

## **Barrie's Bass Pro Shops & Cabela's and Utopia's Brian Swaile lead list of Forests Ontario Award Winners**

**Barrie, Ont. (February 22, 2023)** – In an effort to inspire collective action to grow a healthy tomorrow, Forests Ontario held its 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on February 16 and 17 both virtually and in person in Alliston, Ontario. The annual event is the largest forestry conference of its kind in the province and featured 37 forest sector leaders, government officials, and more than 750 registrants, speakers, moderators, sponsors, and exhibitors, all coming together to ensure a greener and healthier future.

The conference also included an Awards Ceremony which recognized important contributors to forestry and the environment. Forests Ontario would like to thank everyone who attended both virtually and in-person and would like to congratulate all of the following award recipients:

- **Green Legacy Award winner: Bass Pro Shops & Cabela's:** The Green Legacy Award celebrates a visionary corporate partner that has been instrumental in promoting a healthy environment.

The Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund is supported by the company's 200 million customers who round up their purchase in-store and online at checkout, helping to shape the future growth and health of our outdoors and all who love it. In Ontario, the fund has supported conservation projects in the north, east, south and central areas of the province, with organizations such as Ducks Unlimited Canada, Nottawasaga Conservation Authority and Forests Ontario.

- **Forests Ontario Award winner: Brian Swaile:** The Forests Ontario Award celebrates individuals for their outstanding achievements and contributions to forestry education in Canada and beyond.

Brian is retired from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and owns Forever Green Consulting. For 21 years, Brian's role as a superintendent at the Ontario Tree Seed Plant (OTSP) involved the management of a unique side of forestry tree seed.

Brian ensured that the OTSP team was informed by industry and the best science and practices available. With Brian at the helm, the OTSP maintained its position as one of the leaders in tree seed in the country. After retiring from the seed plant, Brian brought his experience to Forests Ontario to build a strong foundation for a program built on seed and seed sourcing, and continued to mentor staff, partners and individuals.

Brian became an important member of the Forest Gene Conservation Association (FGCA), helping to guide the FGCA through many challenges and opportunities over his eight years on the board. Brian also played an important role on the Forest Genetics Ontario Committee and helped FGCA transition from a government guided organization to an independent one.

- **White Pine Award winner: Megan Thomson:** The White Pine Award recognizes student contributions to forest education and awareness.

Megan has been a volunteer Forest Education Intern with Forests Ontario since early 2021, and contributed over 150 placement hours. She undertook numerous projects including, writing for *Our Forest* magazine, reviewing and updating 90 lesson plans to ensure accurate curriculum links and up-to-date information, delivering numerous presentations, and assisting with the delivery of teacher training workshops. As a Teacher Candidate at Western University, Megan is looking forward to bringing forest education into her future teaching practice.

- **Susan Wiecek Forestry Education Award winner: Ken Jewett:** The Susan Wiecek Forestry Education Award recognizes individuals or organizations for outstanding contributions to forestry education in Ontario.

Ken started in business with the Abitibi Paper Company in 1950. In 1970, he left Abitibi and spent the next year arranging financing and equipping a plant for a new business called Marsan Foods. Marsan produces frozen meals for supermarket chains, restaurant chains and the health care field and has since become hugely successful.

Ken's passion was the maple tree and in 2000, he established Maple Leaves Forever. The mandate of Maple Leaves Forever is to promote and support the planting of native maples, and to date it has supported the planting of over 130,000 native maples all through Ken's personal financial contributions of close to \$750,000.

- **Forest Stewardship Award winner: Dr. Jan Oudenes & Dr. Isobel Ralston of MapleCross:** The Forest Stewardship Award is presented to individuals for outstanding activities in private land forest management and strong support of forestry promotion and education.

In 2017, Jan and Isobel established the MapleCross fund. They created MapleCross with the intention to invest in and protect ecologically sensitive land, preserving natural features and biological diversity for generations to come. Beyond the contributions of MapleCross itself, Jan and Isobel hope that this endeavour will inspire others to direct their own efforts and contributions to safeguarding our irreplaceable planet.

Since 2017, MapleCross has contributed to the acquisition of 38 nature reserves and preserves, protected and conservation areas, and critical habitat areas for wildlife across nine Canadian provinces totaling over 13,000 ha's of protected land. Additionally, they have also supported a number of environmental charities including, Toronto Wildlife Centre, Cumberland Community Forest Society, and Forests Ontario.

- **Most Valuable Planter Award winner: Cheyene Brunet:** The Most Valuable Planter Award recognizes an outstanding individual or organization for their contribution to restoring ecosystem health through tree planting initiatives.

Cheyene graduated from both the Forestry and Fish and Wildlife Technician programs at Fleming College and is continuing her education to become a professional forester. For the last 10 years, Cheyene has worked for South Nation Conservation authority as a forestry technician and in that time, has coordinated the planting of over one million trees through the authority's various tree planting programs, including over ¾ of a million with Forests Ontario programs.

- **Most Valuable Planter Award winners: Art Marvin, Bill Newell, Glenn McLeod, & Laird Nelson:** The Most Valuable Planter Award recognizes an outstanding individual or organization for their contribution to restoring ecosystem health through tree planting initiatives.

Art started in northwestern Ontario fresh out of college, then moved to the Cornwall area with Ministry of Natural Resources Forestry operations. After a stint with the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, Art retired and moved back to the family farm near Port Hope.

Glenn had a long career with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Most of his early career was at Orono Nursery as Superintendent with a short stint at St. Williams Nursery. When the Nurseries were closed, Glenn went to the Stewardship Council program in Northumberland. Upon retirement, he became one of Forests Ontario's first Field Advisors.

Bill started his forestry career at the Ganaraska Conservation Authority where he worked on a number of projects including the landowner tree planting program. For the second half of his career, he went out on his own as a forestry consultant working for some of the same landowners, as well as organizations, like Ontario Power Generation and Northumberland Land Trust.

Laird started his career with FERRIC (Forest Industry Equipment Research Organization). He then moved to the woodlands division of Domtar working in both Cornwall and Trenton. He retired as the Woodlands Manager of the Trenton operations.

-30-

**For more information or to request an interview, please contact:**

**Matthew Brown**

Communications Manager

Forests Ontario / Forest Recovery Canada

Cell: 519-471-4751

E-mail: [MBrown@forestsontario.ca](mailto:MBrown@forestsontario.ca)

## About Forests Ontario & Forest Recovery Canada

Forests Ontario is the province's leading charity dedicated to the creation, preservation, and maintenance of forest and grassland habitats. Our ambitious, large-scale tree planting initiatives, extensive educational programs, and decades of community outreach result in millions of trees being planted each year.

Together with our national division, Forest Recovery Canada, we work with our many partners across the country to plant native trees and ensure our efforts today thrive and grow into tomorrow's diverse, healthy, and resilient forests.

Forests Ontario is the voice for our forests.

Visit [www.forestsontario.ca](http://www.forestsontario.ca) or follow us @Forests\_Ontario to find out more.

## Photos



Bass Pro Shops General Manager Rick Hunter and Forests Ontario Director of Business Development Kim Sellers.

The Voice for our Forests

[www.forestsontario.ca](http://www.forestsontario.ca)



Forest Gene Conservation Association CEO Kerry McLaven and Brian Swaile.