

Field work at the Gurd Research Site
By Nancy Young

During the autumn of 2006, some field work has been taking place at the Gurd Research and Tree Improvement Area near Trout Creek, Ontario. This 200 ha research site was established in 1963 by the Department of Lands and Forests for the purpose of establishing a number of seed orchards for different tree species. Since that time many more research projects have been established on the landbase, the management of which has been passed between a number of different organizations. Since 2000 the Forestry Research Partnership has been the primary manager of the site, establishing new studies, maintaining new and old projects, and developing interpretive information.

Throughout the cold and rainy month of October Wayne Kent, of Glendale Consulting, along with an ever-changing roster of volunteers from the FRP and CEC (including the Canada World Youth) took on the task of measuring and assessing the health of all 7000 trees in the white pine progeny test. This test – the first of its kind in Ontario - was established in 2000 when the FRP assumed responsibility for the Gurd research site. The purpose of the



Wayne Kent and Kathleen Côté (CEC) measuring and assessing a white pine tree at Gurd.

progeny trial is to test white pine trees from selected families for their growing performance with the

overarching goal of increasing the presence of white pine forest stands in Ontario (one of the FRP's initiatives). The assessment of each tree included such things as 2005 height, 2006 height, and whether or not the tree exhibited a number of different growth patterns (i.e. 'cabbaging', forking, proleptic shoots, or sub-terminal shoots). Each tree was also rated according to the health of the whole tree as well as that of the leader.



This current project represents the first measurements of the 165 families that are being tested as part of a larger 400 family test. This material originates from numerous clonal seed orchards that were established by MNR using plus tree collections. The presence of superior growth characteristics is evident in the fact that some of the trees measured had heights exceeding 2 metres at age 5, clearly well above the norms for general collection seed sources. The existing PGP data set for Ontario has some plots of natural Pw that have

exhibited mean annual increments ranging from 10-13 m³/ha/yr; based on the early results from Gurd, this test should meet or exceed the historic results.

To date there are at least three more white pine progeny tests established by the FRP throughout north eastern Ontario. The ongoing work at the Gurd research site as well as these others is a prime example of the Forestry Research Partnership's main purpose: conducting research and putting it into action in the field. Many thanks to everyone who generously volunteered their time and energy to make this year's assessment project a success!