

LAKE NIPIGON BASIN SIGNATURE SITE

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“Unless it is cherished, the glory of Nepigon may fade, and the story of its marvellous attractions may become a tradition of the past.”

A.R. Macdonough
Scribner's Magazine
Volume 6, Issue 3, P.271-283,
September 1889

LAKE NIPIGON BASIN SIGNATURE SITE

CHAPTER 1

July 2003

APPROVAL STATEMENT:

I am pleased to approve the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy as the official land use policy for the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site.

This Strategy provides land use direction for the conservation, development and protection of the various natural resources and values within the land use areas that comprise the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site.

The Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site is one of 9 such areas featured in the Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy (1999). Signature Sites are identified for their range of natural and recreational values and their potential to contribute to future recreation and tourism.

The Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy implements the recommendations of the OLL Land Use Strategy, provides overall guidance for resource management activities and development, and provides the context for management plans for provincial parks and conservation reserves and resource management guidelines for enhanced management areas in the Lake Nipigon Basin.

I wish to acknowledge the significant efforts of those involved in the development of Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy.



Charlie Lauer
Regional Director
Northwest Region



Adair Ireland-Smith
Managing Director
Ontario Parks

STATEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS

In accordance with the provisions of the *Environmental Bill of Rights*, the Ministry of Natural Resources prepared a *Statement of Environmental Values*. It describes how the purposes of the *Environmental Bill of Rights* are to be considered whenever decisions are to be made which might significantly affect the environment.

The primary purpose of the *Environmental Bill of Rights* is “to protect, conserve and wherever possible, restore the integrity of the environment.” From the Ministry’s perspective, that broad statement of purpose translates into four objectives in its *Statement of Environmental Values*:

- To ensure the long-term health of the ecosystems by protecting and conserving our valuable soil, aquatic resources, forest and wildlife resources as well as their biological foundations;
- To ensure the continuing availability of natural resources for the long-term benefit of the people of Ontario;
- To protect natural heritage and biological features of provincial significance; and,
- To protect human life, the resource base and the physical property from the threats of forest fires, floods and erosion.

The Ministry’s *Statement of Environmental Values* has been considered in the development of this strategy for the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site.

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1 CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Lake Nipigon Basin was identified as one of nine Featured Areas (also known as Signature Sites) in the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (July 1999), and is recognized as having a range of highly significant natural and cultural values that warrant special strategies. The Lake Nipigon Basin also has very significant tourism and recreation potential that merits enhanced planning and management.

The Basin is composed of an array of land use designations, including existing provincial parks, as well as new parks, conservation reserves, forest reserves, enhanced management areas and general use areas designated through Ontario's Living Legacy land use planning process. The area is home to diverse communities (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), significant earth and life science features (dramatic landscapes, vulnerable, threatened and endangered species) and a variety of resource uses (commercial, recreational and traditional). The Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site protects such values as plant communities, significant earth science features, wildlife, and cultural resources while providing a variety of recreational opportunities. The recreational and natural resources of the Basin support the economic base of many local communities.

1.2 GOAL AND PRINCIPLES

1.2.1 GOAL STATEMENT

In recognition of the significant earth, life, cultural and recreational values of the Lake Nipigon Basin and the overall importance of this area to the social and spiritual fabric of the surrounding communities, the following goal statement for the management of the Basin was developed.

To protect, enhance and where necessary, restore, the natural ecosystems, populations and wilderness qualities of the Lake Nipigon

Basin while allowing for tourism, recreational, and industrial development that will not compromise the integrity and environmental values of the Basin ecosystem.

1.2.2 STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES

The following Stewardship Principles from *Beyond 2000, Ministry of Natural Resources Strategic Direction*, guided the development of objectives, identification of options and establishment of management direction for the Nipigon Basin.

- Sustainable development relies on integrated management approaches which consider and systematically assess the full range of environmental, social and economic factors when decisions are made about the use of natural resources
- The pursuit of sustainable development means that we must manage resources on the basis of continuous improvement. This evolution must occur in a way that attempts to be fair to all those affected. Those affected by change must have access to information and opportunities to provide input to decisions which affect their lives
- The sustainable development of our natural resources, by definition, has limits. These limits are defined by the finite capacity of our natural systems
- From both a sound business and environmental perspective, it is less costly and more effective to anticipate and prevent negative environmental impacts before undertaking new activities than it is to correct environmental problems after the fact
- Rehabilitating degraded environments is an important aspect of resource stewardship. Where feasible, work will be undertaken to improve site conditions, foster ecosystem and natural population recoveries and bring to a more healthy state, sites, ecosystems and natural populations
- A sound understanding of natural and ecological systems and how our actions affect them is key to achieving sustainability

- Our understanding of the way the natural world works and how our actions affect it is often incomplete. This means that we exercise caution and special concern for natural values in the face of such uncertainty and respect the precautionary principle
- Applied research, exchanges and transfer of scientific and technological knowledge and innovative, appropriate technologies must be developed to further the sustainable development of natural resources
- In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection must be an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation

1.3 ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

1.3.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The *Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy* has been prepared to provide additional guidance and clarification of the land use direction contained in the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* as it applies to the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site. The planning direction builds on the Area Specific Policies of Appendix A of the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* and implements the policy direction found in other sections of the document.

All existing land use direction (e.g., from the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, Nipigon District Land Use Guidelines, Thunder Bay District Land Use Guidelines, etc.) that currently applies to the Lake Nipigon Basin will be replaced by the direction contained in this document. Public input from the consultation process used in the development of this strategy will also be used in the preparation of any proposed land use amendments required to implement the direction contained in this strategy.

In addition, this document will replace the Lake Nipigon Integrated Resource Management Plan, and may require

amendments to other resource management plans and strategies (e.g., forest management plans, district fisheries management plans, fire management strategies, etc).

All of the Ministry of Natural Resource's local land use direction will be incorporated into a Crown Land Use Atlas that consolidates direction from the Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy District Land Use Guidelines and other land use plans. This Atlas will be primarily maintained on an Internet site, so that up-to-date direction will be widely accessible. The local land use direction in the approved Lake Nipigon Basin Strategy will be included in this new Atlas.

1.3.2 ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT

The *Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy* is an all encompassing document that provides two levels of planning direction - the land use level and the resources management level. The document is divided up into twelve chapters:

- Chapter 1 provides introductory information, goals and principles, an overview of the various attributes of the Lake Nipigon Basin, a brief description of the planning process, objectives and issues, and land use direction for the natural resources within the signature site. The resource management documents found in Chapters 2 to 12 are consistent with this land use direction.
- Chapters 2 to 12 contain: three conservation reserve management plans (Nipigon Palisades, Nipigon River, and Lake Nipigon); two park management plans (Black Sturgeon River; and one plan for the five parks located along the shores of Lake Nipigon); and, six resource management guidelines for each of the enhanced management areas. Chapter 1, (which comprises the land use direction for the Lake Nipigon Basin), and each management plan and management guideline in Chapters 2 to 12 are considered to be 'stand alone' documents. This means that each chapter can be used independently of one another,

and may be reviewed or amended independently if required.

The content of Chapter 1, Sections 1 and 2 has largely been drawn from previously written or published material, some of which has been updated or expanded to make it current. Chapter 1, Section 3 is based on the planning options document. The identified direction has been selected and in some cases modified as a result of public input, advisory committee recommendations and government review.

Additional supporting and explanatory information on the planning process, public consultation, issues, background information and resource user guides can be found in Appendices A to E.

1.4 LANDS FOR LIFE AND ONTARIO'S LIVING LEGACY

The identification of the Lake Nipigon Basin as one of the nine Signature Sites under Ontario's Living Legacy is based on work carried out during the Lands for Life planning process. Three citizen's Round Tables established in the Boreal West, Boreal East and Great Lake-St. Lawrence planning regions (Lake Nipigon Basin is located within the Boreal West Planning Region) conducted the majority of this work. The Lands for Life Round Tables, each composed of 12 to 14 citizens drawn from diverse backgrounds, met from June 1997 to July 1998.

The Round Tables carried out extensive public consultation throughout their planning region and in southern Ontario. Thousands of people were provided with opportunities to participate through a variety of means including regular Round Table meetings, public meetings, community workshops, questionnaires, written submissions, and e-mail. As part of the consultation process, extensive information was made available to the public through publications, open houses and an Internet site.

In July 1998, the three Round Tables' draft recommendations were submitted to the

Minister of Natural Resources, and subsequently combined into a Consolidated Recommendations Report that was circulated for public comment in late 1998; over 12,000 responses were received. The provincial government and various other sectors met during the winter of 1999 to develop strategies for enhancing the recommendations from the Round Tables to better achieve the four objectives set out at the beginning of the Lands for Life planning process.

In March 1999, the Premier announced Ontario's Living Legacy and the release of the Forest Accord and the Draft Land Use Strategy. After a review period in which over 8,000 comments were received, the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* was released to the public in July 1999. Four objectives are cited in the Land Use Strategy as follows:

- Completing Ontario's system of parks and protected areas
- Recognizing the land use needs of the resource based tourism industry
- Providing forest, mining and other resource industries with greater land and resource use certainty
- Enhancing angling, hunting and other Crown land recreation opportunities

There were nine Featured Areas (Signature Sites) identified in the province in the Ontario's Living Legacy Strategy. Signature Sites were selected for a special approach that focused on retaining and enhancing the special characteristics of each area. The Lake Nipigon Basin is one of these special areas.

The Boreal West Round Table's perspective about the Lake Nipigon Basin and its significance were supported by many public comments that were received during the Lands for Life project. It was this initial work of the Round Table and the input from the public that resulted in the Basin's status as a Signature Site with recognition for and protection of its special attributes.

The Land Use Strategy provides direction on land use designations, permitted uses and

future planning and consultation needs, all of which have guided the development of objectives and direction for the management of the Lake Nipigon Basin as outlined in this Strategy.

The *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* identifies the basic land use intent for each of the designated areas in the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site as well as providing general management direction.

Permitted uses in the recommended conservation reserves and parks are outlined in the Ontario's Living Legacy Strategy. General direction is provided for the following activities: timber harvesting, mineral exploration and mining, commercial hydro development, bait fishing, trapping, commercial fishing, hunting, angling, tourist operations, seasonal recreation camps, land disposition and road construction. Forestry, mining, hydroelectric development and sale of Crown land are not permitted uses in parks or conservation reserves. Other traditional activities such as angling, camping and hunting, are permitted as long as protected area values are not negatively impacted.

Enhanced management areas are a new land use category that evolved out of the Lands for Life process. They have been established to provide more detailed land use direction in areas of special features or values, while still allowing resource extraction activities to occur. The *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* further defines enhanced management areas and their intended management direction. There are six enhanced management areas within the Lake Nipigon Basin.

1.5 ABORIGINAL ASPECT OF THE LAKE NIPIGON BASIN

Archeological records of human presence in Northwestern Ontario date back to the Paleo-Indian period beginning about 9,000 years ago. The Paleo-Indians moved about in small nomadic groups using natural resources for food, clothing, and shelter. There is one known Paleo-Indian site within the Lake

Nipigon Basin in the Black Sturgeon Lake area (Danielson Collection, Ministry of Natural Resources 1987).

Three distinct pre-historic periods followed the Paleo-Indian period; the Archaic, Initial Woodland and Terminal Woodland Periods. During these prehistoric times, the Aboriginal developed extensive trade routes to transport trade materials for hundreds or even thousands of miles. These routes and the intimate knowledge the Aboriginal had of the landscape were the foundations upon which the historical fur trade was built.

Arrival of the Europeans in the 1600s and subsequent development of the Basin resulted in a change to the cultural landscape. Trading with Europeans and the interactions of the two cultures brought about changes in the Aboriginal nomadic lifestyle and led to the development of settled communities.

Currently, a number of Aboriginal groups/communities with a long history in the Lake Nipigon Basin, continue to pursue many of their traditional activities in the area. There are six First Nations; Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay), Gull Bay, Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek (Lake Nipigon Ojibway), Red Rock, Sand Point and Whitesand as well as two Aboriginal groups seeking official band status; Poplar Point and Poplar Point Ojibway, who live and/or carry out traditional activities in the Signature Site. Also within the Basin are three unpopulated reserves: MacIntyre Bay, Jackfish Island, and Parmacheene. The Aboriginal communities use these areas for cottaging and recreation. A portion of the Lake Nipigon Provincial Park has been deregulated to provide reserve lands for Sand Point First Nation.

The First Nations actively participate, to varying degrees, in resource-based industries including forestry, mineral exploration and mining, commercial fishing, hydroelectric power generation, and natural gas pipeline facilities within the Basin. Some First Nation and Aboriginal group members have developed proposals for tourism attractions in the Basin. Others are opposed to any further development in the study area.

Central to this Strategy is the recognition of the Aboriginal aspect of the Basin, the need to ensure protection of significant cultural sites, and the provision of economic opportunities to local Aboriginal communities. Nothing within this document is intended to affect Native land claims, Aboriginal or treaty rights.

1.6 PLANNING PROCESS

The *Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy* was developed through a standard planning process that consisted of the following steps and took approximately 2 1/2 years to complete starting in September 2000.

- Establishment of Terms of Reference
- Establishment of Objectives
- Collection of Background Data
- Invitation to Participate
- Analysis and Documentation of Background Information
- Public Review of Background Information and Objectives
- Preparation of Management Options
- Public Review of Management Options
- Analysis of Public Input on Management Options
- Preparation of a Preliminary Strategy
- Public Review of a Preliminary Strategy
- Review of Public Input and Production of Final Strategy
- Strategy Approval and Public Inspection

In addition to the steps listed above, numerous meetings with First Nations, tourist outfitters, anglers and hunters, municipalities, industry and the general public were held throughout the planning period to collect information, discuss ideas and resolve issues. A fifteen-member Project Team and eight-

member Steering Committee were established to carry out this project. The existing Nipigon Watershed Advisory Committee provided advice and input to the Project Team. Efforts to establish an Aboriginal Advisory Committee were unsuccessful, however, contact with First Nations was achieved through meetings, open houses, letters, phone calls and personal visits.

For a more detailed overview of the planning process and public consultation efforts, please refer to Appendix A.

1.7 PLANNING AREA DESCRIPTION

The Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site contains seventeen land use designations that were established to capture the special characteristics of the area (Tables 1 & 2). The three land use categories in the Basin (Provincial Park, conservation reserve and enhanced management area) cover approximately 370,663.85 hectares of land and water. These areas plus General Use Areas, most notably Lake Nipigon, make up the defined planning area addressed by this strategy (Figure 1).

Mining claims that are situated within recommended protected areas have been designated as forest reserves. Should the mining claims be retired through normal processes, their area will be added to the park or conservation reserve.

1.7.1 REGIONAL SETTING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Lake Nipigon is located in the northwest part of the Province of Ontario, within the Nipigon and Thunder Bay administrative districts of the Ministry of Natural Resources. It is situated approximately 170 kilometers northeast of Thunder Bay and 50 kilometers north of the town of Nipigon between 88 and 89 degrees longitude and between 49 degrees 15 minutes and 50 degrees 15 minutes latitude (Figure 2).

The Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site connects with Wabakimi Provincial Park to the north and with Lake Superior and the Great Lakes Heritage Coast Signature Site to the

south. Provincial parks nearby include Sleeping Giant, Ouimet Canyon, Ruby Lake and Rainbow Falls.

Highway 17 runs across the south end of the Basin, traversing the Nipigon River at Nipigon. Adjacent to the west side of the basin, Highway 527 provides access to the communities of Armstrong and Gull Bay. Highway 580 links the community of Beardmore to the east shore of Lake Nipigon. Highway 585 runs north along the west side of the Nipigon River to Pine Portage. At the south end of the lake near Orient Bay, Highway 11 follows the shoreline within the Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserve for several kilometers before heading northeast to Beardmore. The Black Sturgeon Road and Auden Road are primary forest access roads that also provide access to the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site.

The City of Thunder Bay has an international airport and is the largest service center in the region. There are nine communities within or very close to the Lake Nipigon Basin: Beardmore (as part of the newly created Municipality of Greenstone), Macdiarmid, Armstrong, Nipigon, Red Rock, Gull Bay, Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay), Whitesand and Red Rock (Lake Helen). The hamlet of Orient Bay is located at the south end of Pijitawabik Bay, approximately 10 kilometers south of Macdiarmid. The tiny settlements of Ferland and Mud River are

located north of Lake Nipigon on the rail line. Many of these communities provide essential services such as gas, shopping, groceries, banking, restaurants, hotels, and medical care. Other population centers in this region of Northwestern Ontario include Rosport, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Geraldton, Longlac, Jellicoe, Dorion, Hurkett and Pass Lake.

Gull Bay and Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek are the only occupied Indian Reserves located within the Basin. The Red Rock First Nation community is located just south of the Basin. The Whitesand Reserve is located at Armstrong.

The Canadian National Railway (CNR) main line crosses the Basin north of Lake Nipigon. A CNR station at Armstrong offers a passenger drop off and pick up service. Pickup service is available upon request at isolated railway communities such as Mud River and Ferland at the north end of the lake. A second CNR Line travels through the southern portion of the Basin and crosses Pijitawabik Bay.

There are three hydroelectric power generating facilities on the Nipigon River; Cameron Falls Dam, Alexander Dam and Pine Portage Dam. There is also the Ogoki Diversion located on the Ogoki River, north of the Basin, which serves to divert waters normally flowing to Hudson Bay, south to the Great Lakes. Finally, there is the Namewaminikan Dam located on the Namewaminikan River, just outside the study area.

TABLE 1: LAKE NIPIGON BASIN – EXISTING PROTECTED AREAS

PARK NAME	CLASSIFICATION	AREA (ha)
Lake Nipigon	Natural Environment	918
Livingstone Point	Nature Reserve	1,800
Windigo Bay	Nature Reserve	8,378
West Bay	Nature Reserve	1,120
Kabitotikwia River	Nature Reserve	1,965
TOTAL EXISTING PROVINCIAL PARK AREA		14,181

TABLE 2: LAKE NIPIGON BASIN – NEW DESIGNATIONS

SITE NAME	CLASSIFICATION/CATEGORY	AREA (ha)
<i>Conservation Reserves</i>		
Lake Nipigon	N/A	177,228.6
Nipigon Palisades	N/A	11,582.1
Nipigon River	N/A	2,700.0
Total Area of Conservation Reserves		191,510.7
<i>Enhanced Management Areas</i>		
South Lake Nipigon	Remote Access	24,568.1
Orient Bay Peninsula	Recreation	16,166.2
Gull Bay	Recreation	209.2
West Lake Nipigon	Recreation	42,272.4
Pikitigushi	Wildlife	36,062.5
Lake Nipigon - Beardmore	Recreation	13,091.4
Total Area of Enhanced Management Areas		132,369.8
<i>Provincial Parks</i>		
Whitesand River	Waterway Class	11,353.4
Kopka River Addition	Waterway Class	11,324.8
Black Sturgeon River	Waterway Class	24,105.1
Total Area of New Provincial Parks		46,783.3
<i>Total Area of Proposed New Designations</i>		370,663.8 ha

Note: Area figures are calculated using the best current information, but should be considered estimates for planning and comparative purposes only. The area of Enhanced Management Areas may vary according to map scale. The area of proposed provincial parks and conservation reserves are subject to change depending on map scale, removal of forest reserves and private land, and other boundary adjustments required for regulation.

There is a gas pipeline operated by Trans Canada Pipe Lines, which traverses the Black Sturgeon River Provincial Park and the Nipigon River and Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserves.

The islands and surrounding shorelands of Lake Nipigon, the Black Sturgeon and Nipigon River areas are almost all Crown-owned. Private land exists in the Lake Nipigon-Beardmore Enhanced Management Area, in the communities of Rocky Bay, Macdiarmid and Orient Bay. There are also 19 privately owned cottages along the Lake Nipigon

shoreline in Eva Township as well as some mining patents and leases. Private land can also be found in Ledger and Purdom Townships, close to and in some cases, within the boundaries of the Nipigon Palisades and Nipigon River Conservation Reserves. Other private land within the study area includes the Indian Reserves of Gull Bay, McIntyre Bay and Jackfish Island. Private cottage lots exist on McKenzie, Clearwater and Waweig Lakes. There is also a private land holding on the north shore of Lake Nipigon in Windigo Bay. A Hudson Bay trading post was once located here.

There are over 100 active mining claims within the study area. Many of these claims are grouped along major fault zones. On the west side of the lake, these claims are concentrated around Black Sturgeon Lake, Chief Bay, English Bay, Havoc Lake and Pillar Lake. On the east side of the Basin, claims are concentrated around the Beardmore-Geraldton Greenstone Belt.

1.7.2 ACCESS

The Nipigon River Conservation Reserve can be easily accessed via Highway 585 (Cameron Falls Road). Currently there are a total of 12 access points on Crown, private and leased land along the Nipigon River. Highway 11 runs right through the Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserve, providing easy access. Lake Nipigon is best accessed on the southeast side at the municipally operated Poplar Lodge Campground or High Hill Harbour Marina; via private access points in Orient Bay; or at the South Bay public access point. Other access to Lake Nipigon includes the Poshkokagan River access, Chief Bay access, Kings Landing (Gull Bay), Pishidgi Lake via Wabinoosh River, Humboldt Bay and Ombabika access and river access from the rail line down the Pikitigushi, Little Jackfish and Whitesand Rivers. Black Sturgeon River is accessed at a number of locations from the Black Sturgeon road and associated secondary roads.

1.7.3 STUDY AREA HIGHLIGHTS

Lake Nipigon Basin can be described as a major natural crossroads, where geological, ecological, hydrological and recreational attributes come together in a hub of significant natural importance. Dominating this landscape is Lake Nipigon. At 484,800 hectares in size, it is the 38th largest lake in the world, the largest body of water wholly within the province of Ontario and the largest headwater to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence waterway.

The Lake Nipigon Basin represents the southern limit of the retreating range of woodland caribou in Ontario. This species is listed as threatened in Canada. The islands of

Lake Nipigon provide critical caribou calving habitat. Migration corridors pass through several portions of the Basin. Other wildlife of note includes the osprey and great grey owl as well as the American white pelican and bald eagle, both of which are endangered in Ontario.

Lake Nipigon supports 46 species of fish, two of which have been listed as threatened in Canada, the shortjaw cisco and the deepwater sculpin. Both the sport fishery and commercial fishery are considered to be world class. The Nipigon River also has a reputation for its outstanding brook trout fishery.

An impressive array of geological, landscape and vegetation assemblages can be found in the Basin. One of the most dramatic geological features are the diabase sills which form towering cliff faces along parts of the Lake Nipigon shoreline and islands and in the Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserve. The north and south facing talus slopes of these cliff features harbour plant species more commonly found in arctic or more southerly environments.

A diversity of outdoor recreation activities can be enjoyed in the Lake Nipigon Basin including canoeing, kayaking, camping, angling, rock climbing, wildlife viewing, hiking, boating, hunting, cycling and more. The study area provides an exceptional wilderness environment, with dramatic scenery, ample fish and wildlife and clean, clear water.

Detailed background information relating to the Lake Nipigon Basin can be found in Appendix B.

2 LAND USE OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES

2.1 ESTABLISHING STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

The Project Team established the land use objectives for the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site early in the planning process and published them in the Lake Nipigon Basin Background Document and Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Management Options Document. These objectives have since been revised based on public review and input, new information and government direction. Objectives have been defined to address key topics, namely Aboriginal communities, access, Crown land use, cultural heritage, fisheries, wildlife, forestry, mining, tourism and recreation, vegetation, water resources and parks and protected areas. Each of these topics may have one or more objectives associated with it.

2.1.1 ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

- To ensure that Aboriginal and treaty rights, as identified under the Canadian Constitution, are recognized and respected throughout the planning process
- To ensure local Aboriginal communities benefit from economic opportunities generated through the planning and management of the Lake Nipigon Basin; and
- To encourage active involvement by the communities of Red Rock, Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay), Gull Bay, Animibiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek (Lake Nipigon Ojibway), Sand Point, Poplar Point, Poplar Point Ojibway, and Whitesand throughout the planning process

2.1.2 ACCESS

- To maintain the remote and inaccessible character of the northern half of Lake Nipigon
- To recognize the Basin's scenic, ecological and land use values when considering the establishment of any access roads to existing or new development

- To work toward the establishment of a network of good quality, strategically located access points around the Lake Nipigon Basin to facilitate outdoor recreation, tourism and traditional use of the area; and
- To review current access points and roads to determine whether they should be removed, improved or left status quo

2.1.3 CROWN LAND USE

- To guide the development and wise use of Crown land within the Basin (e.g., remote camping, buildings, trail use)
- To encourage low impact camping; and
- To develop management strategies for Crown land use that ensure the protection and sustainability of the Basin's natural resources

2.1.4 FORESTRY AND MINING

- To manage forestry within the enhanced management areas to ensure there is no reduction in normal wood supply and only in exceptional cases will wood cost be affected
- To develop clear, defined land use and resource management direction for forestry activities within the six enhanced management areas, to protect identified aesthetic, recreational and ecological values and adjacent protected areas; and
- To encourage mineral exploration and development activities within the six enhanced management areas that recognize and maintain identified aesthetic, recreational and ecological values and adjacent protected areas

2.1.5 TOURISM AND RECREATION

- To consider the development of new tourism (e.g. cottage lots, lodge, interpretive signage) and recreation (e.g. trails, campsite development) opportunities in the southern portion of the Basin; and

- To ensure any tourism/recreation development and activities will occur such that the current capacity of the supporting natural resource base is not exceeded, and the current high quality of the Basin ecosystem is maintained (e.g. emphasizing non-consumptive tourism and recreation opportunities)

2.1.6 FISHERIES

- To protect, rehabilitate and sustain aquatic ecosystems and populations within the Basin, while allowing for the benefits of Aboriginal subsistence, sport, commercial and bait fishing
- To protect and rehabilitate fish habitat (e.g., spawning beds, upwellings, nursery areas) to ensure sustainability of healthy fish communities
- To assist in preventing additional species from becoming endangered or threatened in Ontario while actively improving, where applicable, the status of existing endangered or threatened species (e.g., cisco species, sculpin, northern brook lamprey)
- To manage for a sustainable, world-class sport fishery
- To manage for a sustainable, world-class commercial fishery; and
- To foster partnerships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, Ontario Power Generation and interest groups for the achievement of fisheries habitat management, data collection and public education

2.1.7 WILDLIFE

- To protect and sustain wildlife habitat and populations within the Basin while allowing for the beneficial use of wildlife (e.g., viewing, photography, hunting, trapping)
- To seek to increase hunting opportunities in the Basin for example, hunting versus no hunting zones and primitive weapon versus modern weapon hunts

- To promote opportunities for non-consumptive uses of wildlife (nature appreciation, interpretation, education, scientific study)
- To assist in preventing additional species from becoming endangered or threatened in Ontario while actively improving, where applicable, the status of existing endangered or threatened species (e.g., woodland caribou, American white pelican and peregrine falcon)
- To protect, rehabilitate and create wildlife habitat to achieve sustainable and diverse wildlife populations and to ensure environmental quality and ecosystem integrity; and
- To promote partnerships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and interest groups for the achievement of wildlife habitat management, data collection and public education

2.1.8 VEGETATION

- To determine, using local knowledge, science and modeling tools, the appropriate means to maintain a natural variety of vegetative cover (e.g., diversity of age class, forest type, habitat type); and
- To identify and protect rare and disjunct plant species and communities

2.1.9 CULTURAL HERITAGE

- To identify, document and protect the cultural and historical values of the Lake Nipigon Basin; and
- To encourage the development and promotion of facilities, initiatives and partnerships that further the conservation, interpretation and understanding of the Lake Nipigon Basin's cultural heritage

2.1.10 WATER RESOURCES

- To improve water quality and ensure that no degradation of water quality occurs as a result of tourism, recreational or industrial development in the Basin

- To ensure that the Water Management Plan for Lake Nipigon and the Nipigon River is adhered to and if possible, improved; and
- To ensure that water management on the Nipigon watershed is conducted in concert with water management for the Great Lakes

2.1.11 PROVINCIAL PARKS AND CONSERVATION RESERVES

- To review existing parks within the Lake Nipigon Basin in terms of their classification and boundaries to ensure Ontario Parks objectives are being met; and
- To ensure that decisions regarding permitted uses/development/activities in existing and new provincial parks and conservation reserves comply with *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* and provincial policies for parks and conservation reserves

2.2 PLANNING ISSUES

Issues relating to the management of the Lake Nipigon Basin were compiled via a number of mechanisms. Some were identified as a result of ongoing management and regulation of resource use in the Lake Nipigon and Nipigon River area – e.g. sustaining the fish resource, protecting caribou and managing the impacts of Crown land use. Additional issues evolved out of Ontario's Living Legacy and the land use objectives identified for the Lake Nipigon Basin in the Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy. Finally, interest groups, advisory committees and members of the public brought forth other issues during the development of this document.

Issues that could not be addressed through this initiative may be recommended for future consideration. The identified issues (listed in the appendices) provided direction for the development of the strategy objectives, and opened the door to a broad range of management opportunities that will result in the improved management, protection and wise use of the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site.

The main issues are summarized below. For a detailed list of identified issues, please refer to Appendix C.

Aboriginal Interests

- Aboriginal and treaty rights
- Conflicting objectives among communities

Access to Lake Nipigon

- Northern remoteness
- Improved facilities versus status quo Crown Land Use
- Need for more information
- Environmental impacts
- Introduction of exotic species

Forest Management and Mining

- Operations in enhanced management areas

Wildlife

- Protecting species at risk
- Need for more information
- Caribou
- Hunting on islands

Fish and Fisheries

- Managing sport and commercial harvest
- Need for more information

Tourism

- Development versus no development
- Managing cruiser/day charter operations

Cottaging

- Development versus no development

Water Resources

- Impacts of draw-down
- Need for more information
- Degradation in Little Jackfish River
- Namewaminikan River Dam

3 LAND USE DIRECTION

3.1 LAND USE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

The land use and resource management direction for the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site is outlined in Chapter 1, Section 3 and in Chapters 2 to 12. Public input, Government policy and mandate, information and science all played a part in determining the management direction that follows. The direction outlined within this strategy document is based on the various options presented in the *Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Management Options* document (Dec 2001), and strives to ensure the protection and sustainability of the Basin ecosystem while meeting the needs of the public and stakeholder groups. This approach has resulted in a combination of protection and development oriented direction. Protection policies are focused mainly on rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species as well as ensuring sustainability of significant resources (e.g., fishery, wildlife, recreation, and tourism). Development direction encourages nodal development, focused access and low impact recreational development (e.g., trails, and campsites).

There are four land use categories addressed within this document: conservation reserves, provincial parks, enhanced management areas and general use areas. Conservation reserves and provincial parks are protected area designations and are regulated under the *Public Lands Act* and *Provincial Parks Act* respectively. These protected areas contribute to the overall objectives of Ontario's Parks and Protected Areas System. Enhanced management areas are a new land use category governed by the policy direction outlined in *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*. These areas have been established in order to provide more detailed land use direction in areas of special features or values. Commercial resource activities (e.g., forest management, mineral exploration, fur

harvesting) will continue within enhanced management areas.

Activities that occur in general use areas within and adjacent to the study area, may influence future land use and resource management activities that occur within the other designations. For example, fire management, forestry and mining activities adjacent to protected areas may have an impact on values within the protected areas. Lake Nipigon is the most significant general use area (except for McIntyre, Humboldt, West and South Bays which are part of the Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve) within the Lake Nipigon Basin study area.

A fifth category of land use is forest reserve. These are mining claims or leases that were in existence prior to Ontario's Living Legacy, and are located within the boundaries of recommended parks or conservation reserves. Policies for forest reserves are similar to the policies for new conservation reserves except that mineral exploration, mining and related access is permitted. Forest reserves exist in the Black Sturgeon River Provincial Park, Kopka River Provincial Park Addition and the Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve. When a claim or lease is retired through normal processes, the intent is to add that area to the park or conservation reserve. Land use direction for forest reserves will not be discussed separately in this document, as apart from the provisions for mineral exploration and mining, the land use intent will essentially be the same as for the protected area within which the mining tenure is located.

3.1.1 BOUNDARIES

Changes have been made to the boundaries of some of the conservation reserves, provincial parks and enhanced management areas within the Signature Site, from the boundaries originally identified in the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, to better capture environmental and recreational values. These proposed changes were presented to the public at open houses and in the *Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Management Options* document published in December

2001. Public input indicated that on average 49% of the public supported the boundary adjustments for the conservation reserves and enhanced management areas, 10% disagreed, 25% were unsure and 16% did not respond. With regard to the park boundary adjustments, 59% agreed with the Black Sturgeon Park boundary adjustment, and 80% agreed with the Kopka River boundary adjustments. The conservation reserve and provincial park boundaries are regulated under the *Public Lands Act* and *Provincial Parks Act* respectively. The enhanced management area boundaries form part of the land use policy direction for these areas. The land use and resource management direction presented in Chapter 1 Section 3 and Chapters 2 to 12 and the maps contained therein, reflect the boundary changes which are outlined below:

- a) Valuable caribou winter habitat has been added to the Pikitigushi Enhanced Management Area (a wildlife enhanced management area) and area that has lesser value as caribou winter habitat has been removed. This boundary adjustment helps to better meet the intent of this enhanced management area, which is to protect and enhance caribou habitat. The new area, 36,062.53 hectares, is smaller than that originally defined in the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* by about 4,489 hectares.
- b) The boundary of the Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserve has been extended to capture the entire Cash Creek Gorge, a prominent geological feature in the area. This addition is 197 hectares in size.
- c) A portion of the Lake Nipigon Waters Conservation Reserve including Humboldt, West, McIntyre and South Bays, has been amalgamated with the Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve. This includes the Lake Nipigon islands and shore lands and is called the Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve.
- d) A section of land on the northwest side of the Nipigon River has been added into the Nipigon River Conservation Reserve to capture wetland features and to protect scenic landscapes. This adjustment adds approximately 167 hectares to the protected area.
- e) The boundary of the South Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area has been adjusted to exclude the Black Sturgeon Road, (a primary forest access road) since the intent is to manage this area for remote access. In addition, the Orient Bay Peninsula has been established as a separate recreation category enhanced management area to reflect the intent for recreation rather than remote access.
- f) The northern boundaries of Black Sturgeon River Provincial Park have been adjusted to include the mouth of the river and a portion of Black Sturgeon Bay in Lake Nipigon. This boundary change will include the glacial spillway of Glacial Lake Kelvin and surround the portage along the popular canoe route connecting Black Sturgeon Lake to Lake Nipigon (798.68 hectares). This change will mean converting what has already been designated as conservation reserve to a provincial park designation
- g) Wabinoosh Bay shoreline (200 metres) and the bed of the bay, the east shore watershed of Wabinoosh Lake and the Prisoner of War camp area, have all been added to the Kopka River Provincial Park Addition. This addition involves converting conservation reserve designation to park designation. Incorporation of the Prisoner of War Camp will involve converting enhanced management area to park. These additions include 7,446 hectares of new park area.
- h) A section of the Lake Nipigon – Beardmore Enhanced Management Area, approximately 2,323 hectares in size and located adjacent to the Rocky Bay Indian Reserve, has been removed as it is separated from the lake shoreline by the Indian reserve and contributes little to the recreational objectives for the enhanced management area.

3.1.2 LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

The *Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy* is a planning document that provides management direction for land and resource use on Crown lands in the planning area. This direction is provided at two levels. Chapter 1, Section 3 deals with the overall policy and land use direction for the Lake Nipigon Basin with regard to specific subject areas such as access, fisheries, tourism, etc., and is intended to provide a context for the more detailed management direction found in Chapters 2 to 12. Not all designated areas have received the same level of detail in this section. For example, the 5 existing provincial parks on Lake Nipigon, which have been subject to previous planning initiatives (e.g., interim management statements, park management plans) are usually referenced only when new land use direction is being proposed for those areas.

Chapters 2 to 12 provide additional, detailed resource management direction for each designated area (conservation reserve, park, enhanced management area) in the form of stand-alone resource management documents. Both levels of direction must be considered in making management decisions for the planning area. Direction respecting general use areas will be referenced in relation to the specific resource area or designation to which such direction might apply.

3.1.3 IMPLEMENTATION

The *Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy* has been developed within the context and policy direction of the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* and incorporates up-to-date background information (e.g., life science studies, geological inventories) and public consultation. The land use direction outlined in this strategy provides overall intent and direction for land use, resource management and operational activities on Crown lands within the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site.

This strategy replaces the *Lake Nipigon Integrated Resource Management Plan* and

will result in refinements to the area specific policies in the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*. Local land use direction from the Nipigon District Land Use Guidelines and the Thunder Bay District Land Use Guidelines is also replaced by the strategy.

Any new or revised resource or land use plans for Crown lands and Crown resources must be consistent with the Strategy direction. The strategy may also require modifications to the direction contained in existing resource management documents such as fisheries management plans and fire management strategies. These documents will be amended where required to incorporate the new direction. Direction provided herein regarding resource management in the enhanced management areas will be incorporated into forest management plans during the next planning cycle. Where required, the Nipigon District and Thunder Bay District Compliance Plans will be amended to meet the objectives of this strategy (e.g., increased enforcement of the 21-day Crown land camping rule).

Planning is an iterative and adaptive process. There is no intent to carry out a comprehensive review of the *Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy* at any prescribed interval. Using adaptive management, the land use and resource management policies in this document will be kept current through periodic amendments resulting from changes in government policy, new resource information or in response to public need. Future reviews of the park management plans contained within this strategy will occur as necessary.

Activities carried out or sanctioned by the Ministry of Natural Resources as a result of the direction contained within this Strategy document will be subject to the requirements of the *Environmental Assessment Act* and other applicable legislation.

3.1.4 STRATEGY AMENDMENT

Circumstances may change which could require that this strategy document be amended. Proposed amendments must not alter the overall intent of the *Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy*. An amendment to the strategy may be requested at any time and the Northwest Regional Director and Managing Director of Ontario Parks will decide whether or not to consider it. Requests for amendments must have a basis in fact, demonstrably relate to the scope of the strategy, and respond to changing resource conditions, new information, changing government policies or public need. The Ministry of Natural Resources also has the authority to initiate amendments in response to new information or changed conditions.

Amendments will be classified as either minor or major. Minor amendments are those changes that do not have a negative effect on the public, adjacent landowners or the environment and are generally administrative in nature. Minor amendments will be approved by the Nipigon and Thunder Bay District Managers and Ontario Parks Northwest Zone Manager and will not normally be subject to public consultation.

Major amendments have a significant social, economic and/or environmental impact. Major amendments will be reviewed by the Ministry of Natural Resources District Manager and submitted to the Regional Director and Managing Director of Ontario Parks for approval. Public consultation will occur for all major amendments and notice of all major amendments will be posted on the *Environmental Bill of Rights* electronic registry.

3.2 LAND USE DIRECTION

The land use direction for the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site is presented by topic, in Section 3.2.1 to Section 3.2.9. The management direction for each subject area is defined as it pertains to the conservation

reserves, provincial parks and enhanced management areas within the Signature Site.

3.2.1 ACCESS

Existing access on Lake Nipigon is a combination of municipal, private, official and unofficial public sites. Some sites are well developed with boat ramps, parking, docks and garbage facilities, while others are nothing more than a rough bush road to a clearing at the water's edge. The northern half of Lake Nipigon has remained relatively remote, which has contributed to the retention of its pristine, wilderness attributes.

The long-term land use intent is to consolidate access to a fewer number of good quality access points in locations that can support human use. Sites suffering from environmental degradation due to impacts from human use will be closed. Other existing sites will remain open with the intent of maintaining or improving certain access points while others will be allowed to abandon naturally. Use of existing private and municipal access facilities will be promoted.

3.2.1.1 Direction

Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve, Provincial Parks and Enhanced Management Areas

The remote and inaccessible nature of the northern half of Lake Nipigon will be actively maintained. No new access to the shore of Lake Nipigon will be permitted north of Mungo Park Point on the east shore and north of Nazoteka Point on the west shore. Existing access at Ombabika and Humboldt Bays will not be promoted or maintained and will be left to deteriorate naturally to support the remote and inaccessible nature of the northern half of Lake Nipigon. Existing access to the north end of the lake via water routes (Pikitigushi River, Little Jackfish River, Pishidgi-Kopka Rivers, Whitesand River) will be permitted. The access road to the Healing Lodge in Windigo Bay Provincial Park will not be permitted to extend within 1000 metres of the water's edge. No improvements will be

permitted to the old tramway trail leading from Ferland to the north shore of Lake Nipigon.

As identified in *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, shoreline facilities and access will be encouraged in the Gull Bay Enhanced Management Area. A partnership opportunity with Gull Bay First Nation will be pursued for the development of access facilities in the Gull Bay Enhanced Management Area. This facility could include docking, boat launching, garbage, washroom and camping facilities and would be promoted as the prime access to western Lake Nipigon. West shore access to Lake Nipigon via the Pishidgi Lake access point located in Kopka River Provincial Park will be permitted to continue subject to future park management planning. It is recommended that partnership opportunities for improvements at Pishidgi access, such as docking, boat launch and campsites be investigated during future park management planning for Kopka River Provincial Park.

Access will be promoted in a balanced fashion around the southern half of Lake Nipigon (south of Mungo Park and Nazoteka Points) with the intent of focusing access to a fewer number of good quality access points. Well-developed access already exists on the east side of the lake in the Lake Nipigon - Beardmore Enhanced Management Area at the municipally operated High Hill Harbour and Poplar Lodge Campground. These access points will continue to be supported and promoted in information brochures, maps and signage that is developed for the signature site. In addition, private access exists in Orient Bay at a number of tourist facilities, and in Pijitawabik Bay at the Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek and Sand Point First Nation Reserves. Use of these existing, private access points to Lake Nipigon will also be promoted.

The old South Bay access point, located at the bottom tip of South Bay, will be physically closed and the site restored to protect sensitive fish habitat. The newly established South Bay access point will be promoted as the key access point to the south end of the lake. Partnership opportunities for the

improvement and expansion of this facility will be investigated. Possible improvement features could include washroom and garbage facilities, improved docking and parking. The Pine Portage access facility located on the Ontario Power Generation Lease will be permitted to continue provided the leaseholder is in agreement, but will not be promoted.

In the short term, the Poshkokagan River access into Chief Bay will remain open but will not be maintained. Biological information will be collected and analyzed to determine the need for a no wake zone or access closure to protect sensitive wetland features. If research findings indicate that the site can remain open with a no wake zone/speed limit/horsepower limit in place, then the site will remain open and facilities may be put in place through partnerships to ensure environmental and health concerns are addressed (e.g. vault toilets, garbage receptacle). Should the site be closed in the future, consideration will be given to improving the Chief Bay access at the northern end of the bay. Future developments at Chief Bay access could include road improvements, boat launch, parking and docking facilities.

Road development will be limited in the West Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area and South Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area to protect headwater streams and wilderness values. Access for forestry and mineral exploration activity will be developed to minimum standards, closed to public travel and abandoned after use. No new permanent access will be permitted.

Longer-term access to the Orient Bay Peninsula Enhanced Management Area for forestry operations will be permitted. Vehicle access to the peninsula by authorized commercial users (e.g. prospectors, trappers, tourist outfitters) is permitted, but public access into the area will be restricted to the use of off-road vehicles (e.g., ATV's, snowmachines, etc).

Any future road development proposals to access existing or future tourism/recreation facilities in the Lake Nipigon - Beardmore

Enhanced Management Area will be subject to careful consideration of potential impacts on environmental, scenic and cultural values. Otherwise, access developed for forestry purposes within one kilometre of the shoreline, will be developed to minimum standards (not necessarily winter roads only) and will be abandoned after forest harvesting and renewal activities are complete. Closing roads or portions of roads to public travel may be considered, through the Forest Management Plan process, where required to stop potential undesirable access to the shoreline from occurring.

Road development in the Pikitigushi Enhanced Management Area will be governed by the need to protect caribou winter habitat and to enhance caribou movement between Lake Nipigon, Wabakimi Provincial Park and the Ogoki Lake area. This direction will be used to determine the location of permanent and temporary forest access roads as well as to identify the requirement to remove roads that may impact caribou.

There is no connecting road traversing the north end of Lake Nipigon to link western and eastern forest road systems. There is a concern that a road link across the north end of Lake Nipigon will compromise the long-term sustainability of the woodland caribou population, an already threatened species, as well as jeopardize the remoteness of northern Lake Nipigon.

The Lake Nipigon area is strategically important to long-term woodland caribou recovery due to its high quality and quantity of caribou habitat and its location near the southern limit of continuous caribou range.

The Ontario Woodland Caribou Recovery Team has identified that a connecting road link across this northern area will further fragment the Nipigon landscape and potentially isolate the Lake Nipigon forest-dwelling woodland caribou population. This may result in local extirpation and continued range loss for this species.

A precautionary approach must be taken. Any consideration of a future road link, (through

forest management planning or other management planning processes), will require a detailed analysis of all ecological, economic, environmental and social effects within the affected area. The results of such an analysis may require an amendment to the Crown Land Use Atlas. The input of the Ontario Woodland Caribou Recovery Team will be sought in any process (i.e., reviewing road proposals, providing input) and in developing related direction and guidelines for this area.

Nipigon River and Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserves

The Nipigon River is easily accessed via Highway 585. There are currently 5 Ministry of Natural Resources access points and 7 private (Ontario Power Generation) access points along the Nipigon River. The intent is to promote the Nipigon River as mainly a day use area. This approach will address two issues 1) the environmental degradation resulting from multiple access points along the river and 2) the use of access points for camping by relatively few individuals to the exclusion of others who want to use them for access. The nearness of the river to the community of Nipigon, hotels and private campgrounds as well as the existence of other Crown land camping opportunities in close proximity to Nipigon make this a viable option. This also provides Red Rock First Nation with the opportunity of developing/promoting their lands at Parmacheene as an access facility and/or campground.

No new access will be created to the Nipigon River. Day use facilities will be improved at Birch Point and Alexander Landing through partnerships. Improvements may include vault toilets, picnic tables and garbage facilities. No overnight camping will be permitted along the roadside within the conservation reserve or at Birch Point or Alexander Landing access points. Crown land camping will continue to be permitted but not promoted or expanded at North and South Male Creek and the North end of Jessie Lake access points. Ontario Power Generation will be asked to support this land use approach on their leased and private lands on the Nipigon River.

One or more safe public parking lots with associated interpretative facilities and hiking trails will be developed within the Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserve to facilitate ice/rock climbing, hiking and viewing opportunities. The Ministry of Transportation will be consulted in the planning phase and partners will be required to ensure long term maintenance. In addition, improved access to allow for increased fishing opportunities in the Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserve will be investigated.

3.2.2 CROWN LAND USE

Crown land use includes the array of outdoor activities undertaken on Crown land such as camping, hiking, berry picking, swimming, picnicking, boating, hunting, angling and snowmobiling. Crown land use also includes construction of facilities on Crown land for certain purposes (e.g., trap cabins, commercial fish cabins, recreation camps) authorized through land use permit, lease or letters of authority. The Lake Nipigon Basin offers opportunities to enjoy all of these things in an area with exceptional scenic and wilderness qualities. Crown land use can have a negative impact on the environment if not managed properly. Some of these impacts include soil compaction, improper disposal of grey water and human waste, destruction of vegetation, litter, damage to sensitive habitats (e.g., spawning beds, shorebird-nesting sites), erosion of shorelines and disruption of critical fauna (e.g., caribou, nesting eagles, pelicans). The overall land use direction for the Lake Nipigon Basin is to allow for the continuation of Crown land use activities without negatively impacting the ecological, cultural or wilderness values of the Basin.

3.2.2.1 Direction

Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve and Provincial Parks

Within the Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve and the provincial parks, areas easily impacted by human use and activity (e.g., caribou calving islands, sensitive bird nesting sites, critical fish habitat, culturally significant areas) will be protected through specific zoning and

governed by a no-use or limited-use policy. In provincial parks, sensitive features are protected through nature reserve zones or wilderness zones. In conservation reserves, areas containing sensitive features will be zoned for limited or no use under the Public Lands Act. A public education initiative will be undertaken to inform the public of the need to use the lands and waters of the area in a sensitive manner and to advise users about any specific restrictions. This could include the development of brochures and educational signage at key access points. Private sector partners (e.g., naturalist groups, tourist operators, angling groups) and local municipalities will be approached to participate in this endeavor. Traditional Crown land activities are permitted in the conservation reserves except in identified sensitive areas. Provincial parks policy will apply in the parks with regard to permitted activities.

Structures associated with Crown land uses within Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve (e.g., remote recreation camps, trapline cabins, commercial fish cabins, etc.) will be permitted to remain provided they are necessary, are being used for their designated purpose and are not negatively impacting on values. Owners of structures that do not meet these criteria will be required to remove or relocate them.

Crown land disposition for large tourism structures (e.g., lodge), remote recreation camps or outpost camps will not occur within the Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve. Issuance of land use permits for a small number of low impact tourism developments with a Native cultural theme may be considered on islands south of Kelvin Island or on shore land south of Mungo Park Point to the east and Nazoteka Point to the west. Land use permits will only be considered for activities not in conflict with identified values (e.g., caribou calving island, eagle nest, pelican colony) or in conflict with traditional users.

Remote campsites on islands and shore lands within the Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve, which can withstand repeated use

and are not in conflict with caribou calving or other significant natural features, will be identified and mapped. Partnerships will be sought with tourism and outdoor recreation groups to monitor use and maintain basic facilities at these locations, such as box privies, fire pits, tent pads and signage. Camping is not permitted within nature reserve zones in provincial parks.

An increase in the enforcement of the 21-day Crown land camping rule will be implemented to address current issues around extended Crown land camping at public access points to reduce related environmental impacts, and to ensure more people have an opportunity to enjoy the area. Means to achieve this include educational brochures, signage at strategic locations and increased enforcement efforts. To further promote responsible Crown land use, a Basin wide campsite and access point cleanup involving volunteers, local communities, and stakeholders will be instituted.

During the development of management options for the Lake Nipigon Basin, green zones (areas of Crown land where non-residents are prohibited from camping) were discussed as a possible management tool. Ministry of Natural Resources policy identifies that a green zone may be established through regulation where Crown land camping by non-residents creates or contributes significantly to: congested camping, competition for resources or conflict between residents and non-residents, and/or impacts on fisheries resources. Green zones may also be established in areas containing a high concentration of tourist facilities, which face significant competition from Crown land camping by non-residents, and it is apparent that there would be increased private sector benefits if non-resident camping were regulated. It has been determined that none of these problem situations currently exist in the Basin. There may be an option to implement green zones in the future, through amendment to the strategy, should the policy conditions be met.

Nipigon River and Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserves

The Nipigon River and Nipigon Palisades are well-accessed areas (Highways 11 and 585), with many opportunities for Crown land recreation, such as canoeing, boating, picnicking, angling, hiking, nature appreciation and rock/ice climbing in the Palisades. These activities will be encouraged in a manner that does not jeopardize any significant earth, life or cultural values. Areas of high sensitivity will be identified and managed to prevent negative impact to these sites (e.g., no-use areas). Use will be directed to existing and future approved trail, access and viewing facilities. Current Crown land activities that are found to be negatively impacting the environment in specific locations will be discouraged through management action.

Birch Point and Alexander Landing access points along the Nipigon River will be managed for day use only, no Crown land camping will be permitted at these locations. This will reduce the environmental impacts resulting from Crown land camping activity occurring at multiple sites and will allow more people to enjoy the area. Crown land camping will continue to be permitted but not promoted or expanded at North and South Male Creek and North end of Jessie Lake Access Points. Remote tent camping (not road accessible) will be permitted within the Nipigon River Conservation Reserve. Crown land camping along the roadside within the conservation reserve will not be permitted.

Enhanced Management Areas

Non-consumptive tourism development within the West Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area will be encouraged such as canoeing, camping, hiking and nature appreciation. Potential for the development of canoe routes (e.g., campsites, fire rings, portages, box privies) or trails among the interconnecting lakes within the West Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area will be investigated depending on the availability of funding and potential for partnerships. Opportunities for the operation of non-

consumptive tourist facilities, in West Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area, can be considered as long as a strong business case and environmental sustainability can be demonstrated.

The Pikitigushi Enhanced Management Area has been established to ensure that woodland caribou habitat is protected and travel corridors are enhanced between Lake Nipigon and Wabakimi Provincial Park. As a result, Crown land activities will not be promoted and structures (i.e. trap cabins) will be discouraged.

The Gull Bay Enhanced Management Area was established primarily for the development of west shore access facilities. Crown land activities such as swimming, boating and camping are encouraged.

The South Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area has been established to ensure the protection of lake oriented values such as remoteness and lake tributaries. Remote Crown land recreation opportunities will be permitted such as canoeing, wilderness camping, hiking and angling.

The Lake Nipigon – Beardmore Enhanced Management Area has been identified for the promotion of outdoor recreation. A variety of Crown land recreation activities will be promoted including trail development and use (hiking, snowmobile, ATV), swimming, remote and road accessible camping, angling, hunting and nature appreciation. Crown land camping west of High Hill Harbour access road between Poplar Lodge Campground and High Hill Harbour Marina will not be permitted.

The intent for the Orient Bay Peninsula Enhanced Management Area is to promote backcountry recreation and to protect lake oriented values. Off road vehicles are the only permitted means of access to the peninsula, thus providing a large area for high quality backcountry recreation activities such as angling, hunting, hiking, camping, mountain biking and nature appreciation.

3.2.3 FORESTRY AND MINING

The enhanced management areas were established to recognize areas with special features or values (e.g., recreation values, wildlife values, remoteness) and provide a specific focus for the application of guidelines and other planning and management strategies.

Forestry and mining are permitted in enhanced management areas.

“Enhanced management areas may lead to modifications (e.g., timing, location, method, access) in resource management practices in order to recognize other land use values. These adjustments will be implemented with no impact on wood supply, and only in exceptional cases will wood costs be affected” (Ontario’s Living Legacy Land Use Strategy, 1999, page 25).

The intent of this strategy is to provide land use and resource management direction, further refined from that provided in the *Ontario’s Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, for the Basin enhanced management areas.

3.2.3.1 Direction

Land use decisions within the recreation enhanced management areas, (West Lake Nipigon, Lake Nipigon-Beardmore, Orient Bay Peninsula and Gull Bay) will be based on maintaining recreation and tourism opportunities. Industrial activities will be carried out in a manner that protects backcountry recreation and tourism values (e.g., remoteness, scenic landscapes, wildlife viewing opportunities, etc.). Industrial activities will also need to be modified if recreation and tourism infrastructure is developed.

Within the Pikitigushi Enhanced Management Area, industrial activities will be adapted to protect critical caribou winter habitat and to enhance caribou travel routes between Wabakimi Provincial Park and Lake Nipigon as per the *Ontario’s Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*. More specifically, this means maintaining a linked network (temporally and spatially) of mature forest tracts between Lake

Nipigon and Wabakimi Provincial Park, and ensuring that a sufficient area of critical summer and winter habitat is always available within the enhanced management area to meet caribou needs.

In the South Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area no new permanent access will be permitted except where no other reasonable alternative exists and industrial activities will be modified to minimize resource access and its related impacts, especially with regard to Lake Nipigon tributaries.

Industrial activities in all six enhanced management areas will be planned so that all tributaries to Lake Nipigon are protected. As a general rule, industrial roads and trails in all enhanced management areas will be constructed to minimum standards (not necessarily winter roads only), with temporary bridges being required instead of culverts where feasible. Road use strategies described in the forest management plans will clearly define the expected operating life of the roads and the timing and manner in which abandonment will occur. A close liaison between the Ministry of Natural Resources biologist and the Sustainable Forest Licence holder will be maintained when carrying out construction/operations near tributaries.

A new code of best practices for mineral exploration activities within the enhanced management areas has been developed by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in conjunction with the Ministry of Natural Resources (Appendix D). The intent of this code of best practices is to promote the conservation of recreational and natural values in the enhanced management areas by the mining industry. The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines will facilitate promotion and transfer of these best practices to the prospecting community.

3.2.4 TOURISM AND RECREATION

Two of the four objectives set out in the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* are to recognize the land use needs of the resource-based tourism industry; and to

enhance angling, hunting and other Crown land recreation opportunities. The *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* also recognizes the Basin as having “*extremely significant tourism and recreation potential that merits increased planning, management and promotion.*” In addition to this direction, the Project Team identified a number of key principles to help guide the development of land and resource management direction for tourism and recreation in the Basin:

- Ensure no negative impacts on the ecosystems or values of the Basin
- Encourage eco – tourism and low impact recreation opportunities
- Provide economic opportunities for the local Aboriginal population and surrounding communities
- Ensure protection of species at risk when making decisions on development and Crown land use

3.2.4.1 Direction

Gull Bay Enhanced Management Area

The land use intent for the Gull Bay Enhanced Management Area is to facilitate future shoreline access and development. Gull Bay First Nation will be approached to participate as a partner in the development of a lake-oriented access and campground facility within the enhanced management area. This type of facility would provide economic opportunities for the First Nation in terms of jobs and income. This development would provide similar recreational opportunities on the west side of the lake as are currently provided at the Poplar Lodge Campground (e.g., docks, boat ramp, fish cleaning hut, campsites, vault privies).

The location of the development will be in the southern portion of the enhanced management area, as the shoreline along the northern portion is largely comprised of sensitive wetland features. The majority of the shoreline in the southern portion has a stable boulder-type shoreline suitable for

development. The exact site location will be determined through thorough field investigation and inventory work to ensure protection of earth, life and cultural values.

West Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area

The West Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Area offers excellent backcountry recreation opportunities. The landscape is rugged and scenic and the area is poorly accessed. Recreational water routes and circle route opportunities are advocated for this area. For example, potential exists for a circle route starting at Waweig Lake, up to Mackenzie and Machine Gun Lakes and back to Waweig. Canoe routes will be improved based on the availability of funding and opportunities for partnerships.

Improvements could include fire pits and box privies at remote campsites, portage clearing, signage, and the development and publication of canoe route brochures. In addition, potential exists for an eco-tourism development somewhere off the Wabinosh road. This idea will be investigated further, with the intent of providing opportunities for local First Nations.

Crown land may be made available to Gull Bay First Nation in the Lake Nipigon West Enhanced Management Area to develop a remote trail and lookout opportunity on the north shore of Gull Bay amid the spectacular scenery and cliff formations. This development would complement the campground operation proposed for the Gull Bay Enhanced Management Area, and could be offered as a day excursion by charter boat operators.

Lake Nipigon – Beardmore Enhanced Management Area

As directed in the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, some recreational/tourism development is encouraged in the Lake Nipigon – Beardmore Enhanced Management Area. Development will be nodal, will focus on areas already developed (Poplar Point and High Hill Harbour Areas) and will be carefully planned such that cultural, ecological and

social values are not impacted. A close liaison will be maintained with the First Nations in the area and the Regional Municipality of Greenstone regarding any development proposals.

A considerable amount of alienated land exists in the Lake Nipigon – Beardmore Enhanced Management Area including two Indian reserves, and private and leased land in proximity to Poplar Lodge Campground. The Crown land development opportunities identified below will be pursued in light of private sector development activities. The overall objective being to ensure that the capacity of the Basin ecosystem to support development is not exceeded; and that the development identified in this strategy is complementary to, not in competition with, private sector development.

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Nipigon District, will request private sector proposals for the development of one road accessible or remote eco-lodge. The road accessible eco-lodge could be located at High Hill Harbour or North High Hill Harbour; the remote eco-lodge could be located at South High Hill Harbour or Grant Point. Detailed field inventories would be required before a specific site location could be determined. Any development proposals must:

- Provide economic opportunities to local First Nations and communities
- Be aesthetically pleasing and blend in with the Basin landscape
- Promote non-consumptive, high quality tourism opportunities with an ecological and cultural theme; and
- Integrate operations in with existing tourism facilities in the area (harbour, charter boat operations, campground, etc.)

The Township of Beardmore, now part of the Regional Municipality of Greenstone, has had a longstanding interest in pursuing cottage lot development on Lake Nipigon to generate economic benefits for their community. A parcel of Crown land, proximate to the High Hill Harbour Marina, will be made available to

the Regional Municipality of Greenstone for cottage lot development. Cottages will be developed in a cluster format rather than the traditional linear shoreline format. Minimum setback for the cottage development will be 500 metres from the water's edge. Cottage owners will obtain access to the lake via the High Hill Harbour Marina. Number and size of lots will be determined after detailed field investigations to determine suitability of the terrain. No development will take place until inventory work ensures no negative impact on the environment including sensitive values (e.g., significant plant species), cultural features or water quality. The size of the Crown parcel to be sold to the municipality will be determined after site investigations.

Trail development originating from Poplar Lodge Campground or High Hill Harbour will be promoted through partnerships. Potential trail opportunities are as follows.

1. Develop a trail boardwalk along the Standingstone Creek/wetland at Poplar Lodge Campground, leading into a 1-2 kilometre looped trail. This type of development would afford an easily accessible recreational opportunity to campground visitors as well as providing a chance to view and learn about the local environment.
2. Develop a coastal trail (walking only, no vehicles) from High Hill Harbour or Poplar Lodge Campground south to Lake Nipigon Provincial Park. This could be tied in with the future eco-lodge development, providing a challenging hiking opportunity.
3. Take advantage of old logging roads north of Poplar Lodge Campground, to develop looped trails from the campground north to the Namewaminikan River and back to the campground. These trails could be used for hiking and mountain biking or for recreational vehicles (e.g. all terrain vehicles, snowmobiles).
4. MNR will seek partners to develop a lookout/highway rest stop in the Beardmore Enhanced Management Area,

near the microwave tower south of Macdiarmid that would allow for viewing of Pijitawabik Bay Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve.

Tourism and recreation in the Lake Nipigon Conservation Reserve will focus on low impact pursuits. Development will be restricted to the improvement of remote campsites (see Section 3.2.2.1), establishment of canoe and kayak routes, and the promotion of boat tours to explore the lake and view wildlife.

Development of a backcountry canoe route or trail system in the Castle Lake Area (northwest shore of Lake Nipigon), will be considered. Access to this area can be obtained via a trail into Castle Lake from Castle Bay, a trail from Wabinoosh Road into Boswell Lake and then to Castle Lake or by floatplane into Castle Lake. There are a number of interconnecting lakes that would facilitate canoeing. This remote opportunity could be promoted in conjunction with a cruiser boat operation or a remote tourism operation out of Gull Bay, Whitesand Reserve and/or Armstrong. Tourist operators could outfit guests for backcountry excursions using their cruiser boat or existing tourist establishments (Armstrong area operators) as a home base or jump-off point.

Development of a small number of low impact tourist sites with a Native cultural theme, located in the southern half of Lake Nipigon and accessible by boat, will be permitted and authorized through land use permits (see Section 3.2.2.1). Examples include a sweat lodge or a replica of a pre-historic Native campsite. These sites could be incorporated into local tourist operations (e.g., cruiser operations, municipal adventure centre, lodge, First Nation ventures). Any development of this nature will be subject to detailed site inspections and land use permit conditions, to ensure no negative impacts to the Basin environment or conflict with existing use patterns.

Nipigon River and Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserves

The Nipigon River and Nipigon Palisades provide outdoor recreation opportunities that are easily accessible. Further recreation/tourism development that could occur in these conservation reserves and adjacent general use areas include:

1. Improvements to the walking trail at Split Rock along the Nipigon River to address safety issues along this precipitous stretch of the river. A scenic look-out and educational brochures/signage could promote the natural and human history of the area.
2. The establishment of trails from the Palisades highway parking facility (noted in Section 3.2.1.1) to allow ice/rock climbers to access popular climbs and hikers to access scenic waterfalls and viewpoints.
3. A walking trail along the Tramway from Alexander Landing to South Bay to promote and explore the areas' railroad history.
4. A trail along the top of the palisades, traversing their full length and accessed from the highway or the Gorge Creek Road.

Educating the public in the rich history of the area would be a major feature of these trails. Partnerships with local trail associations, naturalist clubs, tourist operators, climbers clubs, municipalities, etc. will be instrumental in developing, promoting and maintaining these trails.

3.2.5 FISHERIES

Lake Nipigon is an aquatic resource of global significance, containing clean, clear water and a fish population that has changed little over the past one hundred years. The overall land use intent with regard to fisheries in the Lake Nipigon Basin is to ensure the maintenance of a healthy, world class, high-quality fishery. Commercial species such as lake whitefish will be managed to optimize the opportunity to

harvest marketable species. Pike, lake trout and brook trout will be managed with the goal of optimizing opportunities to catch a large, memorable-sized fish. The harvest from an existing Aboriginal subsistence fishery will be factored into the management equation when determining available sport and commercial fishing opportunities.

3.2.5.1 Direction

Lake Nipigon, Nipigon River and Black Sturgeon Waterway

Efforts will be made to work with local First Nations to develop a co-stewardship aspect to the management of the Lake Nipigon fishery. This type of arrangement could involve First Nation participation in ongoing fishery management activities, information gathering and analysis, enforcement and public education.

Given the objective to manage for a world class, high quality fishery, the annual allowable harvest levels for each game and commercial fish species in Lake Nipigon (based on stock status indicators) will be calculated. In determining the allocation of the allowable harvest, the first allocation will be to the resource (i.e., enough fish are left unharvested to ensure viable populations). The remaining allowable harvest will be allocated first to Aboriginal subsistence needs, and the remaining allowable harvest will be made available to the commercial and sport fishery. Allocation decisions for commercial and sport fishing will be based in part on an economic-benefit analysis of commercial and sport fishing on Lake Nipigon. Social factors will also be considered in determining the allocation of the fishery resource. Stock status indicators and a protocol for adjusting quotas will be developed for each species. Harvest quotas will be reviewed annually. The allocation process will include consultation with stakeholders.

Commercial fish management practices will be modified, in consultation with commercial fishing operators, to address the long-term health of the fish stocks. These modifications may include developing a commercial system

based on zone quotas over the long term (further study on stock discreteness and movement patterns is required), closing the commercial fishery for degraded species until populations recover and investigating the use of management strategies to reduce the frequency of incidental catch.

Sport fish management practices will also be modified to ensure the sustainability and continued world class status of the Lake Nipigon fishery. This will involve developing a direct harvest control system such that the total harvest by anglers does not exceed the sport fish allocation. This system will be developed in consultation with the public and by investigating the types and success rates of harvest control systems currently being used in various locations around the world. Other management options for Lake Nipigon that will be investigated include allowing only artificial lures year round, creating fish sanctuaries to protect sensitive spawning habitat and establishing a fisheries and wildlife management board for Lake Nipigon waters and shore lands.

The Nipigon River will be managed for a high quality brook trout fishery, with the intent of maximizing the opportunity to catch a memorable sized fish. With regard to the Nipigon River and Black Sturgeon Waterway, the implementation of a direct harvest control system and/or regulations to reduce harvest while still providing quality angling opportunities (e.g., reduced limits, single, barbless hooks year round) will be pursued.

Fishery enhancement efforts for Lake Nipigon, the Nipigon River and the Black Sturgeon waterway will focus on naturally occurring species. Fish habitat restoration projects could include restoring fish passage, repairing damage from log drives or stabilizing degraded shorelines near spawning areas. As set out in the Nipigon District Fisheries Management Plan for Lake Nipigon, sport fish management priorities will continue to focus on protection and rehabilitation of brook trout with secondary priority given to lake trout and walleye stocks. Increased priority will be given to the management of northern pike and lake sturgeon.

Collecting and analyzing information for the improved management of these three aquatic ecosystems is considered of paramount importance. Subject areas requiring study include:

- Collecting data on fish stock status, movement patterns, stock discreteness, spawning areas and time of spawn
- Impacts of smelt and trawling for smelt
- Determining an accurate estimate of Aboriginal subsistence harvest
- Dealing with exotics – prevention techniques, potential impacts
- Identifying barriers to fish migration; and
- Developing recovery plans for degraded species and fish species at risk (brook lamprey, cisco, walleye, lake sturgeon)

Partners will be approached to assist in research and analysis. The district will continue to work with Lake Nipigon Fisheries Assessment Unit to maintain and where possible, enhance programs to monitor and assess status of fish populations and habitat. The Anishinaabek Ontario Fisheries Resource Centre is seen to be a significant partner in this regard with the ability to contribute traditional knowledge as well as to participate in science and information gathering.

Enhanced Management Areas and the Nipigon Palisades

Future tourism facility development opportunities identified for enhanced management areas (Lake Nipigon – Beardmore, Gull Bay and West Lake Nipigon Enhanced Management Areas) will be non-consumptive in nature and not based on the utilization of the Lake Nipigon or inland lake fishery resource.

Streams entering Lake Nipigon provide critical spawning and nursery areas for many species. The maintenance of stream bank vegetation and detailed planning of road crossings will be important in ensuring these habitats are sustained. A systematic stream inventory will

identify human-made barriers to migration (e.g., culverts, dams). In cooperation with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, site specific mitigation plans will be developed and corrective measures taken. This information will be communicated to the forest and railway companies and the Ministry of Transportation.

Lakes in the enhanced management areas currently being stocked will continue to be stocked. Efforts will be made to increase the fish stocking program in the EMAs by assessing the suitability of easily accessible, landlocked lakes not currently being stocked. The provincial fish stocking policy and guidelines will be followed in determining lake suitability.

3.2.6 WILDLIFE

Important wildlife habitat and populations exist throughout the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site. In recognition of the importance of wildlife resources in the area, the overall land use intent for the Lake Nipigon Basin is to ensure healthy wildlife populations, protect sensitive species at risk and maintain (or in some instances increase) the diversity and distribution of native wildlife species in the Basin.

3.2.6.1 Direction

Efforts will be made to work with local First Nations to develop a co-stewardship aspect to the management of the wildlife in the Lake Nipigon Basin. This type of arrangement could involve First Nation participation in ongoing wildlife management activities, information gathering and analysis, enforcement and public education.

Woodland Caribou

The Lake Nipigon Basin provides woodland caribou with critical habitat essential for their survival. The geographic location of the Basin allows for the connectivity between caribou populations in the Basin, along the north shore of Lake Superior, in Wabakimi Park and in the Ogoki Lake area.

Preliminary vegetation analysis of the Basin ecosystem indicates that active vegetation management on the Lake Nipigon islands and shoreline may be necessary to ensure maintenance of wildlife habitat, particularly with regard to woodland caribou. Further studies and analysis will be conducted to determine what the availability of caribou habitat will be over time and how prescribed burning or natural fires and fire suppression on the islands and shore lands may be used to generate/protect desired habitat types. In the interim, fire will be managed according to *Ontario's Forest Fire Management Strategy*, which allows fire to burn on the islands, with suppression occurring only when human safety or property values are at risk. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Sustainable Forest Licence holders will identify opportunities to achieve wildlife habitat and forest management objectives simultaneously in the enhanced management areas.

Based on studies conducted during strategy development, the recognized caribou distribution line has been adjusted to include all of the Lake Nipigon islands to better reflect the current caribou range distribution.

The boundary of the Pikitigushi Enhanced Management Area has been adjusted to accommodate new information gathered during the development of this strategy. It now captures more accurately, the critical caribou wintering habitat located north of Lake Nipigon. Further investigation of existing information as well as analysis of information gathered through future tracking studies will be used to determine if further boundary refinements are required.

Efforts to ensure the protection and continuation of the Lake Nipigon Basin caribou population will include restricting development on caribou summer grounds (islands and peninsulas), winter grounds and migration corridors, and limiting human use and activity on/near the calving islands during critical spring/summer calving periods.

Forestry activities in the Pikitigushi Enhanced Management Area will be conducted so as to ensure the protection of important summer

and winter caribou habitat and to maintain mature forest migration corridors between Lake Nipigon Basin and Wabakimi Provincial Park. Mineral exploration activities in this enhanced management area will be encouraged to follow a code of best practices to avoid impacts to caribou mainly through modified line cutting and scheduling of activities (see Appendix D).

Wildlife Population and Habitat Protection

Public education about species at risk in the Basin will be achieved through production of brochures to be distributed out of government offices, campgrounds, tourist information centres, etc. as well as through the placement of interpretive signs at access points, trails and campgrounds. Local businesses, corporations, municipalities, naturalist and outdoor groups will be invited to participate as partners in this endeavor.

Efforts will be made to locate a bat hibernaculum thought to exist in Pijitawabik Palisades. If discovered, assessments will be undertaken to learn more about this feature and to determine if any protective measures are necessary.

Research and education programs will be initiated (through partnerships where possible) with the intent of achieving long term monitoring stations for birds, small mammals and amphibians; and conducting inventories of wildlife habitat and species at risk.

Wildlife habitat and wildlife species sensitive to human disturbance/activity will be identified and protected from disturbance within Lake Nipigon, the Nipigon River and Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserves and the provincial parks.

Hunting

Big game hunting will not be permitted on the islands of Lake Nipigon although small game hunting will be permitted. No hunting is permitted on Geikie Island, which is designated as a Crown Game Preserve. Hunting of big game for subsistence purposes

by Aboriginal peoples on Lake Nipigon islands is permitted, where the islands are part of their traditional lands.

Efforts to support the opening of Wildlife Management Unit 15B to white-tailed deer hunting will be initiated with the Provincial Deer Committee in an effort to provide new hunting opportunities in the area. The white tailed deer population is expanding northward which may have a negative impact on the Basin caribou population. Opening Unit 15B to deer hunting may help to control the spread of the deer population northward.

3.2.7 VEGETATION

Although a detailed vegetation inventory is not available for the entire Basin, the land use intent with regard to vegetation and vegetative communities is to ensure that the diversity and distribution of native vegetation is maintained and where possible, enhanced within the signature site.

3.2.7.1 Direction

Further fieldwork will be encouraged through partnerships to better map and define the vegetative communities within the Lake Nipigon, Nipigon River and Nipigon Palisades Conservation Reserves as well as the provincial parks. This information will increase knowledge of sensitive or unique vegetative communities as well as allowing for a better understanding of the number of habitat types and their availability. This information will also be used to improve the fire management direction for the Basin, providing a better indication of where prescribed burning may be needed and where fire should be suppressed. Rare or infrequent old growth areas will be identified and management direction developed to protect them.

Significant flora data collected to date is not complete for the Signature Site. Efforts will be made through literature research and fieldwork, to identify and locate regionally and provincially significant flora within the entire Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site. This effort will likely be tied in with other

fieldwork ongoing in the Basin and will take advantage of any partnership possibilities. Efforts will focus on rare habitats such as wetlands, cliffs, talus slopes and exposed shorelines first. As new information becomes available, sites with flora sensitive to disturbance will be designated as no use or limited use zones.

3.2.8 CULTURAL HERITAGE

The protection and appreciation of cultural landscapes/resources is one of the objectives of the provincial parks system. Likewise, the procedure for conservation reserves indicates a requirement to identify and protect cultural heritage values in conservation reserves.

The Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site represents a veritable mix of pre-historic and historic landscapes. The overall land use intent with regard to cultural heritage is to advocate further research and documentation of cultural sites, protect known sites, promote public education and encourage the tourism sector to incorporate cultural heritage interpretation into tourism ventures.

3.2.8.1 Direction

It is likely that much prehistoric and historic information is maintained by the oral tradition of the elder Aboriginal community. As such, local Aboriginal communities will be approached to partner in further identifying, locating and documenting prehistoric and historic archaeological sites and related information. Partnerships will also be sought with local/regional historical groups and the academic community to help improve the level of archaeological/cultural knowledge of the Basin.

Known sensitive archaeological sites will be appropriately zoned in provincial parks and identified as sensitive sites within the conservation reserves (see Section 3.2.2.1). As new information becomes available on archaeological sites within the Basin, management action will be taken to ensure their protection. Interpretive opportunities at access points, campgrounds and/or trails will include an element of cultural heritage

appreciation. Existing and future tourist operators in the Basin will be encouraged to incorporate cultural heritage appreciation into tourism programs. This might involve visitation to historical sites (e.g., trading posts, logging camps) that can withstand human visitation, provision of cultural heritage brochures, and re-creation of authentic prehistoric/historic experiences (e.g., authentic native camping/foods; traveling a fur trader route). As the majority of archaeological sites are vulnerable to destruction, the specific location and identity of most cultural sites will not be made public.

3.2.9 WATER RESOURCES

The waters of Lake Nipigon are a resource of international significance; a vast body of fresh water in near pristine condition. Maintenance of a healthy watershed will be the priority in all water management decisions pertaining to the Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site. Water quality and quantity will be protected and where possible, improved.

3.2.9.1 Direction

Hydro development on the Nipigon River at Pine Portage, Alexander Falls and Cameron Falls and Ogoki Reservoir, will be managed with the health of the lake and rivers' water resources being the first priority. The Ministry in conjunction with Ontario Power Generation will refine and improve the existing water management plan for the Nipigon River and Lake Nipigon under the new Water Management Planning Guidelines. Regular auditing will occur to ensure all aspects of the Lake Nipigon and Nipigon River Water Management Plan are being followed, and plan objectives are being achieved.

Hydro development at the Namewaminikan River Dam is in disrepair and requires substantial investment to make it operational. The dam owner will be required to repair the facility and to operate it.

New hydroelectric development on rivers or lakes in the Nipigon Basin Signature Site (or tributaries to the lakes and rivers in the basin) will be planned to ensure the protection of

water, fish, wildlife, vegetation and habitat values. Hydroelectric development is not permitted in provincial parks or conservation reserves. The new Water Management Planning process will result in a revised Water Management Plan for Lake Nipigon and the Nipigon River. This document will provide detailed direction relating to current and future hydroelectric development and management.

In co-operation with other regulatory agencies, inventories and studies will be conducted to better assess the level of pollution occurring on Lake Nipigon from areas of high use and point source locations (access points, community developments, campgrounds, harbours). Where point source problems are identified, the nature of any required remedial action will be determined and management strategies put in place with the intent of achieving zero discharge.

Future infrastructure development will be located above the regulated flooding elevation for Lake Nipigon.

Aqua-culture operations will not be permitted on Lake Nipigon.

Sealed holding tanks for all boats with pressurized water systems is preferred to ensure waste-water (both grey water and sewage) is not discharged into Lake Nipigon. Consultation with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Ministry of Tourism and the Regional Municipality of Greenstone will be required to determine the feasibility of this strategy and to ensure that shoreline facilities exist and are used to properly manage waste-water.

Efforts will be made to better collect, share and obtain information as follows:

- Solutions to current and possible future introductions of exotics (e.g., spiny water flea, zebra mussels, etc)
- Better inter-agency communications and data sharing (e.g., Department of Fisheries and Oceans, scientific community)
- Conducting field studies (water quality,

benthos) (e.g. Kitchigaming Field Fisheries Unit, Anishinaabek Ontario Fisheries Resource Center)

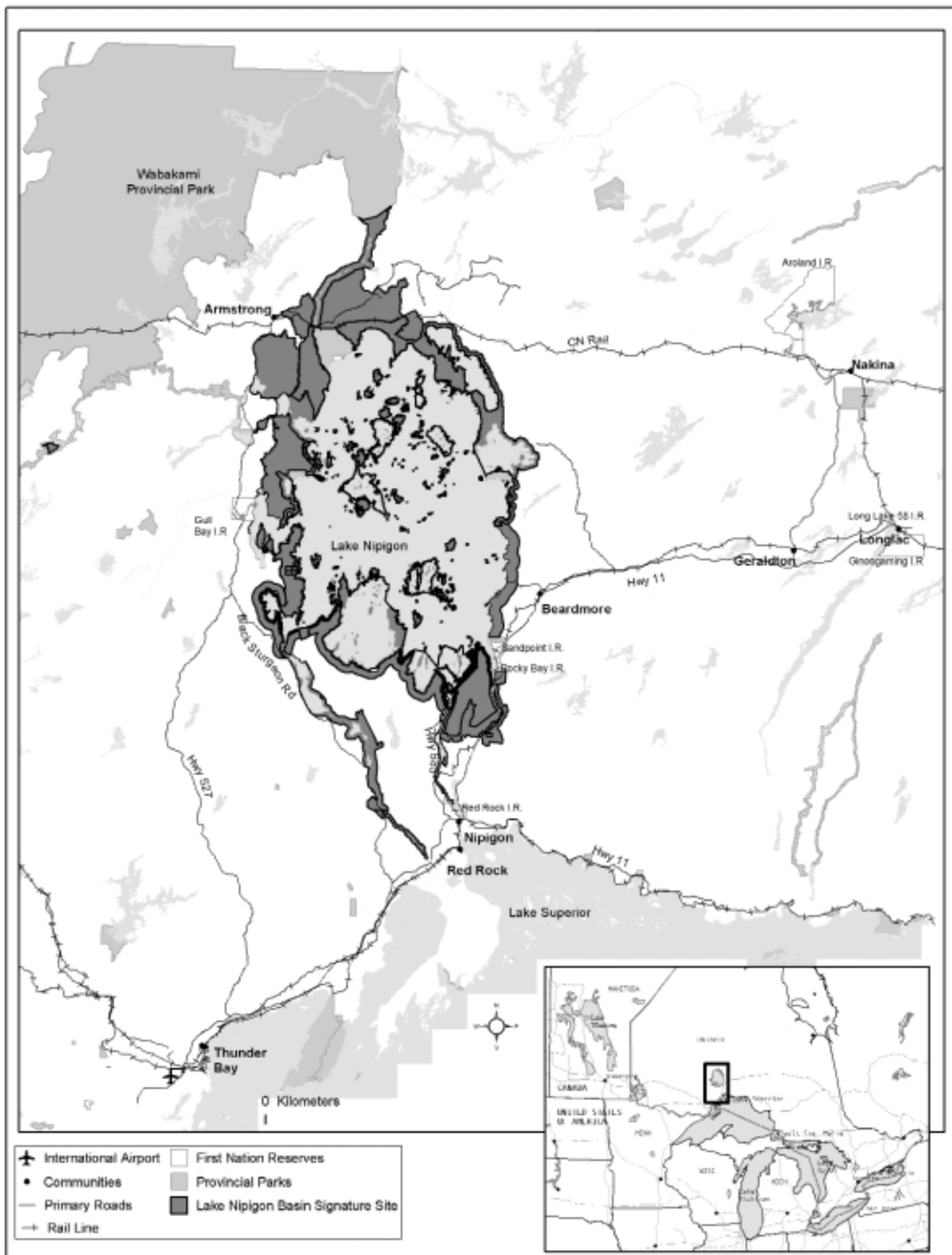
- Scientific collectors' permits (e.g., all data collected must be forwarded to Nipigon District Ministry of Natural Resources within a specified time limit) ; and
- Establishing trend-through-time monitoring stations for water quality

Signs will be posted at all access points educating the public about the importance of keeping exotics out of Lake Nipigon and the required steps to take before accessing the lake (e.g., no dumping of live bait buckets in the lake, or rinsing of live wells and bilge).

Contaminant levels in Lake Nipigon fish will be investigated and a public education effort initiated (signage, literature) in order to address potential public health risks from consuming Lake Nipigon fish. This is especially a concern for First Nation community women of child-bearing age and children whose diets may include a fair amount of fish.

Partners (e.g., Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada) will be sought for the development of improved communications facilities for Lake Nipigon to enable better search and rescue programs. Efforts will be made to also encourage and assist the Canadian Coast Guard to become more active in enforcing boating regulations on Lake Nipigon.

FIGURE 1: REGIONAL SETTING FOR THE LAKE NIPIGON BASIN



INSERT FIGURE 2
LAKE NIPIGON BASIN SIGNATURE SITE STUDY AREA

