

**Torrance Barrens
Conservation Reserve**

(Dark Sky Reserve)

**Statement of
Conservation Interest**

February, 2006

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(Dark Sky Reserve)**

Statement of Conservation Interest

**Ministry of Natural Resources
Parry Sound District**

Prepared with the assistance of:

**Meteeck & Company
Huntsville, Ontario**

February, 2006

Approval Statement

We are pleased to approve this Statement of Conservation Interest for Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve (Dark Sky Reserve).

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve is a 1906 hectare area of Crown land, located west of Gravenhurst town centre and south of Lake Muskoka, Highway 169 and the village of Torrance. It lies within the Township of Muskoka Lakes and the Town of Gravenhurst in the District Municipality of Muskoka.

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve, in Hills' ecological District 5E-7, is a large, relatively undisturbed series of bedrock barrens interspersed with wetlands and treed uplands. The conservation reserve provides habitat for close to five hundred species of flowering plants, about one hundred and fifty species of birds, and numerous mammals, reptiles and amphibians. A number of rare and threatened species and species of special concern have been documented within the conservation reserve.

The conservation reserve and its adjoining Crown lands and protected areas, including Hardy Lake Provincial Park, Loon Lake Wetland Conservation Reserve and Severn River Conservation Reserve, constitute a large area which provides an important ecological link between Lake Muskoka and Severn River.

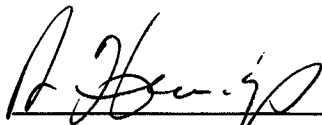
The area, which became Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve in June 1997 (Ontario Regulation 259/97), was identified by local individuals, groups and local governments as meriting protection for its natural, recreational and aesthetic values. Prior to and during the preparation of the original (1999) Statement of Conservation Interest, the public was widely consulted and continued to be very supportive of the protection of this area. After its 1997 regulation as a conservation reserve, the astronomy viewing values of the area were profiled by the Muskoka Heritage Foundation, and Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve was recognized by MNR as a Dark Sky Reserve.

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve has a tradition of a variety of recreation activities, including hunting, gathering, nature appreciation, walking and hiking, snowmobiling, and, in recent years, night sky viewing.

This document replaces the Statement of Conservation Interest that was approved in August 1999, to reflect MNR's evolving views on the management of conservation reserves and to better clarify MNR's intent for this site. This Statement of Conservation Interest provides guidance for the management of the conservation reserve and provides the basis for the ongoing monitoring of activities. More detailed direction is not anticipated at this time. Should significant facility development or other uses be considered or complex issues arise which require additional studies, more defined management direction or special protection measures, then a detailed Resource Management Plan will be prepared with full public consultation.

Nearby property owners and other interested stakeholders were invited to review a draft of this revised Statement of Conservation Interest from December 5th, 2005 until January 9th, 2006. Their comments were considered in the finalization of this document.

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve is managed under the direction of the District Manager and the Bracebridge Area Supervisor of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Parry Sound District.


Approved by: Andy Heerschap
A/District Manager
Parry Sound District



Approved by: Ray Bonenberg,
A/Regional Director
Southern Region

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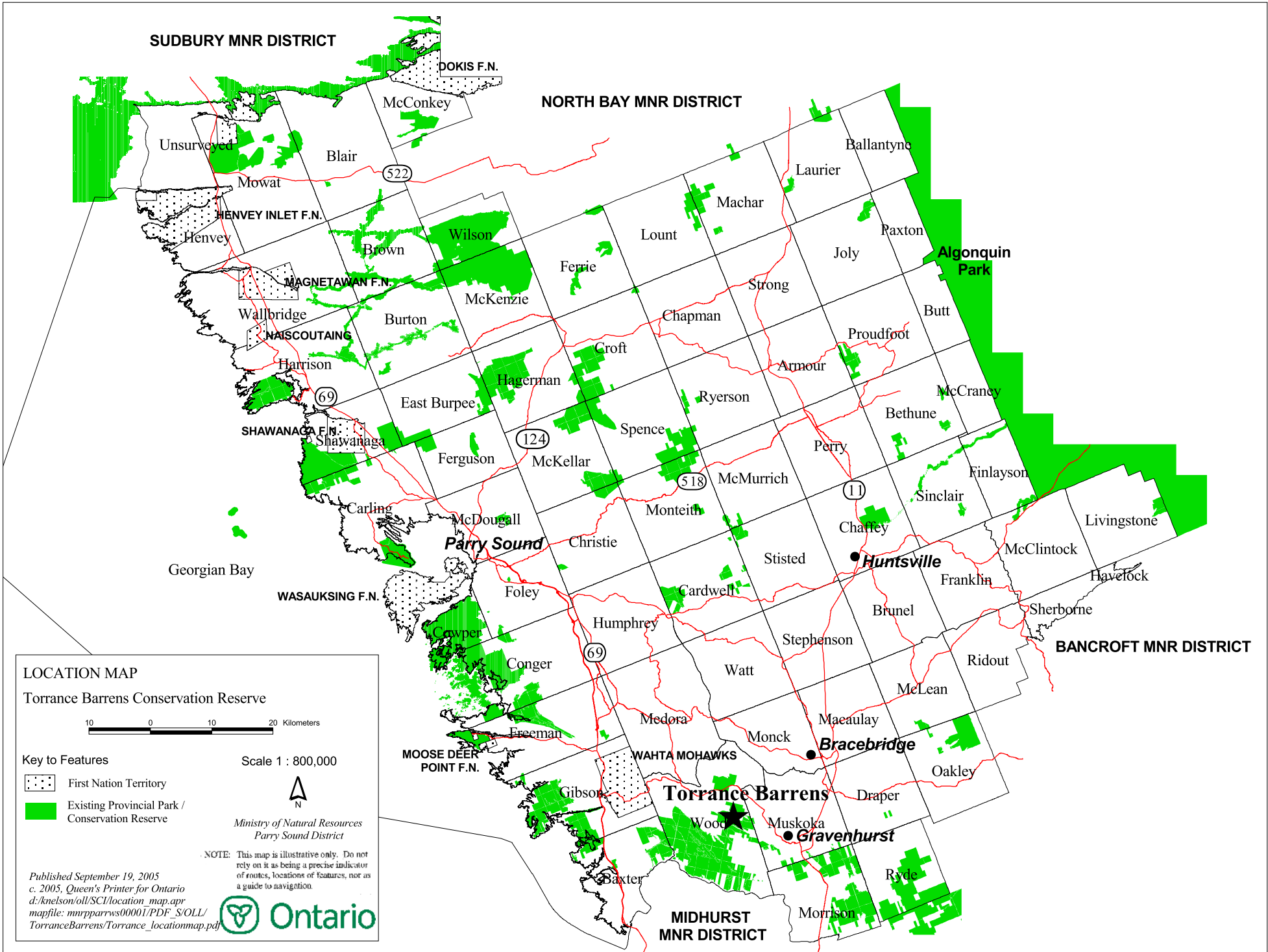


















FIGURE 2

Site Map

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve

Legend

-  Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve
-  Building
-  Primary Roads
-  Secondary Roads
-  Tertiary Roads / Trails
-  Railway
-  Road Allowance
-  Lot Line
-  Township Boundary
-  Intermittent Stream
-  Permanent Stream
-  Water Area, Permanent
-  Wetland Area, Permanent
-  Crown Land¹
-  Private Land¹
-  Lower Tier Municipal Boundary

Footnote:
¹ Road allowances shown on this map are in municipal ownership and are not part of the Conservation Reserve.

Projection: UTM, NAD83, Zone 17, Meters

NOTE: This map is illustrative only. Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of routes, locations of features, nor as a guide to navigation.

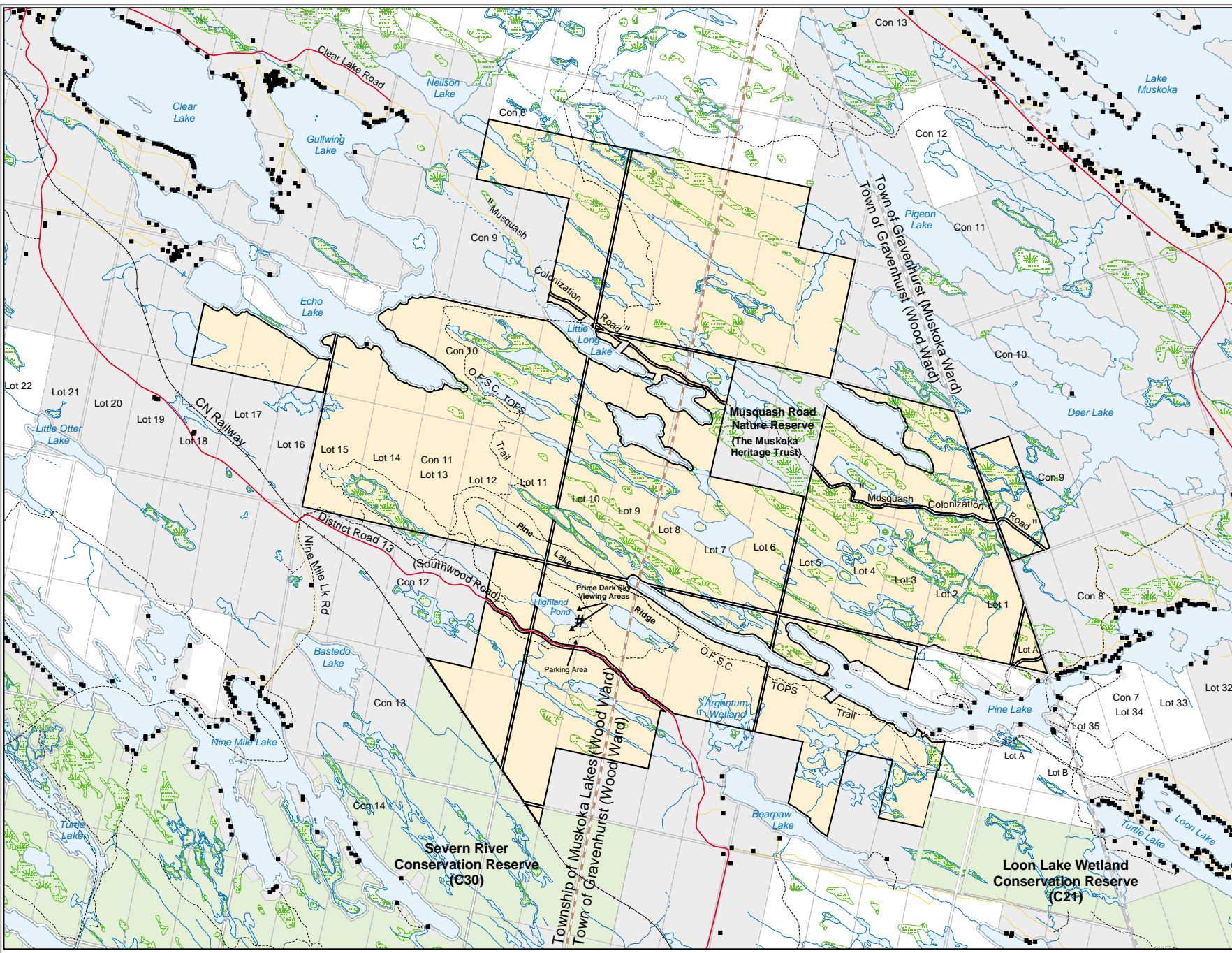


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1.0 Introduction

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve is a 1906 hectare area of Crown land, located west of Gravenhurst town centre and south of Lake Muskoka, Highway 169 and the village of Torrance (see Figure 1). It lies completely within the Township of Muskoka Lakes and the Town of Gravenhurst in the District Municipality of Muskoka.

The conservation reserve consists entirely of Crown lands. It abuts private lands on much of its east, west and south boundaries (see Figure 2). Along the eastern boundary there is a two-lot block of private land that is surrounded by, but is excluded from the conservation reserve.

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve is linked by an extensive area of approximately 750 hectares of Crown land to the north to Hardy Lake Provincial Park on Lake Muskoka. Severn River Conservation Reserve to the southwest, an *Ontario's Living Legacy* (1999) site, provides a continuous area of protected Crown land to the south and southwest extending to the Severn River. Additional Crown lands and Loon Lake Wetland Conservation Reserve (also an *Ontario's Living Legacy* site) abut Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve at its southeast corner. Together, these lands constitute a significant ecological area linking the Severn River to Lake Muskoka.

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve has an extensive history of support for its protection. It was initially identified as having significant natural values by Brunton (1992) and then Reid and Bergsma (1994) of the Muskoka Heritage Areas Program. In 1993, mainly through work done by the Clear Lake Property Owners Association, it was shown to have aesthetic and recreational values for the local community, further articulated by Sauriol and Silver (1995). Additional inventory work (Bergsma, 1994) helped to further describe values and refine boundaries to ensure that the significant values were included within the proposed conservation reserve.

The Ministry of Natural Resources proposed the area for protection in 1995 and public meetings were held in April 1995 and October 1996. Broad-based public input supported the protection of the area provided that existing uses were permitted to continue. Support at and since the October 19, 1996 Public Open House included submissions from the following organizations and individuals:

- Muskoka Heritage Foundation
- Clear Lake Property Owner's Association
- Township of Muskoka Lakes Ratepayers Association
- Muskoka Field Naturalists
- Township of Muskoka Lakes
- Town of Gravenhurst
- District Municipality of Muskoka
- Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
- Beacon Bible Camp
- YMCA Camp Pinecrest
- Snow Crest Riders Snowmobile Club
- Muskoka Snowmobile Region
- Natural History Tours
- Township of Muskoka Lakes Recreational Trails Committee
- And many individuals from across Muskoka and beyond

The primary concerns expressed during this process were associated with the continuation of the existing uses of hunting, snowmobiling and trapping as well as permitting new uses such as walking trails.

Conservation reserves are established under the authority of the Public Lands Act, Ontario Regulation 805/94. Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve was established by Ontario Regulation 259/97 (Schedule 22) on June 25, 1997.

After its 1997 regulation as a conservation reserve, the astronomy viewing values to be found in the area were profiled by the Muskoka Heritage Foundation, and Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve was

recognized by MNR as a Dark Sky Reserve during the preparation of the 1999 Statement of Conservation Interest.

This document replaces the Statement of Conservation Interest that was approved in August 1999. Changes were necessary to update knowledge, to reflect MNR's evolving views on management of conservation reserves, to better clarify MNR's intent for this site, and to better address use issues and values.

A Statement of Conservation Interest is prepared under the direction of MNR's Procedural Guideline A – Resource Management Planning (PL. Procedure 3.03.05). The purpose of this Statement of Conservation Interest is to identify and describe the values of Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve. The Statement of Conservation Interest also outlines the activities that currently occur within the conservation reserve and provides guidelines for the management of current and future activities in the context of protecting the natural, recreational and cultural values.

1.1 Background Information:

Name	Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve (Dark Sky Reserve)
Ecoregion/Ecodistrict	Georgian Bay Ecoregion, Ecodistrict 5E-7
OMNR Administrative Region/District/Area	Southern Region/ Parry Sound District/ Bracebridge Area
Total Area (ha.)	1906 hectares
Regulation Date	June 25, 1997 (O. Reg. 259/97, Schedule 22)
First Nations	Robinson-Huron Treaty and Williams Treaty
OBM map sheets	10 17 6100 49750, 6150 49750, 6200 49750, 6100 49800, 6150 49800
Topographic Map	Penetanguishene 31 D/13 Gravenhurst 31 D/14
UTM co-ordinates	17T 61800 497800 (Centroid)

1.2 Representation:

Earth Science Representation:

- Bedrock
- Grenville Province, Central Gneiss Belt
 - Moon River Domain - gneisses and migmatites of diverse origins
 - Go Home Domain - gneisses and migmatites of diverse origins
- Surficial
- glacial features - minor pockets of shallow glacial sediment
 - bedrock erosional forms
 - bedrock barrens – glaciolacustrine and glaciofluvial action
 - lower Muskoka watershed

Life Science Representation:

The following landform types and vegetation associations are found:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Vlla – 7 | 1. Acidic rock barrens: Open barrens
Treed barrens |
| | 2. Wetlands: Swamps
Marshes
Poor fen peatlands |
| | 3. Upland forests: Successional deciduous
Mature mixed
Coniferous |
| Ia – 11 | |

Other life science values identified include 463 native vascular plant species (including 12 Atlantic Coastal Plain species), 94 bird species, 19 mammal species, 28 butterfly species, 8 dragonfly species and 18 reptile/amphibian species.

Cultural Resources Representation:

Neither detailed cultural research nor inventory has been carried out for this conservation reserve. Recent regional evaluation (OMNR, 2003) shows that this conservation reserve contains areas that have a high potential for cultural heritage sites.

The alignment of the old Musquash Colonization Road cuts through the conservation reserve, partly as the existing Clear Lake access road from the northwest to Little Long Lake, and partly as a trail that continues through the conservation reserve to its east boundary, between Deer and Pine Lakes.

Recreational Opportunities:

No specific studies have been undertaken to date. The area accommodates big and small upland game and waterfowl hunting, gathering (blueberries), hiking, wildlife viewing, camping, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and night sky viewing.

1.3 Survey Work:

Survey Level	Earth Science	Life Science	Cultural	Recreational	Other
Reconnaissance	Bajc, 1993 Spek, 1994	Brunton, 1992 Reid & Bergsma, 1994	OMNR, 2003	None	None
Detailed	None	Bergsma, 1994	None	None	None
Requirement	None	Monitor the status/presence of significant species and associations.	Research to be encouraged	Monitor use impacts	None

2.0 Values to be protected

The conservation reserve is located entirely within Hills' (1959) Ecodistrict 5E-7. Values include earth science, life science and recreational/aesthetic values, with an emphasis on the life sciences.

2.1 Earth Science:

(Earth science information, unless otherwise noted, is taken from Spek, 1994)

Earth science values are focussed on features (bedrock and surficial) that represent the chronology of earth history in the province (Davidson, 1981).

Bedrock:

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve is a large area of low relief, sparsely forested bedrock barrens interspersed with numerous lakes and wetlands.

The conservation reserve straddles the southwestern edge of the Moon River Domain (Parry Sound Terrane) and the northeastern edge of the Go Home Domain (Algonquin Terrane), structural subdivisions of the Central Gneiss Belt, Grenville Province (Easton, 1992a). The area consists of elongated ridges of granitic gneisses and migmatites of varied origins, with intervening swales filled with wetlands and small ponds and lakes.

The Grenville Province is the product of thrusting and imbrication of the crust to the northwest as it collided with a continental landmass to the southeast. The Grenville Orogeny, circa 1140 to 1070 million years ago, culminated more than 500 million years of crustal evolution. The eroded roots of the products of these events are displayed in the complexly metamorphosed and deformed rocks of the region (Easton, 1992b).

The Algonquin Terrane and the Parry Sound Terrane are two of the four lithotectonic terranes of the Central Gneiss Belt. The Go Home Domain is one of twelve structural domains of the Algonquin Terrane. The Moon River Domain is one of three structural domains of the Parry Sound Terrane. This geological environment is part of the modern organization of the complex products of the mid-Proterozoic orogenic events (Easton 1992a & b). As such, their representation in Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve contributes to the conservation of the Grenville Province continental accretion theme (Davidson, 1981).

Within the Ontario Provincial Park system, the bedrock geological features observed in Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve have local significance.

Surficial:

The sparse surficial deposits in this conservation reserve are Late Wisconsinan in age. The dominant Quaternary deposit is limited thin, discontinuous till cover, which occurs sporadically over a large area of bedrock barrens. The wetlands are underlain by recent organic materials.

The conservation reserve represents an erosional landscape, with the following Wisconsinan glacial features found:

- bedrock barrens due to sub-glacial meltwater action and post-glacial wave washing;
- limited erosional forms illustrating glacial advance include bedrock fluting, concentric fractures and chatter marks, and;
- minor pockets of glacial sediment and erratic boulders.

The conservation reserve is located on the lower Muskoka River watershed and is very close to the southern watershed boundary.

Since all these features are well represented within other members of the natural heritage system (e.g. The Massasauga and French River provincial parks) the conservation reserve is only locally significant from an earth science perspective.

2.2 Life Science:

(Life science information, unless otherwise noted, is taken from Bergsma, 1994)

The conservation reserve is located within Hills' (1959) Ecodistrict 5E-7. Life science significance is determined on the basis of the following criteria: representation, diversity, condition, ecological considerations and special features (Crins & Kor, 1998).

The assessment of life science values is primarily focussed on landform type and the vegetation communities that occur on those landforms (Noble, 1983) within the context of an ecodistrict. The conservation reserve is dominated by landform type VIIa-7 (low relief, bare bedrock to shallow soils) with a minor intrusion of Ia-11 (deeper soils of morainic origin) along the western boundary (Echo/Gullwing Lakes).

This conservation reserve is part of a discontinuous band of granite barrens extending from the Kaladar area in eastern Ontario to Georgian Bay up to and including the French River; otherwise, granite barrens have limited occurrence in Southern Ontario. These granite barrens present a distinctive habitat type within Southern Ontario with unique environmental factors and specialized plants and animals (Catling & Brownell, 1999).

Representation:

The conservation reserve represents 19 vegetation communities on landform VIIa-7 (bedrock landform) and to a lesser extent on landform Ia-11 (ground moraine landform). The most significant of these communities are found in the southern zone.

Biophysiological unit VIIa-7 is a weakly broken area of bare bedrock plain with gentle slopes, (generally less than 5%) with organic deposits occupying depressions, as described by Noble (1983). These areas are characterized by the absence of soil except for very shallow pockets of glacial till overburden or localized accumulations of organic soils in minor depressions and lineations in the bedrock.

Biophysiological unit Ia-11, an area of deeper soils of morainic origin, is represented in this conservation reserve by a small area along the western boundary (Echo/Gullwing Lakes).

- VIIa –7
1. Acidic rock barrens:
 - Open barrens:
 - . Lichen graminoid-heath
 - . Graminoid-herbaceous scrub
 - Treed barrens:
 - . white pine-white oak-red oak
 - . aspen-birch
 - . red pine
 2. Wetlands
 - Swamps:
 - . mixed hardwood coniferous
 - . coniferous
 - . tall scrub thicket
 - . low shrub shoreline
 - . dead tree
 - Marsh:
 - . open water
 - . meadow
 - . coastal plain
 - Poor fen peatlands:

- . herbaceous
- . graminoid low shrub
- . treed

- 3. Upland forests:
 - Successional deciduous
 - Mature mixed

- 1a-11 1. Upland forests
 - Coniferous

Condition:

The area's significant size, relatively undisturbed nature, and proximity to Crown lands in a similar condition to the north and south make this conservation reserve an important part of Ontario's natural heritage system.

There is evidence of fires within and around the area of the conservation reserve in the historic period. The bare bedrock surfaces that occupy much of the area are resistant to the casual and intermittent use that it experiences. Areas of shallow soils are subject to compaction and erosion, and wetland areas are sensitive to compaction by snowmobile or foot traffic. There is some evidence of impact on the landscape from recreational use. Snowmobile trails show some scratches on bedrock and depressed bog vegetation, evident into the summer season. Earlier concerns about garbage and trampling of vegetation from random walking, hiking and gathering appear to have been resolved in the area of marked and maintained trails.

Diversity:

The variety of treed barrens and wetland communities support a high number of plants and animals. Ecologically, the conservation reserve can be divided into four zones (see Figure 3): south barrens, central barrens, north barrens, and forest edge (Bergsma, 1994). The south barrens zone is the most sparsely vegetated and best illustrates the northeast/southwest trending linear ridge and trough geologic patterns. Most of this zone is low, flat and open. The central barrens zone makes up the majority of the conservation reserve and shows similar patterns but contains larger lakes and somewhat more soil cover, which supports more closed forests. The north barrens zone is located adjacent to Hardy Lake Provincial Park. This area of open and treed barrens contains more topographic relief with thin soils. The forest edge zone is a small area of deeper soils along Echo and Gullwing Lakes with more productive forest cover.

Across these four ecological zones, three vegetation community groupings are identified: acidic rock barrens, upland forests, and wetlands (Bergsma, 1994). Relict Atlantic Coastal Plain species add further to this diversity.

Atlantic Coastal Plain species, which favour wetland habitats, are native to the Atlantic coast from Cape Cod south to Florida and the Gulf Coast of Texas. In Canada there are two pockets of these species - one in central Ontario and the other in Nova Scotia (Keddy & Sharp, 1989). The Ontario populations are believed to have migrated up the Hudson River into the Great Lakes during the time (11,000 years ago) post-glacial Lake Algonquin covered the area east of Georgian Bay. Once new drainage outlets were opened, lake levels dropped and the shorelines receded to present day levels isolating these species on many of the lakes in Muskoka, Parry Sound and Haliburton. These populations are now disjunct by 500 to 1000 kilometres from their home ranges.

Ecological Considerations:

The size of this area and its links to other members of the natural heritage areas system is important. Here the linkage to Hardy Lake Provincial Park to the north, Severn River Conservation Reserve to the southwest, and Loon Lake Wetland Conservation Reserve to the southeast is valuable as a significant ecological area linking the Severn River to Lake Muskoka.

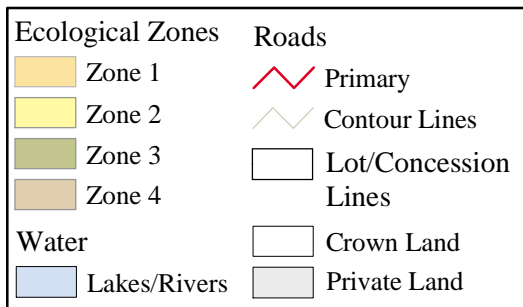
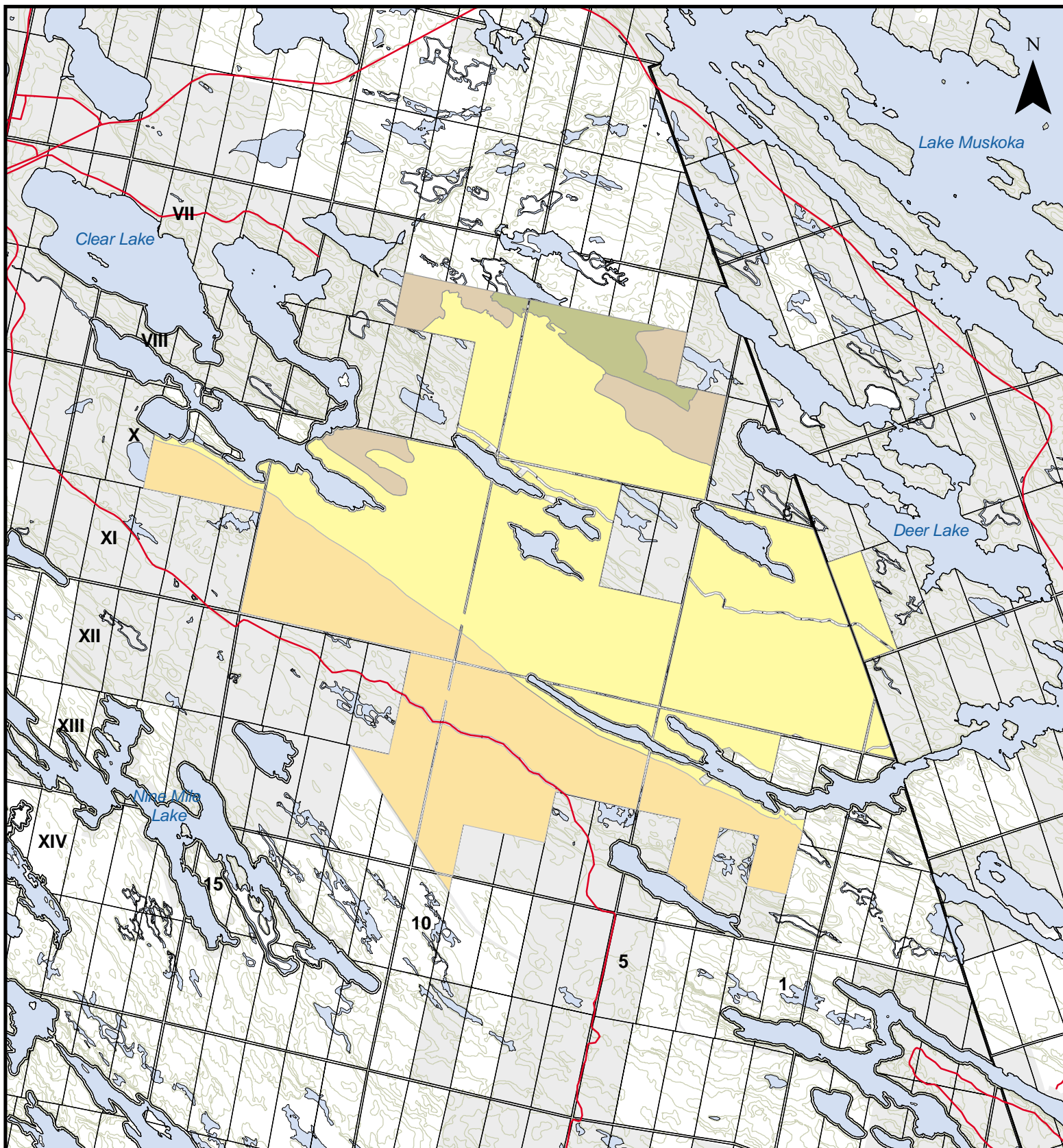
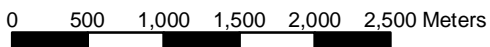


Figure 3: Torrance Barrens Ecological Zones

Contour Interval 5 meters

1:50,000



Ontario

NOTE: This map is illustrative only. Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of routes, locations of features, nor as a guide to navigation.

The most significant areas within the conservation reserve are located in the southern zone. These include Highland Pond, Pine Lake Ridge, and Argentum Wetland. Areas of lakes and ponds with Atlantic Coastal Plain species are fragile because of their sensitivity to shoreline activities. The majority of Atlantic Coastal Plain occurrences are on the western periphery of the conservation reserve on the partially developed lakes (Echo and Gullwing).

Special Features:

An array of rare species and species at risk has been identified within the site. The status of these species ranges from S1, S2, S3, or S3S4 (provincially tracked) to a species at risk category of Special Concern or Threatened (NHIC 2005). These species are as follows:

- **Flora:** Of 463 native vascular plant species identified, the following 5 are tracked by NHIC: Lance-leaved Grapefern (*Botrychium lanceolatum*), Panic Grass (*Panicum spretum*), Southern Twayblade (*Listera australis*), White Fringed Orchid (*Plantanthera blephariglottis*), and Halberd-leaved Tear-thumb (*Polygonum arifolium*).

Atlantic Coastal Plain species – of 12 species identified, the following 4 are tracked by NHIC: Snail-seed Pondweed (*Potamogeton bicupulatus*), Carolina Yellow-eyed Grass (*Xyris difformis*), Marsh St. John's Wort (*Triadenum virginicum*) and Virginia Meadow-beauty (*Rhexia virginica*).

- **Fauna:**
 - 94 bird species identified
 - 19 mammal species identified
 - 28 butterfly species identified
 - 8 dragonflies identified including the tracked mottled darner (*Aeshna clepsydra*).

Of 18 reptile/amphibian species identified, 2 are of Special Concern: Five-lined Skink (*Eumeces fasciatus*) and Eastern Ribbonsnake (*Thamnophis sauritus*); and 3 are Threatened: Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*), Eastern Hognosed Snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*) and Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*).

- **Other:** Lakes which have retained their natural water level regimes and enough undisturbed shoreline to provide a suitable habitat for the Atlantic Coastal Plain species, e.g. Gullwing Lake (ranked 12 out of 49 in importance (Keddy & Sharp, 1989)), Echo Lake and others.

In summary, although the area has a landscape that is already well represented within the natural heritage system, the strategic location and special features and species make this area significant within the natural heritage areas system.

2.3 Cultural Values:

While no specific cultural studies or inventories have been undertaken within the conservation reserve, and no major cultural resource values have been evaluated or identified to date, recent regional evaluation (OMNR, 2003), which provides generalized broad-brush mapping, shows that this conservation reserve contains areas that have a high potential for cultural heritage sites.

A partially documented resource is the location of the old Musquash Colonization Road through the northern portion of the conservation reserve. This road was built about 1870 to connect Gravenhurst to Musquash Falls (now known as Bala) and it was the first road in the area. The existing Clear Lake access road from the northwest to Little Long Lake follows the alignment of this old road, as does a portion of an Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) Trans-Ontario Provincial Snowmobile (TOPS) trail.

2.4 Recreational/Aesthetic Values:

The distinctive 'barrens' appearance of this landscape is unusual and lends itself to many passive pursuits, some of which have been noted by Sauriol and Silver (1995). The conservation reserve currently offers an

array of excellent recreational opportunities including hunting (small and large upland game and waterfowl), gathering (blueberries), hiking (trail and non-trail), educational tours and interpretive hikes. The conservation reserve contains a portion of the OFSC TOPS snowmobile route that passes through western Muskoka. Except for a portion of the old Musquash Colonization Road, all-terrain vehicles do not appear to use the conservation reserve for trails or for random travel, perhaps due to the unsuitable nature of the bedrock ridge and swale terrain for this use.

The main access to many of these activities is a parking area at Highland Pond, off District Road 13 (Southwood Road). The Muskoka Lakes Recreational Trails Committee has established (and maintains) a network of trails originating from Highland Pond. The Township of Muskoka Lakes maintains toilet facilities at this location. While there are no developed campsites within the conservation reserve, there is evidence of occasional camping around the Highland Pond access and along the old Musquash Colonization Road.

The Highland Pond area is also the location of many night sky viewing events, which have become an important part of the recreational activity of this conservation reserve. A combination of attributes makes Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve an excellent site to observe the night sky. These include:

- Remoteness from significant urban light sources allows the area to retain the natural darkness of the night;
- A hard granite surface immune to vibrations is ideal for astronomic telescopes and time-lapse photography;
- The area is within a relatively level landscape, without surrounding hills to obscure the horizon; nor is it elevated to the extent that it would expose distracting distant light sources;
- The area is easily accessible, within two or three hours of major population centres.

These attributes, which result in a relatively pristine night sky, enhance the sense of remoteness and wilderness of this site. Pristine night skies are considered a significant value, given the increasingly limited areas of southern and central Ontario that are not heavily affected by light pollution.

3.0 Management Guidelines

MNR's Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves came into effect on January 10, 2005. All new MNR projects in conservation reserves, and any new approvals or permits issued, must meet the legal requirements of this Class Environmental Assessment, and any relevant amendments.

3.1 Land Tenure:

Background:

Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve consists of 1906 hectares of Crown land within the Township of Muskoka Lakes and the Town of Gravenhurst, in the former geographic Townships of Muskoka and Wood, in the District Municipality of Muskoka. Private lands abut the conservation reserve to the west, southeast and east. Along the northeastern boundary, a two-lot block of private land is surrounded by, but is excluded from the conservation reserve. An extensive area of about 750 hectares (1850 acres) of Crown land connects the northern boundary to Hardy Lake Provincial Park, on Lake Muskoka. Severn River Conservation Reserve, an *Ontario's Living Legacy* site (OMNR, 1999), provides a continuous area of Crown land to the south and southwest extending to the Severn River. Additional Crown lands and Loon Lake Wetland Conservation Reserve (also an *Ontario's Living Legacy* site) abut Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve at its southeast corner.

District Road 13 (Southwood Road) cuts through the conservation reserve along the southern boundary near Highland Pond. In the northwest, Clear Lake Road extends to just east of Gullwing Lake, following, in part, the old Musquash Colonization Road, which cuts through the conservation reserve to its eastern boundary. The road allowances for these roads, shoreline road allowances on Echo and Pine Lakes and other smaller lakes, and unopened internal road allowances are in municipal ownership and not part of the conservation reserve.

The conservation reserve includes four registered traplines (BR-01, BR-02, BR-03, BR-04): one authorized trapline cabin is located within the site. The conservation reserve is included within two commercial Bait Fish Blocks (PS 218, PS 237). No Bear Management Areas apply to this conservation reserve.

An OFSC TOPS trail crosses east/west through the conservation reserve, south of Pine Lake, and continues south towards Nine Mile Lake. A second local snowmobile trail crosses north/south through the conservation reserve. These trails are authorized by land use permit.

Guideline:

The sale of Crown lands within the conservation reserve is not permitted.

There are no plans by the MNR to acquire private lands to add to the conservation reserve. The two-lot block of private lands (Lots 6 & 7, Con. 10 Twp. of Wood), virtually surrounded by the conservation reserve on its northeast boundary, was acquired by The Muskoka Heritage Trust in 2001, and is now known as the Musquash Road Nature Reserve. It is no longer considered for acquisition as part of the conservation reserve.

If the opportunity arises, MNR would encourage the Township of Muskoka Lakes and the Town of Gravenhurst in the closure of all internal unopened road allowances and adjacent shoreline road allowances and their transfer to the Ministry. This would enable consolidation of the conservation reserve boundaries and facilitate effective resource management and enforcement of regulations.

The Bait Fish Blocks, currently assigned, are permitted to continue. The registered traplines are allowed to continue, as is the authorized trapline cabin, but new trapline cabins are not permitted within the conservation reserve.

The provision of commercial bear hunting service is not allowed within the boundaries of the conservation reserve. This site, or portions of it, cannot be incorporated into a Bear Management Area.

New recreation camps are not permitted.

The authorized snowmobile trails can continue to be authorized; their use will be monitored to ensure that conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted. Restrictions on new recreation trails are addressed in Section 3.2 "Development".

3.2 Development:

Background:

Current development includes two authorized snowmobile trails, several day hiking trails and a parking lot. Two authorized snowmobile trails are maintained by OFSC through the conservation reserve. Currently access is from Clear Lake Road and the old Musquash Colonization Road right-of-way, and from several locations along District Road 13 (Southwood Road). Formal access and parking is provided at Highland Pond on District Road 13. The Township of Muskoka Lakes Recreational Trails Committee has been very active in hiking trail development within Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve, starting at Highland Pond, and the Township of Muskoka Lakes maintains toilet facilities at this location. Informal camping occurs along the old Musquash Colonization Road.

Guideline:

New private access or resource access roads, and additions to or upgrading of existing roads in the conservation reserve are not permitted. There is no intention to develop or improve roads on Crown lands outside of the conservation reserve to improve access to this site.

Unauthorized works within the conservation reserve will be handled in accordance with the Public Lands Act, and any required removal of these works will be at the expense of those responsible.

In general, existing authorized recreational trails may be permitted to continue in conservation reserves as long as they do not impair the natural features and values for which the area is identified and as long as there are no significant environmental impacts. Accordingly, the two authorized snowmobile trails will continue to be authorized and can be maintained. Their location and use will be monitored to ensure that conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted. This is discussed further in Section 3.3 “Recreational Activities”.

New recreational trails may be considered on a case by case basis, as is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3 “Recreational Activities”. New recreational trails for motorized vehicles are discouraged and will only be considered under exceptional circumstances if the criteria identified in Section 3.3 have been demonstrated.

Any new development must meet MNR’s commitments to protect cultural heritage values (see Section 3.7).

3.2.1 Dark Skies for Astronomy

Background:

The current lack of development both within and beyond the conservation reserve has made the area attractive for astronomy (stargazing) outings. The absence of light pollution in the night skies over the conservation reserve is remarkable. This resulted in a request by the Muskoka Heritage Foundation (Goering, 1998) and other interest groups to maintain these favorable conditions through appropriate land use controls both inside and outside the conservation reserve.

The Muskoka Heritage Foundation requested that the stargazing opportunities be recognized by MNR through supportive management guidelines and by designating the conservation reserve a “Dark Sky Reserve”. This was done during the preparation of the 1999 Statement of Conservation Interest for this site. Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve was Canada’s first “Dark Sky Reserve” and was publicly announced at the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada’s annual meeting in Toronto in July 1999.

Guideline:

While there is no intent at present to provide or permit any new development in this conservation reserve that would require lighting, should this be considered at some point in the future the MNR will not allow unnecessary, undirected light pollution. This commitment recognizes the natural, aesthetic and biological values provided by a pristine night sky and the unique status of Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve as a Dark Sky Reserve.

MNR has supported astronomy activities at Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve, and has designated the site a Dark Sky Reserve. MNR supports the Dark Sky Reserve theme and educational and stewardship activities of the Muskoka Heritage Foundation in promoting this use, its potential benefits to local tourism and the need for the cooperation of all private landowners around the periphery of the conservation reserve.

MNR partners (Muskoka Heritage Foundation and municipalities) are encouraged to continue monitoring land use activities around the perimeter of the conservation reserve to ensure that night sky values are not compromised by night light pollution of the skies around the conservation reserve. MNR would support any municipal decision in the future to adopt guidelines or a by-law for the design and placement of outside lighting to prevent light pollution within an appropriate range of the conservation reserve; we would also support related education and stewardship programs.

3.3 Recreational Activities:

Background:

Existing recreational uses include big and small upland game and waterfowl hunting, gathering (blueberries), walking and hiking (both trail and non-trail), nature and wildlife viewing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, camping and night sky viewing. Camping occurs at Highland Pond and along the old Musquash Colonization Road where it has led to garbage problems in several locations.

Trail hiking is focused on the trails starting at the Highland Pond area; these were developed and are maintained by the Muskoka Lakes Recreational Trails Committee.

Snowmobiling occurs on the two authorized trails through the conservation reserve, and it is possible that some snowmobiling has occurred on unauthorized trails, or off trails. All-terrain vehicle use of snowmobile trails and the old Musquash Colonization Road has also been documented, but off-trail use does not seem significant at this time.

As discussed in Section 3.2.1 "Dark Skies for Astronomy", night sky viewing is an important recreational activity at Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve. There are now several astronomy outings each year to the Highland Pond area, especially in association with astronomic events such as eclipses, meteor showers and other organized events.

Guideline:

The known recreation activities that now take place in the conservation reserve are allowed to continue. Monitoring of existing and permitted activities will be undertaken as required to ensure that the conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted. Efforts will be made to promote cooperative maintenance of high use sites, to address garbage problems and other use issues.

Overuse of areas and the subsequent potential to damage the sensitive natural areas is a concern. Where overuse develops, or where use threatens the values for which this conservation reserve was established, specific uses or areas may be limited or closed.

The use of pre-existing recreational trails (trails that existed at the time of regulation of this conservation reserve), and any increase in the use of snowmobiles or all-terrain vehicles will be monitored to ensure that conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted. Depending on the results of monitoring, pre-existing trails may need to be redirected from sensitive areas or eliminated completely. There is no intent to mark or upgrade these trails. Accordingly, the hiking trails and the two snowmobile trails continue to be authorized and can be maintained, but their use will be monitored to ensure that conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted. In particular, the use of all-terrain vehicles on the snowmobile trail corridors will be monitored, and their impact on conservation reserve values will be assessed.

New recreational trails may be considered on a case by case basis provided that they meet Procedural Guideline B - Land Uses - Test of Compatibility (see Appendix 1) and the MNR's Environmental Assessment Act requirements. Public consultation will generally be required during the consideration of changes to existing trails, and will always be required for new trails. Any new trails must meet MNR's commitments to protect cultural heritage values (see Section 3.7).

New recreational trails or upgrading of existing trails, for motorized vehicles will be discouraged and will only be considered under exceptional circumstances if the following have been demonstrated:

- there is a community need for the trail, as well as community support;
- there are no alternative suitable locations outside the conservation reserve;
- the trail location would be acceptable and suitable for four-season use;
- the trail would meet the requirements applicable to all trails, as identified in the preceding paragraph.

Off-trail use of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles is only permitted for the direct retrieval of game.

Additional new recreational activities will be considered on a case by case basis provided they are consistent with maintaining the values of the conservation reserve (with special concern for the Dark Sky values) and comply with Procedural Guideline B – Land Uses – Test of Compatibility (Appendix 1). Emphasis will be placed on activities that have a low impact on the environment of the conservation reserve.

3.4 Commercial Activities:

Background:

There has been no recent commercial forest harvesting or mining activity within the conservation reserve.

The conservation reserve is not within a Bear Management Area. It lies within two Bait Fish Blocks. It is covered by parts of four registered trapline areas.

These activities were discussed in Section 3.1 “Tenure – Background”.

The YMCA Camp Pinecrest, a local youth camp, is known to have used the conservation reserve, primarily on a day use basis with a small amount of camping (focus on no trace/low impact camping). Camp Pinecrest campers have also done community service work in Torrance Barrrens Conservation Reserve, such as trail maintenance and garbage pick up.

Guideline:

Fur harvesting and bait fish harvesting operations are allowed to continue within the conservation reserve. The existing authorized trapline cabin is allowed to continue; however, new trapline cabins are not permitted within conservation reserves.

Provision of a commercial bear hunting service is not allowed within the boundaries of the conservation reserve. This site, or portions of it, cannot be incorporated into a Bear Management Area.

Use of the conservation reserve by youth camps may be monitored to ensure that conservation reserve values are not adversely impacted.

Conservation reserve regulations do not permit mineral exploration, mining, commercial forest harvesting, hydroelectric power development, the extraction of aggregate and peat or other industrial uses (Public Lands Act, Ontario Regulation 805/94). Other new commercial activities must meet the requirements of Procedural Guideline B – Land Uses – Test of Compatibility (Appendix 1).

3.5 Aboriginal Interests:

Background:

This site is known to be of interest to First Nation communities. There are 2 treaties associated with the area: the Robinson – Huron Treaty of 1850 and the Williams Treaty, (although a Supreme Court decision in 1994 (Howard) validated that the Williams Treaty surrendered hunting, fishing and trapping rights of those First Nations affiliated with that treaty).

Guideline:

The regulation and management of this conservation reserve will not impede the exercise of existing aboriginal or treaty rights. These rights include hunting, fishing, fur harvesting, gathering of plants for a variety of purposes, and the use of ceremonial sites. It is recognized that the manner in which these rights are carried out is not limited to the manner in which they were carried out in the past, but has evolved over time with changes in technology.

The designation of this area as a conservation reserve or the preparation of this Statement of Conservation Interest will not affect any future First Nation land claim settlement. The conservation reserve designation does not preclude consideration of these lands in the settlement of a claim. If deregulation of part or all of a conservation reserve occurs as part of the settlement of a claim, this will be carried out at no cost to First Nations.

3.6 Natural Resource Stewardship:

Background:

Vegetation management for specific purposes is not known to have occurred in the past and logging activity has been minimal. Wildlife and fisheries management, particularly hunting and trapping, has been occurring according to the prevailing policies and legislation at the time.

Most of the significant natural values are located in the southern portion of the conservation reserve. This area is easily accessible from District Road 13 (Southwood Road). While the bedrock landscape appears to be resilient to use impacts, some values are sensitive to human impact; specifically the Atlantic Coastal Plain species along the shorelines of the larger lakes near the western boundary of the conservation reserve (Echo and Gullwing Lakes).

Guideline – General:

The conservation reserve will be managed by allowing natural ecosystems and processes to function as they would with minimal human interference. The emphasis will be on ensuring that the natural values of the conservation reserve are not negatively affected by current and future activities. Natural values, which require particular consideration before any future uses can be approved, include vegetation and wildlife (particularly rare species), landforms, and the night skies. Therefore, applications for new specific uses will be carefully studied and reviewed. Necessary studies may be undertaken by proponents, the Ministry, and/or partner organizations.

The Ministry and partners will monitor the impacts of hiking, camping, snowmobile and all-terrain vehicle use on the natural values of the conservation reserve.

Guideline – Vegetation:

The intent of this site is to allow the existing vegetation communities to evolve naturally. Some vegetation community associations may be fire dependent for their continued existence. Additional studies on fire dependent communities will be encouraged.

In accordance with existing conservation reserve policy and the Fire Management Strategy for Ontario, forest fire protection will endeavour 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, and limiting the number of trees felled during fire response efforts. Input from the MNR Area Supervisor would be solicited if a forest fire threatens the area. Opportunities for prescribed burning to achieve resource management objectives may be considered. Plans for any prescribed burning will be developed in accordance with the OMNR Prescribed Burn Planning Manual. Any potential threat to adjacent private lands would preclude these options.

Programs may be developed to control forest insects and diseases in the conservation reserve where these threaten significant values in or adjacent to the site. Where insects or disease threaten significant values, in or adjacent to the site, and MNR determines that control is warranted, control within the conservation reserve will be directed by the MNR as narrowly as possible to the specific insect or disease. Biological control will be used wherever possible. In all cases, regard shall be had for Procedural Guideline B – Land Uses – Test of Compatibility (Appendix 1).

Guideline – Wildlife and Fisheries:

Much of Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve is included within Wildlife Management Unit 53B, which includes an archery season for deer hunting. The relevant Ontario hunting and fishing regulations will continue to guide these activities within conservation reserves. Fur harvesting and bait fish harvesting will be managed through the maintenance of the current licencing system.

3.7 Cultural Resource Stewardship:

Background:

No specific cultural studies or inventories have been undertaken within the conservation reserve, and no specific significant cultural resource values have been evaluated or identified to date. Recent regional broad-brush mapping (OMNR, 2003) shows that this conservation reserve contains areas that have a high potential for cultural heritage sites.

The Musquash Colonization Road, an old settlement road, cuts through the conservation reserve, but is not a part of the conservation reserve.

Guideline:

Should the MNR consider either carrying out or permitting new structural development, significant clearing of vegetation or altering of land within this conservation reserve, the MNR will adhere to the cultural heritage resource screening process as is identified in its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Culture. While the purpose of this MOU is to provide a process to identify and protect cultural heritage resources when the MNR is reviewing work permits or disposing of Crown rights under the authority of the Public Lands Act, the considerations and criteria would also enable the MNR to identify high potential cultural heritage areas for other purposes within conservation reserves. If the screening process indicates that the site of a proposed activity is within an area of high cultural heritage potential, the MNR will consult with the Ministry of Culture to determine the appropriate cultural heritage assessment requirements and will undertake a preliminary archaeological assessment if appropriate.

Interested partners will be encouraged to undertake inventories, studies, and research to document the histories of First Nations, settlement, resource harvest/management and recreation in the area. The MNR will discuss the appropriateness of any proposed archaeological assessment with local First Nations and the Ministry of Culture.

Under the Ontario Heritage Act, a licence is required to carry out any archaeological fieldwork. This includes altering or removing any artefact or any other physical evidence of past human activity.

3.8 Client Services:

Background:

Access to the conservation reserve has generally been for commercial and recreational activities. With the exception of the parking and access area and hiking trails at Highland Pond on District Road 13 (Southwood Road), and snowmobile trails that cross the conservation reserve, there are no authorized Crown facilities or services developed on or adjacent to the conservation reserve.

Signage at the Highland Pond access site identifies the area as a conservation reserve and provides “dark sky” information. Parking, hiking, trails, and basic toilet facilities are available at this site. A brochure “*Torrance Barrens Conservation and Night Sky Reserve*”, which highlights the natural and aesthetic features for which the area was identified, has been produced by the Muskoka Heritage Foundation with the assistance of a number of government and non-government sponsors. This is available at various government offices and information facilities. The Township of Muskoka Lakes Recreational Trails Committee provides a “Torrance Barrens Trails” brochure.

Guideline:

The focus will remain on low key information and self-interpretation of conservation reserve values and features, and appropriate uses to ensure the protection of those features. Cooperative maintenance of areas along the old Musquash Colonization Road, and of the Highland Pond site, trails, signs and facilities, and provision of information through brochures will continue to be encouraged through volunteer efforts and partnerships.

Consideration will be given to the strategic location of identity signs where roads, authorized trails and long-standing unauthorized trails approach or cross the conservation reserve boundary.

There are no other plans for structural development within this conservation reserve.

3.9 Research:**Background:**

Research to date has consisted of inventories of the natural values of the conservation reserve. The District of Muskoka and the Ministry of Natural Resources have both completed earth and life science inventories. A recreational/aesthetic values inventory was completed by local interest groups in gathering support for the protection of the area.

Guideline:

The ministry will encourage further inventory and documentation of natural and cultural values, and the assessment of use/activity impacts. All research will be carried out in a non-destructive manner. Research proposals must follow Procedural Guideline C – Research Activities in Conservation Reserves (Appendix 3).

3.10 Marketing:**Background:**

There has been no direct marketing to date. All promotion has been by word of mouth, through local and southern Ontario media stories and the brochures available through the Muskoka Tourist Information Centre, Muskoka Heritage Foundation, Ministry of Natural Resources and the Township of Muskoka Lakes Recreational Trails Committee.

Guideline:

Marketing activities of this conservation reserve will be kept to a minimum, primarily providing information on the place of the conservation reserve within a system of natural areas in Muskoka and beyond. Aggressive marketing activities are not appropriate. Nevertheless, partner organizations like the Muskoka Heritage Foundation, who may wish to promote the concept of the 'Dark Sky Reserve', and the Township of Muskoka Lakes Recreational Trails Committee, who promote the trail network in the area, may wish to do some promotion and attract special interest groups to the conservation reserve. Care will have to be taken to ensure that existing infrastructure can accommodate the uses that evolve from such initiatives.

4.0 Implementation

Administrative responsibility for this conservation reserve belongs to the Bracebridge Area Office of the Parry Sound District of the Ministry of Natural Resources. The Area Office will continue with the custodial care of the conservation reserve and will also seek partnerships with local interests, wherever appropriate. Emphasis will be placed on awareness information highlighting conservation reserve values, and monitoring and managing the current approved uses.

Past arrangements with the YMCA Camp Pinecrest, Clear Lake Property Owners, Township of Muskoka Lakes Recreational Trails Committee, Township of Muskoka Lakes Ratepayers Association, local snowmobile clubs and Muskoka Field Naturalists have been very successful. Similar arrangements will be encouraged.

Initial emphasis will be placed on awareness information and the highlighting of appropriate uses. This may be undertaken with the assistance of local groups. The Ministry will continue to support education and stewardship activities of the Muskoka Heritage Foundation in regard to the Dark Sky Reserve characteristics.

Priorities will include:

- Ensure compliance with prescribed management direction of the approved Statement of Conservation Interest;
- Ensure compliance with applicable legislation and regulations;
- Monitor the recreation use of the conservation reserve to identify problems associated with access, use, and maintenance of trails, and encourage continued partnerships with local interests, wherever appropriate, especially towards the cooperative maintenance of trails, signs and toilet facilities, through volunteer efforts;
- Monitor and evaluate existing and allowed recreational and commercial use levels and impacts as required to ensure that conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted;
- Consider the strategic location of identity signs where roads, authorized trails and long-standing unauthorized trails approach or cross the conservation reserve boundary;
- Encourage further inventory of the cultural history and resources of the conservation reserve;
- Encourage additional studies on fire dependent communities within the conservation reserve;
- Continue to support initiatives of the Muskoka Heritage Foundation and the local municipalities which deal with development activities around the periphery of the conservation reserve and the cooperative educational and stewardship activities that could be undertaken;
- Encourage research about impacts of trails, snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles on significant flora and fauna species and communities of the site;
- Support cooperative ongoing education of resource users, recreationists, and adjacent private land owners with respect to resource and land stewardship values, in order to maintain the ecological integrity of the site, and with a particular emphasis on the area's dark sky values;
- Encourage the establishment of a 'Friends of Torrance Barrens' cooperative association; and,
- Provide client services (e.g. brochures) at nearby MNR offices.

5.0 Review and Revision of the Statement of Conservation Interest

This Statement of Conservation Interest will be amended through a standard process of minor and major amendments. Minor amendments will be processed in a relatively informal manner and will require the approval of the Area Supervisor. These amendments will deal with uses and activities that do not affect any of the policies in this Statement of Conservation Interest (e.g. new uses and/or activities that are consistent with existing permitted uses).

Uses and/or activities that were not anticipated in the approved Statement of Conservation Interest and which may have an impact on the values of the conservation reserve will require a major amendment. This will include an opportunity for public comment and input, and will require the approval of the District Manager and Regional Director.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Procedural Guideline B – Land Uses – Test of Compatibility (PL Procedure 3.03.05)

The conservation reserve policy provides broad direction with regard to the permitted uses. The policy provides **only an indication** of the variety of uses that will be considered acceptable in conservation reserves. The only caution is that **“any new uses, and commercial activities associated with them, will be considered on a case by case basis, and, they must pass a test of compatibility to be acceptable.”** What does a ‘test of compatibility’ mean?

An examination of this must start from the premise of why an area is set aside – specifically, its representative natural heritage values. Criteria are then identified to guide compatibility considerations. These criteria apply to the long-term acceptability of both existing uses and new uses.

1. **Conformity to Statement of Conservation Interest/RMP:** A Statement of Conservation Interest describes values for which an area has been set aside and the range of appropriate uses that will be permitted in the area. Statements of Conservation Interest may also speak to the acceptability of other ‘new’ uses currently not occurring in the area.

The first ‘test’ is: “do proposed new land uses and/or commercial activities conform to the direction of the Statement of Conservation Interest/RMP for the conservation reserve? Would the new use(s) depart from the spirit of appropriate indicator land uses in the Statement of Conservation Interest/RMP?”

2. **Impact Assessment:** If the proposed use(s) pass test 1 it is important to determine their impact on the area before they are approved. This should include the following:
 - Impact on **natural heritage values:** “will the new use(s) impact any natural values in the area? If so how and to what degree? Is it tolerable?”
 - Impact on **cultural values:** “will the new use(s) impact an historical or archaeological values in the area?”
 - Impact on **research activities:** “will the new use(s) affect research activities in the area?”
 - Impact on **current uses:** “will the new use(s) have any negative impact on the array of current uses?”
 - Impact on **area administration:** “will the new use(s) increase administrative costs and/or complexity?” (For example, the cost of area monitoring, security and enforcement).
 - Impact on **accommodating the use outside** the conservation reserve: “Could the use(s) be accommodated as well or better outside the conservation reserve?”
 - Impact on **socio-economics of the area:** “will the new use(s) affect the community(ies) surrounding the area in a positive or negative way?” (For example, will the new use make an area less remote thereby affecting a local tourism industry that is dependent on the area’s remoteness for its appeal?”
 - Impact on **area accessibility:** “does the new use(s) give someone exclusive rights to the area or a portion of the area to the exclusion of other existing uses?”

The following table (Appendix 2) provides a **guide of indicator uses** for the consideration of uses that may be permitted within conservation reserves. For any specific conservation reserve that test of compatibility should be applied to determine which specific uses are acceptable.

Appendix 2 Indicator Uses for Conservation Reserves: Generic and Specific

Activities	Generic Policy		Specific Application in Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve
	Permitted? Y = yes, N = no, M = maybe		
	Existing	New	
Recreation			
Sport fishing	Y	Y	Y
Sport hunting	Y	Y	Y
Food gathering	Y	Y	Y ^A
Facility infrastructure	M	M	M
Off-trail snowmobiling	N ¹	N ¹	N ¹
Off-trail all-terrain vehicle use	N ¹	N ¹	N ¹
Rock climbing/caving	M	M	N/A
Canoeing/kayaking	Y	Y	Y
Motorized boating	Y	Y	Y
Picnicking	Y	Y	Y
Camping	M	M	Y
Trails: Hiking	Y	M	M ^B
X country skiing	Y	M	M ^B
Cycling	Y	M	M ^B
Horse riding	Y	M	M ^B
Snowmobiling	Y	M	M ^B
All-Terrain Vehicles	Y	M	M ^B
Science, Education & Heritage Appreciation			
Research	Y	Y	Y
General walking	Y	Y	Y
Photography & Painting	Y	Y	Y
Wildlife viewing	Y	Y	Y
Outdoor Education/Interpretation ⁷	Y	Y	Y
Collecting	N	M ²	M ²
Commercial Activities			
Food harvesting	M	M	N
Fishing	M	M	N
Bait Fish harvesting	Y	M	Y ³
Fur harvesting	Y	M	Y ³
Trap cabins	Y	N	N
Resort – outpost camp	Y	N	N
Outfitting – bear management	Y	N	N
Wild rice harvesting	Y	M	N/A
Resource Management			
Inventory monitoring	Y	Y	Y
Featured species management	M	M	M
Natural systems management	M	M	M
Insect and disease control	M	M	M

Activities	Generic Policy		Specific Application in Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve
	Permitted? Y = yes, N = no, M = maybe		
	Existing	New	
Industrial Activities			
Timber harvesting	N	N	N
Mineral exploration	N	N	N
Mining	N	N	N
Hydro generation	N	N	N
Energy transmission corridors	Y	N ⁴	N ⁴
Communications corridors	Y	N ⁴	N ⁴
Public transportation corridors	Y	N ⁴	N ⁴
Resource access roads	M	N	N
Private access roads	M	N ⁵	N
Other Activities			
Land Disposition (Sale)	M ⁶	M ⁶	M ⁶
Recreation Camps	Y ^c	N	N

Notes:

On generic policy application in conservation reserves:

1. For direct retrieval of game only.
2. Only as a part of an approved research project.
3. Existing use is permitted to continue. Transfer requests will be considered in the context of the Statement of Conservation Interest or Resource Management Plan for each conservation reserve.
4. Existing use is permitted to continue. New transportation corridors, communications lines, and transmission lines are discouraged in conservation reserves except under unusual circumstances where there are no other viable alternatives.
5. New private roads, including additions to existing roads, will not be permitted within conservation reserves, except where there are existing commitments.
6. Sale of Crown lands in conservation reserves is not permitted, except for certain minor dispositions (e.g. sale of small parcel of land where adjacent private lot is too small to enable installation of a septic system, or to facilitate legal title to lands where there has been a long-standing encroachment of a dwelling on Crown land) where they do not detrimentally affect the values an area is intended to protect.
7. This includes astronomy and night environment activities.

On specific policy application in Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve:

- A. Food gathering is permitted for personal consumption only and must be conducted in a sustainable manner, and such that it does not harm the values of the conservation reserve.
- B. Existing authorized recreational trails are permitted to continue in conservation reserves as long as there are no significant environmental impacts and they do not impair the natural features and values for which the area is identified. New recreational trails may be considered on a case by case basis provided that they meet the requirements identified in Section 3.3 of this document. New recreational trails for motorized uses are discouraged and will only be considered under exceptional circumstances if the criteria in Section 3.3 have been demonstrated. Public consultation will generally be required during the consideration of changes to existing trails, and will always be required for new trails.
- C. Existing authorized recreation camps within conservation reserves are generally permitted to continue. They may be eligible for “enhanced” tenure, but are not eligible for purchase of land. This situation does not apply in Torrance Barrens Conservation Reserve. New recreation camps are not permitted.

Appendix 3 Procedural Guideline C

Research Activities in Conservation Reserves (PL Procedure 3.03.05)

Purpose

To encourage contributions to the goal of conservation reserves by:

- Providing direction for research activities associated with conservation reserves; and
- Establishing a process for the review and approval of proposals by researchers which could have an impact on the values protected by the conservation reserve.

Definition

Research means any investigation or study of the natural, cultural, economic, management or other features or characteristics of conservation reserves.

Guidelines

Research will be encouraged to provide a better understanding of the natural values protected by a conservation reserve and to advance their protection, planning and management. The Statement of Conservation Interest will define, for each conservation reserve, the key research issues, set out the parameters within which research may occur and identify research needs.

Applications and Approvals

Researchers must apply in writing to the relevant Area Supervisor(s) for permission to conduct research. The request letter must contain a statement explaining why the proposed research should be undertaken in the particular conservation reserve in preference to another location.

Proposals will be reviewed and approved by the relevant Area Supervisor(s), guided by the Statement of Conservation Interest prepared for each reserve (see Guideline A – Resource Management Planning) and using Guideline B – Land Uses – Test of Compatibility. Permission must be granted in writing, including any conditions to be met in conducting the research, prior to the undertaking of any research project.

Terms and Conditions

Permission to conduct research under this policy will be valid for a period of 12 consecutive months from the date of issue. Permission to continue a research project for an additional period of 12 months or less may be granted upon submission of a written request and a progress report. The Ministry may require the posting of collateral to assure that the terms and conditions of granting permission are met.

The Area Supervisors may suspend or revoke permission at any time for failure on the part of the researcher to meet:

1. The intent of this policy.
2. The requirements under the Public Lands Act, Ontario Regulation 805/94 including all amendments, where applicable.
3. The requirements under any other Act or regulations of Ontario or Canada, including those governing the taking, handling, storing, confining, fur harvesting, excavating and marketing any specimen, artefact, information or action (for example, scientific collector's permit).
4. The conditions and agreements specified in granting permission.

Final Report

The researcher will submit copies of reports, publications and theses following the results of the project to the relevant Area Supervisor(s).