Rabbit Lake West
Conservation Reserve (CR 9)

Statement of Conservation Interest
January 2002

Ministry of Natural Resources
North Bay District

Table of Contents

Approval Statement

I am pleased to approve this Statement of Conservation Interest for the **Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve (CR 9)**.

This Statement of Conservation Interest (SCI) will provide guidance for the management of the conservation reserve and the basis for the ongoing monitoring of activities.

Direction for establishing, planning and managing conservation reserves is defined under the *Public Lands Act* and current policy. "Ontario's network of natural heritage areas has been established to protect and conserve areas representative of the diversity of the natural regions of the province, including species, habitats, features and ecological systems which comprise that natural diversity." (Policy 3.03.05, MNR 1997). The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve offers an ecologically diverse landscape representative of the Southern Boreal Site Region. Furthermore, it contributes a richness of cultural and social values.

The management and administration of the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve will be guided by this SCI. Should significant facility development be considered or complex issues arise requiring additional studies, further management direction or special protection measures, this SCI will be amended or a more detailed Resource Management Plan (RMP) will be prepared with full public consultation.

The direction contained in this SCI is consistent with the 1997 *Temagami Land Use Plan (TLUP)*. The public was consulted about this site prior to its regulation during land use planning for the Temagami Comprehensive Planning Area. Comments from that planning exercise were considered during the development of this document. The *TLUP* provides detailed direction on future uses and resource management targets for this area. No new decisions have been made with regards to the conservation reserve since the approval of the *TLUP*.

The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve will be managed under the direction of the Temagami Area Supervisor, North Bay District Ministry of Natural Resources.

D.A. Payne — Jan 8/02

District Manager Recommendation For Approval — Date

R.G. Dillon — Jan 15/02

Regional Director — Date

1.0 Introduction

Ontario boasts a varied and diverse landscape. Many demands are placed on its resources for both social and economic benefit. The current planning process is committed to the protection of natural and cultural heritage values represented throughout the province. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) has developed strategies that will maintain the integrity and sustainability of these areas.

The *Temagami Land Use Plan* (*TLUP*) provides direction for the administration and management of parks and protected areas within the Temagami Comprehensive Planning Area. Included in the plan is a natural heritage objective to maintain the full spectrum of the areas ecological and geological diversity. Specifically the *TLUP* protects representative "old growth" red and white pine stands, some watersheds related to Lady Evelyn-Smoothwater Provincial Park, significant wetlands and provincially significant ecological, geological and recreational features.

The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve has been selected as a site representing old growth red and white pine forests and wetland communities. Further studies are required to identify other possible ecological associations and their significance. In addition, it fulfills many social requirements both locally and provincially.

This 491 hectare parcel of Crown land is located on the western shore of Rabbit Lake, approximately twelve kilometres southeast of Temagami, Ontario in the geographic township of Riddell in the Northeast planning region of the MNR (see *Location Map*).

The purposes of this SCI are to:

a) Provide background information and identify and describe the values of the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve.

b) Provide guidelines for the management of current and future activities while protecting natural, social, and cultural heritage values.

This document has been prepared following the format of an SCI, also called a stewardship document. The SCI format was selected since after extensive consultation, no new issues emerged. New uses may be considered, provided they meet the requirements of a *Test of Compatibility* (Appendix A).

This SCI governs the lands within the regulated boundary of the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve; however, to ensure MNR protection objectives are being fully met within the conservation reserve, activities on the surrounding landscape must be consider the conservation reserve's objectives and heritage values. In addition, it is the intent of this SCI to create a public awareness that

will promote responsible stewardship of protected areas and their surrounding lands in Ontario. With management partners such as Ontario Parks, industry, local governments, etc., MNR district offices will be able to pursue and advance sound environmental, economic and social strategies and policies related to the protection of conservation reserves and provincial parks.

2.0 Goal and Objectives

2.1. Goal of the SCI

The goal of the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve SCI is to describe and protect natural and cultural heritage values on public lands while permitting compatible land use activities.

2.2. Objectives of the SCI

2.2.1. Short Term

- To identify the State of the Resource with respect to natural heritage values and current land use activities for the conservation reserve.
- To manage the conservation reserve to protect the integrity of its natural values via specific guidelines, strategies and prescriptions detailed in this statement.
- To meet planning requirements by designing this SCI document to address the immediate planning and management needs of the conservation reserve.

2.2.2. Long Term

- To establish representative targets (e.g., future forest conditions) and validate the conservation reserve as a potential scientific benchmark.
- To identify research/client services and marketing strategies.
- To give direction to evaluate future or new economic ventures (i.e., through use of a *Test of Compatibility* evaluation).

3.0 Management Planning

3.1. Planning Context

3.1.1. Planning Area

The planning area for this SCI is the regulatory boundary of the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve. As noted earlier, planning for other activities on the surrounding landscape must consider the protection objectives and values of the conservation reserve. Any strategies noted within this plan related to the

conservation reserve's boundary or beyond, will be presented for consideration within a larger planning context such as a Forest Management Plan (FMP).

3.1.2. Management Planning Context

The Comprehensive Planning Council (CPC) (a citizens advisory group, which was directed to submit land use recommendations for the Temagami Comprehensive Planning Area) recommended that this area be designated as a conservation reserve. This recommendation, along with others, was submitted in April 1996 and accepted in principle by the government of Ontario in June 1996. The decisions on the recommendations were ultimately reflected in the *TLUP*.

Rabbit Lake West was regulated as a conservation reserve on July 19, 1997 by Ontario Regulation 259/97.

The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve is designated as Management Area 9, page 47 in the *TLUP*. By regulation under the *Public Lands Act*, lands within conservation reserves cannot be used for mining, commercial forest harvest, hydroelectric power development, the extraction of aggregate and peat or other industrial uses. Special Management Areas (SMA) 8 – Rabbit Lake/Cassels Lake and 10 - Lorrain Lake, as described in the *TLUP*, lie adjacent to this conservation reserve.

Traditional uses within the conservation reserve as noted in the permitted uses table of the *TLUP* will continue; however, the goal will be to resolve conflicts if they exist between uses and to ensure that identified values are protected.

When considering future permitted uses and/or development(s), there are established mechanisms in place to evaluate these proposals. These include, but may not be limited to; *Procedural Guideline B – Land Uses – Test Of Compatibility* Policy PL 3.03.05 (OMNR 1997). *Class Environmental Assessment for MNR Resource Stewardship* and *Facility Development Projects* (OMNR 2001), with accompanying Environmental Checklist or Exemption Order MNR 26/7 for future dispositions. Other protocols may be developed that address site specific sensitivities to identified features.

Consideration for proposals pertaining to cultural resources may be screened through *Conserving a Future for our Past: Archaeology, Land Use Planning & Development in Ontario*, Section 3 (MCzCR, 1997) and MNR's AOC Descriptions and Prescriptions (Cultural Heritage Resources) for the *1999-2019 Temagami FMP* or its successor.

These planning tools will refine the review process once the proposal satisfies the direction and intent of the *TLUP*.

3.2. Planning Process

Once a conservation reserve is regulated, there is a need to determine the level of management planning required to fulfil the protection targets. There are two policy documents to select from; a Statement of Conservation Interest (SCI) or a Resource Management Plan (RMP). A SCI does not address new issues, conflicts, or proposals, so public consultation is not required. A RMP does address more complex issues and conflicting demands placed upon a protected resource and involves full public consultation.

The guidelines for the preparation of these documents is outlined in *Procedural Guideline A*-Resource Management Planning (PL 3.03.05, *Public Lands Act*). The appropriate plan must be completed within three years of the regulation date.

For current planning purposes, the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve will be managed under the directive of a SCI. The intent of this SCI is to fulfil the commitments made under the *Public Lands Act*, the *TLUP* and other associated policies.

In July 1989, in response to growing public concern with respect to the use and management of resources within the Temagami area, MNR announced the Temagami Area Comprehensive Planning Program (CPP). The resulting *TLUP* was based on advice of the Comprehensive Planning Council (CPC). Through this process extensive public consultation occurred. Based on past public participation and the fact that the land use direction presented within this SCI does not differ significantly from the *TLUP*, additional consultation at this time is not needed.

Public consultation will be solicited during the review of any future land use proposals that would require new decisions to be made beyond the intent of the *TLUP*. Such amendments to the *TLUP* and this document or its successor will also be posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry (EBR).

This SCI is a policy document that will provide background information, identify values to be protected and establish management guidelines for use in the administration of the conservation reserve.

The implementation of the policy will be the mandate of the MNR at the district level, however associations with various partners may be sought to assist in the delivery. It must be noted that this SCI is a working document and it will be necessary to make revisions to it from time to time. If changes are required they will occur through a standard process of minor or major amendments (see Section 6.5).

4.0 Background Information

4.1. Location and Site Description

4.1.1. Location

The following table describes the location and provides administrative details of the conservation reserve:

Name	Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve
Site Region-Site District (Hills 1959)	4E Lake Temagami – 4E-4 Temagami
OMNR Administrative Region/District/Area	Northeast/North Bay/Temagami
Total Area	491 ha
Regulation Date	July 19, 1997 (O.Reg.259/97)
First Nations	Temagami First Nation, Teme Augama Anishnabai
OBM map sheets	(2017) 5900 52000, 6000 52000
UTM Coordinates	605000 5206000
WMU	40
Municipality	Corporation of the Municipality of Temagami
Townships	Riddell
Status	100% Crown Land

4.1.2. Site Description

4.1.2.1. Physical Description

The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve is a 491 ha parcel of Crown land situated in Northeastern Ontario southeast of the town of Temagami. The conservation reserve features stands of old growth red and white pine, mixedwood forest, significant plant communities and wetlands. The conservation reserve is within Site District 4E-4 (Hills 1959, Crins and Uhlig 2000) and consists of bare to thinly veneered bedrock knobs and ridges of strong local relief, including high cliffs and talus slopes (Kor, 2001). The eastern boundary of the conservation reserve follows the shoreline of Rabbit Lake, a cold water lake containing a Lake Trout fishery. The western boundary follows along the centreline of numerous creeks, or is vectored (Thompson et al, 2001).

The conservation reserve contains provincially significant old growth pine stands, which are between 120 and 177 years old, and dominate approximately 50 per cent of the forest canopy. As well, other old growth coniferous and deciduous

species are present including 90-100 year old black spruce, 100-year-old jack pine, 140-year-old poplar and white birch and 120 year old eastern white cedar.

Upon reviewing digital FRI (Forest Resource Inventory) data and aerial reconnaissance investigations made by Thompson, 2000, it was determined that approximately 17 different forest cover types and 5 wetland landform/vegetation combinations are present in this conservation reserve.

There are a number of wetland ecosystems scattered throughout the conservation reserve including fens and marshes. A number of these systems contain moose aquatic feeding areas.

4.2. Administrative Description

The legal boundaries of the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Area were certified by the Surveyor General of Ontario at the Ministry of Natural Resources in Peterborough on the 21st of February 1997. The conservation reserve was passed into regulation on July 19, 1997 (O.Reg.259/97).

4.3. History of the Site

Historically, there has been little human disturbance within the boundaries of the conservation reserve. According to existing forest management records, no logging has occurred in this area since at least, 1940. Forest fire events have generally been sporadic and of low intensity.

Temagami First Nation (TFN) and Teme Augama Anishnabai (TAA) members have had a long-term relationship with Rabbit Lake for a variety of social and economic reasons.

In recent years, an interest by the visiting public and the scientific community has grown for the natural and social aspects of the conservation reserve. Typically, the conservation reserve is used for outdoor recreational activities, commercial use (i.e., fur and baitfish harvesting), nature appreciation and scientific and educational pursuits.

4.4. Inventories

The following table indicates what scientific survey work has been done in the conservation reserve and what is still required:

Survey Level	Reconnaissance	Detailed	Future Requirement
Life Science	Noble, T.N. 1983. Life Science Report for Site Region 4E. OMNR, 1999. Forest Resource Inventory (FRI) Mapping: Rabbit Lake West Thompson J.E., Aerial Reconnaissance Survey and Thompson, J.E., Lajeunesse, M., Joyce J. and Avoledo, N. 2001. Life Science Checksheet: Rabbit Lake West.		Detailed ecological survey
Earth Science	Aerial photography (1988). Arnup, R. Aerial Reconnaissance Earth Science Survey conducted in the fall of 2000. Interpretations by P. Kor.		Not required
Cultural	Preliminary Review of Heritage Resources, C.P.P.1991. MNR Archaeological Prediction Modeling, 1998 (Temagami FMU)	Historical Mapping, (Craig McDonald1995).	May be required (see Section 3.7)

Recreational	Rabbit Lake Survey, 1973 Creel Census (summer & winter 1996) Boulton Lake Survey, 1991 Mutch, J. Aerial Reconnaissance Recreational Survey fall 2000. Roberts, S.K. 2001. Recreational Checksheet- Rabbit Lake West.		Trail Inventory; condition, level of use, location Campsite Inventory; location, level of use, impact assessment Determine use and condition of canoe route (portage)
Other	Aerial Moose Aquatics Survey - 1979		Access Inventory; location, type, use Develop access zones if required Determine if permanent sample plots are compatible Update moose aquatic surveys.

5.0 State of the Resource

5.1. Representation

The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve is composed of weakly broken bedrock-dominated topography with numerous well-exposed cliffs and talus slopes visible along the shores of Rabbit Lake. The bedrock consists of conglomerate (a mixture of a number of rock types) along with associated sedimentary rocks of the Gowganda Formation (Precambrian era). This formation is considered regionally significant (Kor, 2001) and is represented in other protected areas. Surficial soils in this area are mainly stony and coarse-grained (Kor, 2001).

Old growth red and white pine presently dominate the northern portion of the conservation reserve. The remaining area is made up of a variety of mature and old growth mixedwood stands consisting primarily of poplar, jack pine and white birch. Mature and old growth stands of eastern white cedar are also present there. The conservation reserve contains a diversity of wetlands ranging from treed, open poor and shoreline fens to meadow sheltered and open marshes.

The review of landform/vegetation combinations indicates a dominant cover of dense conifer forest over a weakly broken ground moraine. As previously mentioned, 22 landform/vegetation associations were observed during a recent aerial reconnaissance survey (Thompson, 2000).

Finally, the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve contains, or is directly associated with, a number of different aquatic communities which include a variety of fish species and wetland habitats that enhance the overall representation of the site.

5.1.1. Quality of the Representation

The quality of the representation or the current characteristics of the natural features found within a conservation reserve are as important as the overall representative features that are being protected. A number of factors are considered in evaluating the quality of a conservation reserve's representative features. They include diversity, condition, ecological factors, special features and current land use activities.

a) Diversity:

This conservation reserve possesses a relatively high degree of species richness. As mentioned previously, there is a minimum of 22 vegetative cover types including stands of red and white pine and varying mixedwoods (see *Forest Values Map*). There are also a variety of wetland habitats, which help to enhance this level of richness. Adding to the overall diversity of this conservation reserve are the shoreline features along Rabbit Lake. This stretch of shore land exhibits a variety of topographical characteristics throughout its length.

b) Condition:

The present condition of the conservation reserve reflects past and current trends of commercial, natural, and recreational disturbances. The conservation reserve has not been affected by recent commercial logging practices but has had some documented sporadic low intensity forest fire activity. The conservation reserve borders on a regionally significant canoe route (Rabbit Lake) and also has a portage to Boulton Lake. Informal trails exist in the northernmost portion of the conservation reserve, which provide access for recreation and commercial activities, such as fur harvesting.

c) Ecological Factors:

The design of this conservation reserve has made extensive use of the adjacent lakes and creeks as boundaries. These are effective in acting as buffers from adjacent land uses over time. However, the conservation reserve's relatively small size and north-south orientation limit the protection of core values (Thompson et al, 2001). The vectored portion along the western boundary bisects the old growth values that require protection. Also, the sheltered marshes found at the north and south ends of the conservation reserve must be given consideration in landscape planning (Thompson et al, 2001).

d) Special Features:

The major features that are present within this conservation reserve include:

- Old growth stands of red and white pine, jack pine, cedar and poplar.
- Cold water lakes and associated lake trout fisheries.
- Rugged topography along the conservation reserve eastern boundary resulting in very interesting landscape formations.
- Regionally significant representation of the Gowganda Formation.

e) Current Land Use Activities:

Ranges of land use activities occur within or are associated with the conservation reserve. Activities include hunting, fur and baitfish harvesting, boating, canoeing, and camping.

The conservation reserve can be accessed by water or land. The eastern border follows a regionally significant canoe route on the waters of Rabbit Lake, which is a cold water lake trout fishery. Trails are found adjacent to the northern boundary and allow access for hunters, anglers and trappers. A large campsite exists at the southern end of the conservation reserve, while a much smaller one exists adjacent to the portage route that connects Rabbit Lake to an interior unnamed waterbody. A private recreational camp is located just outside of the northern boundary along the shore of Rabbit Lake.

With the presence of the old growth forests, the potential for educational and research pursuits is high. Two potential scenic lookouts lie within the conservation reserve.

A significant portage route connects Rabbit Lake to Boulton Lake to the west. Archaeological evidence places the route to be in excess of 3000 years old with the TAA having used it for centuries (see *Recreational Values Map*).

Commercial uses such as fur and baitfish harvesting and moose and bear hunt outfitting occur in the conservation reserve. It is suspected that these activities

are not intense and may have limited conflict with other interests. Recreational hunting is also permitted, with the primary game species being moose, bear and ruffed grouse. A trap cabin is located within the southern limits of the area.

Summary:

The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve contains provincially significant old growth red and white pine communities and may contain significant wetland communities. The conservation reserve's overall diversity, physical condition, design, and current and potential recreational and interpretive values are considered significant. Finally, the natural linkages connect the conservation reserve to the surrounding forested and aquatic landscapes found within the Temagami Region. This illustrates the conservation reserve's importance to the provincial parks and protected areas system.

5.2. Social/Economic Interest in the Area

a) Linkage to Local Communities:

The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve consists entirely of Crown land and is accessible to the public via trail or water. Located near the town of Temagami, the area is a popular destination for travelers and seasonal residents. As a result of the closure of the Sherman Mine and the Wm. Milne Sawmill in the early 1990s, tourism has become a major economic driver in the Temagami area, with scenic landscapes and the natural environment as major attractions.

The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve is well suited for outdoor recreation, nature appreciation and educational opportunities. Its proximity to Rabbit Lake and the town of Temagami, along with ease of access make the conservation reserve a logical choice for a variety of backcountry users. In a regional context, the conservation reserve offers natural features that generate interest in ecotourism, recreational and tourism markets.

Currently the conservation reserve is available for hunting, fishing, fur harvesting, canoeing, hiking, camping, nature appreciation (i.e., viewing of old growth forests, wildlife observation, and photography), boating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobile use.

There are several local outdoor recreational outfitting companies and resort lodges that may decide to expand their use of the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve.

Outdoor education and scientific research potential in the conservation reserve is significant. The red and white pine old growth stands are excellent examples of a pristine forest which provide opportunities for viewing old trees, wildlife snags, plant communities, and a succession community, to name a few.

b) Heritage Estate Contributions:

The Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve contributes to the province's parks and protected areas system through its regulation, representation and the long-term management of its natural heritage values.

By allocating these lands to the parks and protected areas system through regulation, the province has ensured a certain level of permanence by distinguishing the conservation reserve and its values from the larger general use or more extensively managed landscape. In addition, its natural features are, and will be available for present and future generations to enjoy and explore.

The conservation reserve's ecological features make a number of contributions to the province's natural heritage estate. Firstly, its old growth red and white pine communities and interior wetlands contribute significantly to the provincial parks and protected areas system. Secondly, the conservation reserve's location and features make a distinctive contribution to quality recreational experiences that include a portage route to an isolated lake, scenic lookouts and rocky shorelines. In addition to lakeshore landscapes, its shape and natural boundaries (e.g., shorelines) buffer adjacent land use activities and allow for a certain level of backcountry opportunities and experiences. Lastly its connection to Rabbit Lake and regional canoe routes and waterways adds considerably to the over-all value of this conservation reserve.

Long term management must consider public access to the conservation reserve, its protection objectives, and commitments made in the *TLUP*. Future managers will have to balance between maintaining the quality of the current natural features and the needs of recreational and other users.

c) Aboriginal Groups

The Temagami Island North Conservation Reserve is within the ancestral homeland, known as Daki Menan, of the TAA. Approximately 150 members of the TAA and the TFN reside on the Bear Island Reserve, located on Lake Temagami. A number of pre-historic and historic archaeological sites have been documented in the immediate area of the conservation reserve. These, and other cultural heritage resources found within Daki Menan, are of great importance to the TAA.

In 1999, Ontario agreed to enter into formal negotiations with the TFN and the TAA on the basis of outstanding treaty obligations consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada's 1991 Bear Island decision. These negotiations are scheduled to conclude in December 2002.

d) Mining Industry

All mining rights were withdrawn based on the boundaries established in the *TLUP* prior to the lifting of the land caution. Minor boundary refinements were required primarily to define the site on the ground for regulation purposes. The mining rights were re-withdrawn in January 2001 to be consistent with the boundaries regulated in 1997.

e) Forest Management

No commercial forest harvesting is permitted in conservation reserves. Forest activities on the adjacent landscape are guided by the Forest Management Plan (FMP). Based on the current plan (1999-2004), the following provisions apply:

Harvesting, renewal and maintenance activities are permitted up to the conservation reserve boundary. Where the integrity of the boundary may be affected by blowdown (e.g., based on slope, aspect relative to prevailing winds, soils, species, size and type of adjacent cuts, etc.), the need for additional protection will be determined during development and planning of the Annual Work Schedule.

No roads or landings are permitted within 100 m of the boundaries of non-waterway conservation reserves, except where it can be demonstrated that no alternative alignments are available and with MNR approval. Roads will be planned to minimize potential access to conservation reserves (e.g., perpendicular to conservation reserve boundaries).

Presently there is no Sustainable Forestry License (SFL) within or adjacent to the conservation reserve. The Temagami Forest Management Unit is currently managed by the Crown. The North Bay District office (Temagami Area) administers Forest Resource Licensing (FRL) in this unit.

f) Utilities

Presently there are no commercial utilities located in the conservation reserve.

5.3. Natural Heritage Stewardship

Analysis of the life science targets based on landform/vegetation combinations have shown that the conservation reserve contains a minimum of 5 such combinations dominated by dense coniferous forest over weakly broken ground moraine. As mentioned previously, a minimum of 22 forest cover types may exist here (see *Forest Values Map*).

A recent aerial reconnaissance survey showed no wide spread forest disturbance due to forest harvesting, fire, insect, wind throw, wildlife damage, ice storms or other natural disturbances.

The MNR maintains one permanent Forest Ecosystem Classification (FEC) plot in the conservation reserve (see *Forest Values Map*).

5.4. Fisheries and Wildlife

There have been no detailed wildlife studies undertaken within the conservation reserve, with the exception of some values monitoring. The importance of the conservation reserve to wildlife has yet to be determined, particularly for those species, and habitats thereof, that may be vulnerable, threatened or endangered. An aquatic habitat inventory has been performed on Rabbit Lake.

Should any vulnerable, threatened or endangered (VTE) wildlife and or plant species be identified within or adjacent to the conservation reserve their value will be protected. Although the species may be identified as residing within the site, their location will remain undisclosed.

Caribou Mountain, within the municipality of Temagami, was the site of a peregrine falcon release (40 chicks) in the early 1990s; however, there are no known peregrines residing in the conservation reserve.

The southwestern wetland areas provide Class 2 aquatic feeding areas, which provide moderate habitat and aquatic plant food for moose. A Class 1 Moose Aquatic Feeding Area is found in a wetland located within the central portion of the conservation reserve which provides basic habitat and aquatic plant food for this species (see *Fish & Wildlife Values Map*).

The conservation reserve and adjacent landscapes maintain both cold and possibly warm water fisheries. Specifically, Rabbit Lake supports a wide variety of species such as lake trout, walleye and smallmouth bass. Boulton Lake, which is located on the western side of the conservation reserve also contains a cold water lake trout fishery (see *Fish & Wildlife Values Map*).

The aquatic habitats of all interior water bodies are unsurveyed.

5.5. Cultural Heritage Stewardship

There are no documented and registered sites (MCzCR) linked to historical habitation in the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve. However, the portage connecting Rabbit and Boulton lakes has been identified as an ancient travel route (possibly dates back 3000 years). Areas of high potential cultural heritage have been mapped through a predictive modeling process. These areas are linked to shorelines and known historic travel routes (see *Cultural Heritage Values Map*).

5.6. Land Use/Existing Development

The Highway 11 corridor is the major access artery to this area. Crown land recreation is very prevalent in this region. Lake Temagami supports numerous summer homes and a wide range of recreational opportunities and is also a focal point for other backcountry destinations and experiences.

A patented parcel of land is located just outside the southern tip of the conservation reserve, which is occupied by a seasonal dwelling. To the north of this location is a trapline cabin (see *Tenure Map*).

Mining claims and leases do not exist within or adjacent to the conservation reserve.

There are no other forms of tenure in the conservation reserve other than legal agreements with registered trappers, bear management area operators and baitfish licensees.

Traditional uses within the conservation reserve will continue to be permitted; however, the goal will be to resolve conflicts regarding incompatibility between uses and to ensure that identified values are adequately protected. Existing uses are as defined in Section 5.2 a).

Non-motorized trails (i.e., hiking, and cross-country skiing) are the only new developments in the conservation reserve in recent years.

5.7. Commercial Use

Present commercial use activities are illustrated on the *Commercial Activities Map*. Two registered fur harvesting traplines and two Bear Management Areas (BMAs) overlap the conservation reserve. Riddell Township is licensed to one commercial baitfish harvester and it is likely that some harvesting activity occurs within the conservation reserve.

5.8.Tourism/Recreation Use/Opportunities

Current uses of this conservation reserve have been described in Section 5.1.1 (e). Presently, there is no known infrastructure supporting any recreational or commercial activity within the conservation reserve's boundaries.

During the planning phase for the conservation reserve, no new recreational initiatives were brought forward for consideration.

5.9. Client Services

Presently, client services include district responses to public inquiries. No formal information or interpretive facilities currently exist within the conservation reserve.

6.0 Management Guidelines

6.1. Management Planning Strategies

Commitments identified in previous planning documents (*TLUP* and current policy (3.03.05 *PLA*)) will form the basis for land use decisions within the conservation reserve. Management strategies for these uses must consider short and long-term objectives for the reserve. For current information on permitted uses, refer to the Crown Land Use Atlas.

Proposed uses and development will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. A *Test of Compatibility*, (Procedural Guideline B – Land Uses (PL 3.03.05)) must be passed before they are deemed acceptable. The emphasis will be on ensuring that the natural values of the conservation reserve are not negatively affected by current and future activities. Therefore, any application for new specific uses will be carefully studied and reviewed. The Ministry, partner organizations and/or proponents may undertake such studies.

6.2. State of the Resource Management Strategies

The development of this SCI and the long term management and protection of the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve will be under the direction of the MNR's North Bay District, Temagami Area Supervisor. The following management strategies have been created to achieve the goal and objectives stated earlier in this stewardship document:

Social/Economic

- Management direction will aim to maintain and develop social and economic benefits to the local communities where practical.
- Local partnerships may be solicited to participate in the delivery of certain objectives identified in this SCI.
- Educational opportunities will be developed and encouraged in order to create an awareness of natural systems in the area.

Natural Heritage Stewardship

- With the exceptions of fire suppression and selective forest insect and disease control, the management intent for the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve is to allow for natural ecosystems, processes and

features to operate undisturbed with minimal human interference while providing educational, research and recreational activities.

- Forest ecosystem renewal and maintenance as stated for this conservation reserve under the *TLUP* will only be entertained via a separate vegetation management plan.
- All wildfire occurrences will be considered a high priority and will actively be suppressed until such time as policy directions change.
- Prescribed burning will be conducted only under the direction of the provincial fire strategy and authorized for the conservation reserve under a separate vegetation management plan. Prescribed burning may be utilized if deemed necessary to emulate natural disturbances and renew forest communities, prepare seed beds for research and/or education purposes or to meet additional objectives determined within a separate vegetation management plan.
- All earth and life science features will be protected by defining compatible uses, enforcing regulations and monitoring and mitigating issues.
- Industrial activities such as; commercial timber harvest, prospecting and mining and new hydro generation will not be permitted within the conservation reserve.
- Permits for fuel-wood will not be issued.
- New energy transmission, communication and transportation corridors or resource roads or construction of facilities are discouraged within the boundaries of the conservation reserve.
- Other activities that do not pass a *Test of Compatibility* will be prohibited (MNR Policy 3.03.05, 1997).
- The introduction of exotic and/or invasive species will not be permitted.
- Programs may be developed to control forest insects and diseases where there is a concern that significant values may be compromised. Remedies must focus on the outbreak or infestation. Biological or non-intrusive solutions should be applied whenever possible.
- The collection/removal of vegetation and parts thereof will not be permitted; however, subject to a *Test of Compatibility*, the Area Supervisor may authorize the collection of plants and/or parts for purposes of rehabilitating degraded sites within the conservation reserve, or the collection of seeds for maintaining genetic stock and/or research.
- Detailed ecological surveys concerning ground vegetation and additional plant values assessment - especially concerning species at risk is warranted. Additional plant science inventory should be linked to future recreational needs and possibly regional gap analysis approaches. Assessments should follow future direction and methods established through MNR's Inventory Monitoring and Assessment Reporting (IMAR) program (see section 6.4).
- MNR will provide leadership and direction for maintaining the integrity of this conservation reserve as a heritage estate.
- Research, education and interpretation will be encouraged to provide a better understanding of the management and protection of the natural heritage

values and will be fostered through local and regional natural heritage programs, initiatives and partnerships.

Fisheries and Wildlife

- Fish and wildlife resources will continue to be managed in accordance with policies and regulations prevailing in the area and under the direction of the Temagami Area Supervisor. Provincial legislation and policy will dictate management and enforcement objectives for this area.
- Management direction will aim to verify species present, ecological function and habitat requirements.
- Additional fish and wildlife population and habitat assessments, especially for species-at-risk are warranted.
- Any fish and wildlife inventory may require a regional gap analysis approach.
- Inventories, assessments or monitoring programs should follow direction and methods established through MNR's IMAR program and be linked to district sustainability objectives and initiatives or future recreational needs (see section 6.4).
- Moose aquatic areas should be resurveyed to update data.
- Hunting and angling will be permitted within this conservation reserve.
- First Nation Treaty rights will be respected (see *Aboriginal Interests*).
- Area of Concern (AOC) prescriptions for the protection of fish and wildlife values, developed for forest management purposes, will be used as a guide when considering proposed activities/developments in the conservation reserve.
- The rehabilitation of damaged ecosystems will occur whenever possible (maintain bio-diversity).

Cultural Heritage

- Protection of these values will be maintained.
- Documented sites will be checked periodically for signs of degradation. Additional sites will be documented as encountered.
- Development, research and education proposals may be considered in accordance with the *Test of Compatibility*; *Conserving a Future for our Past: Archaeology, Land Use Planning & Development in Ontario*, Section 3 (MCzCR, 1997) and MNR's *AOC Descriptions and Prescriptions (Cultural Heritage Resources) for the 1999-2019 Temagami FMP* or its successor.
- Research/education to provide a better understanding of the management and protection of cultural heritage values will be encouraged.

Land Use/Existing Development

- Existing land uses and development within the conservation reserve that conflict with the protection objectives (*Test of Compatibility*) will be identified and discontinued if impacts can't be mitigated. Similarly, uses in adjacent

lands will be reviewed. If they are found to impact on the conservation reserve, mitigation measures will be explored.
- There will be no new motorized trail development; however, non-motorized trail development may be permitted only if the activity passes a *Test of Compatibility.*

Commercial Use

- Existing commercial uses such as fur and baitfish harvesting and the operation of bear management areas will be permitted. Such activities will be monitored in order to ensure they do not unduly deplete natural resources and that they impose a minimal impact on the features identified for protection.
- Commercial enterprises offering ecotourism experiences will be encouraged, providing these activities are of low intensity and are compatible with other uses.

Aboriginal Interests

- Aboriginal and treaty rights will continue to be respected throughout the management of this SCI. Any future proposal(s) and or decision(s) that have potential impact(s) on individual aboriginal values and or communities will involve additional consultation with the affected aboriginal groups.

Tourism/Recreation

- The earth and life science features and their protection, shall be the overall theme for tourism.
- The conservation reserve should also be portrayed as providing backcountry experiences near an urban setting.
- Small-scale infrastructures for enhancing tourism and recreation (i.e., warm-up shelter) may be considered, providing they pass a *Test of Compatibility* and other review requirements.
- Main base tourism development (lodges) will not be permitted.
- Conflict resolution between recreational uses will be a priority. This will be achieved by adhering to the objectives of this SCI with input from relevant user groups.
- The level of safety and compatibility between activities will determine permitted uses (i.e., *Test of Compatibility*).
- Low-impact camping may be permitted along the waterways.
- Degradation of cultural heritage sites will not be permitted and current and future use will be monitored and if deemed necessary, camping may be prohibited at certain sites in order to protect these values.

Client Services

- Information regarding the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve may be delivered from different sources, however MNR will be the lead agency for responding to inquiries regarding access, land use, values and recreation opportunities.
- A management agreement may be pursued with an appropriate partner to share responsibilities for information services and the delivery of other aspects of this SCI.

6.3. Specific Feature/Area/Zone Management Strategies

Presently there are no specific management strategies in place for sub-zones within the conservation reserve.

With the exception of fire suppression, the old growth pine ecosystem will be allowed to develop in a natural, undisturbed manner. Any change in management direction for the old growth areas will be addressed within a vegetation management plan.

If, during the course of conservation reserve monitoring it is deemed necessary to regulate access or uses in certain areas, management zones may be developed. These zones will facilitate permitted/restricted activities for the protection of certain features or to resolve conflicts between uses. Zone management will try to compliment linkages to areas and uses outside the conservation reserve. The creation of management zones will require additional planning beyond this SCI, public consultation and eventual plan amendment if accepted.

6.4. Promote Inventory, Monitoring and Assessment Reporting (IMAR), and Research

There are many opportunities to study and explore the natural systems in the conservation reserve. Since there has been little interference from "outside influences", some features may be observed in a relatively undisturbed state.

The MNR maintains one Forest Ecosystem Classification sample plot in the conservation reserve (see *Forest Values Map*). The establishment of this permanent sample plot was based on its representation within the site region/district. The plot is monitored on an on-going basis and provides valuable information regarding plant ecology and forest growth characteristics. This benchmarked information provides trend through time data that managers may use to identify and predict the effect of management strategies on similar landscapes. Sample plots exist throughout the province and to some extent, throughout the world.

The compatibility of current and future sample plots will be reviewed to ensure they conform with the protection of values and are unobtrusive to other activities conducted within the conservation reserve. Non-destructive research will be promoted as an asset for procuring an understanding of the natural features and processes in the Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve.

New developments such as campsites, privies, trails or developed access points will not be considered until a *Test of Compatibility* is conducted.

6.5. Implementation, and Plan Review Strategies

This Statement of Conservation Interest will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Implementation of the SCI will include monitoring activities to ensure adherence to management guidelines. A full review will coincide with the review of the *TLUP* (next review – 2006) and will be done every ten years thereafter.

Implementation of the SCI and management of the conservation reserve are the responsibility of the Temagami Area Supervisor. Partnerships may be pursued to address management needs. If changes in management direction are needed at any time, the significance of the changes will be evaluated. Minor changes, which do not alter the overall intent of this SCI, may be considered and approved by the District Manager without further public consultation and the SCI will be amended accordingly.

In assessing major changes, the need for a more detailed Conservation Reserve Resource Management Plan will be considered. Where a RMP is not considered necessary or feasible, a major amendment may be considered with public consultation. Such amendments will be posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) registry. The Regional Director has approval authority for all major amendments to this SCI.

6.6. Marketing Strategies

Messages should focus on the conservation reserve's accessibility, natural heritage representation, recreation opportunities and the "Temagami Experience" in general. Research and education is a theme that should be incorporated in all promotional strategies.

Partnerships may be fostered to aid in the delivery of this component.

References

Crins, W.J. and P.W.C. Uhlig. 2000. Ecoregions of Ontario: Modifications to Angus Hills' Site Region and Districts- Revisions and Rationale.

Hills, G.A. 1959. A Ready Reference to the Description of the Land of Ontario and its Productivity. Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, Division of Research, Maple, Ontario. 140pp.

Kor, P.S.G. 2001. Earth Science Checksheet: Temagami Island North Conservation Reserve.

Mutch, J. 2000. Aerial Reconnaissance Field Notes: Temagami Island North Conservation Reserve.

Noble, T.N. 1983. Life Science Report for Site Region 4E. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Sudbury, 90 p. Appendices. 4E Biophysical Map Sheets (1:250,000).

Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. 1997. Conserving a Future for Our Past: Archaeology, Land Use Planning and Development in Ontario. 42pp.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 2001. A Draft Environmental Assessment for MNR Resource Stewardship and Facility Development Projects. 76pp.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 1999. Forest Resource Inventory (FRI) Mapping: Temagami Island. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, North Bay.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 1997. Public Lands Directive Manual: Natural Heritage- PL 3.03.05.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 1997. Temagami Land Use Plan for the Temagami Comprehensive Planning Area.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 1991. Temagami Comprehensive Planning Program (Heritage Component)- Preliminary Review of Heritage Resources.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 1991. Temagami Comprehensive Planning Program (Future Direction).

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 1988. OMNR: Aerial Photos (1:20,000).

Roberts, S.K. 2001. Recreational Inventory Checksheet: Temagami Island North Conservation Reserve.

Thompson, J.E. 2000. Recreational Inventory Checksheet: Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve.

Thompson, J.E., M. Lajeunesse, J. Joyce and N. Avoledo. 2001. Life Science Checksheet: Temagami Island North Conservation Reserve.

Appendix A.

PROCEDURAL GUIDELINE B – LANDUSES – TEST OF COMPATIBILITY

***Public Lands Act* Policy PL 3.03.05 (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, 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 SCI:** SCI describe values for which an area has been set aside and the range of appropriate uses that will be permitted in the area. SCI 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 SCI for the Conservation Reserve? Would the new use(s) depart from the spirit of appropriate indicator land uses in the SCI?"

2. **Impact Assessment:** If the proposed use(s) pass test one 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 any historical or archaeological values in the area?"

- Impact on **research activities**: "will the new use(s) affect any 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 of **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 use(s) affect the community(ies) surrounding the area in a positive or negative way?" (for example, will the new use make the area less remote thereby affecting a local tourism industry that is dependant 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?"

Appendix B.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Annual Work Schedule: one-year schedule of forestry operations (i.e. harvest, renewal, tending, road planning etc.)

Class 1 Moose Aquatic Feeding Areas: are those areas that have minimal wildlife habitat potential for this species.

Class 2 Moose Aquatic Feeding Areas: are those areas (usually less than 1hectare) that have moderate use or habitat potential for this species.

Class 3 Moose Aquatic Feeding Areas: are those areas (usually greater than 1 hectare) that have high use or habitat potential for this species.

Ecotourism: responsible tourism that considers the natural heritage values within the conservation reserve and their sustainability as well as taking into account the interests of local communities.

Fen: peatland with water table at or above the surface with very slow water movement through communities via seepage that results in a more mineral, nutrient and oxygen- rich environment than bogs. Generally fens contain peat accumulations greater than 40 cm deep. Sometimes floating mat with sedges, mosses, shrubs and sparse tree layer present. Indicator plants include; Larch (*Larix laricina*) and Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) over Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*) , Speckled Alder (*Alnus incana*), Dwarf Birch (*Betula pumila*) , Bluejoint Grass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), assorted sedges, Sweet Gale (*Myrica gale*) with ericaceous shrubs present – especially in more nutrient poor fens (Harris *et al.* 1996).

IMAR: An integrated, ministry-wide framework for Inventory, Monitoring, Assessment, and Reporting that supports the management of our natural resources in an ecologically sustainable way.

Land Caution: Regulation that was adopted sometime in August 1973 that prevented the first registration of title on Crown Land. The land caution was lifted in 1996.