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Tsiigehtshik Gwit'lit: Arctic Red River Headwaters

By Karen LeGresley-Hamre, CPAWS-NWT Board Member

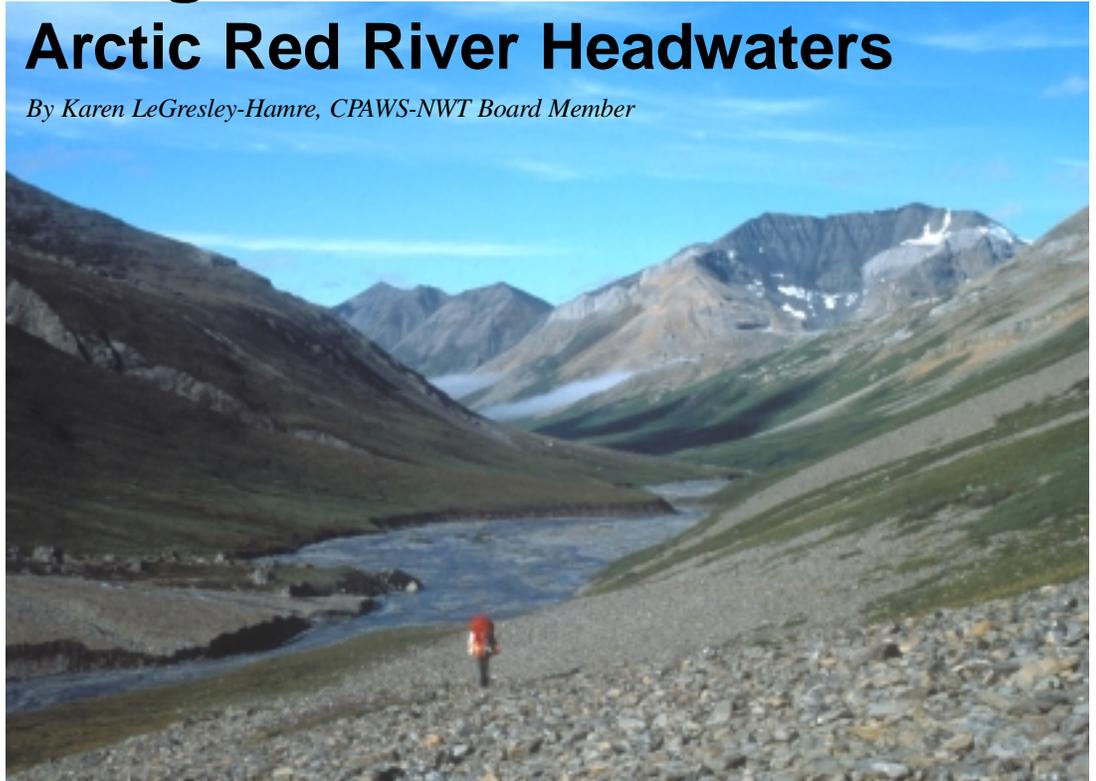


Photo by Michael Morris

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The Arctic Red River's Canadian Heritage River designation (1993) does not provide any protection for the river. However, the entire Arctic Red River watershed lies within the Gwich'in Settlement Area and some protection for the river is provided through the Gwich'in Land Use Plan which designates various portions of the river as *Special Management Zones*, *Heritage Conservation Zones*, or *Conservation Zones*. Further reference is available at www.gwichingplanning.nt.ca.

In recognition of the importance of protecting water quality, a portion of the Arctic Red River headwaters are designated a *Special Management Zone* called "Tsiigehtshik Gwit'lit".

The Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board has just finished two studies on the Arctic Red River headwaters to help better define the values of the area, and determine what additional protection might be needed. One report was on the cultural resources, and the other on ecological resources. CPAWS-NWT helped fund the ecological study.

Ecological Findings

Some of the key findings from the ecological report, done by Dave Jones of Whitehorse, are:

- The headwaters are undisturbed by industrial activities and constitute a rare, pristine aquatic ecosystem in Canada.

- The headwaters are representative of the *Mackenzie Mountain* and *Peel Plateau Ecoregions*.
- The headwaters represent a landscape on a continuum from recent glacial activity to mature mixed boreal forest.
- The lower part of headwaters is a known spawning habitat for inconnu. Inconnu require gravel beds with adequate volume of cold, clean and clear water for spawning. This is a very specific habitat requirement and somewhat unique in the NWT.
- The area is home to alpine, riparian, wetland, forest, and shrub habitat. Many species in these habitats have a low tolerance for human disturbance.
- The area provides excellent habitat for Dall's sheep, which are near the northern limit of their range.
- The area provides habitat to mountain woodland caribou, from at least two different herds.
- The moose, caribou, Dall's sheep and grizzly bear, wolf, wolverine in the headwaters provide for a relatively undisturbed predator-prey ecosystem.

While these findings are important, there are major research gaps in the area, including:

- There are no recent scientific studies on any of the mammal populations within the study area. Little is known of critical habitat areas or specific behavioural patterns.
- No breeding bird survey has been conducted in the study area.
- No detailed vegetation survey has been completed, nor has a basic habitat mapping exercise been attempted.
- Seven species of plants that may be in the study area have been rated as *May be at Risk* or *Sensitive*. It is not known to what extent, or if these species are in the study area.

Cultural Findings

The Cultural Report, completed by Alestine Andre of the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI), also notes that there is very little information on the headwaters of the Arctic Red River. The report states, "there are many indications in the stories that this area was indeed used extensively by various groups in the past. In interviews for the oral history and ethno-archaeology projects carried out by GSCI between 1993-95, many Gwichya Gwich'in elders have mentioned families moving to the mountains through two trails at the

Forks. The trails are at the confluence of the Arctic Red River and the Cranswick River. Elders have also talked about the Arctic Red River area being important for sheep and caribou hunting. Elders have talked about a gathering place where Gwichya Gwich'in and people from Fort Good Hope would meet and celebrate."

Neighbours

This area of the Gwich'in Settlement Area is a relatively narrow 'finger' that extends south between the Yukon and the Sahtu. What happens with the neighbours will be important to the fate of the Arctic Red River. In 1997, the Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board conducted a survey of the Source Peaks area with representatives of the NWT and Yukon territorial governments. This was done in conjunction with the then active Yukon Protected Areas Strategy's interest in potential protection of the 'Source Peaks'. The Source Peaks includes the headwaters of the Snake, Wind and Bonnet Plume Rivers on the Yukon side. The Yukon Protected Area Strategy has since been deactivated, and the interest from the Government of NWT in this area has also abated.

The Sahtu are conducting research about mountain caribou in the area. The Sahtu are also in discussions about their Land Use Plan.

What's Next?

The Gwich'in Land Use Plan states, "The Headwaters of the Arctic Red River may also be an area where a legislative protected area is appropriate. However, at the present time [the Plan was passed in 2003] there is not enough scientific or traditional knowledge available to evaluate this area. More information needs to be collected during the life of the Gwich'in Land Use Plan." The Plan needs to be updated every five years.

At this point, pressures on Tsiigehtshik Gwit'lit are minimal compared to areas such as Campbell Hills and Travaillant Lake. The Board is therefore concentrating more of their efforts in the high development areas of the Gwich'in Settlement Area. However, they do hope that these studies will enable partnerships to develop to further study and evaluate the importance of this area.

CPAWS-NWT looks forward to the possibility of helping the Gwich'in learn more about this very special place, and how to retain those values for the long term.

In Memory of
Catherine Jane Stephenson
26 October 1955 – 14 March 2005



The natural world lost a loyal friend when Cathy Stephenson died unexpectedly of pneumonia this winter.

Cathy was a lover of Nature. She was happiest when out for a paddle, or a walk in the woods, or just a drive along the road to see what ducks had returned to the first open ponds in the spring.

Cathy's childhood summers, spent in Algonquin Park in Ontario, had encouraged her connection with Nature, and given her the opportunity to develop into a biologist/naturalist. After finishing a Biology degree at McMaster University, she moved gradually farther north: first to work in several provincial parks in Northern Ontario, then to Wood Buffalo National Park in Fort Smith in 1980, then to Yellowknife a couple of years later. She enjoyed her work in the North with Parks Canada, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and Government of the NWT Renewable Resources.

Cathy was stricken with an undiagnosed neuro-muscular deterioration, which forced her into permanent disability leave from work in 1995. Although her ability to participate in active outdoor pursuits became limited, her love and appreciation of Nature and wilderness did not diminish. She contributed faithfully to numerous environmental and nature conservation organizations, and continued to spend as much time as she could outdoors. When she sat outside at her parents' backwoods home with a book, she usually wasn't really reading, but rather she was watching the birds and admiring the flowers and appreciating simply being outside. She made a conscious effort to live lightly on the Earth and to give back to Nature in exchange for the enjoyment she derived from all Nature's gifts.

In memory of Cathy Stephenson, the NWT Chapter of CPAWS is accepting donations to a memorial fund in her honour. These funds will be used to further conservation work in the Northwest Territories. Donations may be made to "The Cathy Stephenson Memorial Fund", c/o CPAWS-NWT, PO Box 1934, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P4. Cheques should be made out to CPAWS-NWT.

Great Bear Lake

Clean and Bountiful for all Time

By Karen LeGresley-Hamre, CPAWS-NWT Board Member

The Great Bear Lake Watershed is the homeland of the Sahtugot'ine and part of an intact wild ecosystem that helps define what it means to be a Canadian. The watershed is of great local, national and international significance.

CPAWS-NWT has played a key role in developing a Management Plan for the Sahtu portion of this important watershed. We are part of the Great Bear Lake Working Group, which includes various Déline organizations, co-management boards, and several government departments. Over the past year, the Management Plan for the watershed, including a Research and Monitoring Plan, have continued to be refined (see also Spring/summer 03 and 04 newsletters). The final Management Plan and Research and Monitoring Plan should be available in June.

Ecological and cultural integrity are the basis of the Management Plan. Our scientific understanding of ecology describes how all creatures are tied together in a web of life. The elders of Déline stress that the interconnectedness of all things includes all people - Dene and non-Dene alike. From this "universal law" of the interconnectedness stems the responsibility of people to care for the world in which we live. These understandings underline the Management Plan.

ZONES

The proposal under the Management Plan is to encompass the entire Sahtu portion of the watershed in two Land Use Plan zones. Most of the watershed is a Special Management Zone, with the rest in Neh Karila K'ets'Edi (Conservation Zones).

Neh Karila K'ets'Edi is Slavey for "lands set aside: we're protecting them". Neh Karila K'ets'Edi have a combination of important cultural, historic, traditional and/or ecological values that need a higher level of protection than is provided by the Special Management Zone policies, conditions and prohibitions. No mining or oil and gas activities would be allowed in these areas. The Neh Karila K'ets'Edi are:

- Luchaniline (Whitefish River Conservation Zone),
- Tehkaicho Dé (Johnny Hoe Conservation Zone),
- Du K'ets'Edi ("Sentinel" Islands Conservation Zone),
- Edaiila (Caribou Point Conservation Zone), and
- Sahoyúé - ?ehdacho (interim protection through PAS at this stage).

Development is allowed and even encouraged in the Special Management Zones. However, it is controlled, with restrictions and prohibitions on some activities, and all activities needing permits or licenses must meet a series of policies and conditions.

PROHIBITIONS

Some activities prohibited in both the Neh Karila K'ets'Edi and Special Management Zones are:

- bulk water removal or sales,
- bringing in plants or animals that aren't naturally found in the Great Bear Lake Watershed (exotic or alien species),
- activities that result in or contribute to the loss of any

Great Bear Lake is the ninth largest lake in the world, both in terms of surface area (31,326 square kilometers) and volume (2,292 cubic kilometers) with the following special characteristics:

- low water temperatures, even in summer (thus little stratification and a limited mixing or turning over);
- high oxygen levels;
- remarkable transparency/scarcely plankton and bottom fauna;
- extremely low biological productivity;
- relatively few fish species/simple food webs; and
- high vulnerability to over-exploitation of fish populations.

wildlife or plant species in the Great Bear Lake Watershed,

- fish farming and fish stocking,
- activities that require indefinite (perpetual) ongoing treatment of waste after closure, and
- digging up or otherwise harming the bottom of Great Bear Lake.

POLICIES AND CONDITIONS

Development activities are *only* allowed if a person, group, or company follows certain policies and conditions, including:

- setting up research and monitoring where they are working to show that the land is staying healthy,
- cleaning up when they finish the work (appropriate remediation and restoration plans must be in place),
- setting aside enough money at the start of the project to do the clean up (The company must give a sufficient security deposit to the regulatory authority before they start work so that there is sufficient money set aside to properly clean up the site), and
- keeping all the water that flows from its site into Great Bear Lake at least as clean as it is now (background levels or better for surface and groundwater).

STRENGTH OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The final Great Bear Lake Management Plan is intended to form part of the Sahtu Land Use Plan. Once Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated, and the territorial and federal governments approve the Plan, everyone working on the land in the Sahtu will need to follow its rules.

The Management Plan has been submitted to the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board. The elders expressed great concern that development is continuing during this planning process. Since the federal government continues to give out major prospecting permits, many of the conservation zones are completely covered in permits. While these permits do *not* provide any mineral rights, they *do* inhibit the ability to set up conservation zones or protected areas. So, the elders are urging an immediate interim approval of the Great Bear Lake

Management Plan, so no further permits, licenses or authorizations can be given out that do not conform with the Plan.

THE FULL WATERSHED

The Management Plan deals *only* with the Sahtu portion of the Great Bear Lake Watershed, which is about 62 per cent of the watershed. The bulk of the remaining watershed is in the Tlicho region, which includes Gameti, the only other community in the watershed. The Working Group knows that to be effective, the whole watershed needs to be involved in a management plan. The Déline elders are very keen to lead in the process. They want to start discussions with elders in the adjacent communities as soon as possible.

More Information...

Background documents are available on our website, at www.cpaaws.org/grassroots-chapters/nwt-greatbearlake.html.

The Sahtu Land Use Planning Board and office were closed down for a number of months. However, the office is reopened in Fort Good Hope, and the Board has quorum. At time of writing, the Board includes acting chair Peter Menacho of Déline, and Brian Mcneely and Bella T'Seleie, both of Fort Good Hope. A consultant, Murray McKnight, has been working in the Sahtu communities over the past year to develop a revised draft Land Use Plan. A revised draft Land Use Plan, which at this stage integrates the Great Bear Lake Watershed Management Plan, is expected this fall. Land use planning is a very important land management tool, and CPAWS-NWT is supporting the progress being made towards getting a fully approved Land Use Plan in the Sahtu. When CPAWS-NWT reviews and evaluate the Land Use Plan, we will certainly be looking to see that provisions to 'Keep Great Bear Lake will be clean and bountiful for all time' continue to be fully included.

Ode to Great Bear Lake

By Anne Jane Grieve, Suzette Montreuil and Ron Kent

Bm **A** **G** **A**
The Otter murmured to the night; shrouded by fog and the Northern Light
Bm **A** **G** **A** **Bm**
Beneath us lay a mighty land; and the resting force of Sahtu's hand
Bm **A** **G** **A**
We pay the water to carry us there; to the outer reaches of Grizzly Bear
Bm **A** **G** **A** **Bm**
Too many boats can come up wrecked; we knew enough to show respect

Chorus:

G **D** **A**
I yearn to be led by a freer hand
G **D** **A**
To step to the pulse of this Dene land
G **D** **A**
Teach us to move from sleep to wake
G **A** **Bm**
To honor the lessons of Great Bear Lake

For Sahtu remembers who; Franklin's Fort and hockey too
Atomic ploys and claims on land and Dene laws to understand
While some have come to take and steal; the wise ones know it can reveal
A heart that binds us all as one; a truth carried on Dene drum
Ayah, ayah, ayah

Accordion part: **BB C# D E F# A**
BB D C# B A
BB C# D E F# A
B A F# E D C# B

Chorus

Bm **A** **G** **A**
It feeds the fish; it feeds the bear, it shows us how to sit in prayer;
Bm **A** **G** **A** **Bm**
It freezes deep for time to rest; renewing for a future guest
Bm **A** **G** **A**
The Elders murmur to the night; the water carries souls to flight
Bm **A** **G** **A** **Bm**
The children start the search anew; and the Prophets say 'remember Who'

Chorus

We encourage other musicians from across the NWT to contribute their songs. We would like to publish a series of them in our newsletters. We are applying for funding to record more songs about the land....your song could be one of them!

PROTECTED AREA BRIEFS

by Jennifer Morin, Senior Conservation Coordinator

Northwest Territories Protected Area Strategy (NWT PAS) steps:

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.



Sahoyué - ?edacho or Grizzly Bear Mountain/Scented Grass Hills (Déline)

Parks Canada's recently released management options paper; however the paper is vague. One of the options was for Parks Canada to sponsor an application to extend the current interim land withdrawal to allow for the additional time required to complete final protection. Limited funding was received this year to move forward with this area. Status: Step 5 of the NWT PAS.

Colville Lake

A PAS community meeting was held in mid-April and the community expressed interest in identifying important areas. Some preliminary boundaries were selected, and a follow-up community meeting is scheduled for summer.

Pehdzeh Ki Deh (PKD) or Rock Place Land (Wrigley, Tulita, and Déline)

A new PAS Community Coordinator in Wrigley, D'Arcy Moses, was hired recently. In March, a meeting was held at Fish Lake with Déline delegates to discuss the Déline-Deh Cho overlap issue related to PKD. The area is identified in the working draft of the Deh Cho Land Use Plan. The community is working towards interim protection and a Traditional Knowledge Study is currently underway to help document additional cultural and spiritual sites in the PKD. Status: Seeking to complete Steps 2 and 3 of NWT PAS. with the Sahtu.

Tsodehniline and Tuyat'ah or Ramparts River and Wetlands (Fort Good Hope)

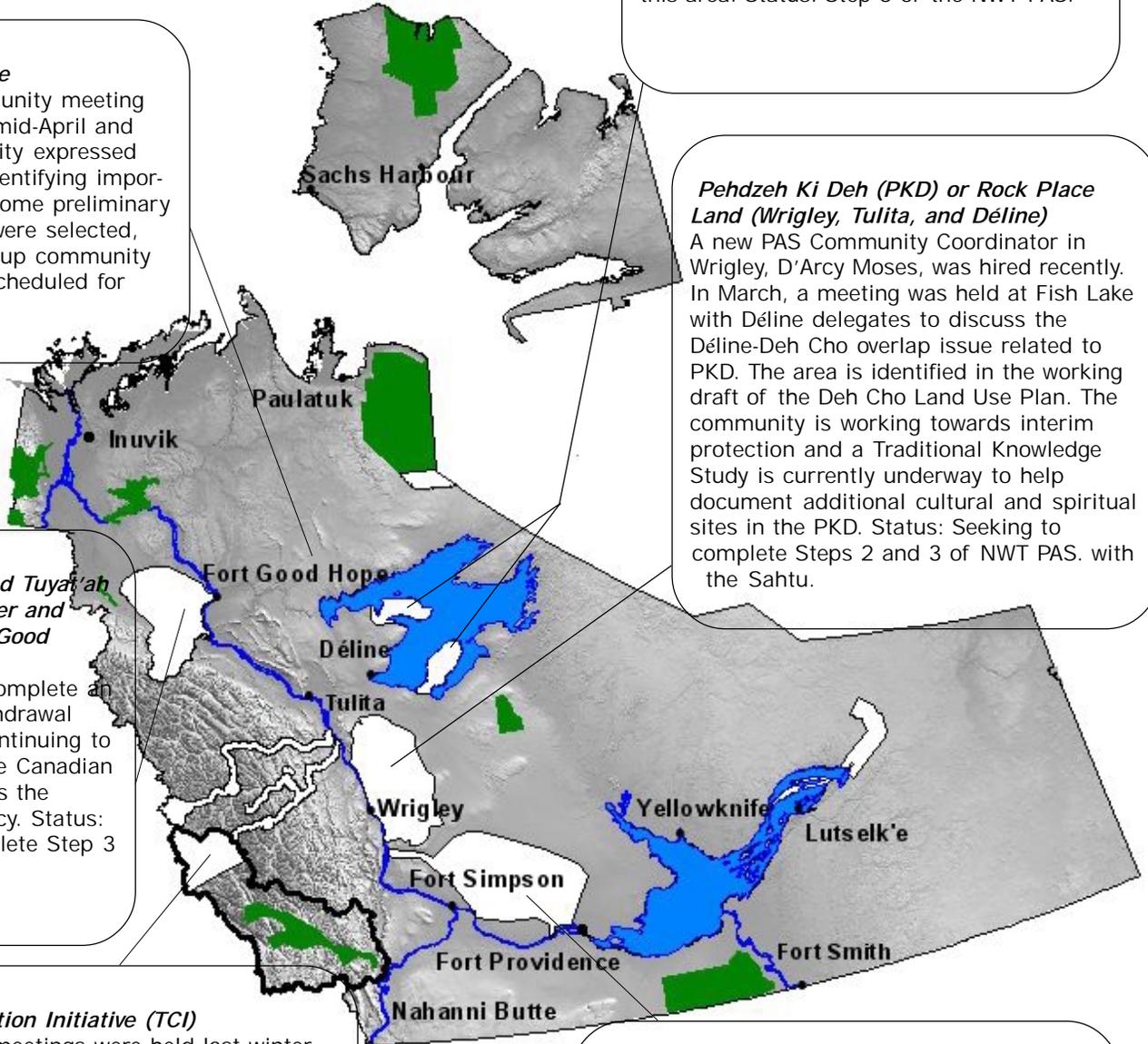
Information to complete an interim land withdrawal application is continuing to be compiled. The Canadian Wildlife Service is the sponsoring agency. Status: Seeking to complete Step 3 of NWT PAS.

Tulita Conservation Initiative (TCI)

Workshops and meetings were held last winter to further define the boundaries of the Raven's Throat, Keele and Redstone Rivers. However, the community and land corporations have yet to pass any formal Band Council resolutions. The Nahanni Headwaters, which is a part of the TCI, is progressing. Parks Canada has indicated an interest in becoming the sponsoring agency. Status: Nahanni Headwaters in Steps 2 and 3, other areas are in Step 1 of NWT PAS.

Edézhíe or Horn Plateau (Fort Providence, Fort Simpson, Rae, Wha Ti, Wrigley)

The Working Group met in December and part of the discussion focused on how to make the Working Group process more effective. Community representatives were provided with updates to bring back to their communities. Status: Step 5 of NWT PAS; in 2nd year of five-year interim land withdrawal.



Notes from the National Board Conference

Leslie Wakelyn, NWT Chapter Representative
CPAWS National Board of Trustees

The spring 2005 meeting of the National Board of Trustees was held from April 15-17 in Ottawa, Ontario. Up to three people from each CPAWS chapter participated in the very busy 3-day conference agenda. Participants from CPAWS-NWT were Daryl Sexsmith, Jen Morin and Leslie Wakelyn.

Gala Dinner – On the evening of April 14th, about a hundred people from the Canadian conservation community gathered for a gala dinner, music, and multimedia retrospective on 40 years of CPAWS history. The theme for the evening was “The Idea of Wilderness: An Evolving Conservation Vision for Canada”. Much inspiration was provided in words, music and images.

The high point of the evening, however, was presentation of the J.B. Harkin Conservation Award to J. Gordon Nelson. Dr. Nelson has more than three decades of experience on national parks and protected areas issues, has assisted CPAWS with conservation issues on many occasions over the years, and is currently a CPAWS Trustee Emeritus. ***CPAWS-NWT enthusiastically congratulates Gordon on his richly deserved award!***

Workshops – A full day of workshops included:

- Presentations on the boreal program and communications plan, including six key themes for conserving boreal forest biodiversity: forestry, land use planning, Aboriginal leadership, energy (oil and gas, hydro), mining, and national park establishment.
- An overview on effective government relations practices.
- Updates by Parks Canada staff on their programs and plans, and an opportunity for CPAWS chapters to raise regional issues. (We raised the issue of the lack of progress by Parks Canada in achieving permanent protection for Sahoyúé and ?ehdacho and fulfilling promises made to the people of Deline.)
- Panel on “Planning for conservation as the petroleum industry encroaches our wild places.”
- Presentations on forest conservation efforts using a market-based approach.

CPAWS Strategic Planning – A full day of the board meeting was devoted to strategic business planning. CPAWS’ primary needs were identified as:

- identifying and articulating our collective conservation vision, and
- securing the resources (funding and capacity) to deliver that vision.

Marketing CPAWS

Help us develop a strategy for marketing CPAWS by sending in your answers to these three questions:

- 1) How do you want CPAWS to be seen by donors and supporters?
- 2) What features will differentiate CPAWS from
 - (a) other charities
 - (b) other environmental organizations?
- 3) In one to three words, what is CPAWS?

Send your responses to us at cpaws_admin@theedge.ca.

A key priority over the next 6 months will be development of a ***long-term strategic conservation vision for CPAWS***. Information on conservation priorities and programs will be collected from all CPAWS chapters over the next few months, and the resulting report will be reviewed by chapters. A conservation panel with representatives from across the country (to be appointed) will use this report to develop the national conservation vision, which will be reviewed and endorsed by the national board of Trustees at the fall 2005 meeting. This vision will be used as the basis for new marketing and fund-raising campaigns, and to identify conservation priorities for the business plan for 2006/07.

The principal means for CPAWS-NWT to provide input into the national strategic planning process are:

- Providing input for developing the national business plan and associated plans (e.g., marketing, communications, fund-raising) to the national Executive Director (ED) through participation in the ED Strategic Council.
- Continuing to participate in the national boreal campaign, including plans for increasing capacity to address oil and gas and mining issues.
- Providing information about our conservation vision for the NWT (from our chapter strategic plan and the Mackenzie Valley 5-year Action Plan) and other conservation priorities.
- Reviewing reports produced during development of the national conservation vision to ensure they reflect our vision and priorities.
- Reviewing the national conservation vision to ensure it incorporates NWT input.

The next national board meeting and AGM will be held in mid-October 2005 in Saskatoon or Calgary. Keep posted for news about progress made in the next 6 months toward developing a new and improved CPAWS!



With regret we say good-bye to Greg Yeoman

A little more than 5 years ago, I (Karen Hamre) had the task of doing reference checks for Greg Yeoman because the Board was considering hiring Greg as our Conservation Director: our first full-time staff person. It was a big step for an organization that had slowly worked its way from a purely volunteer organization.

In talking to the first reference, I explained a bit about CPAWS and that we were considering hiring Greg. “Lucky you!” was the quick reply.

And lucky us indeed. The ‘climate’ towards Protected Areas hasn’t always been friendly. When Greg started, the NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) was just beginning to be implemented. On top of that, a lot of precedent setting decisions were (and still are) being taken on the recently proclaimed *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*. Greg took CPAWS-NWT through a lot of changes, reflective of the growing interest in Protected Areas across the NWT, and the many difficult decisions being made here all the time.

While we still don’t have any areas fully protected under the PAS, we certainly have more people and organizations headed in the right direction now. Greg’s new job is still in the PAS ‘fold’, now on the federal government team. Hopefully

that can just strengthen the ability to move forward on some of these critical areas.

Greg said “CPAWS is a great organization, and I hope to be volunteering with you for years to come’. So, best of luck in the new position, Greg, and we’re glad you’ll still be with us!”



No Environment Assessment Required for Nahanni Winter Road

The NWT Supreme Court decision to exempt the re-construction of a winter road to the Prairie Creek mine site located upstream from Nahanni National Park Reserve from an environmental assessment was disappointing.

The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board, the region’s regulatory authority, had ruled that the road proposal must undergo an environmental assessment. Canadian Zinc challenged this claiming that their road proposal should be exempt from a full environmental review because the historical route was permitted by previous owners before June 22, 1984. CPAWS and the Dehcho First Nations, represented by the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, intervened in the judicial review supporting the Board’s decision that an environmental assessment should be conducted.

“While there is a loophole in the legislation,” said Devon Page of Sierra Legal Defence Fund, “the Mackenzie Valley Land

and Water Board’s decision was the right one because it would have protected both this unique environment and the role of First Nations in land and water management in the Mackenzie Valley. We will continue to work to ensure these principles are recognized.”

The winter road route cuts across the globally unique geology of the Nahanni karstlands to the Canadian Zinc mine site, north of the existing Park Reserve. This area is made up of water-soluble limestone formations and includes canyons and a network of underground caves, which, according to world expert Dr. Derek Ford, are “the most accentuated and important example of arctic or subarctic karst known on the planet.”

The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board can reinstate the land use permit issuance process for the re-construction of the winter road after the appeal periods ends. They also have the authority to set permit terms and conditions.

Leading Edge Conservation Planning Continues - An Update on the Deh Cho Land Use Planning Process

By Jennifer Morin, Senior Conservation Coordinator, CPAWS-NWT

The Deh Cho Land Use Planning Committee held a Regional Forum in Hay River in March to discuss the *Deh Cho Land Use Plan* (Working Plan). Over 75 people from all of the Deh Cho communities, government, industry, and non-government organizations attended and gave presentations. The Working Draft was well prepared by the Committee and extremely well received.

Protection and Zoning

The creation of the Working Draft flows from the 2003 Deh Cho Interim Land Withdrawals and identifies about half of the Deh Cho for protection. How much exactly? 10.8 million hectares (or about three times the size of Vancouver Island) were identified as Conservation Zones that will “provide temporary protection to lands of important cultural or ecological values”. The remaining land use designations are 23 per cent as Special Management Zones and 27 per cent as General Use Zones. In Special Management Zones, “special conditions are set to manage development” and General Use Zones “allow development to proceed relatively unhindered, subject to existing regulations and Dehcho wide terms.”

Cumulative Impacts

One aspect of the Working Draft that is new and very exciting to land use planning in the NWT is the incorporation of quantitative thresholds to prevent, mitigate and manage cumulative effects. For example, corridor or road density thresholds for Boreal Woodland Caribou in Special Management Zones were set as follows based on scientific research studies: critical=1.5 km/km² linear disturbance, target=1.2 km/km² linear disturbance, cautionary=1.0 km/km² linear disturbance. The Working Draft also includes thresholds for many other species (moose, grizzly bears, marten, fish) and other indicators (habitat availability, minimum patch size, stream crossing density).

CPAWS-NWT Comments

Greg Yeoman, former Conservation Director, and I gave a presentation on behalf of CPAWS-NWT. Our main points on the Working Draft were:

- excellent protection of the land through large Conservation Zones and connections between them;
- the Committee should designate the entire South Nahanni Watershed as a Conservation Zone (third party interests could be maintained as non-conforming uses);
- the Committee consider a Conservation Zone in the Peel River Plateau ecoregion; and
- excellent quantitative cumulative effects measures, support full implementation.

While there are too many highlights from the event to list here, the main highlight for me was to hear the positive feedback and support on the Working Draft and all of the work that went into developing it.

The work is not over yet and the Committee and staff are preparing a Draft Plan by the late fall and are planning to submit the Final Plan for approval next March.



Choosing Between Town and Country

By Brad Heath, CPAWS-NWT Volunteer

In these days of climate change, dwindling oil supplies and an ever-expanding human footprint on this fragile planet, many of us are striving to reduce our impact on Mother Earth. Earlier this year, my wife, Leslie Wakelyn, and I moved back into the city after living full-time on the Ingraham Trail for several years. If Star Trek “transporter” technology actually existed, Leslie and I would never consider living anywhere else but in our cabin on Prelude Lake. I could zip into the city for pipe band practice, linger for a pint afterwards at the pub and then simply phone home and say: “Beam me home, Leslie!”

Alas this technology does not yet exist, so we’ve spent many, many, many days driving the 70-kilometre round trip. And earlier this year, after watching the odometer on our loyal truck roll past 250,000 kilometres, we decided it was time to move back to the city. It was a very difficult decision to become “Townies” again. Our years on the Trail were wonderful yet challenging. We loved the natural setting and tranquility of our cabin (well, tranquil before I took up the Great Highland Bagpipes) but lost more than our fair share of contests with ol’ Ma Nature as we set up house in a cabin not designed for winter living North of 60. One particularly bad bout of -40°C temperatures that froze our cabin solid (including our house plants and homemade wine).

Despite the fact that we were living in paradise, we found that our schedule or work and community activities was clashing badly with cabin life – especially since we spent up to 90 minutes each working day loading and unloading the truck and driving to and from town. We arrived home most nights at about 9 or 10 p.m., sometimes later, and after spending a bit of time with the dogs and a bit of time reading, would collapse into bed before rising at 6:30 a.m. to do it all over again. It didn’t help that we had two extremely close encounters with gravel trucks last fall that left us both shaking for hours afterwards or that the winter haul to the diamond mines just keeps getting bigger and bigger.

It’s been about four months since we’ve moved back to the city; time enough to reflect on our gains and losses. One of the most obvious benefits of living in the city is the reduction in time spent commuting. We have freed up about 90 minutes a day (6 days per week), which adds up to nearly nine hours a week or 36 hours each month.

Less driving means less money spent on gasoline and a heck of a lot less CO₂ pumped into the atmosphere. In the winter, we would usually gas up the truck at least twice a week at an average of \$40 a week. Now that we’re living in town, we’ve only had to fill up the truck about once every three weeks. So, it might appear that living in town is more environmentally friendly. That’s not so. Aside from the driving, there are many aspects of the Trail life that are more earth-friendly than Townie life. For example, we installed a composting toilet at our cabin many years ago, so our waste at the cabin doesn’t end up being pumped into a sewage lagoon on the outskirts of the city. Instead, it’s mixed with peat moss and wood shavings and allowed to compost before being added to the soil in our flowerbeds.

For many years, our water supply consisted of blue plastic jugs that we filled up in town and hauled to the cabin. I can assure you when you haul your water by hand, you’re frugal with the stuff. I can guarantee that you’ll never see a Trail resident running the kitchen tap (if they have running water, that is) for a couple of minutes to make sure the water is cold.

We have also installed a solar power system in our cabin and we get power without pollution for at least three or four months every year. In late May we can put the generator, which is our alternate power source (we are off-grid), away for the summer because the sun provides more than enough power! We also plan to add a wind turbine to harness wind power throughout the year, and use our gas generator even less.

Life at the cabin also provides the intangible benefit of providing a lifestyle that is both rewarding and satisfying for the soul. There’s nothing more personally fulfilling than a couple of hours chopping and splitting wood. Let the -48°C temperatures come – we’ve got enough firewood to last us for weeks! And after a hectic, frazzling work week, there’s no better way to recharge your batteries than roaming through the bush with your dogs or sipping coffee by the lakeshore.

Then there’s the privilege of living cheek-by-cheek with the natural world. Wolves, caribou, porcupines, bears, kestrels, eagles, red polls and boreal chickadees are just a few of God’s creatures that we’ve seen from our cabin.

So which is better: living in Town or on the Trail? There’s no easy answer. But we certainly are fortunate to be able to have the conveniences of town-life and also to escape to our cabin and the surrounding lakes, rivers, and wilderness. And who knows, maybe someday we’ll be able to move back to our cabin full-time. I don’t expect Star Trek’s transporter to materialize anytime soon but a non-gasoline consuming truck may not be too far down the road.

Bulletin Board

Comings and Goings



Welcome Ivy Stone - CPAWS-NWT's Newest Board Member

CPAWS-NWT would like to welcome Ivy Stone as our newest member of the Board of Directors. Ivy has formerly lived in Iqaluit and currently enjoys the outdoors and the quality of life in Yellowknife.

She has a M.Sc. from the Université du Quebec in Wildlife and Habitat Management, and has been working with environmental issues for most of her career in the NWT, Nunavut, Alberta, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Maine.

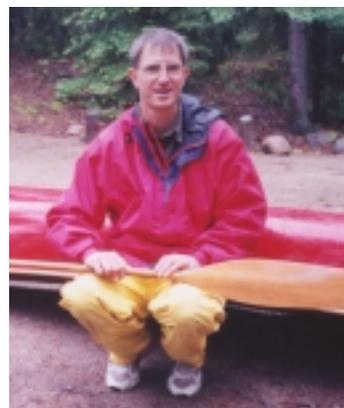
Ivy says that she is happy to be involved with CPAWS-NWT and believes the organization is key to highlighting and protecting special places in the Northwest Territories.

Welcome Daryl Sexsmith - CPAWS-NWT New Executive Director

Daryl Sexsmith is the new Executive Director of CPAWS-NWT and has been working in this position since March. Before joining CPAWS-NWT, Daryl was the Executive Director of the Edmonton branch of Habitat for Humanity, a grassroots humanitarian organization that has a similar national structure to CPAWS.

Daryl has extensive experience in the not-for-profit sector and has been given the mandate of leading CPAWS-NWT through a time of rapid and sustainable growth.

Daryl has enjoyed a lifelong passion for the conservation of Canada's natural areas. He is an avid wilderness canoeist who has written and self published a book about a forty-day solo canoe trip that he took on the Churchill River in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. He is looking forward to paddling the rivers of the NWT.



Welcome Erica Janes as new Conservation Project Manager

Erica Janes joined CPAWS-NWT on May 2 as the new Conservation Coordinator. Erica has a B.Sc. in biology from the University of Victoria. She worked on Vancouver Island as a provincial park interpreter and forestry research technician before returning to her native Yellowknife to work for the federal government on contaminated sites and in conservation education and environmental consulting.

Erica is excited to be now working with CPAWS-NWT to help protect the land, while continuing to take advantage of the endless outdoor recreation opportunities in her backyard. She was fortunate to paddle the South Nahanni River last summer with a group of friends and is looking forward to many more wilderness adventures north of 60°.

Upcoming Events

June 15, 2005 4-7 pm Annual Volunteer + Membership Appreciation BBQ at Fred Henne Kitchen Shelter.
Sept. 2005 CPAWS-NWT Annual General Meeting. Details TBA.

Volunteers Needed

Contact the CPAWS office for more information or check out the website to fill out a volunteer application form.



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