

JOINT PROPOSAL FOR LIGHTENING THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT OF LOGGING IN ALGONQUIN PARK



SUBMITTED BY THE ONTARIO PARKS BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THE ALGONQUIN
FORESTRY AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 28, 2008, the Minister of Natural Resources asked the Ontario Parks Board and the Algonquin Forestry Authority (AFA) Board to work together to develop and submit joint recommendations for *Lightening the Ecological Footprint of Logging in Algonquin Park*, for her consideration.

Algonquin Park is valued by many people as a natural area, a recreation and tourism destination and as a well-managed forest that provides many social and economic benefits to the local, regional and provincial economies. The forests of Algonquin are a natural system with many growth variables, and the forecasts and plans are based on models and estimates. Finding the right balance of increased protection, respecting Algonquin interests and adequate certainty of wood supply for local mills several decades into the future was a significant challenge.

The Boards utilized a working group to assist them in developing, analyzing and preparing the joint Proposal. Input received from the Algonquins of Ontario and key stakeholders was used to modify the proposal. This process started from the substantial areas of agreement in the separate proposals made in 2006 by the Parks Board and the AFA. As a result of further study, consultation and compromise, a new proposal was developed that reduced the productive forest to be moved to protection, and exchanged other areas to reduce the risk of supply impacts on local mills. The resulting Proposal is comprised of:

1. A recommendation that all area in Algonquin Park that is not available for forest management contribute to the summary of area protected from (or not available for) logging.
2. A recommendation related to the expansion of protection zones by 98,202 hectares to enhance the protection of important park values.
3. A recommendation related to operational and planning strategies that will contribute to a lighter footprint in the areas where forest management activities occur.
4. Implementation strategies for consideration when amending the Park Management Plan.

The recommended protection zones have been carefully located and designed to enhance protection for important natural, social, and cultural values within the Park. The Proposal will bring the total area protected from (or not available for) logging in the Park from 341,495 hectares (45%) to 371,238 hectares or 49% of the total Park area.

The Boards and the working group have endeavoured to achieve a balanced solution that provides additional protection for important park values, while minimizing the risk of impacts on the forest industry. There are still some outstanding concerns from the forest industry regarding current and future wood supply and perceived impacts on communities and jobs. Analyses conducted by the working group show that any impacts on wood supply should be manageable.

This report is not about reducing logging in the Park; rather, it is intended to be about lightening the ecological footprint of logging in the Park. The AFA takes its mandate seriously regarding sustainable forest management and maintaining a supply of forest

resources to mills dependent on the Park. The AFA has expressed reservations about the Proposal, as they are unable to say with certainty that this Proposal will not negatively impact the forest industry and local communities.

This Proposal is to be submitted to the Minister for her consideration. It will be the Minister's decision on whether to proceed with any revisions to the zoning or policies within Algonquin Park. Any possible adjustments to the Park zoning or policy would have to be approved through a formal park management plan amendment process, which would include opportunities for public and Aboriginal consultation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ontario Parks Board of Directors (Parks Board) provided advice to the Minister with regards to the protected areas legislation back in February of 2005. The Parks Board recommended that all industrial uses be prohibited in provincial parks and conservation reserves, with the exception of Algonquin Park, where commercial logging should continue. Section 17. (1) of the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act* reflects this exception. The Parks Board recognizes logging is permitted and should continue in Algonquin Park.

The concept of "Lightening the Footprint" has been around since *Bill 11, an Act to Enact the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act* was introduced for First Reading in October, 2005. When introducing the Bill, the Minister of Natural Resources announced that he had asked the Parks Board to make recommendations to the Minister regarding how to lighten the ecological footprint of logging in Algonquin Provincial Park. The Parks Board submitted its recommendations to the Minister in December, 2006. The Algonquin Forestry Authority (AFA) provided the Minister with a separate submission with substantial areas of agreement, but also with differences that attempted to mitigate some of the potential impacts on wood supply. In May, 2007 the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) made the Parks Board recommendations available for review and comment via Ontario's Environmental Registry and through letters to Aboriginal communities and stakeholders. Extensive input was received both in support and in opposition to the Parks Board's recommendations. One of the concerns frequently raised in the submissions was that the 2006 Parks Board Report was developed without consultation or input from stakeholders or the Algonquins of Ontario. The Minister of Natural Resources recognized the need for a more balanced proposal which would include the input of key stakeholders and the Algonquins of Ontario (Algonquins).

On February 28, 2008, the Minister of Natural Resources asked the Parks Board and the AFA Board to work together to develop and submit joint recommendations for *Lightening the Ecological Footprint of Logging in Algonquin Park*, for her consideration. The Minister asked that the Boards consult with the Algonquins and key stakeholders in order to ensure a viable, more widely supported proposal. The Boards were provided with a Terms of Reference to guide the process which included a set of principles:

- *The area of Algonquin Park to be incorporated in permanent protection zones (i.e. Natural Environment, Nature Reserve, and Wilderness zones where logging is not permitted) will be reviewed.*
 - *Proposals from the Parks Board and AFA should be used as reference in the development of the joint proposal for consultation.*
- *Wood supply losses will be minimized.*
- *The joint proposal will include operational approaches to lighten the footprint of logging.*
- *The Park's Board and AFA Board will meet with The Algonquin Nation 1) prior to developing a draft joint recommendation, and 2) to discuss the draft joint recommendation once it is developed.*
- *Consultation opportunities will be provided for local municipalities, environmental non-governmental organizations, local forest companies reliant on Algonquin wood supply, and forest industry associations.*

- *A media protocol and co-ordination approach with MNR will be developed.*

MNR Southern Region has provided both a coordination and secretariat role to the Boards. A technical working group comprised of MNR and AFA staff (working group) has supported the Boards throughout the process. The Boards along with MNR and AFA representatives met with the Algonquins, environmental non-government organizations, local forest companies, the County of Renfrew, regional advisory committee, Algonquin Park local citizens committee, local Members of Parliament (MPPs) and the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. Members of the working group also had follow-up meetings with industry, the local municipality, and the Algonquins. As the process evolved, two technical advisors from the Algonquins of Ontario also joined the working group to provide input and advice during the development of the joint proposal. The Boards considered all input received in the development of this Proposal.

The Minister of Natural Resources also made it clear that the process for developing the forest management plan for the Algonquin Forest for the 2010 to 2020 period would continue, in order to comply with the regulated planning process required under the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act*, and that 'Lightening the Footprint' priority areas would be respected.

This Proposal for *Lightening the Ecological Footprint of Logging in Algonquin Park* is without prejudice to any positions taken by the parties in, or potential settlement of, the Algonquin Land Claim.

2.0 HIGHLIGHTS OF CONSULTATION

Representatives of the Parks Board and AFA Board, along with MNR and AFA representatives met the Algonquins and separately with various stakeholder groups. Most of the initial meetings occurred during the fall of 2008. The input received was very insightful and helped the working group and the two Boards refine the joint Proposal so that it meets the objectives of both Boards.

Algonquins of Ontario

The first meeting between representatives of the two Boards and the Algonquins occurred in September of 2008. This was a very productive and respectful meeting, which set the stage for future meetings and the engagement of the Algonquins throughout the development of a joint proposal. The working group provided draft products to the Algonquins as the proposal was being developed. In March of 2009, two Algonquin representatives were invited to participate as part of the working group. This proved to be a very important step for incorporating Algonquin input as the Proposal was developed. The Boards are very appreciative of the Algonquin's involvement in the Lightening the Footprint process and have developed this Proposal with consideration of the Algonquin's interests and concerns as submitted to the Boards. The Boards do not intend to propose anything that will impact their traditional activities in Algonquin Park or the ongoing land claim negotiations.

In general the Algonquins have been supportive of the Proposal, but have expressed some concerns regarding road access and impacts of increased protection zones on Algonquin

communities reliant on the forest industry. We have taken the input from the Algonquins and incorporated it into our recommendations. However, we believe that some of the requests and suggestions are beyond the scope of our mandate for Lightening the Footprint. Respectfully, we believe that some concerns would be better addressed through the comprehensive land claim process or directly with MNR during the appropriate planning processes. For example¹, the Algonquins have advised us that they have traditional knowledge to share, and they would like to have early and on-going involvement in discussions related to endangered species habitat and cultural heritage values identification and protection, to ensure the proper balance of protection and the viability of forest operations.

Stakeholders

The forest industry is one of the key stakeholders that will be impacted by a decision to increase the area in protection zoning, and as such, meetings with MNR and AFA were held to discuss the wood supply analysis with each of the mills that have wood supply commitments from Algonquin Park. There are mixed feelings within the industry – some have accepted the concept, and some think it clearly is the wrong time and do not support any increase in protection zoning in the Park. Mills that are most impacted by the proposed protection zoning were the least supportive. Some of the comments we heard were:

- Why is there a need for more protection when there is no issue with the quality of forest management in the Park?
- Some mills are fully utilizing their commitments from the Park; any reduction will have an impact on their business
- Suspicions that the ultimate goal is to remove logging in Algonquin Park
- New policies continue to be more restrictive and reduce available harvest area; future impacts of new initiatives/policies are unknown, e.g., Endangered Species Act regulations, Landscape and Stand and Site Guide implementation
- Increasing reserves along waterways takes away some of the best wood, in particular veneer quality yellow birch
- Some local mills have been on the landscape for four or five generations, and have been investing in the future through good silviculture (harvesting the poor quality material) – these areas are now ready for return harvest, and have greater volumes of high quality material; many of these areas are now part of proposed protection zone; companies have lost the benefits of their past investments
- Future markets for the forest industry are uncertain and reducing area available for forest management will limit flexibility and opportunities for future investment and diversification
- Concern about access and increased costs due to greater haul distances to maintain their wood supply
- Wood from Algonquin Park contributes to the economies of many communities, and creating uncertainty about wood supply will affect the viability of mills and may impact jobs and people's livelihood.

¹ Another example of something beyond our mandate to comment - the Algonquins have requested that MNR consider undertaking a comprehensive native values study in advance of any amendment to the Park Management Plan.

The County of Renfrew has been very interested in this initiative, and generally support the concerns of the forest industry. The forest industry is important to Renfrew County and any initiative that reduces the area and volume available for harvest has the potential to affect the communities and potential economic opportunities for the future.

Environmental organizations are supportive of the initiative and want it to proceed sooner rather than later. They are supportive of ensuring the Algonquins have input. They are satisfied with the approach the two Boards have taken, and want to see an increase in protection in Algonquin Park.

3.0 PROPOSAL

Many of the priorities and objectives in the Ontario Parks Board 2006 recommendations were considered in the development of the Proposal.

The Boards and the working group used an iterative process to develop the joint Proposal. Key principles were identified by the Boards to guide the process. These principles can be found in *Appendix A – Methodology*.

The input received during consultations with stakeholders and the Algonquins helped the Boards develop their final Proposal.

The Proposal to *Lightening the Ecological Footprint of Logging in Algonquin Park* is comprised of:

1. A recommendation that all area in Algonquin Park that is not available for forest management contribute to the summary of area protected from (or not available for) logging.
2. A recommendation related to the expansion of protection zones by 98,202 hectares to enhance the protection of important park values.
3. A recommendation related to operational and planning strategies that will contribute to a lighter footprint in the areas where forest management activities occur.
4. Implementation strategies for consideration when amending the Park Management Plan.

3.1 Recognition of Areas Not Available for Forest Management

The Boards recognize that there is a large amount of area within the Recreation/Utilization (R/U) Zone that is currently not available for forest management. There are also unique prescriptions developed through forest management planning that contribute to protection of Algonquin Park's ecological, recreational and tourism values.

The Boards recommend that the area within the R/U Zone that is not part of the available forest (e.g., areas protected by Park policy (e.g., reserves on portages and water bodies), water, wetlands, rock barrens and area of concern (AOC) reserves, present and future inoperable forest) should be recognized as area not available for logging. With our

proposal, the total area not available for forest management within the R/U Zone is 105,493 hectares. See Figure 1 in Appendix C.

3.2 Expansion of Protection Zones

The basis for the proposed protection zones as shown on Map 1 (see Appendix B), was the Ontario Parks Board 2006 recommendations. One of the priority areas in that report related to the protection of under-represented ecosystems. There was early agreement between the two Boards that ecologically representative sites would be the first priority for proposed protection zoning.

An iterative approach was used to develop the final recommendation for the expansion of protection zoning in Algonquin Park. Proposed areas were evaluated in terms of contribution to park values (e.g., ecological representation, connectivity between core areas, enhancing recreational experience, protecting cultural heritage values) and impacts on wood supply to mills. Where practical, area has also been proposed for protection zoning that will have no impact on production forest (e.g., wetlands, water, barren and scattered, etc.).

As modifications were required, the Boards, with the assistance of their working group refined some of the proposed zones in order to mitigate wood supply issues and bring consistency to the dimensions of proposed zones.

There are areas within the Recreation/Utilization (R/U) Zone that are not available for forest management due to park policy (e.g., reserves on portages and waterways), area of concern reserves, non-forested area, protection forest, and forested areas that are inaccessible or inoperable. Many of these areas have been included in the proposed protection zones. The area proposed for protection zoning can be summarized as follows:

- 4054 hectares for sites that contribute to ecological representation of landform/vegetation features
- 200 metre waterway zone along each side of high value/main canoe routes which includes increased protection for brook trout lakes and areas of high cultural heritage value. This 200 metre zone is also consistent with widths of waterway class provincial parks outside of Algonquin Park. However, this provision may be modified in woodsheds where wood supply is an issue.
- 120 metre waterway zone along each side of high value/main canoe routes within woodsheds with wood supply concerns. However, if through the forest management planning process, wood supply issues are resolved, 200 metre zones would be preferred for these waterways
- 120 metre waterway zone around Opeongo Lake and other secondary canoe routes
- 30 metre waterway zone along low use canoe routes
- Areas of inaccessible or inoperable forest and areas that improve connectivity between existing core protection zones

The area proposed for protection zoning is increased by 98,202 hectares, and brings the total area zoned for protection from 167,544 hectares to 265,746 hectares or 35% of the total Park area. This proposed area is comprised of forest and non-forest (rock, water, swamp, etc.).

Combining the area not available for forest management from the R/U Zone (105,493 hectares) and the proposed additions to protection zoning (98,202 hectares) will bring the total area protected from or not available for logging in the Park from 341,495 hectares (45%) to 371,238 hectares or 49% of the total Park area. Figure 1 in Appendix C summarizes the current and proposed areas for protection.

Of the 98,202 hectares proposed for protection zoning, only 29,743 hectares was forested area available for forest management. Therefore, the net effect to the forest industry is a decrease of 29,743 hectares of forested area from the available forest management landbase.

3.3 Proposed Operational and Planning Strategies

The AFA and MNR should continue to respect Aboriginal and Treaty Rights by providing participation opportunities for Aboriginal [Algonquin] people with respect to their rights and interest in sustainable forest management.

The AFA and MNR should continue to ensure that forestry operations are conducted at the highest standard and in a way that helps maintain the ecological integrity of Algonquin Park. This includes continually being at the forefront of new technology including machinery and practices which minimize any negative impacts of forest operations while maintaining a viable forest industry.

Roads

Ideally the road network in Algonquin Park should be as minimal as possible; supporting only what is needed for forest operations. All reasonable steps (e.g., water crossing removals and the effective use of berms upon completion of forestry activities) should be taken to minimize the impacts of roads to ensure Park values such as remoteness, solitude, visitor experience and most importantly ecological values are protected. The road network is of concern and interest to the Algonquins, as roads are used for access to traditional activities such as hunting and fishing. As such, the road network should have regard for these activities.¹

The Roads Strategy for Algonquin Park, developed by the AFA and MNR is an excellent approach and should remain a guiding document for forest management planning, park management and operational considerations. It should be a shared responsibility of MNR and the AFA to keep the Roads Strategy current. It is recognized that the Roads Strategy will be implemented and reviewed as part of the development of a Forest Management Plan or Park Management Plan review, and as such, the Algonquins should be consulted during those processes². The Roads Strategy should have minimal impact on traditional Algonquin harvesting activities, as the temporary road network in one area is abandoned at the end of

¹ The Algonquins have requested that the road network have regard to Algonquin Aboriginal rights.

² The Algonquins have indicated that they intend to seek greater participation in the implementation and review of the Roads Strategy.

logging, and another road network is opened for future forest management activities. Details of these strategies can be found in Appendix D.

Forestry Practices

MNR and AFA should continue to minimize the ecological impact from forest operations by:

- reviewing forestry practices with the objective of maintaining/enhancing ecological integrity (e.g., consider use of environmentally friendly lubricants and fluids, use of portable bridges to span coldwater streams)
- exploring the use of spatial geographic information system (GIS) tools to assist in planning and operational decisions.
- during the May to October period, enhance planning of operations, communications between AFA and MNR (Algonquin Park) regarding recreational use patterns, and consider options for modifying practices such as the use of quieter equipment.

Brook Trout Lakes

MNR and AFA should continue to use strategies to limit access and minimize potential hydrological impacts around brook trout lakes in Algonquin Park. Details of these strategies can be found in Appendix D.

Old Growth Forest

Our recommendations include adding area to protection zoning which will also contribute to old growth values. In addition, through forest management planning, the planning team should continue to develop and implement an old growth strategy for the forest management plan that meets the current legal requirements and considers impacts on all forest management objectives. Details of these strategies can be found in Appendix D.

3.4 Implementation Recommendations

The Boards' recommendations cannot come into full force until there has been an amendment to the Algonquin Park Management Plan. In order for the intent of the recommendations to be fully understood, the Boards have supported the following implementation recommendations:

1. Any proposal to revise the zoning within Algonquin Park, including possible adjustments to the Recreation/Utilization Zone, requires further consultation through the park management plan amendment process.
2. Forest management should continue according to the existing Algonquin Forest Management Plan (2005-2010). Harvesting should avoid all proposed protection zones as a general rule. If wood supply commitments indicate a need to harvest in a portion of one of the proposed protection zones to meet wood supply commitments, these sites will be reviewed by the MNR (Algonquin Park) to investigate other options, where they exist. If operations are permitted to proceed, particular care should be taken to minimize impacts.

3. The 2010 forest management plan (currently in preparation) should avoid the planning of operations within the proposed protection zoning as recommended in this report.
4. Zoning of new protected areas and road strategies should provide for practical road access to current and future harvest areas using the following guidance:
 - Practical road access within proposed new protection zones, including the proposed waterway zones should be permitted where no practical alternative exists. While this includes the building of new roads, the intent is to avoid the need to build new roads where there are suitable existing roads.
 - For roads that will be used within the 200 metre waterway zone, the edge of the road right-of-way should normally be the zone boundary. If a road is located closer than 120 metres from the waterway, a practical boundary should be determined that will not be less than 120 metres from the waterway. The use of roads within the 120 metre distance should be permitted unless there is a sound reason to use another option.
 - The exact location of waterway zone boundaries should be determined during a park management plan amendment process. In order to maintain practical access, MNR (Algonquin Park) staff and the AFA should look closely at roads within 200 metres to determine if they would be required in the future and to draw logical boundaries for the new zone. The intent should be to utilize the existing road if needed and to provide a logical and practical boundary.
 - In order to minimize the need for new roads, and also to ensure practical access to future operating areas, any new road required through a proposed protection zone should require the prior approval of the Park Superintendent.
5. The AFA should realign woodshed boundaries, where appropriate, in an effort to maintain a continuous wood flow to the mills that fully utilize their available harvest area. The realignment of boundaries should consider economic haul distances for mills.

4.0 ANALYSIS

4.1 *Enhancement of Park Values*

Although Algonquin Park is a well managed forest, "lightening the footprint" of logging through operational strategies, combined with an increase of area in protection zoning, will help maintain ecological integrity, and enhance the tourism and recreational value of Algonquin Park.

Algonquin Park is considered by many to be the "flagship" of Ontario's system of protected areas. Canadians regard it as a national treasure and identify Algonquin as the second most frequently visited "national park"¹. It has an international reputation for wilderness and is one of Ontario's leading international tourism destinations. For Ontario residents, it is the most important "accessible wilderness" available for the increasing number of southern Ontario urban residents. Close to 1,000,000 visitors use the Park annually. These visitors,

¹ Environics poll for Parks Canada, 2005 – source Wistowsky, 2007)

and many more people who do not visit the Park, value the option for themselves, or future generations, to experience Algonquin Park. Many people also derive value from simply knowing that Algonquin Park exists for its own sake, irrespective of any human use.

Beyond the value of Algonquin's wilderness to visitors and non-visitors alike, there are important natural heritage and policy considerations. Algonquin Park provides essential habitat for many species, including several species at risk, and contains the highest concentration of self-sustaining brook trout lakes in Ontario. Provincial legislation and policies include the requirement to protect representative ecosystems and earth science features, and to protect ecological integrity (EI), within provincial parks and conservation reserves.

With these values in mind, we recommend the expansion of the protection zones within the Park. The specific expansions to protection zones, combined with operational and planning strategies, would make a significant contribution to park values including the following:

- 4,054 hectares are proposed to be included as a protection zone to address gaps in ecological representation. The proposed additions to the protection zoning bring the major ecological representation gaps that are contained within the park at least to the minimum thresholds established for protection. Representation gaps still remain in Ecodistricts 5E-9 and 5E-10, but none of their thresholds can be met within Algonquin Park; i.e., most of the remaining gaps are situated outside of the park in other portions of these Ecodistricts.
- Additional area in protection zones adjacent to the existing Wilderness and Nature Reserve Zones to expand their core size, improve connectivity between zones and contribute to ecological integrity within the Park.
- Area within the Recreation/Utilization Zone with no commercial timber production value (rocks, water, wetland, barren and scattered, inoperable forest, inaccessible forest, protection forest, etc.) would be recognized as area not available for logging
- Self-sustaining brook trout lakes and associated nursery stream habitat would have enhanced protection.
- Major waterways would have protection zones expanded from 30 metres to 120 metres or 200 metres, which will provide protection to cultural heritage values and canoe routes and many major waterways will also have protection consistent with the 200 metre protection afforded by Waterway Class provincial parks *outside* Algonquin.
- The 120 metre waterway zones on Lake Opeongo and other canoe routes would provide enhanced protection for recreational, tourism and fisheries values.
- The 30 metre reserves on low use canoe routes proposed for protection zoning would formally recognize areas not available for forest management and currently protected through park policy.
- Back-country campsites will have enhanced protection zones to preserve the "wilderness feel" of the experience.

The combined effect of these measures would enhance the overall values provided by the Park to visitors, non-visitors and Aboriginal people through the increased protection of natural features, cultural heritage values, species at risk, ecological integrity and the "wilderness character" of the Park.

4.2 Forest Operations and Wood Supply to Mills

The Algonquins and various stakeholders that we met with have acknowledged that Algonquin Park is a well managed forest. All harvesting operations are conducted in accordance with world class standards and are governed by one of the most comprehensive legal and policy frameworks. The AFA, as the forest manager, has also attained third-party forest certification and meets independent, internationally recognized, sustainable forest management standards. Management of the Algonquin Park Forest conforms with requirements of the international standards ISO 14001 and CSA Z809-02, Canada's National Standard for Sustainable Forest Management.

Algonquin Park is seen as a very unique place, where wilderness, tourism, recreation, back country experiences and forestry co-exist. Forest management is important to the regional and provincial economies, and provides stability to local communities in central and eastern Ontario. The timber harvested in Algonquin Park primarily supports 13 mills in communities such as Huntsville, Whitney, Madawaska, Pembroke, Mattawa and Rutherglen, provides about 40% of the Crown wood supply harvested in central Ontario, and supports at least 2800 jobs within the region.

The forest industry, the Algonquins and the County of Renfrew have all expressed concern about the potential impacts to communities and the livelihood of many people in the region. Many of the mills that receive wood from Algonquin Park have been around for generations, and are very concerned about putting more area into protection zoning. They have indicated that some of the unknown impacts from the implementation of new policy, combined with reducing area available for forest management through Lightening the Footprint, may make their operations unaffordable.

In an effort to address the input received from the forest industry during the meetings in December 2008, and to address some of the wood supply issues highlighted as a result of the wood supply analysis, modifications were made to the draft Proposal. In producing a revised version, opportunities were investigated to mitigate impacts to specific mill's wood supply, particularly for tolerant hardwood sawlogs, red pine poles and veneer logs. Modifications were made to reduce proposed zoning around low use canoe routes, Lake Opeongo and some secondary canoe routes. In addition, the AFA had a closer look at some of the larger proposed areas to see if they were operable/accessible, which resulted in additional proposed protection zones being removed from this final proposal.

The R/U Zone is where forestry is permitted in the Park. Currently about 23% of the R/U Zone is unavailable for forest management. The Proposal for new protection zoning includes some of this unavailable area and some new area previously available to the forest industry. The net effect to the forest industry is a decrease of 29,743 hectares (7%) of forested area from the available forest management landbase.

In undertaking the wood supply analysis for the proposed zoning the current commitment levels for mills were used as a benchmark. Historic utilization from 2000 and 2005 forest management plans and 2010 forest management plan projected levels were also used as reference. Wood supply impacts were evaluated for all of Algonquin Park as well as at a woodshed level. For the whole of Algonquin Park, the issues were not as apparent;

however, investigation of specific woodsheds and products identified some issues in terms of the ability to maintain the current wood supply commitments.

One of the mills that receives wood from Algonquin Park has been in operation for generations and has a long history of investing in good silviculture by removing poor quality material to improve the quality of the remaining stand. These areas were soon to be scheduled for a return harvest and now contain high value material. Much of this area is now in a proposed waterway zone. This specific mill fully utilizes the harvest area made available to them by the AFA on an annual basis.

The industry still has concerns about the area proposed for inclusion in waterway zones. These areas contain some of the best and most valuable wood, including tolerant hardwood sawlogs, yellow birch veneer logs and red pine poles, which are the products that are in greatest demand and these volumes are not replaceable.

While there is sufficient wood in total, both the 2010 forest management plan levels and the proposed "Lightening the Footprint" harvest levels cannot sustain some of the mills at historic harvest levels within their current woodsheds over the long term. As a mitigation strategy, we recommend that the AFA consider re-aligning its traditional woodshed boundaries in order to ensure that wood can be available at an affordable cost to the mills that are most affected. Realigning traditional woodsheds, which should happen regardless of this Proposal, may result in greater haul distances to get the species and products to the appropriate mills, therefore potentially increasing delivered wood costs for the industry.

The forest industry is also very concerned about the cumulative impacts of new forest policy. It is expected that there will be further reductions in area available due to increased protection for species at risk and implementation of new forest management Guides. The Algonquins are generally supportive, but have expressed a similar concern and would like to have greater involvement to utilize their traditional knowledge and work with MNR (Algonquin Park) as they identify locations and habitat for endangered species. There are many Algonquins who are reliant on the forest operations for their livelihood, and would like to ensure that there is a proper balance between protection and viability of operations.

5.0 WRAP-UP

When the Boards started this exercise, they expected to be able to complete it within a few months. The Board Chairs initially could see the "win-win", and were confident that, with the support of the MNR and AFA staff, a joint solution was not far off.

It didn't take long to realize just how complex this issue was and that it was important to do it right. The Algonquins were very sensitive about "Lightening the Footprint" and have a tremendous interest in Algonquin Park. In the end, their comments were generally supportive and their involvement was a critical step in having a more widely accepted Proposal. The Boards are pleased with the involvement and appreciate and respect the input from the Algonquins.

Over the past year, there became a greater uneasiness expressed from the AFA, the forest industry, the Algonquins and the County of Renfrew. The Endangered Species Act and new and emerging forest policy will likely have impacts on wood supply in addition to any impacts that may result from implementing all or a portion of the recommendations in the Proposal. It became very important to analyze the wood supply impacts and be confident with our conclusions, recognizing that the uncertainties affecting future wood supplies cannot be quantified. As we approached conclusion, it became more challenging to land on a final joint proposal that both Boards can fully support. Modifications to the proposed widths of waterway zones were negotiated late in the process by the two Boards

This Proposal is designed to help maintain the ecological integrity, to enhance the tourism and recreational value of Algonquin Park, and at the same time, to minimize any negative impacts on wood supply, individual mills and communities. The Proposal recommends an increase in the area protected from logging, as well as implementation strategies, and also supports the continuation of several operational and planning strategies to lighten the ecological footprint where forest operations are permitted.

We appreciate the opportunity to develop joint recommendations for the Minister's consideration and remain willing to respond to any questions or clarification required by the Minister. If the Minister chooses to proceed with any of the recommendations in the Proposal, we understand that a Park Management Plan amendment will be required. This would be the formal process for proposing changes to park zoning or park policy and would involve public and Aboriginal consultation.

6.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A – Methodology

The following process outlines the approach taken to develop the Board's "Joint" Proposal for lightening the ecological footprint of logging in Algonquin Park:

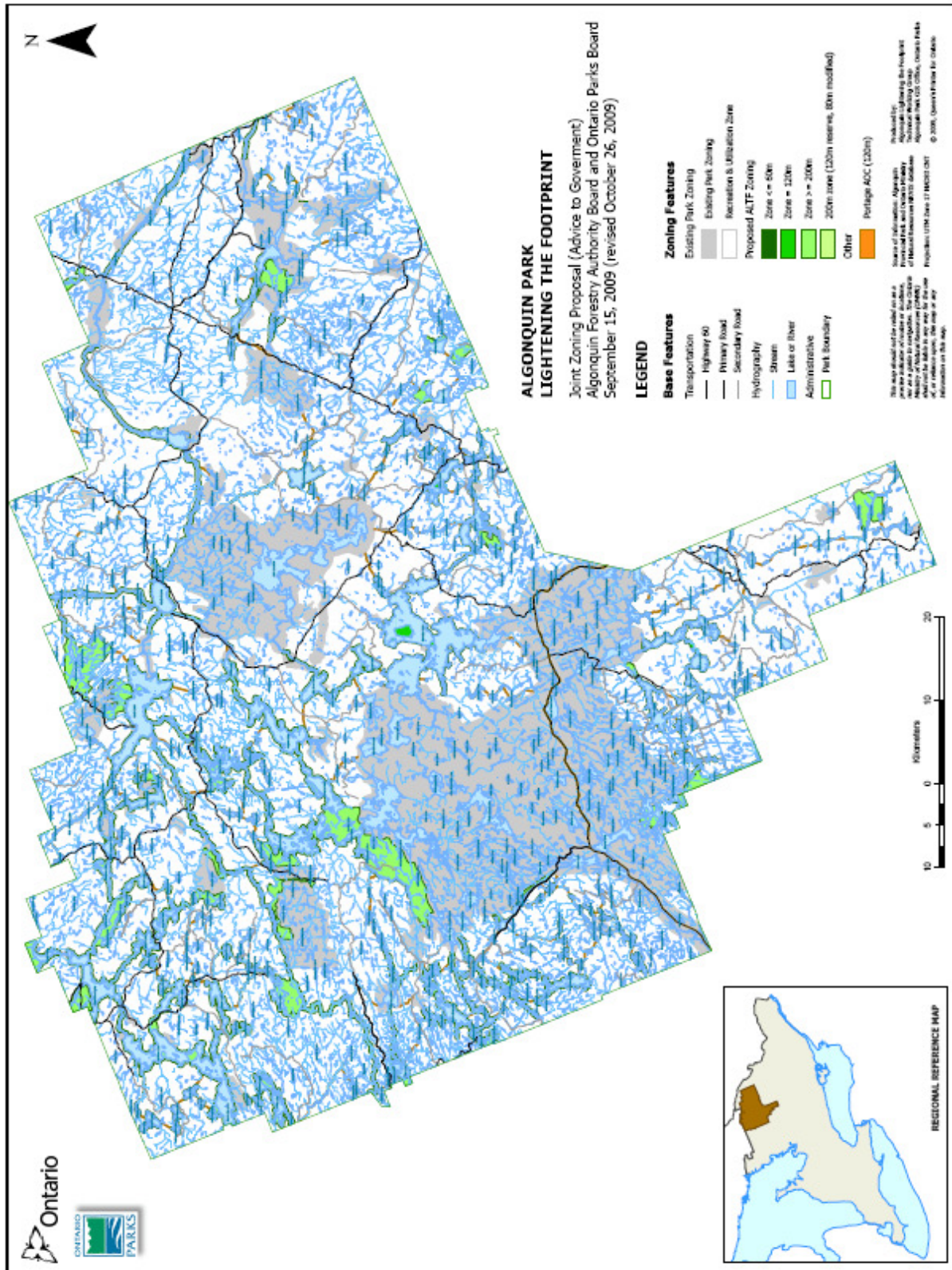
1. Minister asks Ontario Parks Board (OPB) and Algonquin Forestry Authority (AFA) Board to prepare joint proposal for her consideration
2. MNR Southern Region tasked as corporate sponsor and secretariat to the Boards
3. MNR arranges initial meeting of the two Boards discuss approach; MNR and AFA representatives present
4. Boards met with technical MNR/AFA working group (WG) to provide direction
5. General principles identified by the Boards
 - OPB map¹ and AFA map² to be used as reference; focus on areas of discrepancy
 - Do not focus on numbers or percentages
 - Increasing protection should be based on protecting important park values (e.g., ecological representation, connectivity between core areas, recreational experiences, etc.)
 - Minimize impacts on wood supply, individual mills and communities
 - Areas where harvesting cannot or will not occur due to park policy, inoperability, unproductive forest, etc., should contribute to the summary of area protected from logging
 - Consider operational approaches rather than zoning where it makes sense
 - Harvesting should not become uneconomical - practical access to present and future harvest areas to be maintained
 - Consider past silvicultural investment
 - Planning should not become more complex
 - Sound rationale and consistency should be applied for widths of buffers on water bodies, based on value being protected
6. Boards asked WG to evaluate areas of discrepancy in terms of contribution to park values (e.g., ecological representation, connectivity between core areas, enhancing recreational experience, etc.), impacts on wood supply to mills and where practical, protect areas that will have no impact on production forest (wetlands, water, barren and scattered, etc.)
7. Boards met with Algonquins and key stakeholders
8. WG completed evaluation and analysis. Meeting with Boards, where they supported evaluation from the WG and asked WG to consider Algonquin and stakeholder input and:
 - Prepare Version 1 map of draft joint recommendation for zoning
 - Calculate area in overland portages or other policy decisions for permanent protection, but not to be zoned

¹ **OPB Map** – Proposed zoning from 2006 Recommendations of the Ontario Parks Board

² **AFA map** produced as input to mitigate significant impacts to the forest industry in terms of wood supply, silvicultural investment or investment in roads – map presented to Minister in December of 2006.

- Calculate new area summaries for existing and proposed protection – use same basis for existing and proposed
5. Shared the Version 1 map with Algonquins
 6. Working group representatives met with mills during December to seek input on Version 1 map; mills interested in impacts on wood supply for their mills
 7. MNR/AFA working group complete wood supply analysis for Version 1
 - Used current commitment levels for mills as benchmark; also used historic utilization, 2005 and 2010 FMP levels as reference
 - Algonquin Park Forest – all forest units, all products – no issues
 - Issues identified at woodshed/mill and product level
 - i. Sawlogs/Veneer – current commitments greater than supply
 - ii. Whitney, Madawaska, Tembec-Huntsville, Odenbach woodsheds
 8. Boards asked working group to consider impacts of proposed zoning on wood supply and park values and consider all stakeholder and Algonquin input; create version 2 map and analysis
 9. Version 2 map prepared; wood supply analysis and area summaries prepared
 10. MNR met with Algonquin representatives (technical specialists) to share information on Version 2 and draft operational strategies; Algonquin technical specialists invited to be part of working group
 11. Working Group meeting to discuss Version 2 map
 - Looking for opportunities to mitigate impacts on specific mill's wood supply, tolerant hardwood sawlogs, red pine poles, veneer logs
 - Reduce width of proposed zone around low use canoe routes
 - Reduce width of proposed zone around Opeongo Lake
 - AFA to have closer look at some of the larger blobs and re-draw boundaries
 12. Boards ask working group to prepare Version 3 map; finalize strategies and draft report considering input from Algonquins; Boards asked MNR to arrange for meeting with Algonquins
 13. Version 3 map and revised operational strategies forwarded to working group members, including Algonquin technical specialists, for review
 14. Boards, with MNR support proceed with finalizing joint proposal which will consider all Algonquin input to date, including draft input received
 15. Boards and MNR meet with Algonquins to present draft joint proposal
 16. Board meetings and further negotiations between Boards
 17. Board(s) submit joint Proposal (Report) to Minister September 15, 2009
 18. MNR meet with Algonquins to discuss how Algonquin input was considered in Boards' joint report

Appendix B – Map of Joint Parks/AFA Boards Proposed Zoning

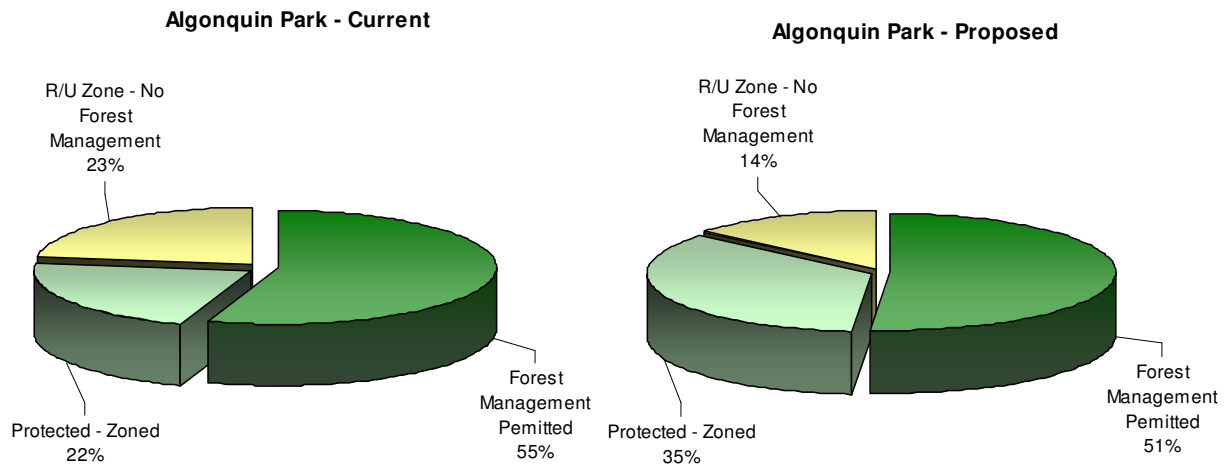


Appendix C – Comparison of Current to Proposed Areas for Protection

FIGURE 1 – SUMMARY OF CURRENT AND PROPOSED AREAS FOR PROTECTION

| | Current | % of Park Area | Proposed | % of Park Area |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Patent land | 673 | 0.1% | 673 | 0.1% |
| Protection Zone - Forested | 129,909 | 17% | 177,709 | 23% |
| Protection Zone - Non-forest | 37,634 | 5% | 88,036 | 12% |
| Total Protection Zone | 167,544 | 22% | 265,746 | 35% |
| R/U Zone - Protected/Not Available (Park Policy, FMP Reserves) | 59,576 | 8% | 42,572 | 6% |
| R/U Zone - Protected/Not Available (Other Forest) | 7,920 | 1% | 6,867 | 1% |
| R/U Zone - Protected/Not Available Non-forest (rock, swamp, water) | 106,456 | 14% | 56,054 | 7% |
| Total Protected/Not Available - R/U Zone | 173,951 | 23% | 105,493 | 14% |
| TOTAL PROTECTED/NOT AVAILABLE | 341,495 | 45% | 371,238 | 49% |
| AVAILABLE FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT | 421,386 | 55% | 391,643 | 51% |
| TOTAL PARK AREA | 763,554 | 100% | 763,554 | 100% |

FIGURE 2 – PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PARK AREA WHERE FOREST MANAGEMENT IS PERMITTED



Appendix D – Detailed Operational and Planning Strategies

Roads

Consistent with the Roads Strategy, the following strategies are recommended:

- Minimize overall impact from road network:
 - Manage logging roads actively by using old roads where possible (unless alternatives will have less environmental impact). Note: this will require the use of roads adjacent to and within new protection zones. Decommission roads that will not be used for extended periods and look at opportunities to rehabilitate abandoned roads.
 - Continue to minimize impact on stream habitats from culvert installations/removals through the use of temporary portable bridges.
- Minimize aggregate use:
 - Review road construction standards and practices as part of the roads strategy. Ensure roads are built to the minimum necessary standards.
 - Integrate the management of aggregate with the Forest Access Management (FAM) area concept.
 - Ensure that pits are consistent with all requirements including the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act.

Brook Trout Lakes

- Continue to implement an area of concern (AOC) (currently 500 metres) around each self-sustaining brook trout lake
 - restrict construction of new roads and reconstruction of old roads within the AOC
 - no new aggregate pits are permitted in the AOC; any deviation from this requires approval from MNR, Algonquin Park
- Tree marking is to be done in the AOC in the snow-free season, where possible, to identify any unknown nursery creeks entering brook trout lakes. In addition, MNR, Algonquin Park should continue to conduct young-of-the-year nursery creek surveys on all lakes before harvest. Any creek that is found to be a nursery creek should receive the Critical Fish Habitat AOC (minimum 30 m reserve and special crossing conditions). The Algonquins have requested that MNR consider utilizing Algonquin traditional knowledge in addition to western science to determine appropriate setbacks.
- Logging operations around brook trout lakes include a minimum reserve of 30m from the high water mark plus a modified area that varies with slope
- Implement effective road planning that ensures the least possible amount of road is constructed, road loops are avoided and the least possible amount of gravel is used. Implement effective road decommissioning locations, well before the 500m AOC, where possible.
- Continue to use portable bridges to minimize impacts on streams connected to brook trout lakes and ensure the stream is returned to its natural state when the crossing is removed.

- Harvest in areas adjacent to brook trout lakes should be completed in as short a time as possible. Once operations are completed in the AOC, access control measures should be put in place.
- Explore the use of spatial computer modeling tools that become available that would identify the important groundwater recharge areas for each specific brook trout lake. This information may help in refinement of the AOC.

Old Growth Forest

- Old growth areas in the non-logging zones of the Park and Area of Concern reserves in the Recreation-Utilization zone should continue to contribute to old growth objectives for the entire Park.
- Current, future (FMP natural benchmark trend levels, Landscape Guide information) and historic forest conditions should be used to guide the development of old growth objectives and targets that protect and/or restore, the distribution and abundance of each even aged forest unit towards its natural levels.
- White pine stands managed under the 4 cut shelterwood system should only be eligible as old growth up until the time they receive a Seed cut, (unless it can be demonstrated that a stand still maintains functional old growth characteristics).
- In uneven-aged forests (selection) that exhibit old growth characteristics, steps should be taken to conserve some old growth features, while still maintaining the health of forest stands. Modified tree marking activities can achieve this.
- Contribute to the maintenance of red and white pine within Algonquin Park by maintaining no less than the 1995 amount (the total amount of hectares) of red and white pine, while permitting a sustainable harvest of red and white pine – now and in the future.
- Consider wildlife species identified as preferring old growth forest as 'selected species' in forest management planning.