

# 2004 Woodlot Owner of the Year Selected

By Tim Whynot



Woodlot owner of the Year James Bower with forester Patricia Amero.

I've had the privilege of being involved with the Nova Scotia Woodlot Owner of the Year program, every year since its inception in 1990, except for two. As a "judge," I have seen some great woodlots and have met even greater people. I hesitate to use the term "judge" because I never feel qualified to "judge" these outstanding landowners. Instead, I

prefer to use the term 'evaluate' or even 'compare with others'.

Woodlot owners are evaluated on their effort and commitment to setting and meeting sustainable goals for their land; improving their knowledge or understanding of the forest, improving the condition, access, and health of their woodland; using integrated resource management, with an emphasis on wood production; and considering values such as wildlife habitat and woodlot management.

If this year's regional woodlot owners of the year are any indication - finding woodlot owners with a stewardship or environmental ethic appears to be getting easier. In search of the best-of-the-best, myself and two other judges visited three extremely keen and dedicated landowners in June.

To say the least, we were impressed with all three landowners. Like most regional winners before them, they have a strong connection to the land. In the Western Region, James Bower of Yarmouth, has a long family history of woodlot ownership and has been practicing silviculture since the early 1980s. In the Central Region, Laurie Hanna and his sons, Mike and Steve, own a family farm with a history of ownership dating back to the turn of the century. In the Eastern Region, we discovered that Earl Vickers of Portree in the Margaree Valley, knows every corner of his woodlot like "the back of his hand".

With the guidance of the Athol Forestry Cooperative Ltd., the Hannas nurture their woodlot, thinning their red spruce-yellow birch stands with the intent to improve tree quality and maintain the species mix. Their philosophy is not to clearcut unless it is absolutely necessary. They also have a modern sugar bush operation. The woodlot more than fills any "slack" time they have from their farm operation.



Eastern Region Winner Earl Vickers

Earl Vickers' dedication to improving his woodlot was clearly evident as he led us on a walking tour, showing us all the thinning and planting he has done in his "spare" time. Not even hordes of mosquitos that would carry many people away, could dampen his enthusiasm for showing us the work he has done. The fact that he is a retired silviculture trainer was evident by the quality of his work. Attention to detail was noticeable - a trait usually exhibited by the best landowners.

In the end, after much deliberation, James Bower was chosen as the provincial winner. Anybody who has driven the Ohio Road between Shelburne and Yarmouth has likely noticed his beautiful white pine shelterwoods dominated by tall stately pines, with the ground now covered to the brim with white pine regeneration. Anyone interested in white pine management would do well to come to his field day on October 16. James works closely with contractor Mike Harris to improve the quality of the pine and his woodlot in general. Earning income is secondary.

Bruce Carter, regional extension forester, says "the woodlot is really a lesson in cooperation between the landowner, his contractor Mike Harris, consulting forester Patricia Amero, and registered buyer Lewis Mouldings."

This fits with James' goal of providing employment from his land. James had the foresight last year to hire Patricia Amero of Picea Forestry Consulting to provide him with an



Central Region winner Laurie Hanna with sons Steve (left) and Mike.

up-to-date management plan to guide him and Mike in their management activities. James is one of a handful of landowners who has made a conscious decision to preserve eight hectares (20 acres) of old growth forest. Following in his father's footsteps, he calls it the "green bunch" - a beautiful 180-year-old stand of red spruce, white pine, and eastern hemlock. To add even more to the charisma of the woodlot, the beautiful Roseway River forms its boundary. The movie "The Scarlett Letter" with Demi Moore was filmed there in the mid 1990s.

The 2004 Woodlot Owner of the Year Award will be officially presented to Mr. Bower at a field day to be held on his woodlot on October 16. Field tours were also held on Mr. Hanna's lot in Parrsboro and Mr. Vicker's lot in September.

*Tim Whynot is an Extension Forester with DNR's Operations Division - Stewardship and Outreach Section in Halifax.*

**Find out more about how the woodlots are evaluated. Visit the Woodlot Owner of the Year webpage at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/extension/woya/woya.htm>.**