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February 28, 2020

Jeff Cameron, Plan Author
Lauren Peterson, Regional Planning Forester
Armstrong Forest Planning Team

Dear Mr. Cameron & Mr. Peterson,

The Board of Directors of the Friends of Wabakimi wish to say thank you for being offered an opportunity to participate in the *Desired Forest and Benefits Survey* for the Armstrong Forest. We recognize that this is just one small step in the long process to create a Forest Management Plan for the Armstrong Forest. We appreciate the opportunity to represent recreational canoers in this process.

On February 16, 2020 the Board of Directors reviewed, discussed and approved the answers contained in the attached survey. The Board of Directors see this as the first step in a long relationship with the Forest Planning Team and Forest Managers. We hope to continue the dialogue and learn more about the management of the Armstrong Forest as the plan is created and eventually executed. We also hope to be able to share this insight with our membership through our newsletter and website.

The Friends of Wabakimi are excited about playing a role in the management of this unique resource.

Respectfully,

Vern Fish, President
Friends of Wabakimi

Survey: Desired Forest and Benefits in the Armstrong Forest

These responses were approved by the Friends of Wabakimi, Board of Directors on Feb 16, 2020.

Question 1: What group or community are you affiliated with? • Check all that apply

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous community | <input type="checkbox"/> Forest Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Cottagers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trappers | <input type="checkbox"/> Harvest Operators | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreationalists |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunters and anglers | <input type="checkbox"/> Outfitters | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Naturalists | <input type="checkbox"/> Municipality | Canoers |

Question 2: Which of the following activities you participate in the Armstrong Forest during a typical year? Check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-motorized: Walking/hiking/cycling/ snowshoeing etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorized: Four-wheeling/ATVing / Snowmobiling etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trapping | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Canoeing/Kayaking/Boating |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Firewood collection | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enjoyment of nature: Camping/Picnicking/wildlife viewing, photography/natural history study |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Edible plant gathering
(e.g. blueberries, raspberries etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting a camp or cottage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicinal plant gathering | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Activities
(e.g. traditional ceremonies) | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not participate in any of these activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment (you or your business gain revenue from the forest) | |

Question 3: Please select which of the following forest resources are used in your community or group affiliation in a typical year (check all that apply):

- Firewood
- Sawlogs/Lumber/Paper/other wood products
- Fish
- Big game (e.g. moose, deer, bear)
- Small game (e.g. snowshoe hare, grouse)
- Material for handcraft products (e.g. birch bark)
- Intrinsic, non-game and aesthetic resources
- Fur (e.g. marten, beaver)
- Food (e.g. mushrooms, berries)
- Plants (e.g. medicinal purposes)
- Edible Plants (e.g. blueberries, raspberries etc.)
- Other (please specify) _____
- I do not use any of these forest resources

Question 4: Please select benefits that you associate with forestry activities in the Armstrong Forest and rank these in order of importance.

• Number 1 is the most important, number 2 is the next most important and so on. If there are values you do not feel are particularly important, do not rank them.

- Wood supply that contributes to the Ontario's forest sector

- 4 Local economic opportunities through jobs and supporting services
- Creation of habitat for moose and other species requiring young forest and forest edge
- 1 Maintain over time landscapes and habitat for wide variety of wildlife species and ecosystems
- Creation of habitat for blueberries and other young forest plants
- Creation and maintenance of roads
- 2 Climate change mitigation through carbon capture and storage
- 3 Fire and forest pest risk management
- Other (please specify) _____

Question 5: Please select concerns that you associate with forestry activities in Armstrong Forest and rank these in order of importance.

• Number 1 is the most important, number 2 is the next most important and so on. If there are values you do not feel are particularly important, do not rank them.

- 4 Harvesting of old-growth stands
- 1 Adverse habitat or human impacts on caribou or other species at risk
- 2 Change to ecosystem function
- Reduction in desirable wood quality or value
- Decommissioning of roads
- Types or amount of common silvicultural treatments, e.g., herbiciding
- Amount of harvest on individual traplines
- 5 Disturbance of cultural and spiritual values
- 3 Water quality impacts on lakes, rivers and streams
- 6 Adverse impacts on embedded or neighboring parks, conservation reserves or other protected areas
- Other (please specify) _____

Question 6: Do you agree with following statements?

- Please cross one option: strongly agree, somewhat agree, no opinion, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.
- Please use the comment line to explain.

A. Armstrong Forest is a healthy and resilient forest

- Strongly agree Somewhat agree No opinion **Somewhat disagree** Strongly disagree

Why? *Current and past road building activities have fragmented the forest. These roads create opportunities for non-native invasive enter the forest. Roads and logging lanes also create “paths of least resistance” for predators which puts more pressure on native species, especially the woodland caribou.*

B. Woodland caribou habitat management approach should reduce risk to woodland caribou and aid in species recovery

- Strongly agree **Somewhat agree** No opinion Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Why? *For example, consider the impacts of tree species composition, age of stands, pattern of harvesting and fires, access, climate change.*

The impact on caribou habitat should be reduced, if the logging prescription “mimics” the impact of fires, creates the necessary species mix, maintains large blocks of habitat and reduces the mobility of predators.

C. The Armstrong Forest provides opportunities for local economic development and jobs in forestry

Strongly agree **Somewhat agree** No opinion Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Why? *The challenge is how to insure that the projects directly benefit the local community. This means a high percentage of the work should be done by local labor and the work must be sustainable. "Boom and Bust" logging does not build a stable community.*

D. The Armstrong Forest provides economic development opportunities though tourism.

Strongly agree **Somewhat agree** No opinion Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Why?

There are a few active outpost cabins within the Armstrong Forest that serve a small number of fly-in anglers. These cabins are promoted on various outfitter websites. It is well known there is world class recreational fishery in this area and pristine forests/waterways where wildlife may be encountered.

Currently, a small but growing number of people paddle the Armstrong Forest section of the Wabakimi Area. However, this has potential to increase through the promotional efforts of the Friends of Wabakimi.

The Wabakimi Project in the past and the Friends of Wabakimi currently, are promoting the Wabakimi area through our website (www.wabakimi.org), newsletters, and outdoor shows promotions. The Armstrong Forest is an appealing area to Wabakimi paddlers due to its relative accessibility.

These paddlers have very few road access points where they can enter Wabakimi Provincial Park directly. They must fly in, utilize VIA rail, or paddle across Crown Land to enter the park. If the canoe routes that cross the Crown Land in the Armstrong forest were maintained and promoted, it is possible that more tourism money would be spent in Armstrong.

It should be noted the Little Caribou Lake entry point is frequently used to access Wabakimi Provincial Park and well as the Armstrong Forest Crown Lands to the north and east. Volume 5, Wabakimi Canoe Routes, shows in great detail the canoe routes in the Armstrong Forest. These were all mapped and cleared by the Wabakimi Project in recent years. They are very closely aligned with the current routes identified in current forest planning maps.

E. Cultural heritage sites and community values are currently being protected

Strongly agree Somewhat agree **No opinion** Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Why? *The Friends of Wabakimi is supportive and respectful of protecting cultural heritage sites. However, we do not have information on the status of these values. Thus, it is difficult for the FOT to form an opinion.*

F. Healthy lakes and rivers are being maintained on the Armstrong Forest.

Strongly agree **Somewhat agree** No opinion Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Why? *The waters "appear" to be clean and healthy. However, we do not know what impact logging operations have on run-off and invasive species movement. Cold water species such as brook trout would be especially vulnerable.*

G. The Armstrong Forest provides sufficient amount of habitat for moose, a game species preferring young forest, mixed forest, and forest edge.

Strongly agree Somewhat agree No opinion Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Why?

We have observed many moose and bear. Our view is that moose and bear do very well after logging operations. Such operations may not benefit caribou and may lead to their decline.

H. Furbearer habitat and trapline access is protected in the Armstrong Forest

Strongly agree Somewhat agree **No opinion** Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
Why?

I. The Armstrong Forest provides opportunities for picking berries and other edible or medicinal plants.

Strongly agree Somewhat agree No opinion Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
Why?

Yes, one of the highlights of any paddling trip is picking berries. Definitely a source of food for paddlers and the local bear population.

J. The Armstrong Forest provides opportunities for outdoor recreation (e.g. camping, canoeing, hiking, snowmobiling)

Strongly agree Somewhat agree No opinion Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
Why?

Yes, the Armstrong Forest offers several miles of paddling routes. It also provides access to and from Wabakimi Provincial Park for long paddling trips. The Friends of Wabakimi have mapped these routes and included them on our planning map and route maps. The FOW is also creating a Wabakimi Canoe Guide which will include some of the routes in the Armstrong Forest.

K. I have opportunities to voice my concerns and input into forest management and operations and know who to communicate them to.

Strongly agree **Somewhat agree** No opinion Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
Why?

Friends of Wabakimi have initiated contacts and have provided input to Forest Management Planners in the past. The FOW would like to maintain this line of communication during the development of future plans and management activities.

L. The road network in the Armstrong Forest meets your needs for access

Strongly agree **Somewhat agree** No opinion Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
Why?

We (paddlers) have used these roads in the Armstrong Forest for access to canoe routes. However, we are not always clear which roads have restricted access or are closed for this use.

M. Management on the Armstrong Forest is sustaining the diversity of forest ecosystems similar to the historic forest and maintaining wildlife habitat and important ecosystem functions.

Strongly agree Somewhat agree No opinion **Somewhat disagree** Strongly disagree
Why?

In our view, it is likely that the current management is shifting the balance to the benefit of moose populations and the reduction of woodland caribou populations. Wabakimi Provincial Park was created and expanded with

the express consideration of maintaining a landscape that ensures the long-term sustainability of woodland caribou populations, as a key indicator species. Our express hope is that the Crown Land forests adjacent to this protected area, are managed with the same goal in mind. We look forward to learning more about this process and welcome more information.

We've reviewed the Forest Management Guide for Boreal Forests. We are highly supportive of these high level objectives. "The first principle mandates that large, healthy, diverse and productive Crown forests and their associated ecological processes and biological diversity be preserved."

We hope that 20 or 40 or more years hence, that succeeding generations will look back and confirm this goal was met. This is all even more pressing in light of the world wide effects of climate change. We know that the Canadian boreal forest is one of the world's great carbon sinks.

Additional Comments/Suggestions

Access:

Currently, road access is limited. Caribou Lake Road and Pikitigushi Road do provide access to canoe routes. These paddling routes do provide access to the Armstrong Forest and into Wabakimi Provincial Park and the Whitesand Provincial Park. However, to our knowledge none of these paddling routes are maintained on a regular schedule.

Our priority is protecting identified canoe routes and the forest's wildlife, habitat and ecological resources. We do not want to see any more roads than absolutely necessary encroach on the greater Wabakimi wilderness area. However when a road is created and maintained for long-term usage, it should be available to the public.

This access should also give paddlers affordable access to existing canoe routes

Harvest:

From a paddling stand point, the FOW wants to see the water quality maintained, the paddling viewshed protected, and portages preserved. Hopefully, the harvest is designed to duplicate the ecological succession that follows a fire and creates caribou habitat in the long run. The FOW would like know what benchmarks or outcomes the foresters use to document that this actually occurs.

Renewal:

Managing ecological succession for hardwoods or coniferous or both is challenging. Assuming that caribou habitat is a priority, coniferous stands with limited road access would be the goal. Recognizing the importance of moose to the local hunting community, there must be consideration for hardwood succession near existing roads.

Protection and tending:

Controlling road access is important to maintaining caribou habitat in the long run. Using herbicides to suppress hardwoods needs to be done on case by case basis with an eye to towards protecting water quality and a goal of improving caribou habitat.

THANK YOU!!