

The Canadian Sweet Chestnut

-Newsletter of the Canadian Chestnut Council-

Issue # 79 – March 2021



<http://www.canadianchestnutcouncil.ca>

Council Mission - to help restore the American Chestnut to the areas of Canada it once occupied.

Current Priorities

- 1) Breeding resistance
- 2) Breaking Isolation / Establishing Gene pool Nodes
- 3) DNA Analysis
- 4) Survey of existing Chestnuts in the wild

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- DNA - Have an American Chestnut – Want To Check Its Pedigree? (Doug Fagan)
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Canadian Chestnut Council – 32nd Annual General Meeting

For the first time, the annual meeting was held virtually via Zoom technology. As expected, there were a few hiccups but perseverance allowed attendees to complete the agenda.

The Board of Directors is pleased to welcome two new members to the Board.

Heather Dover, Urban Forestry, City of Brantford

Neil Dunning, retired educator and Secretary for the Brant Woodlot Owners Association.

Chairs' Update on 2019 / 2020 Activities (Ron Casier)

The thirty second year of the Canadian Chestnut Council started well with great progress being made in our efforts to restore the American Chestnut. In November 2019, the Honourable Jeff Yurek, Minister of Environment, Parks and Conservation visited one of our research plots which rekindled our bid to establish a Stewardship Agreement for the American Chestnut with the government. Over 5000 selected nuts were in stratification at Simcoe including 193 F3 chestnuts: our first Third Generation back crosses! 6000 chestnut trees were in storage for spring distribution for Gene Conservation Seed Colonies for planting on publicly owned lands. The council was reviewing our Constitution and By-laws to conform to the new Canada NFP legislation. We were completing our third year of our SARSF project: Breaking Isolation project. February saw 16 volunteers plant over 5000 chestnuts in the Simcoe greenhouse which would prove to be our last in person event prior to the Covid 19 Pandemic shut down.

Despite all the restrictions, the cancellation of all outreach events and change in plans, our council and partners forged ahead. In June, with the Tim Horton Camp staff, Dragan Galic and his summer students following strict pandemic protocols, planted just under 3000 chestnuts in the research plot at Onondaga Farms and establish our first F3 plot! 2600 potted trees were delivered to Catfish Creek Conservation Authority and another 3400 moved to Onondaga Farms to act as the west and east distribution points for the Gene Conservation Seed Colony project. When most conservation authorities cancelled all tree planting for the year, the CCCA managed to find appropriate locations and volunteers to plant all the stored trees by October. Also, in June, Dragan and his summer team inoculated 213 F2 trees with the blight to continue testing of the Second Generation bringing the total to 758 trees tested. Nine F2 trees, so far, have been selected as the parents for F3 production. Pollination and bagging were completed by the team and involved 30 trees with 850 bags. The result was the harvesting of 3325 nuts in total this autumn including 279 F3 nuts. All of which are currently in stratification awaiting planting at Simcoe.

Working with the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, the council submitted its opposition to the release of the genetically modified Syracuse Chestnut: Darling 68, as a threat to the unique and distinct American Chestnut population in Ontario. Ongoing research has demonstrated that the American Chestnut in Ontario is distinct from its southern cousin. The Stewardship Agreement has been submitted to the MECP for approval. Public interest in the American Chestnut continues to increase as indicated by the number of emails and calls from across Canada that the council receives. As this first ever Zoom AGM demonstrates, the council has moved forward in using technology to overcome the limitations placed on our working and meeting in person. The council has applied for a multiple year SARSF project covering several aspects of chestnut research and development. As the available SARSF continues to dwindle each year, the council greatly appreciates its membership in the renewing of their annual membership and their very generous donations. We hope to add e-payment to our website for your convenience in the near future.

Respectfully submitted by Ron Casier

Why don't we roast chestnuts at Christmas anymore (courtesy of Postmedia)



Recently Postmedia National Video Producer, Nicole Feriancek, produced a video report on the plight of the American Chestnut. Ron Casier, CCC chair, provided her with the information. The video received wide media distribution. Congratulations to Ron Casier on a job well done.

Video Link - <https://youtu.be/LO3Ro6yKiZc>

Or <https://nationalpost.com/life/why-dont-we-roast-chestnuts-anymore-at-christmas>

Free Online Course – “An Introduction to the American Chestnut

The Southern Research Station of the U.S. Forestry Service is offering a free online course. “An Introduction to the American Chestnut”. The course information may be found at the attached link:

<https://srs.fs.usda.gov/products/courses/#chestnut>

Have An American Chestnut – Want To Check Its Pedigree?

Dr. Brian Husband, University of Guelph, and the Canadian Chestnut Council are making plans to hire a summer student to extract the DNA from up to 200 American chestnut leaf samples this summer. The DNA would be sequenced and the results analyzed to determine the parentage of the tree. The analysis will be available to all those who are interested in submitting a sample on a first come – first served basis. The cost will be \$25.00 per sample. The project will be dependent on summer student funding. Please watch the web-site for further information as to how to collect and prepare a sample and who to submit it to, etc.

Fundraising Committee

The committee is looking for members. As it is getting more uncertain that government funding will be available to support our work, it is becoming increasingly necessary to seek other partners. Please e-mail Doug Fagan @ d.fagan@sympatico.ca or call at 519-846-5996 to discuss how you can help. Many Thanks!

Reminder - Membership Dues (Terry Anderson) – a reminder that membership dues for 2021 are due. It is the Foundation’s policy to remove members from the mailing list after three years in arrears. Dues can be forwarded to our Membership Secretary, Terry Anderson. His new address and contact information is below.

The fee is \$25.00 and your cheque should be mailed to **Terry’s new address**.

Make cheques payable to: the Canadian Chestnut Council.

Please send to:

Terry Anderson

261 Sandy Brook Way,

Kingsville, ON. N9Y 0A4

33rd Annual General Meeting 2021 – Oct 23, 2021

Either in person at Onondaga Farms or virtually, the 2021 Annual General meeting will take place on Oct. 23rd, 2021. Further details to follow. **Please reserve this time on your calendar.**

Want more information:

Website - www.canadianchestnutcouncil.ca

Contact - Mr. Ron Casier Phone - 519-631-5279 Email - ronjcasier@gmail.com	Membership Secretary - Terry Anderson Address - 261 Sandy Brook Way, Kingsville, ON. N9Y 0A4 Email - andersonterry419@gmail.com
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Council Directors – Chuck Beach, Ron Casier, Tim Casson, Gord Chinnick, Heather Dover, Neil Dunning, Doug Fagan, Stan Furman, John Hill, Ken MacGillivray, Nathan Munn, Christine Vey.