



ALGOMA
HIGHLANDS
CONSERVANCY
2008 ANNUAL REPORT

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 1992, conservationists, educators, silent sport enthusiasts and research scientists created the Algoma Highlands Conservancy (AHC), a private, bi-national, non-profit land trust. Their mission to conserve and enjoy the ecological and recreational attributes of the Algoma Highlands, a vast, semi-wilderness area just north of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, is even stronger today. This Canadian Shield region contains ecologically significant plant and animal communities, a world-class network of cross-country ski trails managed by Stokely Creek Lodge and scenic King Mountain, which rises more than 300 metres (1,000 feet) above the surrounding topography. Currently, the AHC directly influences a land base of approximately 240 hectares (590 acres), including ownership of the scenic Robertson Cliffs, an important nesting area for peregrine falcons, as well as a significant conservation easement on land adjacent to Stokely Creek Lodge.

The AHC achieved a critical turning point in late 2007 when it forged a three-way agreement with Astina Forest AG, an area landowner, and Stokely Creek Lodge. This partnership gives the AHC and Stokely Creek Lodge a 10-year license for the exclusive use of the 3,500-hectare (8,600-acre) Stokely trail system for silent sport recreation. Furthermore, the AHC was extended a two-year option to purchase 1,050 hectares (2,600 acres) of land between Stokely Creek Lodge and the Robertson Cliffs, including King Mountain. The purchase price is \$1.5 million; all available AHC funds and donations received in 2008 and 2009 will be applied to this purchase. Success will guarantee the long-term protection of a 1,200-hectare (3,000-acre) land base for conservation, silent sport recreation, education and research. However, the window on this option to purchase expires in October 2009. The AHC is relying on private and organizational donations to complete this landmark purchase.

The AHC is the only organization dedicated to the protection of lands in the vicinity of King Mountain. For nearly two decades, our staff, volunteers and partners have demonstrated the will, diligence, capacity and expertise to manage entrusted lands in this area in accordance to our mandates. We are sincerely grateful for, and are carefully managing, the many generous contributions we have received to date. But there is still much to accomplish. This report summarizes a pivotal year for the AHC, its supporters and partners. Now, we must move forward with urgency to build on the past to ensure the future.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or suggestions on how we can make our collective dream a reality.

Sincerely,

Ted Curry
Executive Director

MISSION

The mission of the AHC is to conserve and protect the unique beauty and ecological integrity of key areas within the Algoma Highlands region. Through its core values and the work of passionate, dedicated volunteers, the AHC strives to protect the ecological function and habitat requirements of native plant and animal species in these areas, while encouraging human access and visitation through low-impact recreation and enhanced understanding.

AHC CORE VALUES

Conservation

The AHC seeks to conserve and protect the biodiversity and ecological integrity of the Algoma Highlands region while facilitating access to enhance awareness and appreciation of our natural heritage by the broader human community.

Environmental Education and Research

The AHC has always recognized the need to further our understanding of natural systems and to transfer this knowledge to current and future generations. The Algoma Highlands are a living classroom—a means of discovering and demonstrating the concepts of conservation biology, sustainable forest management and ecology.

Silent Sport Recreation

The magnificent terrain and unique beauty of the Algoma Highlands provide silent sport recreation, leisure and artistic opportunities in every season. The trail system meanders through mixed-wood forests, along tumbling creeks and climbs to the summit of King Mountain. It provides excellent opportunities for low-impact recreational pursuits like cross-country and backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking, hiking, trail running, as well as more leisurely and artistic activities such as nature photography, painting and birdwatching.

Sustainable Forest Management

The AHC believes strongly in the concept of balancing environmental protection with the economic, recreational, and spiritual benefits humans can derive from forests. This is the philosophy, science and art of maintaining or enhancing the long-term health of forest ecosystems while providing environmental, economic, and social opportunities for the benefit of present and future generations. Through a combination of protection and sound forest management, we strive to enhance the long-term health and value of the diverse forests of the area.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Dr. Doug Pitt (President)
Karen Streich (Treasurer)

Dr. Gaylen J. Byker (Vice President)
Dr. Greg Zimmerman (Secretary)

DIRECTORS

Kim Pyykonen
John Waller
Mark Harvey
Ian Phair
Dr. Lisa Venier

Michael O'Connor
Dr. Dean Thompson
Ken Coulter
Dr. Dieter Hohnke

STAFF

Ted Curry
Nicolle Thompson

Craig Howard

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2008

With the signing of a landmark three-way agreement between the AHC, area landowner Astina Forest AG and the Byker-Phair family (the new owners of Stokely Creek Lodge), 2008 was a watershed year. The successful negotiation of a 10-year agreement enabling the exclusive use of the Stokely Creek trail system and an option to purchase 1,050 hectares (2,600 acres) of land, which includes the ecologically sensitive area around King Mountain, stand out as critical turning points in achieving the AHC's mission.

The AHC created the King Mountain Legacy Lands Campaign in order to raise funds to meet Astina's \$1.5 million selling price. We have tapped into an extensive bi-national community of grassroots support—our contact list consists of more than 1,300 like-minded individuals. This effort provided the foundation of our fundraising drive in 2008. In addition, we have developed a comprehensive fundraising strategy and established relations with a number of philanthropic foundations and agencies. With their financial assistance, we will raise the necessary funds to acquire a solid, secure land base to achieve our mandates of integrated conservation, protection and silent sport recreation in perpetuity.

Among the many other highlights of 2008, the following have prime significance:

- Receipt of an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant (\$50,000) to provide critical AHC operational funds
- Hiring of a new executive director (Ted Curry) and Legacy Lands Campaign manager (Craig Howard) to assist in achieving general and campaign-specific goals
- Receipt of a Sault Ste. Marie Community Development Corporation (CDC) grant (\$3,000) to enhance our marketing and public relations efforts
- Continued excellent collaborations with Stokely Creek Lodge and cost-sharing for the maintenance and upgrading of our extensive trail system, and in the hiring of Tom Shorney to act as a joint ambassador for winter visitors to Norm's cabin on our property at Bone Lake
- Continued excellent partnership interactions with Astina Forest AG

The 2008 fiscal year also saw the revitalization and restructuring of the board following the addition of five enthusiastic new board members. This restructuring initiative resulted in the creation of several new subcommittees, each with specific objectives and clear action plans already underway.



Some of the early achievements made by these various subcommittees include:

COMMUNICATIONS

- Development and launch of our new conservancy website (www.algomahighlandsconservancy.org)
- Development and publication of our new brochure
- Distribution of two newsletters to our extensive community of supporters
- Media event and press release announcing receipt of a Trillium grant and the hiring of our new executive director and campaign manager
- Publication of a full page article in the local newspaper describing the AHC and its objectives
- Collaboration with Stokely Creek Lodge in a major media event resulting in an online article by CNN Travel identifying the Stokely area as one of the top-five cross-country ski destinations in North America, as well as a two-page story in the local newspaper highlighting snowshoeing at Stokely Creek Lodge

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

(all current research is being conducted on lands owned by our neighbours and partners Astina Forest AG)

- Continuation of studies investigating the response of tolerant hardwood forests to selection/restoration harvesting as sustainable forestry practices in the Algoma region
- Continuation of studies investigating the response of songbird communities to tolerant hardwood selection/restoration harvesting in the Algoma region
- Publication and continuation of studies designed to assess the re-establishment of white pine in small canopy gaps and the protection of new plantations from white pine blister rust and weevil
- Initiation of a preliminary study to assess the feasibility of using digital field recorder devices to collect bioacoustic monitoring data on forest songbirds in tolerant hardwood forest ecosystems
- Establishment of simulated natural stream channels to examine effects of environmental stressors on benthic macro-invertebrates typical of streams in tolerant hardwood forests
- Ongoing Lake Superior State University ecology field study classes

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2008 CONTINUED

SILENT SPORT AND RECREATION

- Supported and advised on trail improvements to the area in collaboration with Stokely Creek Lodge and Astina Forest AG
- Provided \$20,000 for trail development and maintenance in collaboration with Stokely Creek Lodge
- Partnered with the Soo Cycling Club to initiate establishment of single-track mountain biking trails on King Mountain
- Encouraged and facilitated further development of snowshoe trails by volunteers Lucy Gagnon and Bob Yankus, including a new trail to the King Mountain warming hut

CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

- Reviewed adequacy of existing data and information pertaining to plant and animal species as well as geological and hydrological values in the area
- Prepared a list of key conservation and protection values to be highlighted on our website and published materials
- Initiated a photo archive of plants and animals in the area and posted these on the website to emphasize our focus on conservation and protection
- Evaluated and applied for tax exemption status for the Robertson Cliffs property based on existence of rare and endangered species on this property
- Identified potential partnerships that may facilitate identification and documentation of additional conservation and protection values with particular emphasis on the King Mountain Legacy Lands area

BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE

- Welcomed five new enthusiastic Board members
- Established a series of committees that cultivate and promote AHC core values and ideals
- Completed the 2009-2011 strategic planning process
- Hired Ted Curry as Executive Director and Craig Howard as Campaign Director



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND FUNDRAISING

- Hired a consultant to assist in the development of a fundraising plan to reach our goal of purchasing King Mountain
- Contracted a professional audit of AHC finances for the 2007 fiscal year
- Developed and maintained a comprehensive database for donors to the King Mountain Legacy Lands Campaign
- Developed website links and associated mechanisms to facilitate electronic donations in both the USA and Canada
- Was awarded a \$50,000 Trillium grant to hire personnel to assist in fundraising efforts
- Completed an initial drive for pledges and a solicitation for donations mail-out from a broad community of potential individual donors to help achieve our goal of raising \$1.5 million to purchase the 1,050-hectare (2,600-acre) King Mountain Legacy Lands property

2008 FINANCIAL POSITION

(Unaudited)

ASSETS	(Can \$)
Current	252,188
Long Term Investments	271,400
Robertson Lake Cliffs, at cost	48,412
Norm's Cabin, at cost	35,000
TOTAL ASSETS	\$607,000

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Accounts Payable	11,000
Deferred Revenue	43,162
Investment in Land	83,412
Unrestricted net assets	469,426
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$607,000

OUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

The AHC's successes are the product of dedicated and passionate staff, volunteers and partners. We would like to acknowledge our ongoing partnership with the Byker-Phair family (Stokely Creek Lodge) and Astina Forest AG. We are also very grateful for the generous support provided by individual donors too numerous to list here as well as the following businesses, agencies and foundations among the growing list of supporting organizations.

- Ontario Land Trust Alliance
- Federation of Ontario Naturalists
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Stokely Creek Lodge
- The Chuck Peterson Estate
- Skinnyski.com
- Washtenaw Ski Touring Club
- Soo Mill
- Nordic Ski Racer
- Voyageur Trail Association
- Hike Ontario
- North Star Ski Touring Club
- Sault Cycling Club
- Community Development Corporation of Sault Ste. Marie and Area
- The Ontario Trillium Foundation
- The EJLB Foundation

