



Special Places

NEWS AND VIEWS ON THE NWT PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY

NWT Protected Areas Strategy Approved

Stephen Kakfwi, territorial Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development (RWED) and Robert Nault, federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) announced the approval of the Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) in September.

The PAS sets out a broad framework to guide the work of identifying and establishing protected areas in the Northwest Territories. The Strategy represents a consensus amongst members of the PAS Advisory Committee, which included Aboriginal organizations, industry, environmental groups, and government.

“This Strategy sets out some clear direction on how to protect areas of land and water with special natural and cultural values while providing greater clarity about status, access and development options for industry in these areas,” stated Mr. Kakfwi. “Community consultation played an important part in developing the Protected Areas Strategy and it will be an important element of its implementation.”

“Creating a system of protected areas is one way of ensuring that the biodiversity and cultural significance of the North will continue,” stated Minister Nault. “The NWT Protected Areas Strategy will not only contribute to the conservation of our natural

areas for future generations, but it has the potential to add to the social well-being of the people of the Northwest Territories”.

Implementation of the Strategy will vary from region to region, depending on each region’s unique environmental, cultural and land claims context. Communities, regional organizations, and land claim bodies will take the lead in identifying and recommending specific sites for consideration, with technical and administrative support from a newly mandated PAS Secretariat.

“Here in the Northwest Territories, we need to take steps to ensure that the cultural integrity and unique ecosystems of the North will continue,” stated Ethel Blondin-Andrew, MP for the Western Arctic. “The NWT Protected Areas Strategy acknowledges this need, and will assist Northerners in selecting and managing protected areas.”

In August 1996, during the final phases of the BHP diamond mine approvals, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and DIAND committed to develop a protected areas strategy for the Northwest Territories in partnership with Aboriginal groups, environmental organizations, and other interested parties. Implementation of the Strategy is the next phase of the project and will be ongoing through the year 2000.

PAS Secretariat

“Community consultation played an important part in developing the Protected Areas Strategy and it will be an important element of its implementation.”

– Minister Kakfwi

Gwich'in Land Use Plan

Gwich'in Protected Areas are one of a number of categories of land use identified in the Gwich'in Land Use Plan. In the future, some of these areas may be considered for legislated protection as described in the NWT's Protected Areas Strategy.

The Gwich'in Land Use Plan was approved by the Gwich'in Tribal Council in September, 1999 and has been forwarded to the Government of the Northwest Territories for their consideration and approval. Once approved the Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board will forward the plan will to DIAND for final approval. For further information on Gwich'in Land Use Planning call Deena Clayton at (867) 777-3506.

Protection of the Horn Plateau

The Horn Plateau is one of three priority sites identified by Denendeh Resources for protected area status. It is 10,000 square kilometers and is situated approximately 100 kilometers northeast of Fort Simpson.

The Horn Plateau site is a traditional harvesting area and is thus a spiritually and culturally important gathering place for the Deh Cho Dene. The extensive traditional ecological knowledge of the area reflects the site's rich resources which have always provided the people of the Deh Cho region with food, whether it be fish, woodland caribou or other wildlife. In the legends of Yamoria, the Horn Plateau is noted as an integral part of the way of life of the Deh Cho Dene.

Ecologically, the Horn Plateau site is comprised of five enduring features. These key areas include wetlands, lakes and ponds, creeks and rivers with wide floodplains, flat plains and gently rolling hills. Wildlife is comprised of primarily woodland caribou, beaver, muskrat and moose. As well, migratory birds stop at the Horn Plateau along their flight path and abundant fish populations are found in waters such as Bulmer Lake. Vegetation such as moss, lichen, shrubs, black and white spruce and

larch are distributed over the landscape depending on topography and soil type.

To date the Liidlii Kue First Nation has held several workshops to further the process for establishing protected area status with funding assistance from Indian & Northern Affairs (DIAND), World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping has also combined scientific and traditional ecological knowledge to further the understanding of the Horn Plateau site. To advance the Horn Plateau as a protected area, steps 2 and 3 of the PAS general planning process are now being implemented. The Liidlii Kue report covering the ecological, cultural, and economic values of the Horn Plateau is now being finalized. At the Regional level, during the Deh Cho Leadership Meeting in Hay River Oct 5 - 7, 1999 a resolution was passed in support of the Horn Plateau initiative.

Permanent protection of the Horn Plateau will not only ensure preservation of a significant cultural site but will also capture, or "represent," an entire ecoregion. This site will therefore achieve both goals of the Protected Areas Strategy.

Field Visit to the Horn Plateau

On October 1, 1999 — WWF Canada and the NWT Protected Areas Secretariat hosted an onsite visit and flyover of the Horn Plateau.

Participating in the familiarization tour was Mr. Nick Sibbeston, the newly appointed Senator from the Northwest Territories and resident of Fort Simpson. In one of his first official capacities as a Senator, Mr. Sibbeston demonstrated his support for protection of the environment. "Projects like yours are critical to the survival of many species...including our own. That is why the Government of Canada has so strongly supported Natural Legacy 2000," said Mr. Sibbeston.

"The Horn Plateau is an ecologically significant site, a natural area for woodland caribou and an important cultural and traditional harvesting area," Bill Carpenter, WWF's NWT Co-ordinator, said. "The site was identified by the Deh Cho people at an early stage in the development of the new Protected Areas Strategy. It is also the first site being formally advanced under the Implementation Phase of the PAS. The field visit will give all participants a much better understanding of why this site has been nominated for protection."

Chief Rita Cli of the Liidlii Kue First Nation said, "We are excited and proud to be undertaking work to protect the Horn Plateau, a site that is of significant cultural and environmental value to the people of the Deh Cho."

by Bill Carpenter, NWT Co-ordinator Endangered Spaces Campaign, WWF

Transboundary Activities

The Northwest Territories was invited last June by the Yukon Protected Area Secretariat (YPAS) to a meeting in Dawson City to discuss protected area establishment and opportunities along shared boundaries, particularly in the Dempster Highway area. At this meeting the North East Local Planning Team was established to facilitate implementation of Yukon's Protected Area Strategy. Preliminary voting members include a representative of the: Vuntut Gwitchin, Na'cho N'y'ak Dun, Tetlit Gwich'in, Yukon DIAND, mining industry, conservation interests, tourism, North Yukon, Mayo and Gwich'in Renewable Resource Councils and a YPAS Planner. Non voting members include a representative from the Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board of the NWT and NWT's Protected Area Secretariat.

The goal of the North East Yukon Planning Team is to develop Yukon Goal 1 protected

areas and management plan proposals to represent portions of the Eagle Plains, Richardson Mountains, Peel Plateau and MacPherson Plains ecological areas through the Yukon Protected Area Strategy public process.

It is expected that meetings to advance establishment of protected areas in the North East Yukon region will commence early in 2000 once initiatives associated with Yukon's Fishing Branch protected area are nearing completion.

Similarly, the NWT's Tetlit Gwich'in Land Use Plan is near completion and will provide guidance for the establishment of protected areas in the NWT.

by Eric Yaxley, Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Yellowknife

Landscape Units and Ecoregion Representation

One of the goals of the NWT Protected Areas Strategy is to protect areas representative of the biological diversity within each ecoregion of the NWT. To achieve this goal, a system of protected areas will be based on the diversity of landscape units within ecoregions.

Landscape units are distinct areas within ecoregions described by soil origin, development, texture and topography. They are used to approximate the physical dimensions of habitat, and by extension the diversity of plant and animal species.

The NWT has adopted the National Ecological Framework for Canada (1996) and the 1:1 million Soil Carbon Digital Database (1996), a discrete layer of polygons within the Canadian Soil Information System (CanSIS), as the basis for determining its landscape units. Each soil polygon may contain one or more distinct soil landscape components. The characteristics of these components are described in the database but their location within the polygon is not defined.

Some jurisdictions, e.g. Manitoba and Saskatchewan use only the largest soil landscape component to represent each soil polygon. In many cases this means that the characteristics of a component comprising less than 30% of a polygon may actually describe that polygon. The NWT approach requires

that a component or group of components must comprise at least 65% of a soil polygon in order to represent the polygon. Four (4) soil characteristics - parent material, soil development, texture, and topography (slope and local surface form combined) are used to describe soil polygons as unique landscape units believed to be best-correlated with biological diversity.

Every soil polygon in the NWT has been coded with a landscape unit identity and 1 : 1 million scale landscape unit maps have been created for most of the ecoregions in the NWT. A catalogue of ecoregion/landscape unit maps is being produced and will be available for reference use by end of December 1999.

Ecological assessment procedures, including decision rules for landscape unit representation within ecoregions are being developed. This involves examining the frequency and area coverage of the various landscape units within each ecoregion, the extent to which they are represented by existing protected areas, and the optimal size, location and shape of potential protected areas for obtaining adequate representation.

by Evelyn Gah, Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Yellowknife

Here in the Northwest Territories, we need to take steps to ensure that the cultural integrity and unique ecosystems of the North will continue,"

– Ethel Blondin-Andrew, MP for the Western Arctic

Ecological Resource Assessment Workshop

Between September 27th and October 1st, 1999, DIAND, RWED and WWF Canada co-sponsored a one-day workshop for invited participants on the principles of conservation biology and ecological resource assessment procedures. Concurrently, a mineral resources assessment workshop was held.

The objectives of the ecological resource assessment workshop were to:

1. Inform participants about the concepts of biological diversity, ecological integrity and representation as part of protected areas identification and selection.
2. Provide participants with an understanding of how landscape units are used to identify core protected areas in NWT ecoregions.
3. Provide an overview of the protected areas completed and future work stemming from implementation of the NWT Protected Areas Strategy.
4. Consider how conservation biology fits with traditional knowledge in an overall-planning context.
5. Improve communications among the interests participating in the workshop.

Tony Iacobelli (WWF Canada) and Bas Oosenbrug (RWED) facilitated the workshop. Presentations and discussion included:

- a. An overview of conservation biology, including the concepts of biological diversity, ecological integrity and representation.
- b. Concept decision rules for assessing ecological representation.
- c. Procedures for identifying core representative areas using landscape units.
- d. Conservation suitability analysis, using examples from the commercial boreal forest in Ontario and Slave Geological Province, NWT.

It was recommended that a summary of ecological assessment procedures be produced for communities and others interested in protected areas. A document outlining this process will be drafted and presented at the protected areas workshop scheduled for February 2000.

by Bas Oosenbrug, Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Yellowknife



Pew Grant Supports Protected Areas

Northern conservation efforts got a big boost in September, 1999. World Wildlife Canada (WWF), with the support of the Pew Charitable Trusts, will contribute more than two million dollars towards the establishment of new protected areas in the Yukon and Northwest Territories during the next two years.

Juri Peepre spokesperson for CPAWS -Yukon and the World Wildlife Fund Endangered Spaces Campaign stated "This is welcome and timely news for the conservation of northern wildlife and wilderness. The Yukon, Northwest Territories and federal government, along with First Nations, are moving forward on northern

protected areas and this grant will help us support those efforts. We congratulate the Pew Charitable Trusts for making this generous investment in northern conservation. It demonstrates that the rest of the world sees the value of Canada's wildlands and wildlife and is prepared to support our commitment for its protection."

In the Northwest Territories funds will be distributed to WWF - NWT and to CPAWS - NWT.

by Bill Carpenter, WWF NWT Endangered Spaces Campaign Co-ordinator

Mineral Resource Assessment in the NWT

What is Mineral Resource Assessment?

Mineral resource assessment is a way of estimating the mineral wealth of an area with unexplored mineral potential. The existence, size and value of these deposits must be inferred using indirect surface and subsurface geological data. Mineral resource assessment is based on probability theory and involves consideration of favourable ore deposit models, tonnage and grade relations, and an evaluation of potential costs for infrastructure, development and production.

What has been done?

Workshops on mineral resource assessment were held in Yellowknife between September 27 and October 1, 1999. The workshops brought together government agencies, mineral industry representatives, land use planners and environmental non-government organizations, including the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development (RWED), Geological Survey of Canada, members of provincial geological survey groups, NWT Chamber of Mines, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and the World Wildlife Fund.



The workshops explored a variety of issues, including:

- Why do mineral resource assessments?
- Who has expertise in mineral resource assessment?
- What are the requirements to do mineral resource assessments in terms of personnel and data?

Mineral resource assessment approaches used by other jurisdictions were presented and examined.

Where are we now?

We have begun compiling information on high priority regions which have already been identified as candidate protected areas.

Where are we going?

Our first step will be to develop a methodology for conducting resource assessments in the NWT. This methodology will need to be developed in consultation with the end users - communities and industry.

The second step will be to develop descriptive and statistical ore deposit models. There needs to be one or two dedicated resource assessment specialists who have the necessary skills in geology, mineral economics and statistics.

by Steve Schwarz, DIAND

Creating a system of protected areas is one way of ensuring that the biodiversity and cultural significance of the North will continue,”

– Minister Nault

February PAS Implementation Forum

A Protected Area Implementation workshop is being planned for early in 2000. February 15 and 16 have been set as tentative dates with the location to be decided by January based on the capacity of facilities and overall costs.

The objective of the workshop will be to review recent PAS initiatives, to develop a consensus on the processes that are involved in establishing new protected areas, to identify legislative opportunities and constraints and to discuss the creation of an Implementation Advisory Committee.

If you have other agenda suggestions, or if you have questions that you would like to see discussed at the workshop, please contact the Protected Area Secretariat before the end of January 2000.

To maintain a working relationship with the general public and aboriginal groups the PAS Advisory Committee recommended that a new Protected Area Implementation Advisory Committee be formed to provide guidance on protected area establishment. The Advisory Committee that guided the development of the now approved Protected Area Strategy was highly effective in advancing ecological and heritage protection goals across the NWT. The formation of a Protected Area Implementation Advisory Committee will be open for discussion at the workshop scheduled for early 2000.

by Eric Yaxley, Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Yellowknife

New Protected Area Implementation Coordinator

The Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development (GNWT) is pleased to announce that Heidi Heder will be joining the NWT Protected Area Secretariat as “Protected Area Implementation Coordinator”. Heidi most recently worked with the Gwich’in Land and Water Board as an Integrated Resource Manager and has previous experience working with the Sto:lo

Nation as an Environmental Planner. Heidi received her Masters of Natural Resource Management from the University of Manitoba in 1995. Heidi will work closely with her federal counterpart on the Secretariat, Bert Spek, to coordinate implementation of the recently approved Strategy.

PAS Secretariat



Mills Lake Area

The people of Fort Providence have a spiritual and cultural attachment to Mills Lake and surrounding area. Historically the area has been used for hunting; fishing, trapping and other traditional land uses. In short, Mills Lake and its surrounding pristine environment have become invaluable to the Dene/Metis within the Deh Cho. The Integrated Resource Management Planner for the Fort Providence Resource Management Board (FPRMB), with the financial and administrative support of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), organized a workshop that was held on May 13th & 14th, 1999 to discuss options for protecting the area under the NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS). Representatives from the following agencies attended:

- * The Hamlet of Ft. Providence
- * Deh Gah Got’ie Dene Council
- * Metis Nation Local #57
- * World Wildlife Fund
- * Minerals Directorate, DIAND
- * Environment & Conservation Directorate DIAND
- * Canadian Wildlife Service
- * Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development
- * Fort Providence Resource Management Board

Ducks Unlimited was unable to attend but sent a letter of support to Chief Greg Nyuli.

Delegates from each agency provided discussion papers, which outlined their knowledge of the area, other resource issues to be considered plus scientific/technical and traditional knowledge on the Mills Lake area. WWF described how a Mills Lake protected area would meet both goals of the PAS and

would contribute towards the representation of the Hay River Lowlands by being a segment of that ecoregion. The Canadian Wildlife Service pointed out that in 1975, Mills Lake was a proposed International Biological Program site as wetland habitat of significance for seasonal waterfowl staging in the region. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) made a presentation highlighting the flora present around Mills Lake and how protecting the area surrounding the lake would contribute to preserving the biodiversity. Reference was also made to the low forestry potential, and the historical range of wood bison within the proposed area. Community representatives pointed out that Mills Lake, or Tua in Slavey, is currently occupied by several Dene families who wish to see their heritage preserved and not be disrupted by development.

The majority of the representatives present at the meeting were in favour of a Protected Area designation for Mills Lake. The delegates from Fort Providence voted to have the FPRMB, with support from WWF, prepare a paper to seek approval from the Fort Providence Tri Council Alliance to continue working towards protection for the Mills Lake area. Over the summer and fall an “options” paper was completed and is intended to seek formal support of the Fort Providence Tri Council Alliance for the advancement of the Mills Lake area as a protected area. With the PAS now approved by both the federal and territorial governments it is expected that the Tri Council Alliance will deal with this agenda item at their next meeting.

by Bill Carpenter, WWF NWT Endangered Spaces Campaign Co-ordinator

Sahoyue/Edahcho (Grizzly Bear Mountain/Scented Grass Hills)

The Grizzly Bear Mountain/Scented Grass Hills National Historic Site was officially commemorated in Deline on August 14, 1999. This is the largest National Historic Site in Canada encompassing roughly 5,900 square kilometres of Crown Land, plus a small area where the Sahtu Dene and Metis hold title to the surface estate.

Sahoyue and Edahcho are two peninsulas of Great Bear Lake that are identified in many myths and legends central to Sahtu Dene culture. Designation as a National Historic Site gives prominence to the importance of these areas for cultural and natural history reasons. As well, Sahoyue/Edahcho falls within the Great Bear Plain Ecoregion.

Although the Sahoyue/Edahcho area is now a declared National Historic Site additional work is underway to develop a Commemorative Integrity Statement (CIS) and Conservation and Presentation Plan (CPP) for the area. Parks Canada requires these two documents for all national historic sites. Parks Canada staff held a four day workshop in Deline in October to explain the purpose the CIS and the CPP to representatives of the Deline Dene Band Council, elders, federal

and territorial government staff, including the Minister of Resources, Wildlife & Economic Development, Stephen Kakfwi. Also participating were representatives of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Canadian Parks & Wilderness Association (CPAWS).

During the workshop, Raymond Taniton, Sahoyue/Edahcho Project Co-ordinator, outlined the community's interest in proceeding with advancement of the site within the steps identified in the NWT PAS. There is now widespread support within the community of Deline to seek surface & subsurface protection for the site as a National Historic Park. At the same time, the staff of Parks Canada is continuing to work with the community on the development of the CIS for the historic site. The community will also complete the CPP as the Minister of Canadian Heritage has stated that she will make no decision on whether or not to establish a National Historic Park at Edahcho/Sahoyue until a CPP has been completed for the site.

*by Bert Spek, Environment and Conservation
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern
Development*

Review of Territorial Conservation Mechanisms

A study is being undertaken by TerriPlan Consultants Ltd. to review and recommend on existing and potential federal and territorial conservation legislative mechanisms that may be needed to advance implementation of the PAS. This was one of the recommendations made by in the PAS to ensure that legislation matches community protection objectives.

Key Research Questions that will Guide the Study Include:

1. What are the existing legislative and regulatory instruments available to achieve the two goals of the PAS?
2. What are the restrictions or limitations to the use of these instruments on: crown land, private land (both within settled claim regions and in regions where claims are still to be settled)?

3. What are the various levels of protection available through existing instruments and how do these match the seven IUCN categories of protection?

Presentation of the study results will take place at the first public PAS Forum scheduled for February 2000. It is expected that feedback from this and further regional and community consultation will lead to a definitive outline of existing legislation that may be suitable as PAS implementation tools. Recommendations will also be made to federal and territorial governments in respect to the need to modify and/or develop new legislation that may fill in any gaps and/or expedite the establishment of protected areas in the future.

*by Eric Yaxley, Department of Resources,
Wildlife and Economic Development,
Yellowknife*

“We are excited and proud to be undertaking work to protect the Horn Plateau, a site that is of significant cultural and environmental value to the people of the Deh Cho.”

**– Chief
Rita Cli
of the
Liidlii Kue
First Nation**

Wild Spaces, Heritage Places - Summary Brochure

A summary brochure of the NWT Protected Area Strategy has been completed and was distributed as an insert in NewsNorth on Monday, November 22, 1999 to northern residents. The following excerpt has been provided for information.

VISION AND GOALS

The lands and waters sustain all life and are the primary source of spiritual inspiration, education, legends, history and economic well being. For many northerners the land is an integral part of who we are and how we define ourselves. This deep-rooted connection to the land is reflected in words heard often across the north, "The land takes care of us, we take care of the land."

PAS goals are:

- * To protect special natural and cultural areas in the Northwest Territories.
- * To protect core representative areas within each ecoregion of the Northwest Territories.

PRECEDENCE OF LAND CLAIMS AGREEMENTS

The Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Territories (NWT) have always had strong ties to the land. Their rights concerning the resources of the land, and their responsibilities for managing those resources, are being constitutionally recognized through the settlement of land claims, the clarification of treaty rights, and the creation of regionally based resource management bodies. Such agreements affirm the leadership role of local people in land and water management, giving them more control over protecting the land as well as maintaining resource development options for the future. The PAS conforms to all land claims agreements (see main document). In the event of any unforeseen conflicts between this Strategy and such agreements, the latter takes precedence over the Strategy.

PROTECTED AREA IMPLEMENTATION

Communities, Aboriginal governments, regional organizations and/or land claim bodies and the northern public will be the catalyst for implementation of protection goals

for lands, waters and air critical to the health of their economies and cultures in the Northwest Territories. The NWT PA Strategy is a tool that is now ready to be used for implementation.

Resource-based industries and tourism interests will obtain greater clarity about land status, land use access and development options as identified in the Strategy and as implementation proceeds. These interests will continue to be invited participate as implementation proceeds.

Environmental interests are now more confident that progress towards national and international commitments to protecting representative examples of the NWT's natural regions can be made as a result of Strategy approval.

And, finally present and future generations of northerners will benefit from the ecological, cultural and economic values protected today.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PROTECTED AREAS

The job of planning protected areas lies primarily with communities, regional organizations and/or land claim bodies. At all stages, stakeholders, appropriate government institutions and the RWED/DIAND coordinated PAS Secretariat, will provide assistance in planning protected areas. There are eight steps a community organization can use to obtain protected status for a selected area.

1. Identify priority areas of interest.
2. Prepare and review protected area proposal at regional level.
3. Review and submit proposal for candidate protected area status.
4. Consider/apply interim protection for candidate area.
5. Evaluate candidate area.
6. Seek formal establishment of protected area.
7. Approve and designate protected area.
8. Implement, monitor and review protected area.

For copies of Wild Spaces, Heritage Places and other documents contact the NWT's Protected Areas Secretariat.

Protected Areas
Secretariat

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