

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wolf Lake dodges bullet, but ancient forest still in peril

Ontario cancels plans to remove forest reserve status from Wolf Lake, but leaves rare old growth forest threatened by mining

Toronto - Yesterday the Ontario government announced that it is cancelling plans to remove forest reserve status from the heart of the world's largest remaining old growth red pine forest, responding to a massive public outcry in favour of protecting the area. The Wolf Lake Coalition congratulates Minister Gravelle and Premier McGuinty for making the right decision and taking this important first step. However, Wolf Lake's ancient pines remain open to mining and are at immediate risk from current plans to drill in this critically endangered ecosystem.

"We are pleased to see that Ontario is responding to the thousands of people who have spoken out for the protection of Wolf Lake," said David Sone of Earthroots, speaking on behalf of the Wolf Lake Coalition. "Now it is time to finish the job of permanently protecting Wolf Lake by including this unique forest as part of the Chiniguchi Waterway Park.

In 1999, the government of Ontario promised to protect the 300 year old Wolf Lake ancient pines located in the famous greater Temagami canoeing area northeast of Sudbury. The Wolf Lake Coalition (savewolflake.org) comprises 27 Sudbury-area, provincial and national organizations and businesses. The Coalition calls on the government of Ontario to honour the 13 year old promise to permanently protect Wolf Lake.

"Old growth forests are extremely important as habitat for rare wildlife, storehouses of genetic information, and records of our changing climate," explained renowned old growth ecologist Dr. Peter Quinby. "Allowing mining at Wolf Lake is a very short sighted policy that puts our best remaining example of this rare ancient forest ecosystem at risk."

"This red pine old growth forest is a unique ecological treasure right in our backyard," said Naomi Grant of the Coalition for a Liveable Sudbury. "Not only does this make us incredibly fortunate to be able to experience and share this special place, but it also gives us a responsibility to ensure future generations can do the same. Places like this make Sudbury an amazing place to live."

Red pine is one of Ontario's most iconic tree species; a signature of our cherished northern landscape. Ancient red pine forests once covered much of north-eastern North America, including what is now downtown Sudbury. Extensive logging and mining have eliminated these ancient forests on all but 1.2% of their original extent, making them a critically endangered ecosystem.

The Wolf Lake ancient red pine forest is by far the largest remaining example of this disappearing ecosystem -- more than triple the size of the next largest remnant.

CONTACT

David Sone, Wolf Lake Coalition: [416-599-0152 x.13](tel:416-599-0152)

Dr. Peter Quinby, Old Growth Ecologist: [705-476-2165](tel:705-476-2165)

Franco Mariotti, Wolf Lake Coalition: [705-522-3701 ext. 244](tel:705-522-3701)

MORE INFORMATION: SaveWolfLake.org