



# Special Places

News and Views on the NWT Protected Areas Strategy

## **The NWT Protected Areas Strategy**

The Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada have committed to develop a Protected Areas Strategy for the Northwest Territories by the end of 1998, with significant on-site implementation by the year 2000. The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a framework for the overall development and management of a system of protected areas.

The participation of the aboriginal community is essential to this process as the work conducted by the project team will usually be through claim based land use planning boards and other related boards. Input from industry, environmental groups and other interested parties is also valued.

Consistent with other provinces and countries, the Strategy will use the International Union for the Conservation of Nature definition of a protected area;

*“an area of land or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, managed through legal or other means.”*

The Strategy will provide an outline of how to advance potential protected areas in the NWT. As such, it must address land claims, current legislation, scientific approaches, administrative partnerships, and alternate land uses. Through the development of the Strategy it may become clear that new legal, planning, and funding tools are needed.

The Strategy will include current examples of how candidate sites are advanced. The range of candidate projects should demonstrate various situations, such as; working within established land claims, in areas without settled claims, projects that span two claims or two territories, projects with a cultural focus, or projects with a marine focus.

***Our land is our soul.  
From the land we have  
gained all of our knowledge,  
our wisdom, our spirit, our  
past, our life. We see only  
beauty,  
peace and a way of being  
when we are on the land.  
We call our land  
“Nunatsiaq”  
-- the beautiful land.  
We change as our land  
changes.***

***Shorty Kittikee  
Lake Harbour***



Preservation of wild areas is increasingly important and I urge the involvement of everyone in this task: setting aside rivalries and pooling efforts among agencies, directing energy and time to the practical task of getting new areas established as quickly as possible.

Stan Rowe  
Ecologist

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***The caribou are everything, the centre of our whole livelihood. All of our food, our culture, our dances, our spiritual connections are with the caribou. Indigenous people around the world have a sacred animal. Well, the caribou, that's ours.***

***Norma Kassi  
Gwich'in Nation***

### Gwich'in Protected Areas Underway

The Gwich'in Interim Land Use Planning Board (GILUPB) has issued a report identifying 17 candidate protected areas in the Gwich'in Settlement Region for consideration.

Gwich'in communities chose these areas based upon their importance as wildlife habitat, traditional use areas, or cultural sites. A further 29 sites are proposed for some form of regulatory control. Some of these are in the Yukon.

The GILUPB and the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board are hosting a workshop, November 24-26, to further develop the process and criteria for the selection of protected areas.

*by Mike Morris, Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development*



## Grassroots Protected Areas Strategy Sprouting in Fort Resolution

On the thickly wooded southern shore of Great Slave Lake, the people of Fort Resolution are helping to map the future of their traditional lands. The community's Environmental Working Committee, under the coordination of Maurice Boucher, is organizing a series of community visioning workshops and door-to-door surveys to identify the best ways to manage land and resources used by local people. "Everybody should have a say in what goes on in our traditional land use area", says Boucher in a letter sent to all households in town. "Here is an opportunity to have your input."

One of the goals of this important work will be to develop a community-based protected areas strategy to research and identify areas that may need special protection. How do residents of Fort Resolution define what is meant by the term protected area? What kind of natural and cultural sites do they feel should be included in a protected areas system? What principles should guide the planning and management of protected areas? What criteria would they use to select and evaluate

proposed sites? These are just some of the kinds of questions that the community will be discussing over the next few months as their protected areas strategy unfolds.

***Everybody should  
have a say in what  
goes on in our  
traditional land  
use area.***

With the help of two community fieldworkers, a team of planning consultants, and a powerful in-house GIS mapping system, Boucher will help create what he calls a "road map" on how we should proceed on developing our own protected areas strategy.

For more information on the Fort Resolution project, please contact Maurice Boucher at the Deninu Kue office, (867) 394-4336.

*by Jamie Bastedo, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development*

## PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY SUGGESTED PRINCIPLES

### Plans for a network of protected areas will:

- ◆ Concentrate on reserving a representative sample of northern lands and waters which can conserve the processes needed to maintain healthy ecosystems.
- ◆ Consider other areas with outstanding natural and cultural features important for conservation, tourism, recreation, heritage, research and education.
- ◆ Recognize existing treaties, land claim agreements, traditional aboriginal uses and third party interests.
- ◆ Build upon previous agreements such as the Whitehorse Mining Initiative and the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy.
- ◆ Use existing legislation where appropriate and new legislation where necessary.

### The selection of candidate sites will:

- ◆ Begin with or be supported by proposals from community and regional organizations.
- ◆ Blend traditional and local knowledge of ecosystems, with scientific perspectives.
- ◆ Include economic and social values.
- ◆ Consider the circumpolar context, as well as the land use plans and policies of adjacent regions, provinces and territories.
- ◆ Provide temporary protection to areas in the latter stages of consideration.

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### The Yellowstone to Yukon Conference -- Bringing the Message Home

Last October, over 300 people met in Alberta's beautiful Waterton National Park to discuss the future of protected areas along the mountainous western spine of North America. The focus of this unique conference was the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative or "Y2Y" for short. Many people from both the Yukon and NWT attended this conference including Gwich'in and Deh Cho representatives plus northern members of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) and Ecology North. Many of us were quite excited by this initiative and felt that the grassroots network it created could have promising applications closer to home for the NWT Protected Areas Strategy.

The area covered by the Y2Y initiative is vast: over 1.2 million square kilometers. It reaches all the way from the mountainous regions around Yellowstone National Park in the western USA to the Mackenzie Mountains in the NWT and Yukon. Stretching in between are the Rocky Mountains of Alberta and British Columbia. This area spans many jurisdictional boundaries and embraces many kinds of land uses, legal settings and resource management issues. In spite of its regional differences, this area does share many wildlife species and similar geology. And the most important thing these mountains have in common is wilderness. The Y2Y region contains much of the best remaining habitat for many species that are disappearing elsewhere, particularly grizzly bears and wolves.

These kind of mammals travel over very large areas. We are discovering that the areas now protected are not large enough to sustain populations of such large

animals. As development proceeds around them, many protected areas are gradually becoming islands, cut off from other wilderness areas.

These animals, more and more isolated in parks, are unable to escape disease, food shortages, inbreeding, and environmental changes. The numbers of these species are dropping, and in some cases they are disappearing completely from these "protected islands".

Y2Y is a cross-jurisdictional effort to maintain, and even restore, the biological diversity along this mountain spine. It is a network of environmental groups, biologists, economists, and many others. All members bring their own expertise and knowledge to the Y2Y network, working collectively to help conserve the areas. They share the vision of "doing together what we cannot do alone."

One of the most important dreams shared by people from across the Y2Y region is to create a system of interwoven protected areas. To ensure long term protection, this system will require three main components: core protected areas, connecting corridors and buffer zones. **Core protected areas** are key components of any conservation plan. To provide necessary habitat to all wildlife species, they must be the right size, shape, and distance from other habitats (to name only a few of the many requirements).

**Connecting corridors** join core areas to allow animals to roam

safely back and forth. **Buffer zones** are needed around both core areas and connecting corridors. Through innovative management techniques, these zones reduce the negative effects of neighbouring human activities on wildlife, habitats, and ecosystems. The Y2Y vision is that all of these kinds of areas should be planned and managed in close consultation with affected land users.

The key to success for the Y2Y vision is **partnerships**. Jurisdictions must work together. Cooperative studies of ecosystems must continue across boundaries. The Y2Y network must remain strong. Local and regional efforts need to be connected. In reaching its vision this network will rely on the strengths of its various members, from biologists and economists to teenage students and native elders.

We were inspired by the fellowship, the art, and the science at the Y2Y conference. The strong, supportive network that crosses boundaries, shares information, collaborates on research, and pools skills may point the way to how we in the NWT can successfully work together to create a system of protected areas that future generations will thank us for.

*This article was submitted by Karen Hamre on behalf of the NWT chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, CPAWS. Karen is a Yellowknife landscape architect and President of Avens Associates Ltd.*





### **New Protected Areas in northern British Columbia**

As part of an overall provincial Protected Areas Strategy, British Columbia recently announced the results of a major land use planning process for its northeast corner.

The province has accepted a multi stakeholder report which recommends increasing protected areas to 11,700 square kilometers (or 12 percent of the region) with a special management buffer zone of 32,400 square kilometers, (or 28 percent of the region). This area, called the Muskwa-Kechika, will have its own unique management objectives and legislated boundaries. The single largest new protected area is in the northern Rocky Mountains at 6,450 square kilometers.

BC successfully addressed all stakeholders' interests by the creation of five categories of Resource Management Zones. These allowed for overlapping interests, such as wildlife movements, to be planned for in areas outside of protected area zones.

Industry stakeholders were fully involved with the creation of Muskwa-Kechika. Their contributions included a large exploration lease donated by Amoco and the establishment of an industry trust fund by Petro-Canada and Westcoast Energy Inc. The fund is meant to support planning initiatives and special projects such

as enhancing wildlife populations, ecology research, cultural inventories, etc.

Aboriginal involvement was key to achieving a full understanding of all the resources and areas of significance. The Kaska Dena, who are in the middle of treaty negotiations, participated through a letter of understanding with the BC government. This allowed them to share their knowledge and have areas of importance to them protected, without undermining their treaty process.

*by Mike Morris, Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development*

### **Natural Regions Brochure**

The Government of the Northwest Territories is producing two booklets, one for Nunavut and one for the West, on our natural regions. Each booklet will describe the plants, animals and landscapes that make up the 6 ecozones found in Nunavut and 7 ecozones in the Western Territory. Maps, photos and a description of different kinds of existing protected areas will also be included. These booklets will be available November 21. The Nunavut edition will be available in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun and English.

The development of a Protected Areas Strategy requires consideration of local, regional, territorial, national and, sometimes, international conservation goals. While much of this work must be done at the community level, government can play a key role in providing information and coordinating planning across regional and provincial boundaries. Government is also involved because the establishment of parks or wildlife areas is done through legislation.

Staff working on this project are available to meet with you to discuss means to assist your community in accomplishing the establishment of protected areas in your region.

**The Honourable Stephen Kakfwi  
Minister  
Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development**



### The Science Behind a Territorial Network of Protected Lands

#### Part I. The Concept of Representation

The scientific method of identifying where protected lands are needed is based on the strong bond between wildlife species and their habitat, which together sustain the cultural fabric of the Northwest Territories. The variety of wildlife and plant species, which scientists call **biological diversity**, (or biodiversity for short) share one common element: dependence on natural habitat for survival. By protecting representative wildlife habitats that make up the natural environment, the requirements of many species will be met.

This is not as simple as it sounds, for the Northwest Territories is a huge and varied land. Although a biodiversity approach is not the only way to choose lands for protection, it does provide a reliable and consistent way to identify natural habitats that need to be included in a territorial network of protected lands.

The entire north has been mapped and classified into natural units based on changes in climate, landforms and vegetation. This kind of framework, called ecological land classification (ELC), is used widely across Canada. Using this approach, the NWT has been divided into 67 broad natural areas called **ecoregions**. Each ecoregion is in turn made up of a patchwork of smaller areas called **ecodistricts** defined by different combinations of surface, soil, and terrain

features called **landscape units**.

Local variation in landform and climate produces a mosaic of landscape units, each with their characteristic plants and animals. Unlike plants and animals however, landscape units are more stable over very long periods of time. Representing landscape units in a system of protected lands therefore serves as a useful way to protect the biological diversity of ecoregions.

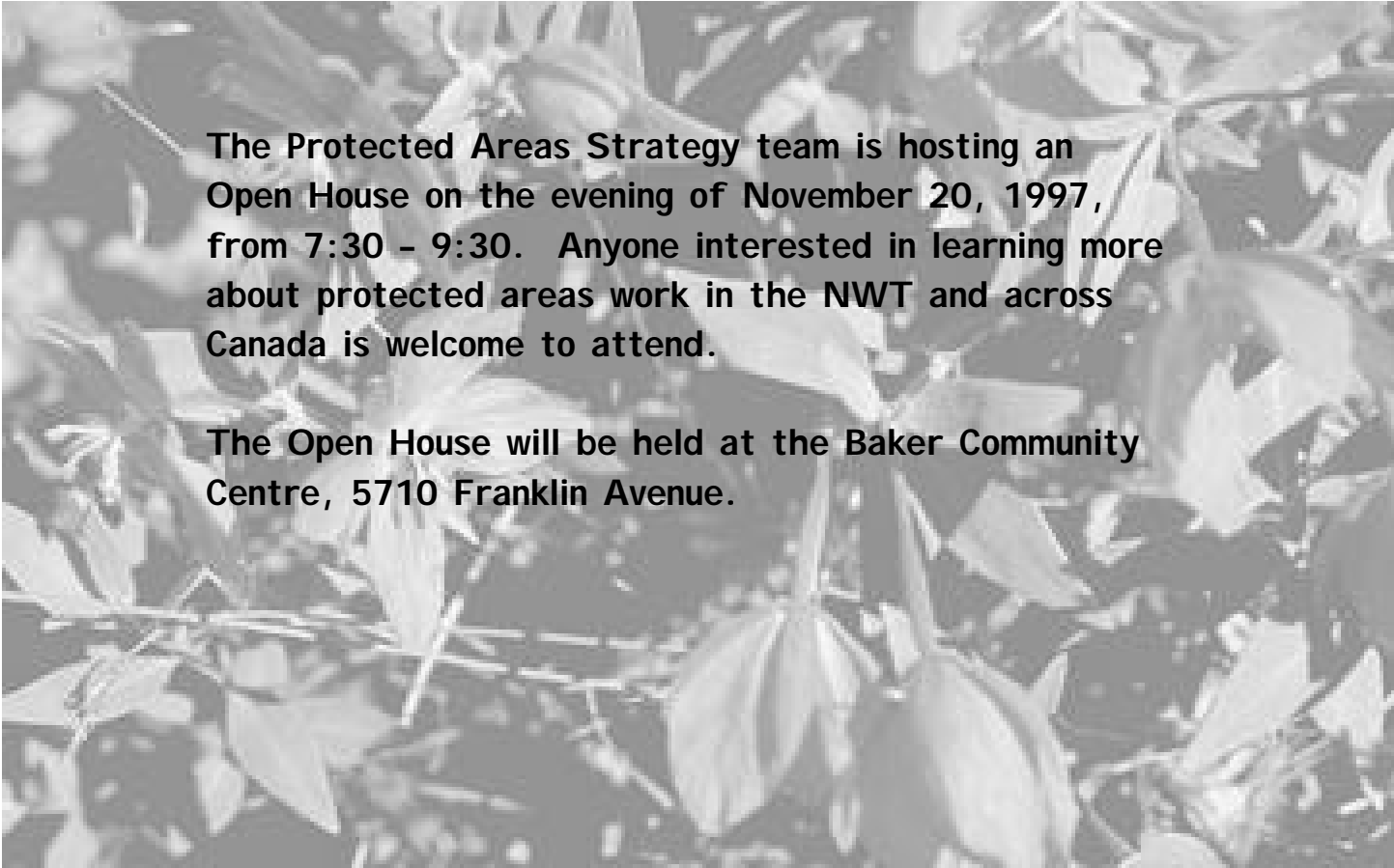
Many of Canada's ecoregions already include some parks and reserves that represent landscape units well enough for long-term protection of biodiversity. But in the north, many gaps still exist. These gaps can be identified by overlying maps of valued landscape units with existing protected areas. This process can tell us how well northern habitats within particular ecoregions are currently protected. Factors such as the size, shape, frequency and distribution of landscape units should all be considered when doing this study of representation. Protected lands proposed by communities or other sources can go hand in hand with such studies to give a full picture of a region's top conservation needs.

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

## WEB TRAILS

Those of you hooked up to the Internet will be pleased to know there are over one hundred web sites available that provide opportunities for learning more about the planning and management of protected areas from all over the world. We will highlight some of the key sites most relevant to Canada in each volume of Special Places. Please contact us to let us know of additional web sites that may be useful to northern protected areas and we will include them in our list for future volumes.

| <u>Web Site</u>  | <u>Source</u>                                 | <u>Contents</u>  |
|--|---|--|
| 1. <a href="http://parkscanada.pch.gc.ca/">http://parkscanada.pch.gc.ca/</a>   | Parks Canada                                  | Parks home page with links to each park and its "Library" with on-line policies, system plans, etc.  |
| 2. <a href="http://www.lib.uconn.edu/articircle/seducation">http://www.lib.uconn.edu/articircle/seducation</a><br>GIS, photos and                      | Arctic Circle                                 | Circumpolar information and resources with maps, many aboriginal links.  |
| 3. <a href="http://www.cyberspc.mb.ca/-fullmoon/AboriginalResourcesaborig.html">http://www.cyberspc.mb.ca/-fullmoon/AboriginalResourcesaborig.html</a> | Aboriginal Resources                          | A huge list of helpful links to Canadian and global aboriginal sources - education, traditional knowledge, tourism, maps, etc.                             |
| 4. <a href="http://web.idirect.com/-wildland/index.html">http://web.idirect.com/-wildland/index.html</a>   | Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) | News and activities of environmental non-government organization promoting wilderness protection. Good Links.  |
| 5. <a href="http://www.doe.ca/ecs/biodiv/biodiv.html">http://www.doe.ca/ecs/biodiv/biodiv.html</a>   | Canadian Biodiversity Network                 | Educational material and case studies related to biodiversity issues.  |
| 6. <a href="http://www1.ec.gc.ca/-ecozones">http://www1.ec.gc.ca/-ecozones</a>   | Canada's National Ecological Frame-           | Text and map descriptions of all of Canada's Terrestrial Ecozones and Ecoregions. Also links to Canada's State of Environment reports on a regional basis. |
| 7. <a href="http://www.wwfcanada.org/">http://www.wwfcanada.org/</a>   | World Wildlife Fund                           | Information on threatened wildlife species and national conservation initiatives.  |
| 8. <a href="http://sts.gsc.nrcan.gc.ca">http://sts.gsc.nrcan.gc.ca</a>   | Geological Survey of Canada                   | Looks at interesting landscapes and land-forms across northern Canada.   |



**The Protected Areas Strategy team is hosting an Open House on the evening of November 20, 1997, from 7:30 - 9:30. Anyone interested in learning more about protected areas work in the NWT and across Canada is welcome to attend.**

**The Open House will be held at the Baker Community Centre, 5710 Franklin Avenue.**

The purpose of Special Places is to provide the public with up-to-date information on the NWT Protected Areas Strategy and to help build partnerships among those working on protected areas across the North.

We would like to hear from you! Please let us know what you think of the NWT Protected Areas Strategy. Letters to the editor, suggestions for improving the newsletter, new web sites, or topics for future articles would be appreciated. For more information on any of the articles included in this volume of Special Places, or for copies of the Natural Regions Brochure, please contact us at the address below.

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