

**To:** Rick Aikman, District Manager  
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry  
435 James Street South  
Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7E 6S7

**Fr:** Board of Directors - Friends of Wabakimi

**Re:** Response to Wabadowgang Noopming 2021-2023 Contingency Plan  
Stage 3 Review of Proposed Operations

**Date:** November 22, 2020

### **Background**

The Friends of Wabakimi (FOW) was created by Thunder Bay conservationist Phil Cotton in 2014. Our vision is that the Wabakimi Area *shall be an exceptional destination for wilderness activities for the benefit of present and future generations of visitors.* To this end, the FOW's predecessor organization, the Wabakimi Project, explored and mapped the Crown Land in and around the Armstrong Forest from 2014 to 2018. The result was Map Volume 5, Lake Nipigon Northern Tributaries (Wabinoosh River to Little Jackfish River). Map Volume 5 can be found at <https://www.wabakimi.org/wabakimi-maps.html#vol5>. This effort indicates that there is an interest in the paddling community to explore and enjoy these routes.

The mission of the Friends of Wabakimi *is to participate in planning processes to advocate for the protection and preservation of the diverse natural, cultural and historical resources of the Wabakimi Area.* The FOW currently has two representatives serving on the Armstrong Local Community Committee, Shawn Bell of Thunder Bay, Ontario and Vern Fish of Waterloo, Iowa. The purpose of these two representatives is serve as communication link to between the Armstrong LCC and the Friends of Wabakimi. The following response to the 2021-2023 Contingency Plan for Armstrong Forest is a sincere effort to maintain that line of communication.

### **Comments**

After reviewing the map of 2021-2023 Contingency Plan – Proposed Operations and details provided on the [www.ontario.ca/forestplans](http://www.ontario.ca/forestplans) we have broken our comments down to the following blocks of work.

**1. Collins Road** (Blocks G3 & G4) – As noted in the minutes from the October 15 Armstrong Forest LCC meeting, the following compromises were worked with all of the interested parties:

\*The timing restriction dates were adjusted to July 1 to the end of Labour Day weekend (to add 3 weeks of summer operations)

\*The area south of the Collins branch corridor is normally where the canoeists spend their last night before heading towards the highway, so they were able to remove the 3 km modified zone from that eastern portion.

This was cited as good example of compromise on both sides to find a win-win. It affects tourism values somewhat and inconveniences the forestry operations somewhat and seems like both sides can live with it. The Friends of Wabakimi support and applaud this compromise.

**2. Broderick Road** (Blocks C6, D6 and D5)– This work does push up against the borders of Wabakimi Provincial Park, Whitesand Provincial Park and Mojikit Lake Conservation Reserve. The Pikitigushi River forms the western boundary of this logging operation. The Pikitigushi River is a popular canoe route because it flows through a scenic valley filled with inspiring cliffs and deep gorges. It is also recognized for Cliff Lake and its cultural heritage. Protecting the visual scenery and the silence of the wilderness should be a priority of this plan.

It appears that there is enough of a buffer to protect the view shed. The compromise worked out for the Collins Road work should also be applied to the Broderick Road. If possible, the work should be limited during the height of the recreational season from July 1 to Labour Day

**3. Trail Lake Road** (Block F3 & F2) – The eastern end of this road currently runs parallel to rail line. Most of this road is already in place and to some degree is being used for recreation access. Thus, any additional impact on scenery and noise pollution will be limited. A possible benefit to upgrading this secondary road to primary road would be to provide vehicle access to Wabakimi Provincial Park and web of beautiful little lakes south of the railroad.

**4. Dalton Road (Block E4 & D4)** – This proposed operation will extend branch roads into a narrow strip between Caribou Lake and D’Alton Lake along the height of land that separates the two watersheds. This will allow vehicle access to area around Michell Lake and up to western shore of D’Alton Lake. This area will then be open to bridging and regular harvest.

The maps provided in the Contingency Plan do note and recognize that there are canoe routes and portages that link Caribou Lake to D’Alton Lake through Michell Lake, Cumaway Lake and Fuchsite Lake. These details are highlighted on the attached map from Volume Five of the Wabakimi Canoe Routes which was produced by the Friends of Wabakimi in 2017. The Contingency Plan does not acknowledge the campsites on Michell Lake, Fuchsite Lake and D’Alton Lake.

The attached aerial photo provides a view from the north end of Michell Lake looking southwest towards Caribou Lake. The highlighted peninsula shows the location of the campsite on Michell Lake. This image also provides a visual hint as to the area that will be opened up to vehicle access for bridging and regular harvest. Michell Lake which is currently only accessible by a series of somewhat demanding portages from Caribou Lake will be surrounded by secondary roads and logging.

The Contingency Plan provides a lot detail on Areas of Concern (AOC). The plan has prescriptions for protecting and shielding these AOC. Portages and canoe routes are recognized as an AOC and are “shielded”. Campsites and a sense of wilderness are not identified in plan or in the prescriptions.

Michell Lake, Fuchsite Lake, Cumaway and D’Alton Lake will go from an isolated wilderness lakes to a bodies of water surrounded by the impact of logging for decades. The roads will also be on the landscape for a very long time. The loss of the “sense of wilderness” is hard to measure on cost/benefit scale but the loss is real.

To maintain a sense of wilderness, the Friends of Wabakimi recommend that the Collins Road compromise be applied to the wilderness lakes mentioned above. Reduce or limit operations during the recreation season. Also consider increasing the buffer around the wilderness campsites identified on Michell, Fuchsite and D'Alton Lake. As noted on the map provided on page 4, D'Alton Lake is a long narrow lake that is blessed with 10 remote campsites and one outpost cabin. Providing a reasonable buffer for this lake should be a priority.

### Summary

The Friends of Wabakimi (FOW) supports the work of the Armstrong Forest planning committee and the Armstrong LCC. The Collins Road compromise is reasonable attempt to maintain the illusion of wilderness during logging operations. This compromise should be applied to the Dalton Road and Broderick Road operations.

The FOW continues to recommend that additional thought be given to allowing recreational access to primary roads within the Armstrong Forest. The Trail Lake Road could provide better access to southeast edge of Wabakimi Provincial Park and Crown Lands to the south of the rail line. The Dalton Road could provide access to the south end of Big Lake. This would create paddling access to a web of lakes north and west of the Whitesand Provincial Park.

The FOW also wishes to explore the idea of partnering with the MNRF to coordinate volunteer efforts to maintain documented canoe routes in the Armstrong Forest. The Armstrong Forest is blessed with many valuable natural resources one of which is the outstanding web of wilderness water trails. These routes provide paddling access to the surrounding Provincial Parks. Maintaining and promoting these routes could increase tourism opportunities within the Armstrong Forest and bring business and revenue to Armstrong.

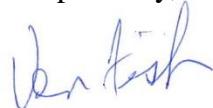
**These comments were approved by the Board of Directors of the Friends of Wabakimi on November 22, 2020.**

### Contact Information

For future reference, our mailing address is:  
Friends of Wabakimi  
1060 Riverdale Road  
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7J 1N2

We can also be reached at [friendsofwabakimi@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofwabakimi@gmail.com)

Respectfully,



Vern Fish  
President  
Friends of Wabakimi

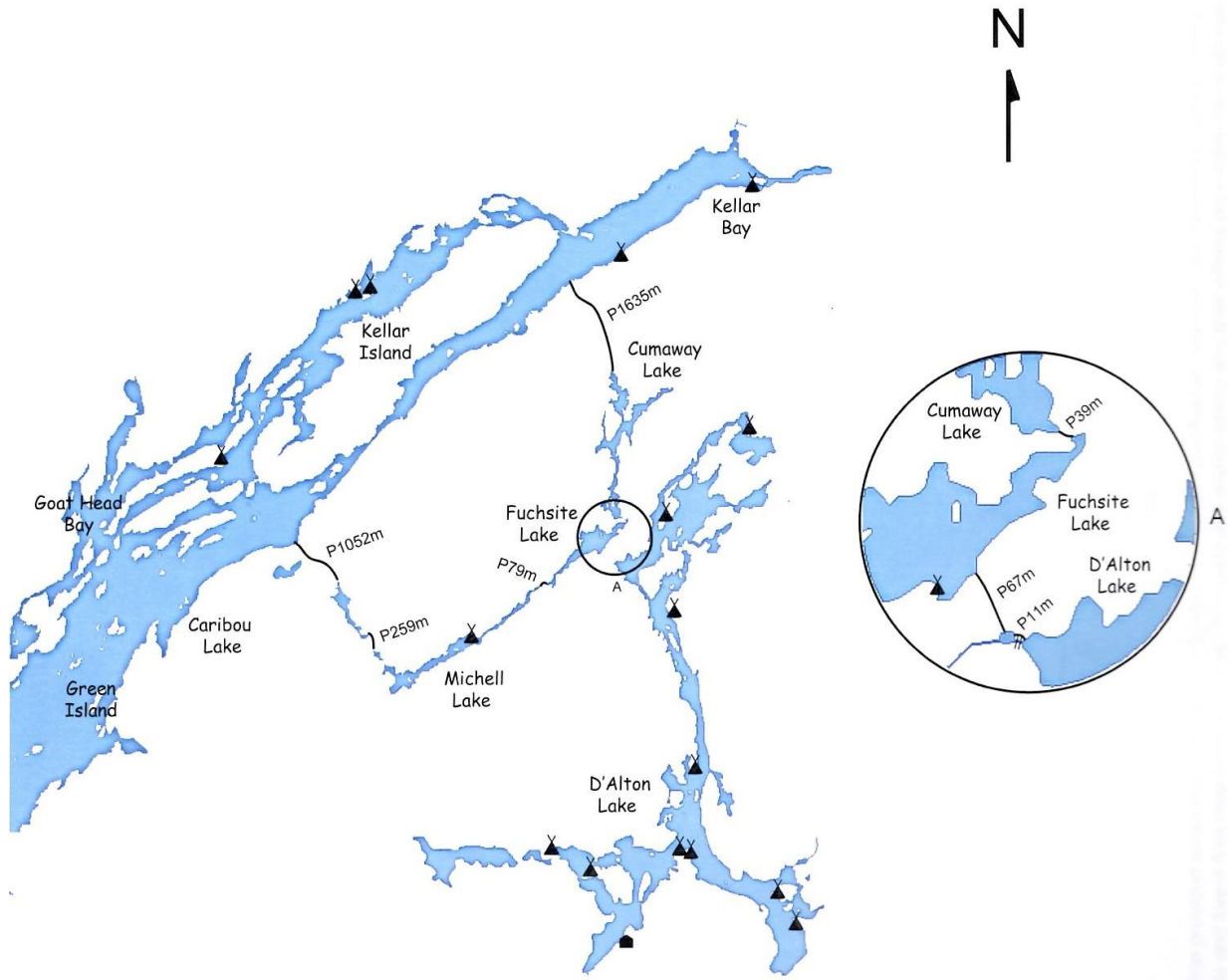


Dave McTeague  
Board Chair  
Friends of Wabakimi



Ray Tallent  
Conservation Chair  
Friends of Wabakimi

**Wabakimi Canoe Routes  
Caribou Lake to D'Alton Lake via Fuchsite Lake**

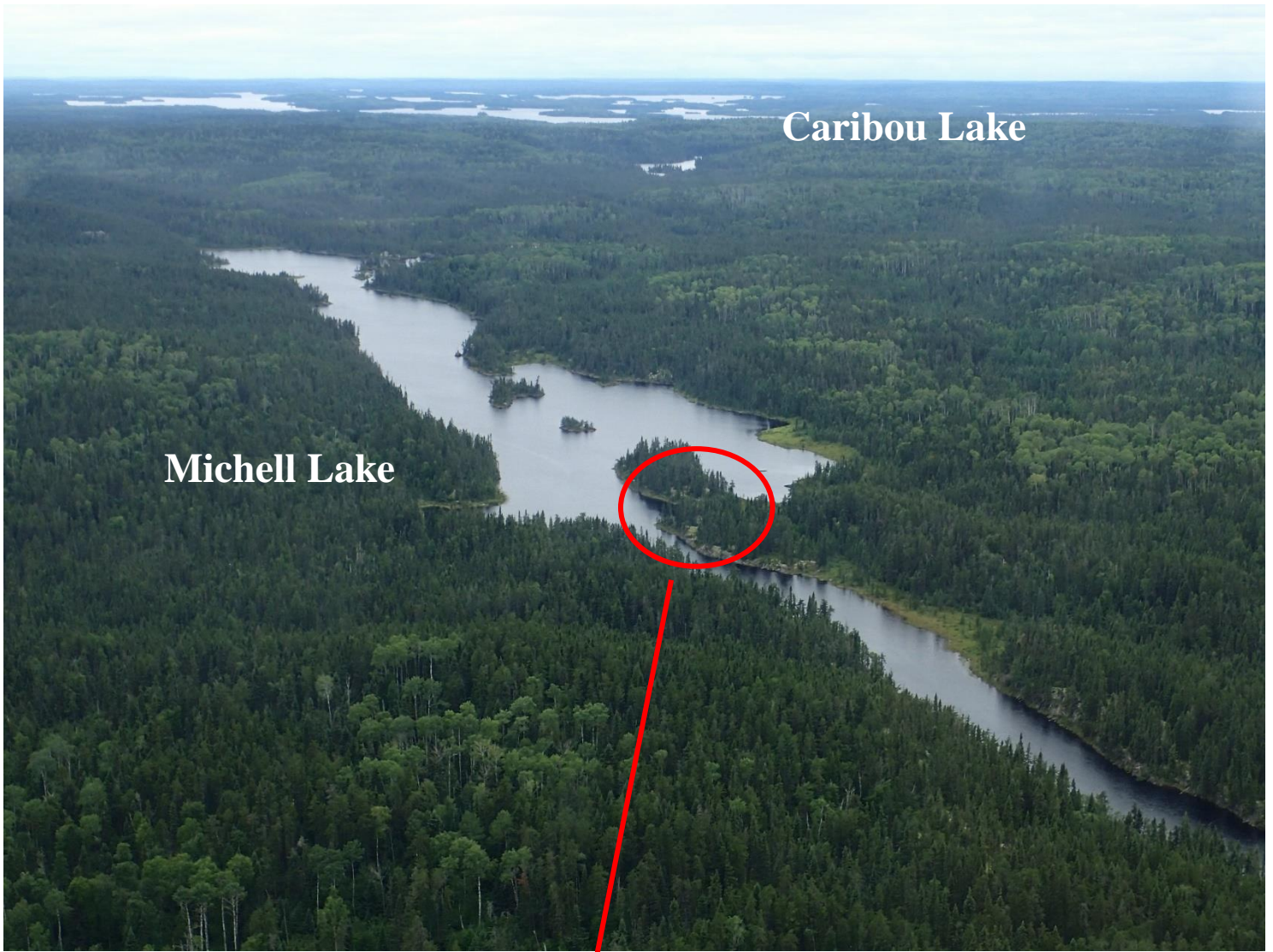


SCALE: 1 mi / 1 km

*Information provided about this route was accurate at the time of publication, however, natural events such as fluctuating water level, high winds and forest fires may (and do!) occur frequently and unexpectedly and their effects may make travel difficult, if not impossible.*

© 2017 - Friends of Wabakimi  
All Rights Reserved





**Caribou Lake**

**Michell Lake**

**Campsite on  
Michell Lake**



**Pileated Woodpecker  
Michell Lake**