

# **AKLAVIK FOREST USE PLANNING WORKSHOP**

**Aklavik, NT  
2-3 February 2000**

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## Summary

A Community Forest Use Planning Workshop was held in Aklavik 2-3 February, 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, Renewable Resource Council (RRC) members, a Hunters' and Trappers' Committee (HTC) member, and 7 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 Aklavik 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, Fort McPherson, and Tsiigehtchic. These plans will become part of the Forest Management Plan for the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA) being developed by GRRB, GTC, and DRWED staff.

Workshop participants discussed local forestry issues and mapped cabin locations, overharvested areas, and possible community woodlot areas. GRRB staff and an Ehdiiat RRC member evaluated the woodlot areas and assessed the forests in the Aklavik area during a helicopter flight on March 15, 2000.



From left to right, David Edwards (Ehdiiat RRC), Joe Benoit (GLA), Fred Kendi (Community Delegate), and Mike Gravel (Manager of Forests, DRWED).

## Background

The GRRB and DRWED began working on a Forest Management Plan in 1995 to guide forestry activities in the Gwich'in Settlement Area. 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 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 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
- ecoforestry workshop

The remaining projects are on-going:

- vegetation classification of the GSA
- regeneration and productivity project
- historical forest use project.

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 and overharvesting in a few areas. Elders also see less respect for family and traditional use areas which is causing disputes. Similar community concerns have been raised at Forestry Working Group meetings and RRC meetings in the past.

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. Following the workshop, the Aklavik RRC requested that the GRRB begin a research project to address concerns about a shortage of firewood in Aklavik and develop a sustainable forest management plan. The Aklavik Forest Use project, funded by the GRRB, was started in 1999. The objective of the project is to develop a sustainable Aklavik Forest Use Plan using land use information based on both local and scientific knowledge sources. The purpose of this workshop is to identify local forest use issues and to collect and map information about forest and land use in the Aklavik area.

## **History of Forest Use Near Aklavik**

More wood was used in the past than is used today in Aklavik (Traditional Knowledge Forestry Workshop, 1997). Before oil became widely available in the 1950's, wood was used to heat homes, the hospital, and mission schools in the settlement. James McDonald estimated that the mission school alone used 200 cords of wood each year. James McDonald and Allen Koe remembered seeing the winter firewood supply for the school piled into four stacks (4 foot wide and 4 foot high) that were each as long as the baseball diamond.

Steamboats also used a lot of timber in the Gwich'in Settlement Area from the 1880's to the 1950's. Local people were paid to cut and stack wood next to the river banks. Allen Koe used to work on the steamships loading wood.

Sawmills operated in Aklavik in the 1940's and 1950's and provided lumber and pilings for construction in Aklavik and Inuvik. Aklavik DGO purchased a wood miser with GNWT Department of

Economic Development and Tourism funds in 1994. It has been used occasionally by community members to cut lumber for personal use.

### **Current Forest Use Near Aklavik**

Currently, most of the wood cut near Aklavik is used as firewood. Many people in the community have wood stoves in their homes to lower heating costs. John McDonald estimated that homes with wood stoves burn 5 cords of wood or less each year. The wood miser is currently not operational. Workshop participants felt that there isn't much wood being cut now. The big issue is that too much timber has been cut close to the community and that the area is overharvested.

However, there is potential for some commercial timber harvests in the future. Frank Edwards discussed Aklavik's Designated Gwich'in Organization's (DGO) plans to repair the wood miser and commercially produce pilings for construction purposes. This operation would not cut trees near the community.

## **Aklavik Forest Use Planning**

Workshop participants discussed things that could be included in the Aklavik Forest Use Plan to reduce the number of trees cut near the community. Two different types of approaches were identified: 1) ways to reduce the amount of wood cut; and 2) ways to spread out the cutting.

### Ways to Reduce the Amount of Wood Cut

#### 1. Make use of other sources of deadwood.

There are other sources of deadwood that can be used for firewood instead of live trees. These sources include:

##### a) Driftwood:

The spring flood carries driftwood to the Aklavik area each year from as far away as the Liard River Valley. The amount of driftwood each year changes. Two years ago there was a lot of driftwood and in two days Dennis Arey collected enough firewood for two years. In years where there is a lot of driftwood, a community driftwood haul could be organized.

##### b) Seismic lines:

There are a lot of dead trees along the edge of old seismic lines that would make good firewood.

##### c) Old stumps

There are lots of old tree stumps around popular cutting sites. Some stumps are 2-3 feet high and these could be cut for firewood. Mike Gravel said DRWED staff cut over 1 cord of old stumps from the edge of Big Lake near Inuvik.

##### d) Waste wood from trees cut for pilings

Frank Edwards said the oil and gas industry and homeowners need pilings. This could be a business opportunity for Aklavik. Waste wood from trees cut for pilings could be used for firewood. In Inuvik, trees are cut into pilings with the Nihtat wood miser and the remaining wood is provided free to community elders and people in need. A similar project could be set up in Aklavik.

##### e) Burned areas

Trees killed by fire could be collected for firewood if the burn is close enough to community to make the collection worthwhile. It is unlikely that a fire would burn close to Aklavik but it is something to consider for other areas.

##### f) Stumpage fees

The possibility of charging stumpage fees to cut timber for personal use was discussed. Some participants were opposed to collecting fees for subsistence tree harvest. No consensus was reached.

#### 2. Alternative fuels

Alternatives to wood as fuel were discussed. In Fort McPherson, waste heat from the power plant is used to heat some nearby buildings. It may be possible to do the same thing in Aklavik. Another possibility is

the use of pellet stoves. Joe Benoit heard that willows could be used to make pellets and thought that a willow pellet factory could be set up in the settlement. Lawrence Lewis will find more information on alternatives and see if they have any potential for the Aklavik area.

3. Lower fuel costs

Some participants felt that if the cost of oil in the community was lower people would not use as much firewood. Aklavik has a higher cost for heating oil than other communities in the GSA due to privatization of the service. It was felt that either a subsidy or returning to a government-run service would lower costs for community members. Natural gas, a cheaper fuel, may also be available in the future.

### Ways to Spread Out Timber Cutting

1. No cutting area around the community  
Participants suggested that there should be a voluntary 10-15 km no cutting zone around the community to let the forest grow back.
2. Establish community woodlots  
Areas with lots of dry wood should be mapped. The maps could be given to community members. DRWED and/or the RRC should build trails to the areas to encourage people to cut wood there. The RRC and/or DRWED could monitor the status of the woodlots and locate new areas as required.
3. Community firewood harvest  
The community (RRC, RWED, HTC) could organize a bulk harvest of firewood each year. The wood could be collected from farther away from the community and the bulk collection would lower costs. Community service and income support people could provide some labour. The venture would be not for profit and the wood could be sold to cover the costs of the harvest. A barge could be used in the summer to bring the wood to the settlement. If there is lots of driftwood one year, a bulk harvest of driftwood could be organized.

### **Other Forestry Issues the Plan Should Address**

#### Cutting around waterbodies

Workshop participants felt that trees leaning over waterways and lakes should be cut, but that it is important to clean up the branches and burn them. Branches and debris that fall into the water clog creeks and block fish movements. Trees should not be cut from narrow banks dividing waterways. This can increase erosion during spring flood and cause changes in channels and lakes.

#### Cabins and trapping areas

Participants are concerned that family and traditional use areas are not being respected as they were in the past. It was felt that trees should not be cut within 5 km of someone else's cabin. A trapper's permission is required to cut wood in their trapping area.

#### Selecting trees for firewood cutting

Workshop participants felt that only dry or dead trees should be cut for firewood. Many of the trees being cut near Aklavik for firewood are small live trees. It is important to leave these trees so the forests around the community can regrow. Also, tall straight trees that would be good for logs should not be cut for firewood.

#### Community education

The success of the Aklavik Community Forest Use Plan depends on good community education. Community members must be informed about the Plan, the importance of forestry planning around Aklavik, and the reasons for the timber cutting regulations and guidelines. The Plan should be simple and easy to read. Copies of the Plan should be made available to community members. Plain language posters and pamphlets should also be produced that explain guidelines for timber cutting and the importance of forest management.

It is important to reach the youth in the community. Teaching materials and activities should be prepared about forest management and provided to the schools.

### Economic Opportunities

There has been a lot of talk in the last few years about developing forest products besides lumber and pilings that could provide economic opportunities. A forest product development workshop should be held to educate community members about commercial opportunities for non-timber forest products. Non-timber forest products include things like berries, mushrooms, moss, and crafts.

### **Other Discussions**

#### Replanting

Mike Gravel (Manager of Forests, DRWED) discussed the department's tree replanting program around the community of Aklavik. In 1999, 300 trees grown from Norman Wells seed were planted in a field near the town dump. In September 1999, white spruce cones were collected from Inuvik uplands, Inuvik-Aklavik delta, and Fort McPherson. These cones were sent to the Smoky Lake Facility to remove and store the seeds. DRWED will receive 1000 trees grown from Inuvik uplands seed in 2000. Mike Gravel asked that the community identify priority areas around the settlement for replanting. Workshop participants discussed the possibility of setting up a greenhouse to grow tree seedlings for replanting efforts. Mike explained that given the low price of tree seedlings and the high costs involved to set up a greenhouse, it is unlikely that growing tree seedlings alone would make money.

### Timber Permitting

Community members are frustrated with the current DRWED and GLA timber permitting system. Workshop participants talked about how timber permitting could be improved and made the following recommendations:

- Change word “permit”  
The word permit makes community members feel that they are being policed. This is causing some of the bad attitudes towards timber permitting in the community.
- One issuing office for permits  
All timber permits should be given at the same office in a community to make things easier for community members. The chosen office would coordinate the timber cutting authorization process between the different governments (GNWT, Gwich’in, and Inuvialuit).
- Report personal cutting instead of applying to cut  
The community would find it easier to report where and how much wood they have cut instead of guessing where and how much wood they will cut.
- Information sharing  
DRWED and GLA should share the timber permit information with the RRC.
- Community Education  
The community has been educated about the current timber cutting process but the reasons for timber permitting need to be clearly explained.

### **Workshop Mapping**

Community participants mapped the following areas during the workshop on 1:50,000 maps. The areas were digitized with ArcView 3.2.

- Overharvested area around the community of Aklavik (map 1)
- Potential community woodlot areas (map 2)
- Cabin locations (map 3)



Dennis Arey (Aklavik HTC), James Greenland (Ehdiitat RRC), James McDonald (Ehdiitat RRC), and Frank Edwards (Aklavik DGO).

### **Evaluation of Potential Community Woodlot Areas**

On March 15, 2000, Jennifer Walker-Larsen (GRRB), Jennifer Shaw (GRRB), and David Edwards (Ehdiitat RRC) evaluated the potential woodlot areas and assessed the forests in the Aklavik area during a helicopter flight. The flight was videotaped to record the general condition of the forests near Aklavik and areas with lots of standing deadwood were recorded (Map 4).

### **Aklavik Forest Use Planning – Next Steps**

1. A draft of the Aklavik Forest Use Plan will be prepared by GTC, GRRB, and DRWED staff by April 30, 2000.
2. GTC, GRRB, DRWED, and RRC will work with Inuvialuit and other community members to gain support for the plan during the summer of 2000.
3. The RRC will host a community meeting to discuss the draft and collect community input in September, 2000.

Figure 1: Map of overharvested area around the community of Aklavik identified by workshop participants.



Figure 2: Map of potential woodlot areas near Aklavik identified by workshop participants.

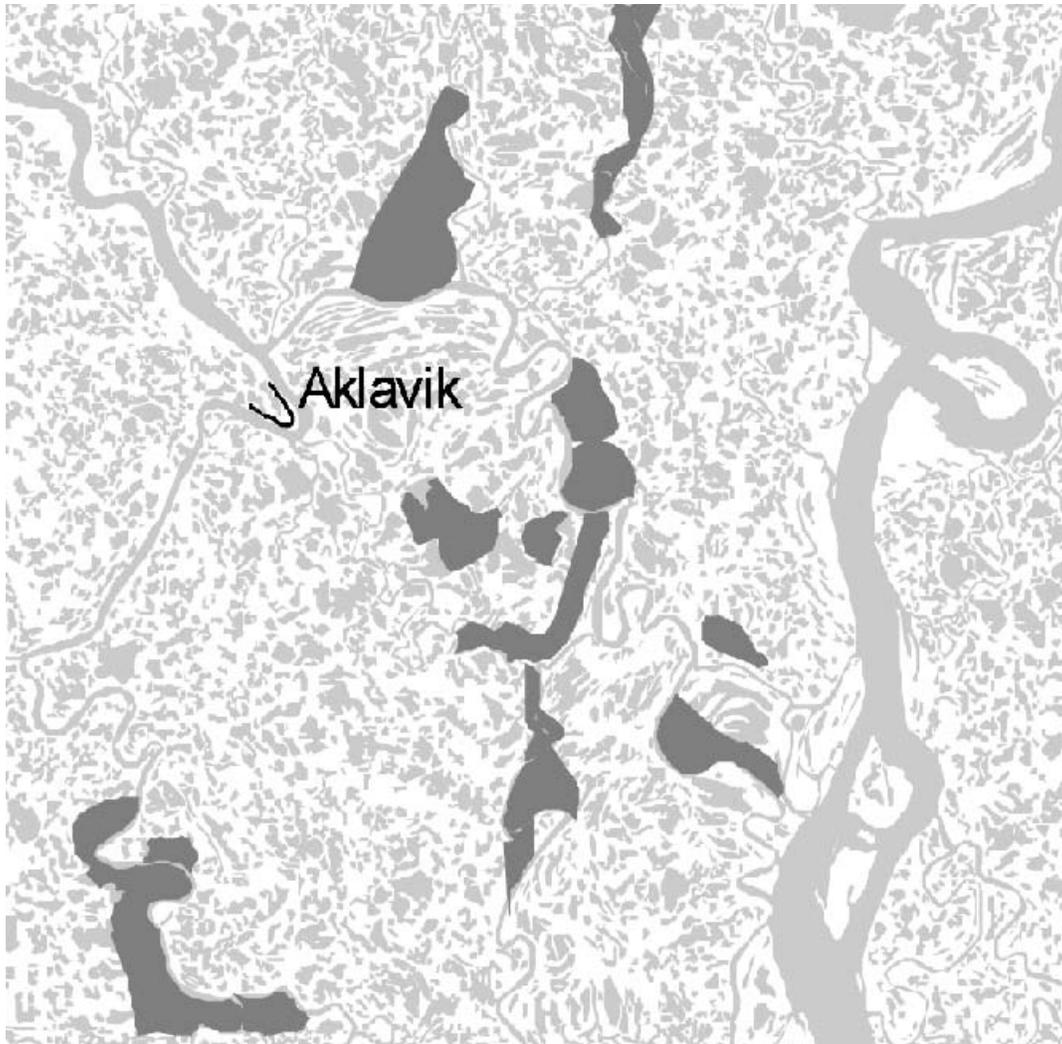


Figure 3: Map of cabin locations around the Aklavik area.



1. James McDonald
2. Dougy Irish
3. Moose Ker School Cabin
4. John Firth
5. Freddy Greenland
6. Danny Greenland
7. Steven Bonnet Plume
8. Scouts Cabin
9. Teachers Cabin
10. Mabel Firth
11. George Kunnizzie
12. Alfred Semple
13. Mary Kendi
14. Freddy Greenland
15. George Edwards
16. Charlie Furlong
17. Ben Mitchell
18. Arthur McLeod
19. Art Furlong
20. George White
21. Eddie Greenland
22. Lizzy Simpson
23. Dean McLeod
24. Joe Benoit
25. Freddy Kendi
26. John Carmichael
27. Dolly McLeod
28. Allen Koe
29. Renie Stewart
30. JJ Stewart
31. Eddie McLeod
32. Knut Lang Camp
33. Charlie Stewart
34. Dale Semple
35. Buster McLeod
36. Robert Semple

Figure 4: Map of areas with good potential for community woodlots identified by the GRRB and RRC during a helicopter flight on March 15, 2000.



**Appendix A: Workshop Participants**

Fanny Greenland (Ehdiitat RRC)	Jennifer Walker-Larsen (GRRB)
James Greenland (Ehdiitat RRC)	Jennifer Shaw (GRRB)
James McDonald (Ehdiitat RRC)	James Edwards (Community Delegate)
David Edwards (Ehdiitat RRC)	James R Edwards (Community Delegate)
Frank Edwards (Aklavik DGO)	Fred Kendi (Community Delegate)
Dennis Arey (Aklavik HTC)	John Carmichael (Community Delegate)
Mike Gravel (DRWED)	Allen Koe (Community Delegate)
Lawrence Lewis (DRWED)	Thomas Stewart (Community Delegate)
Ian McLeod (Aklavik DRWED officer)	Steven Bonnetplume (Community Delegate)
Joe Benoit (GLA)	

DGO	Designated Gwich'in Organization
DRWED	Department of Resources Wildlife and Economic Development, GNWT
GLA	Gwich'in Land Administration
GRRB	Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board
HTC	Hunters' and Trappers' Committee
RRC	Renewable Resource Council

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