



## Bellevue Valley Hanging Delta Block 705 Tour February 09, 2019

*By Dave Euler & Bob Currell  
Photos by Renee Wysynski*

On Saturday February 9<sup>th</sup> a group of 19 Sault Naturalists travelled north of the Bellevue Valley, off the Searchmont highway, to visit a maple dominated hardwood forest area which was being partially harvested by Boniferro Millworks, a local forestry company.

Mike Thompson, manager for the company, showed us around and explained the operation which is being carried out in an EMA or Enhanced Management Area. In a Crown Land forest area of this designation, particular attention must be paid to conserving certain non-timber forest values. In this area, one specific feature being recognised was a telemark ski trail protected under a Land Use Permit (LUP) issued to a local bed and breakfast operator.

Mike explained to us how individual trees were being selected for harvest and he talked about how a 30 metre no cut buffer was being left on either side of the ski trail which had been previously flagged by the holder of the LUP.

The selection harvest, where about 1/3 of the trees (mostly maple) were removed, looked well done. Saw logs are taken to Boniferro for processing. Cull logs are sent to Michigan to a flake board company while others go to Espanola for pulp in the paper making process.

The damage to the soil is minimized during a winter harvest, and wood residue (tree tops mostly) is left on site to decay back into the soil. Since a decision has been made to undertake a harvest in this area, this is an appropriate approach that can be supported economically. If Boniferro were to cut less wood, it would not be feasible because there would not be enough revenue to support the operation.



*At the landing*



*Through the harvested area*



*Down the forest access road*

We took a walk further into the harvested area to the edge of the Bellevue Valley hanging delta. This feature is a series of gravel ridges deposited over time at the mouth of the Goulais River as it entered the Lake Superior basin about 10,000 years ago. Lighter materials would have been deposited further out in deeper water. The land slowly rebounded over time after the glacier retreated and water levels in the basin dropped, leaving this delta “hanging” far from and far above the current shoreline of Lake Superior.

A mechanical processor and forwarder were on site and after snowshoeing around looking for the equipment, we found it and got to talk to the owner operator who described some of the challenges of carefully logging in the Algoma highlands.

From an ecological perspective, this type of timber harvest is a significant disruption to the ecological processes that have occurred there for thousands of years. Habitat for some wildlife species is damaged while for others it is enhanced. Chickadees and White-tailed Deer often thrive in areas harvested with the selection harvest system, while species that need older forests like Wood Thrush and Blackburnian Warbler require forests that have been allowed to evolve through to old-growth stages.

In this relatively small area, as compared to the entire Algoma District, these changes to wildlife habitat may well be acceptable. However, the overall health of wildlife species in Algoma requires a comprehensive approach to managing wildlife habitat.

We hope the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests will build a Forest Management Plan that insures that wildlife habitat throughout Algoma provides opportunities for a variety of both early succession and old-growth wildlife species.

For more images of this outing click: [Renee's Photos](#)



*The Processor which limbs and cuts trees to length*



*A closer look at the Processor's blades and saw*