

# **Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve (C2223)**

## **Statement of Conservation Interest**



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**Prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources,  
Northwest Region**

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## Approval Page

Statement of Conservation Interest

for

Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve

C2223

Nipigon District  
Northwest Region

The purpose of this Statement of Conservation Interest is to identify the natural heritage values of the Conservation Reserve and to identify the activities which occur at this location. This Statement outlines the activities which will be permitted and those which will be prohibited. From this outline, the management direction for the site can be determined.

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ian Hagman, District Manager, Nipigon District

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
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**1. Introduction**

On July 16, 1999, the Ontario Government released *Ontario’s Living Legacy (OLL) Land Use Strategy (LUS)* to guide the planning and management of Crown Lands within a large part of northern and central Ontario. A major component of this Land Use Strategy was the establishment of 378 new protected areas in this part of Ontario. This commitment will be the largest expansion of Provincial Parks and other protected areas in the history of Ontario.

The Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve (C2223) is one site within this expansion of Ontario’s protected areas.

Conservation Reserves are areas of Crown land set aside by regulation under the *Public Lands Act* to complement provincial parks in protecting representative natural areas and specific landscape features. Most recreational activities (e.g. hiking, skiing, tourism related uses, nature appreciation) and non-industrial commercial activities (e.g. fur harvesting, bait fishing and commercial fishing) that have traditionally been enjoyed in the area will continue – provided that these uses do not impact upon the natural features requiring protection. Recreational hunting and fishing are permitted uses within all new conservation reserves identified through the *OLL Land Use Strategy*. Commercial timber harvesting, mining, aggregate extraction and hydroelectric development are prohibited in conservation reserves.

The Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve is located within the Lake Nipigon watershed, approximately 50 km northwest of the Town of Geraldton. The conservation reserve includes all islands in Onaman Lake, as well as portions of the northern shoreline. The site contains representative landform and vegetation types, including mixed forest types and wetlands on weakly broken ground moraine (OMNR, 1999). The islands of Onaman Lake are important woodland caribou habitat and calving grounds. More detail on the natural values of the site can be found in the attached Earth Science Report and Life Science Report.

The purpose of this Statement of Conservation Interest is to identify the natural heritage values of the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve; this Statement also identifies the activities occurring within the conservation reserve. Through a set of management guidelines, this statement will outline the activities which will be permitted and those which will be prohibited. From this outline, the management direction for the area can be determined.

**2. Background Information**

Name	Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve
Site Region / Site District	3W-4
OMNR Administrative Region / District / Area	Northwest Region/Nipigon District/Nipigon East Area
Total Area (ha)	4, 737 hectares
Regulation Date	June 23, 2000
Interested First Nations	Lake Nipigon Ojibway, Aroland, Rocky Bay, Pays Plat, Red Rock, Sandpoint, and Ojibways of the Pic River First Nations.

Lat./Long.	lat: 50 ° 00' long: 87 ° 23'
OBM	164505530, 164605540, 164705540, 164605530, 164705530, 164705550
FRI Stands	Specific numbers for the FRI stands occurring within the conservation reserve can be obtained by contacting the Information Management Team in Nipigon or in Geraldton
General Location	Located within the Lake Nipigon watershed, approximately 50 km northwest of the Town of Geraldton.
Access	There are three access points (boat launch areas) to Onaman Lake (two informal and one formal). These areas are not maintained by the Ministry and the MNR has begun the process of reducing the number of access points to the lake to only one. A number of forest roads provide access to these launch points at the south-western end of Onaman Lake. A fly-in tourist outfitter operates several outpost camps on Onaman Lake.

### 3. Representation Targets

This section provides a summary of the earth science, life science and cultural resource values represented in the site. It also outlines existing and potential recreational opportunities available.

Life Science Representation	Onaman Lake represents a significant recharge area; the lake is surrounded by extensive low-lying wetland terrain. The site is representative of mature coniferous and mixedwood forest on weakly broken ground moraine and lacustrine deposits, often overlain by thin organic materials. The islands in Onaman Lake are important woodland caribou habitat and the lake is part of an important woodland caribou migration corridor and caribou calving area. Bald eagles, osprey and white pelicans have also been observed utilizing the lake. Onaman Lake is a significant walleye sport fishery; other fish species include: lake whitefish, northern pike, white sucker, redhorse sucker, burbot, yellow perch and cyprinids.
Earth Science Representation	The site occurs within the Wabigoon Subprovince of the Superior Structural Province. Local relief is minimal with numerous sediment controlled ridges. The area is overlain by weakly broken ground with occasional ice-contact features (e.g. eskers). Dominant surficial materials include imperfectly to poorly drained lacustrine sediments. The remnant shoreline of glacial Lake Kelvin is visible extending around the northeast arm of the lake.
Cultural Resource Representation	Little is known regarding the cultural, historic, or archeological values of Onaman Lake.
Recreational Opportunities	Three fly-in tourist outpost camps are located within the conservation reserve. Numerous boat caches exist on Onaman Lake. Recreational opportunities include: backcountry camping, canoeing, boating, hunting, fishing,

swimming, wildlife viewing, and snowmobiling.

**4. Survey Information**

This section provides an overview of the inventories completed, their level of detail and any further inventory work required.

Survey Level	Life Science	Earth Science	Cultural	Recreational
Reconnaissance	Yes, Dec. 2000	Yes, Dec. 2000	No	Yes, Summer 2000
Detailed	No	No	No	No
Requirement	No further requirement	No further requirement	No further requirement	No further requirement

**5. Natural & Cultural Heritage Values**

This section provides a description of the key natural and cultural heritage values of the site and their condition relative to past and present resource use and management activities. It also addresses the sensitivity of these values to future land use and management activities.

The intent of this Statement is to protect those values identified in the site, by establishing guidelines for existing and potential uses of the area, given the level of past disturbances and the nature of existing features.

Forest Values – The entire forest area is to be protected from human disturbance. The forest cover on this site is representative of the surrounding area and is predominately fire origin mature stands.

Vegetation Values – Onaman Lake represents a significant recharge area; the lake is surrounded by extensive low-lying wetland terrain. The site is representative of mature coniferous and mixedwood forest on weakly broken ground moraine and lacustrine deposits, often overlain by thin organic materials. (Geowest, 2000)

Geologic Values – The site occurs within the Wabigoon Subprovince of the Superior Structural Province. Local relief is minimal with numerous sediment controlled ridges. The area is overlain by weakly broken ground with occasional ice-contact features (e.g. eskers). Dominant surficial materials include imperfectly to poorly drained lacustrine sediments. The remnant shoreline of glacial Lake Kelvin is visible extending around the northeast arm of the lake. (Geowest, 2000)

Fish & Wildlife Values – The islands in Onaman Lake are important woodland caribou habitat and the lake is part of an important woodland caribou migration corridor and caribou calving area. Bald eagles, osprey and white pelicans have also been observed utilizing the lake. Onaman Lake is a significant walleye sport fishery; other fish species include: lake whitefish, northern pike, white sucker, redhorse sucker, burbot, yellow perch and cyprinids.

Recreation & Tourism Values – Three fly-in tourist outpost camps are located within the conservation reserve. Numerous boat caches exist on Onaman Lake. Onaman Lake is an important walleye fishery. Recreational opportunities include: backcountry camping, canoeing, boating, hunting, fishing, swimming, wildlife viewing, and snowmobiling.

Cultural Values – Little is known concerning the cultural values of the conservation reserve.

Aboriginal Values – The site has probably been used historically by First Nation peoples for traditional hunting, gathering and cultural activities. The MNR has no record that would indicate the levels of historical use for these activities, however, should any be discovered, they will be given appropriate priority and protection. First Nation people also currently utilize the site for hunting, trapping, fishing and recreation. Nothing in this Statement of Conservation Interest in any way affects existing Aboriginal or Treaty Rights.

## **6. Management Guidelines**

The following topics briefly indicate the existing situation within the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve and outline the new and existing management guidelines to be implemented and followed. A copy of the Land Use Policy Report for the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve can be viewed on the Crown Land Use Website (<http://crownlanduseatlas.mnr.gov.on.ca/pdfs/C2223.pdf>).

### **6.1 Land Tenure**

The Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve consists entirely of Crown land. No private land or development currently exists in the area; no future private land disposition or development will be permitted. Existing commercial development within the site (e.g. outpost camps) may be maintained; no future disposition or development will be permitted. Tourism facilities, however, may apply to upgrade tenure from LUP to lease.

### **6.2 Existing and Proposed Development**

Existing approved development within the conservation reserve is as follows:

- Three fly-in outpost camps (under LUP), all operated by one tourist outfitter (Bauer's Onaman Lake Cabins and Outposts), are located within the conservation reserve.
- An old MNR camp is located on one of the southern islands in Onaman Lake. The camp buildings have been removed, however, the old dock still remains and will be removed in the future (Teasdale, 2002).

Other development on Onaman Lake, either adjacent to or in close proximity to the site:

- One commercial fishing cabin, located on the west side of the lake is present under a 'Letter of Authority' (not located within the conservation reserve).
- 29 private boat caches (under 'Agreement') are located at the access points to Onaman Lake (not within the conservation reserve).
- 4 commercial boat caches (with a total of 15 boats; under 'Agreement') are located at the access points to Onaman Lake (not within the conservation reserve).



- One formal and two informal access points to Onaman Lake (not within the conservation reserve).

Maintenance to existing trails, roads, and cabins will be permitted, however, no new development that would disturb the forest or the forest understory vegetation will be permitted. The area will be managed primarily for low-impact recreation, canoeing, hunting, fishing, public nature appreciation, educational experiences and scientific study. Major tourism facilities and development will not be promoted for the area due to the potential for site degradation.

### **6.3 Recreational Activities**

#### **6.3.1 Summary**

Tourism	Three fly-in tourist outpost camps are located within the conservation reserve; all are operated by the same tourist outfitter (Bauer’s Onaman Lake Cabins and Outposts).
Recreational Fishing	Onaman Lake is a significant walleye sport fishery; other fish species include: lake whitefish, northern pike, white sucker, redhorse sucker, burbot, yellow perch and cyprinids. The majority of the business generated by the tourist outfitter is through recreational fishing.
Recreational Hunting	Recreational hunting (mainly moose hunting) opportunities exist; however the tourist operator on Onaman Lake generates less than 10% of their business through recreational hunting. The majority of the site is not included within Bear Management Areas.

#### **6.3.2 Guidelines**

Low-intensity, non-structural activities that do not impact the health of the forest ecosystem (e.g. viewing, canoeing, hunting, fishing, etc.) are permitted. ATV access and snowmobile usage will be closely monitored for possible damage to the trees, hydrology, and to the site’s ability to regenerate. If site degradation occurs, these activities may be excluded from the area. Access to the site by non-mechanized means is the preferred method.

### **6.4 Commercial Activities**

#### **6.4.1 Summary**

Mining	No current mining claims exist within the reserve. Numerous mining claims, exploration and mine sites are located adjacent to and within close proximity to the conservation reserve.
Aggregate	None exist on site
Forest Harvest	Mature forest cover on the site is commercially merchantable.
Wild Rice	None observed on site.
Trapping	Two traplines (GE223 & NG87) overlap the majority of the conservation reserve. A very small portion on the north-eastern side of the conservation reserve is overlapped by trapline GE225.
Bear Management Areas	One BMA (NG-19-008) overlaps a small part of the south-

	western end of the conservation reserve. The majority of the site is not included within a BMA license.
Outpost Camps/Outfitters	Three fly-in tourist outpost camps (operated by one tourist outfitter) are located within the conservation reserve.
Commercial Fisheries	One commercial fishing license is present on Onaman Lake. Four baitfish blocks overlap Onaman Lake (three of which are currently active and one which is presently vacant).

**6.4.2 Guidelines**

All of the commercial activities noted above, in section 6.4.1 (outpost camps, traplines, bear management areas, commercial fishing licenses and baitfish harvest areas), will be permitted to continue. No new trails, cabins or other development are permitted without specific authorization from the Ministry. However, the maintenance and repair of existing trails and cabins is permitted, as long as the scale and function of the trail or cabin is not significantly altered.

No other commercial activities are known to exist within the conservation reserve boundaries and no new commercial activities will be permitted (i.e., mining, hydroelectric development, logging, aggregate extraction, road development, utility corridors, peat development and topsoil removal).

The area of the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve has been permanently removed from the operable area of the Lake Nipigon Forest and the Kenogami Forest Sustainable Forest Licenses. The area has also been officially withdrawn from staking by means of a withdrawal order.

**6.5 Aboriginal Interests**

Local First Nation communities were asked to provide input into the regulation of the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve. District Manager letters were sent to seven First Nations (Lake Nipigon Ojibway, Aroland, Rocky Bay, Pays Plat, Red Rock, Sandpoint and Ojibways of the Pic River) on November 12, 1999.

Meetings were held with Lake Nipigon Ojibway, Aroland, Rocky Bay, Pays Plat and Red Rock First Nations. Sandpoint and Ojibways of the Pic River First Nations were contacted and invited to meet but either declined or did not respond.

No significant issues were brought forward during these meetings. Lake Nipigon Ojibway First Nation indicated that they had a trapline which overlapped the conservation reserve, but that they were not concerned since trapping activities will not be impacted by the site’s regulation as a conservation reserve. Lake Nipigon Ojibway indicated an interest in seeing an additional conservation reserve established northwest of the Onaman Lake site, in the Toronto Lake – Summit Lake area – they were advised to submit their proposal to the Forest Accord Board and the MNR for consideration.

The following First Nations have changed their names since the above consultation was undertaken:

- Lake Nipigon Ojibway First Nation → Animbiigoo Zaagi’igan Anishinaabek
- Rocky Bay First Nation → Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek

Nothing in this Statement of Conservation Interest in any way affects existing Aboriginal or Treaty Rights.

## **6.6 Natural Resources Stewardship**

### **6.6.1 Vegetation Management and Fire Management**

The area will be managed in accordance with relevant existing policies. Natural ecosystem processes and features will, for the most part, be allowed to occur with minimal human interference.

The MNR recognizes fire as an essential process fundamental to the ecological integrity of conservation reserves. In accordance with existing Conservation Reserve Policy and the Forest Fire Management Strategy for Ontario, forest fire protection will be carried out as on surrounding lands.

Whenever feasible, the MNR fire program will endeavor to use “light on the land” techniques, which do not unduly disturb the landscape, in this conservation reserve. Examples of light on the land techniques may include limiting the use of heavy equipment or limiting the number of trees felled during fire response efforts.

Opportunities for prescribed burning to achieve ecological or resource management objectives may be considered. These management objectives will be developed with public consultation prior to any prescribed burning, and reflected in the document that provides management direction for this conservation reserve. Plans for any prescribed burning will be developed in accordance with the MNR Prescribed Burn Planning Manual and the Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves (approval pending).

### **6.6.2 Fish and Wildlife Management**

Fisheries and wildlife will be managed in accordance with existing policies. Opportunities for wildlife viewing will be encouraged. A fisheries management plan for Onaman Lake was prepared in 1998 and will be in effect until the year 2008. Management policies for the Onaman Lake fishery will continue to follow the direction outlined in this plan. The islands of Onaman Lake, recognized as important caribou habitat and calving grounds, will be managed in accordance with existing policies and management practices established to protect this species at risk.

### **6.6.3 Landforms**

No management requirements exist for this category, except that significant and unique landforms should be afforded continued protection as a natural resource.

## **6.7 Cultural Resource Stewardship**

There are no requirements for management of cultural resources at this time based on existing information. The Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to work with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation’s regional chief archaeologist to identify archaeological sites requiring further protection. To date there has been no field survey to assess cultural resources in the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve and the potential for archaeological finds is unknown.

## **6.8 Client Services**

Nipigon District and the Information Management Team staff will be the primary contact for responding to inquiries about the basic level of information such as access, nature appreciation, scientific study requests, wildlife viewing opportunities, hunting, permitted uses and boundaries.

## **6.9 Research**

Non-destructive scientific research by qualified/recognized Canadian institutions or organizations that will contribute to the Ministry of Natural Resources' natural heritage information base will be encouraged. All research programs will require the approval of the Ministry of Natural Resources and will be subject to ministry policy and other relevant legislation.

## **6.10 Marketing**

Activities will include producing a fact sheet highlighting the importance of the reserve and responding to inquiries about the site. There are no other requirements at this time.

## **7. Implementation**

Implementation of this Statement of Conservation Interest will primarily involve monitoring activities to ensure adherence to management guidelines. The conservation reserve will be managed under the supervision of the Information Management Team supervisor (Nipigon District) and the Nipigon East Area supervisor. Any affected clients will be notified of any amendments to this Statement of Conservation Interest.

The Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve was regulated on June 23, 2000 (by Ontario Regulation 86/01) under the *Public Lands Act*, following the process set out in the *Ontario's Living Legacy Protected Areas Regulation Implementation Manual (MNR, 2000)*.

## **8. Review and Revisions**

Any changes that may occur to the management direction outlined in this Statement of Conservation Interest for the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve will be evaluated for their significance. Minor changes, which do not alter the overall protection objectives, may be considered and approved by the Area Supervisor. Local consultation may also be required, as determined by the Area Supervisor. In the case of major changes, the need for a more comprehensive Resource Management Plan will be considered first along with any legislated notification requirements that may exist at that particular time. Any major amendments to this document will require public consultation and the approval of the District Manager and Regional Director.

## **9. Public Consultation**

### **9.1 Results of Past Consultation**

The Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve has been a part of the land use planning and consultation process during:

- Lands for Life round table consultation (June 1997 to July 1998)
- Ontario's Living Legacy consultations (Fall 1998, Spring 1999)
- OLL Site Regulation and Public Consultation Process (Nov 1999)

During the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* site regulation and public consultation process for the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve, contact was made with local stakeholders. In November of 1999, letters from the District Manager were sent to First Nations, representatives from the forestry industry, trappers, municipalities, landowners, prospectors, fish and game clubs, trail and recreational clubs, and tourist operators/outfitters. Newspaper advertisements were also released at this time.

One written comment was received regarding the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve (see Appendix 8 for a copy of the *OLL Public and Aboriginal Consultation Documentation Form for the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve*). Meetings were held with several First Nations to discuss the regulation of the Onaman Lake Conservation Reserve (along with several other OLL sites). Please see section 6.5 for an account of the comments put forward by First Nations. Concerns that arose with respect to the establishment of the conservation reserve were addressed accordingly.

## **9.2 Present and Future Consultation**

Further widespread consultation is not deemed necessary at this time because of the extensive consultation that has already occurred to date.

## **10. References**

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