

THE BRODIE CLUB

Minutes of the 852nd Meeting

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, October 16, 1989

Place of meeting: Faunal Lab, South Borden Building

Speaker: Don Huff, Environmental Director of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, currently on loan to Forests for Tomorrow

Subject: The Class Environmental Assessment Hearing for Timber Management on Crown Lands in Ontario

Chairman: John Speakman. Secretary: Norma Martin

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 p.m. Eleven members were present and three guests: Margaret Bodsworth, guest of Fred; Charlton Carscallen, guest of Savage; Don Huff, our speaker. Keith Reynolds sent regrets.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read. Their adoption was moved by Reading, seconded by Norm Martin.

Announcements

Norm Martin paid tribute to the late Dick Ussher who died in Owen Sound this year at the age of 82. Ussher graduated in Forestry at the University of Toronto in the 1920s. Subsequently, he first worked for the Alberta Government. Later he moved to Ontario Lands and Forests. He became a Park Naturalist in Algonquin Park and later in Rondeau Park where he was employed year round. When he retired at 65 he and his wife, Mollie, moved to Delta where he was active in the Kingston Field Naturalists Club and as leader for F.O.N. trips. The Usshers moved to Owen Sound last year.

All stood for a moment of silence.

Norm Martin, as F.O.N. representative, mentioned the Wye Marsh winter program; F.O.N. Christmas cards for sale as well as records; an appeal for funds from Forests for Tomorrow.

Carrick reported on work with Trumpeter Swans in five states and two provinces. About 200 swans per year have been reared for at least 5 years but the swans do not know where to migrate. Bill Sladen in Virginia has offered a site at which the swans could winter. Carrick will lead 8 swans from Lake Scugog behind his ultra-light plane pending permission to release the birds. Since swans can only take off from water the Ultra-light plane is being equipped with pontoons.

Speaker of the Evening

Don Huff was introduced by Norm Martin. Our speaker is a graduate in honours B.Sc. from Trent University. Following graduate work at Waterloo University he worked for Parks Canada organizing marine parks. He has worked on park planning in Scandinavia and Great Britain. He is Environmental Director for the F.O.N. now on loan to Forests for Tomorrow for the duration of the Environmental Assessment Hearing now in Thunder Bay.

Having heard the previous minutes in which the comments of Mr. Ken Armson on the hearing at Thunder Bay were recorded, Don Huff made two points:

- 1. the hearing is called the Class Environmental Assessment on Timber Management of Crown Lands in Ontario, not Forest Management, an important distinction. Indeed, the assessment should be on forest management.
- 2. the Ministry of Natural Resources had been able to obtain about 12 exemptions from the time that the EA process went in until the time when the hearing started. It is of concern that the Ministry has an exemption from the process until the decision is rendered by the board.

It was not easy for the FON to make a commitment to become involved with the EA at Thunder Bay. The document presented by the MNR had flaws. The various groups now comprising Forests for Tomorrow had to make a decision whether to accept the document as presented by the MNR or send it back and wait another three years for another draft before the hearing could be started. It was decided to accept the document with its shortcomings in order to start the process.

When the hearing began in January or February of 1988 the MNR said their case would be finished in 6 to 9 months. It is now 19 months later and there are still two panels of the 17 to be presented. Within the last few weeks the Environmental Assessment Board has come under tremendous pressure to speed up the process. If the hearing continues on the present schedule it could be 1992 before the hearing is completed. FFT has proposed holding the hearing in Toronto thereby decreasing travel time and expense and increasing the days available for the hearing. Costs for travelling have mounted at an extreme rate.

There will likely be a delay with panel 15 of the MNR presentation. This panel is the culmination of the previous presentations in that it is an approved timber management plan (the Red Lake Plan). The plan was left in disarray by the cross-examination of Michelle Swenarchuk, lawyer for FFT. The MNR did admit that the plan had serious deficiencies.

Slides of the Blind River Administrative District of MNR were shown. The issue of clear cutting is one that FFT is trying to

come to grips with. Large clear cuts require a commitment to artificial regeneration systems which involves great expense with plantings and chemicals. What FFT advocates is smaller sized clear-cuts which allow a greater level of natural regeneration.

Guidelines (and they are just guidelines) are not always followed by logging companies. For instance, buffer areas around lakes and rivers are often narrow. Reserves along water and green areas in clear cuts are called areas of concern and are basically designed to indicate that there is some level of protection out there to keep the maximum amount of timber in production. (Huff admitted that this is his biased statement.) Furthermore, there have been intrusions into parks.

Ken Reading has observed during travels in Ontario in the regions north of Longlac/Geraldton and along the Manitoba border that spruce budworm (or some disease) is killing the trees at such a rate that biologists are saying there will not be any timber in 10 years. The ministry seems to be ignoring the advice of the biologists. Can these concerns be fitted in to timber management?

Huff replied that forest protection is under the direction of timber management.

The question of timber supply as a whole is an interesting one because the MNR states that they have a policy of cutting the old forests first. According to the MNR situations like shortfalls of timber supply will be much easier to deal with when the forests are in a managed state. Here it becomes important to distinguish between timber management and forest management. We have to decide on the type of balance we want, what practices are going to be used, what is the impact of these practices, what we want to effect. Timber management does not deal with nontimber resources such as the wildlife, archeological and aesthetic values.

The MNR has information on deer, moose, cold water fisheries, bald eagles, herons and osprey but other areas are terra incognita. The present Environmental Assessment process is forcing the MNR to do field work that it would not have done before. For the first time the MNR is coming under a rigorous and well organized examination. The lawyers are able to elicit answers that people have not been able to obtain in the past.

Questions

Falls asked how the board responded to FFT's changing the ground rules by addressing forest management instead of timber management. Huff responded that his group is having some success in broadening the scope of the hearing because environment is defined broadly under the Environmental Assessment Act of Ontario. It is hoped that Ontario will come closer to the American model of forest management plan where there is an integration of all the values.

Bodsworth asked if the forestry management requirement could be

met by extending the parks and wilderness reserve system? Huff replied that there was not much chance of that in Ontario. Parks in Ontario are single use; forestry is multiple use. Incidentally in the U.S. parks are considered multiple use and forests single use.

Bodsworth asked Huff if he favored the practice of smaller clear-cuts than what are now used. Huff replied that some form of a modified cut, not a clear-cut, would be preferable to the present practice. Economic factors determine large clear-cuts.

There is not much difference in the success rate of natural regeneration and that of artificial regeneration. In some cases natural regeneration to the desired species can be higher. Artificial regeneration is difficult to assess. It is also expensive. Natural regeneration is greatly inhibited by the practice of clearing all seed sources from the land and piling them in one place in preparation of the site for planting.

Bendell commented that natural regeneration is unpredictable and slow. Economics is the main reason for allowing spruce to die from infestation; spruce does not have a high value. Furthermore, it is only economic to fight fire south of a certain line. The trees that are important are the black spruce in the boreal forest and jack pine. These trees have been relatively impervious to disease. Black spruce does not grow as fast as jack pine. Jack pine will probably come in as the species of choice although recently there have been infestations of budworm in jack pine.

Bendell posed two questions: Are the foresters doing the best possible job of forestry? They are not because no one knows the best way. It is valuable to make that point and get on with finding better ways. Secondly, what do we as citizens want from forest land? Bendell has problems with deciding the size of clear-cuts. For instance, on the west coast Blue Grouse and black-tailed deer thrive on large clear-cuts. On the other hand elk, moose, woodland caribou require areas of older timber for winter cover. A manifesto is needed stating what we want from the forest and then not allow a resource within a chosen zone to fall below that level.

Huff stated that the EA Hearing at Thunder Bay has revealed that there is a wide discrepancy among foresters as to number of hectares found in a large clear-cut. It could run from 130 to 4000 hectares. One of the outcomes of the hearing is the realization that not enough is understood, on all sides, about the whole issue.

Carscallen asked would selective cutting not make more jobs in the long run as opposed to the highly mechanized clear-cutting? Huff replied that certainly there would be more jobs and tied to this issue is the biological productivity of the land. Do we, in fact, have an overbuilt mill capacity in the province.

Carscallen asked what is the role of the Ministry of the

Environment in this hearing? Huff replied that the MOE is the only ministry present at the hearing. They have legal counsel and play an active role in the hearing. However, he wondered if the location of the hearing in Thunder Bay might be a strategy to reduce publicity.

Reading mentioned that he has sent black and white spruce seeds to the Treeline Arboretum in Finland and another in Sweden. They probably have a wealth of information on the management of boreal forests.

The speaker was thanked by Bendell who expressed our willingness to help FFT.

Members' Observations

Howard reported that flint points have been found near the skull of a mastodon six feet below the bottom of a bog.

Bendell was surprised by the sound of a family of Great Horned Owls near a camp at Gogama at the end of August. The sound was not owl-like.

Speakman said he had reported hearing the same sound at another meeting.

Martin had seen a raft of about 3000 Scaups at Prince Edward Point in Prince Edward County.

Carrick reported seeing thousands of Mourning Doves in cornfields. Falls has observed a large seed crop on maples, pines and other species with perhaps a correlated enormous number of Red-breasted Nuthatches in MusKoka. An upswing in small mammals next year could be expected.

Wader watching is good on the wide mudflats along the marshes of Lake Ontario: Godwits, Golden Plovers and various sandpipers.

Bodsworth had also observed large numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches through to MusKoka. When there is an early influx of these birds it is thought to be a good winter for finches, crossbills and grosbeaks. Further to owl calls, Bodsworth remarked on and imitated the soliciting call of young barred owls: a rising zzzipp.

Reading found a Red-throated Loon's nest with two eggs on a sterile lake on Baffin Island. A few days later there was a heavy snow storm and some lakes had ice on them. The young birds would have to hatch and mature early to be able to migrate.

Reading produced an article which he presumed was a tooth found on Baffin Island. It was given to Savage to identify.

Speakman commended Reading on his excellent letter which was circulated to the members with the last minutes. Speakman showed a slide of an osprey nest on top of a hydro pole. Reading has seen ospreys standing beside the road watching traffic.

The meeting was adjourned at 10 p.m.