

# Summer music festival to help preserve old growth forests

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Great music for an excellent cause will take centre stage at the West Dalhousie Community Hall this summer.

On Aug. 23 and 24, SOOFSTOCK, a music festival that celebrates the Save Our Old Forests (SOOF), will take place. It's the second year for the family-friendly, alcohol-free gathering.

Rob Bright, one of SOOFSTOCK's organizers, remembers driving home one day in 2019 and passing a huge new clearcut by the side of the road.

"It was very depressing to be driving by this twice a day," the Hampton resident recalls. "We decided we had to do something to stop the levelling of forests all over the province."

The movement began with 50 or so people protesting at the clearcut site and evolved into the Save Our Old Forests (SOOF) Association, a registered not-for-profit based in Hampton, just outside of Bridgetown.

Launched in March 2023, SOOF has two essential goals: engage the public in the effort to protect the forest and hold the Nova Scotia government to its commitment to protect 20 per cent of the province's land and waters by 2030; and raise awareness of the importance of protecting forests that are more than 80 years old.

"According to DNR's own numbers, by 2001 there was only 1.5 per cent of our forests that were over 80 years old," Bright says. "We need to protect what's left."



Members and friends of the Save Our Old Forests (SOOF) Association enjoyed a forest walk at Goldsmith Lake as part of last year's SOOFSTOCK music festival. **LAURA BRIGHT**

Since its inception, SOOF has sought opportunities to engage with communities across the Annapolis Valley. In May and June of last year an art and citizen science exhibit, For the Love of Lichens and Old Forests, was held at ArtsPlace Gallery in Annapolis Royal, featuring the work of local artists and photographs by Citizen Scientists of Southwest Nova Scotia.

"We were planning a one-month show, but we had so many artists respond that we had to make it a two-month show," Bright recalls.

As a drummer in a local band, The Possibilities, Bright came up with the idea of a music festival, and with the help of about 30 volunteers the first SOOFSTOCK was held at the West Dalhousie Community Hall last August. Despite poor weather, the event attracted about 125



A montage of the bands who performed at the inaugural SOOFSTOCK in 2023. This year's event is scheduled for Aug. 23 and 24 at the West Dalhousie Community Hall. **SINDY SCHOFIELD**

people who enjoyed the music at the indoor stage.

There are 11 bands and nine vendors booked so far for the 2024 event and the complete lineup will be available on the SOOF website

(<https://saveouroidforests.ca/soofstock/>).

"We have overnight camping," Bright adds. "And there will be two food trucks."

And, the importance of trees will be shared.

Trees are essential for removing carbon from the atmosphere and they play a key role in preserving biodiversity, Bright points out. Old forests provide unique habitats, structures and ecological functions not available in younger stands of trees.

"Without older forests we are going to lose more and more of our wildlife," Bright says.

As a volunteer organization, SOOF has brought together a network of people from across the Annapolis Valley and beyond. These people step in to do what needs to be done, Bright says, whether that's putting up posters, baking cookies or helping set up and tear down for a music festival.

"We're realizing that there are thousands of people across Nova Scotia who are just as concerned as we are."