

Low/Bell Conservation Reserve (C2201)

Statement of Conservation Interest

November 2001



**Prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
Nipigon District**

**by Rebecca Zeran
OLL Resource Manager**

Approval Page

Statement of Conservation Interest

for

Low/Bell Conservation Reserve

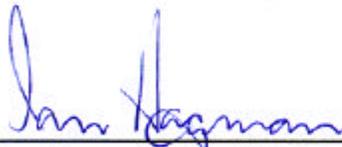
C2201

Nipigon District

Northwest Region

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

Approved:



Ian Hagman, District Manager, Nipigon District

FEBRUARY 11, 2002

Date

Approved:



Ralph Wheeler, Acting Regional Director, Northwest Region

May 17/02

Date

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1. Introduction

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

The Low/Bell Conservation Reserve (C2201) is one site within this expansion of Ontario's protected areas.

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

The Low/Bell Conservation Reserve consists of two separate sites located northeast of Longlac.

- The first part is approximately 60 km northeast of Longlac, between the Flint River and the Selwyn River. (Part A)
- The second part is approximately 75 km northeast of Longlac, to the west of the Bicknell River. (Part B)

The sites contain lacustrine deposits with esker formations. The area is also located in a transitional zone between the boreal forest and the James Bay Lowlands (OLL Factsheet, 2001). More detail is available in the attached Earth Science Report and Life Science Report (please see Appendices 5 and 6).

Access to the general vicinity of the sites is available by logging roads, however, the semi-remoteness of both parts of the reserve make them partially inaccessible at present. A primary road corridor near the eastern side of site B and a secondary road corridor near the eastern side of part A, are slated to be constructed within the next twenty years by the SFL holder for harvesting purposes.

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

2. Background Information

Name	Low/Bell Conservation Reserve
Site Region / Site District	2W-2
OMNR Administrative Region / District / Area	Northwest/Nipigon/ Geraldton Area
Total Area (ha)	5,584 ha
Regulation Date	Slated for regulation in 2002
Interested First Nations	Aroland, Ginoogaming, Long Lake #58, and Constance Lake First Nations
Lat./Long.	lat.: 49°55' N & long.: 85°37' W
Basemap	498853, 501853, 498852, 498853
FRI Stands	Specific numbers for the FRI stands occurring within the conservation reserve can be obtained by contacting the Information Management Team in Nipigon or Geraldton
General Location	Part A is located approx. 60 km northeast of Longlac, between the Flint River and the Selwyn River. Part B is located approx. 75 km northeast of Longlac, to the west of the Bicknell River.
Access	Access to the general vicinity of the reserve is by forest harvest roads.

3. Representation Targets

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

Life Science Representation	Black spruce swamps, representative of the transition to Hudson Bay Lowland regions, make up the majority of the vegetation cover in the site. Mixedwood stands, with trembling aspen components, are also found periodically within the site, usually associated with esker ridges. A series of small ponds and kettle lakes are located within the site. Small peatlands, on the edges of kettle lakes, are home to interesting and regionally significant plant communities.
Earth Science Representation	No bedrock exposures or unconsolidated sediment within the site. Generally low and flat topography. Prominent esker ridges characterize the area and are most likely related to the lacustrine deposits of glacial Lake Nakina.
Cultural Resource Representation	No documented cultural resources.
Recreational Opportunities	Opportunities exist for hunting and fishing.

4. Survey Information

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

Survey Level	Life Science	Earth Science	Cultural	Recreational
Reconnaissance	Yes, Nov. 2001	Yes, Nov. 2001	No	Yes, Dec. 2001
Detailed	No	No	No	No
Requirement	No further requirement	No further requirement	No further requirement	No further requirement

5. Natural & Cultural Heritage Values

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

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

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

Vegetation Values – The site contains interesting and unique vegetation, such as horned bladderwort, English sundew, hooded ladies tresses and dragon's mouth orchid, as well as a regionally rare plant – rusty cottongrass (Harris & Foster, 2001). The conservation reserve is regionally significant, containing representative forest and wetland communities in the transition zone from Boreal Forest to the Hudson Bay Lowlands.

Geologic Values – Prominent and well-developed esker deposits are located along the eastern boundaries of both sections of the reserve. The eskers are regionally rare within this site region and closely linked to the lacustrine deposits of glacial Lake Nakina (Gauthier, 2001). When building forest access roads, contractors generally look for the most cost effective placement of the road. Generally, if eskers are present, this results in roads being built over or alongside esker ridges (adequate drainage and a ready supply of aggregate material). The esker ridges in this site are located along the eastern boundaries of both sections of the reserve. This is also where the SFL holder has indicated an intention to build forest access roads in the near future. One such road already exists alongside the esker of Part A. Further study would need to be conducted in order to ascertain whether or not the

roads will be or are a risk to the eskers, as well as to whether or not it is an acceptable risk.

Wildlife Values – Habitat conditions exist for beaver, mink, marten, otter, muskrat, weasel, moose, bear, fox, hare, squirrel and upland birds.

Recreation & Tourism Values – Potential recreational activities within the reserve include recreational hunting and fishing. There is little evidence of traditional tourism use within the reserve. A canoe route may exist down the Flint River, however, its difficulty may limit its use.

Aboriginal Values – There is no knowledge of the current use of this site for traditional hunting, gathering or cultural activities. The MNR has no record that would indicate the levels of historical use for these activities, however, should any be discovered, they will be given appropriate priority and protection.

6. Management Guidelines

The following topics briefly indicate the existing situation on Low/Bell Conservation Reserve and the management guidelines to be implemented or continued.

6.1 Land Tenure

Low/Bell Conservation Reserve consists entirely of Crown land. No private land or development currently exists in the area; no future disposition or development will be permitted. No commercial land or development exists within the site; no future disposition or development will be permitted.

6.2 Existing and Proposed Development

There is no existing development within the conservation reserve. No new development that would disturb the forest or the forest understory vegetation will be permitted. The area will be managed primarily for low-impact recreation, hunting, fishing, public nature appreciation, educational experiences and scientific study. Major tourism facilities and development will not be promoted for the area due to the potential for site degradation.

6.3 Recreational Activities

6.3.1 Summary

Tourism	Few known tourism opportunities exist. There may be a canoe route down the Flint River, however, its difficulty will limit its use.
Recreational Fishing	A few small lakes, streams and beaver ponds are present within the reserve. Although relatively remote at present, the future development of forest access roads along the eastern sides of both parts of the site, may see an increase in usage of these lakes for fishing purposes.
Recreational Hunting	Potential does exist for recreational hunting. As noted in the previous section, the area may see an increased opportunity for recreational hunting activities in the future. Two active Bear Management Areas currently contain portions of the reserve.

6.3.2 Guidelines

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

More information on the current use and recreational potential of this Conservation Reserve can be found in the Recreation Resource Assessment Report for the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve.

6.4 Commercial Activities

6.4.1 Summary

Mining	No mining claims exist within the reserve. Over 20 years ago there was some exploration activity in the general area of Part A (Dave Barker, 2001, personal communication).
Aggregate	None known to exist on site
Forest Harvest	Mature forest cover on the site is commercially merchantable.
Wild Rice	None observed on site.
Trapping	Traplins GE12, GE53 and GE230 all overlap the conservation reserve.
Bear Management Areas	Two BMAs overlap the reserve: GE-19-036 and GE-19-038
Outpost Camps/Outfitters	None exist within the site.
Commercial Fisheries	None present. No baitfish block overlaps the reserve.

6.4.2 Guidelines

The site forms part of three active traplines and two active Bear Management Areas. There are no Baitfish Harvest Areas currently contained within the Conservation Reserve. These activities will be permitted to continue. No new trails, cabins or other development are permitted without specific authorization from the Ministry. However, the maintenance and repair of existing trails and cabins is permitted, as long as the scale and function of the trail or cabin is not significantly altered.

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

The area of the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve has been permanently removed from the operable area of the Kenogami Forest Sustainable Forest License. The area has also been officially withdrawn from staking by means of a withdrawal order.

6.5 Aboriginal Interests

Local First Nation communities were asked to provide input into the regulation of the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve. Meetings were held with Pays Plat First Nation to discuss the regulation of the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve (along with 5 other OLL sites). Pays Plat expressed no concern over the regulation of the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve.

Letters were sent to four 'affected' First Nations within the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN), informing them of the regulation process and inviting them to comment and consult on the boundaries (this included Aroland, Ginoogaming, Long Lake #58, and Constance Lake First Nations). Similar letters were also sent to seven other NAN First Nations (Eabametoong, Kasabonika, Neskantaga, Marten Falls, Nibinamik, Webequie and Wunnumin Lake First Nations).

Meetings will not be held with NAN-member First Nations at this time. Consultation is currently underway between NAN and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Regional and District offices received a letter from the Ontario Metis Aboriginal Association (OMAA) indicating a wish to participate in any management planning regarding OLL sites and also expressing the need to protect aboriginal rights such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. Consultation with OMAA is being coordinated at a corporate level.

Nothing in this Statement of Conservation Interest in any way affects existing or future aboriginal or treaty rights.

6.6 Natural Resources Stewardship

6.6.1 Vegetation Management and Fire Management

The area will be managed in accordance with relevant existing policies. Natural ecosystem processes and features will, for the most part, be allowed to occur with minimal human interference. However, current fire management strategies and protection will continue to be carried out on this site unless an alternative direction for the control of fire is approved through a more detailed resource management plan. At present no thought has been afforded to the use of prescribed burns as a management tool.

6.6.2 Fish and Wildlife Management

Fisheries and wildlife will be managed in accordance with existing policies. Opportunities for wildlife viewing will be encouraged.

6.6.3 Landforms

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

6.7 Cultural Resource Stewardship

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

6.8 Client Services

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

6.9 Research

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

6.10 Marketing

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

7. Implementation

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

The Low/Bell Conservation Reserve is slated for regulation in 2002 (by Ontario Regulation 86/01) under the Public Lands Act, following the process set out in the Ontario's Living Legacy Protected Areas Regulation Implementation Manual (*MNR, 2000*).

8. Review and Revisions

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

9. Public Consultation

9.1 Results of Past Consultation

Low/Bell Conservation Reserve has been a part of the land use planning and consultation process:

- Lands for Life round table consultation (June 1997 to July 1998)
- Ontario Forest Accord (1999)
- Ontario's Living Legacy round table discussions (1999)
- OLL Site Regulation and Public Consultation Process (June 2001)

During the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* site regulation and public consultation process for the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve, contact was made with local stakeholders. In June of 2001, letters from the District Manager were sent to First Nations, representatives from the forestry industry, trappers, municipalities, landowners, prospectors, fish and game clubs, trail and recreational clubs, and tourist operators/outfitters. Newspaper advertisements were also released at this time.

No comments (written or verbal) were received regarding Low/Bell Conservation Reserve (see Appendix 7 for a copy of the *OLL Public and Aboriginal Consultation Documentation Form for Low/Bell Conservation Reserve*). Meetings were held with Pays Plat First Nation to discuss the regulation of the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve (along with 5 other OLL sites). Please see section 6.5 for an account of the comments put forward by First Nations. Concerns that arose with respect to the establishment of the conservation reserve were addressed accordingly.

9.2 Present and Future Consultation

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

Once the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve has been formally regulated under the Public Lands Act, Decision Notices will be sent to all members of the public who expressed interest in the site. Notices will also be sent to all First Nations, industry and municipal organizations potentially affected by the regulation of this site.

10. References

Gauthier, Dave. (2001). *Earth Science Inventory Checksheet and Report for the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve (C2201)*.

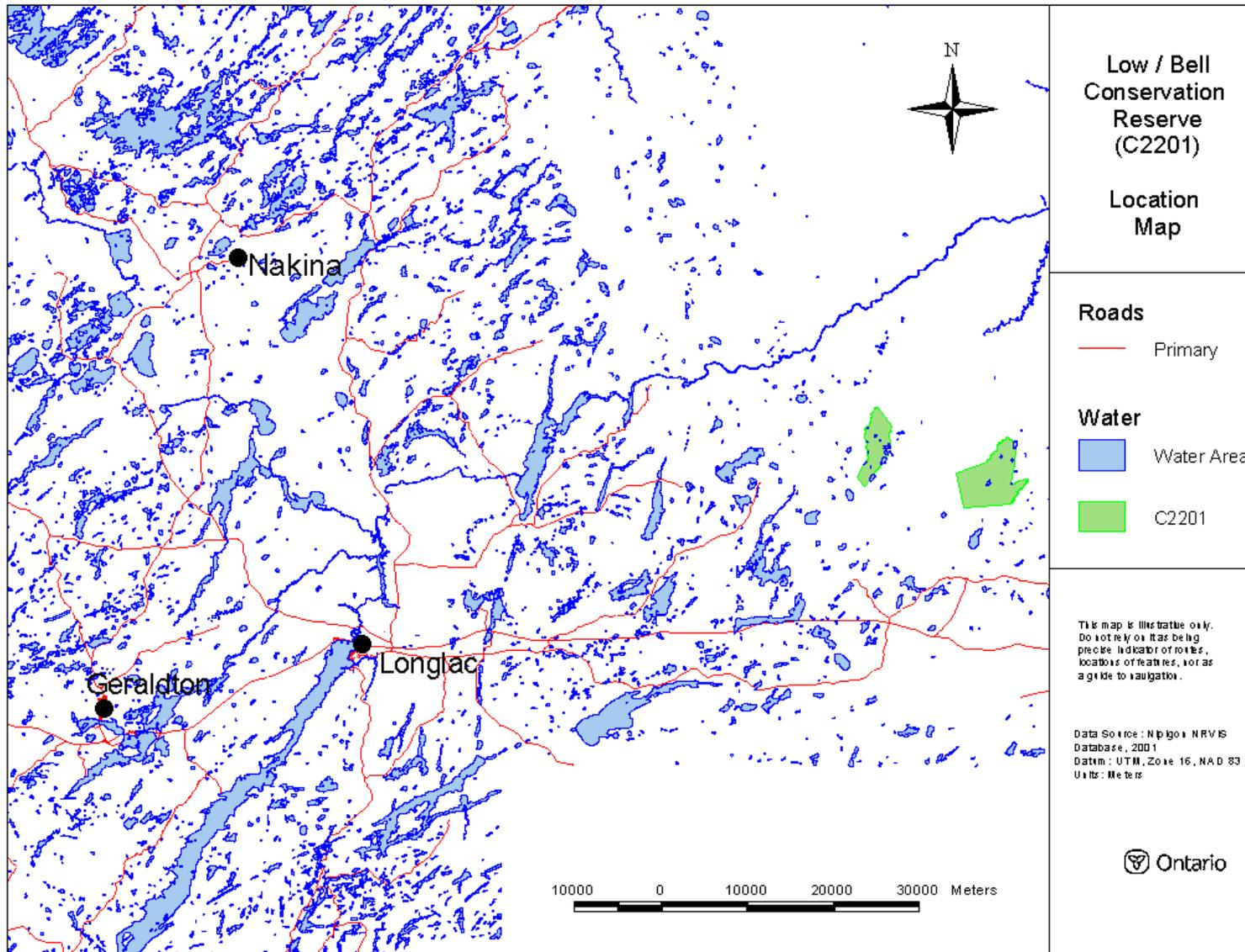
Harris, Allan and Rob Foster. (2001). *Life Science Inventory Checksheet and Report for the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve (C2201)*.

Ministry of Natural Resources. (1999). *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, Queen's Printer for Ontario, Ontario Canada.

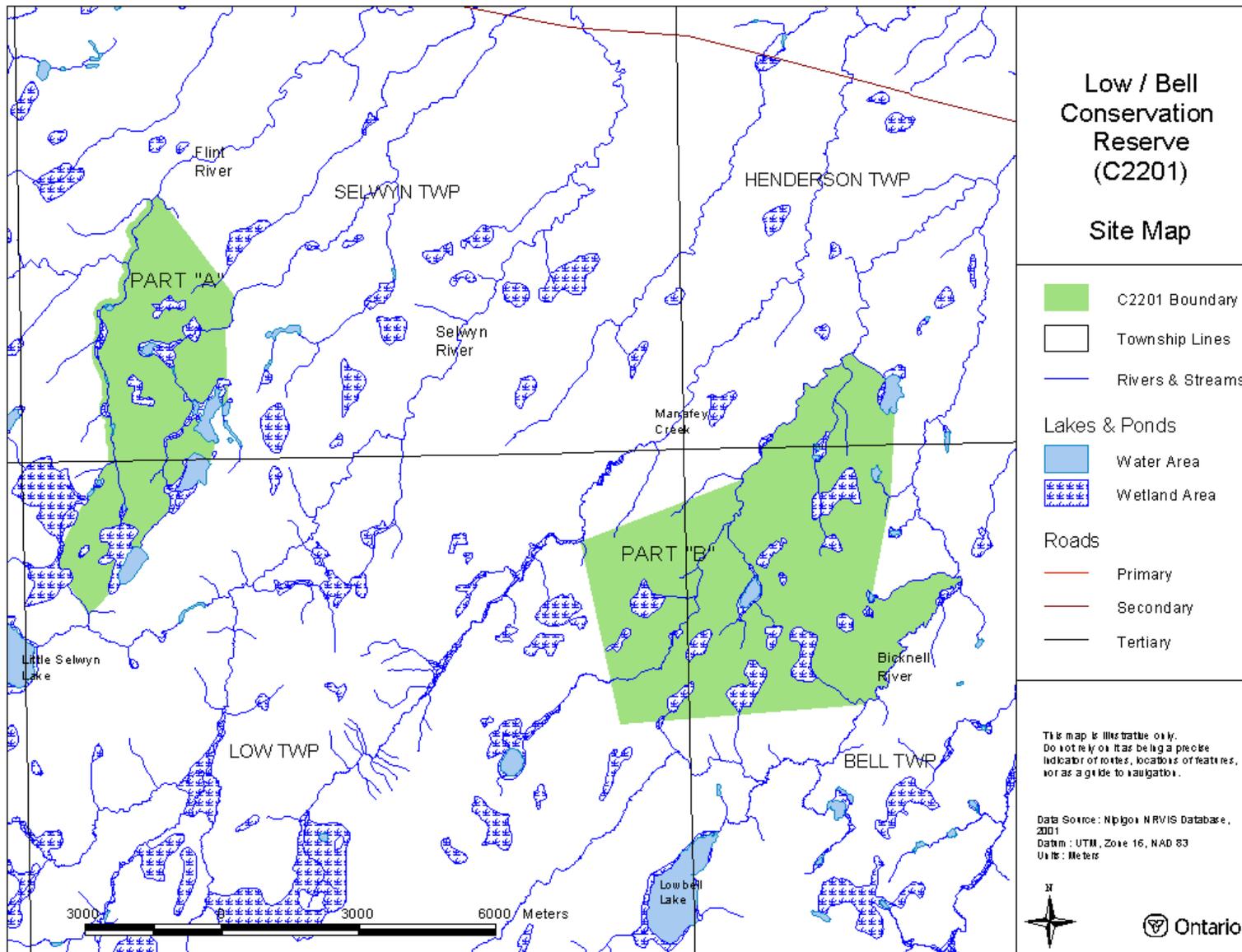
Ministry of Natural Resources. (2000). *Protected Areas Regulation Implementation Manual*, Internal Document.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. (2001). *Low/Bell Conservation Reserve (C2201) Fact Sheet*, June 2001, Public Document.

Appendix 1: Site Location Reference Map



Appendix 2: Site and Values Map for the Low Bell Conservation Reserve



Appendix 3: Permitted Uses Table, Low Bell Conservation Reserve

Activity/Value	Permitted	Not Permitted	Modified	District Manager Approval
Sport Hunting	v			
Commercial Trapping	v			
Boating / Canoeing / Kayaking	v			
Baitfishing	v			
Commercial Wild Rice Harvest	N/A			
Mineral Exploration & Extraction			v	
Land Disposition for Private Purposes		v		
All Terrain Vehicle			v	
Snowmobile			v	
Land Claims				v
Traditional Use	v			
Native Hunt Camps				v
Commercial Tourism Based Hunting	v			
Native Hunting	v			
Commercial Native Trapping	v			
Wildlife Management	v			
Commercial Forest Operations		v		
Vegetation Management (i.e. herbicides)		v		
Timber Harvest for Personal Use		v		
Fuelwood Harvest		v		
Insect & Disease Suppression				v
Sport Fishing	v			
Commercial Fishing		v		
Native Fishing	v			
Water Control Structures		v		
Aggregate Extraction		v		
Bear Management Areas	v			
Trapline Cabins				v
Wild Rice Harvest	N/A			
Boat Caches				v
Fire Management	v			
Archeological Study	v			
Backcountry Travel	v			
Wildlife / Vegetation Viewing	v			
Photography	v			
Hiking	v			
Rock Climbing	N/A			
Mountain Biking			v	
Nordic Skiing	v			
Snowshoeing	v			
Aircraft			v	
Roads / Bridges / Culverts			v	
Ongoing Research	v			
New Research				v

“Modified” – refers to a use which may be permitted under certain circumstances where the use would not impact the values for which the Conservation Reserve was created to protect (e.g. new trails, clearings/docks for aircraft access, etc.)



Figure 1: Aerial view of small kettle lakes and ponds in Part A. Photograph by Allan Harris.



Figure 2: Ponds and shore fens in Part A of the conservation reserve. Photograph by Allan Harris.



Figure 3: Esker formation (to the bottom right-hand side of the lake in the photo) in Part B of the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve. Photograph by Charles Faust.



Figure 4: Vegetation on an esker – the dominance of trembling aspen can easily be observed from this photo. Photograph by Charles Faust.



Figure 5: Forest access road along the esker ridge beside the eastern boundary of Part A of the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve. Photograph by Allan Harris.



Figure 6: Shore fen. Photograph by Allan Harris.



Figure 7: Aerial view of the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve, Part B. Photograph by Charles Faust.



Figure 8: Shore wetland area in Part B of the Low/Bell Conservation Reserve. Photograph by Charles Faust.



Figure 9: Pitcher Plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*).
Photograph by Charles Faust.



Figure 10: Flower head of the pitcher plant, *Sarracenia purpurea*. A carnivorous plant adapted to nutrient-poor conditions, the pitcher plant is one of four carnivorous plant genera in Ontario. Photograph by Charles Faust.



Figure11: Dragon's Mouth Orchid (*Arethusa bulbosa*). This is the only species of this genus located in Canada. Populations of this orchid can fluctuate greatly from year to year, especially if late frosts kill the flowers, suggesting that this orchid is short-lived and relies on heavy seed production to maintain its populations (Johnson et al., 1995). Photograph by Charles Faust.