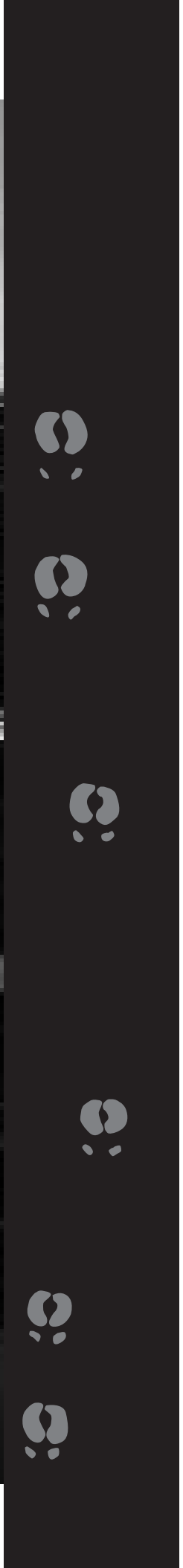


Woodland Caribou Signature Site



APPROVAL STATEMENT

The Ministry of Natural Resources is working towards an approved strategy for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site. We are pleased to approve the Woodland Caribou Signature Site Preliminary Strategy.

This preliminary strategy provides the proposed land use direction for the protection, conservation and development of the various natural resources within the land use designations of the signature site.

This preliminary strategy implements the recommendations of the Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy (1999), provides overall guidance for resource management and recreation activities, and provides the context for management plans for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, recommended park additions and Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve, and resource management guidelines for the Pigeon's Bay - McIntosh Enhanced Management Area.

We invite you to review and comment on this document. All comments will become part of the public record for the duration of the planning process. Comments will be available for public review upon request, unless privacy is requested, pursuant to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Please indicate in your comments if you wish your name not to be made public.

Once public consultation is complete, the planning team will review and summarize the comments received. Based on this information, an approved Signature Site Strategy will be written to guide future resource management, recreation and development.


Adrienne Smith
Managing Director
Ontario Parks



Claudiu Bocu, Regional Director
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Ontario Parks

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Statement of Environmental Values Under the Environmental Bill of Rights

In accordance with the provisions of The Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR), the Ministry of Natural Resources has prepared a Statement of Environmental Values. This Statement of Environmental Values will consider the Environmental Bill of Rights whenever decisions are being made which might significantly affect the environment, including decisions made during this planning process for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site Strategy.

The primary purpose of the Environmental Bill of Rights is “to protect, conserve and, where reasonable, restore the integrity of the environment.” This broad statement of purpose translates into four objectives in the ministry’s Statement of Environmental Values:

- To ensure the long-term health of ecosystems by protecting and conserving our valuable soil, aquatic resources, forests 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, leaving future generations a legacy of the natural wealth that we enjoy today
- To protect natural heritage and biological features of provincial significance
- To protect human life, the resource base and 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 the Preliminary Strategy for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site.

1.0 Introduction

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site is located in northwestern Ontario, approximately 30 kilometres west of the town of Red Lake, 90 kilometres north of the city of Kenora and 60 kilometres south of the community of Pikangikum (Figure WCSS-1). It consists of 537,585 hectares which includes a provincial park, four recommended wilderness park additions, a conservation reserve, an enhanced management area and a forest reserve (section 5.0). By considering all areas of the signature site together, the interrelationships can be identified and appropriate levels of protection and promotion of the entire signature site area can be established.

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site was chosen because of its important natural and cultural heritage values and its significant tourism and recreation potential. As such, it has potential to make lasting contributions to Ontario's landscape, biodiversity and economy.

The unique boreal ecosystem of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site is influenced by the prairie climate and displays a diverse community of flora and fauna, some of which are provincially rare or at the northern limits of their range. This site is home to threatened forest dwelling woodland caribou. The area is currently known for its excellent facility-based sport fishery and backcountry wilderness canoeing and camping.

Cultural heritage values exist throughout the signature site. The site is considered a cultural landscape; a geographical area that has been modified, influenced or given special meaning by people (Parks Canada, 1994). The Manitoba First Nation community of Little Grand Rapids and the Ontario First Nation communities of Grassy Narrows, Pikangikum, Lac Seul and Wabaseemoong all have traditional use areas within the signature site. The signature site is located within Treaty 3 and Treaty 5.

The western edge of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site borders the Province of Manitoba and three of its protected areas. Northeast of the signature site lies the Whitefeather Forest where community-based land use planning is underway led by Pikangikum First Nation. East and south of the site are the following managed forests; the Whiskey Jack, Kenora and Red Lake Forests.

The identification of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site as one of the nine featured areas under *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* is based on work carried out during the Lands for Life planning process. The objectives of that process were to: complete Ontario's system of parks and protected areas within the *Ontario Living Legacy* planning area; recognize the land use needs of the resource based tourism industry; provide the forest, mining and other resource industries with greater land and resource certainty; and, enhance angling, hunting and other Crown land recreation opportunities.

2.0 Purpose of this Document

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site Strategy is an all-encompassing document that provides resource management direction. The document is divided into sections. The first section provides introductory information, vision and objectives, an overview of the attributes of the site and direction for natural resources in the site.

The second, third and fourth sections contain: a preliminary park management plan for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and recommended additions, a draft resource management plan for Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve and draft resource management guidelines for the Pipestone Bay-MacIntosh Enhanced Management Area. Each section can stand alone and be used independently of the others.

The Crown Land Use Policy Atlas (CLUPA) is MNR's repository of current area-specific land use policies for Crown lands in the central part of Ontario. It identifies the basic land use intent and permitted uses for each of the designated areas in the Woodland Caribou Signature Site. This signature site strategy and the complementary supporting documents provide more details on the land use intent, and the resource management and recreation activities that may occur in the site. Amendments to the CLUPA will be completed to reflect the direction of this signature site strategy and/or the complementary supporting documents.

3.0 Signature Site Vision and Objectives

The strategy provides the collective vision and direction for all the land use designations in the signature site area. Through stakeholder consultation, the Advisory Committee assisted in the development of a vision statement which was created to guide the management planning process:

“To manage the Woodland Caribou Signature Site for its significant geological, biological, cultural, wilderness, and recreational values in a sustainable manner for the people of Ontario.”

The setting of site objectives is essential in the realization of the overall strategy. Protected and enhanced management areas will help ensure the ecological and economic health of the Woodland Caribou area and its communities, now and for future generations.

Signature site objectives are, to:

- ensure long-term protection of natural and cultural features in the site
- promote the site while preserving and protecting the character and quality of the environment
- encourage social and economic opportunity which reflect the unique qualities of the site
- develop strong partnerships in order to support a collective vision

4.0 Signature Site Values

The signature site protects the headwaters of the Bloodvein, Gammon, Bird, Haggart and Sturgeon Rivers. These waterways are the backbone of approximately 2000 kilometres of interconnected canoe routes. They are also the travel routes that were once part of the historic fur trade in the area known as the “petit nord”.

The signature site, located in the Canadian Shield, consists of some of the oldest rocks on Earth. It is situated in the largest province of ancient Precambrian rock, the Superior Province, and contains the Berens River and Uchi subprovinces. Dividing the signature site is the Wannipigow-Wallace Lakes fault.

The cultural resources of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site represent the prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies of the boreal forest as well as their present descendants. Cultural evidence consists of both pre- and post-contact sites including pictographs, burial sites, and landscape modifications (e.g. fish traps, planting of wild rice).

The signature site is home to the threatened forest-dwelling woodland caribou, and provides critical summer, winter and calving habitat for this species. Other significant wildlife includes bald eagle, sharp-tailed grouse, wolverine and white pelicans. New northern range extensions for species such as green frog, snapping turtle and painted turtle have been documented.

Fourteen plants within the signature site are provincially significant and 124 are considered to be regionally rare. Significant plant communities include wild rice marshes, prairie communities, bur oak savannah, a large stand of American elm, a large patterned fen and a mature red pine stand.

The signature site also contains a high concentration of lake trout lakes, and one of the most northerly extents of muskellunge range in Ontario is within the signature site. Some lakes contain trophy-sized northern pike, and walleye are abundant in many lakes within the signature site.

5.0 Signature Site Components and Policy Context

The components of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site are shown in Table WCSS-1.

Table WCSS-1: Components of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site

Site Component	Site #	Classification/Category	Area (hectares)
Woodland Caribou Provincial Park	P2370e	Wilderness	450,000
Recommended Park Additions	P2370	Wilderness	29,660
Eagle-Snowshoe (CR)	C2405	N/A	35,621
Pipestone Bay - McIntosh (EMA)	E2359a	Recreation	22,281
Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve	F2370	N/A	23
Total area			537,585

Note: Area figures are calculated using the best current information, but should be considered estimates for planning and comparative purposes only.

Also included within the boundaries of the signature site is the Bloodvein River which was designated as a Canadian Heritage River in 1998. Additional details about the Bloodvein River and its designation can be found in WCPP section 9.3.1 (preliminary park management plan).

5.1 Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and Recommended Park Additions

The existing Woodland Caribou Provincial Park was regulated in 1983 as a wilderness class park. The recommended park additions were designated in 1999 in the land use strategy to become wilderness class park additions. Both have operated under an Interim Management Statement since 2000. Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies (1992 update) defines permitted uses within provincial parks for those activities not defined in *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (1999).

Woodland Caribou Signature Site

The objectives of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park are:

- protect the wilderness values for which the park was created
- support or enhance ecological health
- protect and support a healthy population of forest-dwelling woodland caribou
- protect provincially significant natural features
- protect cultural heritage features
- provide a range of backcountry tourism and recreation opportunities where it is consistent with wilderness values and resource capacities
- permit existing facility-based tourism where it is compatible with protection objectives
- consider new ecotourism opportunities where it is consistent with protection objectives
- investigate economic opportunities with First Nations that have traditional use within the site

5.2 Eagle -Snowshoe Conservation Reserve

Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve was regulated under the Public Lands Act in May 2003. *Conservation Reserves Policy and Procedure* (1997) defines permitted uses within conservation reserves for those activities not defined in the land use strategy. Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve will operate under this general management direction and the Statement of Conservation Interest until such time as the resource management plan is approved.

Objectives for Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve are:

- protect representative earth and life science features while permitting many existing public and Aboriginal land uses to continue;
- protect forest-dwelling woodland caribou habitat;
- support existing and new recreation and tourism opportunities where they do not negatively impact the representative earth science and life science features.

5.3 Pipestone Bay – McIntosh Enhanced Management Area

Pipestone Bay – McIntosh Enhanced Management Area land use designation was created by the 1999 land use strategy. Activities within this area are guided by the land use policy developed in the strategy.

The objectives for Pipestone Bay – McIntosh Enhanced Management Area are:

- maintain existing recreational use and consider new tourism opportunities consistent with Woodland Caribou Provincial Park objectives
- protect the ecological health of park-related values (e.g. Bloodvein River headwaters, Eagle-Finlayson moraine) through resource management planning
- maintain existing land use commitments to the industrial resource sector

6.0 *Aboriginal Aspects of Woodland Caribou Signature Site*

First Nations people have used the signature site from time immemorial and continue to do so today. Habitation sites have been discovered, dating from 3000 years ago. During pre-contact times, Aboriginal people developed extensive trade routes to transport trade materials for hundreds or even thousands of kilometres. These routes and the intimate knowledge the Aboriginal people 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 area 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.

A number of Aboriginal communities with a long history in the Woodland Caribou Signature Site retain a close relationship with the land and continue to pursue their traditional activities in the area. These uses may continue, subject to public safety, conservation and private property considerations.

7.0 *Planning Process*

The direction presented in this strategy is based on public input, advisory committee recommendations and government review. The planning stages are as follows:

- Invitation to Participate - *December 2002*
- Public Review of Background Information - *February/March 2004*
- Public Review of Issues and Options – *Spring 2005*
- Public Review of Preliminary Strategy – *Spring 2006 (current stage)*
- Public Inspection of Approved Strategy – *Summer - Fall 2006*

8.0 *Advisory Committee and First Nations Working Group*

An Advisory Committee was established in January 2003. It is comprised of representatives with a wide range of interests and takes local, regional, and provincial perspectives into account.

The Advisory Committee, with respect to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and the recommended park additions, developed a set of guiding principles that allowed discussion to continue on park issues by all parties on the committee. In accordance with the guiding principles, a series of recommendations were submitted to the Project Planning Team. The guiding principles and resulting recommendations were integral to the development of this document and are found in Appendix WCSS-1 of this section.

The First Nations of Grassy Narrows, Lac Seul, Little Grand Rapids, Pikangikum, and Wabaseemoong were formally invited to participate in the Woodland Caribou Signature Site planning process. They formed a First Nations Working Group to allow communities with traditional use in the signature site to meet in a separate forum to discuss specific issues, investigate economic opportunities and to begin the development of a long-lasting and meaningful relationship with local government offices which have responsibilities within the site.

9.0 Related Landscape Initiatives

9.1 Manitoba/Ontario Interprovincial Wilderness Area

Manitoba and Ontario share a common border and have contiguous protected areas that encompass more than one million hectares. Protected areas include Atikaki Provincial Wilderness Park (MB) and Nopiming Provincial Park (MB), Woodland Caribou Provincial Park (ON), South Atikaki Provincial Park (MB), four recommended park additions to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park (ON), and Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve (ON). Boundaries of these areas are shown in Figure WCSS-1. The two provinces have identified the following areas of cooperation:

- *Resource Management* – coordinate resource management activities such as fire/vegetation management, enforcement, and wildlife management.
- *Marketing* – promote the interprovincial wilderness area through joint marketing endeavours.
- *Management of Recreational Opportunities* – manage and coordinate high-quality recreational opportunities that showcase the ecological value of the area.

9.2 Whitefeather Forest Planning Initiative: Northern Boreal Initiative

The Ministry of Natural Resources has established the Northern Boreal Initiative (NBI) and is currently engaged with several First Nations who are investigating economic opportunities in locations north of the area where commercial forestry currently takes place.

Pikangikum First Nation is exploring resource-based economic opportunities, such as forestry, tourism and ecotourism through a community driven land use planning exercise. This process is designed to provide timely direction to proceed with economic opportunities for the community, to guide their future and determine a balance between protection, conservation, traditional uses, and development.

The Whitefeather Forest Planning Area is northeast of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site. New protected areas, or additions to existing protected areas, will result from this land use planning exercise. Interim management direction for new protected areas takes direction from the *Whitefeather Forest and Adjacent Areas Land Use Strategy* (2006). It is anticipated that as economic opportunities are realized within this planning area, the cultural and ecological linkages that exist between the Whitefeather Forest and the Woodland Caribou Signature Site will continue to develop.

9.3 Adjacent Areas Planning Initiative

An area of 109,200 hectares lies south of the Whitefeather Forest, north of the Red Lake Forest, east of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, and west of the Trout Forest (Figure WCSS-1). It contains three areas (Valhalla Lake, Blondin Lake and Crossland Lake) which may have value as protected areas. Planning for these “adjacent” areas will be led by the Red Lake District (MNR) in conjunction with the Whitefeather Forest Planning Initiative. Decisions about designating any lands in these areas as protected, either new or as additions to existing protected areas, will be made through the Adjacent Planning Areas Initiative.

9.4 UNESCO World Heritage Site: Boreal Forest in the Northern Hemisphere

A partnership has been formed among the Province of Manitoba; the Province of Ontario; the Manitoba First Nations of Bloodvein River, Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi, and Poplar River; and the Ontario First Nation of Pikangikum. Collective data was submitted to the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) regarding Atikaki Provincial Park in Manitoba, Woodland Caribou Provincial Park in Ontario and future protected areas within the traditional lands of the aforementioned First Nations, which fills an important gap in the representation of the Canadian boreal shield ecozone.

In November 2003, the IUCN identified the site as remarkable and subsequently recommended it for World Heritage Site status (IUCN 2004). The IUCN also identified this site as internationally significant because of the planned integration of traditional and western ecological knowledge for land management and protection. The agreement between the resident First Nations, in whose traditional territory this site is located, is precedent setting. In April 2004, the Federal Government elected to nominate this site as one of eleven on Canada’s Tentative List for World Heritage Sites for consideration by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

10.0 Summary of Planning Challenges

The complexity of the signature site is demonstrated by the wide range of discussion topics and issues brought forward by the advisory committee, First Nations, public and planning team.

10.1 Motorized Travel

A variety of types of motorized travel occurs for a wide range of purposes. Motorized travel associated with some tourism and recreation activities affects natural, cultural and wilderness values, and is causing user conflicts.

10.2 Boundaries

Some feel the boundaries do not capture all the significant values in the area.

The boundaries of two of the recommended provincial park additions cannot be regulated until replacement wood supply is secured from other locations for those recommended provincial park additions.

10.3 Crown Land Use

There are early signs of overuse by signature site users. In some places, soil compaction, improper disposal of human waste and grey water, litter, destruction of vegetation and damage to sensitive habitats and shorelines are apparent.

10.4 Cultural Heritage

More information is needed about the location and importance of sites so that they can be properly protected and interpreted.

10.5 Economic Health

The current commercial activities are important to the local and regional economy. The signature site should provide some new opportunities.

10.6 Fisheries

If the sport fishing is to be sustainable, it must not be negatively affected by remote tourism activities.

10.7 Industrial Use

Industrial access in the enhanced management area and the other parts of the managed forest can cause undesirable impacts on protected area and tourism values, and the headwaters of the Bloodvein River.

10.8 Land

Land occupations in the signature site should not negatively affect any significant natural, cultural or landform features.

10.9 Vegetation

Fire suppression in the last few decades is impacting the natural plant abundance and distribution, including caribou habitat.

10.10 Water

Even though water quality in the signature site is excellent, it is important to support and protect this fundamental resource. Activities in the signature site may negatively affect water quality and ecosystems dependent on it.

10.11 Wildlife

Although hunting is permitted in the recommended park additions, using motorized vehicles to access hunting areas and retrieve game is inconsistent with wilderness class park policy.

10.12 Woodland Caribou

This Species at Risk requires large expanses of old, even-aged conifer forest with lichen ground cover in winter and isolated islands or peninsulas for spring calving. Winter recreation trails and spring camping may negatively impact caribou.

11.0 Signature Site Direction

The following direction is based on public input, advisory committee recommendations and government review.

11.1 Motorized Travel

A wide variety of motorized travel occurs in the signature site.

Due to the remote nature of the site, aircraft are used for access to private property and tourism, and for recreation.

Clients of facility-based tourist operations travel within the site mainly by motorboats based at the facility or based away from the facility at a boat cache. Other tourist operators located outside the site have boat caches within the site where they leave clients for day-trips.

Recreational snowmobiling occurs in the signature site, however no authorized trails exist. Snowmobiling is a non-conforming use in the park and currently occurs in Bulging/Haggart, Douglas/Hatchet, Knox/Murdock and Talon/Dragon areas.

Industrial road access for forestry and mining purposes exists in the Pipestone Bay – McIntosh EMA and other parts of the managed forest. Motorized travel related to forestry and mining is addressed in the “Industrial Use” section.

Direction

Enhance wilderness values over the long term by creating larger areas of less motorized use in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Access will be primarily at the periphery of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, with a few exceptions.

Private aircraft use will be limited to access zones in the park. However, patent land owners and immediate family can access their patent property using their own aircraft, commercial aircraft or their own boats.

Commercial aircraft use will be permitted in specific areas of the park.

Aircraft are not restricted in the conservation reserve or enhanced management area.

Enhance wilderness values by regulating horsepower related to recreational watercraft in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park.

Phase out snowmobile use in the existing park to protect the long-term health of woodland caribou populations and to maintain a large undisturbed core wilderness area.

Permit snowmobile use in a limited number of seasonal access zones in the park additions, and on existing trails in the conservation reserve, to support hunting and ice fishing. Proposals for new snowmobile trails in the northern part of the enhanced management area will be considered.

Prohibit ATVs except on tenured properties in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and on existing trails in the conservation reserve.

Resource harvesters may be permitted to use aircraft, snowmobiles, motorboats or ATVs according to the terms of their authorized resource use.

In the northern part of the EMA, the public can use existing and new roads for general recreation activities.

In the southern part of the EMA, the public can use existing roads for general recreation activities. Public use of new roads is not permitted.

Access to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park or park additions via the EMA is permitted at designated access zones only.

11.2 Boundaries

The existing Woodland Caribou Provincial Park was regulated in 1983. *Ontario’s Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* recommended four wilderness park additions, the Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve (which was regulated under the Public Lands Act in 2003), and the Pipestone Bay – McIntosh Enhanced Management Area.

Across Ontario, where protected areas recommended under *Ontario’s Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* overlapped with pre-existing mining lands (claims and leases), the areas were designated as Forest Reserves. The intent was that when the mining tenure lapsed, the area would be regulated as protected areas. A land use amendment was approved for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site to adjust the boundaries of the park additions, the enhanced management area and the forest reserve from those originally identified in *Ontario’s Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*.

Direction

Regulate Douglas/Foley Lake and Sydney/Rowdy Lake recommended park additions immediately after the approval of the strategy.

Regulate Peisk/Lund Lake and Anchor Lake recommended park additions when replacement wood supply is secured from other locations.

11.3 Crown Land Use

Crown land use includes the array of outdoor activities undertaken on Crown land such as camping, canoeing, picnicking (e.g. shorelunch), hunting, angling and snowmobiling. Crown land use also includes construction of facilities on Crown land for certain purposes. Land in the signature site is occupied for uses such as commercial tourism establishments, cottages and private resorts, resource harvesting developments (e.g. trap cabins), boat caches and mining/forestry activities. Of these developments, there are 13 on patent land. Crown land uses can have a negative impact on the environment if not managed properly. The overall land use direction for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site is to allow for the continuation of Crown land use activities, in accordance with policy, without negatively impacting the ecological, cultural or wilderness values of the site. Dispositions related to tourism and recreation are addressed in “Tourism and Recreation”.

Direction

In Woodland Caribou Provincial Park acquire patent land based on willing seller – willing buyer basis, as resources permit.

Ban the use of glass bottles in the park, except on tenured land, to contribute to ecological health.

11.4 Cultural Heritage

An objective for the signature site is the long-term protection of cultural values. The cultural heritage of the signature site is partially displayed through pictographs and artifacts. It is also demonstrated through landscape modifications such as fish traps, channeling and planting of wild rice. The First Nations communities that have traditional use areas within the site retain a close relationship with the land. The overall land use intent with regard to cultural heritage is to advocate further research and documentation of cultural sites, protect known sites and promote public education.

Direction

Represent and protect significant cultural heritage resources in the signature site to help ensure the long term preservation of such features for future generations.

Protect significant cultural features in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park by restricting, prohibiting or relocating activities like boat caching, camping, hiking trails, portages, canoeing and kayaking in certain areas.

Identify post-European contact sites, such as remnant fur trading posts.

Work in partnership with First Nations to identify significant cultural and archaeological sites.

Research and interpretation of the Aboriginal cultural heritage within the Pikangikum traditional land use area of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park will be undertaken co-operatively.

11.5 Ecological Health

The signature site is a substantial area of approximately 537,585 hectares. Although there is some road access to the periphery and air access is currently unrestricted, the site is relatively remote. The signature site contains many significant natural values. Some values are negatively affected by commercial and recreational activities that occur in the site.

On a broader scale, there is a greater understanding and appreciation of the role protected areas play in conserving biodiversity, mitigating climate change, and acting as ecological benchmarks in the landscape. Forested lands can help to moderate the effects of climate change by removing and storing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Global warming can negatively affect forests by an increase in the frequency of fires, insect infestation and diseases due to changes in temperature and precipitation. Climate change could also affect the distribution and abundance of habitat and populations of flora and fauna, resulting in a change in species composition.

Direction

Increase ecological health by prohibiting certain activities in sensitive areas.

Maintain ecological health and meet protection objectives by rehabilitating fish habitat and by applying conditions to sport fishing.

Protect significant natural and cultural features and wilderness values in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park by restricting, prohibiting or relocating activities like boat caching, camping, hiking trails, portages, canoeing and kayaking in certain areas.

Collect data on populations and habitat of flora and fauna as opportunities exist, to consider the effects of climate change during scheduled reviews of management plans for the provincial park and conservation reserve.

11.6 Economic Health

The predominant economic activities in the area are tourism, forestry and mining. Other land uses include trapping, wild rice harvesting and commercial bait fishing.

Direction

New opportunities in tourism may be considered if the proposal is compatible with policies for the land use areas within the signature site.

Bear Management Areas are permitted in the enhanced management area, the conservation reserve and the recommended park additions.

Forestry and mining are permitted in the Pipestone – MacIntosh Enhanced Management Area. Mining is also permitted in the Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve.

11.7 Energy

There are no energy generation facilities or any energy-related infrastructure within the signature site at this time.

Direction

Commercial power generation, including hydroelectric, is not permitted in the park, recommended park additions or conservation reserve.

Small-scale, non-commercial, renewable energy developments to generate power for existing tourism facilities may be considered if they are more economical and environmentally friendly than the current method of electricity generation and if they are compatible with signature site values. For example, it may be desirable to generate power for tourism facilities using wind or water, rather than diesel fuel, if remoteness can be maintained, and if natural, cultural heritage and recreation values can be protected.

11.8 Fisheries

The majority of anglers in the signature site are associated with the facility-based tourism industry or commercial day trips, however angling by local residents and First Nations community members does occur. Commercial bait harvesting also occurs.

Direction

Rehabilitate habitat.

Support research and inventories of the fisheries resource.

Pursue a “conservation limits only” regulation for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park to maintain a high quality fishery that supports tourism.

Renew dialogue with the Province of Manitoba regarding the Ontario/Manitoba Boundary Waters Agreement.

11.9 Industrial Use

The Red Lake area is one of the richest gold producing areas in North America and has been extensively explored and developed since the 1920s. Over the past 70 years, 12 mines have come into production. Currently there are two significant gold producing mines in the Red Lake area.

The signature site is bordered by the Red Lake, Whiskey Jack and Kenora Forests. Timber harvesting and forest management are the most visible adjacent land uses and may have the greatest potential impact on the signature site.

Direction

Forestry and mining are permitted in the Pipestone – McIntosh Enhanced Management Area. Mining is also permitted in the Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve.

Industrial activities will be planned to protect natural, cultural and recreational values. For example, timing restrictions and/or timber reserves may be appropriate depending on the value and the activity.

Industrial access in the enhanced management area will be planned to avoid undesirable impacts on park and tourism values, and the headwaters of the Bloodvein River.

The Guidelines for Exploration Best Practices in Enhanced Management Areas in Ontario (2002) will be applied.

Avoid undesirable impacts on park and tourism values through careful planning of new road locations and restricting access on existing roads where conflicts exist or where values are at risk.

In the EMA, roads will be constructed to lowest standard possible. New roads/trails should consider aesthetics. Design and construction should facilitate access controls and closure/rehabilitation where unwanted entry to the park is likely.

A primary forest access road crossing between Sydney and Rowdy lakes in the most southerly recommended park addition is permitted.

Industrial access roads are permitted in the conservation reserve to access existing mining tenure for future mineral exploration and/or mining development

11.10 Land

Natural features in the signature site include shorelines of glacial Lake Agassiz, subaqueous fan deposits, the provincially significant Eagle-Finlayson Moraine and associated features, a portion of the Red Lake greenstone belt, the Wannipigow-Wallace Lake fault and shear zones.

Direction

Protect significant geological structures and landforms in Nature Reserve zones of the park and through other management policies.

11.11 Representation

Representation of the diversity of natural features, species and ecosystems is one of the principles of the protected areas system. Protected areas contribute to the conservation of genetic and biological diversity. The Woodland Caribou Signature Site is within the Ontario Shield Ecozone. The site spans two Ecoregions (3S Cat Lake and 4S Lake Wabigoon) and three Ecodistricts (3S-1 Berens River Bedrock Plateau, 4S-1 Sydney Lake, and 4S-2 Sunstrum). The signature site represents 37 per cent of Eco-district 4S-1, providing representation to all land cover classes found therein.

Direction

Maintain the current diversity of landform-vegetation classes found within the provincial park and conservation reserve.

Protect rare communities in Nature Reserve zones, or prohibit development in those locations.

Regulate the park additions to enhance biodiversity in the park.

11.12 Vegetation

The signature site contains rich sedge meadows, rare plants, hardwood swamps, bur oak savannahs, prairie-boreal species communities, provincially significant species (e.g. floating marsh marigold, Vasey's pondweed, prairie crocus, prairie spikemoss), patterned fens, rich fen meadows, southern flora such as ten flowered showy goldenrod and purple chokeberry, and various delicate wetland flora.

Direction

Maintain the diversity and distribution of vegetation within the provincial park and conservation reserve.

Commercial timber harvesting is not permitted in the provincial park or conservation reserve.

Provincially rare plant species and unique vegetation communities will be protected in Nature Reserve zones in the park.

A fire management plan will be prepared that balances the ecological role of fire with safety considerations. Fires within the signature site will be jointly managed, such that district staff and park staff are consulted regarding management actions for fires that are likely to cross boundaries between the park, the recommended park additions, the conservation reserve or the enhanced management area.

Fuelwood harvesting will not be permitted in the provincial park or conservation reserve unless existing facilities lack reasonable means of acquiring fuelwood.

11.13 Tourism and Recreation

In the Woodland Caribou Signature Site there are six main base lodges located on Sabourin, Douglas, Carroll, Sydney, Gammon and Rowdy Lakes. Lodges are located on patent land or Crown leases. There are also 24 commercial outpost camps in the signature site located mainly on the Bird, Bloodvein and Gammon River systems. Outpost camps are authorized by Land Use Permits or Crown Leases.

Private tourism and recreation interests in the signature site include private resorts on Donald and Anderson Lakes, and 15 private cottages (on patent land). There are also seven private recreation camps on Land Use Permits throughout the site.

Two of the four objectives set out in *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* are: to recognize the land use needs of the tourism industry; and, to enhance angling, hunting and other Crown land recreation opportunities. Further, the land use strategy recognizes the signature site as having extremely significant tourism and recreation potential that merits increased planning, management and promotion.

There are a number of features and values, especially natural heritage values and remoteness that were considered in determining the land use intent for the signature site with respect to tourism and recreation.

Direction

New dispositions for the private use of individuals will not be permitted in the existing park or recommended park additions. Existing dispositions for private purposes will be phased out by December 31, 2009.

In the conservation reserve and enhanced management area, dispositions for private recreation will not be considered for facilities that provide overnight accommodation.

Backcountry recreation and tourism opportunities will be supported by providing staging areas for access

ranging from maintained tertiary roads to floatplane access to low-intensity access zones. Low-intensity access zones will not have any facilities and will be restricted to non-motorized watercraft. In general, visitors will reach one of these access zones by paddling from a parking area some distance away.

Existing tourism operations may continue however some restrictions may be imposed on certain activities to ensure ecological health. New opportunities in adventure and ecotourism may be possible.

In the conservation reserve, Crown land camping by non-residents is permitted provided they obtain a Crown land camping permit. Seasonal LUPs may be issued to commercial tourism operations to support hunting opportunities where no facilities already exist.

11.14 Water

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site lies entirely within the Nelson River Drainage Basin where all water flows into Hudson Bay via Lake Winnipeg and the Nelson River. Many headwaters are contained within the signature site boundaries. Water quality is excellent and suitable for all recreational uses in the signature site.

Direction

Protect headwater areas of the Bloodvein River by regulating the Peisk/Lund Lake recommended park addition.

Identify and protect representative aquatic features subject to a provincial framework being established.

Establish baseline information for water quality and quantity, where feasible.

11.15 Wilderness Values

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site contains areas of appropriate size and integrity that support backcountry tourism and recreation opportunities while preserving and protecting the character and quality of the environment. A “wilderness continuum” is a concept symbolized by a horizontal line representing wilderness. At one end of the line, the park does not meet the definition of a wilderness class park (less wilderness). At the other end of the line, the park meets the definition completely (more wilderness). Decisions made during the planning process will be measured against current conditions in the park and how these changes affect the realization of the wilderness class definition and the parks system as a whole. At the end of this planning process and subsequent ones, management actions will move the park along the wilderness continuum towards more wilderness in varying degrees.

Direction

Backcountry activities (e.g. hiking trails, portages, canoeing, kayaking) will occur in a manner that ensures that wilderness values are protected.

Move the park along a “wilderness continuum” towards a state of more wilderness. In the provincial park wilderness values will be protected by reducing the human footprint of certain activities. Examples include designating campsites, relocating boat caches and limiting motorized travel. Entry quotas will be implemented when required.

11.16 Wildlife

Typical boreal wildlife species found in the signature site include large mammals such as woodland caribou, moose and black bears. Furbearers such as beaver, otter, mink, muskrat, fisher, marten, weasel, lynx, fox, wolverine and timber wolf are also present. Interesting bird species include bald eagles, sharp-tailed grouse and white pelicans. The northern range extensions for green frog, snapping turtle and painted turtle also occur here.

There are 36 full or partial traplines throughout the signature site. Hunting has not been permitted in the existing park since 1989 but is a popular activity in the remainder of the signature site.

Direction

Hunting by non natives is not permitted in the existing provincial park. Hunting is permitted in the conservation reserve, the EMA and recommended park additions (except in the nature reserve zones), subject to regulations under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act.

Commercial trapping is permitted in the conservation reserve and the enhanced management area. In the existing park, trapping by non-native people will be phased out by December 31, 2009. In the recommended park additions, trapping by non natives can continue indefinitely.

11.17 Woodland Caribou

The signature site contains important summer and winter habitat for this species which is listed as nationally “threatened”¹ by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and has been designated as threatened by MNR.

Direction

Protect caribou by reducing opportunities for predation and by reducing impacts of human disturbance on critical habitat. Examples include prohibiting snowmobile trails in winter habitat areas and prohibiting camping in calving areas in spring and early summer.

1. “Threatened species means a wildlife species that is likely to become an endangered species if nothing is done to reverse the factors leading to its extirpation or extinction. (Species at Risk Act, 2002)

12.0 Next Steps

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site Preliminary Strategy will be made available for public review in conjunction with the Woodland Caribou Provincial Park Preliminary Management Plan, the Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve Preliminary Resource Management Plan and the Pipestone-McIntosh Enhanced Management Area preliminary resource management guidelines. A series of open houses in local communities will occur to present the documents. Input will be considered to develop the final Woodland Caribou Signature Site Strategy and the associated resource management plans.

This strategy will be implemented through the policies in the resource management plans for the park and conservation reserve, and through the policies in the management direction for the enhanced management area. Proposed changes in land use direction and permitted uses as a result of this planning process are shown on revised Crown Land Use Policy Atlas reports in the complementary supporting documents.

The need for a comprehensive review of the approved Woodland Caribou Signature Site Strategy will be assessed every 10 years. However, new or changed circumstances may require the strategy to be amended. Amendments will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may require public consultation if they have significant environmental, social or economic impact.

13.0 References

- IUCN. 2004. Proceedings of the World Heritage Boreal Zone Workshop. St. Petersburg, Russia. October 10-13, 2003. 40 p.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR). 1992 update. *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Strategies*.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR). 1999. *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR). 2004. *Woodland Caribou Signature Site Background Information*. Ontario Parks, Red Lake District. Red Lake, Ontario. 54 p.
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR). 2005. *Woodland Caribou Signature Site Issues and Options*. Ontario Parks, Red Lake District. Red Lake, Ontario. 36p.
- Parks Canada. 1994. *Guiding Principles and Operating Policies*. Ottawa: Department of Canadian Heritage.

Appendix A – Advisory Committee Contributions

Guiding Principles and Recommendations

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site Advisory Committee held its inaugural meeting on January 23, 2003. In the beginning of the planning process, the Advisory Committee developed a set of guiding principles in order to create an atmosphere of respect and understanding in which discussions could proceed. In accordance with these principles, recommendations were submitted to the Project Planning Team for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site Preliminary Strategy.

The following is a direct communication from the Advisory Committee (August 23, 2005):

“The Advisory Committee thanks Ontario Parks for the opportunity to represent the diverse interests of the region in preparing a management plan for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and Signature Site.

It has been difficult to fit together the requirements of existing Parks policy, the needs of local communities and the various directives. However, the Advisory Committee reached 100% consensus on the following guiding principles:

This Advisory Committee will make recommendations in accordance with the following principles;

- 1. All existing commercial roofed accommodation with air access will remain;*
- 2. Portage access boat caches associated with facility will remain;*
- 3. Existing motorboat use associated with points 1 and 2 will remain with possible restrictions;*

- 4. No seasonal net loss of easily accessed high quality canoe routes;*
- 5. Protection of earth and life science features;*
- 6. Minimum of 5 day canoe route (max.25 km/day) with solitude, i.e. no motorboats for at least 3 of the 5 days, with possibility of encountering motorboats or facilities in entry/exit points only;*
- 7. All existing users have some assurance that their presence and future viability will continue (local economic benefits);*
- 8. Plan the park to ensure that there are a variety of wilderness experiences.*

As an Advisory Committee, based on the foregoing, we have come to unanimous consensus on the following recommendations:

- 1. All existing commercial roofed accommodations will be allowed to continue in their present form.*
- 2. Move as quickly as possible, through negotiations with individual operators, to remove all boat caches from the large wilderness areas outside of the Bloodvein and Gammon River System, with the exception of Irregular Lake.*
- 3. Move towards the phase out of snowmobiling in the park in ten years on those trails which do not conflict with current caribou habitat. We note that recognized snowmobile use in the park additions will continue.*
- 4. Whereas Park Policy, in conjunction with the Minister's Order (PM 1.00), limits motorized boat activity to that associated with current tourism operations within the park; therefore the Advisory Committee urges that motorized boat traffic not meeting that requirement be phased out.”*

Other Discussion Topics

In addition to the principles and recommendations, the Advisory Committee reached consensus on a number of other topics between January 23, 2003 and August 23, 2005. The Planning Team considered these in the development of the preliminary signature sites strategy, resource management plan and resource management guideline.

- No new transmission towers or utility corridors, and existing towers to be phased out over ten years in the core park.
- No new transmission towers or utility corridors, and phase out existing towers over a period of ten years in the conservation reserve.
- Remove MNR fuel cache from the park.
- No MNR fuel caches allowed in the park additions.
- No MNR fuel caches in the conservation reserve.
- No MNR fuel caches allowed in the enhanced management area.
- Can and glass bottle ban, except for tenured locations (LUP, Crown lease, patent lands), in the core park.
- Can and glass bottle ban, except for tenured locations (LUP, Crown lease, patent lands), in the park additions.
- Can and glass bottle ban, except for tenured locations (LUP, Crown lease, patent lands), in the conservation reserve.
- Recommended to identify three wilderness zones, and two access zones in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park as a planning tool.
- No new opportunities for commercial fishing except those provided for in the Islington Band Agreement.
- New facilities/opportunities should be non-consumptive.
- Existing and new outpost camps permitted (with qualifiers for non-consumptive for new opportunities).
- Existing resorts and lodges permitted but not new ones.
- Recommend to MNR to maintain the road from Red Lake to Leano Lake and that a road access be provided at Lund Lake via the McIntosh road for access to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. That MNR should be prepared to enter into a road maintenance agreement on the above roads.
- Propose Donald, Hansen and Sabourin Lakes for air access zones.
- Reduce the number of boat caches by 10% over five years and another 10% in the next five years .
- Explore opportunities with operators to relocate on same lake or remove boat caches in Wilderness Zone 2
- Where critical winter caribou habitat is not in danger and there is use of existing trails, the Advisory Committee recommends a phase-out period of ten years for snowmobiling in the existing Woodland Caribou Provincial Park.
- 'Conservation license only' be phased in over five years in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park.
- The Woodland Caribou Signature Site Advisory Committee sees the proposed road crossing between Sydney and Rowdy Lakes as having the potential to impact negatively on park values and therefore, the Woodland Caribou Signature Site Advisory Committee opposes the Sydney/Rowdy Crossing as proposed in the 2004 Whiskey Jack Forest Management Plan.

- Portage-to boat caches are boats which are associated with the facility-based operations (for fisheries management purposes) and are accessed by a walking trail or water from the lake that the facility is located on.
- Facilities and motorized transport are items which do not conform with the objectives of wilderness parks and wilderness zones, however, the Minister has mandated that existing commercial tourism facilities will remain, furthermore there are few opportunities to relocated facilities outside of the park.

The Advisory Committee discussed many other topics on which consensus was not reached. The Planning Team also considered this discussion in the development of the preliminary signature sites strategy, resource management plan and resource management guideline

