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Ms. Michelle Swallow

Manager - Conservation Planning and Implementation Unit

Environment and Natural Resources Government of the Northwest Territories

PO Box 1320

Yellowknife NT X1A 2L9

Submitted by e-mail:

Michelle\_Swallow@gov.nt.ca

**Re: Renewal of Healthy Land, Healthy People: Government of the Northwest Territories Priorities for Conservation Network Planning - 2022-2027**

The Northwest Territories Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-NWT) was established by volunteers in 1996, and is led by a volunteer Board of Directors and local staff. Our chapter was a founding member of the NWT-Protected Areas Strategy (1999) and continues to focus on supporting the establishment of protected and conserved areas across the NWT. Our Vision is that ecosystems in the NWT are protected, maintained, and connected across the territory to sustain nature and people for current and future generations.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide input,

**General comments:**

**Glossary:**

The definition of conservation network needs to be consistent with the description given in the Introduction. The network includes more than the site specific protected and conserved areas. The concept of conservation network needs to be discussed further to foster a better understanding of how various land and resource management mechanisms can function in support of each other. CPAWS-NWT is very interested in participating in these discussions.

**Pages 6-7: National Biodiversity Targets**

“GNWT will continue to engage in national conservation discussions….”

We agree that “decisions in NWT will continue to be made in collaboration with IGO’s and stakeholders” and are not necessarily based on Federal or International targets.

However,

The GWNT over the past number of years since devolution has been reluctant to showcase NWT conservation opportunities, nationally and to the world. Rather the concept of meeting national and international targets can be leveraged by the GNWT to secure financial resources for Indigenous Governments and for the GNWT itself. GNWT can adopt the International targets for the purpose of championing outcomes in the NWT. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 15th Conference (COP-15) is convening again in Montreal this December. It is possible that the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will be adopted including international targets. Protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures should be expanded to cover at least 30% of the planet by 2030. There is an opportunity here for the GNWT with IGO and NGO partners to highlight progress that has been made to date and incoming opportunities to meet and exceed federal and international targets.

***Suggestion:***

*Please update the section on “National Biodiversity Targets” to include an update on the incoming COP-15 conference and leave a placeholder for the 30 x 30 international targets that are being proposed within the Global Biodiversity Framework. Please change the title of this section to* ***“National and International Biodiversity Targets”.***

**Page 7** – Link PA’s to mitigating and adapting to climate change

Under the heading **Climate Change** Please add that *“Protected and Conserved Areas are a Nature Based Solution to Climate Change”.*

Add to the definitions: **Nature-Based Solutions**

From Resolution adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 2 March 2022:

1. *“nature-based solutions are actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits, and recognizes that nature-based solutions:”*

2. *“that nature-based solutions may contribute significantly to climate action, while recognizing the need for analysis of their effects, including in the long term, and acknowledging that they do not replace the need for rapid, deep and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, but can improve action for adaptation and resilience to and mitigation of climate change and its impact;”*

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39864/NATURE-BASED%20SOLUTIONS%20FOR%20SUPPORTING%20SUSTAINABLE%20DEVELOPMENT.%20English.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

**Expand the discussion about Connectivity**:

We suggest that a statement is added that discusses the value of core protected and conserved areas and the conservation network in meeting the objectives of other important conservation/land management strategies led by the GNWT and regional or community IGO’s.

***Suggestion:***

*“The conservation network including the management objectives of established protected and conserved areas can support the outcomes of other land and water stewardship initiatives such as the NWT Water Stewardship Strategy or NWT-Species at Risk Act.”*

**Priority Outcomes:**

The titles for the Five (5) priority outcomes are not clear in describing what the objectives are supporting. The titles could be more meaningful in the context of driving an action oriented plan forward.

“Support, Learn, Continue, Assess and Support” followed by objectives of “Develop, Support, Provide, etc. etc.” do not lend to pursuing, achieving or measuring outcomes in the future.

The Priority Outcomes should be succinct and focused on what needs to be achieved. We have suggested new titles then follow with our comments on the objectives.

Also, please list the objectives alpha-numerically for ease of reference. (Such as 1a, 1b etc.)

**Suggested titles for Priority Outcomes and Comments/Recommendations on Objectives:**

**1. *Implement the NWT Protected Areas Act (PAA)***

We think that the purpose of this section needs to be crystal clear to ensure that momentum can be built toward achieving and communicating the early successes of the PAA. Implementing the PAA is a big workload for the GNWT and partners thus we think it should have a specific focus. The title should also align with providing a clear reference for reporting on objectives in the future.

***“Effective and Equitable Management” are good principles for implementing the PAA and could be integrated into Objective (1b), we suggest:*** *“Support effective and equitable management responsibilities of Territorial Protected Area Management Boards”*

In our NGO/GNWT discussion held April 29, 2022 it was suggested that public education could be a separate objective from enforcement. We agree that it would be beneficial to separate the purposes of public education from enforcement in territorial protected areas communications. We believe that public education about a Protected Area is much more involved than communicating on restrictions or rules. Public Education could include presentations, signage etc. about values (culture, ecology, geology…). These are a few reasons that people will support establishment of Protected Areas and will influence visitation. This is captured in Objective (2c) *“Provide robust public education…”*

Communicating on enforcement and restrictions is very important but could be more effectively presented to the public through a stand-alone objective.

**Suggested re-wording for Objective (1d):**

*“Communicate the roles of enforcement officers and restrictions for each Protected Area”*

***2. Communicate and Leverage the Learnings, Innovations and Successes of the Conservation Network***

There is an un-tapped opportunity to evolve and showcase a world leading NWT Conservation Network. Communicating and leveraging opportunities and outcomes can stimulate investment into establishment, management and Protected Areas operations for the participation of both GNWT and Indigenous Governments. It is time for the GNWT to take a bold approach to championing protected areas and the conservation network. This is reflected in our suggested title.

**Objective (2a):** We note that NGO’s are not included in the objective (2a) description regarding a research plan to support conservation network establishment, planning and implementation. NGO’s such as CPAWS-NWT have extensive experience working in the NWT. We are often at the front of discussions regarding protected areas design and work in support of land-use or land management initiatives that are key connective pieces within a conservation network. We are eager take part in discussions regarding planning and implementing the network.

***Suggestion for (2a): We assume that this is an easily remedied oversite, please include NGO’s on your list of,*** *“the Government of the NWT will work with …….. and NGO’s.*

***3. Champion establishment of existing Candidate Areas and Promote Nominations for new Candidate Areas***

Please list the four (4) Dehcho region areas as candidate areas. We believe that the GNWT has the intent to support establishment. However, the language carried forward from the 2016-2021 HLHP, “Conclude decision-making processes on other areas of interest” continues to imply that the GNWT may not at all be committed.

These (4) areas were candidate areas when they were advanced through the NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS). It now seems that areas can only be “candidate” if they have been nominated through the PAA. In the context of a conservation network there will be numerous mechanisms that will contribute to protected or conserved area status. There needs to be a way of recognizing initiatives that contribute to the conservation network but that are not nominated under the PAA.

We believe that the GNWT should be open to supporting that each community government has an opportunity to nominate a Protected or Conserved Area(s) through the PAA or other mechanism if it is in the interest of that community to do so.

***Re-word Objective (3c) to:***

***“****The GNWT will support that each Indigenous Community Government has an opportunity to nominate areas for inclusion in the Conservation Network.”*

***4. Evolve Conservation Network Planning In the Northwest Territories***

(4b) Comment:Conservation Network planning must include civil society representation. This extends from our comments regarding (2d). It would be most effective to include partners such as IGO’s and NGO’s in any assessment or gap analysis regarding the conservation network.

Furthermore, NGO’s are at the fore front of leveraging philanthropic and federal investment and contribute capacity to community led conservation projects that can help address gaps and other priorities. Another consideration here is that collaboration at a working level has fallen off since devolution and should be reconvened.

**(4b) suggestion:**

“GNWT will do a gap assessment w/ participation of NGO’s, IGO/s etc.”

***5. Pursue Creative Financing Arrangements for Establishing, Monitoring and Managing Protected Areas***

***Suggestion:***

*Move Objective (4c) to (5a)*

***Add to (5a):***

* *“Creative financing opportunities are quickly evolving related to protecting areas that support carbon and biodiversity conservation”.*

**Note on Appendix A – Nomination Process under the Protected Areas Act:**

Protected Areas should be nominated because there is a need to set land and waters aside for cultural or ecological values related to conservation. The proposed criterion exceeds what is necessary to process a nomination. The test should be to consider values for conservation not for “balance” with economic development. Discussions about renewable or non-renewable economic development can happen at a regional or land-use planning level or further on in the process once an area is considered to be a candidate.

Submitted by:

Kris Brekke

Executive Director

CPAWS-NWT