintenance and garbage pick-up on April 30, 2022. More events will be planned in 2023. 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 County Forest Advisory Team (DCFAT)

In 2022, there was one meeting of the Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team, to discuss the outdoor recreation plan.

Recreational Events

As COVID-19 restrictions were loosened, larger-scale in person recreational events resumed in 2022. Table 3 gives details of the sixteen larger-scale recreational events that took place in the County Forest in 2022. Unless otherwise noted, the events took place at the Main Tract. In total, the events generated revenue of about \$2,500 for the County.

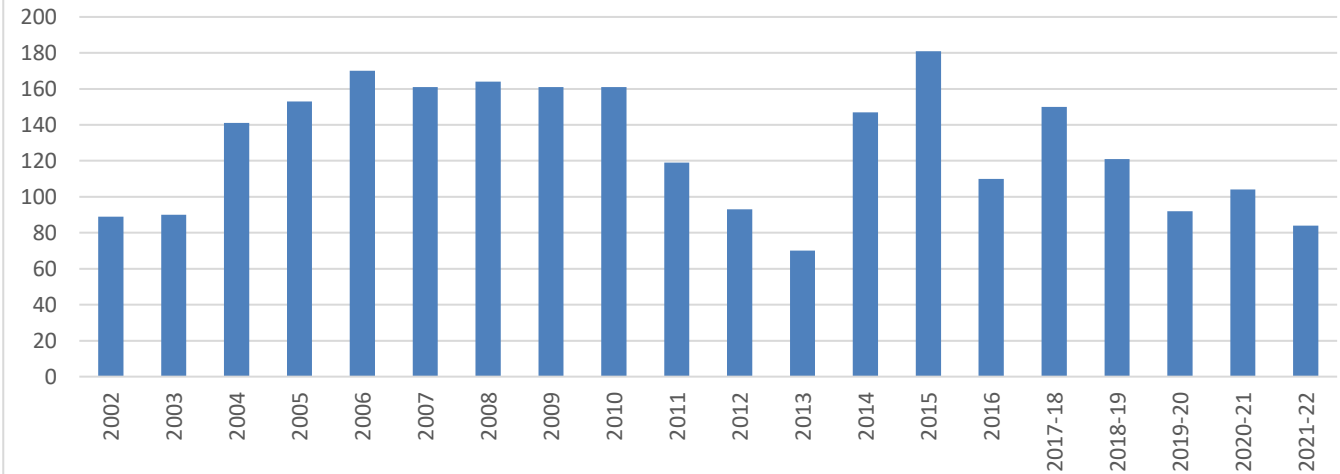
Table 3: Larger-Scale Recreational Events in the Dufferin County Forest 2022

Date of Event	Type of Event	Number of People
May 6-8	OTRA Horseback Riding Event	15
May 20-23	Chesley Saddle Club Horseback Riding Event	9
May 28	1849 Orangeville Army Cadets Outdoor Skills Event	24
June 17-20	OCTRA Horseback Riding Event	56
June 10-12	OTRA Horseback Riding Event	18
June 3-6	Chesley Saddle Club Horseback Riding Event	11
June 11	Substance Projects Mountain Biking Event	200
July 4-10	OTRA Horseback Riding Event	24
August 5-7	OTRA Horseback Riding Event	17
August 14	Substance Projects Mountain Biking Event	102
August 26-29	Chesley Saddle Club Horseback Riding Event	19
September 9-11	OTRA Horseback Riding Event	36
September 16-19	Chesley Saddle Club Horseback Riding Event	5
September 17	Chase the Coyote Trail Run Event – Mono Tract	120
September 30-October 2	OCTRA Horseback Riding Event	59
October 29-30	1849 Orangeville Army Cadets Outdoor Skills Event	73

Forest Use Permits (Hunting)

Figure 2 shows the number of Forest Use Permits (Hunting) that have been issued in the last twenty years. In 2018, the permits transitioned from an effective period of January 1-December 31 to an effective period of 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 \$2,500 for the County.

Figure 2: Forest Use Permits (Hunting) Issued for the Dufferin County Forest 2002 to 2021-2022



Mansfield Outdoor Centre

The Mansfield Outdoor Centre leased cross-country ski trails in the south portion of the Main Tract for the 2022-2023 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.

Signs and information related to COVID-19 were placed at all of the Forest entrances, at the Main Tract kiosk, and on the County website in 2022.

Infrastructure

During 2022, 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.

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

The signs at the Forest entrances stating guidelines for Forest use during the COVID-19 pandemic were replaced as necessary throughout 2022.

Temporary signs were posted at a number of the tracts 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

In order 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, 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.

In 2021, there was production and periodic updating of various information products, including a general County Forest brochure; a recreational use brochure; a hunting brochure; a brochure describing the Little Tract interpretive trail; a brochure describing the Main Tract interpretive trail; a trail map brochure for the Main Tract; and a brochure describing the driving tour.

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.

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 Dufferin County Forest pamphlets, maps of the Main Tract, and information on various insects and diseases that affect trees, spongy moth and emerald ash borer in particular.

The County Forest information on 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.

Presentations, Schools, Walks, and Tours

Guided forest walks were not held in 2022 due to continued uncertainty regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the impossibility of practicing social distancing during such as event.

Interpretive Trails

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

Cultural Heritage Resources

In 2022, no further work was done at the site of the building foundation at the Simmons Tract.

3.0 MONITORING

In 2022, 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 loggers complied with the terms and conditions of the tenders. There were no significant violations of tender terms and conditions in 2022.

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 species was conducted as part of both forest inventories and other field work.

In 2020, the County embarked on a program to measure recreational use of the Forest, in particular 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.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the strict limits on in person interactions, no in person surveying was done in 2022.

At the end of 2021, some changes were made to the placement of the trail counters to improve the efficiency of data collection. Trail counters are now located:

- i. at the Main Tract, along the main south double track trail from the parking lot, to count equestrians and pedestrians;
- ii. at the Main Tract, along the single track trail from the parking lot, to count mountain bikers;
- iii. at the Main Tract, along the single track trail west of the event field, to count mountain bikers;
- iv. at the Main Tract, along the single track trail south of the event field, to count mountain bikers;
- v. at the Main Tract, along the double track trail from the event field, to count equestrians;
- vi. at the Mono Tract, at 675111 Hurontario St., to count all users; and
- vii. at the Mono Tract, at 715120 1st Line EHS, to count all users.

Some work was done on calibrating the trail counters by the Forestry Summer Student.

The trail counters will always be representative of trends in use rather than actual user numbers as both the Mono and Main Tracts have a number of entrances and it is not viable to have trail counters at all of them.

At the Main Tract, peak numbers for pedestrians, equestrians, and mountain bikers occurred on Saturday and Sunday. On a 24-hour basis, activity peaks are mid-day, from roughly 10 am to 3 pm. Numbers for all activities decreased into December, although there were still numerous users. At the Mono Tract there was significant activity on Monday and Wednesday in addition to the weekend.

Three periods of traffic counts were collected in 2022: May 30-June 6, August 2-8, and October 3-12

(Thanksgiving weekend). Although weekend and holiday Monday visits continued to be high, weekday visitation, especially on Friday, was significant. The main parking lot continued to be used more than the event field parking.

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 survey.

4.0 STAFFING

As part of the 2022 budget deliberations, County Council approved funding for a full-time, permanent Forest Assistant position in the County Forest Division. Michelle Kratky started in the position on November 1, 2022. The first large project for Michelle is the development and implementation of a comprehensive invasive species management plan for the Dufferin County Forest and other County-owned assets. Michelle will be assisting in all County Forest Division activities.

5.0 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.

6.0 DUFFERIN COUNTY FOREST ANNUAL WORK SCHEDULE

The main activities for 2023 are described in the following sections.

6.1 Environmental Sustainability

It is anticipated that there will be 29.4 hectares of conifers marked in 2023. The breakdown of the areas is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Areas Planned to be Marked in the Dufferin County Forest for 2023

Tract (Compartment)	Species	Area (ha)
Randwick (5b)	red pine	14.0
Main (15b, 16b)	red pine/white pine	7.0
Mono (39a-1)	red pine	8.4
Total Area		29.4

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 late summer of 2022.

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.

Implementation of a comprehensive invasive species management plan will begin, focusing on terrestrial plant invasives in the County Forest.

6.2 Economic Sustainability

For details of the budget, refer to the County of Dufferin's Budget 2023.

6.3 Social Sustainability

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

Pending budget approval, major new signs planned for 2023 include:

- i. signs at all County Forest entrances prominently displaying the County Forest website address and/or a QR code to link to the website; and
- ii. pictographic signs indicating permitted trail uses.

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 start to be disseminated through the County's various social media accounts, as well as through traditional media avenues.

6.4 Monitoring

In 2023, the monitoring program will focus on five broad areas:

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

A detailed inventory of known terrestrial plant invasive species locations will be conducted to inform control measures as part of the implementation of the invasive species management plan.

A detailed inventory of oak regeneration, particularly in the Oak Ridges South Slope Forest Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, will be conducted to inform a management strategy specifically for oak-dominated stands.

For more information:

County Forest Division
c/o Museum of Dufferin
936029 Airport Road Mulmur, ON L9V 0L3
519-941-1114 or 877-941-7787
forest@dufferincounty.ca www.dufferincounty.ca