

Why We Do What We Do in the Ganaraska Forest

If you have walked the trails of the Ganaraska Forest, you have probably noticed the many stands of Pine plantations, with some that are marked with orange paint. These Pine plantations, which cover over 5,000 acres of the 11,000 acre Ganaraska Forest, are being managed to allow them to become a healthier and more diverse forest.

In the early 20th century, Ganaraska Forest lands were almost entirely covered by barren, rapidly-eroding blowsands, the result of early, destructive farming practices. The Red Pine in particular could survive in such harsh conditions, stabilizing the blowing sands, and growing into healthy forests to manage for timber production. The trees also provide source water protection for the Ganaraska Watershed. Over time, the conifers have grown and have enriched the soil; and now, the selective thinning process will allow other species to regenerate to create a more diverse and resilient forest for the future.

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) is managing these forests on top of the Oak Ridges Moraine to maintain their health and productivity, fulfilling its mandate of "Clean Water, Healthy Land for Healthy Communities". A small portion of the conifer overstorey will be removed every 10-20 years. These thinnings gradually allow more light into the understorey of the stand and encourage more shade-loving species to establish, survive, and thrive. Good forest management will ensure that the Ganaraska Forest can continually provide sustainable, renewable, locally-sourced wood – the lumber for your house, the paper in your favourite book, and the utility poles that bring us electricity and phone service - just to mention a few .

While efforts are made to conduct harvesting operations in ways that reduce impacts on recreational forest uses and on the environment, visitors to the Ganaraska Forest should be aware that logging activity takes place annually from mid-summer through the winter months. To learn more about how and why the GRCA is sustainably managing the forest for your continued benefit and enjoyment, please contact us. We're happy to discuss the history and the future management of southern Ontario's largest, contiguous forest.

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