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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Group welcomes Premier's announcement of landmark conservation vision for Boreal Forest

Historic announcement sets aside area almost twice the size of England

Toronto -Today CPAWS Wildlands League congratulates Premier McGuinty on his vision to protect 225,000 km² or 22.5 million hectares of intact Boreal Forest in Ontario in an interconnected network across the Far North. The future of Ontario's northern Boreal lands and waters will be determined through an innovative Land Use Planning initiative with First Nations. The announcement includes two important commitments; to work with First Nations to ensure their consent is given before any industrial projects go forward; and resource benefit sharing with the First Nations communities involved.

Also in the announcement is a firm commitment to change the Mining Act from a 'free entry' system to one that respects the rights of First Nations. It also enshrines the duty to consult and accommodate in legislation in accordance with the Supreme Court ruling.

"This announcement sets out the most ambitious conservation agenda for the Boreal Forest in Canada," said Janet Sumner, Executive Director of CPAWS Wildlands League. The area set aside for protection is almost twice the size of England.

CPAWS Wildlands League, working with other conservation groups, has been a strong voice calling on Ontario to protect its intact Boreal forest for the past five years, given its critical global ecological value as one of the world's most important remaining stretches of wilderness. It has also been a critic of the "free entry" mining system.

"This is a visionary and unprecedented policy. Today's announcement fulfills the Premier's promise to protect the Boreal Forest by doing Land Use Planning before large scale industrial development. It sets out an incredible conservation agenda that will be a legacy for all our grandchildren and their grandchildren," Ms. Sumner commented.

"The commitment to revise the Mining Act is also extremely welcome. Ontario is now taking a leadership position in Canada on this issue, leaving behind an antiquated law that has no place in our future," adds Ms. Sumner.

In comparison to previous notable conservation area gains in Ontario, this one is unprecedented:

Greenbelt	728,000 hectares
Lands for Life	2,400,000 hectares
Algonquin	763,000 hectares

“Scientists say that we need to protect more than half of the carbon-rich Boreal ecosystem in order to ensure its ecosystem services and benefits are maintained in the long term. Protection must be designed to meet the needs of wide-ranging species such as caribou, which is the indicator for overall ecosystem health, support carbon retention and sequestration and of course, protect watersheds to maintain clean air and water,” Ms. Sumner said.

The key to successful land use planning will be to work respectfully with First Nations in achieving the overarching conservation objectives and in providing business stability, the group noted.

In this part of Ontario (encompassing nearly 45% of the province), the Boreal Forest is home to billions of migrating birds, threatened species such as Woodland Caribou, Polar Bear and Lake Sturgeon. It is one of the world’s largest terrestrial carbon storehouses. Each hectare of forest holds approximately 177 tonnes of carbon while the peatlands on average hold 1,294 tonnes of carbon. There are approximately 27 million hectares of Boreal Peat Lands in Ontario.

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