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Projets de réserves de biodiversité du lac Opasatica, du lac des Quinze, de la forêt Piché-Lemoine et du réservoir Decelles

Abitibi-Témiscamingue

PR1.1c

6212-01-207

Piché-Lemoine forest proposed biodiversity reserve

(provisional name)

Conservation plan



March 2004

1. Plan and description

1.1. Geographic location, boundaries and dimensions

The location and boundaries of the proposed Piché-Lemoine forest biodiversity reserve are shown on the map in the Schedule.

The proposed Piché-Lemoine forest biodiversity reserve is located in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue administrative region, between 47°56' and 48°06' north latitude and 77°52' and 78°02' west longitude. It lies in Municipalité régionale de comté de la Vallée-de-l'Or, with the greater part being situated in the territory of Municipalité de Val-d'Or, a part on the territory of Municipalité de Malartic and a part in the unorganized territory of Lac-Fouillac.

The proposed biodiversity reserve is found approximately 10 kilometres south-west of Val-d'Or, south of Route 117. It covers an area of 93.8 km². It is partially served by a network of forest roads accessible from Route 117.

1.2. Ecological overview

The protected area is in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands. It protects a forest representative of the Abitibi Plain natural region. The topography of the area is generally flat, dotted with a few isolated hills. The elevation of the area ranges from 250 to 360 metres.

1.2.1. Representative elements

Climate: The Piché-Lemoine forest is characterized by a subpolar, subhumid continental climate with a middle growing season. It belongs to the balsam fir-white birch bioclimatic field of the continuous boreal forest vegetation subzone.

Geology and geomorphology: The proposed biodiversity reserve lies within the Superior geologic province, and is underlain by an Archean basement (over 2.5 billion years). The bedrock consists mainly of siliceous sedimentary rocks such as sandstone, arkose and greywacke. The geologic substrate is also formed of metamorphic rocks (gneiss and paragneiss), intrusive felsic igneous (tonalite), and mafic rocks (basalt and gabbro). The area lies on the southern margin of the Abitibi Plain, which was once covered by the proglacial Barlow-Ojibway lake. During the Quaternary era, the basement rocks were covered by thick glacio-lacustrine surface deposits (sands, silts, clays). The few relief features are covered with a thin layer of undifferentiated till.

Hydrography: The proposed biodiversity reserve forms part of the Harricana river watershed. It takes in Lemoine lake, which is 30 km long and 2.6 km wide and covers approximately 24% of the protected area.

Lemoine lake is fed by the Piché river and is up to 52 metres deep in places. Lemoine lake, with De Montigny lake further north, is one of the main sources of the Harricana river.

Vegetation: Close to two thirds (61%) of the proposed biodiversity reserve is forested. This forest is formed of stands of mixed species, of softwoods and of hardwoods which cover 38%, 24% and 35% of the area, respectively. Most often, the stands are either young or overmature dominated by black spruce (*Picea mariana*), white spruce (*Picea glauca*), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) and white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) or yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*). Black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) and red maple (*Acer rubrum*) are also found here and there.

1.2.2. Outstanding elements

The proposed biodiversity reserve is home to old-growth stands of yellow birch. This species, found here at the northern limit of its distribution area, is rare at the regional level.

1.3. Occupation and main land uses

The occupations and main land uses in the proposed Piché-Lemoine forest biodiversity reserve are shown on the map in the Schedule.

The proposed biodiversity reserve is classified as Category III land under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA) signed in 1975 and the *Act respecting the land regime in the James Bay and New Québec territories* (R.S.Q., c. R-13.1) enacted in 1978. The territory of the proposed reserve lies within the territory covered by the hunting, fishing and trapping regime applicable pursuant to section 24 of the JBNQA (see the *Act respecting hunting and fishing rights in the James Bay and New Québec territories* (R.S.Q., c. D-13.1)).

The lower quarter of the proposed biodiversity reserve lies within the Grand-Lac-Victoria beaver reserve, where the Native communities have special rights regarding the hunting and trapping of fur-bearing animals.

The remainder of the land lies within fur-bearing animal management units (FAMU) 03-B and 04.

There are thirty-three private properties within the proposed biodiversity reserve. Thirty land rights have also been granted within the perimeter of the proposed Piché-Lemoine forest biodiversity reserve, for the most part around Lemoine lake. They are as follows:

14 leases for the construction of a rough shelter in the forest;

8 leases for personal vacation resort purposes;

5 leases for diverse purposes (other rights);

1 lease for commercial purposes;

1 lease for community purposes (vacation camp);

1 lease for incidental personal purposes or to complement an establishment.

A wide range of recreational activities, including cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, the use of all-terrain vehicles and mountain bikes, hunting and fishing are carried on in the Piché-Lemoine forest.

There are also seven kilometres of tertiary forest road.

Lastly, equipment to measure the real effects of silvicultural treatments (planting and pre-commercial thinning) covering 0.1 hectare are present and the two units will require monitoring for the next twenty years.

2. Protection status

The proposed biodiversity reserve protects a peri-urban forest of exceptional interest from a social perspective because of its recreational vocation. From an ecological perspective, the proposed biodiversity reserve is of interest because of the stands of old-growth yellow birch found there, a species not commonly found on the southern margin of the Abitibi Plain.

Biodiversity reserve status would allow the pursuit of the following conservation objectives:

- ✓ the conservation of a forest representative of the Abitibi Plain natural region;
- ✓ the preservation of biodiversity in forest and aquatic ecosystems;
- ✓ the preservation of recreational activities that maintain ecological balance;
- ✓ the acquisition of new knowledge concerning natural and cultural heritage.

3. Activities within the reserve

The activities carried on within the proposed Piché-Lemoine forest biodiversity reserve are governed by the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act* (R.S.Q., c. C-61.01).

This conservation plan does not specify any prohibited activity other than those prohibited in biodiversity reserves by the Act; nor does it authorize any other activities, or set any additional constraints on the activities permitted by the Act.

3.1. Prohibited activities

It is important to note that under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, the main activities prohibited in an area designated as a proposed biodiversity reserve are:

- mining, and gas or petroleum development;
- mining, gas or petroleum exploration, brine and underground reservoir exploration, prospecting, and digging or boring, where such activities necessitate stripping, the digging of trenches, excavation or deforestation;
- forest management activities within the meaning of section 3 of the *Forest Act* (R.S.Q., c. F-4.1);
- the development of hydraulic resources and any production of energy on a commercial or industrial basis;
- any new allocation of a right to occupy land for vacation resort purposes;
- earthwork or construction work.

3.2. Activities governed by other statutes

All activities likely to be carried on within the boundaries of the proposed Piché-Lemoine forest biodiversity reserve also remain governed by the other applicable legislative and regulatory provisions, including those that require the issue of a permit or authorization or the payment of fees. The carrying on of certain activities may also be prohibited or limited by other Acts or regulations applicable within the boundaries of the proposed biodiversity reserve.

A special legal framework may, within the boundaries of the proposed biodiversity reserve, govern permitted and prohibited activities in connection with:

- **Archaeological research** (especially the measures contained in the *Cultural Property Act* (R.S.Q., c. B-4));
- **Development of wildlife resources** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife* (R.S.Q., c. C-61.1) and, where applicable, the measures contained in any applicable federal legislation);
- **Access** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* (R.S.Q., c. T-8.1) and provided under the regulation concerning motor vehicle traffic in certain fragile environments made under the *Environment Protection Act* (R.S.Q., c. Q-2));

- **Land rights** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* (R.S.Q., c. T-8.1) and in leases issued by the Minister of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Parks).

3.3. Supervision of activities

The Minister of the Environment is responsible for the application of the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, and is therefore responsible for the proposed biodiversity reserves established under that Act. The Minister will supervise and monitor the measures contained in the Act with regard to prohibited and permitted activities in protected areas.

All other government departments and bodies will retain their responsibilities as set out in the legislative and regulatory texts that apply within a proposed biodiversity reserve, as provided for under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*.

4. Permanent protection status

The permanent protection status envisaged for the reserve is "biodiversity reserve" status under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*.

Schedule

Map of the proposed Piché-Lemoine forest biodiversity reserve (provisional name)

