

Kevin Murphy
Assistant Deputy Minister
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March 2, 2016

Dear Mr. Murphy,

The Saskatchewan Regional Working Group of the CBFA is pleased to recommend the establishment of a protected area centered on the Mossy River watershed in the Mid-Boreal Plain Ecoregion in east central Saskatchewan.

Background

The Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA) commits Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) members and participating Environmental Non-Government Organizations (ENGOS) to work with governments and Aboriginal groups to develop joint recommendations for the completion of Protected Areas (Goal 2) and Caribou Conservation Plans (Goal 3). The Saskatchewan Regional Working Group (SK RWG) was established to fulfill this mandate for FPAC company tenures in Saskatchewan.

Weyerhaeuser and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Saskatchewan Chapter (CPAWS-SK) have identified potential protected areas in and around the Pasquia Porcupine Forest Management Area (PP FMA) that build on protected planning processes previously undertaken by the Government of Saskatchewan. These include the proposed protected area centered on the Mossy River watershed and the previously proposed Lobstick Lake Protected Area (See Figure 1).

This recommendation, along with recommendations for a Caribou Conservation Plan, form a package that reflects the CBFA commitment to concurrently achieve high degrees of ecological integrity and socio-economic prosperity in Canada's Boreal region. One of the strengths of the CBFA is its commitment to the 'Twin Pillar Approach' to conservation planning, where equal consideration is given to both ecological and economic values.

The CBFA Parties recognize that the legal responsibility and authority for land use decisions and for conservation and resource management policy rests with governments, and that successful implementation of many aspects of the CBFA will require the support of and/or actions by governments and the support of a broad array of interests including local communities.

Protected Area Recommendations

Mossy River Watershed Protected Area

Supported by the conservation analysts of the Canadian BEACONS Project and guided by the *Methodological Framework for Protected Areas Planning in Support of the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement*, a potential system-level benchmark was identified in the Mid-Boreal Lowland Ecoregion that includes the Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area. The delineation



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of the Mossy River system-level benchmark was constrained to within the non-allocated region bordered by forest management areas including the Pasquia Porcupine FMA, Prince Albert FMA and Mee-Toos TSL.

The Mossy River system-level benchmark encompasses a portion of Saskatchewan River Delta (SRD). The SRD is one of the largest freshwater deltas in the world and biologically diverse habitats in Canada, though unlike its counterparts, it is not celebrated or even widely known to exist. The communities of Cumberland House have a deep connection to the area and many residents consider preservation of the SRD directly related to their cultural identity and traditional way of life. Largely an intact forest landscape without significant industrial potential, traditional hunting, trapping and gathering activities persist as important resource uses.

The SK RWG proposes the Mossy River watershed as a new protected area. This protected area would make a significant contribution to conservation values globally and locally, where the provincial analysis indicates the eco-region is under-represented. The SK RWG is committed to continuing to work with the provincial government and other area stakeholders to further develop and advocate for protection of the Mossy River watershed. Continued work on this file should be advanced through the appropriate provincial government processes and the SK RWG looks forward to participating and providing assistance where possible.

Lobstick Lake Protected Area

The Lobstick Lake Protected Area was identified for protection in the 1990 Saskatchewan Parks System Plan to represent the Saskatchewan Delta. Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management also defined it as part of the Representative Area Network in the Pasquia Porcupine Integrated Forest Land Use Plan prepared in 1998. Notwithstanding the recognition of the representative nature of Lobstick and the fact that industrial resource extraction has not been permitted, the Lobstick area has yet to be designated as a Park or other type of Protected Area.

The SK RWG supports the Saskatchewan Government in the process to establish Lobstick Lake as a protected area including continued local stakeholder and First Nations consultation.

Representation and Benchmark Analysis of Lobstick and Mossy River

Forest management areas including the Pasquia Porcupine FMA, Prince Albert FMA and Mee-Toos TSL surround the Mossy River region. As a region unallocated for Forest Management, it is a favourable location for establishing an ecological benchmark without impacting the forest industry. To determine the benchmark potential of the Mossy River region, an assessment was conducted based on the benchmark characteristics of: representation, intactness, and size.

In general, the proposed Mossy River benchmark was most effective at representing the indicators of environmental variation at the scale of ecoregion 148 (Mid-Boreal Lowland). However, among individual land cover types, wetland-shrub and dense broadleaf and mixedwood forests were under-represented within the benchmark. Representation of climate moisture index is expected to decrease over time because of projected dryer conditions outside of the proposed benchmark, especially in the southern portion of the ecoregion.

The representation of existing and proposed protected areas (Lobstick RAN + proposed Mossy



River benchmark) was also assessed at the full extent of the Saskatchewan planning region using a set of 16 conservation features. Twelve of the features were effectively represented within the protected areas, with the exception of enduring features, Cape May Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher and lake sturgeon. Representation of songbirds is projected to vary over time without any strong directional trends.

Conclusion

The proposed Mossy River Protected Area has many characteristics representative of the Mid-Boreal Lowland Ecoregion that are missing from the provincial Representative Area Network. This area is not allocated for forestry, and is supported by environmental groups and by adjacent Aboriginal communities. We believe designating the Mossy River Protected Area will be good for the environment and the economy.

We look forward to discussing this opportunity with the Ministry of the Environment.

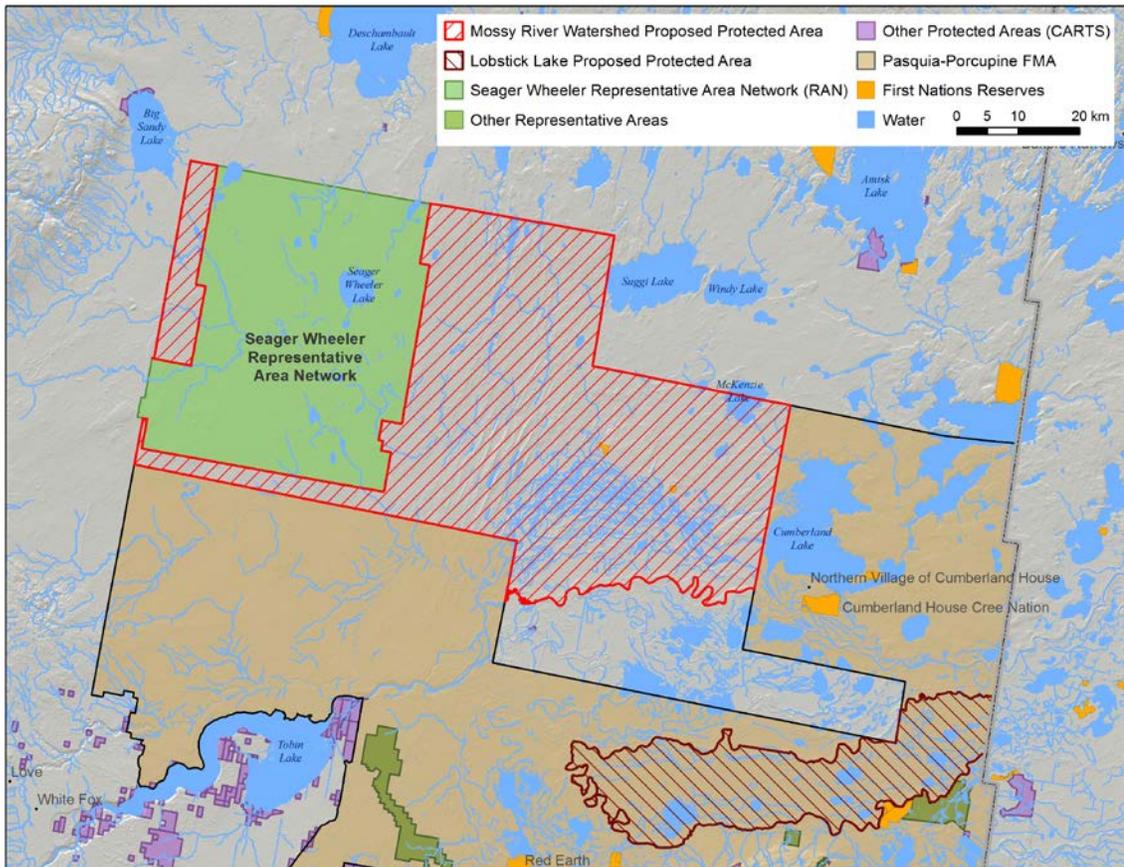


John Daisley, Weyerhaeuser



Gord Vaadeland, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Saskatchewan Chapter

Figure 1



Cc: Aran O’Carroll, CBFA Executive Director

