

# A SUPERIOR-TEMAGAMI CORRIDOR

## Linking Natural Heritage, Cultural Heritage, and Recreational Opportunities

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*"A culture is no better than its woods"*  
W.H. Auden, 1966

Blue lakes, rocky shores, and big trees (big white and red pine trees that is): for most Canadians, these are likely the first thoughts that come to mind when considering canoeing on the Canadian Shield. And while the Shield bedrock and waterways include the rugged plateaus of Labrador and Ungava, the Land of Little Sticks (spruce forests) of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and the Barrens (above tree line tundra) to the north, a dominant view of Shield canoe travel is pool-and-drop rapids in swift rivers, rocky-point campsites, and easily connected lakes with well-forested portages which include towering pines.

In fact, those portions of Shield country that exhibit all of these characteristics are relatively few. The most limited characteristic is the towering pines. The fact that old-growth red and white pines — Ancient Forest Landscapes (AFL), see endnote 1 — are now referred to as endangered ecosystems, and that they remain "relatively" abundant (the world's greatest abundance) in the Lake Superior to the Ottawa River band of Canadian Shield country, makes the region one of super significance both in scientific and recreational terms. Indeed, blue lakes, rocky shores, and big trees are still a healthy portion of the landscape within this "Near North" region. But the combination should not be thought of as enduring.

The Superior-Temagami region of what the Ministry of Natural Resources would refer to as the 4E site region is one of 13 biogeoclimatic regions of Ontario (see the map on this page). It is also called the Lake Temagami Site Region (LTSR). The majority of Ontario's remaining old-growth white and red pine forests are located in this region. Three areas within the LTSR have particularly significant concentrations of these unique forests combined with notable wilderness recreation value. They include Temagami, The Lower Spanish Forest, and The Algoma Highlands. The wilderness recreation and natural heritage values of all three areas are currently threatened by resource exploitation, primarily logging.

Here, we would like to draw attention to this overall region (the LTSR) and advocate, on a scientific and recreation basis, for a protected "corridor" connecting these three unique areas which would extend from the Ottawa River at Lake Temiskaming to Lake Superior. First, some background concerning the region will be provided. Then the corridor canoe routes with a focus on natural heritage — AFL's, cultural heritage themes, and canoe travel potential — will be explored. The

Superior-Temagami Corridor is now a proposed nature reserve, but with the scientific research well established and ongoing (see reference list), the region's AFL's identified, assessed, and mapped (see An Ancient Forest Atlas reference), and the canoe routes mapped and linked as a corridor with side routes to specific attractions, the time is right to generate greater support and enthusiasm for both the environmental advocacy so needed and the existing canoeing potential that is largely being exposed with the corridor concept and the AFL atlas. Work is now ongoing to achieve the goal of this nature reserve.



Site Regions and Site Districts of Ontario

### BACKGROUND

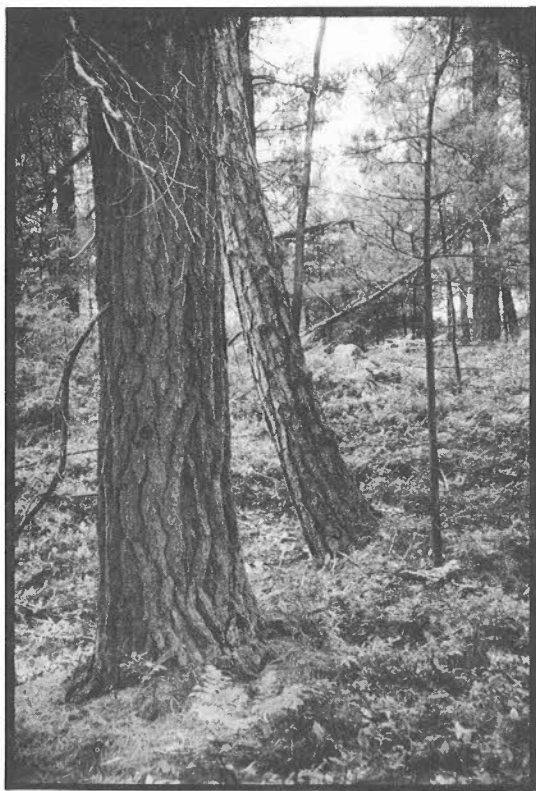
#### Temagami

Since the establishment of the Save Maple Mountain Committee in 1973, citizens have been joining forces to challenge resource management activities that threaten the character of the Temagami wilderness. Perhaps the single most intense battle was fought over the proposed logging of the Obabika Lake old-growth pine stand, which resulted in 370 arrests of protestors blockading the Red Squirrel logging road in 1989 (Killan 1990). Since that time, resource exploitation in Temagami has been minimal and non-threatening to wilderness advocates until recently. In December 1995,

the Temagami Comprehensive Planning Council released a plan that proposes "large-scale industrial development, including mining, logging, road building and bridge construction" (Wildlands League 1995). For example, 35% of Temagami's remaining old-growth pine stands will be opened to logging under this plan.

### ***The Lower Spanish Forest***

A mapping analysis commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) (Spectranalysis 1993) has shown that the largest concentration of white and red pine (50 yrs.; 10% of a stand) is located in The Lower Spanish Forest. Further work by Quinby et al. (1995) has shown that 40,000 hectares of this area is pristine pine landscape. It was also documented just recently that The Lower Spanish Forest has the largest pristine white and red pine landscape remaining in the world (Quinby and McGuiness, 1996). This global significance and pristine character did not, however, persuade the OMNR or E.B. Eddy Forest Products Ltd. to protect the entire 40,000-hectare area despite recommendations from Geomatics International (1994) to do so. Instead, only 8,000 hectares (20%) of the pristine pine landscape has been identified for protection by the OMNR (Crins 1996). Thus, 32,000 hectares of pristine white and red pine landscape are available for logging by E.B. Eddy, *some of which is currently being logged.*



### ***The Algoma Highlands***

The old-growth white pine, sugar maple, yellow birch, and jack pine forests of the 120,000-hectare Algoma Highlands is one of the largest areas of pristine forested landscape remaining in the Great Lakes basin. It sup-

ports healthy populations of lynx, pine marten, and bald eagle — sightings of the endangered eastern cougar have also been made there. However, about 35,000 hectares of The Algoma Highlands is scheduled for logging over the next five years, mostly by clear cutting. Although physical damage to a site may be minimized using shelterwood logging (see endnote 2) in some areas, recent scientific studies of Algoma white pine forests have shown that shelterwood logging can reduce genetic diversity of white pine populations by as much as 54% (Buchert et al. 1995). In addition, in the summer of 1995 it was discovered that Lajambe Forest Products had accelerated their cut of old-growth white pine to 60% of their five-year allocation to take place within the first 12 months of their cutting period. Currently, the only protected area in The Algoma Highlands (Ranger North) is a mere 6,000 hectares in size — too small to be ecologically viable.

### **SOME ADVOCACY APPROACHES TO PROTECTION OF THE REGION**

Because of their remote and roadless conditions, the three primary core areas of the LTSR — Temagami, The Lower Spanish Forest, and The Algoma Highlands — are all still "wild." Due to their wild, forested landscapes, these areas provide special value for their ecological/natural integrity and wilderness recreation. They all have significant amounts of old-growth white and/or red pine forest as well as many other types of ancient forest. And they provide quality habitat for maintaining healthy populations of both plants and animals, which may be severely affected by clear-cutting, agriculture, and urban/suburban development in other parts of Ontario. There are, however, other landscapes located between these three core areas that also have significant ecological, cultural, and recreational features. Examples of such regions include the red pine stands and the uncommon red pine regenerative forest (due to forest fire) at Wolf and Dewdney Lakes on the Chiniguichi River system, and the significant geological fault to the north of Welcome Lake, west of the Wanapitai River. If linked conceptually and protected via the Superior-Temagami Corridor, these additional areas could serve as valuable core linkages, provide additional recreation and tourism resources, and help to meet natural heritage protection goals for the LTSR.

Corridors are "landscape linkage(s) designed to connect open spaces to form protected (areas) that follow natural and man-made terrain features and embrace ecological, cultural and recreational amenities where applicable" (Hay 1991). The identification of a corridor and advocacy for its establishment to connect Temagami, The Lower Spanish Forest, and The Algoma Highlands can serve as a mechanism to create a regional natural heritage network of grassroots organizations with a common focus on values of natural heritage, cultural heritage, and recreation. One of the unique qualities of a corridor in the LTSR is to provide

natural travel ways for people interested in long-distance wilderness travel as well as for wild animals with large territory and migratory requirements, though ecological/natural integrity is the primary goal. Although corridors have been used for conservation purposes in the United States since the 1960s and more recently in southern Ontario, they have not yet been applied in central Ontario on any significant basis.

It was the wild nature and resulting recreational appeal of both Temagami and the Algoma Highlands that attracted people to these areas and that facilitated the first significant opposition to destructive resource exploitation practices. The Save Maple Mountain Committee, made up primarily of Lake Temagami summer residents, effectively stopped the Maple Mountain Resort Development Plan in 1973. The Alliance for the Lady Evelyn Wilderness, which evolved from the Save Maple Mountain Committee, advocated successfully for the creation of the 72,000-hectare Lady Evelyn-Smoothwater Wilderness Park created in 1982. The Temagami Wilderness Society, which grew out of the Alliance for the Lady Evelyn Wilderness, successfully protected the Obabika Lake old-growth pine stand and many other ancient white and red pine stands in the Temagami area. They also pressured the OMNR into generally improving resource management in the district. Temagami is well known (and "too" well travelled, many would say) as recreational canoe country. The corridor concept would open up new regions and connect travel routes to advance the needed conservation advocacy voice within a broader area of the whole LTSR. In The Algoma Highlands, George Nixon, a remote tourism operator on Megisan Lake, with support from Forests for Tomorrow, was able to convince the Ontario government

to conduct an environment assessment of logging in the Megisan Lake area with special emphasis on his remote tourism business. This assessment delayed logging in the region resulting in additional study of its unique features and additional time for advocacy groups to strategize. The AFL offers canoeists a choice canoe route north from Megisan to Lance Lake. (see article on Algoma by Joan McGuffin in *Kanawa*, Summer 1995), as well as the connections to Lake Superior and to the eastern routes of the LTSR.

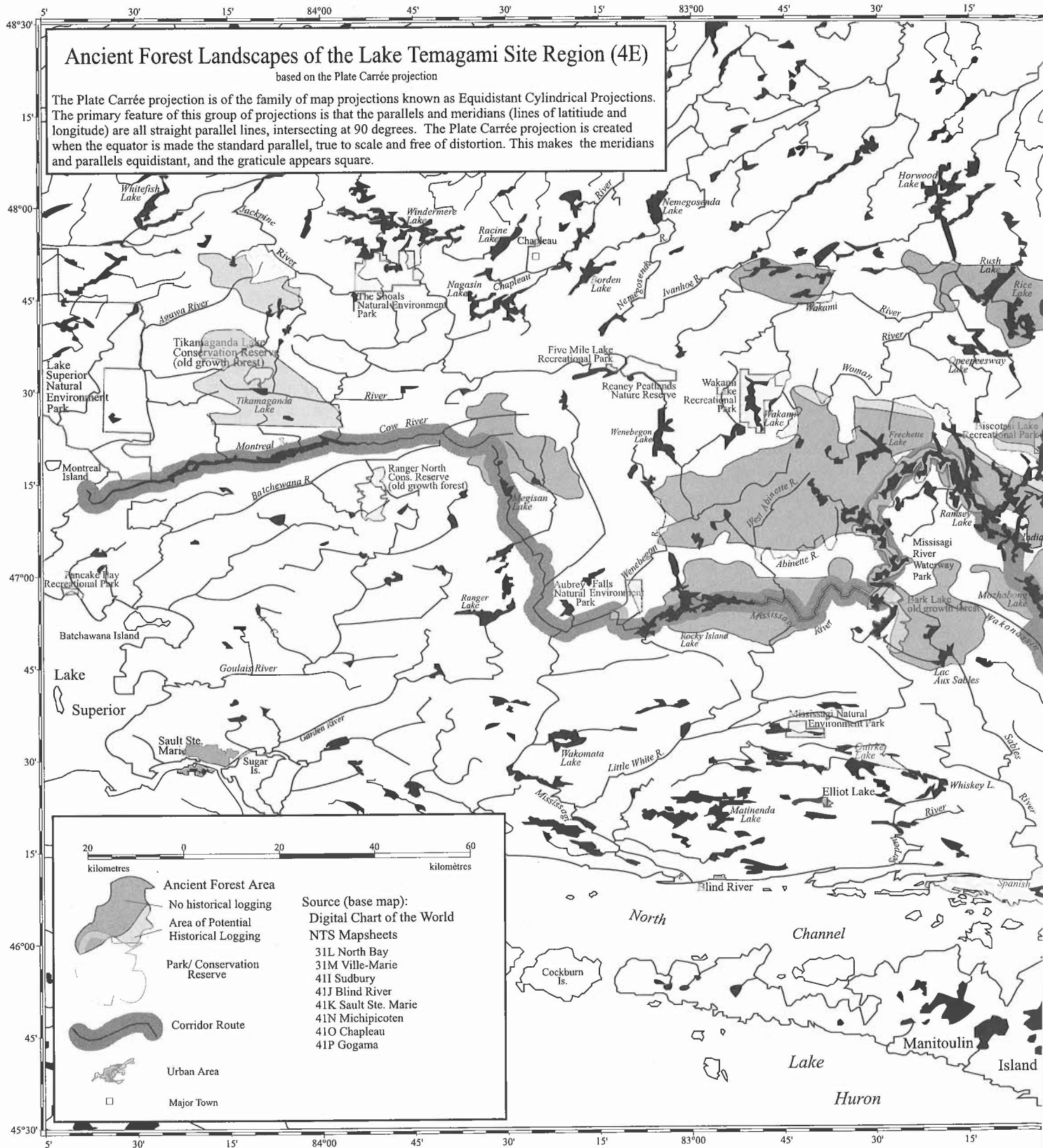
Although The Lower Spanish Forest is virtually unknown for its wilderness recreational opportunities, The Ancient Forest Exploration and Research Group has recently received funding to identify and promote these opportunities. As with Temagami and The Algoma Highlands, interest in the recreational values of The Lower Spanish Forest will help to protect this special area. Currently, this area is thought of, from a canoeist's perspective, as part of the Lake Biscotasing/Spanish River area. Knowledgeable canoe trippers know of the beautiful lakes in The Lower Spanish Forest such as Pogamasing, but the attention to conservation and for recreation are hardly recognized.

As for the LTSR as a whole, the Wildlands League in November 1996 printed the following "campaign snapshot" for the North Shore:

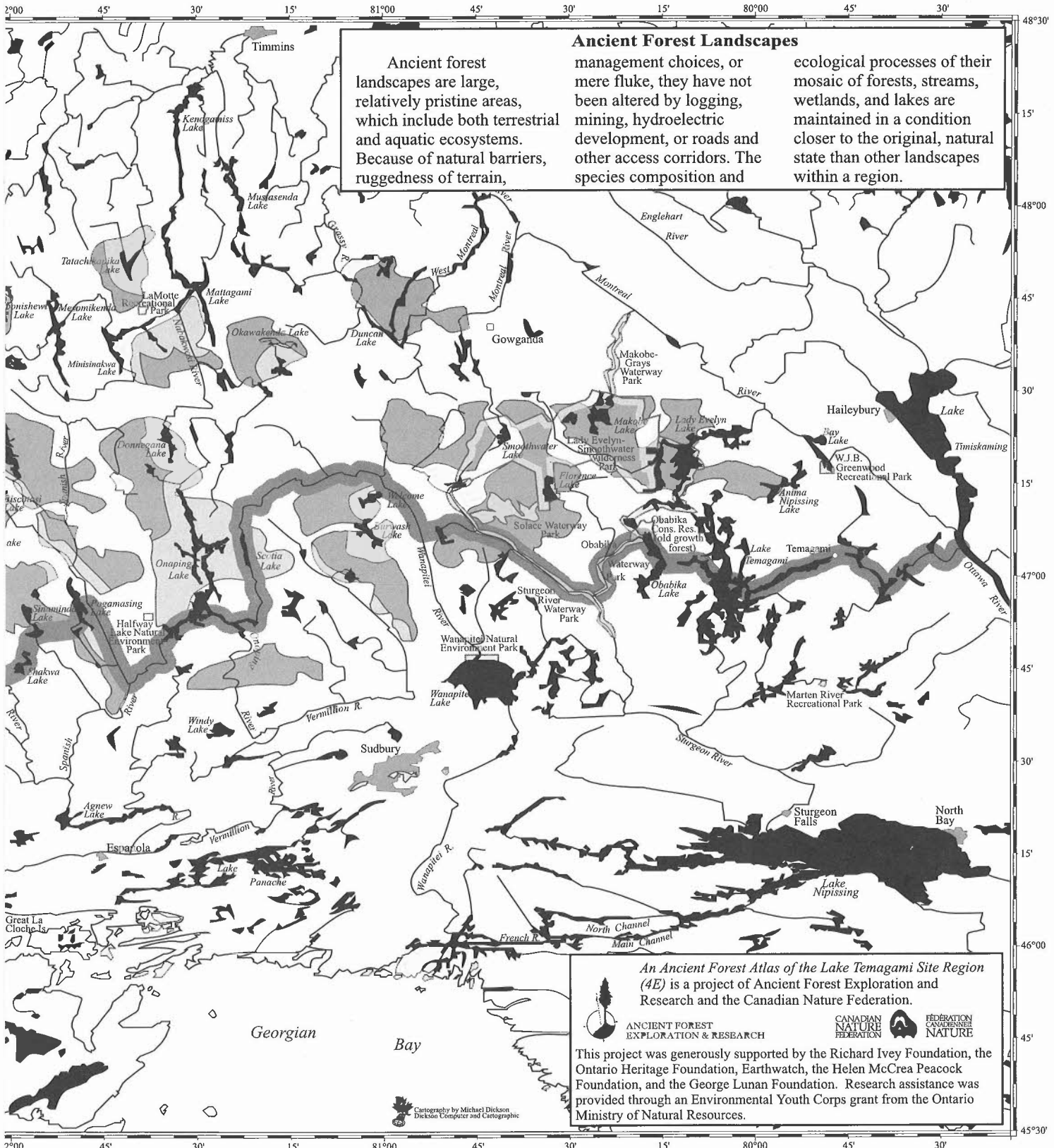
Wilderness still exists in this Nova Scotia-sized region that stretches from Lake Temiskaming to Lake Superior and gives rise to waters that feed both the Great Lakes and the Arctic Ocean. Over the next two years we will be bringing you both news and ways to get personally involved in our efforts to protect the wild in this area.



Photographs by:  
 Bob Henderson  
 Mike Henry  
 James Hines







**Ancient Forest Landscapes**

Ancient forest landscapes are large, relatively pristine areas, which include both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Because of natural barriers, ruggedness of terrain, management choices, or mere fluke, they have not been altered by logging, mining, hydroelectric development, or roads and other access corridors. The species composition and ecological processes of their mosaic of forests, streams, wetlands, and lakes are maintained in a condition closer to the original, natural state than other landscapes within a region.

*An Ancient Forest Atlas of the Lake Temagami Site Region (4E)* is a project of Ancient Forest Exploration and Research and the Canadian Nature Federation.

ANCIENT FOREST EXPLORATION & RESEARCH

CANADIAN NATURE FEDERATION

FEDERATION CANADIENNE DE NATURE

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Cartography by Michael Dickson  
Dickson Computer and Cartographic

## A SUPERIOR-TEMAGAMI CORRIDOR CANOE ROUTE

Combining the information of the AFL atlas and the corresponding map of the AFL's within the LTSR with a knowledge of historical and contemporary travel ways (see endnote 3), it was possible to create a canoe route corridor and off-shoot routes that: travel through AFL, travel through interesting connecting canoe country, visit cultural heritage sites, and, most importantly, are viable long-distance cross-country canoe routes with specific off-shoot routes. This is not an easy task given the general north-south flow to the rivers and lakes with the need for an east-west orientation to travel. Also, matching routes to AFL's is not always the obvious choice of travel, though it is usually the most wild.

However, the result, remembering that certain links in the overall route would need trail maintenance to "re-open" former cleared portage connections, is an exciting cross-country vision that stirs the heartstrings of many seasoned travellers. Combing over maps, standard 1:50,000 topo sheets plus the AFL atlas, MNR's 1950 canoe route guides for the area, and learning of historical routes and stories reveals the richness of the area for canoe travel, long-distance or short loops, and highlights an understanding of the region as one integral natural and cultural heritage region in Ontario.

The following notes are a rough sketch of the canoeing corridor. To follow along for details you will need a map, preferably a set of 1:50,000, but the



1:250,000 also provides the needed detail. The large map on pages 16-17 is a first attempt to combine the canoeing corridor with the AFL of the 4E LTSR map that accompanies the atlas.

Provided here is one early version of a canoe route corridor system in its most complex form. This "involved" version highlights the overall travel potential. For the most part, it is a direct route, but occasionally there are loops for specific interest and standout travel areas. The fixed routing for one single corridor is yet to be finalized, but for canoe trippers this branching routing format offers the most potential to envision long-distance routes, connections to take-out/put-in sites, and canoe circuits to and from a main corridor. Routing 4A South and 7A can be part of the main corridor as will the stages with no route branching. The Obabika-Maskinonge-Wolf-Florence-Smoothwater loop of Stage 2 can be deleted from the main corridor in favor of the more direct Obabika-Diamond-Lady Evelyn River-Smoothwater routing.

Legend: (\*) = old growth; (+) = cultural heritage;  
(out) = trail head routings

The following stages comprise the Superior-Temagami Corridor: Stages 1, 2, 3A, 4A south, 5, 6, 7A. Alternate stages are provided here to showcase the opportunity for canoeing: circuits, off-shoot routes, and long-distance cross-country travel.

### Stage 1: TEMISKAMING TO TEMAGAMI

— via Matabitchuan-Rabbit(\*) — Cassels-Snake Island(\*) — Temagami

### Stage 2: TEMAGAMI TO SMOOTHWATER

— Temagami (northeast arm)(+) to main lake (Cross Bay, Narrow Island, Witch Bay, Temagami Island(\*)  
— Wawiagawa(\*) — Sturgeon River — Upper Goose Falls — Kelly Portage(+) to Maskinonge-McCarthy Bay(+)  
— Wolf/Dewdney(\*) — Chiniguichi  
— Yorston (series of lakes and portages) — some logging road confusion — to Yorston — Florence(\*) (+) — Lady Evelyn River — to Lady Evelyn Lake — Mowat Landing(out) (see endnote 4) or Gamble — Sunnywater — Smoothwater(+)

### Stage 3A: SMOOTHWATER LAKE TO THOR LAKE

— Smoothwater(+) — Scarecrow (Ishpatina Ridge) to Sturgeon River — Stewart  
— Stewart Lake to Haentschel (the Haentschel/Stewart portages) to Sturgeon River (north to Welcome Lake, intriguing fault formation)(\*) — Welcome — Prune — Avery(\*) to Thor Lake



- Stage 3B: SMOOTHWATER LAKE TO SHINING TREE
- Smoothwater — Montreal River — Gowganda (town) (out) to Hanging Stone Lake — Elkhorn — Firth Lake/Creek — Montreal River west
  - Duncan Lake(\*) to Pigeon Lake to Houston Lake (on Montreal River)
  - Wasapika Lake — Michwakenda (Main road crossing) to Okawakenda Lake(\*) to Shining Tree Lake (Shining Tree town) (out)



- Stage 4A South: THOR LAKE TO BISCOTASING LAKE
- Thor Lake (lodge at Thor, food drop) — Oshawong Lake (cross railway) — south to Scotia Lake(\*) — Friday Lake — Kawawia Lake — Bennet Lake to Onaping River
  - Onaping Lake (possible out option Onaping River to Onaping)
  - Onaping Lake — lower Onaping to Spanish River via: 1. Bailey Lake to Spanish, 2. Moncrieff Creek (a drag in summer), 3. arrange drive between lower Onaping and Benny (on railline) then paddle/drag down lower. (Note that 1 to 3 is an awkward connection.)
  - Moncrieff Creek from Spanish River up-river to: 1. Pogamasing Lake(\*) — long up-river stretch, 2. to Mogo River (Bluewater Lake) to Pogamasing(\*)
  - Pogamasing — Little Pogamasing — Sinaminda Lake — Mozhabong(\*)
  - Indian Lake — Biscotasing Lake(\*) (+) (out option Biscotasing, rail and road, food supply option)
  - possible river finish down-river and Spanish (out)
- Stage 4A North: THOR LAKE TO BISCOTASING LAKE
- Thor Lake — Oshawong Lake — Shoofly — Meteor — Opikinimika — Deschenes Creek/Lake to Westree (on rail line) — Duchegana Lake (good portage) — Donnegana Lake(\*) (poor portage) to Lupas Lake
  - Invernesse (seasonal — low water)

- Three Corner Lake — East Sand Creek (cross road #144) to Spanish River (Spanish River at headwaters to out option down Spanish River)
- Spanish River to Azure Creek — Smuts Creek/Lake — Biscotasing Lake(\*) to Biscotasing town(+)(out)

#### Stage 4B: SHINING TREE TO BISCOTASING LAKE

- West Shining Tree Lake — Alan Lake — Opikinimika — Nabakwasi Lake(\*) — Nabakwasi River to Mattagami (Indian First Nation) — Minisinakwa River
- Gogama town on Minisinakwa Lake
- Mollie River to Dividing Lake
- Azure — Smuts Creek/Lake to Biscotasing(\*) (+)(out)
- possible: Spanish River trip down from headwaters (out)

#### Stage 5: BISCOTASING TO MISSISSAGI RIVER TO AUBREY FALLS

- Biscotasing Lake to Cat Bay — Spanish Lake — Bardney Lake — White Owl — Upper Green(+)
- Upper Bark(+) to River proper (follow Wild River Provincial Park) to Rocky Island Lake to Aubrey Falls on #129 Highway (out)

#### Stage 6: AUBREY FALLS TO MEGISAN/LANCE LAKES, ALGOMA HIGHLANDS

- Mississagi River to West Aubinadong River to Spike Lake — Ranger Lake
- Saymo Lake — Gong Lake to Nushatogaini River to West Aubinadong River to Megisan Lake(\*) via Gord Lake to Lance Lake
- possible: Mississagi River down-river to Lake Huron (Blind River) (out)

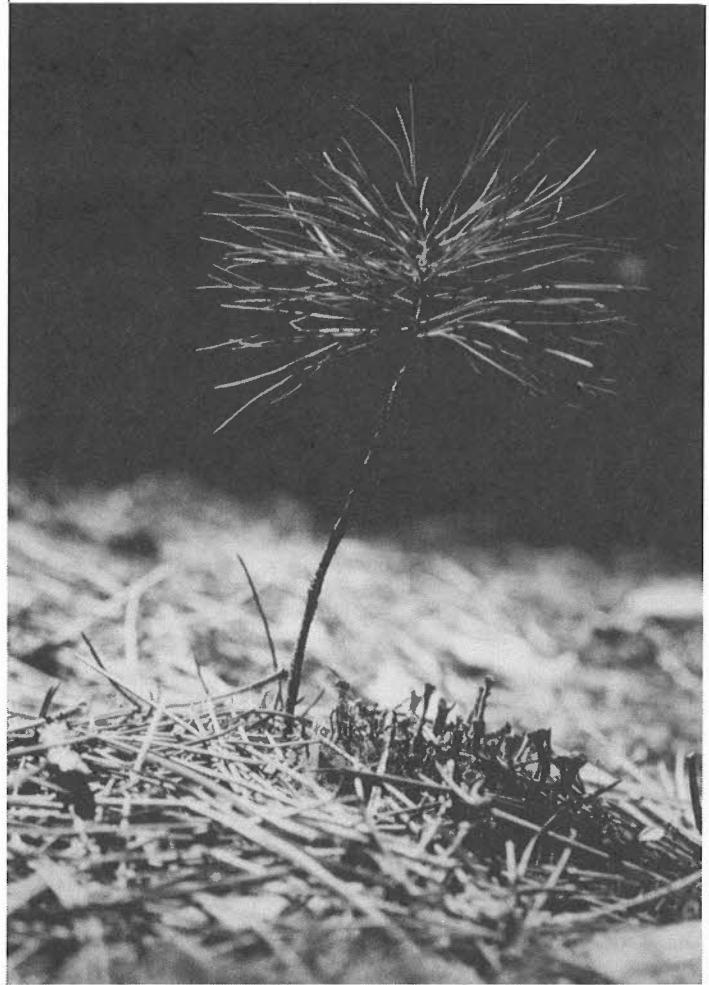
#### Stage 7A: MEGISAN LAKE TO SUPERIOR VIA MONTREAL RIVER

- Megisan Lake to Lance Lake to Farewell Cr. to Cow River to Montreal River to Superior

#### Stage 7B: MEGISAN LAKE TO SUPERIOR VIA GOULAIS RIVER

- Megisan Lake to Lower Lake — Goulais Lake to Goulais River through Searchmont and Goulais River town to Goulais Bay, Superior.

Routes 3A, 4A South, and 7A are the routes for the Superior-Temagami Corridor connecting old-growth and direct east-to-west travel. The B options are presented mainly for recreational canoe circuit purposes. These options continue to connect with AFL's and enhance recreational canoeing and heritage exploration options.



#### ENDNOTES

1. Ancient Forest Landscapes are more than just forests — they are the combination of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that have developed together and interact within a region. In addition to forests, they include the lakes, streams, wetlands, and non-forested terrestrial ecosystems that make up the entire landscape. Their common characteristic is their natural integrity. Because of natural barriers, ruggedness of the terrain, management choices, or mere fluke, they have not been altered by logging, mining, or hydroelectric development, and their original species composition and ecosystem processes are maintained throughout the mosaic of forests and other habitats. The minimum landscape area identified for an AFL was 20,000 hectares, with the narrowest connections between any two portions of an AFL no less than 500 metres wide.

“Old-Growth Red and White Pine Forests” — a subset of Ancient Forests — are ones that are pristine, but also comprise a significant component of red and white pine trees that are, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources (Ontario) definition, 120+ years in age.



2. Shelterwood logging involves the planned removal of approximately 50% of the tree biomass with the first cut. The second is to follow 20 years later. It can also mean the removal of 1/3 of the trees followed by the second third 20-30 years later, with the last third cut in another 20-30 years.
3. Sources for information on Red and White Pine Old-Growth Forests:
  - Ancient Forest Exploration Guide, Peter A. Quinby, 1993.
  - An Ancient Forest Atlas of the Lake Temagami Site Region (4E), prepared by Ancient Forest Exploration and Research and the Canadian Nature Federation, 1996.
  - Wolf/Dewdney Lakes, Sudbury Naturalist Club Report, Viki Mather, 1995.
  - Paddling, Pines & Portage Trails, Joan McGuffin, *Kanawa*, Summer 1995.

## Sources for canoe routes:

- Correspondence with canoe guides or canoe trip journals. Thanks to Joss Haiblen/Chuck Samuels, Steve Beamish/Jonathan Reynolds, James Wheeler.
- Temagami Canoe Routes, Hap Wilson.
- "A King Among Rivers: Grey Owl's Mississagi." Bob Henderson, *Paddler*, Spring 1992.
- Correspondence with area historian Craig Macdonald.
- MNR canoe routes pamphlets and 1950/60 route maps. Sault Ste. Marie District.

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Two useful guides are already available (other than Ancient Forest Atlas of the LTSR, 4E): *Ontario's Old Growth: A Learner's Handbook*, by Mark Stabb; and *Exploring Old Growth Forests: A Teacher's Manual*, by Chris Lemieux, Jennene Powers, Peter Quinby, Caroline Schultz, and Mark Stabb. Both are available via The Canadian Nature Federation and the AFER, 1 Nicholas St., Suite 520, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 7B7, 1-800-267-4088. For information on the political front, contact The Wildlands League, c/o Lara Ellis, 401 Richmond Street W., Suite 380, Toronto, Ontario, M5V 3A8.

For more information about the Superior-Temagami Corridor contact Ancient Forest Exploration and Research, created in 1992 to address, through research and public education, the loss of Ontario's native forest heritage: *Ancient Forest Exploration and Research*, 93 Westmoreland Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6H 2Z8, phone (416) 535-0205, fax (416) 535-8336; summer address: RR#4, Powassan, Ontario, P0H 1Z0, phone/fax (705) 724-5858.

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