

**FORT MCPHERSON FOREST USE
PLANNING WORKSHOP**

**Fort McPherson, NT
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SUMMARY

A Community Forest Use Planning Workshop was held in Fort McPherson on the 25-26 November, 2000. Workshop participants included Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board (GRRB) staff, Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) staff, Department of Resources Wildlife and Economic Development (DRWED) staff, Tetlit Renewable Resource Council (RRC) members, and 6 community delegates (see Appendix A). The goal of the workshop was to identify local forest use issues and to collect and map information about forest and land use in the Fort McPherson area. This information will be used to develop a sustainable Forest Use Plan for the community. Community Forest Use Plans will also be developed for Inuvik, Aklavik, and Tsiigehtchic. These plans will become part of the Forest Management Plan for the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA) being developed by the GRRB, GTC, and DRWED staff, and the communities.



Groups discussing issues at the workshop. In the photo are Woody Elias, Thomas Koe, Norm Firth, Jennifer Shaw, William Teya, PJ Kaye, Robert Alexie, and Richard Francis.

Funding for this project was provided by the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board and the First Nation Forestry Program. The Department of Resources Wildlife and Economic Development (GNWT) and the Gwich'in Tribal Council provided considerable staff time and other in kind support.

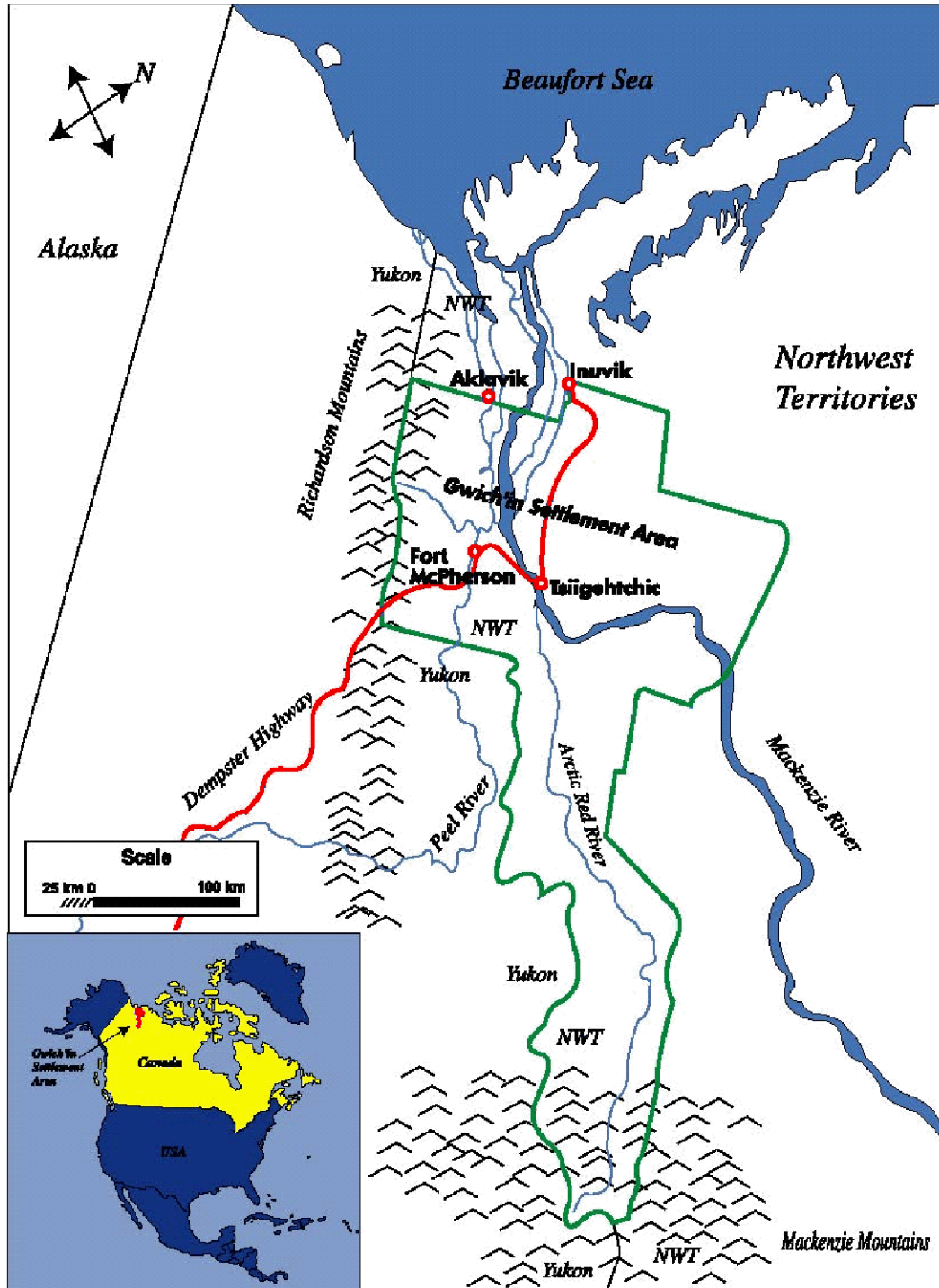


Fig 1. The Gwich'in Settlement Area.

BACKGROUND

The GRRB and DRWED began working on a Forest Management Plan in 1995 to guide forestry activities in the Gwich'in Settlement Area (Figure 1). Before the land claim, the Territorial Government managed the forests in the region from the Hay River office through local Renewable Resource officers. From 1973 to 1994, commercial permits for the harvest of 36,814 logs were issued. With the land claim in place, the communities wanted to protect timber resources for the future. In 1995, at the Regional RRC Meeting in Fort McPherson, it was decided that commercial forest harvest regulations would be developed for Gwich'in private lands. A Forestry Working Group involving GTC, GRRB, and DRWED staff and community representatives was formed and met in November 1995 to discuss forest management. This group directed the GRRB and DRWED to begin work on a forest management plan for the GSA.

The GRRB and DRWED, under direction from the Forestry Working Group, started research projects to provide background information needed for the Forest Management Plan. The following projects have been completed:

- forestry inventory of 3 productive areas in the GSA (Arctic Red River, Peel River, and Mackenzie River Delta);
- forest use survey of households in all communities;
- traditional knowledge forestry workshop; and,
- ecoforestry workshop.

The remaining projects are on-going:

- vegetation classification of the GSA;
- forest regeneration and productivity project;
- historical forest use project; and,
- developing sustainable non-timber forest products.

At the Traditional Knowledge Forestry Workshop (1997) concerns were raised about current forest harvesting practices in the settlement area. According to community elders, people are not spreading their cutting out enough resulting in overharvesting in a few areas.

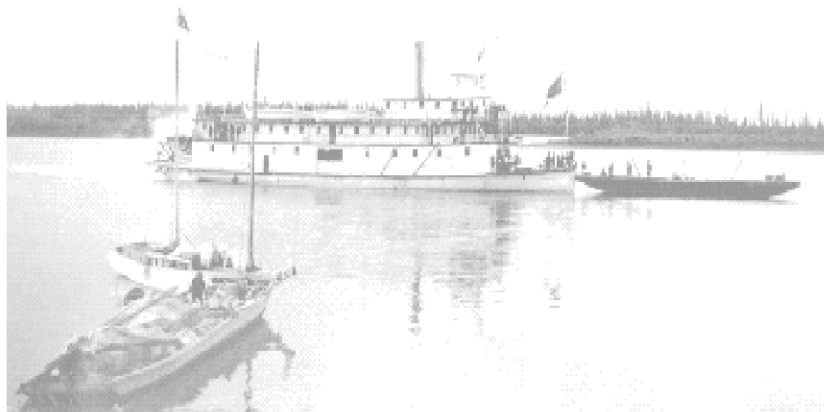
In 1998, the Silva Forest Foundation facilitated an 'Ecoforestry Training and Forestry Workshop' in Inuvik involving 25 participants from the settlement area. The focus of this workshop was to train community representatives, DRWED and GRRB staff in ecosystem-based forest management.

In 1999, the GTC hired a resource planner. This staff member began working with DRWED and GRRB staff on the Forest Management Plan shortly after starting the position.

FOREST USE IN THE FORT MCPHERSON AREA

Past Forest Use

More wood was used in the past than is used today in Fort McPherson (Traditional Knowledge Forestry Workshop, 1997). Before oil became widely available in the 1950's, wood was used to heat homes and schools in the settlement. Steamboats also used a lot of wood from the 1880's to the 1950's. From his analysis of steamship logs, Chandler (2000) estimated that these ships burned approximately 3.5 cords per hour of travel. However Nap Norbert, a Tsiigehtchic elder who worked for the steamships, stated the ships burned 1 cord per hour (personal communication, 2000). Local people were often paid to cut and stack wood next to the riverbanks.

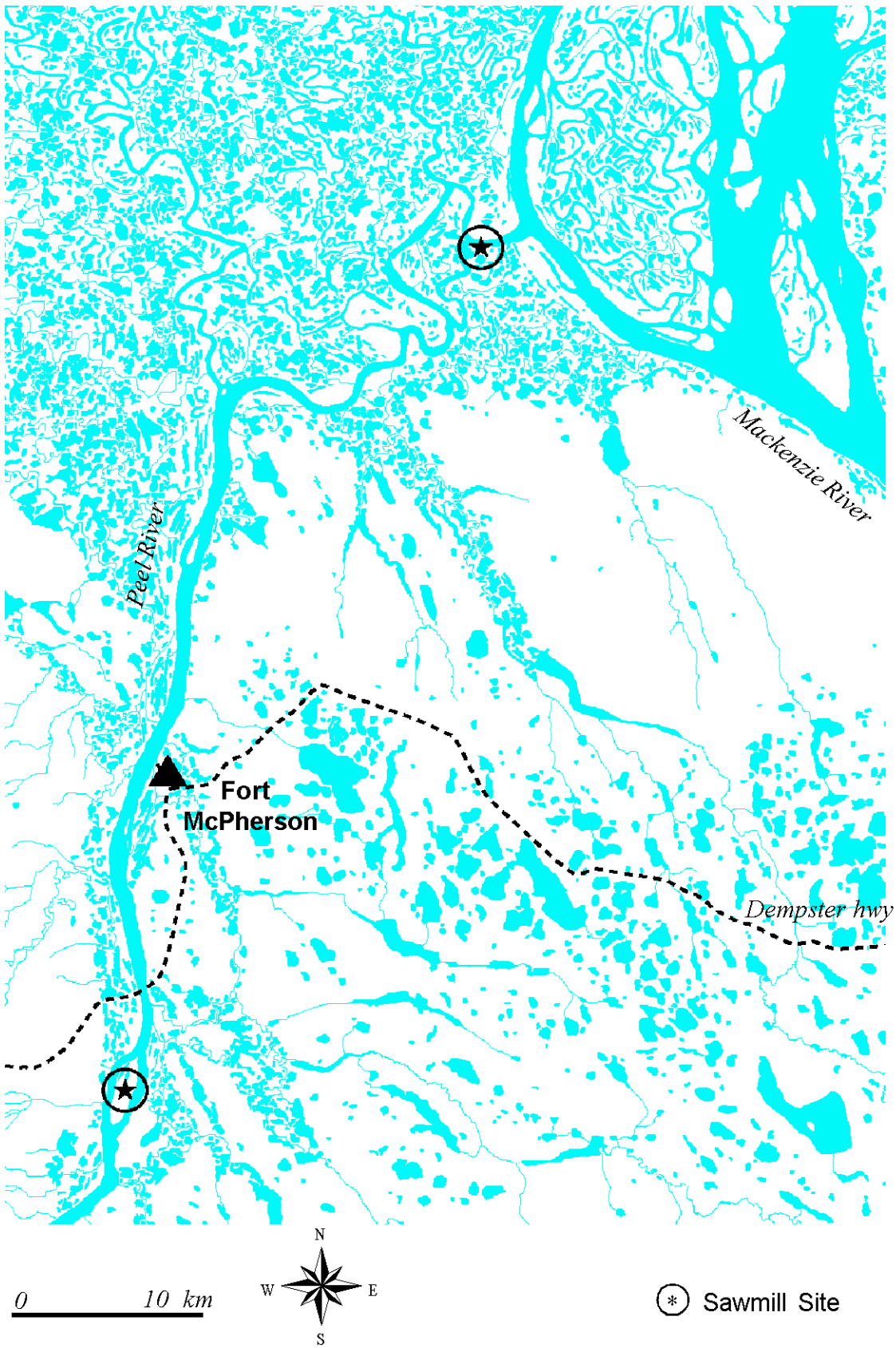


The Hudson Bay Company steamship, 'The Distributor' on the Mackenzie River.

During the construction of Aklavik and Inuvik, many people from Fort McPherson cut logs to sell for pilings and lumber. According to Abe Koe, about 40 different people were cutting trees up the Peel River in the 1940's and 50's. He said each person would cut roughly 250 logs each year, raft them to Aklavik in the spring, and sell them for about 15 cents a foot.

Sawmills operated at Indian Village at the mouth of the Peel and at Roy Island just upstream from the townsite in the 1950's and 60's and provided lumber and pilings for construction in Fort McPherson, Aklavik and Inuvik (Figure 2).

Fig 2: Locations of sawmills that operated in the Fort McPherson area.



Current Forest Use

Most Fort McPherson residents cut timber along the Peel River and its tributaries up to about Road River and down to the southwest portion of the Mackenzie delta. Wood cutting locations were mapped during the Forest Use Survey in 1997 (Figure 3).

Subsistence Use

A. Firewood

Currently, much of the wood cut in the Fort McPherson area is used as firewood. Of the 108 households surveyed in the community in 1997, 56% reported using wood stoves in town and 44% reported using wood stoves at their camps (Table 1). Roughly 870 cords of firewood in total was reported cut in the Fort McPherson area in 1997.

Table 1: Firewood use by residents of Fort McPherson in 1997 (GRRB Forest Use Survey Data, based on 108 households surveyed).

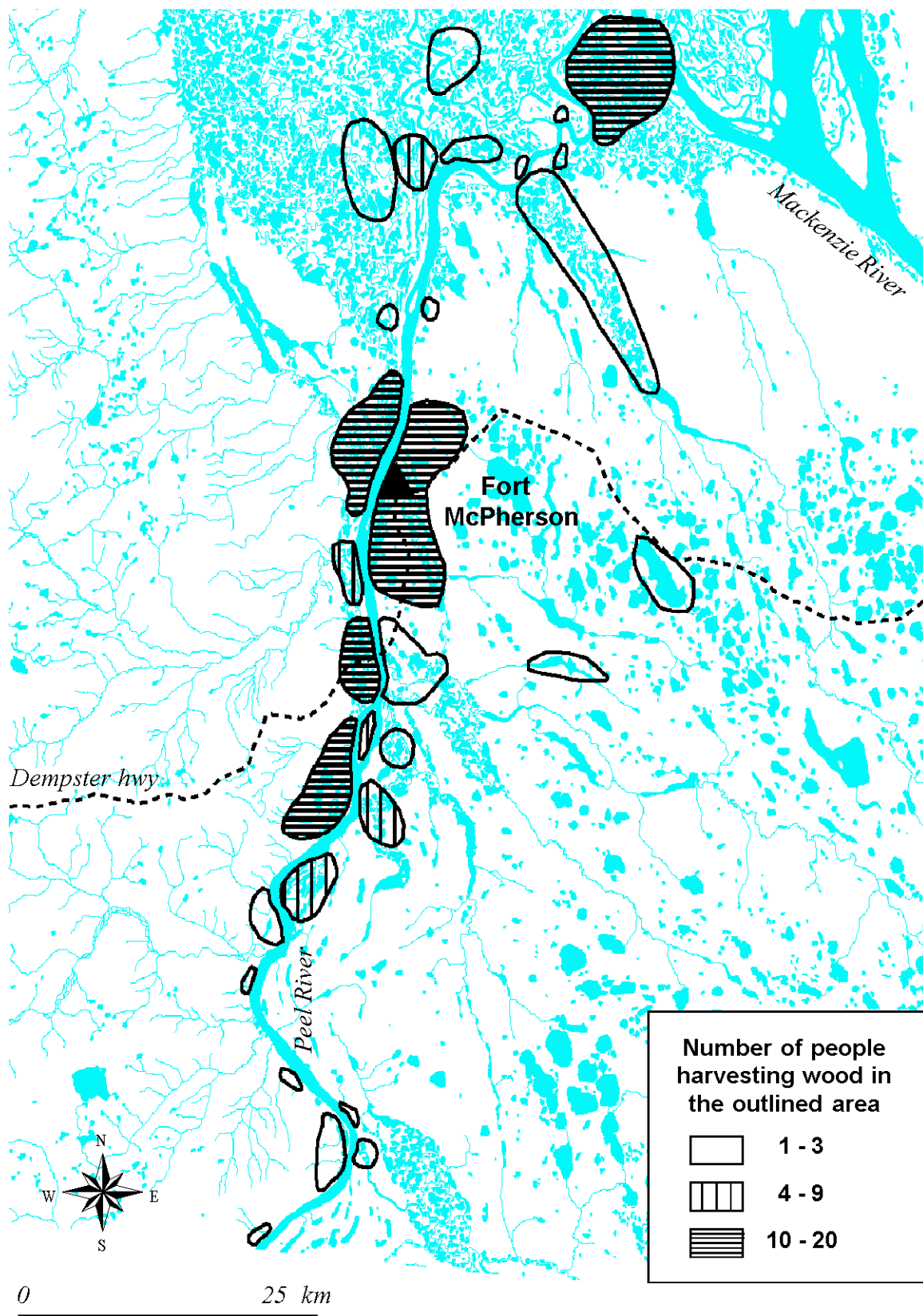
Activity	Number of households	Average amount each year	Total amount
Firewood use in town	60	7.5 cords	450 cords
Firewood use at camp	47	6 cords	420 cords

Workshop participants felt that firewood use has remained the same since the survey and will remain steady in the future.



Logs piled up in Fort McPherson.

Fig 3: Wood cutting locations (firewood and logs) of Fort McPherson residents (Forest Use Survey, 1997). Results based on interviews of 108 households in Fort McPherson.



B. Logs

Some trees are also cut for scrap lumber, sawlogs and pilings. About 9% of households interviewed during the Forest Use Survey (1997) reported cutting logs for personal use (Table 2). These are generally used as skids for boats, flagpoles, or foundations for cabins and tents. Some residents also use local logs for lumber and use the wood miser owned by the Tetlit Band.

Table 2: Use of logs by residents of Fort McPherson in 1997 (GRRB Forest Use Survey Data, based on 108 households surveyed).

Activity	Number of households	Average number of logs	Total number of logs
Cutting logs for personal use	10	20 logs	200 logs

C. Other

Uses of the forest are not restricted to logs and firewood. Apart from trapping and hunting wildlife that occur in the forests, people collect berries and medicinal plants. Community members make smokehouses with bark and use various types of wood to make snowshoes, tool handles, paddles, and crafts. Shrubs can be burned to control mosquitoes and spruce needles can be boiled to freshen the air.

Commercial Use

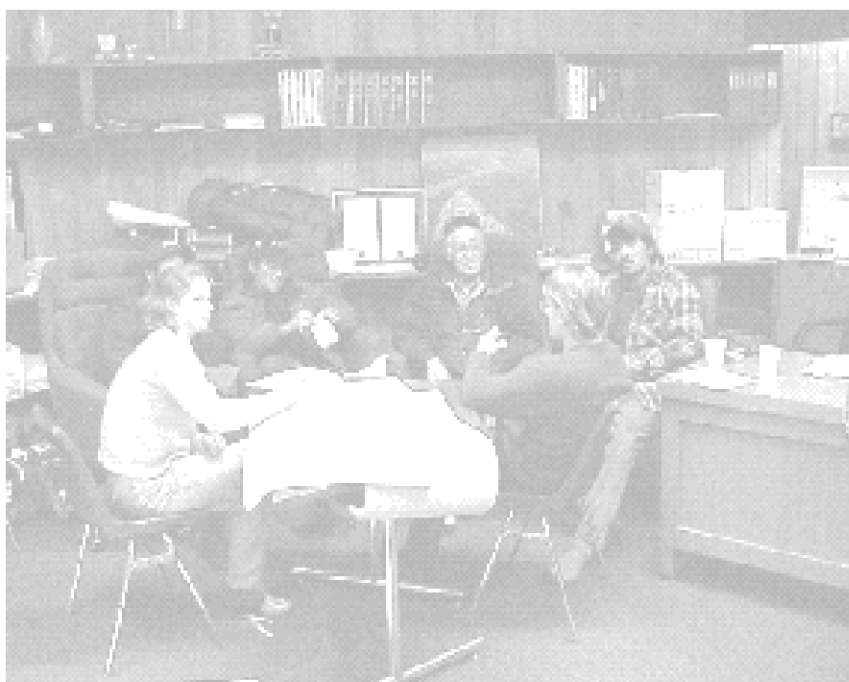
There is a small local demand for firewood and logs, and a number of community members supplement their income by cutting wood commercially. In 1997, 14 households reported that they sold firewood (an average of 6.5 cords per household). Workshop participants felt that current firewood use is about the same. The Tetlit Band contracts firewood cutting for Income Support claimants and frequently advertises for 30-40 cords at a time.

In 1997, three households reported selling logs (an average of 21 per household). Logs sold commercially were mainly used for pilings and landscaping. Workshop participants felt that demand for logs has increased slightly since the Forest Use Survey. Steven Charlie reported that 200-300 logs have been run through the local wood miser in the last few years and that 300 logs purchased from Fort McPherson residents were used for the new Co-op building in 2000.

The local demand for logs will likely increase in the future. Residents in the GSA are taking advantage of government homeowner incentive programs to own their

own houses. Log homes are an attractive option for many home builders. A 20' by 20' log cabin was built with local logs from the Tsiigehtchic area for George Niditchi as an employment training project in the summer of 2000. In the summer of 2001, two privately-owned log homes will be constructed, one in Tsiigehtchic and one in Fort McPherson. Logs for these homes will be purchased locally.

Increased oil and gas activity will also increase the demand for rough cut lumber. This lumber is used for building camps, skids for machinery, and foundations for structures. There will also likely be a demand for woodchips.



Break out group discussing issues. In the photo is Jennifer Shaw, PJ Kaye, Norm Firth, Robert Alexie, Richard Francis, and Jennifer Walker-Larsen

FORESTRY ISSUES/CONCERNS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Forest Values

The forests of the Gwich'in Settlement Area are important to residents of Fort McPherson. The forests provide wood for cabins, firewood, shelter for wildlife, clean air, and medicinal products. It is important that the forests remain healthy so traditional use can be continued by future generations.

State of the Forests in the Fort McPherson Area

Workshop participants stated that there is little deadwood close to the community (within 2 kms), due to increased harvesting pressure in that area, but that there is lots of deadwood around the Peel River so firewood is very easy to come by. However, good trees for sawlogs are scarce. Trees must be large, tall, straight, not spiral-grained, and accessible by boat or snowmobile. Most of the large trees in easily accessed forest stands along the Peel River have already been cut. Participants felt that the nearest remaining trees good for logs are at ‘Three Cabin Creek’, about 40 km upstream from Fort McPherson.



Woody Elias and Thomas Koe enjoying themselves.

Harvesting Practices

Heavy equipment is not used for logging in the Gwich’in Settlement Area. For both subsistence and commercial purposes, wood cutters access stands by boat or snowmobile, cut trees with chainsaws, then raft or haul the wood to the final location.

Workshop participants generally felt that most people harvest trees in a responsible manner. Education is needed to ensure people understand the importance of good harvesting practices. Workshop participants identified the following forest practices as being especially important for harvesters to follow.

1. Do not waste trees

People should use the wood they cut. When cutting for logs, people sometimes leave tall stumps and large amounts of the top of the tree. These unused pieces should be cut and used for firewood. In the Yukon there is a regulation that limits the size of the tree top that can be left to 6 inches in diameter.

The same rule should be applied in the Northwest Territories.

1. *Use dead trees for firewood*

Trees good for logs or other purposes should not be cut for firewood. According to the Forest Use Survey, most of the firewood cut is deadwood. Fort McPherson residents reported that 80% of trees cut for firewood were dead trees, 18% were live trees, and 2% were driftwood.

2. *Clean up after cutting*

Branches left after cutting should be spread out rather than piled.

3. *Cut trees leaning over lakes and waterways*

Trees washed into lakes and waterways can block creeks and disrupt fish habitat. These trees should be removed.

Forest Management

Workshop participants discussed current forest management in the Gwich'in Settlement Area, identified issues that need to be addressed, and suggested possible management solutions.

1. *Committee to oversee forest management*

Workshop participants felt a committee with representation from the community Renewable Resource Councils, Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board, Department of Resources Wildlife and Economic Development, and Gwich'in Tribal Council should oversee forest management in the Gwich'in Settlement Area. The current Forestry Working Group fulfills this role and should be continued.

2. *No clear cutting*

Clear cutting should not be allowed in the Settlement Area.

3. *Commercial logging*

Commercial logging should be limited to small, locally owned companies. The community wood miser should be brought back to the 8 mile area to take advantage of economic opportunities.

4. *Monitor harvesting*

It is very important to know how much wood is being cut and where, especially near the community. Workshop participants felt that people cutting near town and people cutting commercially or contracted to cut wood should be getting permits. They also felt that subsistence use at camps was not significant and did not need to be monitored.

Fort McPherson residents are not cooperating with the current timber permitting regulations. Johnnie Charlie and Lawrence Lewis (RWED staff) distributed pamphlets that explained the permit process to all community members in 1999, but to date only two free timber cutting permits have been issued in the community.

Workshop participants felt that a monitoring process similar to the harvest study could track Fort McPherson resident harvesting more successfully. After cutting, community members could fill out a form to report the location and how many trees of each species they cut.

5 *Yukon transboundary forest management*

Most of the good timber (logs) are in the Yukon Territory (secondary use area). There is a need to discuss this and other forest management issues with the Mayo Renewable Resource Council, Canadian Forest Service, and Yukon Territorial Government.

6 *Replanting programs*

Forests in this area take a long time to regrow. Areas that should be replanted include 8 mile, Shiltee Rock, and old sawmill sites. Seedlings should also be provided for people to plant at their camps.

7 *Take advantage of wood cut for oil and gas exploration and drilling*

There are potential benefits for communities from seismic work if they can stipulate in the agreements that any timber cut in the development of seismic lines or drilling sites be made available to the public. Devlan Exploration, a company planning seismic and drilling work at Tree River, have made commitments to haul cut trees of a certain size back to Tsiigehtchic for community use.

8 *Educational programs*

Educational programs should be continued and expanded. Wood cutters need to be kept informed about levels of harvest and location of overharvested areas and educated about good forest practices. Programs are needed for schools that stress the importance of forests and how to protect them.



PJ Kaye and Liz Wright listening to the discussions.

AREAS PROTECTED FROM FORESTRY ACTIVITIES

Workshop participants discussed existing protected areas in the Fort McPherson region. The Gwich'in Land Use Plan is now complete and is awaiting approval from DIAND. The Plan allows timber cutting for personal use in all areas of the Gwich'in Settlement Area, however the Plan proposes two types of protected areas where commercial forestry (and other developments) would not be allowed. See Figure 4 for a map of these areas.

1. *Gwich'in Protected Areas* – areas of outstanding wildlife significance. These include the Rat/Husky/Black Mountain and James Creek/Vittrekwa River areas near Fort McPherson.
2. *Gwich'in Heritage Protected Areas* – areas of outstanding historical or cultural significance. These areas include the Mouth of the Peel, 8 miles, Shiltee Rock, Stone Scrapper Creek, and Tloondih near Fort McPherson.

Workshop participants discussed whether any area required additional protection from forestry activities. It was generally felt that because there is lots of deadwood available for firewood there was no need to give protection from subsistence harvesting to any area. However, people should avoid cutting timber in the following areas:

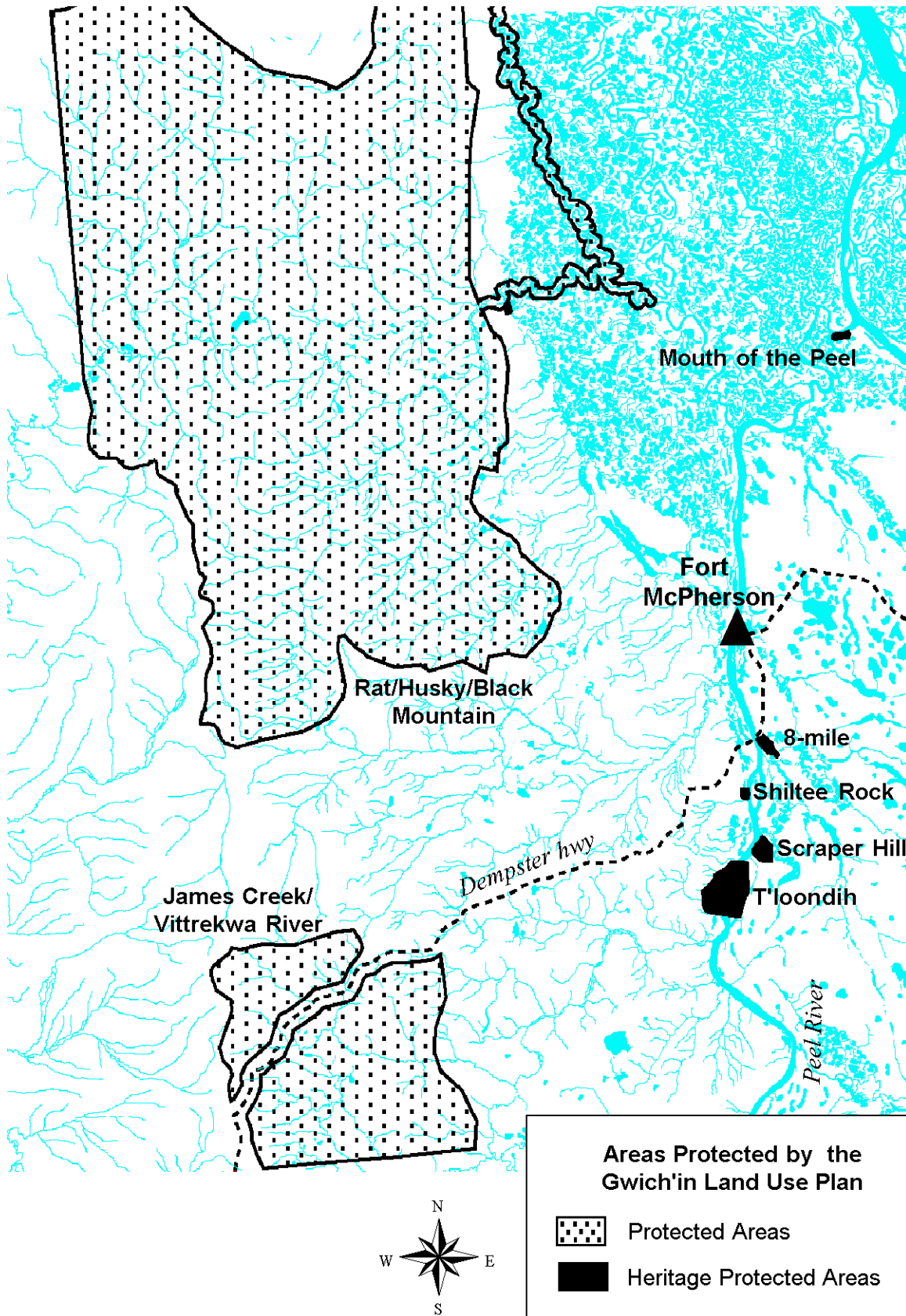
1. *Cultural sites*
It is important to avoid cutting at cultural sites, such as gravesites. There are gravesites north of 8 mile, at the mouth of the Peel, etc. The Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute should make residents aware of the locations of these sites so they can be left alone.
2. *Close to the community*
Workshop participants felt that there was too much cutting near the community and there is not much deadwood left. They proposed that no wood should be cut within 2 km of town.
3. *Near other people's camps*
People need to ask permission when cutting within 500 m of another person's camp or trapline.

AREAS THAT SHOULD BE PROTECTED FROM FIRE

Fire is a natural part of the region and plays an important role in keeping the land healthy. However, fire can threaten people, communities and areas with high wildlife value or traditional value. Consideration must be given to when and where fires are fought.

Brief discussions took place regarding fire management and fire fighting decision making in the Region. Maps were used to show the recent history of fire in the McPherson area. It was clearly evident that wherever fire has occurred in the past forty years, no new fires have started. The maps also showed how new fires run into old burns and stopped.

Fig 4: Protected areas around Fort McPherson established by the Gwich'in Land Use Plan



The maps were a good tool to show how some of the Region's largest fires (1989 & 1999) occurred in areas where many fires were previously put out. This allowed for large, uncontrollable fires to move in when the conditions were right: hot, dry, windy, and lots of fuel (older forests).



Group discussing areas that should be protected from fire. In photo are Robert Alexie, Steven Charlie, Mike Gravel, and Richard Francis.

By fighting all fires, the forest continues to get older and eventually will be prime for a large fire event. By allowing fires to play a natural role, many smaller fires will dominate the land. This creates a mix of young and old forest. It is this mix of forest ages that benefit animals the most and reduces the likelihood of large fires spreading across an area.

Workshop participants generally accepted the fact that RWED is primarily concerned with protecting human life and communities from threatening forest fires. The need for more fire management talks was indicated and will take place during the winter or spring months.

Appendix A: Workshop Participants

Robert Alexie (Tetlit RRC)	Hugh Colin (Community Delegate)
Woody Elias (Tetlit RRC)	Norm Firth
Steven Charlie (Tetlit RRC)	Richard Francis
P.J. Kaye (Tetlit RRC)	Alex Benitah (GTC)
Liz Wright (Tetlit RRC Co-ordinator)	Mike Gravel (DRWED)
Thomas Koe (Community Delegate)	Lawrence Lewis (DRWED)
Abe Koe (Community Delegate)	Johnnie Charlie (DRWED)
David Vaneltsi (Community Delegate)	Jennifer Walker-Larsen (GRRB)
John Kunnizzie (Community Delegate)	Jennifer Shaw (GRRB)
Billy Wilson (Community Delegate)	

DRWED	Department of Resources Wildlife and Economic Development, GNWT
GRRB	Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board
GTC	Gwich'in Tribal Council
RRC	Renewable Resource Council

Appendix B: Flipchart Notes

Break-out group discussion of forest concerns and potential solutions in the Fort McPherson Area

Group 1:

Cultural sites where no cutting allowed:

just north of 8 mile – graves, mouth of the Peel (just around camp), T'loondih, Shiltee Rock, 1 km radius around all camps

Town – 2 km out, can cut all around roadside but no clearcutting

Firewood – dead white and black spruce and live, birch, alder (willow 6 inches), poplar that float down river

Logs – for logs mostly difficult to find in one spot so not really a separate issue

Allowed – cutting around lakes and rivers

Both white and black spruce, birch – interior siding, poplar too

Medicinal products – hasn't heard of many problems, should speak to GSCI

Clean sites – piling and burning but could be a fire hazard. spread out leftovers. Noticed lots of trees near river that end up in water. Should harvest them as they will end up in water.

Healthy forests – study on parasites/diseases, noticing lots of lumps on trees, not really a big issue

cabin/bush camps – everyone knows not to harvest around others camps and trails, map of the area and camps

cabins for future, shouldn't be a problem, most use factory logs, there is some concern but mostly with plan shouldn't be

wildlife - need an education program to show wildlife values (e.g. some dead trees impt)

wood supply – using woodlot system is a good idea

wastage – Yukon example – cannot leave trunk with diameter over 6 inches, should have rules for what you can leave, should consider bringing back the miser permanently – can be good business

clearcutting – there was an issue a while back for clear cutting

Monitoring – very important, harvest study for forest get long term data, also benefits the cutter, educational package, benefits for all – use radio, be persuasive, get in touch with Yukon First Nation (Mayo) about Forest Mgmt of shared areas

Forest Committee – good idea, need more people from each community

Commercial harvest – no big companies, small local companies should be helped and keep larger companies out

Harvesting on Gwich'in lands – suggestion – job creation plan – Gwich'in could harvest and sell to non Gwich'in

Allowing Some Commercial harvest – a mix of two last points, small Gwich'in company could provide service

Zoning – good idea to have woodlots and protected zones for wildlife and regular harvest areas for everyone

Replanting – give out seedling to plant around camps, maybe plant where you cut (but need to manage money)

Education – teach in school, workshops, radio, brochures, correspondence with community, school system for cultural aspects – there is some taught but not very specific

Forest fires – in Mayo – 2 crews, government crew and band crew. If government doesn't want to fight fire band crew can go in. Letting it burn is good for regeneration but there is no value other than that. Should fight all fires.

Group 2

Ensure people are not wasting wood when cutting and leaving stumps

A person/wildlife officer should check cutting site after a harvest – monitor through permits. Band gets permit and monitors people themselves, Keep track of the amount of logs cut

Plant trees – 8 miles, sawmill island (Roy), Airport area

Educate youth not to waste wood, not to blaze trees (initials, axe marks, climbing?), tree aging – leaves holes in tree, keeping camp brush clean – burning – brochure – school visits

Committee to oversee forest activities – introduce certificates

Someone hired to cut stumps
grow birch, some people burn it

protected areas close to cabins

Group 3

Important values – local use (cabins, firewood), healthy forests, wildlife

Forest practices

clean up, people are generally responsible, no cutting around camps

Forest management

no big companies, no clearcutting, only local commercial activities, teach people about proper harvesting – radio, report all harvesting near town, not as important at camps, need permit to sell wood, people buying must ask to see permit, forest fires – camp compensation, - work with Yukon (Upper Peel)

Appendix C: Workshop Agenda



AGENDA

Fort McPherson Community Forest Use Planning Workshop

Hamlet Council Chambers

Oct 25th 11 am to 6 pm

lunch provided

1. Welcome

Participants introduce themselves
Explain format of the workshop

2. Workshop Objectives

- | Provide input to the Forest Management Plan
- | Identify forestry concerns in the Fort McPherson area and in the GSA as a whole.
- | Identify potential management solutions to forestry issues.
- | Map historic forest use in the Fort McPherson area
- | Identify areas that should be protected from forestry activities
- | Identify areas that should be protected from forest fires

3. Introduction to the Forest Management Plan

4. Forest Use in the Fort McPherson Area

A. Historic forest use

steamships, sawmills, mission schools, etc.
mapping steamship logging sites, sawmill sites, cut-out areas, etc.

- A. **Current forest use**
Summary of results from forest use survey
Has forest use changed since the survey?
 - B. **Future forest use**
How will forest use change in the future?
How will development affect forest use?
- 5. **Forest Concerns and Potential Solutions in the Fort McPherson area**
overview of forest use survey information
Break out groups to discuss potential solutions
Open forum to discuss potential solutions
- 6. **Protected Areas from Forest Activities**
Overview of existing protected areas and level of protection
Gwich'in Land Use Plan
Other areas previously proposed
Gwich'in Land Use Plan, Forest Use Survey
other areas? mapping exercise
- 7. **Priority Areas for Fighting Forest Fires**
discussion, mapping exercise
mapping fires that burned before 1965
- 8. **Forest Monitoring**
Current monitoring
Timber Permitting Process
- 9. **Summary and Closing**
Recap of workshop
Where to from here