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## Change in management at Ontario's AFA

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By: Brett Hanson

Forestry operations in Ontario's flagship provincial park is under new leadership. Jeff W. Leavey has been named General Manager of the Algonquin Forestry Authority (AFA). Leavey replaces retiring Danny Janke who ends a 37 year career with the Crown Corporation.

Leavey has had a long career in technical forestry operations. He began as a forest technician in Tweed district in eastern Ontario, the following summer he began a seven year stint on contracts as a tree marker and technician in Algonquin Park. From there he moved to permanent staff with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) in Algonquin Park, then Pembroke district.



**Jeff Leavey**

"During my time there, I developed an attachment to the park, as many people do. It's remarkable that I have come full circle. Actually, when I left I said I would probably be back," Leavey said. "I've worked as a senior crown land planning technician and then as an operations leader. My career has always been in applied silviculture, harvest and renewal operations. I remain true to my beginnings by staying involved with tree marking and I'm proud to be a founding member of the provincial tree marking committee."

Leavey's exposure to the policy and political side of forestry began in the 1990's with the change to the Crown Forestry Sustainability Act. He took on a MNR forestry advisor assignment in Pembroke and helped guide the private sector through the changes in legislation and new business relationships.

In 1998 Leavey left government to join the private sector as General Manager of the newly formed Ottawa Valley Forest (OVF) Sustainable Forest License (SFL) where he worked for ten years.

"I've always kept my eye on the AFA and what they were doing. They are leaders in forest management. When the manager of operations position with the AFA came up my wife reminded me that I wanted to return to the park. I was very busy and quite happy to be OVF's GM, but I took a crack at it and was in that position for five of the most challenging years in my forestry career." Leavey said.

"When Danny Janke announced his retirement, although I felt it was the logical next step for me, I wasn't ready," Leavey said. "I felt I still had a lot of work to do as manager of operations but also felt I could serve the AFA well in the role of general manager."

The focus of the AFA right now is the delicate balancing act of affordability. Leavey says the AFA will continue the work of balancing the willingness of mills to take their wood and pay fair market price to cover the cost of getting the wood there and being able to pay contractors what it takes to do the work as well as AFA's forest management and renewal costs. Leavey is buoyed by the numerous positive signs recently.

Predictions are that 2014 should be on par with business levels of the previous year. Leavey expects increases in demand for their product may be offset by increases in operating costs.

"We have some strategies to work on. Like everyone else in the business, we'll grapple with transportation costs. Our environmental management system and third party certification demands that we are walking the talk and implementing programs to make sure we are looking ahead and moving the yardsticks on the continual improvement front."

The other major part of the AFA's program is making sure their contractor's harvesting season isn't any less than it already is. There are many constraints on the wood supply in Algonquin Park whether it's recreational and biological values or the marketplace and weather.

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Leavey says those four factors affect how long and where they can work and what type of wood is harvested. Leavey and his team have to balance all of those operational concerns with the social mandate.

"Responsibility for sustaining jobs is pretty important to AFA and a big part of our mandate, to keep people working and supply raw material to the mills in the region," Leavey said. "It's all about those good hard-working people, the one's we need to achieve sustainable forest management. It's tough but it's an honorable job, especially in Algonquin Park." ◇

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