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Policy Proposal Notice:

Title:

Amendments to remove and re-designate parts of the Wolf Lake Forest Reserve (F175) Crown land use designation and replace those parts with additions to Chiniguchi Waterway Provincial Park, General Use Area G2048 and Enhanced Management Area E183r

EBR Registry Number: 010-7775

Ministry:

Ministry of Natural Resources

Date Proposal loaded to the Registry:

June 01, 2011

Keyword(s): Land use planning | Protected Areas | Parks

The comment period for this proposal is now over.

Description of Policy:

Under Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy (1999) forest reserves were created where potential protected areas coincided with pre-existing mineral exploration tenure such as mining claims and leases. Forest reserves recognize these exploration and mine development rights, but other industrial uses (forestry, commercial aggregates) are not permitted. The intention was that forest reserves would become individual or additions to provincial parks or conservation reserves if the tenure lapsed through normal processes. The forest reserve designation would remain as long as the mining claim or lease was in good standing.

In 2002, after discussions with a range of stakeholders, the province initiated a process with the mineral exploration community, represented by the Ontario Prospectors Association and environmental groups represented by the Partnership for Public Lands, to "disentangle" the forest reserves. This was in response to concerns that forest reserves potentially discouraged investment in mineral exploration and development as well as creating uncertainty about the timing for the regulation of these lands as provincial parks or conservation reserves.

On May 10, 2005 the province posted a "disentanglement strategy" for 66 sites on the Environmental Registry (Environmental Registry posting XB05E4002). At that time it was proposed to remove the remaining 2371 ha Wolf Lake Forest Reserve land use designation and replace it with a General Use Area designation, while seeking equal replacement land area for protection that contained the same or reasonably similar ecosystem features. This amendment is based upon that original intention and is a balanced, compromise solution. Please refer to Figure 1 in CLUPA Amendment 2007-001.

The Forest Reserve F175 land use designation will be removed from the mining lease areas (340 hectares which generally coincides with the old growth red pine location) and re-designated as General Use Area G2048. Commercial forestry in the 128.4 hectare old growth red pine area will be prohibited. Comparable old growth red pine communities of equivalent size will be added as a contiguous (unbroken) addition to Chiniguchi Waterway Provincial Park (P174a). Mineral exploration will be permitted to continue in the Wolf Lake old growth red pine stands; the F175 designation has never prohibited it. It will be subject to MNR restrictions to minimize impacts on the old growth red pine stands under the Public Lands Act and Crown Forests Sustainability Act. If mine development was proposed, it will be undertaken in accordance with the Mining Act administered by the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, and all other applicable legislation.

The Forest Reserve F175 designation will remain in place for land with mining claims that surround the mining leases (1002.9 hectares). When claims are retired through normal processes, the land will become additions to Chiniguchi Waterway Provincial Park P174a.

The southern Matagamasi Lake portion of F175 (1030.6 hectares) will be dropped and will become part of the surrounding Chiniguchi River North Area, E183r. This is an Enhanced Management Area, a recreation category that recognizes and protects important recreational, tourism and resource features in the area. Replacement land of equal area will be added as a contiguous addition to Chiniguchi Waterway Provincial Park.

Replacement land (737.2 hectares) for former Sturgeon River Forest Reserve will form part of the replacement land for addition to Chiniguchi Waterway Provincial Park. The proposed total replacement lands (park addition) contain 238.3 hectares of representative old growth red pine. The mining lease area where the F175 designation will be dropped is 128.4 hectares, most of it containing old growth red pine. Therefore, there is a net increase in old growth red pine protection in the replacement area of 154.9 hectares.

Purpose of Policy:

The F175 Forest Reserve land use designation is proposed to be dropped where it coincides with mineral exploration leases, but not where it coincides with mineral exploration claims. Reasonably equivalent features in a land replacement area of 2195.7 ha will be added to the Chiniguchi Waterway Provincial Park. Commercial forestry and commercial aggregate extraction will not be permitted within the mining lease area.

Other Information:

The following information is provided in the web links on the right side of this notice:

- Crown Land Use Policy Atlas – access to maps and policy report revisions for F175 Wolf Lake Old Growth Forest Reserve, G2048 Venetian/Ministic Lake General Use Area, E183r Chiniguchi River North Enhanced Management Area – recreation, P174a Chiniguchi Waterway Provincial Park Additions
- Environmental Registry search page (search for XB05E4002) – 2005 Information notice that outlines the details of the proposed provincial land use planning process.

Public Consultation:

This proposal was posted for a 47 day public review and comment period starting June 01, 2011. Comments were to be received by July 18, 2011.

All comments received during the comment period are being considered as part of the decision-making process by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Please Note: All comments and submissions received have become part of the public record.

Other Public Consultation Opportunities:

Direct mail notification to provincial, regional, and local stakeholders, this mailing will include maps and a cover letter describing the proposal in detail.

MNR held a stakeholder meeting in May, 2008 attended by Ontario Parks, the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, and provincial and local environmental group representatives. The meeting focus was to discuss possible solutions to removing and replacing the Wolf Lake Forest Reserve.

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