

**Naiscoot Forest
Conservation
Reserve (C116)**

**Statement of
Conservation Interest**

March 2004

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(C116)**

Statement of Conservation Interest

**Ministry of Natural Resources
Parry Sound District**

Prepared with the assistance of:

**Meteeck & Company
Huntsville, Ontario**

March 2004

Approval Statement

We are pleased to approve this Statement of Conservation Interest for Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve (C116).

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve is a 375 hectare area of Crown Land located approximately 8 kilometres northeast of Pointe au Baril Station. The site is located in Harrison Ward within the Township of The Archipelago, in the Territorial District of Parry Sound. It lies along the north shore of Naiscoot Lake (also known as Six Mile Lake), the west shore of Horseshoe Lake, a portion of the northwest shore of Little Wilson Lake, and it includes all of Evans Lake within its boundaries. This site connects to Wahwashkesh – Naiscoot Conservation Reserve which follows along the remaining shoreline of Naiscoot Lake and extends eastward. It also connects on its north side to Magnetawan River Provincial Park.

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve, in ecological Site District 5E-7, includes middle-aged hemlock, red pine and white pine forests, and older jack pine stands on low hills with sandy soils. It has habitat for the eastern massasauga rattlesnake. It is adjacent to popular canoe routes, and is used for a variety of traditional recreation activities, including hunting.

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve is one of 378 new protected areas approved through *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, aimed, in part, at completing Ontario's system of parks and protected areas.

During the "Lands for Life" planning process, the public was widely consulted and provided valuable input into what became *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*. During consultation related to the formal Public Lands Act regulation of the boundaries of this conservation reserve a number of minor boundary changes were made to reduce resource management conflicts, ensure the boundaries reflected areas requiring protection. Comments received during the consultation were generally supportive of the protection of this area. Stakeholders who provided comment during the earlier consultation for this site were subsequently consulted regarding the draft Statement of Conservation Interest and their comments were considered in the finalization of this document.

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 more complex resource management or conservation issues arise or significant facility development be considered, then a detailed Resource Management Plan will be prepared with full public consultation.

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

Approved by: R. Griffiths
District Manager
Parry Sound District

Approved by: Ron Running
Regional Director
Southern Region

Table of Contents

- APPROVAL STATEMENTII**
- 1.0 INTRODUCTION..... 3**
 - 1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION: 3
 - 1.2 REPRESENTATION: 4
 - 1.3 SURVEY WORK: 4
- 2.0 VALUES TO BE PROTECTED 5**
 - 2.1 EARTH SCIENCE: 5
 - 2.2 LIFE SCIENCE 6
 - 2.3 CULTURAL VALUES:..... 8
 - 2.4 RECREATIONAL/AESTHETIC VALUES:..... 8
- 3.0 MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES 9**
 - 3.1 LAND TENURE: 9
 - 3.2 DEVELOPMENT: 9
 - 3.3 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES: 10
 - 3.4 COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES:..... 11
 - 3.5 ABORIGINAL INTERESTS: 12
 - 3.6 NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP: 12
 - 3.7 CULTURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP: 13
 - 3.8 CLIENT SERVICES: 14
 - 3.9 RESEARCH:..... 14
 - 3.10 MARKETING:..... 14
- 4.0 IMPLEMENTATION 15**
- 5.0 REVIEW AND REVISION OF THE STATEMENT OF CONSERVATION INTEREST 15**
- 6.0 REFERENCES 16**
- APPENDICES 17**
 - APPENDIX 1 PROCEDURAL GUIDELINE B – LAND USES – 17
 - APPENDIX 2 INDICATOR USES FOR CONSERVATION RESERVES: 18
 - APPENDIX 3 PROCEDURAL GUIDELINE C..... 20

Table of Figures

- Figure 1: Location of Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve (C116)..... 1**
- Figure 2: Site Map – Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve (C116) 2**

Figure 1: Location of Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve

Figure 2: Site Map – Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve (C116)

1.0 Introduction

Ontario's Living Legacy, the result of an extensive planning process that began in early 1997, culminated in the approval in July 1999 of a Land Use Strategy that identifies the intended strategic direction for Crown land, including the completion of Ontario's system of parks and protected areas. This process, which included extensive public consultation, resulted in the recommendation for regulation of 378 new protected areas, including Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve (C116).

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve is a 375 hectare area of Crown Land located approximately 8 kilometres northeast of Pointe au Baril Station. The site is located in Harrison Ward within the Township of The Archipelago, in the Territorial District of Parry Sound.

This conservation reserve is a popular recreation area composed largely of scenic shorelines of three lakes (north shore of Naiscoot Lake, the west shore of Horseshoe lake, and a portion of the north-west shore of Little Wilson Lake); it also includes all of Evans Lake and three smaller lakes or ponds within its boundaries. There are private lands on a peninsula of Naiscoot Lake, which are adjacent to the conservation reserve; these are not a part of the conservation reserve.

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve connects to Wahwashkesh – Naiscoot Conservation Reserve which follows along the remaining shoreline of Naiscoot Lake and extends eastward 18 kilometres towards Wahwashkesh Lake. It also connects on its north side to Magnetawan River Provincial Park.

Part of the conservation reserve lies within a Restricted Access Area, as identified in the 1983 Parry Sound District Land Use Guidelines. With the approval of the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy – 1999*, the Restricted Access Area policies were carried forward into the Land Use Strategy, and continue to apply to the eastern portions of this conservation reserve. Adjacent to the conservation reserve, the former Restricted Access Area is now within Parry Sound Interior Enhanced Management Area (E104a). The intent of the Restricted Access Area and E104a is to maintain the remote access characteristics of the vicinity. The Crown lands adjacent to the western and central portions of the conservation reserve are within North Parry Sound Recreation Enhanced Management Area (E119r).

Conservation reserves are established under the authority of the Public Lands Act, Ontario Regulation 805/94. Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve was established by Ontario Regulation 237/03 on June 28, 2003.

A Statement of Conservation Interest (SCI) is prepared under the direction of Procedural Guideline A – Resource Management Planning (PL Procedure 3.03.05). The purpose of this SCI is to identify and describe the values of Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve. The SCI 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	Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve (C116)
Site Region/District	5E-7
OMNR Administrative Region/District/Area	Southern Region/Parry Sound District/ Parry Sound Area
Total Area (ha.)	375 hectares
Regulation Date	June 28, 2003 (O. Reg. 237/03)

First Nations	Robinson-Huron Treaty and Williams Treaty
OBM map sheets	10 17 5500 50500, 5550 50500
Topographic Map	Pointe Au Baril Station 41 H/9
UTM co-ordinates	17T 55350 505460 (Centroid)

1.2 Representation:

Earth Science Representation:

Bedrock -- Bayfield gneiss association rocks, Nadeau Island gneiss association rocks, and the Central Britt shear zone, in the Britt Domain, Algonquin Terrane in the Proterozoic Central Gneiss Belt of the Grenville Province.

Surficial -- Thin, discontinuous drift cover over bedrock, with patches of ice-contact deposits in low lying areas are typical components of the Late Wisconsinan Stage of the Quaternary Era in central Ontario.

Life Science Representation:

The conservation reserve is notable for its diversity of both terrestrial and wetland community types. Predominant forest communities include middle-aged hemlock, red pine and white pine forests, and older jack pine stands on low hills with sandy soils. These vegetation types provide habitat for at least 152 vascular plant species.

Cultural Resources Representation:

Neither detailed cultural research nor inventory has been carried out for this conservation reserve. However, there is some site evidence of early logging activity. Recent regional evaluation (OMNR, 2003) shows that this conservation reserve contains areas that have a high potential for cultural heritage sites. Naiscoot Lake is a part of historic inter-connected canoe routes.

Recreational Opportunities:

A recreational inventory report was prepared for this site based primarily on existing knowledge and data sources of MNR staff, recent site visits and reflecting field observations made during the preparation of the life science report (Larson, 2003). It accommodates big and small game hunting, canoeing and sport fishing.

1.3 Survey Work:

Survey Level	Earth Science	Life Science	Cultural	Recreational	Other
Reconnaissance	Blackburn, 2003	Jones., 2003	OMNR, 2003	Larson, 2003	None
Detailed	None	None	None	None	None

Requirement	None	Monitor the status/presence of significant species and associations.	Research to be encouraged.	Monitor use impacts	None
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2.0 Values to be protected

This conservation reserve is located within Hills' (1959) ecological Site District 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 Blackburn, 2003)

Bedrock:

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve is an area of extensive bedrock barrens interspersed with numerous lakes, interconnecting drainages and wetlands. The dominant rock types exposed are Whitestone Suite meta-anorthosite in the western part of the Britt Domain, Algonquin Terrane in the Proterozoic Central Gneiss Belt of the Grenville Province.

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 is one of the four lithotectonic terranes of the Central Gneiss Belt. Within the Algonquin Terrane, the Britt Domain is one of twelve structural domains. These geological environments are part of the modern organization of the complex products of the mid-Proterozoic orogenic events (Easton 1992a & b). As such, their representation in this conservation reserve contributes to the conservation of the Grenville Province continental accretion theme (Davidson, 1981).

The Britt Domain consists of highly deformed 1.8 to 1.6 billion-year-old gneisses and migmatites of supracrustal and igneous origin that have been intruded by younger 1.5 to 1.4 billion-year-old granitic and monzonitic plutons. Structural trends of the Britt Domain vary. West of Highway 69, the dominant trend is north-westerly. East of Highway 69, the structural trend changes to a northerly to north-easterly direction. This conservation reserve lies in an intermediate location between the two structural trends. Two of the five gneiss associations of the Britt Domain are found in this site. Bayfield gneiss association rocks underlie the western portion of the site. Nadeau Island gneiss association rocks underlie the eastern portion. The Central Britt shear zone separates the two associations.

Taken together with the adjacent Wahwashkesh-Naiscoot Conservation Reserve, a 25 kilometre cross section of the Britt Domain is represented in an inland central area. However, the bedrock geological features of Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve have local significance in the Britt Domain, Algonquin Terrane.

Surficial:

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve lies in the Georgian Bay fringe physiographic region of Southern Ontario characterized by very shallow soil and bare bedrock knobs and ridges (Chapman & Putman, 1984). Thin discontinuous drift overlies bedrock in places and very small patches of ice-contact deposits have been mapped in lower lying areas close to shorelines.

No significance is attributed to these surficial geological features.

2.2 Life Science:

(Life science information, unless otherwise noted, is taken from Jones, 2003)

Representation:

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve was identified during the *Ontario's Living Legacy* selection process for its representation of middle-aged hemlock, red pine and white pine forests; older jack pine stands on low hills with sandy soils. It also provides habitat for the eastern massasauga rattlesnake.

The conservation reserve lies in the weakly broken, shallow, sandy till plain biophysical unit (1a-23) which is predominantly bare bedrock with organic soils. The site displays the steeply changing topography of the underlying bedrock in hills, walls, and cliffs. Where the bedrock levels into flatter land and in drainage valleys, deeper organic sediments have accumulated.

Because of its varied topography, Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve is very diverse, with 22 vegetation types in a relatively small area. Four types are common and widespread:

- 1) White pine (*Pinus strobus*) dominated forest, with red pine (*Pinus resinosa*) and red oak (*Quercus rubra*) as common associates. In the interior part of the conservation reserve, white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) is the common associate and there is usually a sub-canopy of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*). This forest grades into areas of sugar maple-dominance with supra-canopy white pines.
- 2) Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) forests are common, usually with a supra-canopy of white pine and sometimes a younger sub-canopy of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*). Nearly all of the white pine or hemlock forests are in a mature to old state, with white pines averaging 50 cm diameter at breast height (dbh) and some reaching 80+ cm dbh and 35m tall. Large hemlocks are in the range of 30-55 cm dbh although many larger trees are present. Most of these areas are nearing the age and size where they should be considered old growth.
- 3) At the water's edge along Naiscoot and Horseshoe Lakes, there is typically a narrow strip of shrubs a few meters wide, dominated by sweet gale (*Myrica gale*) with alder (*Alnus rugosa*) and royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) occurring on small, broken chunks of bedrock.
- 4) Moving out into the water, the shrubs grade into a shallow aquatic community dominated by pickerel weed (*Pontederia cordata*) and water lily (*Nymphaea odorata*).

In addition to these predominant vegetation types, sugar maple forests occur scattered throughout the conservation reserve in level areas or where the bedrock provides an indentation to form a valley or water drainage. Yellow birch (*Betula allegheniensis*), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), and white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) may all occur as associates. Nearly all these forests are mature to old and have very large trees present. At the time of the survey (August, 2003) the understory of these maple forests were mostly covered with small sugar maple seedlings although there is a richness of other species present including Indian cucumber (*Medeola virginica*) and doll's eyes (*Actaea pachypoda*) as well as more widespread species such as sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*). Some light gaps have a dense growth of beaked hazel (*Corylus cornuta*).

Other deciduous forest types present in the conservation reserve include an area of large-toothed aspen (*Populus grandidentata*) and white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) forest at the north end of Horseshoe Lake with an understory of bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*). In a mesic area adjacent to a tamarack (*Larix laricina*) swamp, mixed forest was present and had a cover of cedar, white birch, and an understory of red maple (*Acer rubrum*). One further forest vegetation feature is a strip of cedar (or sometimes hemlock) that occurs along the west shore of Horseshoe Lake and which is backed by the predominant white pine or hemlock forest.

Many different types of wetland vegetation exist in the conservation reserve, but only a few have significant size. In the central area south of the east end of Evans Lake is a cedar swamp with ground cover of *Sphagnum* mosses and typical species such as three-seeded sedge (*Carex trisperma*) and cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*). This area may be as large as 10 hectares. The drainage flowing out of this cedar swamp into Naiscoot Lake contains a black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) swamp with a shrubby understory of red maple, yellow birch, alder (*Alnus rugosa*) and wild raisin (*Viburnum cassinoides*). Another large wetland is

the tamarack-black spruce (*Picea mariana*) swamp, which occurs in the level area south of the middle of Evans Lake, roughly 100 m north of the Naiscoot Lake shore. This area is roughly 5 hectares in size and has a ground cover of *Sphagnum* mosses and scattered pools of water containing water-arum (*Calla palustris*).

Wetland communities exist at all the lakes in the conservation reserve. The drainage area entering the west end of Evans Lake (from the south) contains a large, open shrub thicket of sweet gale and leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*). A similar community, but with more sweet gale, occurs at the north end of Horseshoe Lake with a well-developed aquatic component of Robbin's spike-rush (*Eleocharis robbinsii*) and water lily. Shallow aquatic communities occur at the east end of Evans Lake and in the smaller lake to the east, with water lilies and water shield (*Brasenia schreberi*) dominant, and a narrow strip of wool-grass (*Scirpus cyperinus*) and Canada blue-joint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*) on the muddy bank. The small lake at the southeast corner of the site is boggy with a floating mat in the centre. The mucky shore has a community of leatherleaf, sweet gale, and three-way sedge (*Dulichium arundinaceum*). The provincially rare marsh St. John's wort (*Triadenum virginicum*) occurs here.

In the northern-most part of the conservation reserve, the small lake and its two adjacent marshes are an excellent example of a successional progression. The lake itself has shoreline marshes dominated by Canada blue-joint and wool grass, as well as a small area of shallow aquatic plants. The marsh immediately to the east is dryer, with no open water, appearing to have grown into a large field of wool grass with meadowsweet bushes (*Spiraea tomentosa* and *S. alba*). The third and furthest east area is an older stage yet, being a thicket swamp of alders with Canada blue-joint underneath.

There are no sizeable rock barrens present in the site, only a few small, open patches on the top of rocky knobs. These areas have white pine and red oak (*Quercus rubrum*) present with wavy hair grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) and bracken fern on the ground. Some of these rock-top areas are more vegetated and probably a later successional stage of the previous type, with the same species composition but in greater cover, and with big patches of common juniper (*Juniperus communis*) on the ground.

Other rock-based features include a slope of tumbled blocks with a great diversity of bryophytes, and a couple of sheer walls covered with the rock tripe (*Lasallia sp.*) lichen.

An area of young, brushy vegetation was noted and observed to be the result of natural disturbance processes. On the top of the hill above the big cedar swamp is an area of intense regeneration of young maples and fallen trees, with red raspberries (*Rubus strigosus*) and fringed bindweed (*Polygonum cilinode*). The area appears to be a natural blow-down.

Several species are present in the conservation reserve that are components of the provincially rare, Atlantic Coastal Plain marsh vegetation type, including buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), meadow-beauty (*Rhexia virginica*) and Robbin's spike-rush. While these species were occasionally seen in large quantities individually, they were not observed together in sufficient quantity to merit designation as this community type.

Condition:

The older age condition of the forests in Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve indicates that fire has not had a significant effect on this area in the last 200+ years. OMNR digital fire history mapping shows no documented fire in the area, and since there were marketable-sized trees in the 1880's (when the area was logged), it is unlikely that fire had a significant effect in the site for at least 100 years prior to that. There is much evidence of fire in the surrounding Wahwashkesh-Naiscoot Conservation Reserve, and on the adjacent crown lands, but Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve itself appears to have been little burnt, perhaps because it is nearly surrounded by water.

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve was logged in the 1880's. A few very old, cut white pine stumps were noted at the east end of Evans Lake, and a few old, cut logs are floating in the water at the west end of the lake above the outflow into the lake to the east. Otherwise, the conservation reserve shows almost no evidence of anthropogenic disturbance.

Diversity:

Twenty-two landform-vegetation types were documented during the 2003 field inspection of this site. These vegetation types were defined using standard ecological land classifications of Ontario (Chambers et al. 1997, Lee et al. 1998, NHIC 2002 and Harris et al. 1996) which have been applied to create a complete classification for the greater Georgian Bay area by Jalava et al. (2002). The conservation reserve is notable for its diversity of both terrestrial and wetland community types. These vegetation types provide habitat for at least 152 vascular plant species.

Ecological considerations:

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve and the Naiscoot River system in general are connected to the waters of Magnetawan River Provincial Park and Noganosh Lake Provincial Park at a connection between Evans Lake and Lone Tree Lake just north of the conservation reserve, forming part of a very large network of aquatic habitats. The conservation reserve lands are also connected to the long, continuous shorelines of Wahwashkesh-Naiscoot Conservation Reserve. There is anecdotal evidence of sightings of eastern massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*) and the site contains areas that have potential as habitat for this reptile.

Special Features:

Given that most trees in the site are 120 years old or less these forests are just approaching the old growth stage, which is generally accepted to be around 120 years or more. However, they should be considered old growth now because they are in a completely natural condition, showing no obvious anthropogenic interference, and they are older, larger, and more natural than the vast majority of other forests in the vicinity.

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, this area is a part of historic and current canoe routes. Recent regional evaluation (OMNR, 2003) shows that this conservation reserve contains areas that have a high potential for cultural heritage sites.

2.4 Recreational/Aesthetic Values:

The lakes bordering this conservation reserve are used recreationally for boating and fishing, with easy public access from the west where Highway 69 crosses Naiscoot Lake. They are also part of a number of interconnected canoe routes, with portages through the conservation reserve. Campsites are limited in the site itself.

Naiscoot Lake, Little Wilson Lake and Horseshoe Lake (which border the site) are popular fishing lakes, as is Evans Lake within the conservation reserve.

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve is used for a wide variety of hunting. Small game and waterfowl hunting is frequent; however, the majority of hunting activity is focused on large game species such as white-tailed deer, moose and bear.

The distance of this conservation reserve from urban areas has resulted in a relatively pristine night sky, which enhances 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 which are not heavily affected by light pollution.

3.0 Management Guidelines

3.1 Land Tenure:

Background:

Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve comprises 375 hectares of Crown land located in Harrison Ward within the Township of The Archipelago, in the Territorial District of Parry Sound. There are private lands on a peninsula of Naiscoot Lake, which are adjacent to the conservation reserve. These are not a part of the conservation reserve.

The conservation reserve is divided between two registered trapline areas (PS-156 & PS-157). The conservation reserve lies within parts of two commercial Bait Fish Blocks (PS0028 & PS0029). The western portion of the site, along the shoreline of Naiscoot Lake, lies within Bear Management Area PS-49-01; the remainder of the site is not within a Bear Management Area.

There are no recreation camps within the conservation reserve.

Guideline:

The sale of Crown lands within the conservation reserve generally is not permitted. Exceptions will only be considered under unusual circumstances, such as where an adjacent privately owned parcel has inadequate area for the installation of a septic system.

There are no plans by the MNR to acquire private lands to add to the conservation reserve.

The commercial bear hunting service associated with the current Bear Management Area in the western part of this site is allowed to continue. However it is not allowed in the remainder of the conservation reserve, and additional areas of the conservation reserve cannot be incorporated into a Bear Management Area. Fur harvest is permitted to continue in the registered trapline areas. The Bait Fish Blocks are permitted to continue.

New recreation camps are not permitted.

Commercial timber harvesting is not allowed within conservation reserves. However, there are limited situations in which abutting land owners can harvest firewood for use on their adjacent property. Specifically, property owners and recreation camp permittees who have no road access to their properties can apply for permits to cut limited amounts of firewood in the conservation reserve for their own use. This situation would apply only to water access cottages or recreation camps that are adjacent to conservation reserve boundaries and that do not have road access.

3.2 Development:

Background:

There are no Crown owned buildings or other facilities within the conservation reserve.

There are three portage trails in the site: from Naiscoot to Evans Lake along a drainage at the west end of Evans Lake; from Little Wilson to Horseshoe Lake on the west side of a small creek; and, from Horseshoe to Evans Lake at Horseshoe's north end. The trails appear to have regular use.

A forest access road crosses Kelly Creek from Kelly Lake to Naiscoot Lake where it crosses the boundary of the conservation reserve. It extends a short distance into the conservation reserve at this point.

No other authorized trails enter or cross the conservation reserve.

The eastern part of the conservation reserve is within a pre-existing Restricted Access Area, as identified in the Parry Sound District Land Use Guidelines (OMNR, 1983). Adjacent to the conservation reserve, the former Restricted Access Area is now within the Parry Sound Interior Enhanced Management Area (E104a). The intent of the Restricted Access Area and E104a is to maintain the remote access characteristics. The central and western part of the conservation reserve is adjacent to a Recreation Enhanced Management Area (North Parry Sound Enhanced Management Area – E119r). The intent of that land use designation is to provide for semi-remote recreation, access, natural resource protection and extraction.

Guideline:

New roads for resource extraction and/or private use will not be permitted, nor will additions to existing roads or up grading of existing roads be permitted. An exception is that the existing forest access road is allowed to continue as a pre-existing use. This includes maintenance and future upgrading where required for forest access purposes. There is no intention to develop roads outside of the conservation reserve to improve access to this site.

In keeping with the pre-existing Restricted Access Area in the eastern part of the conservation reserve, no new trails, extensions to existing trails or up-grading of existing trails will be authorized in that area. Consistent with the management intent of the Recreation Enhanced Management Area which surrounds the western and central parts of this site, 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.

New recreational trails for motorized vehicles will not be permitted, unless 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.

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

No mineral exploration is permitted within this conservation reserve. This policy decision is based on a commitment made by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in March 2002. This policy direction replaces that identified in the 1999 *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, which stated that controlled mineral exploration would be permitted in new conservation reserves which were identified as having provincially significant mineral potential.

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

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 wilderness values provided by a pristine night sky.

3.3 Recreational Activities:

Background:

Existing recreational uses include hunting, sport fishing and canoeing. There are no formal trails within this site. While a Trans Ontario Provincial Trunk snowmobile trail crosses Naiscoot Lake to the west, there is no indication that snowmobiles travel to or through this site.

There is some caching of boats on Evans and Horseshoe Lakes, presumably used for fishing (Jones, 2003).

All-terrain vehicle use is limited within this site. There is little evidence of the use of the conservation reserve by hikers, birdwatchers, mountain bikers, skiers, or snowshoers.

Guideline:

Hunting and sport fishing are permitted to continue within the conservation reserve.

Canoe tripping, and associated portaging and camping are permitted to continue within this site. Portages and camping areas will be monitored to determine an appropriate level of use and maintenance. Cooperative maintenance of portages and campsites will continue to be encouraged through volunteer efforts.

Recreational use such as hiking, wildlife viewing, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing, while currently very limited in extent and therefore not managed, are allowed to occur in the conservation reserve.

Under current policies, non-commercial boat caching is a free use of public land, and can continue. This use will be monitored to ensure that conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted.

As discussed in Section 3.2 Development, no new trails, extensions to existing trails or up-grading of existing trails will be authorized in the pre-existing Restricted Access Areas in the eastern part of the conservation reserve. Consistent with the management intent of the Recreation Enhanced Management Area which surrounds the western and central parts of this site, 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 for motorized vehicles will not be permitted, unless 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.

Unauthorized recreational trails that were existing at the time of regulation of this conservation reserve, and any increase in use of all-terrain vehicles, will be monitored to ensure that conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted. Depending on the results of monitoring, some trails may need to be redirected from sensitive areas or eliminated completely. Otherwise, there is no intent to mark or upgrade these trails.

New recreational activities will be considered on a case by case basis provided they are consistent with maintaining the values of the conservation reserve 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.

Monitoring of existing and permitted activities will be undertaken as required to ensure that the conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted.

3.4 Commercial Activities:

Background:

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

Commercial fur harvesting is authorized through registered traplines. The guiding of non-resident bear hunters is authorized through Bear Management Area in the western portion of the site. Bait fish harvesting is

authorized through Bait Fish Block licences within the conservation reserve. These activities were discussed in Section 3.1 Land Tenure - Background.

Guideline:

Fur harvesting, and bait fish harvesting operations will be allowed to continue within the conservation reserve. Bear hunting services are allowed to continue in the existing Bear Management Area only, as discussed in Section 3.1. New trapline cabins are not permitted within conservation reserves. Any commercial boat caches can only continue if they have been authorized.

Mineral exploration is not allowed in this conservation reserve, as discussed in Section 3.2.

Conservation reserve regulations do not permit 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 (see Appendix 1).

3.5 Aboriginal Interests:

Background:

This site is known to be of interest to many First Nation communities. There are 2 treaties associated with the area: the Robinson – Huron Treaty of 1850 and the Williams Treaty. 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.

While there are no existing First Nation land claims that extend to this site, it is recognized that at some point in the future there is a possibility of a land claim in this area. If such a land claim is determined to be valid, the Conservation Reserve designation is not irreversible and 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:

Except for historic logging, vegetation management for specific purposes is not known to have occurred in the past. Wildlife and fisheries management, particularly sport fishing, hunting and fur harvesting, have been occurring according to the prevailing policies and legislation.

Because most forest stands in the conservation reserve are approaching 120 years old, are in a completely natural condition, showing no obvious anthropogenic interference, and they are older, larger, and more natural than the vast majority of other forests in the vicinity, they should be considered old growth forests.

The emphasis will be on ensuring that the natural values of the conservation reserve are not negatively affected by current and future activities. 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.

Guideline – Vegetation:

The intent of this site is to allow the existing vegetation communities to evolve naturally. The Ministry will continue to monitor for the status/presence of significant species and associations.

This area appears to have been free of forest fire for more than a century. In accordance with existing conservation reserve policy and the Forest 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 local 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.

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 (See Appendix 1).

Guideline – Wildlife and Fisheries:

The relevant Ontario hunting and fishing regulations will guide hunting and fishing within Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve. Fur harvesting and bait fishing will be managed through the maintenance of the current licensing system.

The Ministry will monitor the impacts of activities of snowmobile and all-terrain vehicles and other recreational uses on the natural values of the conservation reserve.

3.7 Cultural Resource Stewardship:**Background:**

Recent regional evaluation (OMNR, 2003) shows that this conservation reserve contains areas that have a high potential for cultural heritage sites. The canoe routes associated with this and adjacent sites are considered to be historic travel routes. However, no specific studies or inventories have been undertaken within the conservation reserve, and no specific significant cultural resource values have been evaluated or identified to date.

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.

3.8 Client Services:

Background:

Access to the conservation reserve has generally been confined to traditional uses for the current commercial and recreational activities. There are no Crown facilities or services developed on or adjacent to the conservation reserve. The information fact sheet for this conservation reserve is currently available to the public through the Parry Sound District Office, or via the Internet at www.ontarioslivinglegacy.com.

Guideline:

The focus will remain on low key information and self-interpretation of conservation reserve values and features. Consideration will be given to the preparation of an information brochure (with map) to highlight the features for which the area was identified and appropriate uses to ensure the protection of those features.

Consideration will be given to the strategic location of identity signs where canoe routes or portages cross the conservation reserve boundaries.

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

3.9 Research:

Background:

Research to date has included the preparation of a number of check sheets to document life science values, an earth science values, and recreation potential and values.

Guideline:

Research focussing on the prehistoric and historic use of the conservation reserve and its vicinity will be encouraged.

Research focussing on the assessment of use/activity impacts on sensitive species and habitats will be encouraged.

Research focussing on old growth attributes of this site will be encouraged.

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 marketing of this conservation reserve to date. Promotion and information about this site has been primarily through the *Ontario's Living Legacy* planning process and recent MNR Parry Sound District public consultation regarding the boundaries of this site.

Guideline:

Marketing activities of this conservation reserve will be kept to a minimum.

4.0 Implementation

Administrative responsibility for this conservation reserve belongs to the Parry Sound Area Office of the Parry Sound District of the Ministry of Natural Resources. The Area Office will continue to have the custodial care of Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve. Emphasis will be placed on awareness information highlighting reserve values, and monitoring and managing the current approved uses.

Priorities will include:

- Ensure compliance to prescribed management direction of the approved Statement of Conservation Interest;
- GPS location of existing trails, portages and campsites and classify their status and condition;
- Monitor boat caches to ensure that conservation reserve values are not being adversely impacted.
- Encourage research and studies focusing on the prehistoric and historic use of the conservation reserve and its vicinity;
- 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;
- Encourage research about significant flora and fauna species and communities (including the old growth forests), and potential impact on these by various recreation activities;
- Support cooperative ongoing education of resource users with respect to resource and land stewardship values, in order to maintain the ecological integrity of the site and to provide long term recreational opportunities; and
- Provide client services (e.g. brochure or fact sheet) 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 SCI (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 SCI 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.

6.0 References

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Appendix 2 Indicator Uses for Conservation Reserves: Generic and Specific

Activities	Generic Policy		Specific Application in Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve C116
	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	Y	Y	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	Y	Y	Y
Collecting	N	M ²	M ²
Commercial Activities			
Food harvesting	M	M	N
Fishing	M	M	N
Baitfish harvesting	Y ²	M	Y
Fur Harvesting	Y ²	M	Y
Trap cabins	Y	N	M ^C
Resort – outpost camp	Y ²	N	N
Outfitting – bear management	Y ²	N	Y ^D
Wild rice harvesting	Y	M	M
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
Industrial Activities			
Timber harvesting	N	N	N
Mineral exploration	N	N	N
Mining	N	N	N
Hydro generation	N	N	N

Activities	Generic Policy		Specific Application in Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve C116
	Permitted? Y = yes, N = no, M = maybe		
	Existing	New	
Energy transmission corridors	Y	N ⁴	N ³
Communications corridors	Y	N ⁴	N ³
Public Transportation corridors	Y	N ⁴	N ³
Resource access roads	M	N	N ³
Private access roads	M	N	N
Other Activities			
Land Disposition	M ⁶	N ⁶	N ⁴
Recreation Camps	Y ^c	N ⁵	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. New transportation corridors, communications lines, and transmission lines are discouraged in conservation reserves except under unusual circumstances where there are no other viable alternatives.
4. 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.

On specific policy application in Naiscoot Forest 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 unauthorized recreational trails may permitted to continue in this 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. In keeping with the pre-existing Restricted Access Areas in the eastern part of the conservation reserve, no new trails, extensions to existing trails or up-grading of existing trails will be authorized in that area. Consistent with the management intent of the recreation Enhanced Management Area which surrounds part of this site, additional recreation trails will be discouraged in the central and western parts of this conservation reserve. Public consultation will be an important part of the consideration of any new trails, and they would also be required to comply with Procedural Guideline B – Land Uses – Test of Compatibility (Appendix 1) and with MNR’s Environmental Assessment Act requirements.
- C. Existing authorized uses can continue. New cabins, outpost camps and private recreation camps are not permitted.
- D. Except in the portion of the conservation reserve that is outside of Bear Management Areas, as noted in Section 3.1

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 Area Supervisor 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 Area Supervisor, guided by the SCI 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.

Term 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 periods 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 Supervisor 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 Area Supervisor.

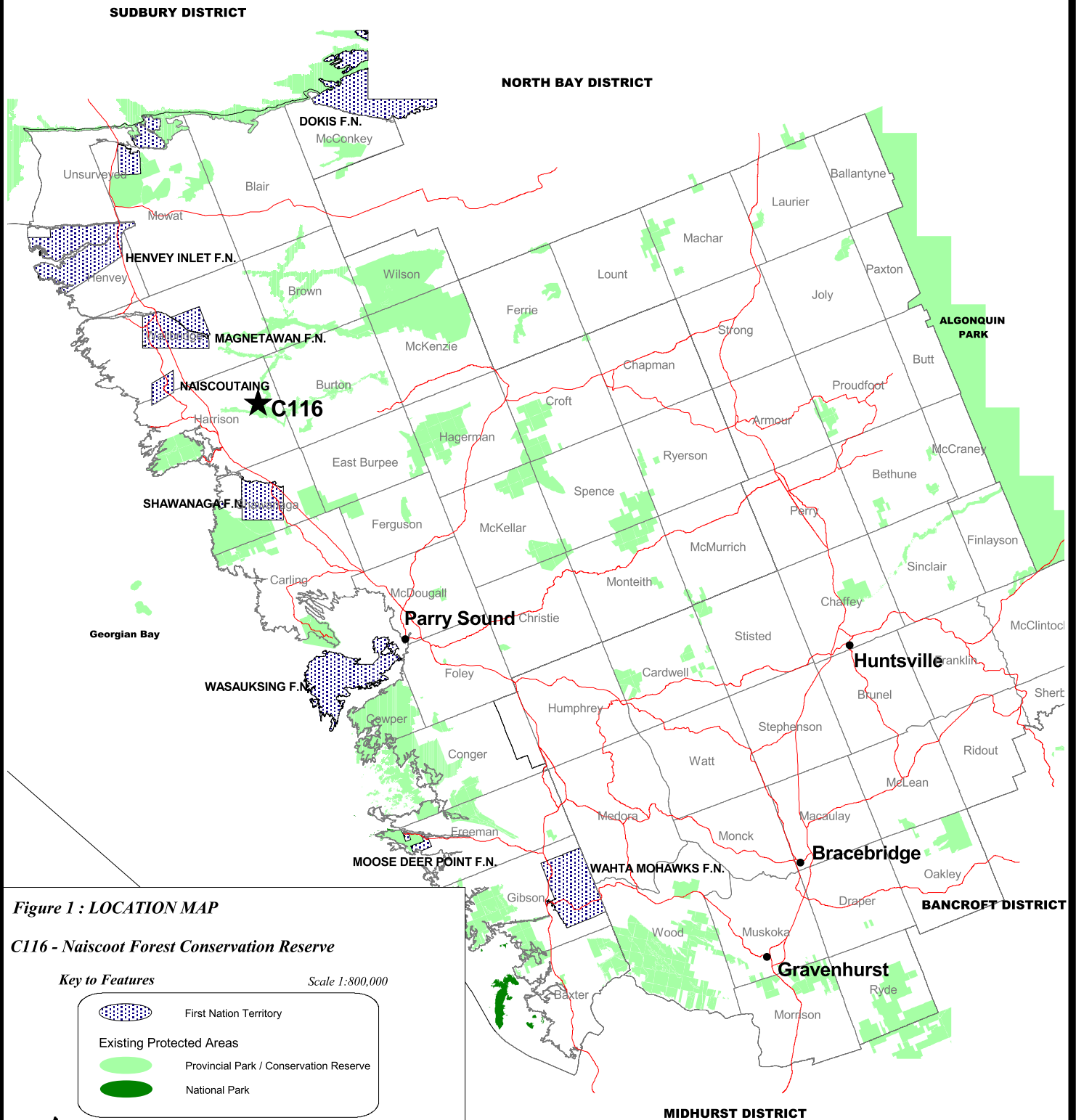


Figure 1 : LOCATION MAP

C116 - Naiscoot Forest Conservation Reserve

Key to Features

Scale 1:800,000

	First Nation Territory
Existing Protected Areas	
	Provincial Park / Conservation Reserve
	National Park



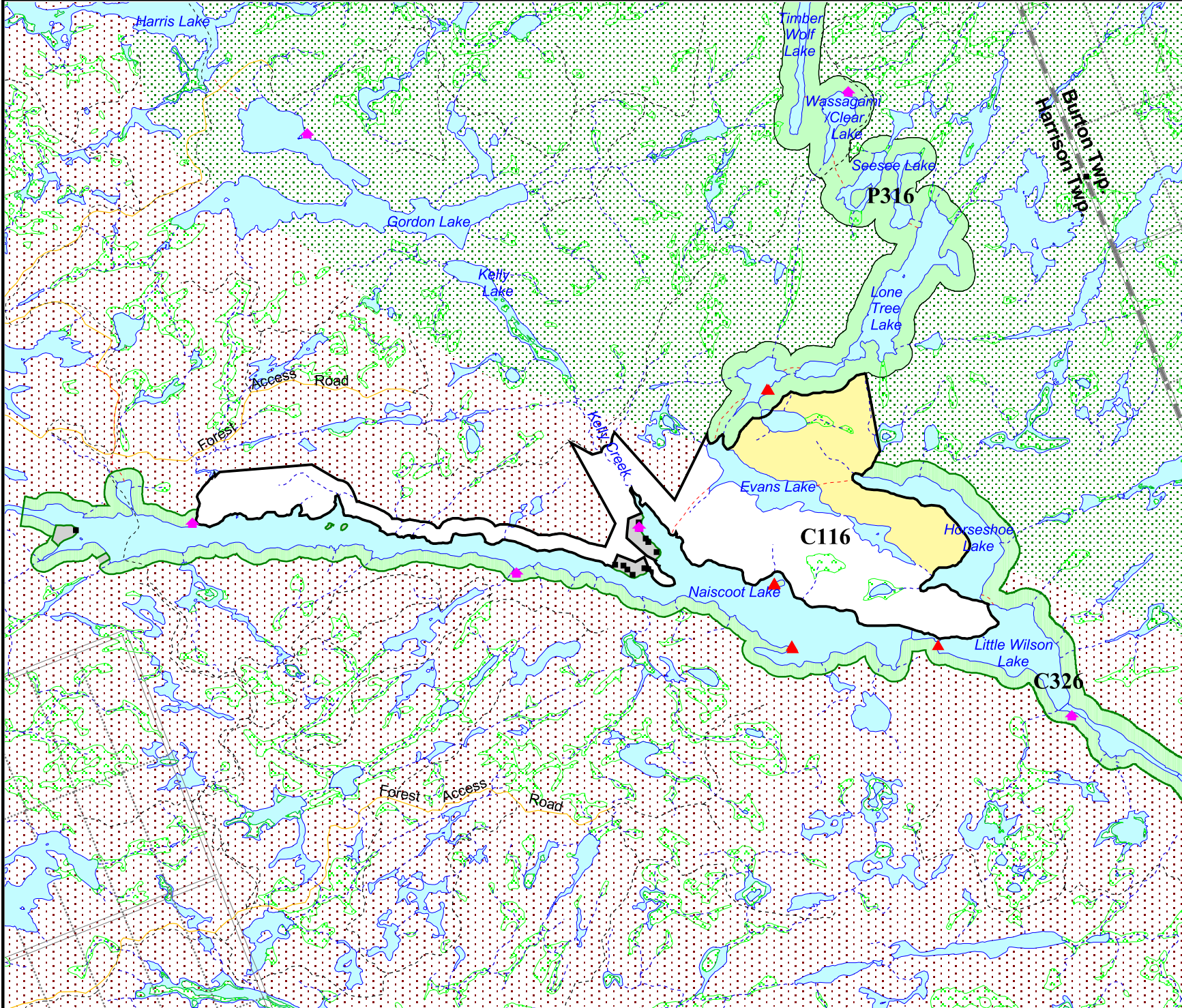
NOTES: This map is illustrative only. Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of routes, locations of features, nor as a guide to navigation.

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FIGURE 2
 Site Map
 Naiscoot Forest
 Conservation
 Reserve
 C116



Legend

- OLL Sites
- Recreation Camps
- Campsites
- Building
- Primary Road
- Secondary Road
- Tertiary Road / Trail
- Portage
- Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- Water Area, Permanent
- Wetland Area, Permanent
- Crown Land
- Private Land
- Restricted Access Area in C116 (as per DLUG's)
- Unsurveyed Lot Line
- Surveyed Lot Line
- Road Allowance
- Township Boundary/Road Allowance
- Provincial Park/ Conservation Reserve
- Enhanced Management Area - Remote Access (E104a)
- Enhanced Management Area - Recreation (E119r)

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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Scale 1:40,000

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