



Finding solutions for ecosystems and communities in the Boreal Forest

April 28, 2010
Gull Bay, Ontario

By Anna Baggio, Director Conservation Land Use Planning



www.wildlandsleague.org

CPAWS Wildlands League

- a charity; a not-for-profit organization
- work in the public interest
- solutions group; we work with provincial and federal governments, First Nations, industry, concerned citizens, communities, media, scientists etc.
- John's blog *Noopemig*
<http://noopemig.blogspot.com/>





We bring scientists to communities...



..visit Elders and other community leaders



and we listen.



We talk to the media and get issues covered in southern Ontario

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2006

Stakes are high as miners and natives square

Remote site's platinum riches touch off fight over land rights

BY JULIUS STRAUSS
BIG TROUT LAKE, ONT.

It may not look like much: a white canvas tent, a five-kilo-watt diesel generator throbbing on the frozen muskeg and two miners puffing in the winter air. In fact, the setup was so small that the men and their equipment had fit into the belly of a Twin Otter plane that landed on a nearby frozen lake the day before.

But this tiny wilderness camp in a forgotten corner of Northern Ontario is the scene of a dispute that may have an impact across the country.

The outcome may prove pivotal for the welfare of native communities in Northern Ontario and may set a precedent that could alter the way Canada manages its natural resources.

At stake is the notion dating back to the days of the Yukon gold rush and beyond — the idea that anybody can stake a claim on Crown land, buy a licence and begin digging or drilling for valuable resources.

But while the miners who arrived at the site last week believe they have the right to dig, the Big Trout Lake band is arguing that aboriginals never signed away ownership of the land to the European settlers in early 20th century treaties.

Big Trout Lake, along with six other native communities in



They think it's roughshod old days. But birthright, or right. The co to be involve

action. And we mental protect

"We've been ing for countless Now we need to until the matt Beardy said.

Environment, weighed in, crit mior Dalton Mc ure to live up to while in oppos comprehensive.

The Wildlands on the Premier t huge boreal for to woodland c and many other at risk.

Last week, na had been watchi for signs that Pla truck in a drilling wishes were cau the company flew

By the time Big bers reached the next day — a dr truck and snowm tures of -30 — Platinox construc place.

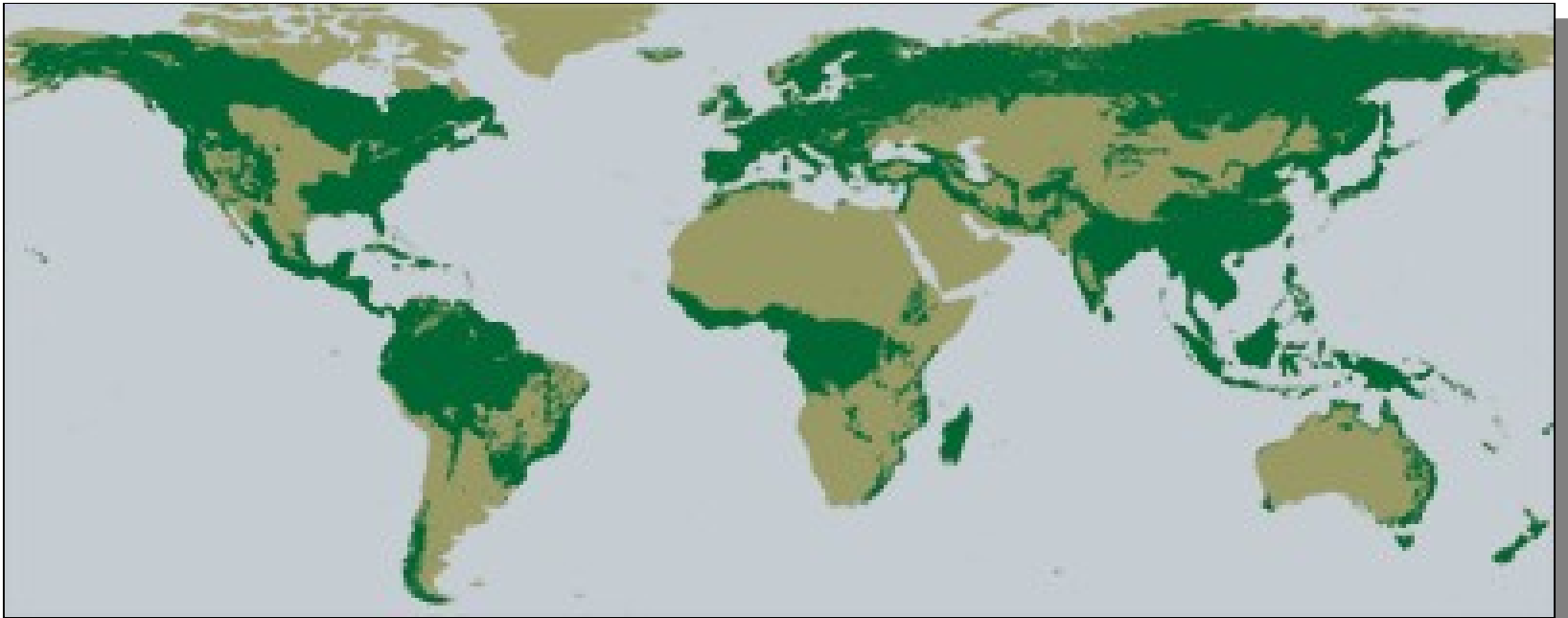
David Saimnav for the band, was "I've always had a

The purpose of our presentation today

- to share some thoughts on proposed Northwest Expansion Project
- to learn from you about this project, the Little Jackfish, and what you would like to see in the region
- to get feedback on possible alternatives to the current reference corridor by Hydro One, and
- to see if we could work together on common objectives



World's Forests



World Resources Institute


Original Forest Cover

World's Forests



World Resources Institute

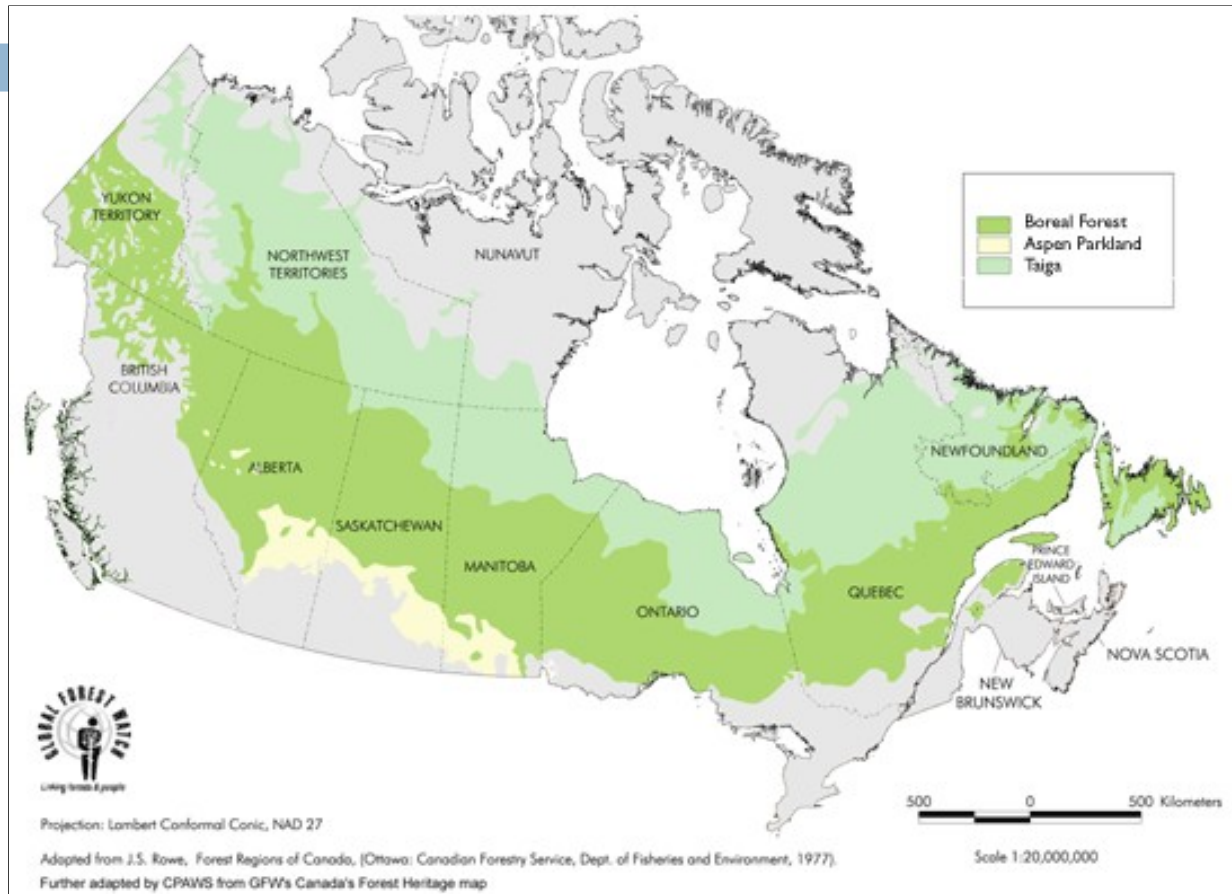
Remaining Frontier Forests



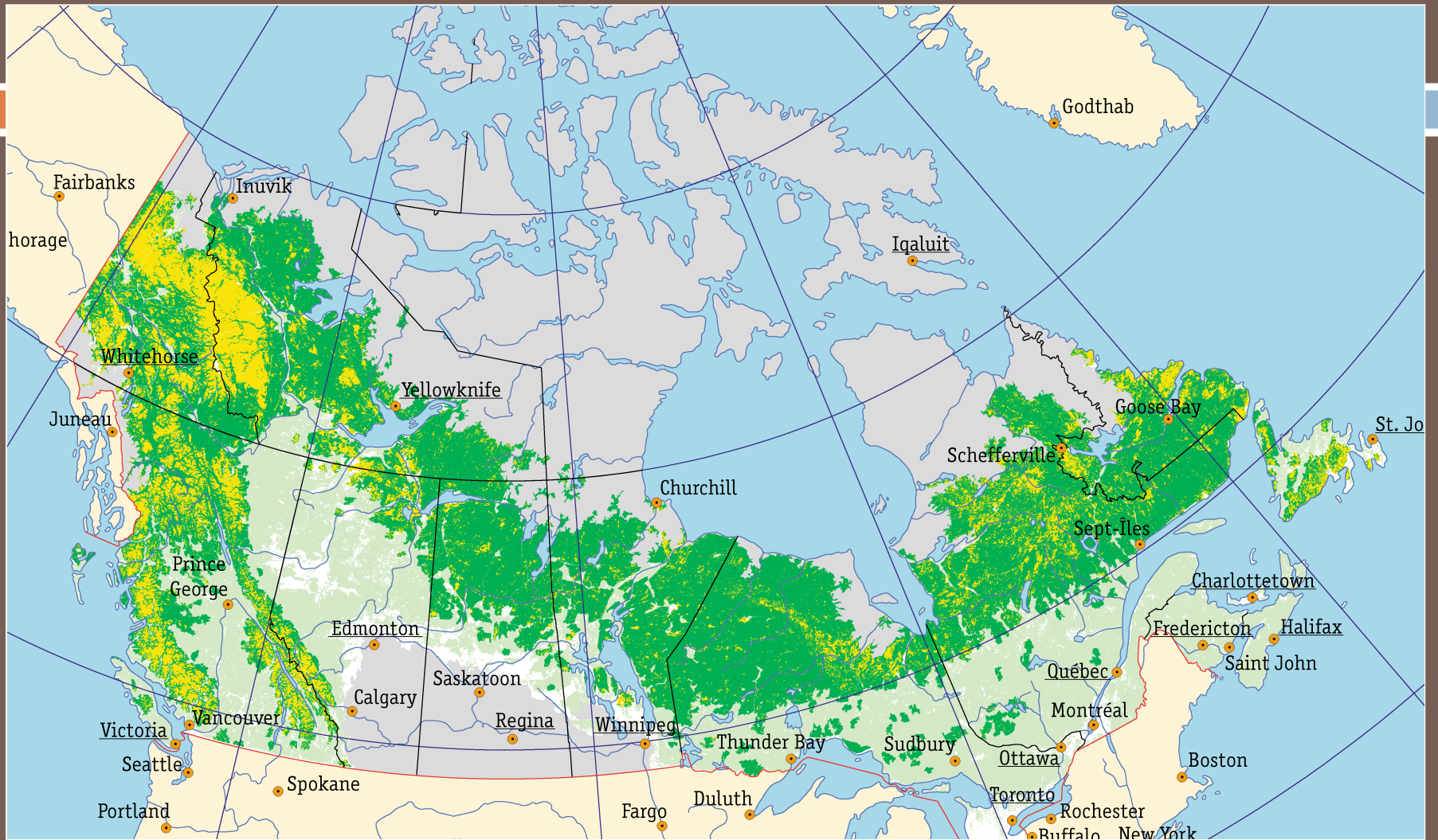
Intact areas are becoming a globally scarce resource and therefore more valuable as wilderness areas disappear in Canada and around the world.

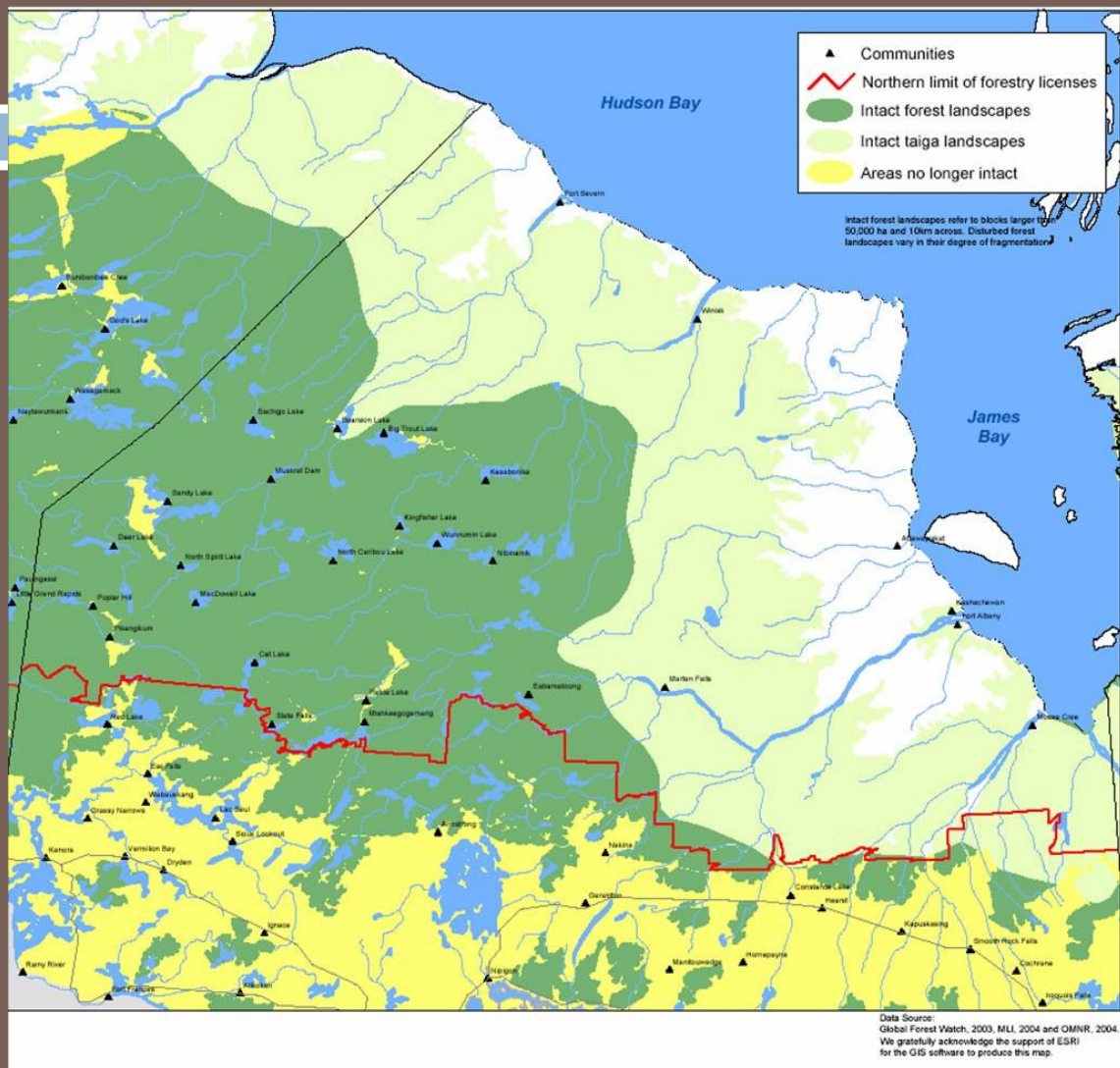
Watersheds
Healthy ecosystems
Climate change

Canada's Boreal Region

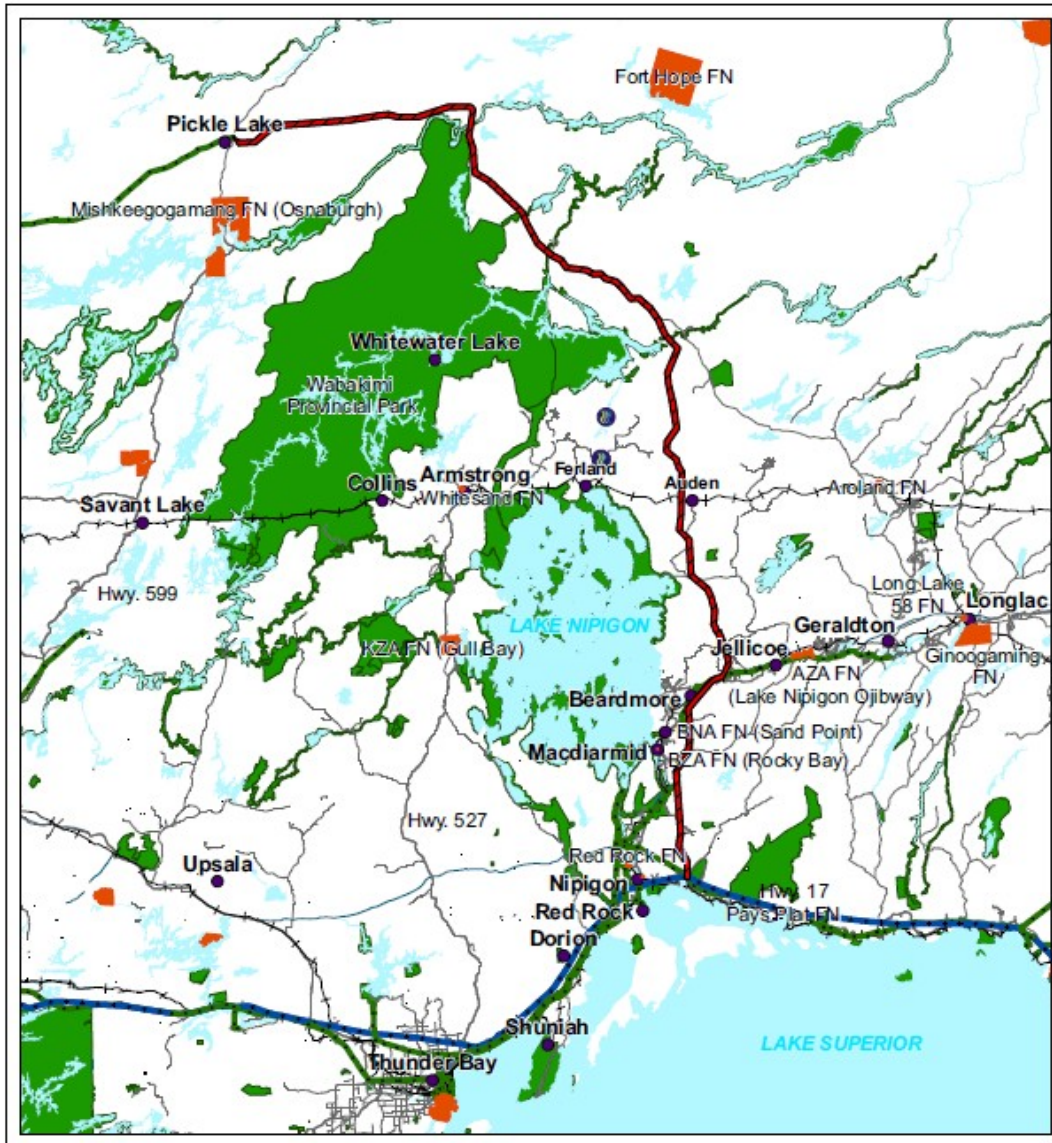


is Globally significant



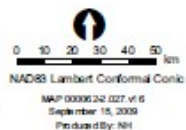


Ontario's intact
Boreal includes
true Boreal
Forest and
Taiga (also
known as
Hudson Bay
Lowlands)



Legend

- Reference Corridor
- 115 kV Circuit
- 230 kV Circuit
- Communities
- Utility Line
- Railways
- Transport Line
- Highways
- Primary Roads
- Proposed Structure
- Little Jackfish River
- First Nation Reserve
- Waterbodies
- Park or Conservation Reserve



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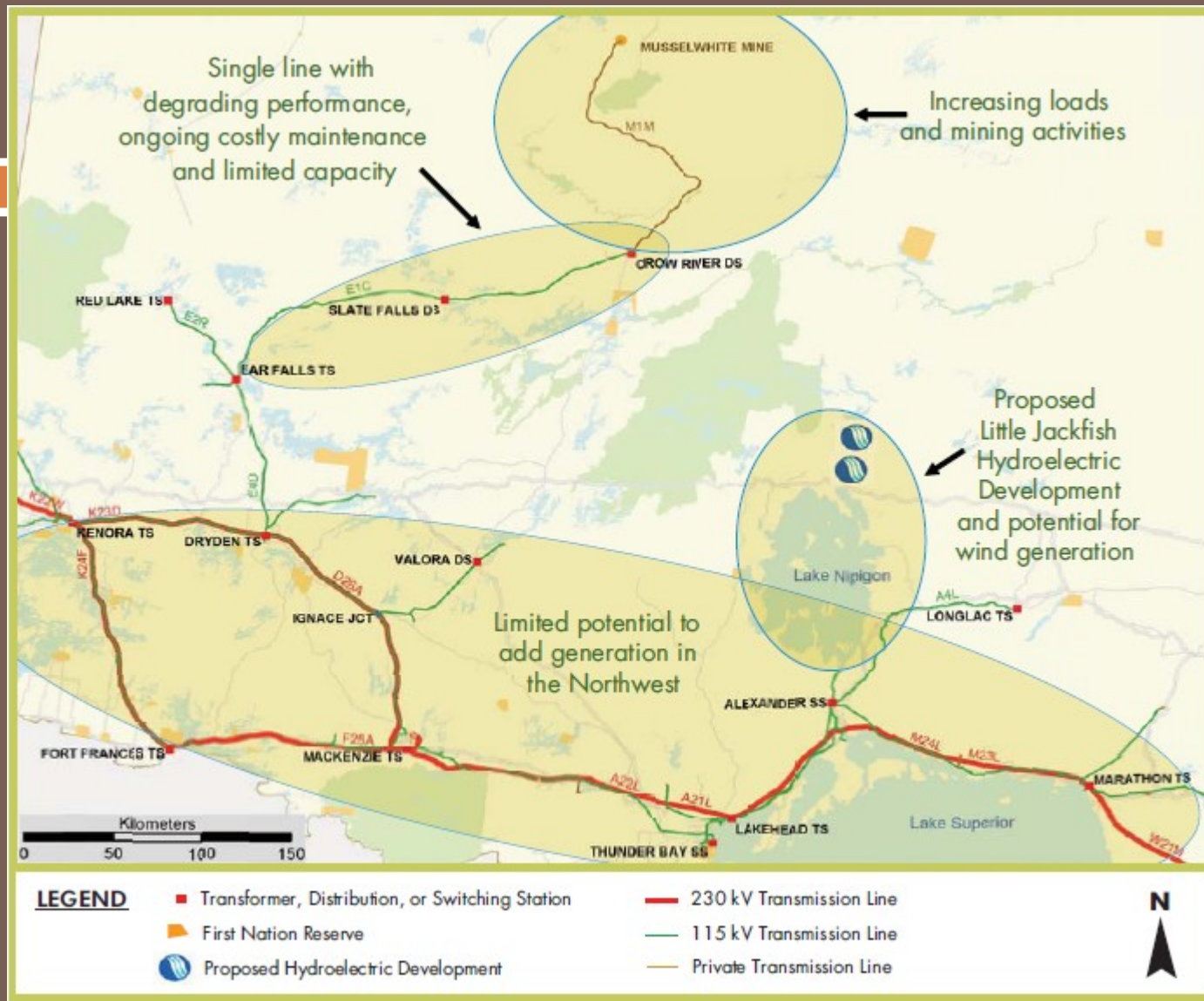
This map is to be used for reference purposes only.



From Hydro One



WILDLANDS LEAGUE
A chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society



From
Hydro
One:
current
context
and why
they say
it's
needed



WILDLANDS LEAGUE
A chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

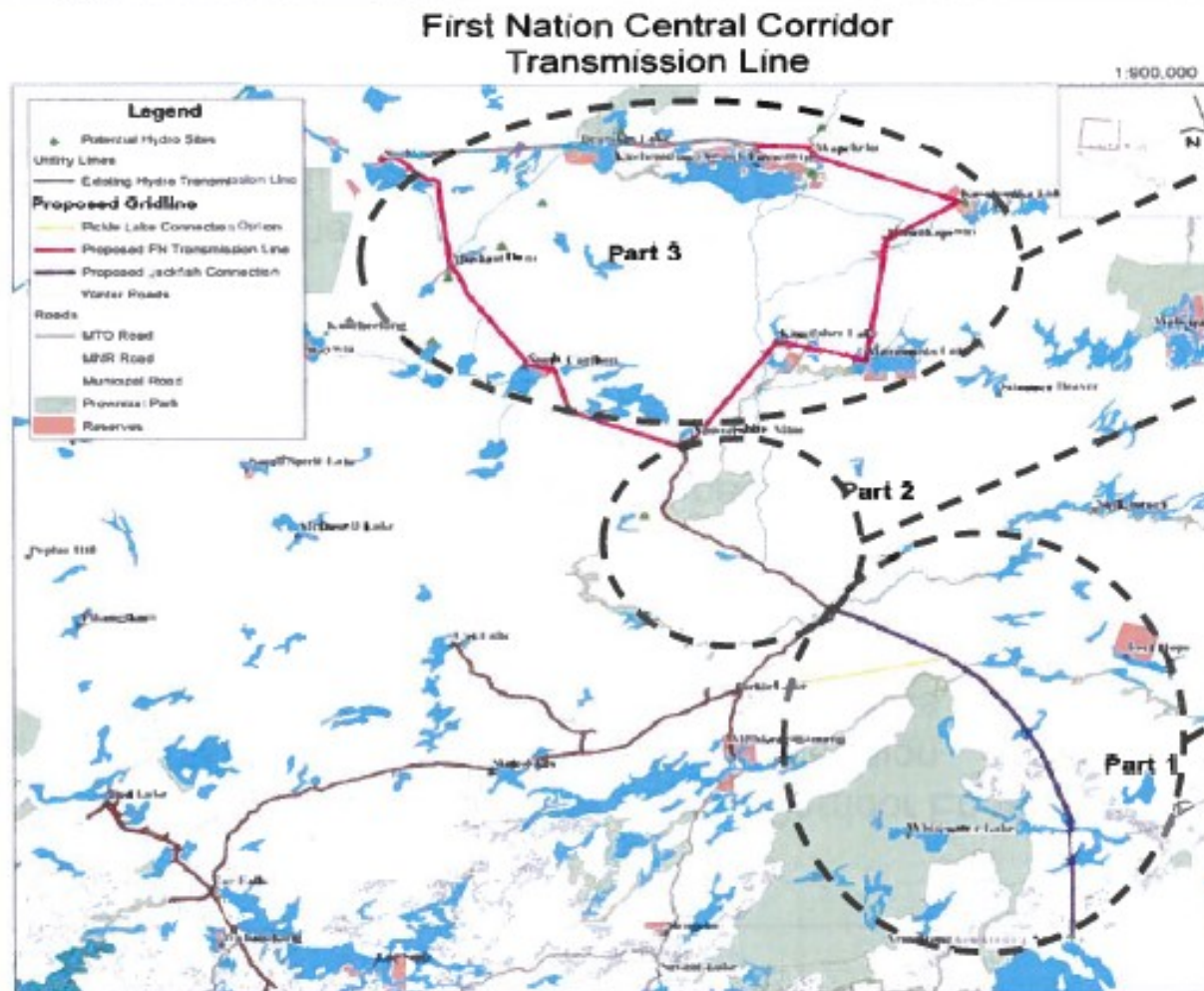
Hydro One's stated case includes:

- Reliability
- Capacity
- Renewables (OPG's Little Jackfish hydro project 100 MW and wind potential of Lake Nipigon up to 280 MW)
- Remote communities
- Grid Reinforcement and Economic Development

From

<http://www.hydroone.com/Projects/Northwest/Pages/default.aspx>

Is major transmission only solution for remote communities what about distributed generation? Micro-grids?



Stage 3 – Construction of a transmission loop to the 10 Central Corridor Energy Group communities

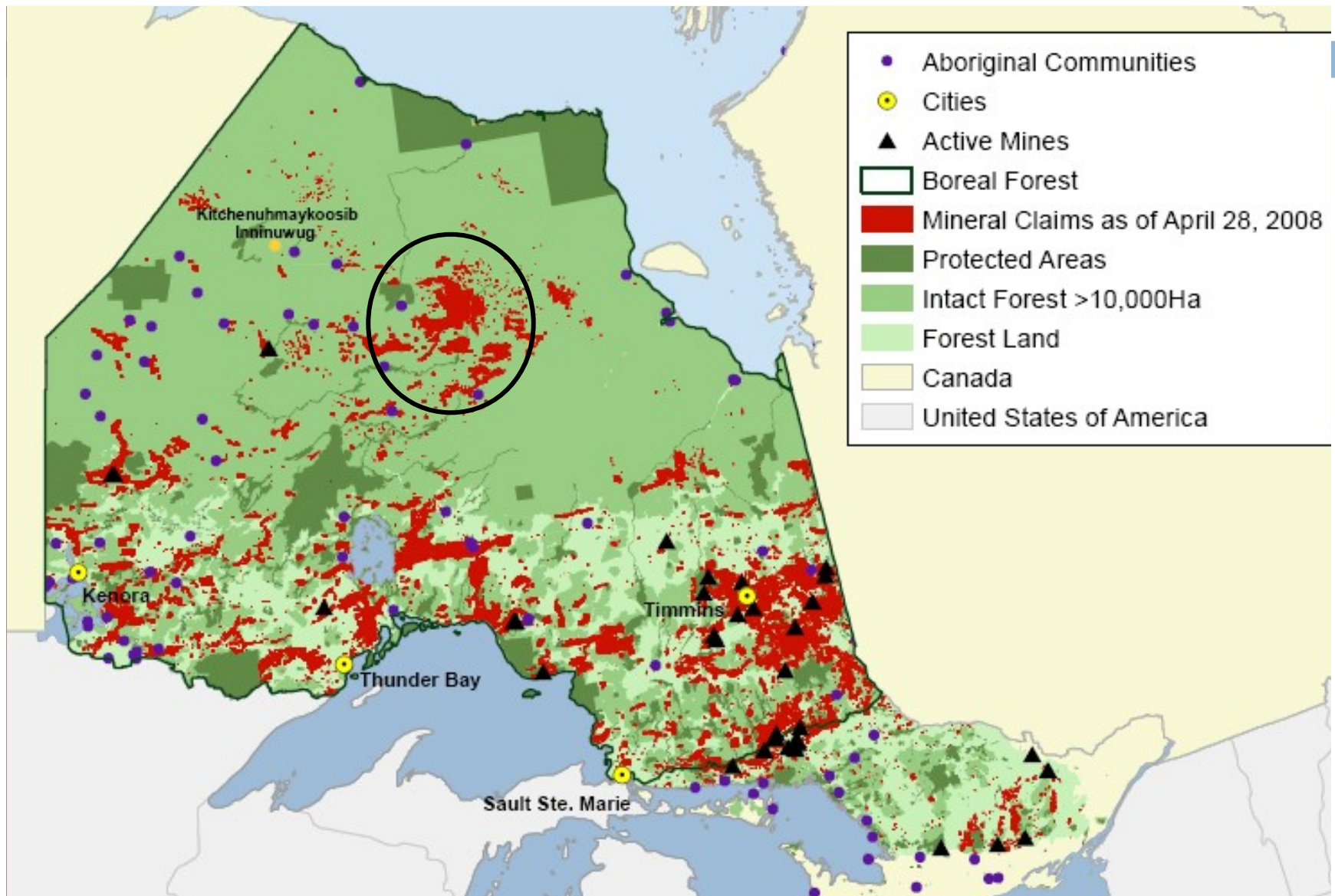


Stage 2 – Upgrade of the transmission line from Pickle Lake to Musselwhite Mine



Stage 1 – Construction of a new transmission line from Little Jackfish to Pickle Lake

Plus Ring of Fire is now a major consideration esp. after Throne Speech and Budget



Mining claims in the Far North as of February 17, 2010

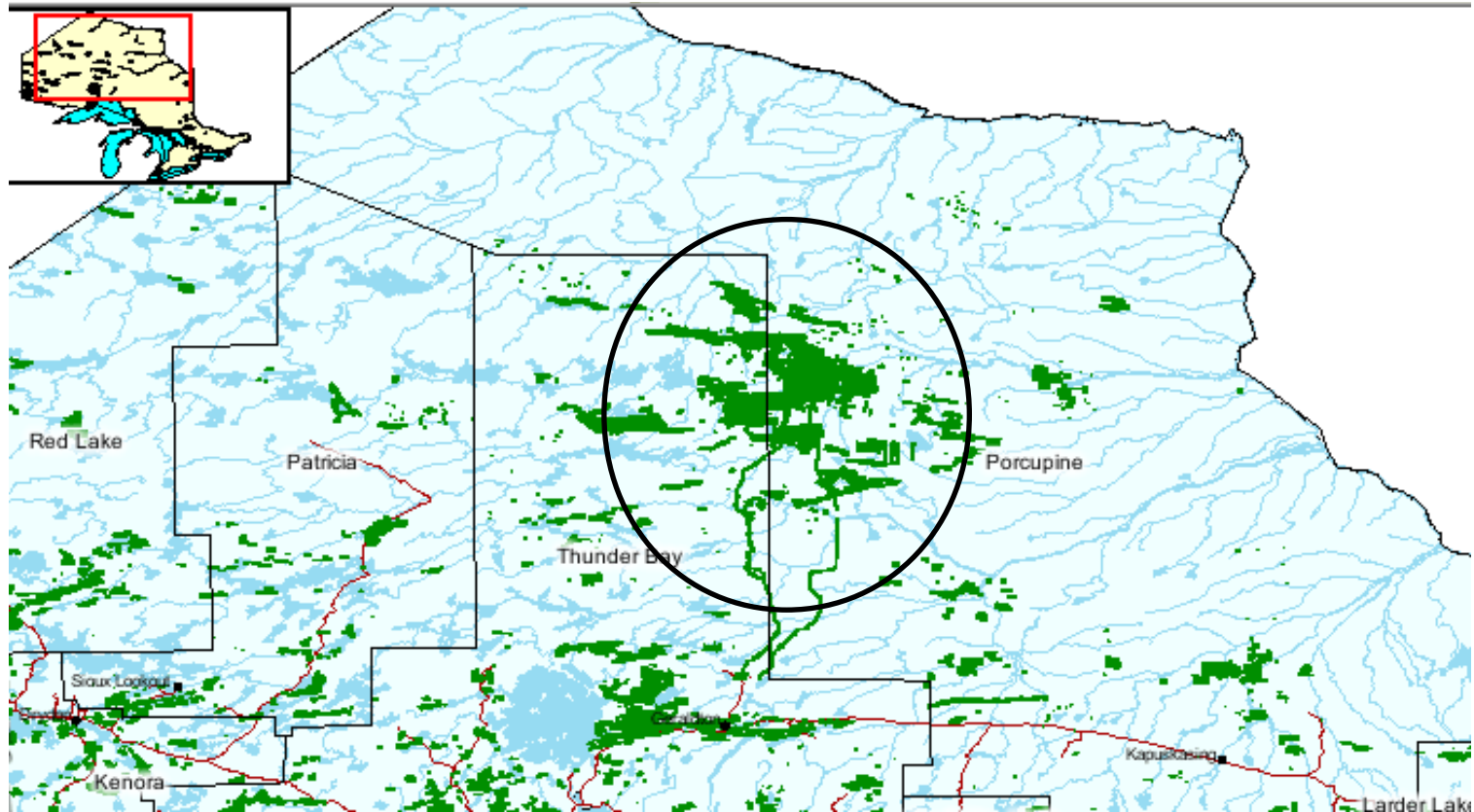
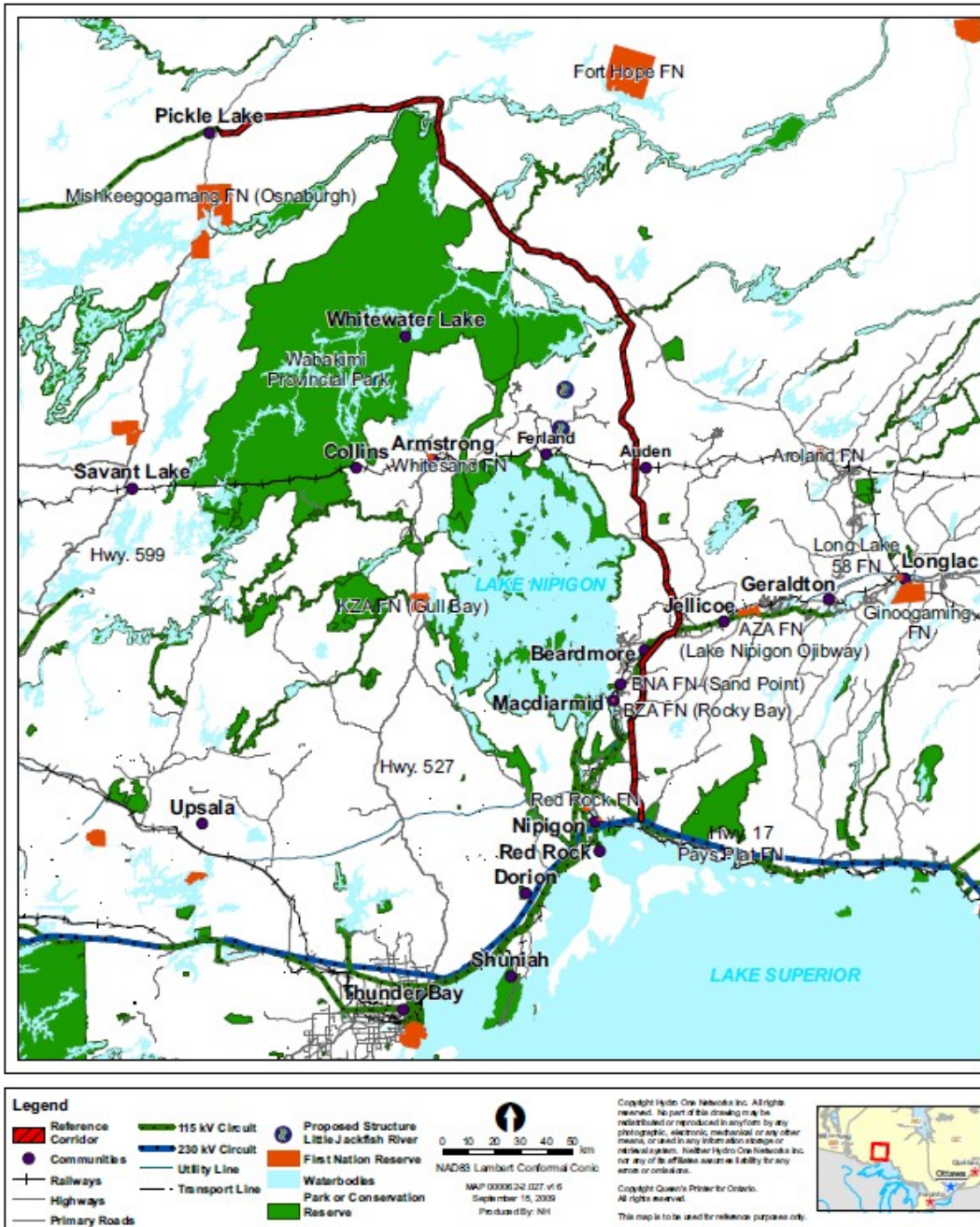


Figure: Screen capture image from CLAIMaps February 17, 2010. The large area of claims at the top of the image is the Ring of Fire area with two linear corridors stretching south. (This image can be found accessing http://www.mndm.gov.on.ca/mines/lands/claimap3/disclaimer_e.asp).

We're concerned by the current and only reference corridor by Hydro One for several reasons.



The new Green Economy, among other things, is being used by Hydro One to justify opening up intact boreal ecosystems in Ontario with a new transmission line.

It is a new permanent linear disturbance in caribou habitat and in the Lake Nipigon area



- Caribou have already lost 50% of its range in Ontario
- Indicator of a healthy Boreal Forest ecosystem
- The new line would isolate caribou populations and other wildlife in Wabikimi (a protected area already recognized for being too small to support caribou)

Caribou- a threatened species

- Live in remote interior parts of the forest
- Far from roads and other disturbances
- So far caribou only seem to thrive in the long term in forests $>10\text{km}$ from a road or cutover



Reproduction

- 6 yrs of age (can vary widely)
- Protect calves by birthing in predator free - islands, peatlands, lakeshores, or tundra
- Calf survival rate - 30% - 50% 1st yr





So why are they threatened?

Boreal Forest - disrupted by the cumulative impacts from:

Logging

Mining

Hydro

Access roads

- Easier for predators to locate and kill caribou
- Fragments and reduces habitat



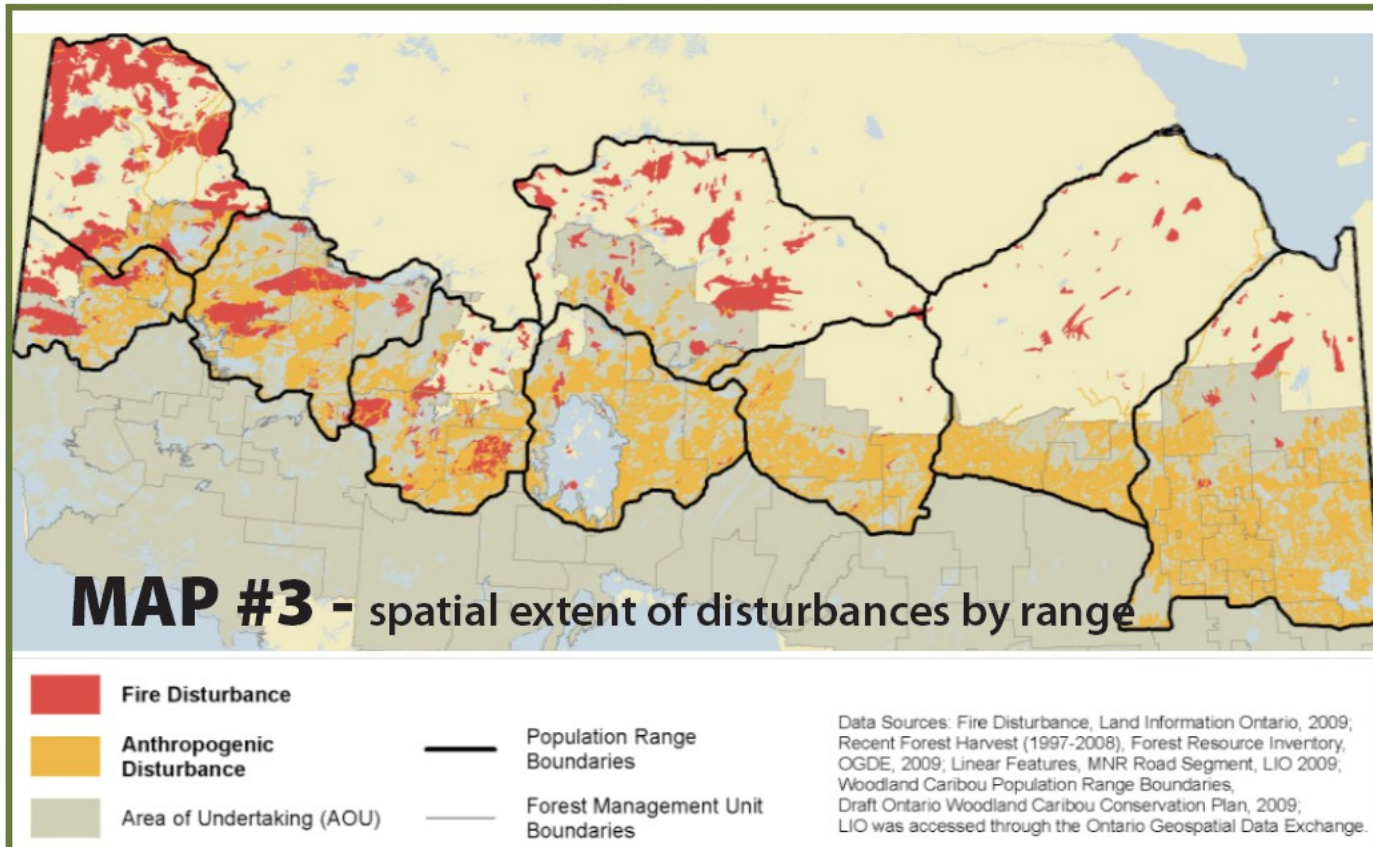
- Our latest report showing that 7 out of 9 caribou populations are tracking towards collapse due to high levels of industrial disturbance in their habitat.
- This is the first time this type of analysis has been applied in Ontario.
- Nine local ranges were examined along the northern limit of commercial logging in the province.



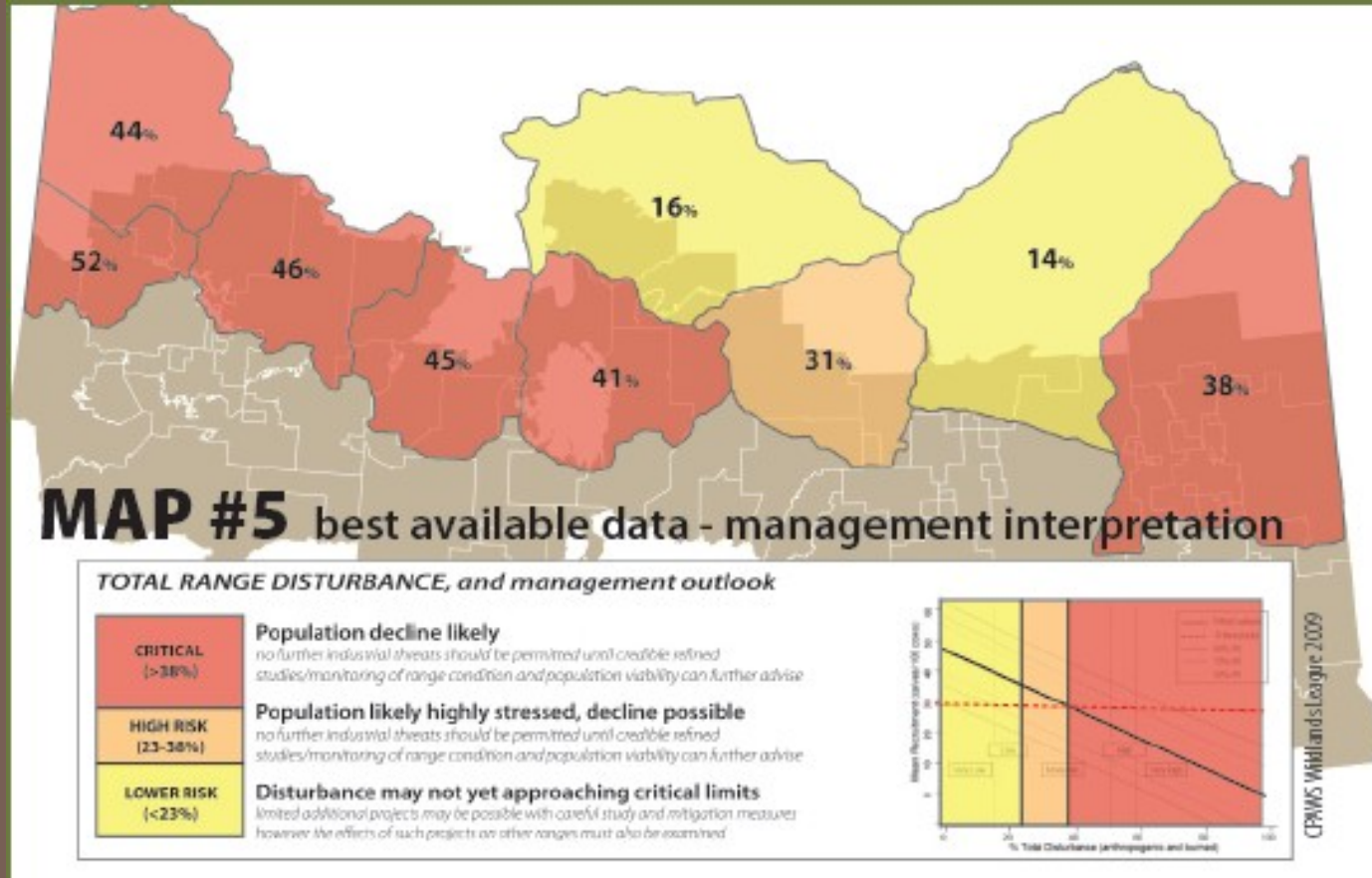
Available at www.wildlandsleague.org

Total Disturbance using Best available data

total disturbance using best available data



6 Caribou Ranges in Ontario are in the critical zone where population decline likely--not self sustaining



And this line would erode the remoteness of Lake Nipigon and add more pressure to already threatened populations here not to mention fish and other wildlife

- “the Lake Nipigon area is strategically important to long-term woodland caribou recovery due to its high quality and quantity of caribou habitat and its location near the southern limit of continuous caribou range”

- Lake Nipigon Basin Signature Site Ecological Land Use and Resource Management Strategy. 2004. Available at

http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/laken_planning.html



Caribou Researcher, LS Vors letter to Hydro One

January 6, 2010

“I strongly recommend routing the hydro line along existing linear corridors (e.g., along roads or railways) to reach Pickle Lake. The use of current linear corridors will minimize the presence of anthropogenic disturbance within woodland caribou habitat. In addition, Wabikimi PP is not large enough in and of itself to sustain a healthy population of woodland caribou. Severing its connection to woodland caribou habitat in the north will only help to hasten the demise of caribou in this part of Ontario.”

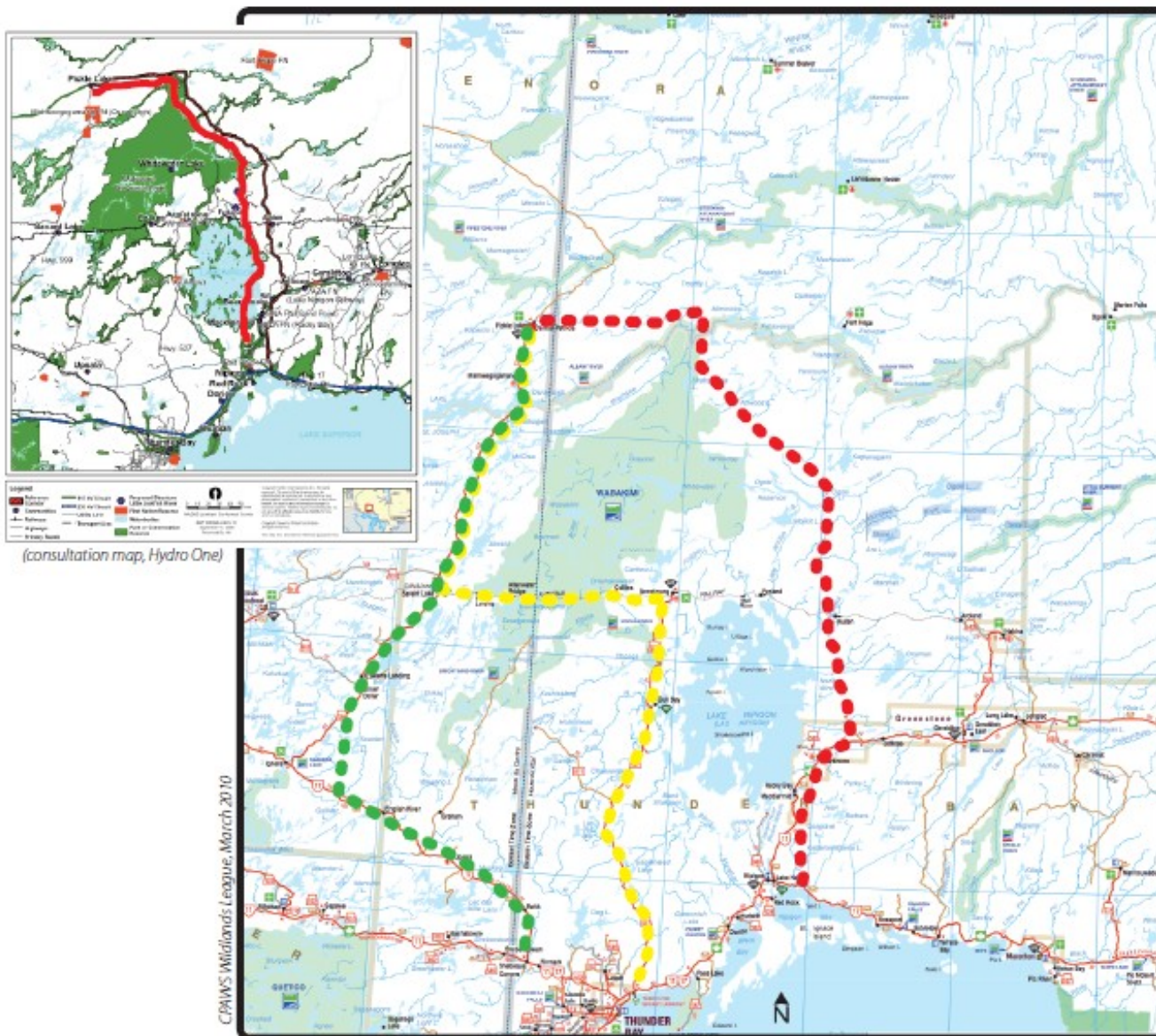


Hydro One refuses to consider alternatives to the current reference corridor. It focuses on a narrowly scoped 2km corridor and is treating the project in a piecemeal fashion without examining cumulative impacts.

SOLUTION: Avoid or minimize new permanent linear disturbances by identifying and carefully evaluating alternatives including routes that parallel existing paved roads and railways



Alternatives are available and cheaper to build



Several of our recommendations to Hydro One and Ontario

- Alternative routes that parallel existing permanent roads, railways and linear features are available and cheaper to build
- Preserving intact ecosystems of Lake Nipigon and the ecological integrity of Wabikimi must be a priority



Recommendations cont'd



- Information about alternatives and **costs and benefits** (ecological, social and economic) must be made publicly available including a cumulative impacts assessment
- Let's think about what communities need and how to do it. Consider “alternative **routes near communities that could actually benefit from the economic and social advantages of transmission corridors**. These communities also likely have the most experience and interest in working with energy-related businesses that could benefit because of their current locations in proximity to developments.” (WCS Canada, letter to Hydro One, February 2010)

Hydro One says their right of way is the “best route”

- On December 14, 2009 Hydro One said this about the Wildlands League proposal and concerns with the line:

We have received a proposal from Wildlands League about rerouting it, but we believe our proposed right of way is the best route. I think their main concern is the caribou, and while that is warranted, it is an “isolated interest”. (Brian McCormick, Hydro One)

- A similar message was delivered at the Open Houses.

Since then...



- We generated over 370 letters using our website www.caribouandyou.ca to Hydro One, MEI and MNR urging them to consider alternatives
- And 3800 postcards have been signed by concerned residents

In March 2010 after receiving hundreds of letters from concerned residents, Hydro One responded with:

“Thank you for your email on March 9 regarding the Northwest Transmission Expansion Project and your concerns about potential effects on woodland caribou. We would like to assure you that Hydro One is very aware of the importance of the woodland caribou, Wabikimi Park and the Lake Nipigon Signature Site. The environmental assessment (EA) for the project will consider these issues thoroughly and include extensive agency, public, stakeholder and First Nations and Métis consultation to ensure a balanced approach and assessment...”

“Currently, we are at an early stage in the EA process and a draft EA Terms of Reference will be issued later this spring following consultation...

A reference corridor from Pickle Lake to Nipigon was identified as the starting point for the EA process. It was developed based upon a number of high level environmental, social and technical criteria to provide an early forecast of a probable location for a future transmission line. As a starting point, it was fully intended to solicit comments and suggestions such as those provided in your letter...”

“...The final routing of the transmission line has not been determined and the reference corridor will not limit the consideration of other proposed routes as part of the EA study which would include linear severances as indicated in your letter. However, this assessment will consider a broad range of interests and criteria as part of the identification and refinement of alternative routes, and selection of a preferred route...”

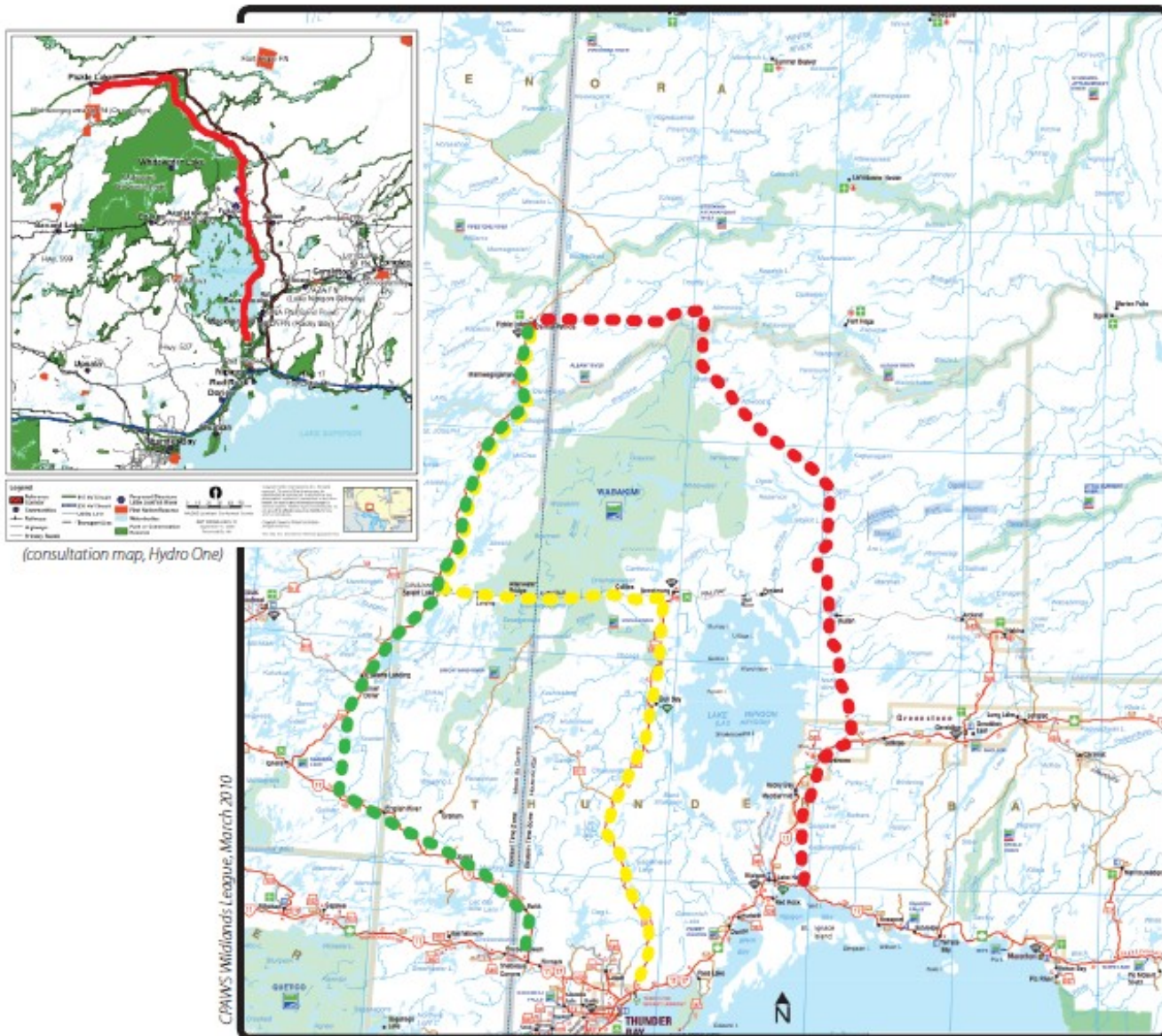
(letter from Enza Cancilla, Manager, Public Affairs,
Hydro One March 23, 2010)

Our concerns remain about Hydro One's current reference corridor and narrow approach

We're going to continue to follow the Environmental Assessment process for the Transmission Line closely and carefully.



Alternatives are available



What do you think?

- Any feedback?
- What is your long term vision for the area?
- What about the potential for distributed generation vs massive transmission and hydro?
- Is there something we could do together?



Thank you!

