

SDG receives donation of 84-acre forest

28 December 2020



It's wasn't quite Christmas, but SDG received quite the generous gift on Dec. 21 — an 84-acre forest, courtesy of Dr. John Macaulay.

The news of the donation was made to council through a formal letter of intent sent from Macaulay. In it, the man wrote he has owned and managed the parcel of land — located off of Robertson Road in Martintown — for about 50 years.

"My reason for wishing to make this donation at this time is that I am now 90 years of age and no longer physically capable of managing this forested land myself, even with help from available resources," Macaulay stated in his letter. "None of my adult family wishes to take on this responsibility. After my death, it is likely that the land would be deforested and the remarkable biological diversity of the land would be lost."

The donation would be made through the Canada Ecological Gifts Program and as such, the county would have very little financial obligation relative to the value of the donation. A site visit by the county's contracted forester — South Nation Conservation — revealed the lot has been well managed, possesses magnificent diversity, and great potential for continued hardwood growth.

"Given its age and condition, the property could be easily incorporated as part of the county's existing forest, and incorporated into existing sustainable management plans," read a report from administration.

In all, the county owns about 10,000 acres of forest throughout the region. These are managed according to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification requirements.

"It's important that council supports this, with all the clear-cutting that's been going on," said Coun. Bryan McGillis. "I really think that we should thank this individual property owner who is kind enough to donate this lot to us. Something has to be done about the bush that is being destroyed."

"This is such a heartwarming offer," added Coun. Carma Williams. "We just don't see near enough of this kind of thing, and I will support it wholeheartedly. I would really love to meet this gentleman."

Macaulay's letter did contain several provisions if council did indeed accept the donation. Among them was that SDG ensure future generations have access to the forest on a recreational and educational basis, continue to maximize biodiversity of the forest and control public access, and prohibit extensive logging, clearcutting or the use of heavy equipment on the land.

The man also wants the forest to bare some of his family's recognition — in the form of the creation of Macaulay's Lane as well as the right for some specific individuals to exclusively hunt deer within the property.

Council voted unanimously in favor of authorizing the county's director of transportation and planning to work with Macaulay on acquiring the land.

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Source: <https://www.standard-freeholder.com/news/local-news/sdg-receives-donation-of-84-acre-forest>