

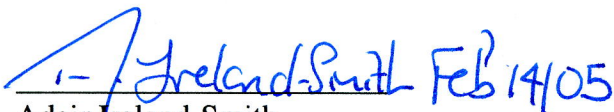
Dear Sir/Madam;

The Ministry of Natural Resources is working towards an approved strategy for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site. Part of this process includes preparing a document containing issues and options for the site. We are pleased to present the approved *Woodland Caribou Signature Site Management Options*.

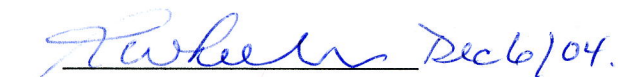
This document identifies issues and presents options for the management of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and proposed park additions, the Pipestone Bay - McIntosh Enhanced Management Area, the Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve and the Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve.

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 response 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, a Preliminary Signature Site Strategy will be prepared and will include preferred management approaches to be presented to the public.

 Ireland-Smith Feb 14/05

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 Dec 6/04.

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## 1.0 WOODLAND CARIBOU SIGNATURE SITE – Introduction

### 1.1 General

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site was identified as one of nine featured areas in *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (1999). These featured areas are places of outstanding natural beauty and significant cultural value which provide high-quality wilderness recreation opportunities and tourism potential. As such, signature sites warrant special management strategies. This document is part of the process in the development of a strategy for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site.

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site is located in northwestern Ontario, approximately 30 kilometres west of Red Lake, 90 kilometres north of Kenora and 60 kilometres south of the community of Pikangikum (Figure 1). It consists of 536,569 hectares and includes a provincial park, four proposed wilderness park additions, a conservation reserve, an enhanced management area and a forest reserve (Table 1). Also included within the boundaries of the Signature Site is the Bloodvein River, which in 1998 was designated as a Canadian Heritage River.

**Table 1.** Woodland Caribou Signature Site Complex Components

<b>Site Component</b>	<b>Site #</b>	<b>Classification/Category</b>	<b>Area (hectares)</b>
Woodland Caribou Provincial Park	P2370e	Wilderness	450, 000
Proposed Park Additions	P2370	Wilderness	29, 788
Snowshoe - Eagle (CR)	C2405	N/A	34,548
Pipestone Bay - McIntosh (EMA)	E2359a	Remote Access	21,978
Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve	F2370	N/A	255
<b>Total area</b>			<b>536, 569</b>

The western edge of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site borders Manitoba and two of that province's protected areas. Northeast of the signature site lies the Whitefeather Forest where community land use planning is under way led by Pikangikum First Nation. East and south of the site are the following managed forests; the Whiskey Jack Forest, the Kenora Forest and the Red Lake Forest.

The unique boreal ecosystem of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site, influenced by the prairie climate, displays a diverse community of plants and animals, 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 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. Treaty and Aboriginal rights will be respected.

## **1.2 Related Landscape Initiatives**

Due to the complexity of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site, activities on the landscape surrounding the site may affect site objectives. Below is a summary of four new land use planning processes that may directly or indirectly affect the Woodland Caribou Signature Site. Each has its own planning and consultation process.

### **1.2.1 Manitoba/Ontario Interprovincial Wilderness Area**

Manitoba and Ontario share a common border and have adjoining protected areas. These include Atikaki Provincial Wilderness Park (1985) and Nopiming Provincial Park (1976) in Manitoba, and Woodland Caribou Provincial Park (1983) in Ontario. Boundaries of these areas are shown in Figure 1. Next to these parklands are six additional protected areas including the South Atikaki Park Reserve in Manitoba, four proposed park additions to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park in Ontario and the Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve (Figure 1). In total, these parks and protected lands encompass more than one million hectares of natural values and wilderness area. Cooperation between the two provinces can involve many aspects of protected area management and operation. The following areas of cooperation have been identified, though other areas may develop over time.

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

### **1.2.2 Whitefeather Forest Planning Initiative: Northern Boreal Initiative**

The Ministry of Natural Resources has established the Northern Boreal Initiative (NBI) and is working with several First Nations who are investigating opportunities in areas north of the land use planning area.

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 will result from this land use planning exercise. 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.

### **1.2.3 Adjacent Areas Planning Initiative**

An area of 44,488 hectares lies outside the planning area and Whitefeather Forest. The area 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 1). It contains three areas which may have value as protected areas (Valhalla Lake, Blondin Lake and Crossland Lake). 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 this initiative.

### **1.2.4 World Heritage Site: Boreal Forest in the Northern Hemisphere**

A partnership has been formed among Manitoba, Ontario, the Manitoba First Nations of Bloodvein, 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, Canada nominated this site as one of 11 on its updated Tentative List for World Heritage Site consideration by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

## **1.3 Signature Site Vision & Objectives**

A signature site strategy is a directional statement for the entire area. The strategy provides the collective vision and direction for all the land use designations in the signature site area. Through stakeholder consultation, a vision statement 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 to developing 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.
- to assess and promote the tourism potential of the site while preserving and protecting the character and quality of the environment.
- to develop partnerships with both the public and private sector in order to support a collective vision and foster sustainable economies in the north.

## **2.0 WOODLAND CARIBOU SIGNATURE SITE – Background**

### **2.1 Planning Partners**

The signature site strategy will guide the protection and use of resources, visitor use and overall development within the site for a 20-year period. Planning is carried out by a project planning team with input from an advisory committee, First Nations Working Group, and the general public.

The project planning team has conducted considerable field and literature research. In March 2002, a process was initiated to develop an ecological land use and resource management strategy for this remarkable area. The public was invited to participate in the development of the strategy in December 2002.

An advisory committee was established in January 2003. It is made up of representatives with a wide range of interests and takes local, regional, and provincial perspectives into account. The advisory committee has established an approved operating procedure protocol, reviewed background information, agreed upon a vision statement for the signature site, identified issues and suggested options for the management of the site.

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.

A series of public open houses began in February 2004. Background information was presented and feedback was collected regarding issues and objectives. The issues and options presented in this document have been developed from the opinions expressed by the project planning team, advisory committee, First Nations Working Group and the general public.

## **Woodland Caribou Signature Site Planning Schedule:**

- Invitation to Participate - *December 2002*
- Public Review of Background Information - *February/March 2004*
- Public Review of Issues and Options - *Winter 2004/2005*
- Public Review of Preliminary Strategy - *Summer 2005*
- Public Inspection of Approved Strategy – *Fall/Winter 2005*

## **2.2 Advisory Committee Summary**

The following is a list of topics that were raised by the Advisory Committee over a series of meetings between January of 2003 and October of 2004 (not ranked):

- Transmission Towers
- MNR Fire Fuel Caches
- Aircraft Landings
- Boat Caches
- Existing Facility Based Tourism
- Permitting and Reservation System
- Mechanized Use
- Protection of Natural and Cultural Features
- Protection of Forest Dwelling Woodland Caribou Habitat
- Access
- User Conflicts
- Iriam Lake Forest Access Road
- Zoning
- Garbage
- Fisheries – Sustainability
- Boundaries
- Interprovincial Wilderness Area Concept
- Shorelunch Sites
- Campsites
- Local Economic Development
- Mining
- Tourism and Marketing
- Patent Properties
- Hunting

## **2.3 First Nations Working Group Summary**

The following is a list of topics that were raised and/or discussed by the First Nations Working Group between January 2003 and October 2004 (not ranked).

- Trapline Management
- Traditional Use Areas
- Economic Development
- Future Economic Opportunities
- Protection of Natural and Cultural Features
- Interpretation of Cultural Information
- Potential World Heritage Site Designation
- Treaty and Aboriginal Rights
- Partnerships and Research Opportunities
- User Conflicts

## 2.4 Public Consultation Summary

Sixty-three responses were received after the Invitation to Participate and the Terms of Reference documents were reviewed by the public. During the Background Information stage, 70 responses were received from the public. Responses were in the form of letters, emails, telephone calls, and public comment forms. Approximately 185 people attended open houses held in the communities of Ear Falls, Red Lake, Pikangikum, Kenora, Grassy Narrows, Kejick Bay, and Whitedog between February and March 2004.

The responses that were received have been used by the Project Planning Team to assist in further development of the issues. For the purposes of this document, specific issues have been grouped into categories as follows (not ranked): The *Public Consultation Summary* report, which details the public responses from the Background document and public open houses, is available upon request.

- Access
- Boat Caches
- Commercial Tourism Operations
- Conservation Reserve
- Enhanced Management Area
- Fire Management
- First Nation Involvement
- Hunting
- Multiple Use
- Proposed Park Additions
- Wildlife Management
- Winter Recreation
- Visitor Control

## 2.5 Purpose of the Issues & Options Document

The public have had the opportunity to review the Terms of Reference and Background Information. Suggestions and comments from the public, as well as the Advisory Committee and First Nations Working Group, have lead to the present document. The purpose of this Issues and Options document is to:

- present objectives for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site and its components
- outline issues.
- propose possible options that address objectives and issues within the context of site constraints and capabilities.
- meet policy and regulatory requirements for provincial park and conservation reserve planning.

Once the Advisory Committee, First Nations Working Group and general public have had an opportunity to provide feedback on the Issues and Options document, the Project Planning Team will draft strategies and present them in the next stage of the planning process, the Preliminary Signature Site Strategy. The Preliminary Signature Site Strategy document will contain:

- a preliminary Park Management Plan for the existing Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and proposed park additions.
- a preliminary Resource Management Plan for Eagle Snowshoe Conservation Reserve.

- a preliminary management direction for Pipestone Bay -McIntosh Enhanced Management Area.

### **3.0 WOODLAND CARIBOU SIGNATURE SITE – Policy Context**

The Woodland Caribou Signature Site Strategy must consider existing commitments and direction established through previous legislation, policy and planning. Existing commitments include those relating to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, the Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve, the Pipestone Bay-McIntosh Enhanced Management Area and the Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve.

The existing Woodland Caribou Provincial Park was regulated in 1983 as a wilderness class park and has operated under an *Interim Management Statement* since 2000. The *Interim Management Statement* is intended to guide the use of natural resources and related activities. It does not replace a Park Management Plan. The approved signature site strategy will contain a Park Management Plan. Signature site management guidelines are based on the *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies* (1992 update) and *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (1999). Proposed park additions were designated in the land use strategy to become wilderness class park additions. Provincial parks are regulated under the *Ontario Provincial Parks Act*.

*Conservation Reserves Policy and Procedure* (1997) defines the permitted uses within conservation reserves for those activities not defined in the land use strategy. The Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve will operate under this general management direction and Interim Protection Policy until such time that the Resource Management Plan is in place. This plan will be included in the approved signature site strategy. Conservation reserves are regulated under the *Public Lands Act*.

The Pipestone Bay-McIntosh Enhanced Management Area and the Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve are land use designations created by the 1999 land use strategy. Activities within these areas are governed by the land use policy developed in the strategy. Enhanced management areas and forest reserves are not 'regulated'. Instead, their boundaries and permitted uses are established through land use planning processes and application of land use policy.

As part of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Parks is a public sector agency and as such, subject to the *Environmental Assessment Act*. Management will be carried out in accordance with the MNR Class Environmental Assessments for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves. The Class Environmental Assessments for MNR – Resource Stewardship and Facility Development Projects, will apply to projects and activities carried out in the enhanced management areas and forest reserves of the signature site.

The *Crown Land Use Policy Atlas* is the MNR official source of specific land use policy for Crown lands in the land use planning area. This atlas consists of the approved policies for each land designation in the Woodland Caribou Signature Site. The atlas is accessible to the public via the Internet at <http://crownlanduseatlas.mnr.gov.on.ca>.

Signature site planning and the proposed management options are not intended to infringe upon Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

## 3.1 Ontario Parks

### 3.1.1 Provincial Parks Policy Context

Provincial parks policies have evolved over the last century, since the establishment of Algonquin Park in 1893. Today, provincial parks are governed by two key tools: the *Ontario Provincial Parks Act* and *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies* (1992 update). The latter was amended by *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (1999), for provincial parks within the OLL planning area. The information within this section is based on these documents.

The 1978 Cabinet-approved Ontario Provincial Parks Policy Statement established the goal and four main objectives for the park system, provided nine guiding principles and six park classifications which make up the current system.

The goal of the Ontario provincial parks system is, “to ensure that Ontario's provincial parks protect significant natural, cultural, and recreational environments, while providing ample opportunities for visitors to participate in recreational activities” (MNR, 1992 update).

The key **objectives** of the park system are:

- *Protection*: to protect provincially significant elements of the natural and cultural landscapes of Ontario.
- *Recreation*: to provide outdoor recreation opportunities ranging from high-intensity day-use to low-intensity wilderness experiences.
- *Heritage Appreciation*: to provide opportunities for the exploration and appreciation of the outdoor natural and cultural heritage of Ontario.
- *Tourism*: to provide Ontario residents and out-of-province visitors with opportunities to discover and experience the distinctive regions of the province.

Nine **principles** guide the management of the provincial park system and contribute to the achievement of the four program objectives. These nine principles are:

- *Permanence*: dedicated to the present and future generation for their healthful enjoyment and appreciation of Ontario parks.
- *Distinctiveness*: to provide a range of quality outdoor recreation experiences which are not available in other types of parks.
- *Representation*: established to secure for posterity features which represent Ontario's natural and cultural heritage.
- *Variety*: to provide a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities and protected natural and cultural landscapes.

- *Accessibility*: to distribute equally, both geographically and socially, the benefits of the park system so it is accessible to all Ontario residents.
- *Coordination*: managed to complement rather than compete with the private sector and other public agencies.
- *System*: the provincial park system as a whole, rather than individual parks, provides the diversity of experiences and landscapes.
- *Classification*: organizes parks into broad categories, each of which has a particular purpose, characteristics, as well as planning, management and user policies.
- *Zoning*: parks are zoned on the basis of resource significance and recreation potential. Planning and management policies are applied consistently to each zone type throughout the system and ensure that users get the most out of individual parks.

The provincial parks system incorporates six classes of parks. Each class contributes differently towards the four park program objectives while collectively ensuring that the province's natural, cultural and recreational environments are protected. Each park shares similar characteristics with other parks within its classification. These similarities help to determine the specific function and management framework for each classification. Woodland Caribou Provincial Park is a wilderness class park.

***Wilderness Parks*** – Wilderness parks are defined as “substantial areas where the forces of nature are permitted to function freely and where visitors travel by non-mechanized means and experience expansive solitude, challenge and personal integration with nature” (MNR, 1992 update). The target is to establish one wilderness park and one complementary wilderness zone (in either a waterway or natural environment park) or a national park equivalent in each ecological region of Ontario. Examples include Quetico and Opasquia.

***Provincial Nature Reserve*** – Nature reserve parks are established to represent and protect Ontario's geological, ecological, and species diversity. The target is to represent each of the vegetative types found in Ontario's 14 ecoregions and all of Ontario's past geological environments. Examples include Ouimet Canyon and Trout Lake.

***Historical Parks*** - These parks represent and protect distinctive historical resources for interpretive, educational and research purposes. The evaluation and selection of archaeological and historical features in Ontario's provincial parks is based on criteria developed and described in “A Topical Organization of Ontario's History” (MNR, 1975). The system defines 13 significant landscape-related themes (and 115 sub-themes) that depict Ontario's human history. An example is Michipicoten Post Provincial Park.

***Natural Environment Parks*** - Natural environment parks are selected to protect large, representative, and ecologically viable areas throughout Ontario which provide high quality recreation and educational experiences. They represent elements of geological, ecological, and species diversity commonly found within an ecological region, but not contained within provincial wilderness parks or national park equivalents. The target is to establish one natural environment park in each of the province's ecological districts. Examples include Pakwash, Sleeping Giant and Neys.

***Waterway Parks*** - Waterway parks are selected river corridors that complement other parks by representing elements of diversity not found within the other park classes. The class target is to establish one waterway park in each ecological district. Examples include St. Raphael and Turtle River–White Otter Lake.

***Recreation Parks*** - Recreation parks are selected to protect outstanding recreational environments. They provide a wide variety of outdoor experiences for larger numbers of people and may include representative examples of Ontario’s geological, ecological, and species diversity. There is no specific target for the number of recreation parks, though the intent is to ensure a sufficient supply of recreational and tourism opportunities. Examples include Rushing River and Caliper Lake.

Classification and zoning of provincial parks are the key elements in determining the type and extent of management activities that may take place in a provincial park. Classification sets the direction for the types of zones that a park may contain. Park zoning permits further refinement by setting limits on the range of management activities that can be considered. This approach is flexible enough that management policies can be tailored to reflect resource significance and management objectives for individual parks. At the same time, it ensures general consistency in approach across the entire park system.

### **3.1.2 Zoning**

The park planning process uses the identified constraints and capabilities of a park to assess carrying capacity, limits of acceptable change, existing use, access and dispersal patterns and to designate zones. Zoning allocates lands and waters based on their protection requirements and potential for recreation. Zones provide a range of opportunities for recreation, heritage appreciation and education, while maintaining the integrity of the resources upon which recreation opportunities are based.

Zoning is based on the reality that visitors do not use all resources in the same way and that all activities are not carried out everywhere, nor should they be. For example, an area with provincially significant vegetation or wildlife features (e.g. caribou calving/nursery areas) may be damaged by high-intensity recreation activities. Therefore a nature reserve zone designation may be chosen which restricts uses to very low-impact recreation. Policies related to permitted uses and development in each zone serve as guidelines for park management planning.

There are six zones types that apply to the park management planning process. Table 2 shows the various park class and zone associations. The presence or absence of a zone in a particular park class depends on the philosophy and objectives of that class. As a wilderness class park, Woodland Caribou Provincial Park can have four types of zones (Nature Reserve-NR, Wilderness-WI, Historical-HI and Access-A). Two zones not available to wilderness parks; Development Zones (D), support intensive day-use and car camping facilities and Natural Environment Zones (NE) often serve as a buffer between access zones and the more protection-oriented wilderness, nature reserve or historical zones.

Later sections of this document present options for zones based upon the best resource inventory information available at this time. However, with new information about earth and life science features (e.g. species at risk habitat) and cultural heritage values, adjustments to zoning may be considered in the future.

**Table 2. Zone Possibilities by Park Class**

Park Class	Zone Type					
	Natural Environment (NE)	Nature Reserve (NR)	Wilderness (WI)	Historical (HI)	Access (A)	Development (D)
<b>Wilderness</b>		*	*	*	*	
<b>Nature Reserve</b>		*		*	*	
<b>Historical</b>	*	*		*	*	*
<b>Natural Environment</b>	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Waterway</b>	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Recreation</b>	*	*		*	*	*

### 3.1.3 What is a Park Management Plan?

A Park Management Plan identifies the contributions that an individual park makes to the achievement of the parks system’s four objectives. No plan is undertaken with a “blank slate.” There are a variety of givens – management policies that apply to the entire park system dealing with topics such as park classification, zoning or permitted uses. Conversely, the plan will also contain policies that reflect specific resources and management needs of the park. According to the *Ontario Provincial Park Management Planning Manual* (1994), the Park Management Plan shall include:

- a definition of the park’s role, significance and classification in the provincial context
- a statement of policy, including classification and zoning, addressing the protection, planning, development and management of the significant resources and values within each park. Amendments to the park boundary (additions or deletions) are also prescribed
- documented evidence that planning, development and management activities reflect the need for environmental protection and sustainability and are responsive to public interests
- guidance in preparing subsidiary implementation plans for the various activities and projects needed to achieve park objectives
- a rationale and priorities for the long-term funding of capital development and operations
- a record of issues identified through internal and public consultation, and their resolution through the management planning process
- a basis for auditing park development, operations and resource management activities
- assurance that proposed management activities and projects comply with the *Environmental Assessment Act* (the Class EA addresses this assurance).

## **3.2 Conservation Reserve**

Conservation reserves are protected areas that are established and regulated under the *Public Lands Act*. These areas are intended to complement provincial parks in protecting representative natural areas and special landscapes. As part of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site, the Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve also protects additional forest dwelling woodland caribou habitat and provides recreational opportunities. It also provides remote commercial tourism opportunities. Conservation reserves are administered by the local Ministry of Natural Resources. The Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve is within the Kenora District.

### **3.2.1 Conservation Reserve Policy Context**

The goal of conservation reserves is to protect natural heritage values on public lands while permitting compatible land use activities. The conservation reserve designation permits many existing land uses to continue while excluding activities such as commercial timber harvesting, mining and hydroelectric development. Detailed policies for conservation reserves are outlined in *Conservation Reserves Policy and Procedure* (1997). The Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve is also within the North Kenora Pilot Project Agreement Area where specific provisions for the protection of the remote resource-based tourism industry are in effect.

### **3.2.2 What is a Resource Management Plan?**

A Resource Management Plan is a document that provides detailed direction for permitted activities within a protected area and is intended to guide resource use within a conservation reserve. It is written in accordance with *Conservation Reserves Policy and Procedure* (1997) and considers the applicable recreation inventory, life science inventory and earth science inventory. The goals and objectives of the conservation reserve are identified within the Resource Management Plan, and where conservation reserve policy is limited, these goals and objectives will guide management direction planning.

### **3.3 Enhanced Management Area**

An enhanced management area is a new land use category (1999) that has been established to provide more detailed Crown land use direction in areas with special features or values. Enhanced management areas are not a regulated designation, unlike provincial parks or conservation reserves which are regulated under the *Provincial Parks Act* and the *Public Lands Act* respectively. In the case of the Pipestone Bay-McIntosh Enhanced Management Area, its purpose is to provide additional protection to the headwaters of the Bloodvein River as well as other recreation and tourism values associated with Woodland Caribou Provincial Park.

#### **3.3.1 Enhanced Management Area Policy Context**

There are seven categories of enhanced management areas with associated specific management policies. These are natural heritage, recreation, remote access, fish and wildlife, Great Lake coastal areas, resource-based tourism and intensive forestry. The Pipestone Bay-McIntosh Enhanced Management Area is classified as remote access. The intent of a remote access enhanced management area is to avoid undesirable impacts on park and tourism values through careful planning of new road locations and restricting access on existing roads where values are at risk. The resource development and management activities must also recognize significant values such as wildlife habitat, backcountry wilderness and scenic landscapes associated with the park.

Mining can take place within the enhanced management area under a generic code of best practices for mineral exploration activities. The "best practices" principle has been developed by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in conjunction with the Ministry of Natural Resources for the enhanced management area portion of the Lake Nipigon Signature Site and has been adopted for operations within this site. The intent of this code of best practices is to manage on the basis of ecological sustainability as well as promoting the conservation of recreational and natural values on Crown land by the mining industry.

Any new road locations for non-forestry and/or non-mining purposes will be managed to prevent access into sensitive areas. Roads in remote access category enhanced management areas will have public use restrictions and require comprehensive long-term access planning.

Management direction, provided in the land use strategy for forestry activities within enhanced management areas, will be further defined through this process to provide clear direction to future Forest Management Planning initiatives. Modifications in resource management practices in the enhanced management area will be implemented with no impact on wood supply, and only in exceptional cases will wood costs be affected.

Enhanced management areas are managed under the *Public Lands Act* and are administered by the local Ministry of Natural Resources office, in this case the Red Lake District.

### **3.3.2 What is a Management Direction?**

The Pipestone Bay–McIntosh Enhanced Management Area document will provide guiding principles that may lead to modifications to resource management practices (e.g. forest management activities) 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. Enhanced management areas will focus on the application of guidelines, best practices, and other management strategies to accomplish the intent for why it was created.

## **3.4 Forest Reserve**

A forest reserve is a land use designation created through the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (1999) where protection of natural heritage and special landscapes is a priority, but some resource use can take place with appropriate conditions. This designation has been applied to areas initially identified for inclusion in provincial park and conservation reserves. The areas cannot be regulated at this time due to active mining claims or leases.

### **3.4.1 Forest Reserve Policy Context**

The provisions of the *Mining Act* apply to forest reserves. Within a forest reserve, mineral exploration can lead to mine development. The development of access roads to mining land, plus roads and other development within the forest reserve are subject to applicable environmental assessment requirements. If a claim/lease lapses or is retired through normal process, these lands will be added to the park, to improve park integrity.

Commercial forest harvesting, new hydroelectric power development and peat extraction will not be permitted. Policies for forest reserves are similar to the policies for conservation reserves except mining and related access will be allowed in a forest reserve.

The generic code of best practices for mineral exploration activities that have been adopted for the enhanced management area will also apply to forest reserves. The intent of this code of best practices is to promote the conservation of recreational and natural values on Crown land by the mining industry.

## **4.0 WOODLAND CARIBOU SIGNATURE SITE – Issues & Options**

### **4.1 Woodland Caribou Provincial Park (existing park and park additions)**

The foundation of the signature site is Woodland Caribou Provincial Park which makes up approximately 84 per cent of the total area of the site and, as such, has a significant influence in setting site direction. Wilderness parks are defined as “substantial areas where the forces of nature are permitted to function freely and where visitors travel by non-mechanized means and experience expansive solitude, challenge and personal integration with nature”.

The objectives for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park are to:

- protect the wilderness values for which the park was created
- maintain or enhance ecological integrity.
- protect and maintain 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
- maintain 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.

#### **4.1.1 Nature Reserve Zones**

Nature reserve (NR) zones protect provincially significant and representative earth and life science features to help ensure the long-term preservation of such features for future generations. These areas may require management different from the adjacent landbase in order to protect provincially rare plant species, represent significant geological structures and landform processes, protect headwater areas, represent unique vegetative communities and habitats, and to safeguard representations of landscape units found in the park. Nature reserves may also provide special protection where required and can include a protective buffer area in which a minimum of development is permitted. Development is generally restricted to trails, necessary signs, interpretive facilities (where warranted) and temporary facilities for research and management. Mechanized travel, hunting and camping are not permitted in nature reserve zones.

Consideration is being given to protecting representative aquatic features (lakes) within Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Currently, there are no aquatic features or representative fish communities proposed to be set aside as benchmarks or controls for research. Should aquatic nature reserve zones be proposed in the future, after more information is collected, an amendment to the management plan will be made and public consultation will be required. Currently some work is being conducted with respect to the genetic variation in native lake trout stocks within the park.

Within the Woodland Caribou Signature Site, 14 areas have been identified as having provincially significant features which require protection and are proposed as nature reserve zones in two management options, Option 1 and Option 2 (Figures 2 and 3). Nine of the provincially significant features are entirely in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park (NR1 - NR5 and NR7 - NR10). One is situated in both Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and the Anchor Lake proposed park addition (NR6) and four are located entirely in the Sydney/Rowdy Lake proposed park addition (NR11 - NR14). These provincially significant features are proposed as nature reserves in order to provide the necessary protection. Several of the proposed nature reserves have issues that need to be resolved through consultation. Some issues are specific to individual proposed nature reserves, such as boundaries, and other issues pertain to all proposed nature reserves such as permitted and/or non-conforming activities. Following the descriptions of the proposed nature reserve zones is a summary of the issues which require resolution.

### **Descriptions of Proposed Nature Reserve Zones**

#### **NR1 - *South Artery Lake Wetland*** (138.7 hectares)

The South Artery Lake Wetland includes excellent examples of rich sedge meadows which contain rare plant species, one of two hardwood swamps in the park, and good examples of porphyritic granites which are representative of one of the major rock units in the park. Current development in this proposed zone includes four campsites.

#### **NR2 - *Bloodvein River Savannah*** (1.3 hectares)

This area of open oak communities can be described as a “savannah”. Bur oak communities are provincially significant and contain rare plants which may be threatened by human disturbance. Although the communities are relatively small and probably restricted to habitats with a suitable microclimate, they are excellent examples of prairie species communities in a warmer period of post-glacial history. Current development in this proposed zone includes one campsite.

#### **NR3 - *Larus Creek Wetland*** (484.7 hectares)

The Larus Creel Wetland represents the deeper and richer lacustrine silts and clays of the middle Bloodvein River watershed which supports the largest percentage of hardwoods. A number of provincially rare plants occur including Floating Marsh-Marigold and Vasey's Pondweed. Current development in this proposed zone includes five campsites.

#### **NR4 - *Olive Lake*** (335.4 hectares)

Rich patterned fen and a number of provincially rare plant species such as Vasey's Rush, Parsley Fern and Prairie Spikemoss are located in this zone. Shorelines of glacial Lake Agassiz also occur in association with spillways which are significant to understanding the retreat of the glaciers from the park area. Good representation of the granitic components of the Beren's River subprovince is also included. Current development in this proposed zone includes two campsites.

**NR5 - *Carroll Lake*** (111.9 hectares)

This zone includes excellent examples of subaqueous fan deposits attributable to flowing meltwater of the retreating glaciers as well as good representation of the metamorphosed rocks of the Berens River subprovince. Provincially rare plant species, such as Prairie Crocus and Prairie Spikemoss, are also found within this zone. No development exists in this proposed zone.

**NR6 - *Eagle-Finlayson Moraine***

Option 1 (715.9 hectares) or Option 2 (561.3 hectares)

The Eagle-Finlayson Moraine supports very rich wetlands and marshes, including the largest patterned fen in the park. There is good representation of black spruce bog forests here. This zone also represents the highly modified portion of the provincially significant Eagle-Finlayson moraine and associated features such as outwash, lacustrine and ground moraine deposits. This is considered to be a new northern extension and possible termination of this moraine system. Also included are the highly altered remains of the Red Lake greenstone belt, mild faulting conditions at the east end of the Wallace Lake - Wanipigow fault, and other geological features of the Uchi subprovince. Current development in this proposed zone includes three campsites, one commercial boat cache and one resource harvest boat cache. Both options include the existing development.

**NR7 - *Crystal Lake Shear Zone***

Option 1 (179.1 hectares) or Option 2 (134.8 hectares)

Excellent examples of subaqueous fan deposits attributable to flowing meltwater of the retreating glaciers as well as good representation of the metamorphosed rocks of the Berens River subprovince are found in this zone. Furthermore, an outstanding representation of the Wanipigow-Wallace Lake fault is also located here. This major shear zone between the Berens River and Uchi subprovince is an obvious feature which contributes to the interpretation of the geological processes of the park. Current development in this area includes seven campsites. If Option 1 is selected, all seven campsites will fall within the nature reserve boundary. If Option 2 is selected, only one of the campsites will be within the proposed boundary.

**NR8 - *Eagle Lake*** (250.9 hectares)

The life science features within this zone include rich fen meadows and southern flora such as the Ten Flowered Showy Goldenrod and Purple Chokeberry. An example of the highly altered remains of greenstone belts completes the representation of this volcanic feature. Current development in this proposed zone includes two campsites and one commercial boat cache.

**NR9 - *Shear Lake Shear Zone***

Option 1 (200.3 hectares) or Option 2 (0 hectares)

Shear Lake provides obvious examples of a shear zone and related mineralization associated with the Wallace Lake-Wanipigow faulting process. These cliffs occur in the same area as an array of wave washed deposits typical of glacial Lake Agassiz's action on the deposits of the Wisconsinan glacier. Current development in this proposed zone includes seven campsites.

**NR10 - *Kilburn Lake Prairie Communities*** (247.7 hectares)

Kilburn Lake supports excellent mixed and deciduous forests with southern affinities on lacustrine silts and clays. Delicate wetland flora, including several species of rare Rushes, are found here. Visible geological structures representing the Uchi subprovince are also present.

This area has been known to provide good summer habitat for forest dwelling woodland caribou. Current development in this proposed zone includes eleven campsites, and eleven commercial boat caches.

**NR11 - Sydney Lake Prairie Community** (1.0 hectares)

The Sydney Lake area contains an excellent representation of prairie species communities. The remnant communities persist on microclimate sites of small exposed bedrock shores on south-facing exposures with a mixture of local boreal species. These plant communities may be genetically distinct from other populations and important for biodiversity conservation. The flora and physical environment is very similar to the bur oak community. Current development in this proposed zone includes one campsite and one commercial boat cache.

**NR12, NR13 - Sydney Lake, and NR14 - Rowdy Lake Savannas** (3.2 hectares)

These open provincially significant oak communities can be described as “savannas”. Although the communities are relatively small and probably restricted to habitats with suitable microclimate, together they provide excellent examples of prairie species communities in a warmer period of post-glacial history. Current development in this proposed zone includes one commercial boat cache.

See Appendix A of the questionnaire to respond to the issues related to nature reserves.

**Nature Reserve Issues & Options (Appendix A)**

**Issue #1 - In an effort to best protect shear zones, which zone designation is most adequate?**

The proposed nature reserves, NR7 and NR9, contain bedrock features known as “shear zones”. The NR9 zone is entirely composed of the provincially significant bedrock feature while NR7 is partially composed of the bedrock feature. Due to the durability of these bedrock features, they may be equally protected with either a nature reserve or a wilderness zone designation. Mechanized travel, hunting and camping are not permitted in nature reserve zones. Figure 2 (Zoning Option 1) shows the shear zone designated as nature reserve zone. Figure 3 (Zoning Option 2) shows the shear zone designated as wilderness zone.

**Issue #2 - What options should be considered with respect to non-conforming recreation/tourism activities in nature reserves?**

Some backcountry recreation and facility-based tourism activities occur within the proposed nature reserves. In accordance with the *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies* (1992 update), activities such as boat caches and backcountry campsites are deemed as non-conforming in nature reserves because they may harm provincially significant features. To enhance ecological integrity and protect significant natural and cultural features, boat caching and camping may be phased out of nature reserve zones or relocated outside of nature reserve zones. Phasing out the activities, over a set period of time, would give users time to adjust their practices, work out any complications and create new options. Relocation would immediately protect provincially significant features from potential risk but still allow users to continue the activity elsewhere in the park.

### **Issue #3 – *What option(s) should be considered with respect to backcountry travel in nature reserves?***

Some existing backcountry activities (e.g. hiking trails and portages) are permitted and encouraged in accordance with wilderness park classification. However, backcountry activities may be restricted or prohibited to ensure that the wilderness values for which the park was created are protected in accordance with nature reserve zoning. One option could be to prohibit canoeing and kayaking in nature reserves. This would fragment existing travel routes because of the mosaic of proposed nature reserves across the landscape (Figures 2 and 3), but would provide the most protection for provincially significant features. A second option is to place restrictions on activities which would limit the human impact on proposed nature reserves. For example, particular portage routes could be closed, relocated or their use restricted to a carrying capacity quota. A third option includes maintaining existing portage trails while prohibiting shorelunches. This option could reduce the potential impact of litter and physical damage on provincially significant features.

#### **4.1.2 Historical Zones**

Historical Zones (HI) represent and protect significant cultural heritage resources to help ensure the long-term preservation of such features for future generations. They will support the minimum amount of development required for visitor exploration and appreciation, and scientific research (MNR, 1992 update).

Use of the signature site by ancestors of the First Nations people who use the site today has existed since time immemorial. Although history may have altered much of the traditional lifestyle of the Ojibway people, the First Nation communities that have traditional use areas within the site retain a close relationship with the land. They continue to practise traditional activities on the landscape.

Ontario Parks is working with First Nations to identify significant cultural and archaeological sites within the signature site. Identification of potentially significant post-contact sites, such as remnant fur trading posts, is also under way. Once identified, these sites may be designated as historical zones. However, prior to designation an amendment to the Park Management Plan will be required in accordance with *Ontario Provincial Parks: Management Planning Manual* (1994).

#### **4.1.3 Wilderness Zones**

Wilderness (WI) zones are areas of appropriate size and integrity that support backcountry tourism and recreation opportunities while preserving and protecting the character and quality of the environment. Development is limited to backcountry camping, portages, trails and signs necessary for route identification.

Part of the appeal of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park is its wilderness setting and remote quality. To many users, a wilderness area means no roads or development, and few people frequenting the area. Yet for some, wilderness experiences are enhanced through managed

activities. The existing backcountry recreation (canoeing/camping) and facility-based tourism use (outpost camps/lodges) contribute to the parks recreation and tourism objectives. Figure 4 identifies the most common recreation developments and associated sites as well as backcountry travel corridors. The often divergent interests of the two user groups creates user conflict. This conflict is usually based on mechanized travel versus non-mechanized travel. To address this issue, two types of wilderness zones are proposed. In each proposed wilderness zone, the objective will be to maintain backcountry tourism and recreation opportunities where consistent with wilderness values and resource capacities. The policies for recreation and tourism activities in both types of proposed wilderness zones will differ in approach in order to provide for both user groups. Furthermore, the wilderness zoning concept shall acknowledge the significance and/or sensitivity of the resources within these areas and may limit or prohibit recreational use to ensure that the protection needs of natural and cultural features are not compromised.

The proposed wilderness zoning concept consists of two wilderness zones (Figures 2 and 3). The less motorized and developed areas are proposed as Wilderness Zone 1 (Northern, Central and Southern). The wilderness areas which will permit higher levels of motorized traffic are proposed as Wilderness Zone 2 (Gammon and Bloodvein River systems).

Following each description of proposed Wilderness Zones 1 and 2 is a summary of the issues which require attention and comment.

### **Description of Proposed Wilderness Zone 1 (WI-1)**

Wilderness Zone 1 consists of three areas; the Northern, Central, and Southern wilderness zones totalling 451,500.8 hectares. (Figures 2 and 3).

#### ***Northern Wilderness Zone***

The Northern Wilderness Zone comprises the area within Woodland Caribou Provincial Park north of the Bloodvein River system. This northern component of Wilderness Zone 1 is fairly remote and is mainly accessed through a combination of float plane and/or water travel. This northern zone can be entered from the Bloodvein or Chukuni River systems, or from the Musclow and Keeper River systems to the north.

The facility-based commercial tourist operations and related activities in the Northern Wilderness Zone consist of five boat caches and two facility-based commercial fly-in outpost camps. Four of the boat caches are fly-in access only, two are linked to existing facility-based commercial operations within the park, and two are linked to existing operations located outside the park. The fifth boat cache is linked by a portage associated with an existing facility-based commercial operation located in the Bloodvein Wilderness Zone (WI-2).

### ***Central Wilderness Zone***

The Central Wilderness Zone comprises the area south of the Bloodvein River and north of the Gammon River as well as the proposed Douglas/Foley Lake, Anchor Lake and Peisk Lake park additions. The area is characterized by a network of small lakes connected by portages and provides several linkages between the Gammon and Bloodvein River systems. It also has potential for canoe route expansion. It can be accessed from outside of the park via Pipestone Bay (Red Lake) or via the current Johnson Lake entry point through Douglas and Hatchet Lakes.

The facility-based commercial tourist operations and related activities in the Central Wilderness Zone consist of 23 boat caches and four fly-in facilities. The facilities consist of one commercial lodge and three commercial outpost camps. One of the commercial outpost camps is located just west of the Ontario border in Manitoba with boating access to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Eight of the boat caches are fly-in access only and fifteen are linked to facilities. All 23 boat caches are associated with existing facility-based commercial operations in the park.

There are three private recreational cottages in the Central Wilderness Zone authorized by Land Use Permit tenure. All are scheduled for phase out by January 1, 2010.

### ***Southern Wilderness Zone***

The Southern Wilderness Zone includes the Sydney-Rowdy Lake proposed park addition and all the area south of the Gammon River within Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. This is perhaps the most popular backcountry canoeing area due to the fact that it is currently accessible by road via Leano and Sideous Lakes and that it provides a number of possible loop options that do not require the use of a float plane. Although boat caches appear frequently in this area, encounters with motorized vehicles are generally less common than elsewhere in the park. This is due to the seasonal nature of their use resulting from a seasonally focused lake trout fishery.

The facility-based commercial tourist operations and related activities in the Southern Wilderness Zone consist of 33 boat caches and five fly-in commercial facilities. The commercial facilities consist of one commercial lodge and four outpost camps. One of the outpost camps is located just west of the Ontario border in Manitoba with boating access to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Twenty-five of the boat caches are fly-in access only and eight are linked to facilities by portage. Of the 33 total boat caches, 21 boat caches are associated with existing facility-based commercial operations in the park and 12 are linked to operations outside of the park.

See Appendix B of the questionnaire to respond to the issues related to Wilderness Zone 1.

### **Wilderness Zone Issues & Options - Wilderness Zone 1 (Appendix B)**

#### ***Issue #1 - What options should be considered to reduce or eliminate user conflicts in Wilderness Zone 1?***

To many users, a wilderness park means no roads or development, as well as few people frequenting the area. In Wilderness Zone 1, wilderness values will be enhanced by reducing mechanized travel related to boat caches, facility-based tourism operations and aircraft. These options will also help protect natural and cultural features as well as ecological integrity.

Boat caches reduce the aesthetic appeal of a wilderness park and, although permitted in some areas, do not support the definition of a wilderness class park. Yet, motorboats are important for the operation of commercial outpost camps and lodges. Some options, which would correspond with the stated intent for Wilderness Zone 1 (less mechanized use), could be to regulate mechanized use, reduce the number of boat caches or remove unused boat caches.

There are 11 facility-based operations in Wilderness Zone 1. These businesses support the local economy and help to promote Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. However, facility-based operations, and their related activities, may put at risk some of the wilderness values which the park has been created to protect. Options might include restricting watercraft, promoting ecotourism opportunities or, in exceptional circumstances, relocating the facility.

A peaceful backcountry wilderness trip can be negatively affected by aircraft and facility-based activities. An option which may enhance the wilderness experience for backcountry users, yet maintain existing facility-based tourism operations, could be to permit aircraft landing/takeoff only at facilities or remote fly-in boat caches (a remote fly-in boat cache is a boat cache that is only accessible by float plane). Other options, which may reduce encounters between backcountry users and facility-based operations, could be to relocate canoe routes or portages, designate campsites, or establish park user quotas based on carrying capacity.

#### ***Issue #2 – What options should be considered to ensure the protection of natural and cultural features in Wilderness Zone 1?***

Backcountry activities can negatively affect the natural and cultural features as well as the ecological integrity of the area, depending on how these activities are carried out by park users. To protect park wilderness values, management strategies need to reduce the human “footprint” which users leave on the park. Some options could be to limit mechanized watercraft, implement visitor quotas, designate campsites, manage open fires, relocate boat caches, or regulate fuel and accessories storage. Some of these options may also lessen user conflicts and enhance the overall wilderness experience by reducing mechanized use and development, which is the intent of Wilderness Zone 1.

### **Descriptions of Proposed Wilderness Zone 2 (WI-2)**

Wilderness Zone 2 consists of two river-system areas; the Gammon and Bloodvein Rivers, covering a total of 25,719.7 hectares. (Figures 2 and 3). These wilderness zones will permit higher levels of motorized traffic along the river systems.

***Bloodvein Wilderness Zone*** (13,779.0 hectares)

The Bloodvein River, of which 106 kilometres lies within Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, was designated as part of the Canadian Heritage River System in 1998. The headwaters will be partially protected by the Peisk Lake proposed park addition and the Pipestone Bay-McIntosh Enhanced Management Area. Waters of the Bloodvein River flow west into Manitoba's Atikaki Provincial Park and on into Lake Winnipeg. Co-ordinated efforts by the both provincial governments are aimed at protecting these waters.

The Bloodvein route offers few opportunities for backcountry side trips. This river system experiences a high level of motorized traffic. There is one commercial lodge, four commercial outpost camps, one boat cache, and two fly-in private recreation cottages, mainly along the eastern section of the Bloodvein. One of the outpost camps is located just west of the Ontario border in Manitoba with boating access to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. The boat cache is a fly-in access only linked to operations outside of the park.

One private recreation cottage has Land Use Permit tenure and is scheduled to be phased out by January 1, 2010. The second private recreational cottage is of patent land status.

***Gammon Wilderness Zone*** (11,940.7 hectares)

This zone comprises the area along the Gammon River system and includes Optic, Telescope, Embryo, Upper Hatchet, Hatchet and Douglas Lakes. This river system also experiences a high level of motorized traffic. The headwaters of the Gammon River can be accessed from outside the park through Onnie or Johnson Lake. The Douglas/Foley Lake recommended park addition also provides an access possibility into Douglas Lake via Trout Bay (Red Lake). Lastly, the Gammon River can also be accessed from within the park via portage and canoe routes from the South and Central Wilderness Zones (WI-1).

There are a number of facility-based tourism operations and some private recreational cottages situated throughout the Gammon Wilderness Zone river-system. The commercial facilities consist of two commercial lodges and five commercial outpost camps. There is also an outpost camp located on Carroll Lake, just west of the Ontario border within Manitoba, which has boating access to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. There are 17 boat caches in this zone. Four are fly-in access only and 13 are linked to facilities by a portage. A portage-linked boat cache is one where the use of the boat cache originates from an existing facility and is not accessed by a float plane. The four fly-in access boat caches are linked to operations located outside of the park. Of the 13 portage-linked boat caches, 12 are associated with existing facility-based commercial operations and one boat cache is linked to a commercial resort based in the Central Wilderness Zone (WI-1).

There are nine fly-in private recreational cottages in the Gammon Wilderness Zone. Two hold a Land Use Permit tenure and are therefore scheduled to be phased out by January 1, 2010. The remaining seven private recreational cottages have patent property status.

See Appendix C of the questionnaire to respond to the issues related to Wilderness Zone 2.

### **Wilderness Zone Issues & Options - Wilderness Zone 2 (Appendix C)**

#### ***Issue #1 – What options should be considered to reduce or eliminate user conflicts in Wilderness Zone 2?***

In Wilderness Zone 2, wilderness values can be enhanced through management strategies that reduce user conflict and ensure the protection of the natural and cultural features yet maintain the existing facility-based tourism and backcountry recreation opportunities. The four main activities that create user conflict issues are commercial boat caches, facility-based operations, aircraft use, and backcountry excursions.

Motorboats are important for the operation of the existing commercial outpost camps and lodges, yet boat caches can reduce the aesthetic appeal for some wilderness park users. Some options to reduce user conflict could be to manage mechanized use, reduce the number of boat caches or remove unused boat caches.

There are 12 facility-based tourism operations in Wilderness Zone 2. These businesses support the local and regional economy and help to promote Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. However, facility-based operations, and their related activities, may not be compatible with protection objectives. Options might include restricting watercraft, promoting ecotourism opportunities or, in exceptional circumstances, relocating the facility.

To maintain the backcountry recreation and tourism opportunities, yet provide for existing facility-based tourism, commercial aircraft would be permitted to land/takeoff at facilities and/or remote fly-in boat caches only. To reduce conflict between backcountry users and facility-based operations, canoe routes or portages could be relocated, campsites could be designated, or visitor carrying capacity quotas could be established.

#### ***Issue #2 – What options should be considered to ensure the protection of natural and cultural features in Wilderness Zone 2?***

Backcountry activities can negatively affect the natural and cultural features as well as the ecological integrity of the area, depending on how these activities are carried out by park users. To protect park wilderness values, management strategies need to reduce the human “footprint” that users leave on the park while, at the same time, considering opportunities for tourism and recreation. Some options could be to manage mechanized watercraft, implement visitor quotas, designate campsites, prohibit open fires, relocate boat caches, and/or regulate fuel and accessories storage. Some of these options may also reduce user conflicts and enhance the overall wilderness experience while still supporting existing facility-based tourism, which is a focus of Wilderness Zone 2.

### **Issue #3 – *How should Ontario Parks reconcile patent property?***

Patent property exists within Wilderness Zone 2. Having patent land within a wilderness class park introduces constraints to the management of the area as a whole. To increase the ecological integrity and continuity of this protected landscape, the acquisition of patent land may be considered, based on the availability of funds and the owner's willingness to sell. The gradual acquisition of patent land would eventually create a continuous, permanently protected landscape.

Currently, access to patent land is by motorboat, private and commercial aircraft. Provincial park policy states that mechanized use be restricted to access zones. However, it is not the intent of Ontario Parks to deny landowners access to their patent land. Therefore, it is proposed that owners and immediate family be permitted to access their patent property using their own boat(s) and/or private aircraft or by commercial air transportation. Guests of patent property owners will be required to accompany the owner in the owner's private aircraft or use commercial air transportation.

#### **4.1.4 Access Zones**

Access zones (A) serve as staging areas where a minimum of facilities support the use of adjacent zones such as nature reserve, historical and wilderness. To increase backcountry tourism and recreation opportunities, these staging areas shall range from maintained tertiary roads and to floatplane access to low-intensity entry points. These zones do not provide campgrounds or day-use facilities. Figures 2 and 3 broadly delineate the proposed access zones, yet the actual size will be much smaller than what is shown on the map. The actual size will be determined based on the method of access/entry. For example, road access zones (for automobile use only) may have limited development such as a parking area and/or a trail to a canoe launch site. Water access zones may not have any development and will be restricted to watercraft. Air access zones may have a dock with a minimal upland/shore staging area. These access zones will be open all year in contrast with seasonal access zones, which are proposed for the park additions (section 2.0 Woodland Caribou Signature Site - Park Additions Only).

Currently, there are 12 existing entry points (A1–A12) located on the periphery of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. There is one road entry point (A11) and 11 water entry points (A1-A10 and A12). It is important to note that air access is currently unrestricted.

Six candidate air access zones are presented for consideration. However, only three of the six air access zones will be selected. One air access zone will be chosen in the northern portion of the park (A13 or A14), one in the park interior (A15 or A16 or A17), and one in the Bloodvein Wilderness Zone WI-2 (A1). In total, there are 14 proposed access zones; 11 of the 12 existing entry points where backcountry travellers presently access the park, plus the three new air access zones where commercial aircraft could land.

According to the *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies* (1992 update), if deemed appropriate, mechanized use [e.g. snowmobiling, private aircraft and All Terrain Vehicles (ATV)] may be permitted in access zones. However, it is proposed that the access zones in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park follow the stated intent of access zones and be created only for the dispersion of backcountry users into remote areas, not as areas for mechanized recreation. Access zones will be small staging areas or islands within or at the periphery of the park. By their nature, small access zones would restrict mechanized recreation. Mechanized activity may compromise protection objectives of adjacent zone(s) and therefore needs to be managed.

When evaluating an area for access zones, consideration should be given to the following criteria:

- type of access
- the physical suitability of the area
- the spatial relationship of one access zone to another
- the current and potential circulation and dispersal patterns of backcountry users
- the potential impact of activity associated with the access zones on wilderness values and adjacent significant natural and cultural features.
- the degree of user conflict.

## **Descriptions of Proposed Access Zones**

Entry on the western edge of the park is proposed to consist of five access zones (Figures 2 and 3 - A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5).

### **A1 - Access Zone 1**

Access Zone 1 is a proposed air access zone located on the Bloodvein River west of Artery Lake. This proposed zone forms part of a small lake which straddles the Ontario/Manitoba provincial border. Existing development on this waterbody consists of an outpost camp located in Atikaki Provincial Park. Currently, this lake is used by commercial aircraft to service the existing outpost camp. Also popular in this area is the use of Artery Lake as a drop-off point where backcountry travellers begin their adventure down the Bloodvein River to Lake Winnipeg. The Atikaki Provincial Park Management Plan has designated the Manitoba portion of the border lake as an air access zone. Access Zone 1 proposes to collaborate by designating the Ontario portion of this lake also as air access. If this waterbody is designated as an access zone commercial aircraft would be prohibited from landing on Artery Lake. This direction would alleviate some user conflicts and enhance the wilderness character of the area.

### **A2 & A3 - Access Zones 2 & 3**

Access Zones 2 and 3 are proposed water access entry points to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park from Manitoba through Carroll Lake. Access Zone 2 originates on the Gammon River just west of Carroll Lake and Access Zone 3 originates from Obukowin Lake. Backcountry travellers currently entering the park at these locations usually originate from the Wallace Lake Provincial Campground in Manitoba.

#### ***A4 - Access Zone 4***

Access Zone 4 is a proposed water access entry point to the park via the Wanipigow River. Canoeists entering the park at this location usually originate from Siderock Lake in Manitoba.

#### ***A5 - Access Zone 5***

Access Zone 5 is located in the southwest corner of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park at Garner Lake and is a proposed water access entry point. Most paddlers entering the park at this location originate from Beresford Lake in Manitoba.

Entry on the eastern edge of the park consists of six entry points (Figures 2 and 3 - A6, A7, A8, A9, A10 and A11).

#### ***A6 - Access Zone 6***

Access Zone 6 is currently used as water access entry point located in the northeast corner of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park on an unnamed lake east of Olive Lake. Currently backcountry travellers enter the park at this location after travelling up the Chukuni River starting from the junction of the Chukuni River and Pine Ridge Road or by travelling west from Valhalla Lake after being dropped off by commercial aircraft. This access zone is the only entry point proposed for the northeast section of the park.

#### ***A7 - Access Zone 7***

Access Zone 7 is a proposed road access entry point. Access would be gained north of Red Lake using the Nungessor, Pine Ridge and McIntosh roads. This proposal would locate an entry point at Lund Lake and would permit direct access to the headwaters of the Bloodvein River via Knox Lake. Currently, use of the McIntosh Road (within the Pipestone Bay- McIntosh Enhanced Management Area) for entry into Woodland Caribou Provincial Park is prohibited pending management planning outcomes. This proposal would greatly improve access to the headwaters of the Bloodvein River.

#### ***A8 - Access Zone 8***

Access Zone 8 is a proposed water access entry point located on the west end of Red Lake at Trout Bay. This access zone would allow entry to the Douglas Lake area after paddling or being shuttled from the community of Red Lake. Due to the limited ability for backcountry travellers to disperse into this area and because of the area's sensitivity, Access Zones 8, 9 and 10 are proposed to work collectively to provide access to the headwaters of the Gammon River system.

#### ***A9 - Access Zone 9***

Access Zone 9 is a proposed water access entry point on Douglas Creek. Currently, this area is used by canoeists to enter the park using the Suffel Lake Forest Access Road and to enter the signature site using the Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve at Johnson Lake. Due to the limited ability for backcountry travellers to disperse into this area and because of the area's sensitivity, Access Zones 8, 9 and 10 are proposed to work collectively to provide access to the headwaters of the Gammon River system.

### ***A10 - Access Zone 10***

Access Zone 10 is a proposed water access entry point located on Hjalmar Lake which is located adjacent to the southern section of the Pipestone Bay – McIntosh, Enhanced Management Area. Currently paddlers access the park at this location after beginning their trip at the Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve near Johnson Lake (Suffel Lake Road) or by using the Iriam Lake Forest Access Road to begin their trip in the vicinity of Onnie Lake. Due to the limited ability for backcountry travellers to disperse into this area and because of the area’s sensitivity, Access Zones 8, 9 and 10 are proposed to work collectively to provide access to the headwaters of the Gammon River system.

### ***A11 - Access Zone 11***

Access Zone 11 is located at Leano Lake and is a proposed road access entry point. Currently, this is the most popular entry point in the park as a result of its proximity to a road network (Iriam Lake Road/Mile 51) and the ability to disperse quickly once in the park. This access zone would permit entry to the southern portion of the park where route options are numerous. Because of the ease of access and dispersion at this zone, the area may be negatively affected by an increased amount of backcountry travel.

The southern periphery of the site has one entry point located on Eagle Lake (Figures 2 and 3 - A12).

### ***A12 - Access Zone 12***

Access Zone 12 is a proposed water access entry point located on Eagle Lake, permitting entry to the southern portion of the park. Eagle Lake is located on the periphery of the park in the Eagle – Snowshoe Conservation Reserve. Currently there are three canoe route options leading to the park from Eagle Lake.

Access into the park interior will consist of two of the five proposed air access zones; one air access zone into the northern interior of the park [proposed Northern Wilderness Zone WI-1 (A13 or A14)] and one in the central interior [proposed Central Wilderness Zone WI-1 (A15 or A16 or A17)]. The air access zones will be selected to enhance circulation and dispersal patterns of backcountry opportunities within the interior. If there is development of recreational opportunities north of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park (Musclow and Keeper River systems), access zoning to support these initiatives may be considered at that time.

### ***A13 & A14 - Access Zones 13 & 14***

Access Zones 13 and 14 are proposed for Sabourin and Thicketwood Lakes, respectively. Development on these waterbodies consists of a main base lodge on Sabourin Lake and an outpost camp on Thicketwood Lake. Both lakes provide several routes to disperse visitors into the northern area of the park. Only one air access zone will be selected in this area (A13 or A14).

### **A15, A16 & A17 - Access Zones 15, 16 & 17**

Access Zones 15, 16 and 17 are proposed for Donald, Hammerhead and Gammon Lakes respectively. Donald Lake has four patent properties (one commercial lodge and three private recreational cabins cottages) and a Land Use Permit (private recreational camp). Gammon Lake has a Crown lease (commercial lodge) and two Land Use Permits (private recreational cottages) Hammerhead Lake has one Land Use Permit (commercial outpost camp). All three lakes offer travel route options originating in the central area of the park. Only one air access zone will be selected in this area (A15 or A16 or A17).

See Appendix D of the questionnaire to respond to the issues related to access zones.

### **Access Zone Issues & Options (Appendix D)**

#### ***Issue #1 – Where should commercial air access occur in the interior of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

Given the geographic location of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and the absence of roads leading to the periphery of the park, it is proposed that air access continue to be permitted but restricted to air access zones. Air access zones within the interior of the park will disperse backcountry travel over a wider area and may assist in reducing user conflicts. An air access zone is being considered for the northern interior (proposed Northern Wilderness Zone WI-1) in either Sabourin Lake or Thicketwood Lake (Bloodvein River system). Another air access zone is being considered for the central interior (proposed Central Wilderness Zone WI-1) in either Donald Lake, Hammerhead Lake or Gammon Lake (Gammon River system).

#### ***Issue #2 – How could existing entry points be used in developing an access strategy for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

Creating effective access to the park is necessary in order to meet recreation and tourism objectives. Providing access that allows users to disperse while protecting natural and cultural values is critical. There are nine areas that have been identified as entry points to the park (A2-A6, A8-A11) and are proposed as access zones. If approved as access zones, these existing entry points would remain as either road or water access. Two additional entry points, Lund Lake (A7) and the Bloodvein River (A1), are being proposed for development as road and air/water access zones respectively.

The Iriam Lake Forest Access Road has been identified for abandonment in the 2004-2024 Draft Forest Management Plan for the Whiskey Jack Forest. Should this management strategy be approved, the Sustainable Forest License (SFL) holder, Abitibi Consolidated, would be relieved of its management responsibilities for this road. At that time, decisions on management responsibilities would have to be made by the Ministry of Natural Resources. This could potentially result in changes to the current use and maintenance of the road, which may range from improving the standard of the road to the removal of all structural liabilities such as

crossings. These management decisions will have to consider, in addition to many other factors, the access strategy of the Woodland Caribou Signature Site.

***Issue #3 – Should private aircraft be permitted to use air access zones in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

The intent of air access zones is to allow visitors to gain access and quickly disperse to other areas of the park to participate in backcountry activities, yet remain compatible with protection objectives. Normally, this is carried out by commercial aircraft dropping off clientele. The Red Lake area is known for its floatplane enthusiasts, both commercial and private. At present, private aircraft use occurs in the park and has focused on remote fishing opportunities in both summer and winter. Consideration is being given to permit private aircraft to land at access zones for access purposes.

***Issue #4 – Should a visitor quota system be implemented in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

Access zones are gateways to a park. They are also important for the implementation of a visitor quota-controlled entry system. A quota-controlled entry system, based on visitor carrying capacity, would allow a limited number of parties to enter an access zone over a specified period of time. Recreation opportunities in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park must be sustainable on the landscape, have minimal user conflict and allow for a remote and challenging experience, all the while providing a high degree of protection for the significant natural and cultural heritage values the park is regulated to safeguard. To accomplish this, it is proposed that recreational opportunities in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park are maintained at a moderately low level of use in comparison to other wilderness parks in the region. This lower level of backcountry use will ensure a cautious approach, enabling monitoring programs to assess recreational impact before visitation quotas are increased.

#### **4.1.5 Issues Common to all Zones**

In contrast to the previous sections, which deal with issues specific to individual zones, this section deals with issues that may be common throughout Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and, consequently, are shared by more than one zone.

#### **Natural Heritage Education**

Structured and unstructured opportunities for exploration and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, including Aboriginal habitation, exploration, the fur trade, and the earth and life science features of the park as well as the Bloodvein Canadian Heritage River will be encouraged.

Ontario Parks has recently entered into an exciting and rewarding partnership with Pikangikum First Nation. Research and interpretation of the Aboriginal cultural heritage within the Pikangikum traditional use area of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park will be undertaken

cooperatively. In 2003 and 2004, archaeological investigations were carried out involving a partnership among Ontario Parks, Pikangikum First Nation, Lakehead University, University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg. This type of research will greatly assist Ontario Parks and Pikangikum First Nation as they work together to ensure this cultural legacy is adequately protected, interpreted and appreciated.

Ontario Parks was a capital funding partner of the Red Lake Heritage Centre and intends to work closely with the Heritage Centre in the development and displaying of interpretive themes for the Woodland Caribou Signature Site. This will allow individuals who are not able to visit the park an opportunity to discover some of its unique characteristics.

## **Mechanized Use and Related Activities in the Existing Park**

### ***Snowmobiles***

Snowmobile use currently occurs in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Until recently, snowmobiles were used only as a means of transportation to hunt, fish and trap in the park. Snowmobiling has become a popular winter recreation activity but these machines can have significant impacts on forest dwelling woodland caribou, either directly (e.g. noise disturbance) or indirectly (e.g. snow compaction and habitat fragmentation.) Snowmobiles by their very nature create packed trails. These trails also allow predators a more energy efficient way of travel, through or throughout the forest (James and Stuart-Smith, 2000; Simpson and Terry, 2000; Creel *et al.*, 2002). Any increase in predator activity as a result of packed trails to, through or throughout critical caribou wintering habitat, would be a detriment to that species (James and Stuart-Smith, 2000; Simpson and Terry, 2000; Wolfe *et al.*, 2000; Mahoney *et al.*, 2001). Some studies, however, have shown opposing results regarding the magnitude of the impact of packed snowmobile trails on other ungulate species (Mahoney *et al.*, 2001; Richens and Lavigne, 1978). Considering the threatened status of forest dwelling woodland caribou, a cautious approach will be taken in order to ensure the protection of the species and to maintain ecological integrity.

Current snowmobile use occurs primarily in three areas of the existing park, although no trails have been authorized. Use in the west/central area of the park is predominantly in the Bulging and Haggart Lake areas. On the eastern side of the park, use is primarily in the Knox, Murdock, Douglas and Hatchet Lake areas.

### ***Bulging/Haggart Lake Areas (existing park)***

Recreational snowmobile use in this area originates primarily from Manitoba. Existing snowmobile trails are found in critical winter habitat of forest dwelling woodland caribou.

### ***Douglas/ Hatchet Lakes Area (existing park)***

Snowmobile use in this area originates primarily from Red Lake. Although some users are non-residents of Canada, the majority of users are local residents. The most common method of accessing this area is from Trout Bay on Red Lake. Although fishing is the primary winter activity on Douglas and Hatchet lakes, a trail leads from this area to the Page/Peterson/Crystal Lakes area which is within the Anchor Lake proposed park addition.

*Knox/ Murdock Lakes Area (existing park)*

Snowmobile use in this area originates primarily from Red Lake. Although some users are non-residents of Canada, the majority of users are local residents. The most common method of accessing this area is through the Pipestone Bay-McIntosh Enhanced Management Area, from Pipestone Bay on Red Lake. Use in this area became established as snowmobiles became more dependable, faster and more comfortable for longer trips. Most of the trails in this area traverse an 18-year-old burned area. This area was being used by caribou as winter habitat before the 1986 fire and it is anticipated that it will provide suitable habitat in the future.

These aforementioned areas occur within proposed wilderness zones. Snowmobiling is not permitted in wilderness zones. Snowmobiling is, however, permitted on authorized trails in park additions and throughout the enhanced management area. Zoning proposals are being made with the understanding that snowmobiling is an important local winter activity and that recreational snowmobiling is generally not restricted in the Red Lake area. As snowmobile trails have been shown to impact on the health of woodland caribou populations, it is proposed that snowmobiling not be permitted in the existing Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Exceptions may be made for commercial lodge outfitters if snowmobiles are necessary for daily operations.

***Private Aircraft***

Private aircraft use currently occurs in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Private aircraft is used primarily for recreational activities such as fishing, both in the summer and winter, as well as to gain access to private property. Private aircraft use in wilderness class parks is permitted in access zones only and to access private property by landowners and immediate family. Zoning proposals are being made with the understanding that private aircraft use is an important local recreational activity and that, in general, private aircraft use in the Red Lake area is currently not restricted. Therefore the public is being asked to comment on whether or not private aircraft should be permitted to use proposed air access zones for access purposes only (see section 4.1.4 Access Zones, p.32).

***Ice Fishing***

Ice fishing takes place within Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and is permitted in all zones. Ice fishing is closely tied to private and commercial aircraft, snowmobiles and ATV use. The activity of ice fishing is not an issue but it will be affected by zoning decisions because mechanized travel is restricted in most zones. Zoning proposals are being made with the understanding that ice fishing is an important local winter activity but, in general, is not restricted in the Red Lake area. Therefore, ice fishing will continue to be permitted in the park. Access to lakes within the existing park will be by non-mechanized means.

Appendix E of the questionnaire to respond to issues which are common to all zones

### **Issues & Options Common to all Zones (Appendix E)**

#### ***Issue #1 – Should all terrain vehicles (ATV) be restricted in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

Unsanctioned ATV use is taking place in some areas of the park. Recreational ATV use happens primarily in the spring when snow conditions permit. Because of the nature of this activity and the higher daytime temperatures during the period of normal ATV use, soil and ground conditions can be damaged. Off-road ATV use can also cause serious river bank damage due to processes such as erosion and compaction, which could result in the loss of fish breeding habitat and reduce natural stocks. ATV noise pollution can stress wildlife and reduces the overall enjoyment of the backcountry experience. (Vancini, F.W., 1989.). It is proposed that recreational ATV use be prohibited in the park since it is not compatible with protection objectives. ATV use associated with commercial outpost camps and lodges takes place primarily at the facility. It is proposed that this type of use be permitted to continue but would be restricted within the tenured boundary of the operation.

#### ***Issue #2 – What should the maximum horsepower be for all watercraft (e.g. motorboats, jet skis, etc) in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

Private use of motorized vehicles is permitted only in access zones in wilderness class parks and are to be removed by sight and sound from other zones, wherever possible. Some motorboat use by commercial tourist operations is permitted outside of access zones but the size of motors will be limited. In order to reduce the impacts from motorized use on the park (e.g. fuel spills, noise pollution, wildlife disturbance), a maximum horsepower for all watercraft is proposed.

#### ***Issue #3 - Should non-native insects and disease be controlled in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

Native insects and diseases are recognized as an integral component of the boreal ecosystem and necessary for the maintenance of ecological integrity in the park. It is proposed that insects and diseases which are not native to the park be controlled when and where necessary, with minimal disruption to the balance of the park environment. When control is undertaken, it will be applied as discreetly as possible and specific to the target insect or disease. Biological controls would be used whenever appropriate.

#### ***Issue #4 - How should fire management objectives be prioritized?***

Fire is an essential ecological process which is fundamental to the health and sustainability of the northwestern boreal ecosystem. Ontario is broken down into Fire Management Zones, each with specific objectives and direction. Woodland Caribou Provincial Park falls within the Parks Zone which has several management objectives (OMNR, 2004):

- protect park visitors and prevent socio-economic disruption.
- enable the ecological role of fire as an agent of disturbance for the maintenance of ecosystems and critical habitat (e.g. forest dwelling woodland caribou).
- promote a “naturalness” objective to approximate a natural forest and wildlife habitat condition.
- minimize loss or damage to provincial park property, infrastructure and structures.
- minimize impacts of prescribed fire management programs on adjacent land users and communities through proper planning and sound decision-making.

The Provincial Fire Strategy states that fires within the Parks Zone (e.g. Woodland Caribou Provincial Park) will generally receive a full suppression response within the capacity of the fire management program. Until such time that a Fire/Vegetation Management Plan is completed, this Interim Fire Response Strategy for the park will apply. During the development of the Fire/Vegetation Management Plan, further opportunities will be provided for public consultation and input. Until such time, it is proposed to prioritize the five fire management objectives listed above, in order to better understand the public’s opinion regarding fire in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park.

***Issue #5 - Should vegetation management be used to approximate natural disturbance patterns in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

Natural disturbances such as fire, insect infestation, disease and windthrow are recognized as important disturbance processes for habitat regeneration and to maintain ecological integrity. These processes leave behind a pattern of disturbance that is a defining element of the boreal forest. Some areas within Woodland Caribou Provincial Park represent unique and significant natural heritage sites that depend on fire to stimulate native plants and keep invading species out. Across large landscapes, forest structure relies on disturbance patterns to maintain the balance of habitat stages on which wildlife depend (e.g. forest dwelling woodland caribou.) Disturbance is inevitable. With research, sound planning and experienced decision-making, natural disturbance can be approximated though never duplicated. Using proactive management (e.g. prescribed burning) natural disturbance approximation can help to maintain habitat balance and reduce the risk of a potentially catastrophic disturbance event. It is proposed to consider natural disturbance approximation as a management tool for the park. Such active management would only be implemented following careful analysis, knowledgeable and cautious planning and with appreciation for protection objectives and wilderness values.

***Issue #6 - What techniques should be used to actively manage fish species in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

In order to maintain ecological integrity and uphold park protection objectives, fish populations and habitat (e.g. spawning grounds) will need to be monitored and, if necessary, actively managed in order to protect native fish species. Management options may involve habitat rehabilitation as well as conditions applied to sport fishing (e.g. barbless hooks, instituting conservation limits, prohibiting live bait and/or lead tackle.) Reasons for such conditions

include, for example, the release of exotic fish species into lakes that could result in the establishment of non-native populations and have devastating impacts on native fish populations within that lake and connected waterbodies. Over-harvesting can stress native fish populations and removal of certain size classes can limit the gene pool for future populations. If native fish stocks in specific lakes become stressed to a point where natural sustainability of the population is in question, re-introduction or replenishing of native fish populations is a proposed option. Stocking would only take place where it is found to be biologically feasible, acceptable and necessary.

***Issue #7 - How should camping be managed in order to protect habitat for boreal species (e.g. forest dwelling woodland caribou)?***

The boreal populations of forest dwelling woodland caribou are listed as nationally “threatened” by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). The designation is given to a native species that is at risk of becoming “endangered” through all or a significant part of its range. Protecting and maintaining a healthy population of forest dwelling woodland caribou is one of the objectives for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Protection of habitat is critical for threatened species survival. Caribou are very solitary during the summer months. Female caribou select isolated islands or peninsulas in spring for calving, as a strategy to avoid predators. Stress from increased predation and human disturbance could result in reduced survival. In order to protect habitat, it is proposed that camping on islands and peninsulas be seasonally managed and that campsites be designated in order to direct and minimize human impact.

***Issue #8 - Should hiking opportunities be developed?***

New opportunities to experience expansive solitude, challenge and personal integration with nature may be found by developing hiking trails for backcountry tourism and recreation users. Established, permanent hiking trails can reduce the overall human footprint on the landscape but will also leave a permanent mark. Hiking trail options may include backcountry, overnight, day hikes or a managed trail system. Trail heads could start from air or road access zones. Trails would only be established where compatible with wilderness values and resource capacities. The question of hiking trail opportunities is proposed in order to better understand the public’s opinion regarding trail development in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park.

***Issue #9 - Should cans and glass bottles be banned in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

In general, most visitors respect the rule to ‘pack out’ material that they ‘pack in’. Unfortunately when the rule is not respected, garbage can quickly become a serious problem. There are alternatives to cans and glass bottles. For example, powdered drink mix in reusable plastic containers can be a more environmentally-friendly, less expensive and lighter substitute to cans and glass bottles. A can and glass bottle ban, outside of tenured land, is proposed for all zones. Such a ban may help to ensure ecological integrity, the protection of wildlife, visitors and wilderness values.

**Issue #10 – *What approach should be taken regarding communication towers in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

Transmission towers for communication purposes exist at some outpost camps and lodges within the park. Past technologies required a tower structure in order to operate in remote areas. However, modern technologies exist (e.g. satellite phones) which do not require the presence of a tower on the landscape. The proposed options are to remove existing communication towers, prohibit or regulate new tower construction.

**Issue #11 – *What research activities should be encouraged?***

Research by qualified individuals which contributes to our knowledge of natural and cultural features, natural and cultural history, recreational features and uses, and the condition of the park environment will be encouraged in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. All research programs will require the approval of the Ontario Parks and must meet all requirements under applicable provincial and federal legislation. Approved research activities, and any associated facilities, will be compatible with park objectives. Sites altered by research activities will be rehabilitated as closely as possible to their previous condition.

**Issue #12 - *How should user conflicts along the Manitoba-Ontario border be resolved?***

The western boundary of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park is also the Manitoba-Ontario provincial border. There are 70 lakes and several rivers that cross the Ontario-Manitoba border. The “Ontario/Manitoba Boundary Waters Agreement” identifies specific lakes for which either Manitoba or Ontario is the lead management agency. The intent of the agreement is to provide for the conservation and orderly use and development of the fisheries resources in identified lakes. Some of these border waters provide Manitoba-based tourist operators direct access to the park for recreation and tourism activities. Alleviating user conflict in order to enhance wilderness experiences and ensure natural and cultural heritage features are protected, is an objective of the park. In lakes where Ontario has the lead management role, proposed options to alleviate user conflict may include regulating horsepower and/or emissions, instituting a no-take-home catch policy, discontinuing the use of lead tackle or regulating the use of live bait.

**Issue #13 - *Should the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) fire fuel cache be relocated?***

Currently, one MNR fire fuel cache exists in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. It is located in the proposed Central Wilderness Zone WI-1. The fuel cache is located in an area with high potential for the development of new canoe routes. Right now canoe route options are low in the proposed Central Wilderness Zone WI-1. A fuel cache is required to effectively and efficiently fight wildfire. A fuel supply, close to the fire, reduces travel time and keeps suppression equipment engaged as opposed to travelling back to Red Lake to refuel, losing time in the field. It is proposed that maintaining the fuel cache as a suppression tactic should continue, however the fuel cache should be relocated to minimize user conflicts and provide for increased backcountry tourism and recreation opportunities within this area. Specific sites that may be considered for a fuel cache have yet to be identified.

***Issue #14 – Should Ontario Parks advocate the development of an Interprovincial Wilderness Area?***

Ontario Parks is proposing the establishment of an Interprovincial Wilderness Area. This area would encompass Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and Atikaki Provincial Park, with the possible addition of other existing parks and protected areas. The two government departments are committed to work together to conserve the ecological integrity of the area while respecting and maintaining their separate jurisdictions. The primary focus of this initiative would be resource management, marketing and management of recreational opportunities.

***Issue #15 – Should new tourism opportunities be considered within Woodland Caribou Provincial Park?***

New tourism opportunities based on the more traditional sport fishing experience are limited within Woodland Caribou Park. Currently the existing tourism facilities occupy almost all of the available lakes that can support this type of activity. Ecotourism is a relatively new type of business with a wide range of activities included in its definition. Few businesses market themselves as ecotourism in this region. New opportunities in this tourism sector may be possible provided they are consistent with provincial park policy and meet park objectives. To date, no detailed proposals have been submitted although several First Nations have expressed their interest in ecotourism. Development of new tourism proposals may take time and therefore will be considered through a Park Management Plan amendment.

## **4.2 Woodland Caribou Provincial Park - Park Additions Only**

Four wilderness park additions have been identified for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. The activities in the proposed park additions are subject to the land use strategy. For certain activities, the policy pertaining to those activities is based on *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies* (1992 update). The land use strategy states that the Douglas/Foley Lake and Sydney/Rowdy Lake proposed park additions will be added to the existing park immediately. The remaining two proposed park additions (Lund/Peisk Lake and Anchor Lake) will be protected on an interim basis and added to the park once replacement wood supplies are secured from other locations.

Existing facility-based tourism will be maintained where consistent with protection objectives. New ecotourism and backcountry recreation and tourism opportunities may be considered, where consistent with protection objectives.

A variety of recreation and tourism activities occur in the proposed park additions throughout the year. In summer and fall, a broad clientele consisting of local, regional, provincial and international recreationalists seek wilderness experiences in these areas. These experiences are related to facility-based tourism and backcountry recreation activities such as fishing, canoeing and backcountry camping. During the fall, hunting is an activity that is enjoyed by resident and non-resident alike. Snowmobiling and ice fishing are also popular winter activities.

Use of snowmobiles and aircraft (private and commercial) to access lakes for ice fishing and hunting in the proposed wilderness park additions occurred prior to 1999. The land use strategy identifies sport fishing and hunting as permitted, with consideration of safety and conservation made during management planning with public involvement. The strategy also states that hunting, although permitted in additions to wilderness class parks, is not permitted in nature reserve zones. Existing authorized trails can continue subject to conditions determined through park management planning and new trails may be considered where consistent with existing park policy.

A primary forest access road crossing between Sydney and Rowdy Lakes will be permitted as determined through forest management planning.

### ***Seasonal Access***

The continuation of sport fishing and hunting in the proposed park additions depends on a suitable access strategy. In order to maintain these existing activities, while protecting natural and cultural features and wilderness values, a new approach is proposed. Park policies restrict private aircraft and snowmobile use to access zones; however the designation of year-round access zones may create user conflicts and compromise wilderness values. Creating seasonal access to specific areas and authorized trails in the proposed park additions are options which would allow hunting, fishing and ice fishing to continue, limit user conflicts, and protect provincially significant natural and cultural values. Seasonal access schedules will be determined through the planning process but will correspond with regulated hunting and ice fishing seasons. The nine proposed seasonal access zones are described below.

## **Descriptions of Proposed Access Zones - Seasonal (As)**

### ***As1 Peisk Lake***

Peisk Lake is located in the proposed Peisk Lake park addition and is adjacent to the Pipestone Bay – McIntosh Enhanced Management Area. The southern portion of Peisk Lake is proposed for seasonal access zoning (aircraft/snowmobile).

### ***As2 Crystal Lake***

Crystal Lake is located in the proposed Anchor Lake park addition. The entire lake is proposed for seasonal access zoning (aircraft/snowmobile).

### ***As3 Connecting Trail***

As3 is located in the proposed Anchor Lake park addition and is an existing snowmobile trail that connects Crystal Lake with Page Lake (snowmobile only).

### ***As4 Page Lake***

Page Lake is located in the proposed Anchor Lake park addition. Both lakes are proposed for seasonal access zoning (aircraft/snowmobile).

### ***As5 Connecting Trail***

As5 is located in the proposed Anchor Lake park addition and is an existing snowmobile trail that connects Page Lake with Peterson Lake (snowmobile only).

### ***As6 Peterson Lake***

Peterson Lake is located in the proposed Anchor Lake park addition. The entire lake is proposed for seasonal access zoning (aircraft/snowmobile).

### ***As7 Anchor Lake***

Anchor Lake is located in the proposed Anchor Lake park addition. The entire lake is proposed for seasonal access zoning (aircraft only).

### ***As8 Sydney Lake***

Sydney Lake is located in the proposed Sydney/Rowdy Lake park addition. The entire lake is proposed for seasonal access zoning (aircraft/snowmobile).

### ***As9 Rowdy Lake***

Rowdy Lake is located in the proposed Sydney/Rowdy Lake park addition. The entire lake is proposed for seasonal access zoning (aircraft/snowmobile).

See Appendix F of the questionnaire to respond to the issues related to the proposed park additions.

## **Proposed Park Additions Issues & Options (Appendix F)**

### **Issue #1 – *How should hunting be accommodated in the proposed park additions?***

#### *Anchor Lake proposed park addition*

The proposed Eagle-Finlayson Nature Reserve (NR6) bisects the proposed Anchor Lake park addition. The area along the eastern edge of NR6 has been identified as a customary hunting area. Although hunting is permitted in wilderness park additions, motorized travel and hunting in nature reserve zones are not. Therefore, an option is being proposed that would reduce the size of NR6. This boundary modification would provide access to customary hunting areas within the proposed park addition. Due to the sensitivity of the provincially significant moraine, the area is designated as nature reserve in Figure 2 – Option 1. If the size of NR6 is reduced, the area in question would then be designated as wilderness zone (Figure 3 – Option 2). If the area is zoned as wilderness, instead of nature reserve, hunting would be permitted and travel on land would be restricted to non-mechanized means.

#### *Peisk and Sydney/Rowdy Lake proposed park additions*

Access zones with seasonal restrictions are also proposed in the Peisk and Sydney/Rowdy Lake park additions. Seasonal restrictions will affirm that protection objectives are not compromised, while still providing for recreation activities.

The recreation and tourism hunting opportunity in these areas normally occurs using aircraft. Therefore, Peisk Lake, Sydney Lake and Rowdy Lake are proposed as air/snowmobile access zones, with seasonal restrictions, for the purpose of hunting.

#### *Douglas/Foley Lake proposed park addition*

Current information has identified the Douglas/Foley Lake proposed park addition is routinely used for moose hunting. Hunters currently access the area by foot. No special access requirements are required at this time. Should the need arise for more focused access management to this area, it would be proposed and reviewed through an amendment to the Park Management Plan.

In all proposed park additions, seasonal access for the purpose of hunting is intended to coincide with the regulated hunting season for specific species. It is proposed that hunting in the proposed park additions may be limited to a specific game species or some combination of licensed game. Therefore, the opening date for seasonal access zones for the purpose of hunting will depend on the type of game species (or combination) selected through the planning process.

***Issue #2 - Should a primitive weapons only hunt be introduced?***

The land use strategy states that hunting is permitted in additions to wilderness parks. In the proposed park additions, hunting with primitive weapons only (archery and/or flintlock or percussion cap muzzleloading guns) may be more compatible with wilderness values, natural and cultural features and protection objectives.

***Issue #3 - How should ice fishing be accommodated in the proposed park additions?***

Use of snowmobiles and private/commercial aircraft for fly-in ice fishing within the proposed park additions are customary activities. Access zones with seasonal restrictions are being proposed for Anchor Lake, Peisk Lake and Sydney/Rowdy Lake proposed park additions between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup> of the same year. This will restrict access to this time period, yet will allow for the continuation of the existing recreation and tourism opportunities in these areas. Overnight fishing structures will not be permitted.

***Issue #4 - Should a new trail system be developed to allow access to interior lakes for ice fishing?***

Concerns were raised regarding the loss of snowmobile access to interior lakes in the existing park for the purposes of ice fishing. Since mechanized travel is permitted only in access zones, an option for continuing ice fishing in interior lakes is to authorize existing trails within the Pipestone Bay-McIntosh Enhanced Management Area and proposed park additions to direct mechanized access (specifically snowmobiles) to the edge of the existing park. From the existing park boundary, a non-mechanized form of travel (e.g. hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing) would be permitted to allow access to interior lakes such as Douglas, Hatchet and Knox Lakes for the purpose of ice fishing. This option would provide a range of backcountry tourism and recreation opportunities where it is consistent with wilderness values and resource capacities.

***Issue #5 - Should options be considered to manage mechanized use in the proposed park additions?***

If proposed access zones with seasonal restrictions are created, options to limit mechanized activities may be considered to protect natural and cultural features, and protect wilderness values. Options may include quotas on the number of people entering the proposed park additions by snowmobile or airplane to hunt or fish.

### 4.3 Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve

The objectives for the Eagle–Snowshoe Conservation Reserve are to:

- protect representative earth and life science features while permitting compatible 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 have a negative impact on the representative earth science and life science features

See Appendix G of the questionnaire to respond to the issues related to the Eagle–Snowshoe Conservation Reserve.

#### **Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve Issues & Options (Appendix G)**

##### ***Issue #1 – What conditions, if any, should be included in fuelwood permits?***

Commercial tourism facilities and private camps require small amounts of fuelwood (e.g. heating of outpost camps). Fuelwood permits can be made available to facilities that lack other means of acquiring fuelwood. Dead standing and fallen trees provide valuable wildlife habitat, contribute nutrients as they decay and provide a medium for regeneration. Furthermore, the removal of trees from the natural landscape, on any scale, may have a negative impact on the wilderness experience for backcountry users. It is proposed that conditions, intended to protect representative earth science and life science features, may be included in a fuelwood permit.

##### ***Issue#2 – How should baitfish harvest blocks be reallocated?***

Right now, all baitfish blocks within Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve are allocated to licensees. Baitfish harvest licences within the Woodland Caribou Provincial Park portion of the signature site are to be phased out by 2010. In the event that a baitfish block becomes vacant within the conservation reserve, the block(s) could be re-allocated through a system that allows those harvesters who were displaced from the provincial park the first opportunity to acquire the block licence.

##### ***Issue#3 – What provisions should be made for new tourism facility development?***

Through the North Kenora Pilot Project Agreement, the area within Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve is designated as a “Green Zone” which permits Crown land camping by Canadian residents but requires non-residents of Canada to stay overnight at private or commercial facilities. The Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve is used by canoeists and kayakers as an entry area to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Backcountry outfitters supply clients with equipment and/or materials to support non-motorized recreational activities. As per the “Green Zone” requirements, non-resident clients of backcountry outfitters must travel directly to the provincial park to camp overnight because they are not permitted to camp on Crown land within the conservation reserve portion of the signature site.

Backcountry outfitters could provide camping opportunities to their guests if they had the opportunity to acquire tenure [e.g. Land Use Permits (LUP)]. As well, they could use this tenure to store their outfitting equipment (e.g. canoes, tents, canoe packs) thereby decreasing operating costs and increasing supply to their clients. This may also enhance access to the conservation reserve and Woodland Caribou Provincial Park.

New Seasonal Land Use Permits (LUPs) could be issued to support hunting opportunities where there are no existing facilities. If additional land use permits were made available in the conservation reserve, these land dispositions could be used to promote existing tourism facilities (such as outpost camps) or to encourage new tourism opportunities.

Land Use Permits may be issued with applicable conditions. Examples of such conditions could include seasonal restrictions for usage (e.g. structure to be removed by a specified date), limitations on size and type of equipment present on the site, and maintenance requirements (e.g. removal of waste from the site). Conditions to protect representative earth science and life science features could also be included.

#### **Issue#4 – *Should there be new trail development for approved activities?***

For the purpose of management documents relating to the Eagle-Snowshoe Conservation Reserve, a trail is considered a cleared path area capable of supporting travel by a vehicle recognized by the *Off Road Motor Vehicles Act* or the *Motorized Snow Vehicles Act* (ATV/motorcycle/snowmobile) or non-mechanized means of travel (e.g. by foot or bicycle.)

There are several trails within the conservation reserve. The original purpose of many of these trails is unknown, but is likely related to trapping activities. These are currently low intensity, multi-use and multi-season trails. The primary activities taking place on these trails include canoe/kayak portaging, hiking, and snowmobiling. Existing trails are permitted to continue. The location and management direction for the construction of new trails is to be determined through resource management planning. Conditions intended to protect representative earth science and life science features may be considered at that time.

#### **4.4 Pipestone Bay – McIntosh Enhanced Management Area**

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

- maintain existing recreational use and consider new tourism opportunities consistent with Woodland Caribou Provincial Park objectives
- protect the ecological integrity 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.

The Pipestone Bay-McIntosh Enhanced Management Area designation is intended to protect values associated with Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and the proposed park additions. This enhanced management area is divided into two areas, both having the category of “remote access” and referenced as either the Pipestone Bay area or the Onnie Lake area. The values that have been identified within or adjacent to the enhanced management area include the Eagle-Finlayson moraine, the overland portage from Pipestone Bay to Lund Lake, tourism values on Onnie Lake, Douglas Lake, and Peisk Lake, the headwaters to the Bloodvein River, and the individual red pine trees on the north shore of Pipestone Bay.

All recreational and commercial activities that were enjoyed prior to this designation will continue to be permitted except access to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park from the McIntosh Road located within the Pipestone Bay portion of the enhanced management area. However, through this planning process, access into Woodland Caribou Provincial Park from the McIntosh road through Lund Lake will be considered as an option.

New roads proposed in forest management plans, or for mineral exploration will be planned in consideration of the natural and cultural features identified in the park and the access zones identified for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Some guidelines are:

- roads to be constructed to the lowest standard possible
- new roads/trails should consider the aesthetics of the identified values
- design and construction of roads should facilitate access controls and closure/rehabilitation where unwanted entry to the park is likely.

The enhanced management area direction regarding access will support the access objectives for Woodland Caribou Provincial Park through strategies suggested above.

All industrial activities proposed within the enhanced management area will consider methods and best practices, which when applied, will ensure the lowest levels of disturbance to the natural environment.

## **4.5 Forest Reserve**

The objectives for the Woodland Caribou Forest Reserve are to:

- ensure that resource extraction activities adhere to “best practices”
- consider natural and cultural features when planning for permitted activities
- consider wilderness character and quality of the environment when planning for permitted activities.

This forest reserve is located in the proposed Douglas/Foley Lake park addition, on the northeast and southeast ends of Douglas Lake. Due to existing mining claims, these areas were not included as part of the proposed park addition. As claims lapse, forest reserves will be regulated into the adjacent zone and zoning can be reconsidered at the 10-year management plan review. Mining activities that occur within these two sites will consider methods and best practices, which when applied, will ensure the lowest levels of disturbance to the natural environment.

## **4.6 Next Steps**

The public, First Nation communities, the advisory committee and stakeholders are encouraged to provide comments on the Issues and Options document during the 45-day comment period, project PB02E6023. Dates are listed on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry at <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envregistry/019159ep.htm>.

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