



# Industry and the PAS

## The Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy

The NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) is a community-based process to establish a network of protected areas in the NWT. It recognizes the need to balance conservation and economic development, while respecting Aboriginal rights, third party rights and land use planning processes.

In the NWT, non-renewable resource development is an important component of the economy. The NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines recognizes that "[economic] progress is linked to a shared vision of sustainable development." The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers has stated that "establishing formal regional processes, forums, and mechanisms will enhance the positive outcome of integrated resource planning discussions." Industry acknowledges there are sound ecological reasons for establishing protected areas, while recognizing that their ability to explore and develop some lands may be affected by the establishment of protected areas.

### Industry's Role in the PAS

Mining and petroleum industry representatives have played key roles in developing and guiding the PAS. They help create and maintain a balanced approach to sustainable development in the NWT by helping to:

- *recognize the need for access to development areas.* The PAS recognizes the need to maintain access to existing third party interests when establishing protected areas.
- *determine resource potential.* Where possible, lands with third party interests and high industrial development potential are avoided.
- *recommend boundaries.* The economic potential of an area is considered as part of the PAS process. Under the eight-step process, a working group is established when a government department or agency sponsors a proposed protected area. Working groups make recommendations on the appropriate level of protection, boundaries and future management of an area. Industry has the opportunity to participate in these groups to discuss their priorities and ensure their interests are considered.

### Industry and Temporary Protection

During the evaluation of a proposed protected area, an "interim land withdrawal" may be requested. This provides interim protection during the assessment and designation phases of the PAS process. Interim protection prohibits the establishment of new subsurface third party interests on a temporary basis. Issuance of some surface interests may also be temporarily prohibited. Interim protection typically lasts for five years, and is generally requested for an entire area of interest. The final boundaries and level of protection are determined after the PAS assessment process is complete.



## Sustaining Multiple Values

A candidate protected area can be expected to have cultural, ecological and economic value; the PAS process looks at all these values to determine the type of protection best suited for an area. Some areas contain values that are suitable for protection as core representative areas that permit no industrial development. In other cases, ecological and cultural values can be protected while allowing compatible land use, which may include industrial development. The assessment process and working group discussions are key considerations in determining the level of protection and management of a protected area. To support informed decision making, industry is encouraged to talk with communities and stakeholders about economic values and best practices for managing impacts.

## Benefits to Industry

Northern communities want a viable and prosperous future that combines economic, social and environmental sustainability. They want conservation and development opportunities to be coordinated and planned in accordance with their values.

- Approved land use plans are a key component of the integrated regulatory system of the NWT. The PAS complements land use planning.
- Permanently protected areas and approved land use plans can increase certainty in the regulatory process.
- Clearly designated protected areas reduce the risk of stranded industrial investments.
- Protected areas may provide opportunities to “offset” unmitigated impacts of industrial development elsewhere.
- Establishing protected areas helps industry implement frameworks related to mining exploration and development.

The PAS provides an opportunity for industry to demonstrate good corporate citizenship and build respectful community relationships.

Communities are concerned about baseline environmental information and the rates of change associated with industrial development. Protected areas may be useful as “benchmarks” that can be compared with industrial sites to observe changes and to determine cause and effect. Establishing benchmark sites may contribute to community understanding of and comfort with industrial development. Establishing benchmarks and monitoring programs is essential for successful adaptive management of both protected areas and industrial development.

The PAS assessment process has generated new information about non-renewable resource potential in the NWT. Industry involvement in the PAS brings valuable information in the areas of best management practices and development scenarios.