

Education and advocacy with the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council



By Nate Smelle

2015 looks to be another exciting year for the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council (BASC). Taking an active role as stewards of the area's resources, BASC's presence is felt throughout the community in many ways. The community-based, volunteer group's mandate is to create a healthy, vibrant and sustainable community through natural resource stewardship. BASC works with other local community groups, agencies and landowners to deliver programs and services that support economic development, biodiversity conservation, and the wise management and use of the area's natural resources.

For the last year BASC has been working alongside the North Hastings Trail Committee to develop and implement a comprehensive non-motorized trails strategy in Bancroft. This plan will encompass the improvement of existing trails and the development of new ones.

"The council has become a significant partner in assisting with the facilitation, and organization of this initiative," said BASC's chairman Steve Wilkins. "In the long term this strategy will benefit the health of local citizens, contribute to the economic development of the area, enhance knowledge of our local natural resources and cultures, and improve the quality and vibrancy of our community for existing residents and those who may want to make the area their new home."

This initiative now has the interest of local, provincial, and federal agencies as well as nationally significant trail experts. Stay tuned as this project develops in the near future.

The council finds strength in working together with other community organizations. BASC plans to continue its partnership with the Bancroft and District Chamber of Commerce in 2015, bringing back its popular line-up of Nature Discovery Tours. The tours visit the provincially significant and unique North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery; take advantage of the one and only elk interpretive tour in eastern North America; see and learn firsthand the management and processing of Canada's most renewable resource in our forestry tour; learn and view the local and nationally significant species at risk in our chimney swift tour; and finally learn about minerals in one of the richest geological regions right here in the "Mineral Capitol of Canada". For Information about these tours contact the Bancroft and District Chamber of Commerce at 613-332-1513 or visit bancroftdistrict.com.

Environmental education and advocacy are two important components of the stewardship council's strategic plan. BASC is a prominent advocate of the Northern Outdoor Studies (NOS) program and the Northern Environmental Research and Development Studies (NERDS) program. As founding members of NOS the BASC has over a history of 18 years of affiliation with the program. BASC and supporting partners remain vigilant in support of these programs, maintaining the safety and integrity of the program to the benefit of the community and most importantly participating students.

Here is your chance to help make your environment a little greener by supporting the BASC Tree and Shrub sale! BASC have Pines (Red and White), Cedar, and Oak trees available as bare root stock, as well as Upland and Shoreline shrub bundles. BASC still have a fair amount of stock available so people have lots to choose from, and at a great price. The easiest way to purchase our trees and shrubs is at the online store for secure credit card payment at: <http://bascstore.ecwid.com/#>. The orders will be available for pick-up in the Bancroft area, on May 1 and 2.

There are also a slew of children's activities supported or hosted by BASC. Every August there is the Annual Eco-Scavenger Hunt for children held at Silent Lake Provincial Park. Another popular BASC children's event is its Wonders of Wetland Day held each autumn. This program brings together more than 200 children in Grade 4 from all the public schools in the area to teach them about why it is important to protect the area's wetlands, and to teach them how to take action. For a more detailed summary of BASC's stewardship projects visit www.bancroftstewardship.ca.