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This Weekend We're Celebrating a Private Forest Champion

By Andrew de Vries, CEO, Canadian Forest Owners

From his hometown in New Brunswick, Canada to the far reaches of Nepal, Peter deMarsh was a champion of local communities and family woodlot owners, mobilizing the advancement of sustainable forest management in countries across the globe.

On the fifth anniversary of his death, family woodlot owners around the world are remembering an exceptional human being—a modest, humble man whose wisdom recognized one simple truth: Family woodlot owners are uniquely qualified and in the best position to sustainably manage our natural resources, because they have an intimate knowledge of the land, which is often passed down from generation to generation.

Like the 450,000 forest owners [Canadian Forest Owners](#) (CFO) represents, Peter was a landowner. He was also a forest advocate.

Together, Canadian Forest Owners manage a private forest land base of 24 million hectares, an area 25% larger than Finland's forests. These forest owners provide environmental, social, and economic benefits to our country, provinces, and local communities. A shared appeal that reaches woodlot owners around the world, crossing borders, and cultures, aligning global interests in sustainable forest management practices to enhance biodiversity and help fight climate change.

Perhaps no one knew this better than Peter de Marsh. In 1976 he helped establish the New Brunswick Federation of Woodlot Owners and in 1989, he co-founded the Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners (now CFO). His network was extensive, but no matter where he travelled, Peter observed that woodlot owners and wood producers across the globe faced remarkably similar challenges. Language and cultural barriers never stopped him, and in 2002 Peter was a driving force behind the creation of the [International Family Forestry Alliance \(IFFA\)](#) to bring these voices together. Still active today, the IFFA continues to promote family forestry and its important contribution to sustainable forest management, rural livelihoods, forest cover and helping solve climate change.

On March 10, 2019, Peter was travelling to the UN International Conference on the Environment where he planned to focus on the exemplary work of Kenyan agroforestry families and their associations. Tragically, Peter and [17 other Canadians](#) lost their lives when the Ethiopian airlines passenger jet enroute to Kenya crashed shortly after takeoff.

Canadian Forest Owners is proud to remember Peter and his tireless efforts on behalf of communities across Canada and the international forest community. Each year, CFO offers [two bursaries](#) to celebrate Peter's memory. Acknowledging the important role of research in forest management, we offer a research bursary to graduate students and to help ensure the continued voice of family forest owners at international events we offer a travel bursary.