



Directors' Report for the Year Ending December 31, 2012  
Annual General Meeting  
March 23, 2013

Deep within the Board Minutes of September 29 last year is this – “Motion to pay the balance of the loan in full. Carried.” With that small note the forests of Friends of Redtail Society became debt free and the “Sheltering Forests” campaign was successfully concluded. We had planned to celebrate on the last day of the year as part of the now traditional walk, the Grenzgang, but a blizzard visited and we thought it better to let it go.

But heartfelt thanks to everyone whose imaginations have been sufficiently fired to have given so selflessly to secure the health of this little bit of earth and its communities. Now, the way has been more fully opened for FRS to help in the great work of this age: finding and engaging in a better working relationship between humans and wild nature.

Early in the summer the Board tasked the Second Step Committee with developing a suitable forestry model. We have not made much progress. Fundraising. Fundraising. Fundraising. You get the idea. So our efforts so far have been limited to studying the management plan of a new community forest near Mooseland in Halifax County East called Otter Ponds Demonstration Forest, and to looking at the practices of Enrichment forestry and of Restoration forestry. Whatever practice is used, it is this Board's position that anything done on the land has to increase, or at least not damage the integrity, resilience and beauty of the forests. If we find our activities violating that rule, we stop. We trust the Boards to come will do the same.

Also, a series of presentations was initiated late last year by the Second Step Committee and has since been under on-going organization by the board. “Talking Forests: Living and Learning From The Land Speaker Series” is the full name. Bob Bancroft's presentation this afternoon will open the series. The first was to have been last month but another blizzard came instead.

Beginning with the January Board meeting in 2012, and probably before that, the Board has been pushing to gain control of a 354-acre parcel of Crown Land adjoining FRS lands. Much of this land brings water to FRS lands. Much has been abused for a half-century and more. Some has not. What this board proposed to do with it is the same as that of FRS forests: learn from the land then do what we can to demonstrate how local people can make part of a living there while at the same time enhancing life there. FRS is already an ambitious project and will become more so with this. The challenge of taking on more sometimes seems to be too much. But we found we could not just stand

by and send our deepest regrets that we could not attempt to wrest this adjoining land away from the industrial maw. That is especially true now that more forest destruction has taken place on two sides of the FRS land.

A process that was very heartening through last year was the coming of clarity among all of us on the Board that if this new land were to come to FRS, it could only come if the following criterion is met: a community forest, to be a community forest, must be under the control of the local community.

FRS has been urged by government and industry to act as advisors to industry over this Crown Land. That arrangement would then be labeled “community forest.” We found we could not do that. As one board member put it, FRS would just become decoration for industry. It is not that we do not wish to work with industry at all; if they wish, for instance, to advise us we shall be grateful for the advice - as long as it is just advice. So the Board has taken the position that the needs of the land must precede the needs of industry, particularly the needs of corporation shareholders to make money. We hope that position is representative of all of FRS.

In June some of the Board met with representatives of the Stern Company, now Port Hawkesbury Paper Company, at their request. We met on the Porter Road. It was a friendly, productive meeting and led to an invitation by PHP for FRS to visit some of their, as they name them, operations. So far we have expressed interest but have not found the time. During the meeting we asked, perhaps obliquely, “How about we get the licence for this land?” They said, “How about not?”. Later it was announced by DNR that the 20 year renewable licence over this parcel, previously a 50 year lease, had been granted to PHP. This generated more letters from yours truly, the Board, pointing out that the new licencing regime provides the Minister with the power to exclude parcels from industry management. So we did not give up. Even though the scope of this report is supposed to exclude activities in 2013, we can say that there have recently been faint indications that control of this land might still go to FRS. So stay tuned.

As promised during last year’s AGM, the Board carried out a survey of the members then followed it with a Members Meeting in May. A summary of the results indicates the Board is pretty much in sync with the responders: local control and cleanliness first with view to how to make part of a living in community with the land. Thanks to those who responded and to Trudy Watts for facilitating much of the process. We had hoped for more response but we know the membership is vibrant and passionate about FRS. So a different approach is needed. Maybe the new board will come over to your house for a talk and then stay for supper! Whatever, the Board saw no partition between itself and members. So let us reiterate that all Board meetings, committee meetings and Board records are open to all members. If you want to come to a meeting please allow the Board to put your news or issue on the agenda. Any Board member will help you. Or if you just want to sit in, that’s fine too. There will probably be plenty of opportunities; last year the Board met 16 times, an average of every 23 days, with committee meetings in between.

With the exception of several neighbouring parts of the forest getting cut down, FRS's relations with neighbours and community have been friendly. Part of this is that, although we prefer no motor vehicles within FRS lands, the Board agreed in principle last winter to sign the Snowmobile Association standard agreement with landowners allowing them to pass through FRS lands on one long-established trail down an abandoned public road. There will be certain conditions: better signage, better grooming, better erosion control, and possibly, gates installed to exclude ATV's. There is no desire among the Board to allow wheeled ATV's to go through, just snowmobiles and work related activities for ATV's.

Late last summer arrangements had been made with an insurer to buy a general liability policy covering FRS lands up to \$2m. This was done because, after study, it became apparent we could not place FRS in the position of being open to ruination through a charge of negligence; it costs a great deal to defend yourself. So we agreed to go ahead but had to defer purchase until the purse was better off. At one point in October the bank account was about \$270. Thankfully, due to continuing generosity of members and of some new donors, we found that we were able to buy this policy recently. The cost of \$2m liability insurance is about \$1100/year.

Much work was done on Craig's Way last year. It is now nearing completion. Most of the work has been done by FRS members, but quite a bit by folks who just wanted to help out. For those who don't know Craig's Way, it is an oval shaped footpath of about 2km in length connected by footpaths to the MacBeth Road and at the other end to the Porter Road. The proof for a five foot by four foot introductory sign for the MacBeth Road approach is now ready to go to the sign maker. You should be able to see the sign there by summer. A bridge over a brook and the completion of trail markers all around are among the many jobs done on Craig's Way last year. The placement of boulders at the Porter Road entrance is one of the few remaining jobs. There is a hold-up due to a highway bridge getting washed away.

Fundraising, like death and taxes, continues. Two of our several fundraising projects last year were the very successful "Forest Gold" event, initiated and carried out by Nova Poirier, where folks gave their unused jewelry. A "Walk On The Wild Side" event, our second one, took place in May. People were again guided through local forests then were treated to live music made by The North Shore Slow Pickers while they enjoyed a light lunch. There was persistent work last year to get Garnet Rogers here for an FRS benefit. It looks like that might take place this summer. More events have been contemplated. Again, stay tuned.

As Chair I believe I have the privilege to pick out four people for special thanks, so I am going to. Geoff Moore acted first as Secretary and then as Treasurer. In his four years of service on the Board he was responsible for almost singlehandedly gaining our charitable tax status, only one of his many contributions. We regret he has had to resign recently. Michelle Ferris has acted for six years first as Treasurer then as Secretary. Michelle has always used her considerable talents, skills and diligence to promote the interests of FRS. Together they have done the heavy lifting for FRS in 2012, and before. Steve Wark

answered many calls from the Board to act in his capacity as a professional designer to produce materials, such as the soon-to- be-placed main sign for Craig's Way. It's beautiful work. And finally, I'd like to give thanks to our old legal standby, Ian MacLean, who has always made himself available to FRS for legal counsel. All have contributed selflessly and without any charge.

I want to add special thanks for the generosity of Glen and Elizabeth Chenell over several years' time, but particularly last year. The same goes to the Romanowsky family who, over the summer, worked together to find the means to provide FRS with a big chunk, which brought the Sheltering Forests campaign pretty well home. But of course all those who have given whatever that could give deserve our thanks and our gratitude.