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June 9, 1998

Ms. Chrissy Swain
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Grassy Narrows, Ontario
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Dear Ms. Swain:

Thank you for the comments you provided the forest management Planning Team during the Information Centre held at Grassy Narrows First Nation on April 21, 1998. Many of your comments and questions were similar and as such, we felt a response to your entire group would be most appropriate. We would be happy to respond individually to anyone with a specific concern regarding any aspect of the Forest Management Plan.

Many of the comments questioned the practice of clear cutting. People see all clear cutting as being negative because of the way it looks. The way forests are cut now are very different from the way it used to be done. In the past, all trees were cut down and the areas were often planted back to one particular kind of tree. Often they were sprayed with herbicides to remove everything but the trees required by the industry. In recent times, new approaches to cutting have been developed. The way we cut is still called clear cutting, but it is done with better knowledge and understanding of the effects cutting has on the forest.

The modern approach to logging is to try to emulate, or mimic nature. We attempt to have the same effect on the forest that fires would have. Like a fire, we leave clumps of trees, logs and debris on the ground. These practices are done to provide places for various animals to live and to ensure the new forest will be similar to the one which was harvested.

Your comments and concerns about clear cutting are shared by many people. We have acted upon those concerns by changing our approach to clear cutting as described above. We have developed many guidelines to help us achieve these changes. We have guidelines that consider the needs of many species of animals including moose, white-tailed deer, marten and caribou. These guidelines help us design cuts so that the animals have different habitats, such as winter cover or summer browse, in which to live. We have guidelines to ensure that there are reserves left along lakes and streams. These reserves are designed to protect water quality and fish habitat. In addition, these reserves provide important habitats to a number of other species that live near water.

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We carry out regular surveys and inventories to identify where various species of animals live such as eagles, herons, ospreys, swans and owls. When we find some of these animals, we again apply the appropriate guideline to protect the areas around their nest, or any other important habitat component, from disturbance.

We continue to study the forest community. We develop new guidelines as we learn more. For example, we are developing guidelines we hope will protect all of the many thousands of species that inhabit the forest. The process is complex, as new science takes a long time to develop. We do not wish to see a single species become extinct. If we thought there was any threat of extinction to any species in the forest, we would act immediately to protect it.

The type of forest in which we live has a history of large scale catastrophes such as fire, insect infestation and blow down. We realize the way we manage the forest may be considered catastrophic, but we also believe that in the long run it is best for the forest. If the forest were left with no cutting or with no large scale catastrophe, it would become old and would not renew itself. The animals would lose many of the habitats they now use such as young forest for browse or middle age forest for cover and shelter. The best way to provide a healthy, growing forest, without losing everything to fire, is through careful and considered planning, and the application of new knowledge.

We all have a spiritual tie to the land in which we live. None of us wish to lose that tie. We take our part in this process of forest management very seriously. It is our sincere desire to continue to be an integral part of the natural cycle of the forest, living and working in harmony with nature.

Yours truly,

Darlene MacGillivray, R.P.F.
Plan Author and Planning Team Chairperson