



# Committee Report

<b>To:</b>	Warden McQueen and Members of Grey County Council
<b>Committee Date:</b>	February 27, 2020
<b>Subject / Report No:</b>	PDR-CW-15-20
<b>Title:</b>	Forest Management Annual Report and By-law Enforcement Officer Appointments
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Sarah Johnson
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Randy Scherzer
<b>Lower Tier(s) Affected:</b>	All local municipalities
<b>Status:</b>	Recommendation adopted by Committee as amended per Resolution CW55-20; Endorsed by County Council March 12, 2020 per Resolution CC35-20;

## Recommendation

1. That Report PDR-CW-15-20 regarding Forest Management be received;
2. That a by-law be prepared to appoint Lee Thurston and Jason Traynor as Municipal By-law Enforcement Officers for the County of Grey; and
3. That the by-law contain provisions for the appointment by the Director of Planning or his/her designate of additional Municipal By-law Enforcement Officers for the County of Grey.

## Executive Summary

The County contracts our forest management and lands management to Grey Sauble Conservation Authority. They provide a number of services including by-law enforcement as it relates to our Grey County Forest Management By-law, maintenance and management of forest properties and the CP Rail Trail, expertise on harvesting and related construction projects, administration of harvesting or clearing permits, as well as many other matters. This report provides a comparative overview of forest harvesting permits issued from 2017-2019, as well as some of the significant activities that occurred in the forests or on the CP Rail Trail this timeframe.

The Report also recommends the appointment of current By-Law Enforcement Officers and provides consideration for a substitute in the absence of both the primary and alternate officers.

# Background and Discussion

In previous years, a monthly report on forest harvesting activity was provided to the Planning and Community Development Committee, and more recently it was presented quarterly to the Committee of the Whole. Given the nature of the content and the frequency that Committee was presented with this information, it was difficult for Council to get a complete picture on forest management within the County. Through new annual reporting, staff will present the information to give a more complete picture of the activity within the County, including comparisons to previous years, such that there can be a greater comprehensive understanding.

To provide some context on forestry, it is estimated that currently Grey County has approximately 40-45% forest cover. These forests are a mixture of both public and privately-owned lands. This level of forest cover sets Grey County apart from most other municipalities in southwestern Ontario. Forests across the County serve as a major attraction to both residents and tourists, while improving our mental and physical health, and contributing to the local economy. Aside from the human-centric benefits, the natural functions these forests perform as part of our larger eco-system, is also not to be undervalued.

In the recent and coming months, there are and have been a few forest related projects occurring within the County, these include the;

1. update to the County's Forest Management By-law (see Report PDR-CW-06-20),
2. County's new Draft Forest Management Plan (see Report PDR-CW-09-20), and
3. passing of the Recreational Trail Master Plan (see Report PDR-CW-44-19).

Links to the above-noted staff reports have been included in the Attachments section of this report, and a brief summary of each project is included below.

1. The Forest Management By-law law applies to the entire County and is intended to regulate the management of forest areas in both public and private ownership. It requires harvesting to be done in a sustainable way that will promote forest health. The process is overseen by the County's Forest Management By-law Enforcement Officer.
2. The Forest Management Plan is a document that outlines how the County Forests are to be managed over a 20-year period. Grey County's properties provide wildlife with natural sources of food, water, shelter, lifecycle habitat and travel corridors. The large forested tracts of land also provide forest-dependent wildlife with forest interior habitat. In addition, the County's Forests serve as recreational amenities to both local residents and tourists. Grey County Forests (GCF) are comprised of 46 separate properties totaling 3,394 hectares (8,383 acres), spread across Grey County. The productive forest cover is approximately 2,784 hectares (6,877 acres) or about 82% of the forest area.
3. The Recreational Trails Master Plan is a strategic document providing direction on recreational activities occurring or proposed within the GCF properties and the CP Rail Trail (e.g. hiking, cycling, snowmobiling, etc.) as well as improvements that can be done to better support and promote these recreational activities.

These three projects are all intended to preserve the health and sustainability of both County-owned and privately-owned woodlots for generations to come.

The County is also undertaking a Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP), wherein staff expect that the forestry assets will be highlighted as a significant contributor to the health and sustainability

of the natural environment. Within the CCAP the concept of '*climate forests*' may also be considered. A climate forest is a forest that is deliberately managed to fight climate change. This is done by centering the management of the forest around the capture and storage of additional carbon. The primary products of the type of climate forestry are carbon offset credits.

## Forestry Activities within the County

One of the many roles of the By-law Enforcement Officer/Forest Manager is providing staff with a monthly report on the number of permits (Intents to Cut) and activities associated with the County Forest Management By-law. These permits enable selective harvests that are classified as good forestry practices. Permits are sent to the respective municipality when they are received, so that if there are corresponding municipal processes, then the municipality will have enough time to obtain that information. Municipal knowledge of these cuts is also crucial as it relates to any impacts on the municipal road network, or questions about tree cutting activity from local landowners.

Table 1 below provides a summary of Intent to Cut permits issued for good forestry management activities on both public and private lands from 2017-2019. Intents to Cut permit numbers have remained relatively stable over this time period, with a slight increase in 2019.

Daily activities done by the Forest Manager are significant and these monthly reports help the Forestry-Trails Coordinator to understand the volume of work that is being required of the position in order to manage time and resources effectively. It also assists staff to handle enquiries from the public or municipalities.

	January			February			March			April			May			June			July			August			September			October			November			December			Totals		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
The Blue Mountains	4	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	8	9	5
Chatsworth	3	2	3	5	1	5	1	1	2	2	3	6	1	0	3	1	1	4	0	1	4	1	1	0	1	2	2	2	1	1	4	2	6	0	5	5	21	20	41
Georgian Bluffs	2	2	1	0	1	2	1	1	2	0	1	4	0	2	3	4	0	6	2	3	0	0	1	2	0	3	1	2	4	1	0	3	4	1	3	2	12	24	28
Grey Highlands	8	6	10	4	6	1	1	6	3	4	1	2	2	0	3	5	3	3	0	3	3	1	3	1	2	0	2	5	6	8	6	6	6	7	10	13	45	50	55
Hanover	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Meaford	3	0	2	2	1	1	2	0	2	1	1	1	6	2	0	2	3	0	0	0	3	2	1	2	2	1	0	5	0	3	3	2	1	0	0	3	28	11	18
Owen Sound	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Southgate	2	2	5	0	1	2	0	1	3	3	1	0	3	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	3	1	3	0	3	9	5	4	25	15	22
West Grey	4	5	6	12	4	5	7	4	6	5	3	1	4	12	2	4	4	7	5	4	3	3	2	2	5	8	5	4	8	5	4	7	7	7	5	4	64	66	53
	26	18	28	23	14	17	12	13	18	15	11	14	16	17	13	17	11	21	8	13	15	9	10	8	11	15	10	20	24	20	20	20	27	26	29	31	203	195	222

Table 1: Good Forestry Harvest Permits Issued 2017-2019

The second type of permit/application administered through the Forest Management By-law is the Minor Exemption. These applications are more complex and are when a landowner wishes to clear more area than the by-law permits, and can result in clear-cutting a portion of woodlot. Under certain circumstances Minor Exemptions are possible, provided a number of criteria are met. In some cases, Minor Exemption applications can require the completion of an environmental impact study. Since 2012, when the Planning department began administering the By-law, the number of Minor Exemption applications has increased. Table 2 below shows the number of applications that were received from 2012-2019 and whether or not the application was approved, denied, withdrawn or further information was requested. Also, in the last category there were three applications where staff did a preliminary review and indicated that even with supplemental information the application could not be supported.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Number of Minor Exemption Applications Received	1	9	3	1	6	2	5	6
Approved	1	6			2		2	4
Denied				1				
Withdrawn		1						1
Further Information Requested/Not Supported by staff		2	3		4	2	3	1

**Table 2: Minor Exemption Applications (2012-2019)**

During this same time period, Grey County also tendered harvests in our own GCF properties. Grey County Forests managed were;

- 2017 – Forest #1 Normanby, Forest # 29 Lily Oak and Forest #45 Chatsworth,
- 2018 – Forest #30 Sunken Lake, Forest #27 Berkeley, Forest #4 South Welbeck, Forest #3 North Welbeck, Forest #20 Dornoch and Forest #6 Collingwood 19, and
- 2019 – Forest #43 Sullivan Klondyke, Forest #31 Copper Kettle, Forest #2 Artemesia/Euphrasia Townline, Forest #21 Camp Oliver and Forest #19 Camp Oliver.

Over this three-year period the County received \$257,298 in revenue from the above-noted harvests.

In addition to issuing permits, there are other on-going forestry-related activities that occur across the County on public and private lands. These include ongoing marking for the harvesting schedule and verification, numerous site visits both at time of operations and post-harvest inspections, invasive species tracking and investigation, species at risk identification, as well as investigating possible violations and issuing tickets and stop work orders when necessary. In recent years, County staff have seen an increase the number of Forest Management By-law infractions. This increase has resulted in more time spent by the By-law Enforcement Officer, as well as Planning and Legal Services staff, on investigations and laying charges under the By-law. As a result, County and Grey Sauble Staff have also been working to educate landowners on the By-law through the Call Before You Cut campaign. This education will continue as part of the County's update to the by-law.

## Appointment of a By-law Enforcement Officer and Alternates

The By-law Enforcement Officer position is fulfilled by Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA) staff through a contract. This contract was recently renewed for another five-year period (see Staff Report PDR-CW-45-19 in the Attachments section of this report). The GSCA contract is crucial to supporting the management of our forest and trail properties, as well as the implementation and enforcement of the Forest Management By-law. The current By-law Enforcement Officer is Lee Thurston, who filled this role after the retirement of Carl Sadler.

The County By-law that names the Officer needs to be updated to reflect that Lee has assumed this role and also needs to name an alternate. The County Lands Manger position, responsible for County trails and forests, is the other major role that GSCA staff provide for us and currently in that position is Jason Traynor. Jason also has the forestry background and provincial certification to act as a back-up to Lee in filling the By-law Enforcement Officer role.

Through this by-law, staff are recommending the appointment of Lee and Jason as Municipal By-law Enforcement Officers for the County. Staff are also seeking flexibility for County staff to appoint other duly credentialed enforcement officers, should both Lee and Jason be unable to perform their duties (e.g. illness, vacation, etc.). There are times when the nature of the By-law Enforcement Officer's work is time sensitive (e.g. investigating a scenario where active tree cutting is occurring), and as such it is important to have alternate resources. The proposal is that the Director of Planning, or his/her designate, be delegated the authority to appoint other duly credentialed enforcement officers. Such additional officers would typically be other GSCA staff members

Staff are recommending this report be received, and that a by-law be prepared to appoint the by-law officers as described above. Annual forestry reports will follow in the first quarter of each year, updating the County's forestry numbers as per this report.

## Legal and Legislated Requirements

Forest permits (Intents to Cut) are administered by the By-law Enforcement Officer as per the Forest Management By-law. The County's by-law and activities are further governed by the *Municipal Act*. Municipal By-Law Enforcement Officers are appointed pursuant to the *Police Services Act*.

## Financial and Resource Implications

There are no anticipated financial or resource considerations related to this report beyond what is included within the County budget. The activities described within this report are within the scope of the recently approved agreement between Grey County and the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority. The appointment of a Forest Management By-law Enforcement Officers would ensure continuous service delivery to the County and the public.

## Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Planning Staff, County Clerk, Director of Legal Services
- External: Lee Thurston and Jason Traynor, Grey Sauble Conservation Authority

## Appendices and Attachments

[PDR-CW-44-19 Recreational Trail Master Plan](#)

[Recreational Trails Master Plan \(2019\)](#)

[PDR-CW-06-20 Forestry Management By-law Updates](#)

[4341-06 Consolidated Forest Management By-Law](#)

[PDR-CW-09-20 Forest Management Plan](#)

[Current Forest Management Plan \(2003\)](#)

[PDR-CW-45-19 Grey Sauble Contract Renewal](#)