

Whitemud Conservation Reserve (C2310) Statement of Conservation Interest



Prepared for OMNR, Red Lake District

Updated November 2011

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Approval Statement

I am pleased to approve this Statement of Conservation Interest for the Whitemud Conservation Reserve.

This Statement of Conservation Interest provides guidance for the management of the Conservation Reserve and the basis for the ongoing monitoring activities. Should significant facility development or resource management be considered, or complex issues arise requiring additional studies, a more detailed Conservation Reserve Management Plan will be prepared with full public consultation.

The public was widely consulted during the original regulation process for this site. However, further consultation with Treaty 3 and representatives of Lac Seul First Nation is required before this site can be regulated.

The Conservation Reserve will continue to be managed by the Red Lake South Area, Red Lake District, Ministry of Natural Resources.



Graeme Swanwick
District Manager
Red Lake District

01.07.19
Date



Charlie Lauer
Regional Director
Northwest Region

01/08/08
Date

1.0 Background Information

The purpose of this document is to identify the natural heritage values of the Whitemud Conservation Reserve, as well as identifying the type and extent of current recreational use onsite. A set of management guidelines defines the activities that will and will not be permitted, along with overall management direction for the area. Additional information on the basis for this Statement of Conservation Interest can be found by referring to the “Conservation Reserves Policy and Procedure” PL3.03.05.

The Whitemud CR was originally chosen as a site of interest during the Regional Parks System Planning exercise (1977-1981), and was included as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest in the West Patricia Land Use Planning initiative of the early 1980's. These designations were based on the area's Earth Science values. The site has been identified as a good representation of Landscape Unit 24. (see fig. 3)

Table of background information

Description: Overview data describing Whitemud Conservation Reserve and location.

Name	Whitemud Conservation Reserve
Ecoregion / Ecodistrict	3S-5
OMNR Administrative Region / District / Area	Northwest Region - Red Lake District - Red Lake South Area Office
Total Area (ha)	18,485
Regulation Date	Pending
First Nations	Treaty 3 Traditional Land Use Area.
OBM	
Lat. / Long.	50 42' N 92 25' W
Basemap	53561, 53562, 54561, 54562
Forest Resource Inventory (FRI) Stands	12, 21, 34, 39, 42, 234, 238, 240. Among others. (1977 FRI) The Forest Resource Inventory was updated in 1996.
General Location Description	Located approximately 100 km north of Dryden, and 20 km north of Lac Seul's McKenzie Bay. The Whitemud Conservation Reserve is near two important boundaries; the MNR district boundary between Red Lake and Sioux Lookout districts, and the boundary between Site Regions 3S and 4S as outlined by the Ontario Land Inventory's (OLI) boundary delineation.
Access	The Whitemud Conservation Reserve can be accessed from the north by turning east off of hwy 105 onto Wenasaga Rd. at the extreme NW of Lac Seul. A fork is located at ~km 50. Follow the right fork (Wesley Rd.) and travel approx. 15 km where several tertiary roads lead to the south and into the Whitemud. See Figure 1.

1.1 Targets

This section provides a summary of the earth science, life science, and cultural resource values represented as well as present or possible recreational opportunities.

Table of values and representation

Description: Summary of earth / life science and cultural representation as well as recreational opportunities

Representation Target	Details
Life Science Representation	<p>Large peatland complexes typify the lowland areas; some of these being patterned ridge and swale. The Whitemud Conservation Reserve represents the southern extent of such peatlands. A number of significant communities and species occur here. For example, Michaud's sedge (<i>Carex michauxiana</i>) occurs as an open graminoid fen dominance type. Also, white spruce (<i>Picea glauca</i>) occurs on a knoll top near the eastern boundary. Two provincially rare vascular plant species, Prairie Goldenaster (<i>Heterotheca villosa</i>) and Mudwort (<i>Limosella aquatica</i>) have been recorded at the eastern end of Lac Seul and their presence within the Whitemud cannot be ruled out. Upland areas of the Whitemud Conservation Reserve are predominantly mantled by closed and open black spruce - jack pine coniferous forest.</p> <p>The area of the Whitemud Conservation Reserve is designated as being of low Moose density (<0.051Moose/km²).</p>
Earth Science Representation	<p>Upland forests broken by patches of bare bedrock barrens. Present on site is many short, narrow northwest-southeast trending De Geer moraine ridges, as well as occasional northeast-southwest trending sand and gravel esker ridges.</p>
Cultural Resource Representation	<p>Part of the Whitemud Conservation Reserve is located within Lac Seul First Nation's Traditional Land Use Area (TLUA).</p>
Recreational Opportunities	<p>The area of the Whitemud is not an area that sees much recreational use. Possible recreational activities available in the area include: hunting (especially moose), angling, and perhaps snowmobiling.</p>

1.2 Survey Information

This section provides an overview of the inventories completed their level of detail and any further inventories that are needed.

Table of inventories completed

Description: Inventories completed and future requirements

Survey Level	Reconnaissance	Detailed	Requirement
Life Science	Completed (Sept. 1995)	Low Detail	Cursory survey only -further survey may be warranted.
Earth Science	Completed (Sept. 1995)	Low Detail	No further survey required.
Cultural			Not Required
Recreational	Completed (Sept. 1995)	Extensive aerial survey	Sufficient information collected. No further survey required.
Other			Not Required

2.0 Values to be Protected

This section provides a description of the key natural heritage values on the site, and their condition relative to past resource use and management activities and their sensitivity to future land use and management activities.

2.1 Values Identified on the Site

Table of values

Value	Details
Life Science	<p>Upland Forest Ecosite Classification types: V28, V29, V30, V33, V34. Wetland (lowland) Ecosite Classification types: V35, V36, V37.</p> <p>A wide variety of ecosite types: Black Spruce Swamp, Thicket Swamp, Open and Treed Bog, Open Sphagnum Bog, Open Graminoid Bog, various fens and marshes.</p> <p>No plants of provincial or national significance were found, but it is conceivable that a more detailed survey of specialized niches could turn up such species. Several plants of regional interest were found. These are: <i>Carex lacustris</i> (lake sedge), <i>Carex michauxiana</i> (Michaud's sedge), <i>Cladium mariscoides</i> (twig-rush), <i>Glyceria canadensis</i> (rattlesnake manna grass), <i>Phragmites australis</i>.</p> <p>Given the size of the Whitemud Conservation Reserve, all fauna representative of the area should occur here. This Conservation Reserve will play an important role in contributing to caribou habitat as this forest cover matures. An albino moose was observed within the study area during aerial reconnaissance northeast of the junction of Lorne and Dead Creeks.</p>
Earth Science	<p>The Whitemud Conservation Reserve is situated in one of the headwater regions of the English River drainage basin. The topography is generally subdued, with elevations between 400 and 480m above sea level. Local relief is less than 15m in most areas, but in a few locations exceeds 40m.</p> <p>The area is underlain by late Archean age bedrock and mantled by a thin cover of glacial and post-glacial sediment. The previously mentioned rock outcroppings are the result of wave-washing action by Lake Agassiz, which flooded the area during the last deglaciation.</p> <p>The northern portion of the area is underlain by a felsic intrusion, namely the Bluffy Lake Batholith. This type of intrusion is found elsewhere within the English River Subprovince.</p>
Cultural	None Identified
Aboriginal Interests	Lac Seul First Nation Traditional Land Use Area.

Value	Details
Tourism	None Identified
Recreational Fishing	None Identified. Larger lakes such as Lorne Lake appear to contain suitable Northern Pike habitat, and possibly Walleye. No oligotrophic (trout supporting) lakes.
Recreational Hunting	None Identified
Mining	There are no staked or patented mining claims within the boundary. The mineral potential for the area is low. Past claim staking activity has however taken place at nearby Aerofoil Lake.
Aggregate	Some staking activity in relation to ornamental building stone (granite) has occurred on the periphery of the area. Nothing inside the Conservation Reserve.
Forest Harvest	The site is located in the Trout Lake Forest, which is a forest management unit held under a Sustainable Forestry Licence by Weyerhaeuser Canada.
Trapping	There are portions of 4 traplines located within the Conservation Reserve; RL 25 (administered out of Red Lake), SL67 T112, T120, & T121 (administered out of Sioux Lookout).
Bear Management Area	1 area - SL04 053
Commercial Fish	Portions of 3 baitfish blocks are affected; 506 922, 506 923, & 507 922.

2.2 Values to be Protected

The intent of this Statement of Conservation Interest is to protect values by establishing management guidelines for existing and potential uses in this area, given the level of past disturbance and the nature of the existing features.

Forest Values: values and features to be protected include a bedrock drift complex and vegetation patterns associated with the Central Boreal Forest.

Species at Risk Values: Signs of Woodland Caribou were observed through collaring data in 1997, along with caribou observations from a caribou survey in 2007. A wolverine was observed during a survey in 2005. Wolverine and Woodland Caribou are species at risk under the *Endangered Species Act (2007)*.

Recreational Values: There is no evidence of current recreational use within the boundary.

Limited potential for recreation does exist, with this potential being mostly confined to hunting and trapping. Some of the larger lakes (Anton and Nine lakes) on the western edge of this site provide excellent angling opportunities for Northern Pike and Walleye. However, sport fish potential in the upper reaches of the Whitemud watershed within this Conservation Reserve are unknown. The area is remote and difficult to access and would be a recreational destination only for the most adventurous traveler.

Tourism Values: The potential for tourism in Whitemud Conservation Reserve is uncertain but difficult access and the lack of unique features may prohibit use of the area. Review of the

Recreational Resource Summary suggests that tourism is not likely to develop in the immediate vicinity of the Whitemud.

3.0 Management Guidelines

3.1 Land Tenure

It was always intended that Whitemud Conservation Reserve should remain Crown land. Although the boundaries of the ANSI have undergone a number of revisions in the past it is expected that this site will be regulated once First Nations consultation has been finalized. No dispositions (including Land Use Permits or Licenses of Occupation) will be issued for the site.

3.2 Existing and Proposed Development

No development has occurred inside the Whitemud Conservation Reserve to date, and no specific plans have been drafted. No development or proposed development is anticipated at this time.

3.3 Recreational Activities

Any hunting and trapping traditionally occurring inside the Conservation Reserve boundary will be permitted to continue provided that this does not threaten the natural ecosystems and features found within the area.

3.4 Commercial Activities

Whitemud Conservation Reserve lies in the southeast portion of the Trout Lake Forest Management Unit. The SFL for this area is held by Weyerhaeuser Canada. The site will be removed from the SFL once the regulation process has been completed. Interim protection has been applied until this occurs.

The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM) has withdrawn the area from all mineral exploration and extraction activities, at MNR's request.

Careful mineral exploration may occur in specific new conservation reserves proposed through Ontario Living Legacy Land Use Strategy, in areas that have provincially significant mineral potential. If a portion of the new conservation reserve is to be developed for a mine, it would be removed from the reserve, and appropriate replacement lands would be placed in regulation.

Portions of 4 Trapline Areas (TA's) are included in the Conservation Reserve. These traplines are presently active and will be permitted to continue.

Whitemud CR is located within Bear Management Area SL04 053. Hunting will continue as a permitted use in the area.

3.5 Aboriginal Interests

The land that has been designated as the Whitemud Conservation Reserve is part of the Treaty 3 Traditional Land Use Area. Specifically it is the Lac Seul Band that has used, and continues to use the area for hunting and trapping. There are portions of four traplines within the conservation reserve. Traplines SL67 T120 & SL67 T121 are affected more than the other two, and both of these traplines are operated by First Nations Trappers. Nothing in this Statement of Conservation Interest affects in any way existing or future aboriginal or treaty rights.

3.6 Natural Resources Stewardship

3.6.1 Vegetation Management

The area's dominant vegetation is Black Spruce and Jack Pine in stands that are approximately 40 years old. The even age of these stands is due to the passage of a substantial forest fire in 1961.

The Whitemud Conservation Reserve is included in the intensive fire management zone of the Trout Lake FMU. Current policy dictates that all fires inside the conservation reserve will be actively suppressed in the interest of adjacent commercial timber supply. It may be, however, that to maintain the health of the forest in areas like the Whitemud, a certain amount of fire is beneficial. Forest renewal by fire might be accomplished in two ways:

1. By letting small or otherwise non-threatening fires burn inside the reserve.
2. By prescribing burns where deemed appropriate.

Flexibility in suppressing Low Risk fire occurrences within this Conservation Reserve should be evaluated where the opportunity presents itself. Prescribed fire should also be considered as a management tool, to emulate over time, the natural fire ecology of the area. However, intensive fire management and protection will continue to be carried out on this protected area until an alternative direction for the control of it is approved through a more detailed local natural resource plan or management plan.

3.6.2 Fish and Wildlife Management

As the stands within the 61 burn approach maturity, the area will become more suitable for sustaining winter use by Woodland Caribou. An area adjacent to the northeast boundary of this Conservation Reserve is already included as a significant wintering area for Caribou. Caribou activity is expected to increase over the entire area, as the surrounding forest cover matures.

Existing Wildlife Management Unit (WMU 4) boundaries and hunting and sport fishing regulations will continue to apply.

3.6.3 Landforms

The protection afforded the site under the Conservation Reserve guidelines is sufficient.

3.7 Cultural Resources Stewardship

Based on the existing information, no management activity is required at this time.

3.8 Client Services

Because of accessibility issues and funding constraints, trails and interpretive information for Whitemud Conservation Reserve are not a current priority. Perhaps with time and/or interest expressed by the public, these services will become available.

3.9 Research

Any non-destructive research will be encouraged in the Whitemud. A more detailed inventory may be necessary in the future to investigate further the possibility of provincially rare species occurring in the reserve.

3.10 Marketing

Information about the Whitemud is available at the Red Lake District Office in the form of fact sheets, and tabloid sized maps. Similar information is forthcoming on the MNR internet website. Marketing management in the near future may involve signage on Hwy. 105 as well as the Wenasaga and/or Wesley roads.

4.0 Implementation

Implementation of these management guidelines is the responsibility of MNR Red Lake District - Red Lake South Office, with guidance from the regional office in Thunder Bay. Stakeholders have been kept abreast of the development of the Whitemud, and this information is available to the public upon request.

5.0 Review and Revisions

The Whitemud Conservation Reserve Statement of Conservation Interest will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

In accordance with the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act (2007), MNR will examine management direction documents that have been in place for 10 years or more. The next scheduled review for Whitemud Conservation Reserve will be in 2020.

If changes in management direction are needed at any time, the significance of the changes will be evaluated. The need for public notice or more formal consultation will be assessed. Any major amendments will require full public consultation and the approval of the District Manager and Regional Director. This Statement of Conservation Interest complies with all the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act and the Environmental Bill of Rights.

5.1 Public Consultation

5.1.1 Results of Past Consultation

The Whitemud Conservation Reserve area has a 20 year history of public consultation which began with the West Patricia Land Use Planning process of 1981. At that time Whitemud was thought to have potential as a Provincial Park. This first round of public consultation resulted in the reduction of the original area of 54,300 ha to 38,800 ha. More recently (1996) Terry Noble, an Earth and Life science consultant, conducted an inventory on this site on behalf of the MNR to be used in negotiations with the forest industry over boundary refinement. These discussions resulted in a further reduction of the overall area to the current size of 18,485 ha. Consultation on the new boundary was deferred until it was recommended as a protected area under the Lands for Life regional land use strategy in June of 1998.

5.1.2 Present and Future Consultation

The latest round of public consultation under the Ontario's Living Legacy implementation strategy was initiated in August of 2000. Newspaper advertisements and a district information package were distributed to known stakeholders and affected people to initiate public consultation.

Feedback received during the public consultation period were general inquiries with no actual issues made concerning this conservation reserve. There was one case in which an individual asked to be included in the mailing list, should further information be sent out to stakeholders. It is thought that this particular gentleman was an avid canoeist, and had in the past, paddled near to, but not inside, the area of the Whitemud.

Further consultation with Treaty #3 and representatives of Lac Seul First Nation is required prior to the regulation of this site.

6.0 References

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Conservation Reserves Policy and Procedure (PL 3.03.05). 1997

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Red Lake South File 17.1 - Whitemud ANSI.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. West Patricia Land Use Plan. 1981

Noble, T.W. (for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources). Site Region 3S Gap Analysis. 1998.