

**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES' PROTECTED AREAS UPDATE REPORT
CCEA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 2009**

Annual Update:

Completed Sites

Déłjne and Parks Canada jointly announced Saoyú-ᑭehdacho as a permanently protected National Historic Site in a signing ceremony on April 14, 2009. Saoyú-ᑭehdacho are two major peninsulas on Great Bear Lake, and have become the first areas to be permanently protected through the PAS process, an important milestone in the PAS process.

Sponsoring Agencies

Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS)

The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) has committed to establishing six National Wildlife Areas in the NWT by 2013. Five candidate areas have already been identified – Edézhíe, Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta, K'a'agee Tu, Shúhtagot'ine Néné and Sambaa K'e.

Edézhíe is nearing completion of the process as all assessments have been completed. The final recommendations report drafted by the Edézhíe Working Group was released for public review. Soon the Tlicho and Dehcho Governments will submit a request to Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) to establish a National Wildlife Area under the *Canada Wildlife Act*.

Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT)

The K'átt'odeeche First Nation submitted a proposal to the GNWT to consider the Buffalo Lake site as a Critical Wildlife Area under the *NWT Wildlife Act*.

Pehdzeh Ki First Nation has submitted a proposal to the GNWT to sponsor the site as a Cultural Conservation Area under the *Territorial Parks Act*.

Proposals for the Edajíla, Jean Marie River and Daring Lake Areas of Interest are expected to be submitted to the GNWT later this year.

Other conservation processes in the NWT

Parks Canada highlights for the past year include:

- Nahanni National Park Expansion was finalized
- Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve Proposal – an interim land withdrawal was announced
- On November 21, 2007, Federal Environment Minister John Baird announced an interim land withdrawal for the expansion of the East Arm National Park (Thaydene Nene) to allow for further assessment of this area by Parks Canada.

Land use planning and community conservation planning:

- The Gwich'in Land Use Plan is undergoing its 5-year review
- Work continues on drafting land use plans for the Dehcho Territory and Sahtu Settlement Area
- Work on a land use plan for Tâichô settlement lands is ongoing

General Updates

A new website (www.nwtpas.ca) was developed to better present the work of the PAS. The site navigation has been simplified and expanded to incorporate the full breadth of resources and research generated through the PAS.

Ecological Representation

- The technical report describing the ecological representation analysis method has been published and is available on the NWTPAS website.
- PAS is working with the University of Alaska on climate change scenarios for protected areas planning in the NWT.
- Ecological representation analysis (terrestrial) at a coarse scale has been completed for the entire mainland NWT and has been updated to include information from the ecological land classification project.
- To ensure that freshwater biodiversity is also represented within protected areas, the PAS, with support from The Nature Conservancy, is developing a coarse scale freshwater classification. The completed map and draft report of the freshwater classification will be completed by December 2009.
- A map and report on karst areas in the NWT has been completed and should be published by November 2009.

Summary Freshwater Classification

To ensure that freshwater biodiversity is also represented within protected areas, the PAS, with support from The Nature Conservancy, is developing a coarse scale freshwater classification.

Initially intended to support conservation efforts in the Mackenzie Valley as part of the PAS Mackenzie Valley Five Year Action Plan, which was developed to enhance protected areas planning in 16 terrestrial ecoregions potentially affected by a proposed gas pipeline development, this classification focuses primarily on the Mackenzie River Basin. Since almost half of the Mackenzie River Basin lies outside the NWT, but drains into the NWT on its way to the Arctic Ocean, thus potentially affecting downstream aquatic systems in the NWT, the entire Mackenzie River Basin was included in this classification. In addition, several watersheds in the adjacent Queen Elisabeth drainage basin were included to cover those parts of the 16 terrestrial ecoregions that aren't covered by the Mackenzie River Basin.

Given the huge size of the study area and the limited amount of data that covers the entire study area, this classification is limited to describing the dominant geomorphological patterns of catchments within the larger drainage basins that determine the characteristics of freshwater ecosystems and influence biotic processes. It is not intended to predict species distribution or specific habitats. Instead, the resulting abiotic classification units will serve as a foundation for a freshwater coarse filter to help ensure that the diversity of freshwater habitats within the NWT is well represented in protected areas.

The component datasets used for the classification are based both on data availability and usefulness as surrogates for freshwater ecosystems and biotic processes and include:

- Surficial geology (12 classes): influences sediment load, substrate size, infiltration, ground water–surface water interaction, water chemistry, nutrient concentrations
- Permafrost (6 classes): influences water temperature, surface flow/drainage
- Groundwater potential (5 classes): informs about ground water storage capacity
- Amount of glacial coverage: influences water temperature, which in turn influences fish distribution and water chemistry, amount and timing of affected stream flow, turbidity, etc.

- Amount of waterbodies: sinks for sediment load, influences water chemistry, etc.
- Amount of eskers: have different ecology than the surrounding Shield, so influence local ground water flow and availability in an otherwise surface flow dominated landscape

Background:

The Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) was established in 1999. It has two goals:

To protect special natural and cultural areas. Development could be permitted in these areas when it is compatible with the values being protected.

To protect core representative areas within each of the Northwest Territories (NWT) 42 eco-regions. Resource-based development and associated infrastructure will not be permitted in these areas.

Partners:

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) share responsibility for implementing the PAS in partnership with communities, regional organizations, land claim organizations, industry, and environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS).

The PAS Steering Committee guides the PAS. The PAS Steering Committee includes representatives from regional Aboriginal organizations, ENGOS, industry and the territorial and Federal governments.

Process:

There are eight general steps to obtain permanent protection through the PAS:

- Identify priority Areas of Interest.
- Prepare a protected area proposal and obtain support at the regional level. This usually involves conducting initial assessments of cultural, ecological and economic values.
- Review and submit proposal to a sponsoring agency as a candidate protected area.
- Apply interim protection for the candidate area (where necessary).
- Conduct a detailed evaluation of the candidate area, including consultations.
- Seek formal establishment of the protected area.
- Approve and designate the protected area.
- Implement, monitor and review the protected area.

For more information please visit www.nwtpas.ca

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