

# Youth rangers get feet wet, and hands dirty, to improve environment

by Jim Moodie  
**WHITEFISH FALLS**—Four teens have a few more calluses now than they did two months ago, but they also have a few tales that can be proudly told around a future campfire.

It was a challenging but varied summer for the Espanola-Manitoulin stewardship rangers, whose work ranged from hoisting boulders into a creek near Meldrum Bay to busting up beaver dams near Tehkummah.

The crew of four 17-year-olds did a bit of everything: tree planting, trail clearing, even a bit of old-fashioned fence building. The latter, involving traditional split rails, was required to cordon off an area alongside the Mindemoya River to prevent cattle from trampling the riverbank.

It wasn't all sweaty toil, however. "We also did invasive species awareness on the Chi-Cheemaun," noted team leader Cally Manning.

The crew, consisting of Darren Nicholson, Webb Bousquet, Brandon Hulbig, and James Curtis, was deployed on a pair of Manitoulin Streams projects in mid-summer. Apart from their efforts on the Mindemoya River site, the group also pitched in to rehab Mill Creek at Meldrum Bay.

In mid-August, they were recruited to help with a "Deer Save" project near Gore Bay. "It was through Ian Anderson and the Gore Bay Fish and Game Club," explained Ms. Manning. "We did three main deer



Espanola-Manitoulin Stewardship Rangers Darren Nicholson, Webb Bousquet, Brandon Hulbig and James Curtis do some spadework on the Red Deer Village Trail, which provides access to the LaCloche Ridge Conservation Reserve near Whitefish Falls.

yards." Work involved clearing newly cut trails to key wintering grounds for white-tails, which will facilitate emergency feeding in times of deep snow and plunging temperatures.

The crew also groomed footpaths for hikers. "We were at Misery Bay for a week, making markers and clearing trails," said Ms. Manning.

Most recently, the gang was dispatched to the Red Deer Village Trail, which provides access to the LaCloche Ridge Conservation Reserve near Whitefish Falls. The route is multi-use

in nature—with ATVs and snowmobiles permitted, along with hikers, mountain bikers and cross-country skiers—and consequently takes a bit of a pounding, so a number of upgrades, primarily involving drainage, were required.

The team lugged in large culverts by hand and dug out areas that had been washed out and churned up by tires (and snowmobile tracks) to install the pipes. In the most troublesome low spot, a massive, corrugated PVC pipe measuring 20 feet in length, and a foot-and-a-half in diameter, was

planted in the mushy soil. "We placed corduroy of already dead or downed trees on either side and made a trench to direct the water to the culvert when flowing downhill," said Ms. Manning. Both culvert and corduroy "will be covered over with gravel to raise the trail and hopefully prevent further erosion and widening of the trail," she added.

The Ontario Stewardship Ranger (OSR) program provides an eight-week summer employment and learning opportunity for youth aged 17, with work covering a range of outdoors projects. Apart from the hands-

on exposure to natural resources management techniques, rangers also have the chance to pick up valuable camping, canoeing and woodcraft skills.

With the season of stewardship work now complete, Ms. Manning said a big thank you is due to "everyone who had the OSRs out this summer."



A gang of area Stewardship Rangers totes a drainage pipe through the pines and hemlocks of the LaCloche Ridge reserve as part of a trail maintenance assignment.

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