



An Introduction to the Far North Land Use Strategy

December, 2013

Ministry of Natural Resources

Table of Contents

PREFACE.....	3
About the Far North.....	3
Evolution of Land Use Planning in the Far North.....	4
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	6
Purpose of this Paper	7
2.0 COMMUNITY BASED LAND USE PLANNING AND THE STRATEGY ...	8
Community Based Land Use Planning	8
Steps in the Planning Process:	8
Far North Land Use Strategy	9
How does the Strategy Relate to Community Based Land Use Plans?	10
3.0 THINKING ABOUT THE STRATEGY	11
What will the Strategy Contain?	11
Policy Guidance.....	11
Categories of Land Use Designations and of Protected Area Designations	12
Requirements and Processes for Amending Plans	12
What will Inform the Strategy’s Development?	13
4.0 MOVING FORWARD	14
Steps in Developing the Far North Land Use Strategy:	14
How to get involved	15

Preface

About the Far North

The Far North of Ontario is home to 24,000 people living in 34 communities including the municipalities of Pickle Lake and Moosonee. First Nations people make up more than 90 per cent of the region's population and live mainly in remote, fly-in communities. Traditional languages spoken include Ojibway, Cree and Oji-Cree. First Nations people in the Far North live as close to the land as anyone in North America, and they know and rely on it. Many continue to pursue traditional activities, such as hunting, fishing and trapping.

The Far North of Ontario is one of the world's largest, most intact ecological systems. The Far North covers 42 per cent of the province, spanning the width of Northern Ontario, from Manitoba in the west to James Bay and Québec in the east. It encompasses two distinct ecological regions: to the east are the bogs and fens of the Hudson Bay Lowlands; to the west and south is the boreal forest of the Canadian Shield. By acting as a carbon sink, the Far North's forests, peatlands and wetlands play a key role in the world's fight against global climate change.

The Far North provides essential habitat for more than 200 sensitive species, including species at risk like woodland caribou and wolverine, and Ontario's only populations of polar bears, beluga whales and snow geese. Millions of North American migratory birds nest in the Far North. The Hudson Bay and James Bay coastlines provide internationally important habitat for shorebirds.

While there is currently limited development in the Far North, there is vast natural resource potential. There are two operating mines in the Far North, and ongoing mineral exploration indicates significant mineral potential, particularly in the area known as the "Ring of Fire." Commercial forest potential has been estimated at 6 to 7% of the total area of the Far North. There is also significant renewable energy potential (both wind and water), although current provincial policy puts certain limitations on waterpower development in the Far North. First Nations and resource industry have interest in expanding infrastructure into the Far North including all-weather roads and electrical transmission lines.

Evolution of Land Use Planning in the Far North

Ontario and First Nations have long recognized the importance of land use planning, which is a process of making decisions about how the land and the water will be used in the future. The Far North of Ontario has never seen the kind of comprehensive land use planning that has been done in the rest of Ontario.

First Nations and Ontario recognize that land use planning in the Far North requires a different approach and different tools than elsewhere in the province. The 1985 report of the Royal Commission on the Northern Environment made important recommendations about enhancing the participation of northerners, especially First Nations, in land use and resource management decision making.

In the past, there have been a number of processes initiated by both First Nations and Ontario to plan for the Far North. Although these processes did not result in plans recognized by both Ontario and First Nations, they have contributed to the understanding and evolution of planning.

In 2002, a joint community based land use planning approach was developed by First Nations and Ontario as part of the Northern Boreal Initiative (NBI). The NBI was established in response to several First Nations' interests in commercial forestry just north of the area that was then licenced for commercial forestry. This approach was founded upon sharing responsibilities, applying local knowledge in decision making, and full consultation. It established a promising foundation for joint efforts in planning and decision making and led to the successful completion of the first community based land use strategy in Ontario in 2006, the Whitefeather Forest Land Use Strategy.

In July, 2008, the Far North Land Use Planning Initiative was announced by Ontario, extending this joint community based land use planning approach to all of the Far North. The *Far North Act, 2010*, provides a legislative foundation to enable First Nations and Ontario to jointly prepare and approve community based land use plans. The Act also requires that a Far North Land Use Strategy be prepared and that joint planning teams consider the Strategy as they develop their plans. The Strategy is intended to guide planning and to help planning teams consider broad-scale matters.

Early discussions on the role of the Strategy were held with First Nations and stakeholders between 2008 and 2009. Ontario worked with Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and Tribal Council representatives through the Oski Machiitawin (Northern Table) Land Use Planning Technical Table, including dialogue on principles and processes to guide land use planning in the Far North. These discussions helped inform the drafting of the relevant sections of the Far North Act.

The Ministry of Natural Resources also established a Far North Advisory Council and a Far North Science Advisory Panel to provide advice to government on land use planning in the Far North. The [Advisory Council](#) recommended to government the need to ensure that community plans have regard for broader regional objectives that transcend traditional land use areas. The Science Panel provided advice on current and emerging

pressures on natural resources, wildlife and ecology in the Far North, and identified science and information gaps. The panel’s final report “[Science for a Changing Far North](#)” provides a valuable source of scientific information for both First Nations and Ontario as they work together on developing a Far North Land Use Strategy.

1.0 Introduction

Ontario is working jointly with First Nations on community based land use planning as part of the Far North Land Use Planning Initiative. The *Far North Act, 2010* is the legislative foundation that provides for planning at the community level in the Far North of Ontario and for a Far North Land Use Strategy to help guide that planning. The Far North Act applies to most of the geography of the Far North with the exception of municipalities, small parcels of private land and First Nation reserves (federal land).

Community based land use planning with each First Nation establishes which areas will be set aside for protection and which areas will be open for sustainable economic development. The Far North Land Use Strategy will assist in the preparation of land use plans and guide the integration of matters that are beyond the scope of individual planning areas.

Community based land use planning is already underway with many communities across the Far North and will continue to be an ongoing activity, led by interested First Nations working with Ontario.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is now preparing to move forward on the development of the Strategy.



Purpose of this Paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide:

- Background on community based land use planning and the Far North Land Use Strategy
- An introduction to the Strategy – the concepts, components and intent and how it will relate to community based land use plans
- Next steps in the development of the Strategy and opportunities for participation

2.0 Community Based Land Use Planning and the Strategy

Community based land use plans and the Far North Land Use Strategy are both important components of the Far North Land Use Planning Initiative, each having a different purpose but working together in a complementary way. A brief description of each and an explanation of how they work together follow.

Community Based Land Use Planning

The Ministry of Natural Resources is working jointly with First Nations in the Far North to develop community based land use plans (plans).

Community based land use planning is a process to describe what land use activities may take place and where. Plans will identify areas that will be dedicated to protection, and areas that are suitable for sustainable economic development opportunities such as forestry, mining and renewable energy. Aboriginal traditional knowledge and science-based information and knowledge inform and support the development of a plan. Once a land use plan is in place, activities on the landscape must be consistent with the plan's land use designations.

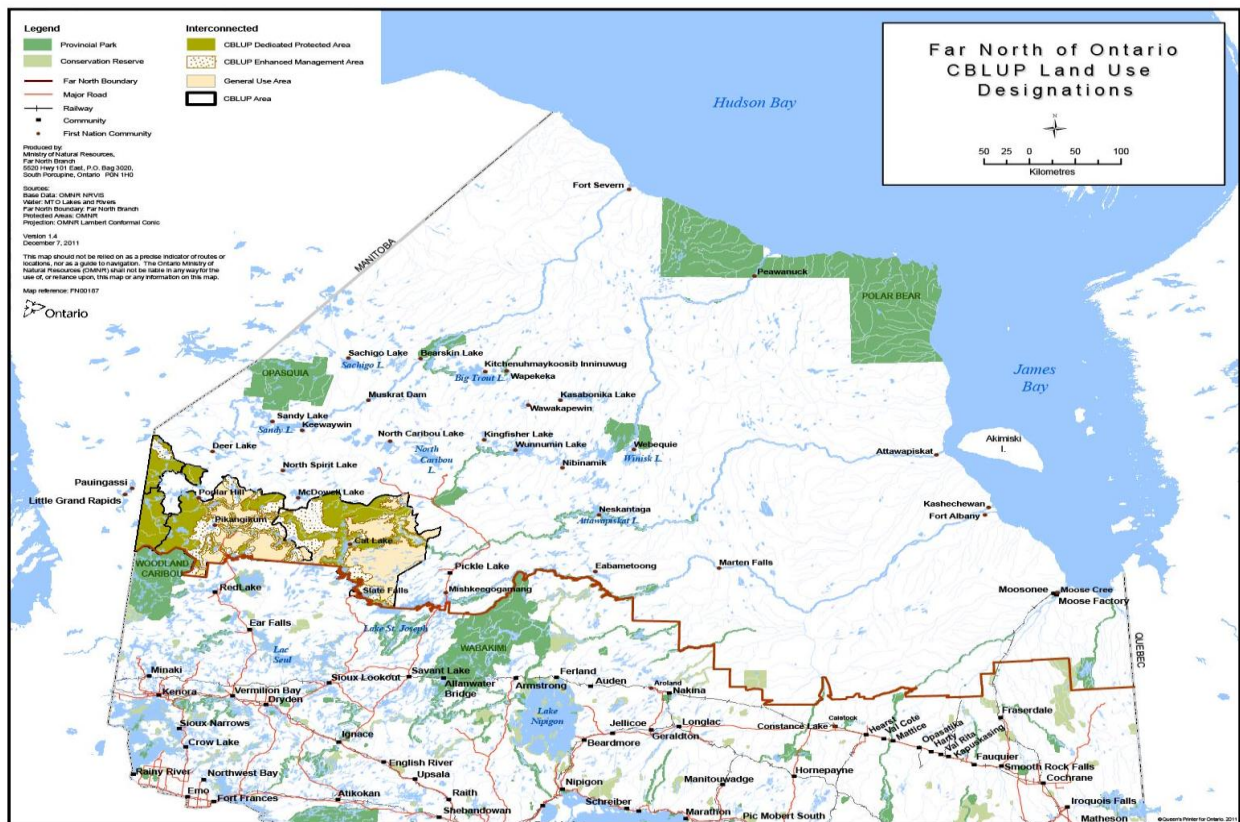
Steps in the Planning Process:

- First Nations initiate engagement in planning process.
- Establish a joint planning team (First Nation and MNR).
- Collect background information and map traditional knowledge and values.
- Develop a Terms of Reference, to be jointly approved by the First Nation and Ontario, that:
 - sets out the process to complete a plan and provides guidance for establishing a planning area.
- Provide opportunity for public participation in the planning process, including posting on the Environmental Registry.
- Set out objectives that the plan will address and describe land and resource opportunities in the planning area.
- Jointly prepare a Draft Plan which includes proposed land use and protected area designations (zoning) and provide opportunity for public comment, including posting on the Environmental Registry.
- Jointly prepare the final Community Based Land Use Plan to be jointly approved by the First Nation and Ontario.
- Post final plan on the Internet and Environmental Registry



★ Denotes public consultation opportunity

To date, five communities have completed community based land use plans (Pikangikum, Cat Lake, Slate Falls, Pauingassi, and Little Grand Rapids). The plans have been jointly approved by the First Nation(s) and the Minister of Natural Resources under the Far North Act. In addition, approved Terms of Reference are in place for Deer Lake, Eabametoong and Mishkeegogamang First Nations



Far North Land Use Strategy

Under the *Far North Act, 2010*, the Minister of Natural Resources must ensure that a Far North Land Use Strategy is prepared.

The Strategy will provide policy guidance that joint planning teams can draw from to help consider the Far North as a whole as they develop their plans. This policy guidance will recommend approaches to considering matters of common interest across the Far

North, such as watersheds, all-weather roads and transmission corridors, caribou habitat and migration routes, and climate change. The Strategy will also include policies on:

- categories of land use designations;
- categories of protected area designations; and
- the process and requirements for amending community based land use plans.

As the Far North Land Use Strategy is developed, joint planning teams must take it into account as they prepare community based land use plans.

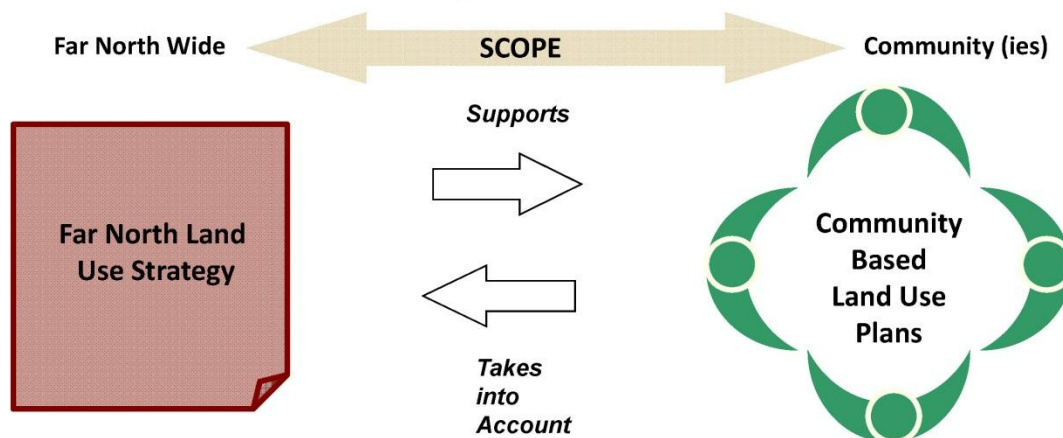
Further information on what the Strategy will contain is found in section 3.

How does the Strategy Relate to Community Based Land Use Plans?

While joint First Nation-Ontario planning teams must take the Strategy into account when preparing plans, decisions on land use and protected area designations remain with the joint planning team at the community level. . Joint planning teams prepare community based land use plans that consider both community and provincial interests, building a shared understanding of desired outcomes. MNR is Ontario’s representative on the joint planning team, and is responsible for bringing forward provincial interests in both protection and development.

The diagram below shows the relationship between the Strategy and community based land use plans.

Land Use Planning under the Far North Act



3.0 Thinking about the Strategy

What will the Strategy Contain?

The Far North Land Use Strategy will describe and provide policy guidance to support planning on matters of common interest across the Far North.

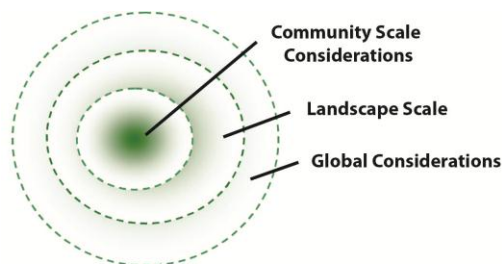
The Strategy will also include policies relating to categories of land use designations and to categories of protected area designations. Additionally, the Strategy will include requirements and processes for amending community based land use plans.

The next sections outline the major components of the Strategy.

Policy Guidance

Policy guidance on cultural, social, environmental and economic interests would assist planning teams in considering broad-scale interests while developing individual community based land use plans. The Act identifies a number of policy topics that could be included in the Far North Land Use Strategy:

- Cultural and heritage values
- Ecological systems, processes and functions, including considerations for cumulative effects and for climate change adaptation and mitigation
- The interconnectedness of protected areas
- Biological diversity
- Areas of natural resource value for potential economic development
- Electricity transmission, roads and other infrastructure
- Tourism



As an example, policy guidance on protected area design could suggest that joint planning teams consider:

- The size and scale of protected areas, and the importance of their interconnectedness across the landscape.
- Cultural, ecological and geological values or features that should be protected from development.

- Land use direction for adjacent lands that could complement protection of these features.
- Features that extend across large areas (i.e., cross more than one planning area). Such features could include waterways and wildlife migration routes.
- Existing and potential transportation and other infrastructure corridors and consideration of the need for crossing of protected areas.
- Features in neighbouring communities, and how protected areas could be linked to those to provide for connectedness.

The policy guidance in the Strategy may eventually become more formalized through “policy statements” should a First Nations-Ontario Joint Body be established under the *Far North Act*. If a Joint Body is established, policy statements could be recommended to the Minister and be issued with approval of Cabinet.

Categories of Land Use Designations and of Protected Area Designations

The Strategy will also contain policies related to categories of land use designations and to categories of protected area designations. These policies will describe types of land use designations that could be used in community based land use plans and the land uses and activities that would be permitted or not permitted in a particular land use designation. Land use designations in already completed community based land use plans could help inform development of broad policy on this topic.

Categories of “protected areas” would be developed to be in keeping with First Nations understanding of protection and will be built on a shared understanding of “protection” and “protected areas”. Approaches to land use and protected area designations used elsewhere in Ontario and in other jurisdictions could also provide examples of potential approaches.

Requirements and Processes for Amending Plans

The Strategy will contain guidance on amending approved plans.

Broad direction on plan amendments is already provided in Sections 10 (1) and (2) of the *Far North Act*. The Act states that either the First Nation or Minister that have approved a plan may propose an amendment to the plan. It also requires that the objectives of the Act and the Strategy must be taken into account in developing the amendment, and sets out the mandatory contents of the plan amendment. As with the original plan, the amendment must be approved by both the First Nation and the Minister.

The Strategy would build on this broad direction by providing further guidance regarding the process for preparing and consulting on plan amendments.

What will Inform the Strategy's Development?

First Nations knowledge and experiences are key to the development of the Strategy. As we move forward to develop the Strategy we will be engaging First Nation communities to work with us and to share their knowledge and perspectives. Input from the public and stakeholders is also important and we welcome comments and input at each stage.

In addition, the Province and First Nations now have over 15 years of experience with community based land use planning; this experience will be instrumental to the Strategy's development. In approved plans to date for example, planning teams have provided strategic direction that enables desired economic development opportunities while ensuring protection of values. Direction sets out guidance on how desired activities would take place, for example planning for access in a way that considers the desire to also maintain areas of remoteness.

The Strategy could provide a synopsis of this type of guidance for the benefit of other planning teams.

The objectives for land use planning set out in the Far North Act will be taken into account in the development of the Strategy. These objectives are:

1. A significant role for First Nations in the planning.
2. The protection of areas of cultural value in the Far North and the protection of ecological systems in the Far North by including at least 225,000 square kilometres of the Far North in an interconnected network of protected areas designated in community based land use plans.
3. The maintenance of biological diversity, ecological processes and ecological functions, including the storage and sequestration of carbon in the Far North.
4. Enabling sustainable economic development that benefits the First Nations.

Existing provincial policy in areas such as biodiversity, climate change, and natural resource development will also help inform the development of the Far North Land Use Strategy.

4.0 Moving Forward

Steps in Developing the Far North Land Use Strategy:

The Strategy is a key component of the Far North Land Use Planning Initiative. MNR looks forward to working with First Nations and seeking input from stakeholders and the general public to develop the Strategy. In addition to this introductory paper, further postings will be made on the Environmental Registry to seek input as the Far North Land Use Strategy is developed. This paper represents Stage 1, and further planned Stages are set out in detail below.

Stage 1: Introduction to the Far North Land Use Strategy (Fall 2013)

- Provides overview of the Strategy's contents and how it will guide/support planning
- Serves as the "Invitation to Participate" in the development of the Strategy
- Posted on the Environmental Registry (ER) for comment

Stage 2: Discussion Paper (Winter 2014 - Summer 2014)

- MNR will prepare a preliminary Discussion Paper to seek input on different planning topics that could be included in the Strategy.
- First Nations will be engaged to share their knowledge and perspectives to guide the development of a Draft Strategy.
- Discussion paper will be posted on the Environmental Registry for comment and input.
- Additional opportunities for engagement with stakeholders will also be provided

Stage 3: Draft Strategy (Fall 2014)

- Draft Strategy will be posted on the ER for comment
- MNR will continue to work with First Nations and seek input from stakeholders

Stage 4: Final Far North Land Use Strategy (Winter 2014/15)

- MNR will post the Final Strategy on the ER as a decision and make it available on the Internet
- The Strategy will include a timeline for future review

How to get involved

- If you are interested in being added to a mailing list to receive information on the development of the Far North Land Use Strategy, please send an email to: farnorthstrategy@ontario.ca.
- If you would like to request a meeting to discuss the Strategy, your request can be emailed to: farnorthstrategy@ontario.ca
- You can submit comments on the Environmental Registry posting.

Feedback

Written comments can be submitted to:

Far North Branch
Ministry of Natural Resources
77 Grenville St., 5th Floor
Toronto, ON
M5S 1B3
farnorthstrategy@ontario.ca

Written comments can also be submitted on the Environmental Registry posting:
www.ebr.gov.on.ca

Additional Links

Please go to <http://www.ontario.ca/farnorth> for more information on the Far North Land Use Planning Initiative.