

A fight for the forest

MNR sets logging dates despite opposition

By Erin Lynch

Mark Bramham is a self-declared tree hugger. These days he's embracing a stand of Red Oak trees on a parcel of 100-acre crown land that adjoins his property.

Mark and his wife Sandra own Greenmantle farm on the Essonville line. Rocks have traditionally been the Bramhams' passion. With a large number of mineral occurrences on their property, the couple offers mineral tours to the public. An appreciation for the natural world has the Bramhams campaigning to protect the 100 crown acres that border their property. The land situated behind Vinegar Hill is a testament to the Highlands' wilderness: rocky, hilly and lush.

Prior to logging skidders, Mark says the hilly terrain prevented the land from being logged. The land-locked parcel has no stumps, a sign that the forest has not been logged. The crown jewel is an ancient yellow birch hollow that one can stand up in and look at the sky through the living tree.

The piece of property is scheduled to be logged by the MNR between 2016 and 2022.

The Bramhams oppose the logging for a number of reasons, which include the rarity of the property.

"It's an old Oak forest. It's rare to see Red Oaks that haven't been touched. Oak trees provide acorns which create food for moose, deer, squirrels, bear and other animals," says Mark.

Another reason is to protect the minerals on the Bramhams' property. Mark has a mining lease on their property. A logging skidder could damage the abundance of rare minerals that are located close to the ground's surface.

Gareth Davies, Management Forrester for the Bancroft district MNR, says that removing the parcel of land from being logged is infeasible. Davies says they will be using a selection system which involves taking the worst trees first. "It will be harvested," says Davies who says they are open to consultation.

Logging to start in 2012

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Davies says that the MNR walked the property with Mark in the fall with a delegation that included the forestry company and a local citizen's committee.

Mark says that one person in the party was unable to walk the property due to ill health. As a result, the group walked only 10 percent of the land.

Mark has told the MNR that he will not allow them to cross his property to reach the land-locked crown land. He also spoke to his neighbours, who he says have agreed to follow his suit. However, people age and property changes hands. There are no guarantees.

"Why can't we just set acreage aside and just let it be. I look at old pictures of Haliburton County and the hills are bare. I'm not saying it was right or wrong. People were starving. We need to think about the future," says Mark.

