

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER:

BREAKTHROUGH UNDER THE CANADIAN BOREAL FOREST AGREEMENT FOR CARIBOU, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES IN ONTARIO'S NORTHEAST

The Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA) is an historic agreement between 9 environmental organizations and the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC), and its 19 member companies, that seeks to protect significant areas of Canada's vast Boreal Forest, protect threatened woodland caribou, and sustain a healthy forestry industry for the communities who rely on it. We are committed to providing advice and recommendations on these issues to governments in Canada (provincial, Aboriginal, federal and municipal).

In the face of contentious opinions about protecting woodland caribou and ensuring economic development in northern Ontario, the CBFA signatories are offering a constructive path forward based on creativity and cooperation.

What is being presented is the CBFA's contribution of a set of recommendations for an Action Plan for the 3 million hectare portion of the Abitibi River Forest located in the Kesagami Range in north eastern Ontario. This entire area is managed as a co-operative Sustainable Forest Licence. The two largest shareholders in the co-operative are Tembec Inc. and Resolute Forest Products, both signatories to the CBFA.

The Abitibi River Forest overlaps a significant portion of the Kesagami Range of Boreal caribou (Figure 1). The Kesagami Range has been identified by the federal government in its draft recovery strategy under the *Species at Risk Act* as having national significance due to its connectivity with Québec. Boreal caribou are important indicators of the health of the ecosystems which they inhabit. This range is disturbed and scientists describe the local population of caribou as having suffered a "rapid population decline".

The recommendations the CBFA has presented to the Ontario government are based on the precautionary principle. We have proposed an innovative zonation approach to forestry that includes a no-harvesting zone (called Zone 3) covering an area of 835,000 ha that complements and includes existing protected areas in the northern reaches of the Abitibi River Forest; a Caribou Recovery Zone (Zone 2) composed of deferrals and harvest areas (985,000 ha); and, a Strategic Caribou Recovery Zone (Zone 1) where normally approved forestry with supplemental caribou recovery objectives will be undertaken (1,200,000 ha) (Figure 2).

The plan increases wood supply for industry relative to the current direction by approximately 20% over the next 30 years. This provides a degree of business certainty for both forest operators and local communities. Also it recognizes that our collective scientific knowledge and understanding of caribou is still immature and commits to an adaptive management approach. The plan also incorporates the local traditional knowledge of First Nations.

We've tested our zonation approach and found that it lowers human-caused disturbance in caribou range over the short to medium term and increases wood supply over the next 30 years. Our intention is to work with the co-operative forest manager, Abitibi River Forest Inc., the Ministry of Natural Resources and affected First Nations to ensure the forest management plan is amended to reflect our zonation approach.



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Our recommendations have their beginnings in the prior collaborative work of Tembec and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (Wildlands League).

Our recommendations mark a step forward in our efforts to demonstrate that the dual imperatives of conserving our Boreal forests and protecting jobs in Ontario can be jointly met. It is also the first action plan to be tabled as a result of the nation-wide Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement, serving as an example of the type of innovation that can result when environmentalists and resource industries put their heads together to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions to seemingly intractable problems. CBFA signatories continue to work on conservation plans across Canada's Boreal forest

Recommendations in Summary:

- Proposes a large landscape zonation strategy
- Incorporate these recommendations into the forest management planning process for the Abitibi River Forest as soon as reasonably possible
- For the Abitibi River Forest portion of the Kesagami Caribou Range we recommend a three-zone approach for Caribou Action Planning, applicable to forestry only, as follows (Figure 2):
 - Habitat conservation in two zones (Caribou Conservation Zone (Zone 3) and a Caribou Recovery Zone (Zone 2)) within the existing caribou range where caribou currently exist and human disturbance is low to moderate
 - Normally approved forestry with supplemental caribou recovery objectives in a zone (Strategic Caribou Recovery Zone (Zone 1)) where caribou are not currently present and where existing disturbance is relatively high.
- Recommended principles for Caribou Action Planning:
 - Minimize the industrial footprint within caribou ranges contingent upon ensuring that long-term, secure and economic wood supply is available,
 - Monitor populations of caribou to ensure their long-term health and recovery, and to understand caribou re-occupancy of disturbed habitats,
 - Offset the incremental costs of best practices such as road deactivation and enhanced silviculture,
 - Review all new industrial proposals through a cumulative effects screening tool that operates at the caribou range level, and,
 - Implement an adaptive management approach by government for population monitoring and recovery of the species on an ongoing basis.
- The CBFA signatories encourage the Government of Ontario to continue to consult with First Nations on the implementation of these recommendations and the forest management planning process for the Abitibi River Forest.

For more information please visit www.canadianborealforestagreement.com

For access to high resolution B-roll footage and photography of Northeastern Ontario Boreal forest please go to the following link and enter in the username and password "media" in lower case:

<http://canadianborealforestagreement.com/media-gallery>



Figure 1 – The CBFA’s planning area used to develop the recommendations for a Kesagami Range Caribou Action Plan.

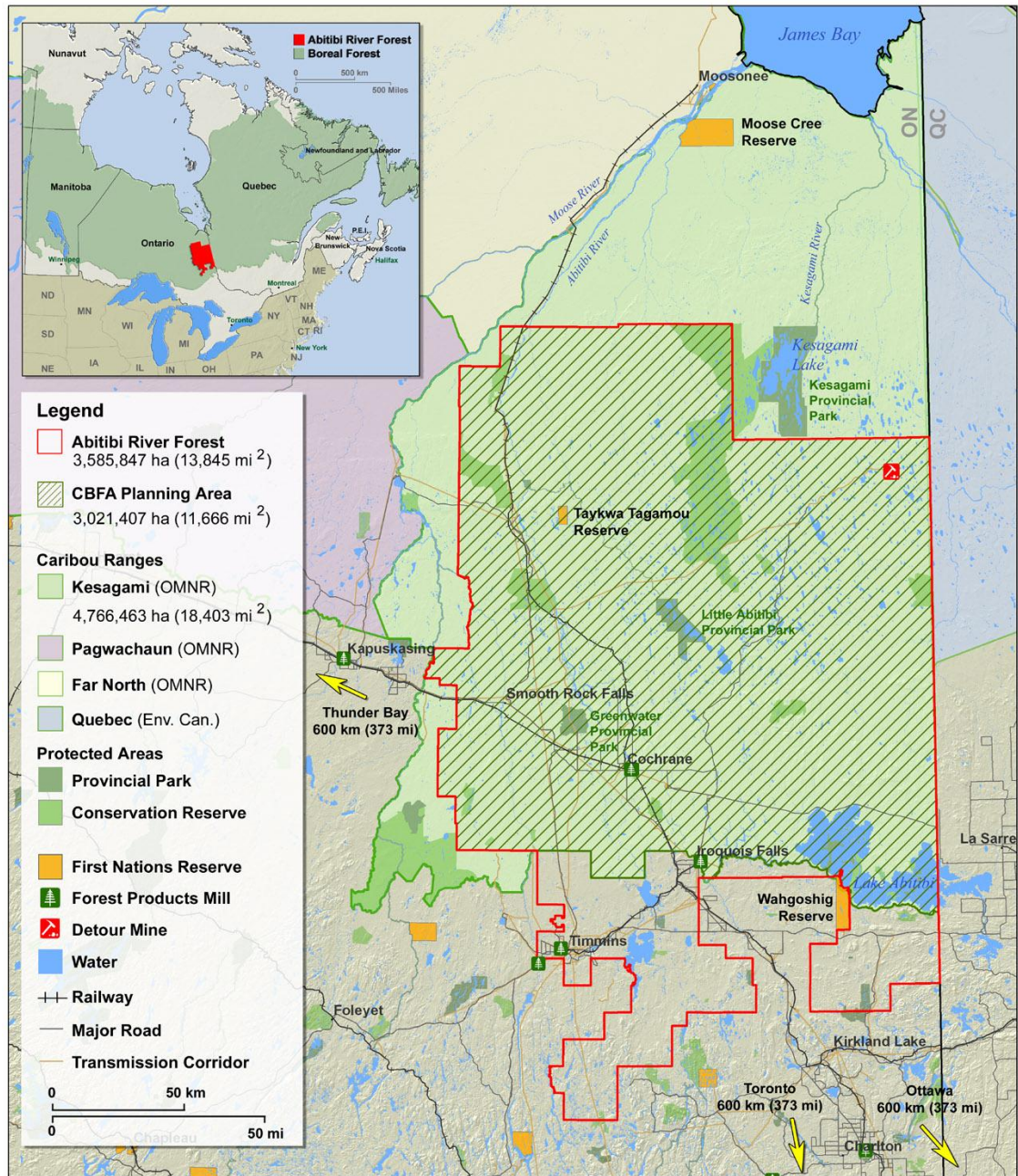




Figure 2 – The CBFA’s recommendation for the delineation of three zones for caribou management in the Abitibi River Forest portion of the Kesagami Range.

