



Cabin Creek Timber Harvest Plan

2026



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Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary	1
1.1	Intergovernmental Relations with First Nations.....	2
2	Collaborative Forest Resources Management Planning.....	2
2.1	Collaborating with First Nations.....	2
2.2	Kaska Rights	3
2.3	Personal Use Harvesting.....	4
2.4	Sustainability and Integrated Resource Management.....	4
2.5	LFN Interim Protected Lands.....	5
	Figure 2: Cabin Creek THP with Rural (pink) and Site Specific (Green) IPLs	6
3	Forest Resources Information	7
3.1	Location and Setting.....	7
	Figure 1: Cabin Creek THP located within the Poison Lake Burn	8
3.2	Ecoregion	8
3.3	Forest Stand Composition	9
3.4	Forest Health	9
3.5	Economics of timber supply	10
3.6	Soil Conservation	11
3.7	Hydrology.....	11
	Figure 3: Wetlands within the Poison Lake burn.....	13
3.8	Riparian Management.....	13
4	Wildlife, Habitat and Other Values	14
4.1	Wildlife and biodiversity.....	14
	Figure 4. Poison Lake burn with recorded location of Little Rancheria herd.....	15
4.2	Valued Wildlife Components.....	16
4.3	Wildlife Habitat and Mitigations.....	16
4.4	Heritage Resources	17
4.5	Trapping and Fur Bearers.....	18

Cabin Creek Timber Harvest Plan

5	Fuelwood Harvesting Overview and Methodology.....	19
5.1	Licencing Process for Fuel wood Harvesting	19
5.2	Schedule for Timber Harvesting.....	19
5.3	Timber Harvesting Methods	20
5.4	Access Management Considerations.....	20
5.5	Access Management Plan	21
6	THP Map and Volume Table	22
6.1	Estimated Fuel wood and Timber Volume	22

1 Executive Summary

The Government of Yukon - Forest Management Branch ("FMB") and Liard First Nation ("LFN") recently benefited from a collaborative effort to salvage timber resources from the Scoby Creek burn area. A similar opportunity exists in the 730 hectare ("ha") Cabin Creek Timber Harvest Plan ("THP") which is within the 27,800 ha, 2018 Poison Lake burn.

FMB and LFN have started and will continue the development of this THP with a view to ensuring that timber salvage harvest operations in the Cabin Creek area minimizes, and where possible avoids, harms to the exercise and enjoyment of Kaska Indigenous rights asserted by the Kaska ("Kaska Rights"). Further, FMB is committed to working with LFN through the permitting and authorization process to identify and mitigate and otherwise accommodate for potential impacts to Kaska Rights.

LFN has its own process of independent assurance to determine whether the exercise of Kaska Rights remains meaningful. Post and during harvest, LFN and FMB may collaborate on research or other processes to help to determine effective ways of accommodating Kaska Rights impacts and where implemented processes were not effective. FMB recognizes that it must fulfill its constitutional duties to consult with LFN deeply, meaningfully, in good faith and with the goal of reconciliation.

The THP area covers an area of approximately 730 ha and overlaps with the most north-easterly portion of the 2018 Poison Lake burn. The THP is located adjacent to kilometre 54 of the Robert Campbell Highway, approximately 44 km northwest of Watson Lake. The THP will be accessed from an existing gravel pit and planned forest resources roads. The area has a moderate volume of merchantable timber suitable for use as fuel wood with a limited amount of larger diameter timber that has potential to be used as sawlogs or building logs. The activities proposed in this THP include the harvest of dead standing and downed timber for use as fuel wood, sawlogs and building logs, with some incidental harvest of green trees.

This THP has been prepared to meet the requirements of the *Forest Resources Act*, SY 2008, c. 15 ("FRA") and *Forest Resources Regulation*, OIC 2010/171 ("FRR") and evolving LFN policies, procedures and decision-making processes. Under the FRA and FRR, a THP is required prior to the issuance of any timber harvesting licence or forest resources permit that authorizes harvesting greater than 25 cubic metres (s. 29(4)(d)(ii) of the FRA). Comments received during the assessment of this plan will be considered prior to developing and approving the final THP.

In addition to meeting Yukon statutory obligations, an objective of this THP is to advance the planning process for commercial timber harvesting, and where feasible, for personal use and Kaska Rights-related timber harvesting activities. This is to be achieved by providing a short-term, interim wood supply while FMB and LFN continue to collaborate on processes that better

enable forestry, forest management and forest stewardship consistent with their respective responsibilities.

This THP is intended to provide opportunities for FMB and LFN to continue exploring ways in which they can act together to fulfill their respective responsibilities associated with sustainable forest management, forest planning, forestry and other public government interests.

1.1 INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS WITH FIRST NATIONS

LFN and FMB have begun to collaborate in the development of a THP for the Cabin Creek area in novel ways. Both LFN and FMB assert responsibilities to manage, plan and make decisions about forests and forestry. FMB does so through the direction provided by the *FRA* and *FRR* and the *Constitution Act, 1982*, s. 35(1). LFN does so by asserting a Kaska Right, and by policy identifying the need to achieve independent assurance that Kaska Rights will remain meaningful throughout the planning, harvesting and regeneration periods, and to identify where decisions or activities have failed to do so. Independent assurance could include, for example, LFN's partnership in the development of a timber harvest plan, site visits and harvest areas selections, or research and monitoring to better understand how forestry operations may affect Kaska Rights. Such research could involve a variety of methods that LFN and FMB may collaborate and decide upon.

This intergovernmental partnership between LFN and FMB sets the stage for the work required to revise forest management and planning at multiple levels. While both governments continue work on improved THP development and implementation processes for southeast Yukon, this THP aims to minimize, avoid or mitigate, to the extent feasible, impacts to Kaska Rights, while achieving the plan objectives and working towards reconciliation.

2 Collaborative Forest Resources Management Planning

2.1 COLLABORATING WITH FIRST NATIONS

This THP is situated within the area that the Kaska Nation – which includes LFN, Daylu Dena Council (a branch of LFN), Ross River Dena Council, Dease River First Nation and Kwadacha Nation – has identified as part of Kaska Traditional Territory (“Kaska Territory”). FMB notified all Kaska First Nations of the intent to develop a timber harvest plan. FMB and LFN recognize that co-development of THPs offers both governments ways to ensure the Yukon and LFN public government responsibilities are enabled by the joint development, assessment, approval and implementation of THP's.

Through ongoing reconciliation efforts with LFN and other Kaska First Nations, FMB aims to develop a deeper understanding, appreciation and respect for Kaska Rights, laws and values.

This partnership between LFN and the Government of Yukon sets the stage for the work required to revise forest management and planning at multiple levels. This THP aims to ensure impacts to Kaska Rights are minimized, avoided or mitigated, while achieving the plan objectives and working towards reconciliation.

LFN priorities include maintaining, managing and harvesting moose and caribou populations, as well as trapping opportunities and other traditional pursuits, including a complex bundle of Kaska Rights that are entwined with those activities including the transmission of inter-generational knowledge. Additional mitigations that would help to maintain Kaska Rights will also be identified through the site planning for specific sites and LFN's public government involvement in forest resource management, planning, and tenure processes.

Kaska Rights to hunt and trap rights are supported by an abundance of historic, ethnographic and anthropological documentary evidence, going back at least as far as the journals and writing of Robert Campbell and other early explorers in the mid 1800's. The significance of this understanding is to illustrate that accommodating Kaska Rights to trap and hunt rights involves understanding and commitments that go beyond standard operating procedures and Yukon laws of general application. FMB and LFN are involved in pursuing mutually satisfactory solutions to these challenges, which begins with achieving a better understanding of the complex bundle of Kaska Rights and notions of Kaska lands management and jurisdiction as they apply to forest resource management.

As resources are available, both governments look forward to co-developing studies and other research that independently give all parties assurance that the sustainability principles and meaningful Kaska Rights assurances successfully achieve their objectives.

2.2 KASKA RIGHTS

Kaska Rights are exercised by people belonging to the Kaska Nation and protected by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. While Yukon acknowledges that Kaska members assert Indigenous rights within the Yukon, these rights have not been subject of formal recognition or agreement by Yukon.

LFN advises that Kaska people continue to harvest forest resources and exercise a complex bundle of Kaska Rights which rely on intact forest ecosystems. LFN has informed Yukon that their citizens claim Kaska Rights within parts of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and British Columbia. LFN further informs Yukon that from their perspective, Kaska rights include, but are not limited to: harvesting big and small game, furbearers, fish, birds and other creatures for food, medicine, art and culture and trade and commerce. LFN has informed Yukon that Kaska Rights are not limited to harvesting or land use, but include governance, law-making, land and resource planning, decision-making, economic systems, education, culture, and enforcement.

From LFN's perspective, the exercise of Kaska Rights are not meaningfully accommodated by the FRA. This concern was raised by LFN when the legislation was enacted and again when it was amended. This remains an unresolved issue for LFN, and in LFN's view, requires further work in partnership with Yukon to ensure Kaska Rights are respected and territorial decisions are guided towards being constitutionally justified.

In the meantime, LFN Lands and FMB have attempted to find ways of accommodating Kaska Rights during timber harvesting through measures agreed to in the Cabin Creek THP and any forthcoming access management plans. While this THP is not intended to recognize or affirm the existence or scope of specific Kaska rights, Yukon acknowledges the importance of considering Kaska Rights and interests during the planning process. Measures have been included, in part, to avoid or mitigate potential impacts on the exercise of Kaska Rights through independent assurance processes engaged in by LFN.

2.3 PERSONAL USE HARVESTING

LFN has informed Yukon that their citizens harvest a wide variety of forest resources in their exercises of Kaska Rights. An access management plan should consider and identify how the use of the THP area will enable the ongoing exercises of Kaska Rights including continuing the harvesting of forest resources. Several designated personal-use fuelwood ("PUFW") harvesting locations are currently identified near Watson Lake and are available at yukon.ca/en/personal-firewood. In consideration of safety issues with increased access while commercial harvesting operations are active, PUFW opportunities may be limited within the THP.

2.4 SUSTAINABILITY AND INTEGRATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A Forest Resources Management Plan ("FRMP") has not been approved in the southeast Yukon portion of the Kaska territory. LFN maintains that the lack of a FRMP limits effective forest management and requires a precautionary approach. LFN emphasizes the importance of co-developing land and resource planning initiatives to give both governments assurance that they can support the planning outcomes and that Kaska Rights will remain meaningful.

In the absence of a completed FRMP, a THP must take into account various sustainable forest management principles as required by the FRA and FRR. This THP also considers measures required for the continued meaningful exercise and enjoyment of Kaska Rights.

The purpose of the FRA is to promote the sustainable use of forest resources for the benefit of current and future generations by ensuring that the environmental, economic, social and cultural interests of all users of the forest are considered with the need to promote the health of forests (s. 2 of the FRA). Sustainable forest management has been defined by the Canadian Forest Service (2001) as:

management that maintains and enhances the long-term health of forest ecosystems for the benefit of all living things while providing environmental, economic, social and cultural opportunities for present and future generations.

In this THP sustainable forest management also requires that forestry be done in ways that allow for the continued meaningful exercise of Kaska Rights.

This THP provides economic opportunities for timber harvesting while affecting a relatively small portion of a wildfire killed boreal forest. Licenced timber harvesting activities permitted within this THP would be limited to the removal of dead and downed timber and incidental harvest of green trees. Harvest activities will be, to the extent possible, limited to those that are likely to have minimal long-term impact on the quality and function of the ecosystems in this area and are least likely to impact the exercise and enjoyment of Kaska Rights.

It is often not possible to identify all the values within a given area during the THP planning process. Many values such as wildlife features are dynamic or difficult to identify during the planning stages of a THP. FMB has standards and guidelines to direct the actions of operators when additional values are identified during site planning, harvest block and road layout, and harvesting operations. All the standards and guidelines that apply to forest operations in the Yukon and within this THP can be found at Yukon.ca/forestry-policies-standards. FMB and LFN may collaborate post-harvest to determine what was effective.

2.5 LFN INTERIM PROTECTED LANDS

Interim Protected Lands (“IPLs”) are areas within the Yukon that were withdrawn from disposal to facilitate the settlement of a Yukon First Nation claim under the previous Umbrella Final Agreement treaty process. As such, IPLs represent areas of significance to LFN and are considered by YG when making decisions that may affect these lands and the exercise of Kaska Rights they support. These withdrawals continue to be preserved while discussions between the Government of Yukon and LFN regarding LFN’s land and resource interests are occurring, including the development of THP’s. Therefore, subject to any contrary terms included in the Order in Council that withdraws the land from disposition, the Government of Yukon is prevented from selling, leasing or otherwise providing someone else with exclusive rights to the identified land. IPLs are currently protected by Orders made under the Yukon’s Lands Act, the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act, the Quartz Mining Act, the Placer Mining Act and the Oil and Gas Act, and are protected from transfer to a third party for the purposes of a land disposition and entry for the purposes of locating a claim or prospecting. There are exceptions in place for activities related to timber and quarry dispositions. Easements, licences or permits related to utility lines and rights/claims that existed prior to the lands being protected are also not subject to this protection. Although forestry and quarrying are possible on IPLs, the Government of Yukon has obligations

Cabin Creek Timber Harvest Plan

to consult and when required accommodate LFN regarding potential adverse impacts to Kaska Rights that may stem from these activities.

There are two types of IPLs in or adjacent to the Cabin Creek THP area, a large Rural (R) block and two Site Specific IPLs. LFN advises that R-blocks are larger areas reflecting a broad, common LFN interest and the Site Specific blocks reflect a specific Kaska interest and often represent a particular family or Clan interest. From LFN's perspective, that fact in itself is significant and needs to be factored into Crown consultation. Figure 2 below shows these IPLs. The R block IPL is pink and the Site Specific IPLs are green.

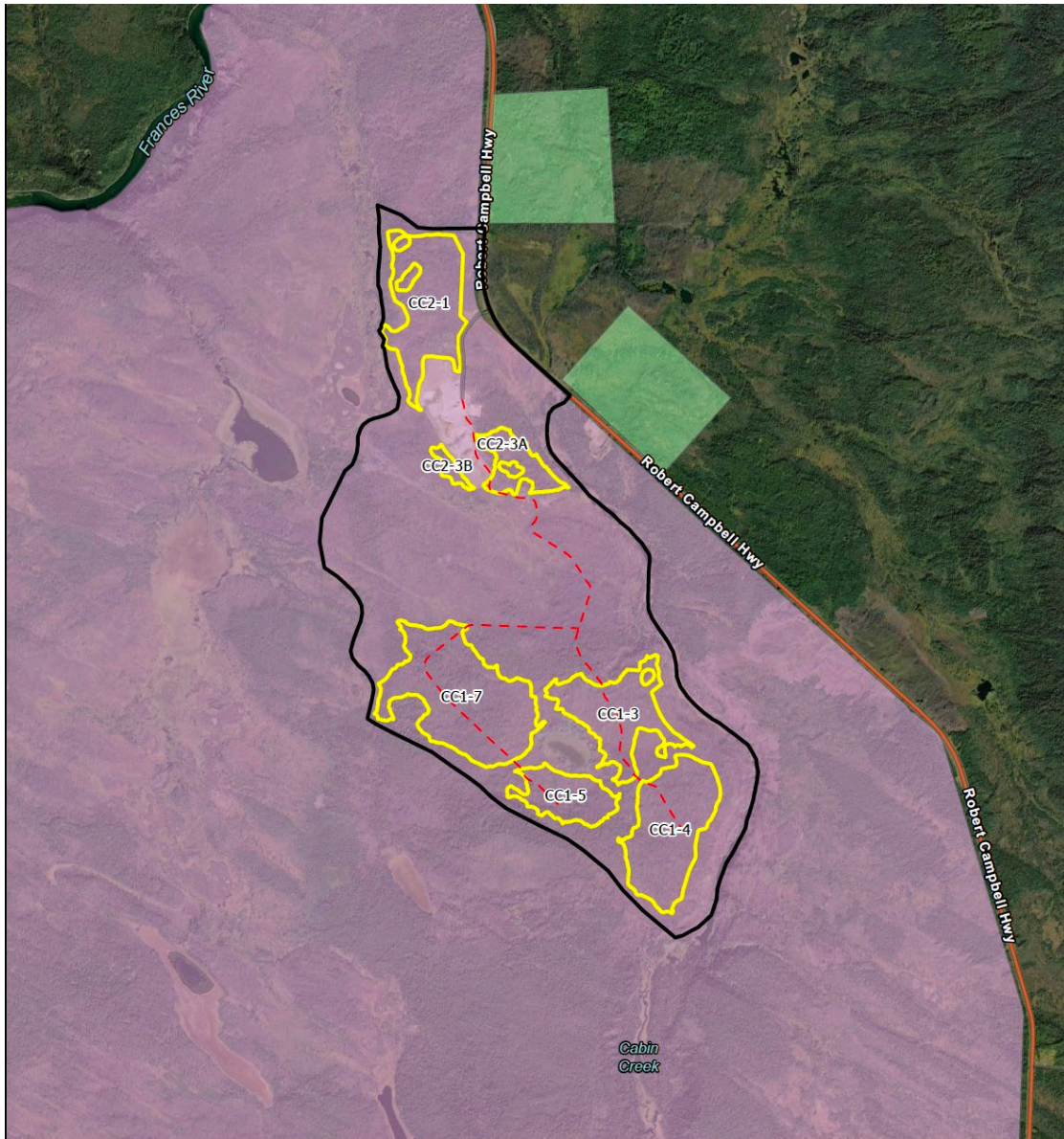


Figure 2: Cabin Creek THP with Rural (pink) and Site Specific (Green) IPLs

3 Forest Resources Information

3.1 LOCATION AND SETTING

The Cabin Creek THP area is within Kaska territory, approximately 44 kilometres northwest of Watson Lake, at approximately kilometre 54 of the Robert Campbell Highway. The areas to be harvested in this THP are located west and south of the highway. The THP area is within the northern portion of the 27,800 ha, 2018 Poison Lake burn area.

The Poison Lake area encompasses the confluence of four major rivers: the Liard, Rancheria, Meister and Frances Rivers and is described by LFN as an ancient, historic and current transportation and trade crossroads, anchored by major river systems and overland trails that continue to support the exercise of Kaska Rights.

This proposed THP covers a total area of 730 ha with 246 ha containing merchantable timber and 484 ha of inoperable ground and non-merchantable forest. There is one Operating Unit with 7 blocks proposed for harvest and approximately 7.7 kilometres of access roads (proposed and existing) with an estimated volume of 19,393 cubic metres. Timber volumes related to land clearing for road construction are included in the overall harvest volume as the majority of access will be constructed through timber harvest blocks while the remainder will be through burned-over areas with small, non-merchantable trees. An overview map of this THP area within the Poison Lake burn is Figure 1 below.

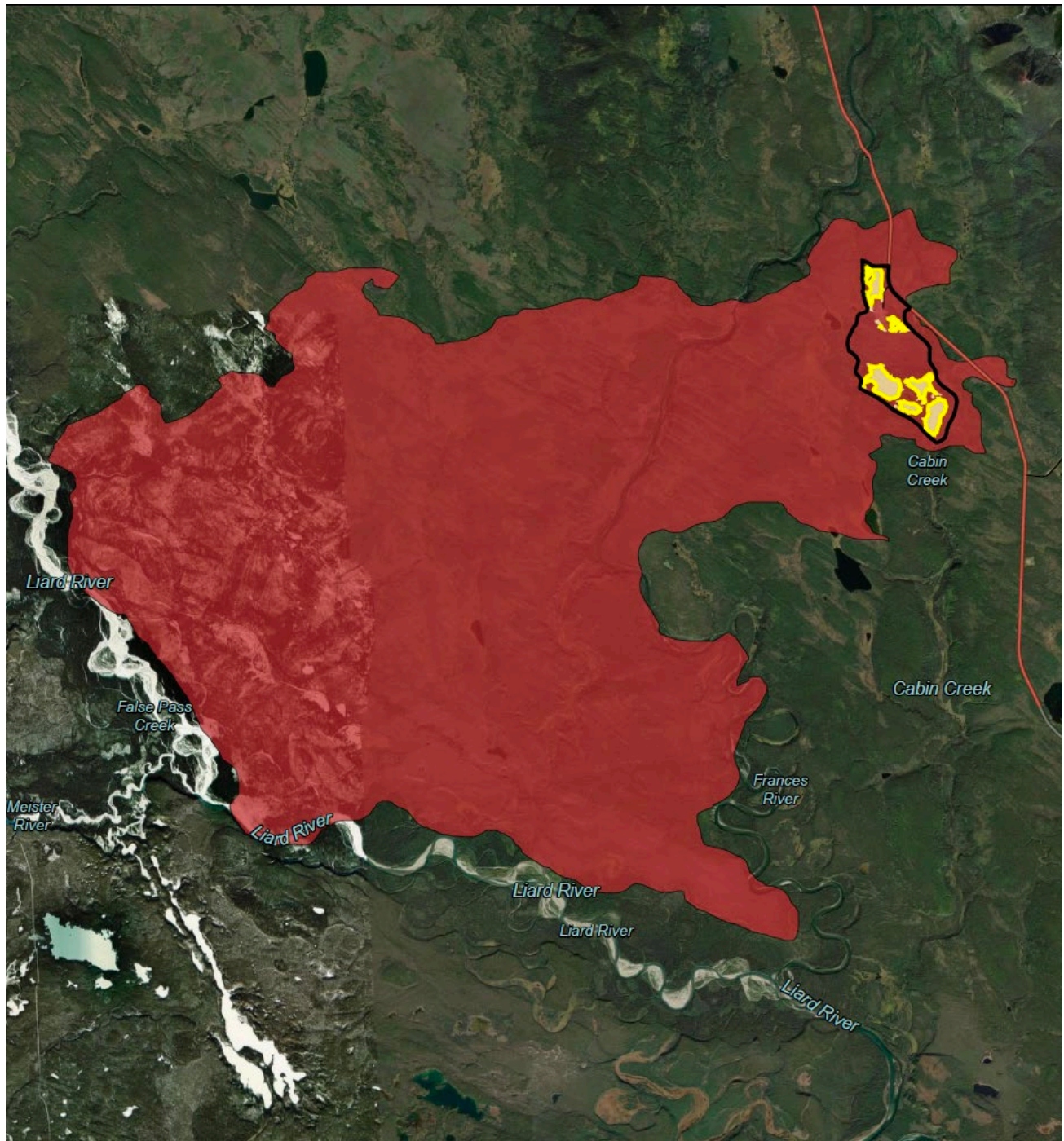


Figure 1: Cabin Creek THP located within the Poison Lake Burn

3.2 ECOREGION

The THP area lies within the Liard Basin Ecoregion within the Boreal Cordillera Ecozone. This area is dominated by extensive boreal forests which benefit from moderate precipitation and

relatively long, warm summers, the result of which is productive forest growth (Yukon Ecoregions Working Group, 2004). Mean annual temperatures are close to -4°C, with large variation between winter (averaging -25°C) and summer temperatures which often exceed 30°C (Yukon Ecoregions Working Group, 2004).

While plant and animal species are typical of most of the Yukon, there are several species that are at the northern limit of their range and seldom found in the territory outside of the southeastern Yukon. Such species include, among others, western toad, white-tailed deer, fisher and pileated woodpecker, as well as several species of dragonflies and vascular plants (Yukon Ecoregions Working Group, 2004).

3.3 FOREST STAND COMPOSITION

The THP is within the vast boreal forest. The boreal forest is the world's largest land biome, found in the northern hemisphere across North America, Europe and Asia. In Canada, it experiences long, cold, dry winters and short, cool, moist summers. This is due to the influence of cold, dry air masses from the Arctic in winter and warm, moist air from the Pacific in summer.

The Poison Lake burn area is dominated by lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), white spruce (*Picea glauca*) and black spruce (*Picea mariana*). White birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and poplar (*Populus* spp.) are also present and especially noticeable as regeneration within burn areas because many dead mature stems have fallen. Following salvage operations, the area will continue to naturally regenerate with pine, spruce, birch and poplar.

Post-harvest monitoring will occur, and silvicultural activities will be implemented if required. Assessment of the regeneration will be carried out by the Forest Management Branch. If stocking standards are achieved through natural regeneration, no additional silviculture activities will be required. If regeneration is below stocking standards, planting of seedlings may occur. Planted seed stock will be locally sourced, and seedlings will be grown locally.

There are scattered areas of lodgepole pine and white spruce that survived the fire, especially in the damp hollows and along the boundary of the THP. The THP boundary excludes most adjacent live forest stands outside the fire boundary. Further stand information will be provided in the site plan of any commercial cutting permit authorized under this THP.

3.4 FOREST HEALTH

FMB monitors forest health in the Yukon and releases reports summarizing the current state of forest health. The mountain pine beetle is one of the 10 major concerns outlined in these reports. A special management zone just south of the Yukon border near Watson Lake is monitored annually to detect any changes in the mountain pine beetle populations. This species is expected

to continue to migrate northward into the Yukon. This THP is in a 2018 burn and the dead trees targeted for harvest will not be affected by mountain pine beetle. However, the surrounding area of live trees may be susceptible to pockets of beetle infestation. There are also minor occurrences of aspen serpentine leafminer, spruce bark beetle, lodgepole pine beetle and northern spruce engraver beetle in the vicinity of the THP.

FMB will follow a risk-based approach to manage all forest health concerns that might arise. The 2022 forest health report can be found at:

yukon.ca/en/science-and-natural-resources/forests/learn-about-forest-health.

3.5 ECONOMICS OF TIMBER SUPPLY

There are three main commercial interests in the timber supply in this THP area: fuel wood, sawlogs and building logs. The intent of the harvesting in the THP area is to satisfy, where possible, the demand for all three.

The supply of fuel wood remains a priority for Yukoners. Commercial fuel wood harvesting is an important source of income in Watson Lake thanks to a consistent demand for fuel wood in Watson Lake and across the Yukon. LFN advises that harvesting personal and community fuel wood helps to satisfy important cultural, social and health benefits for everyone, and enables exercises of their Kaska Rights.

There is a demand for sawlogs and building logs in the Watson Lake area. First Kaska Limited Partnership (First Kaska) has made significant investments in a modern, value-added, wood product manufacturing facility in Watson Lake. The facility requires larger diameter timber to use as sawlogs or building logs. The supply of sawlogs and building logs is an important source of income in Watson Lake, for both Kaska people and other Yukoners. There is a consistent demand for saw logs and building logs in Watson Lake and across the Yukon. The log profile required for log home manufacturing is very rare within the Cabin Creek THP. Recognizing LFN's interest in access to suitable timber for First Kaska, and YG's interest in supporting local value-added manufacturing, reasonable efforts will be made to identify and make suitable timber available for local manufacturing opportunities. This THP is proposed to provide an additional harvest area for fuel wood, sawlog and building log harvesting.

The extent of the availability of the timber that fits this profile is difficult to determine as there are numerous factors to consider beyond height and diameter if a log is suitable as a sawlog or building log, such as taper, sweep, twist, heart rot, checking, excessive limbs, etc. This THP will provide a wood supply comprised mostly of fuel wood, while at the same time clarifying, as feasible, the extent of availability of larger diameter sawlogs that are required for local manufacturing.

Harvesters have depleted fuel wood in some previously established THP areas near Watson Lake, reducing opportunities to harvest, or leaving those that are less desirable. Economic viability of harvest may be due to access constraints or increasing levels of windthrow and rot. Commercial operators in Watson Lake have begun to look for alternative areas for harvesting. This THP is proposed to provide an additional harvest area for fuel wood, sawlog and building log harvesting. This in turn supports associated economic activity within the region.

3.6 SOIL CONSERVATION

The soils in the THP area are of glaciofluvial origin, primarily sandy and gravelly, consisting of loamy sand and very fine sandy loam over sandy and gravelly fluvial deposits. The topography is channeled and terraced. With the exception of wet and very wet sites, these soils generally have a low to moderate soil compaction and puddling hazard and low to moderate soil erosion hazard.

Soil conservation is guided by the Soil Conservation Standards and Guidelines:

<https://yukon.ca/en/yukon-forest-resources-act-soil-conservation-standards-and-guidelines>.

Guidelines for site specific soil conservation will be included in the Site Plan and Cutting Permit and will include:

- Excluding operations in riparian reserve zones adjacent to pothole lakes, wetlands and creeks;
- Minimizing permanent access structures as defined by the length and width of permanent roads and landings;
- Avoiding permafrost areas where possible;
- Avoiding ground-based machine operations on slopes greater than 30 per cent; and
- Avoiding mechanical site preparation.

3.7 HYDROLOGY

Protecting the integrity of soils and their hydrological function is essential to maintaining a healthy and productive forest ecosystem. The Soil Conservation Standards and Guidelines have been established to conserve soil productivity and hydrological function during harvesting operations. All activities carried out under this THP must adhere to these standards, which can be found at [Yukon.ca/forestry-policies-standards](https://yukon.ca/forestry-policies-standards).

Site specific soils information and protection measures will be outlined in the site plan of any commercial cutting permits issued within this THP. While the Soil Conservation Standards and Guidelines can be used to determine the season of harvest based on the hazard ratings of the

soil type within this area, local area drainages within the THP suggests access may be limited to months with frozen ground conditions.

Understanding soil and how water should be used, how it moves on the land, and how to protect both surface water and groundwater is essential in maintaining a healthy and productive forest ecosystem. The knowledge of the Kaska people in this area can help shape how the THP is developed and implemented.

The THP is situated within the Poison Lake burn in the headwaters of the Liard River Basin near the confluence of the Liard, Rancheria, Meister and Frances Rivers (see Figure 3). The inset map shows wetlands from the Yukon Vegetation Inventory 1:40,000 intersecting the fire.

Water from this region flows to the Arctic Ocean via the Liard River to the Mackenzie River. Protecting water quality and hydrologic connectivity is essential for maintaining healthy forest and freshwater ecosystems. Water quality directly influences the suitability of freshwater habitats for species.

Connectivity or flow of surface and subsurface water facilitates the movement of nutrients and species, water availability, habitat heterogeneity and various ecological processes. Physical components of the hydrologic cycle that could be directly influenced by harvesting activities (such as soil compaction and erosion, runoff resulting from road construction and hanging culverts, and soil displacement during harvesting,) have been considered and incorporated in the development of this THP. Importantly, the Cabin Creek plan area does not cross any of the aforementioned rivers.

To protect these components, all activities carried out under this THP will adhere to the FMB standards and guidelines for riparian management on streams and lakes, wetlands riparian management, and soil conservation which can be found at [Yukon.ca/forestry-policies-standards](https://www.yukon.ca/forestry-policies-standards).

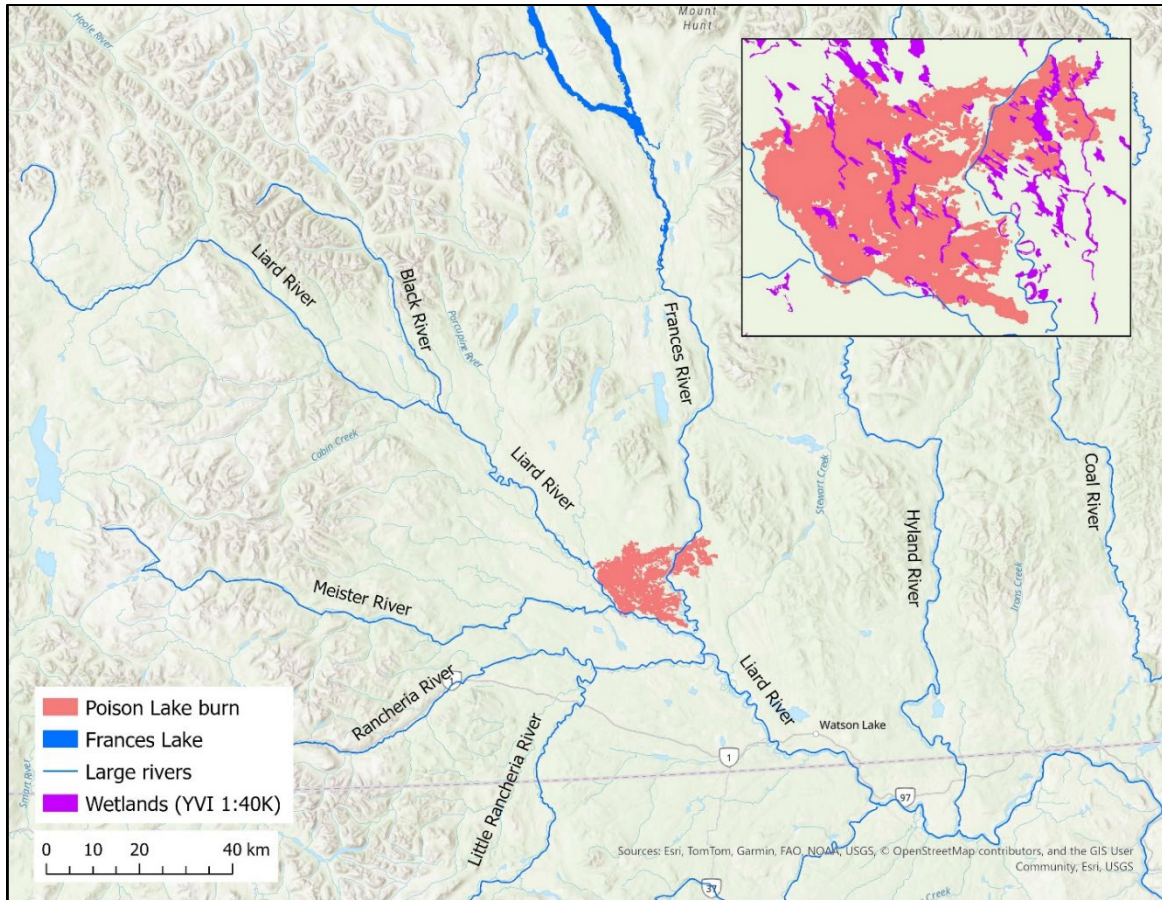


Figure 3: Wetlands within the Poison Lake burn.

3.8 RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT

The southeast boundary of the THP boundary follows Cabin Creek and a chain of small wetlands. Other small wetlands, open-water pothole lakes and seasonal watercourses occur in the middle and southern portions of the THP. The Frances River is located approximately 1.5 kilometres to the northwest of the THP at its closest point. Riparian features have been fully excluded from the operating areas, and retention buffers have been applied, as applicable, that meet or exceed FMB operational standards and guidelines, and in consideration of Kaska knowledge and supporting extensive exercises of Kaska Rights. These buffers represent the riparian reserve and management zones, which together comprise the riparian management area protecting and preserving both the riparian features and wildlife habitat, such as for western toads which may be hibernating on the forest floor nearby. The Riparian Management on Streams and Lakes, and Wetland Riparian Management standards and guidelines can be found at Yukon.ca/forestry-policies-standards.

4 Wildlife, Habitat and Other Values

4.1 WILDLIFE AND BIODIVERSITY

The southeast Yukon is home to a diversity of wildlife, including Species at Risk and species that are culturally important to the Kaska Dena and support the maintenance of Kaska Rights. The THP area is within the Liard Basin Ecoregion, which extends from the southeast Yukon into northern British Columbia. Due to its low overall elevation, moderate precipitation and relatively long and warm summers, trees grow relatively vigorously in the ecoregion (Yukon Ecoregions Working Group, 2004). This ecoregion contributes to an ecological corridor that connects with forested areas in northern British Columbia. As a result, it may be more likely for some wildlife species such as pileated woodpecker, fisher and white-tailed deer to be present in the southeast Yukon than elsewhere in the territory.

Wildlife Overview

Large wildlife species typically found in the vicinity of the Cabin Creek THP include moose, caribou, beaver, wolves, bears and bald eagles, as well as other birds, including migratory species, fur bearers, and small mammals. For example, the federally Endangered Species little brown myotis may roost and forage in forest and over wetlands, and wolverine (*Species at Risk* Act, SC 2002, c. 29, Schedule 3 – Special Concern) are known to occur in the THP area.

Moose

A moose wildlife key area exists along the Frances and Liard River corridors to the southwest of the THP; however, moose are expected to be increasingly common in the area of the Poison Lake burn as understory and tree age and composition mature over time.

Fish and Amphibians

The THP area contains and is adjacent to several wetlands and waterways that support fish and amphibians. The western toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) (listed as Special Concern under the federal *Species at Risk* Act, SC 2002, c. 29, Schedule 3 (“*Species at Risk* Act”)) is known to occur in several locations south of the THP where they breed in open water wetlands, ponds, and shallow lakes. Adults forage in both wetland and upland forest areas and spend the winter hibernating in the forest floor including under debris piles of fallen dead trees. They are likely to breed in at least some of the open water wetlands within the THP area.

The watercourses, open-water pothole lakes and wetlands within and adjacent to the THP also have potential to support fish species, including bull trout (listed as a Special Concern under the *Species at Risk* Act). The southeastern boundary of the THP area is adjacent to Cabin Creek, which is hydrologically connected to the Frances River. Frances River is known to support fish such as whitefish and grayling.

Caribou

The THP area does not overlap with any identified woodland caribou wildlife key area or range, but caribou from the Little Rancheria herd, whose range is to the south of the THP, have been observed in the area. Based on GPS locations for 25 individuals (2020-25), caribou stayed south of the Liard River with one exception. In October 2021, one individual moved to the north side of the burn's southeast toe for three days and used the area circled in yellow; see Figure 4.

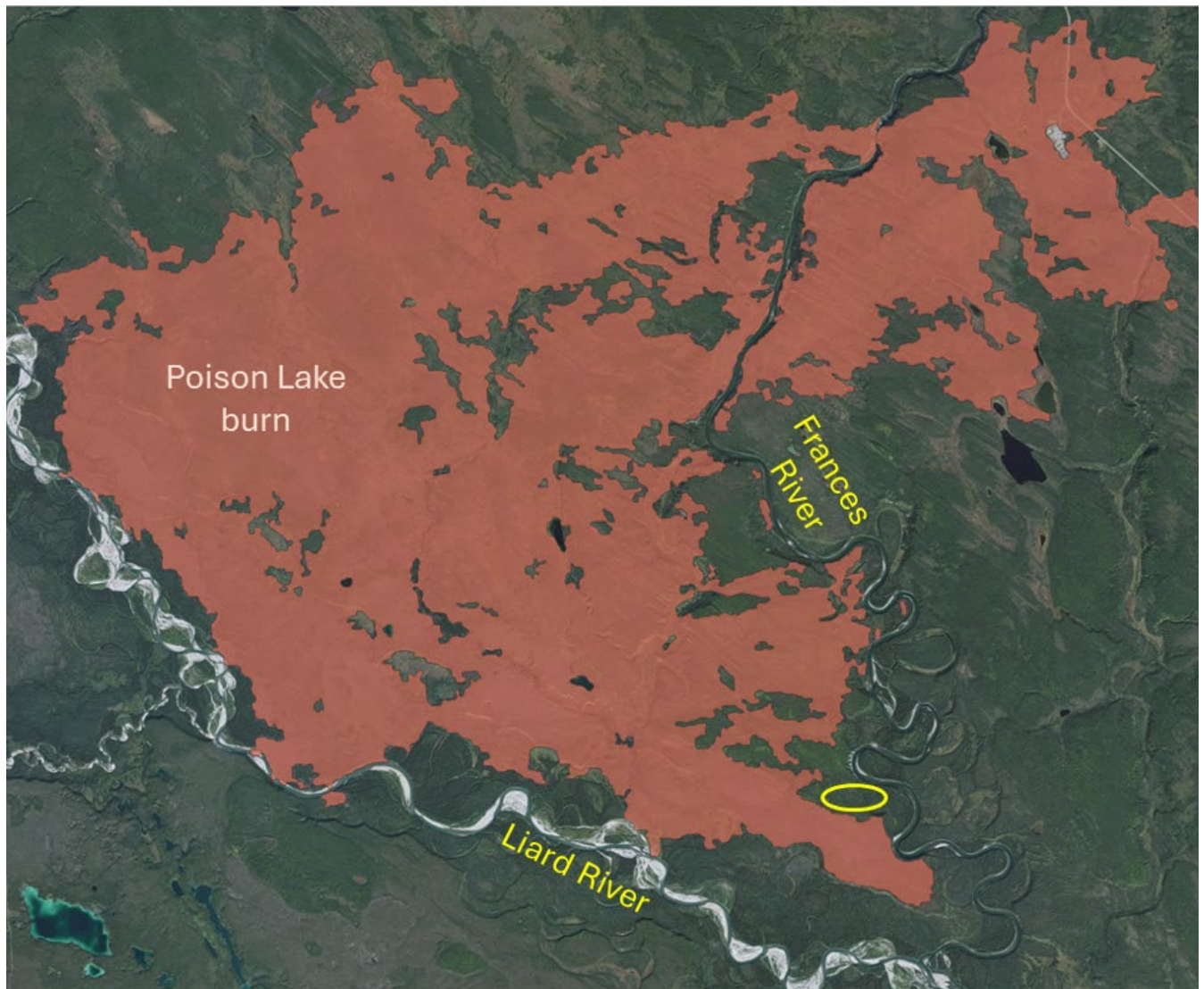


Figure 4. Poison Lake burn with recorded location of Little Rancheria herd

Invertebrates

There is also conservation interest in several species of dragonflies which are known to occur in southwestern Yukon, including ocellated emerald (*Somatochlora minor*), mountain emerald (*S. semicircularis*) and Kennedy's emerald (*S. kennedyi*). The rare western snaketail dragonfly (*Ophiogomphus colubris*) is ranked as somewhere between uncommon and threatened in Yukon and occurs to the south of the THP area. Small pothole lakes, ponds and non-forested wetlands in the THP area may support these species.

4.2 VALUED WILDLIFE COMPONENTS

Valued wildlife components were identified for the THP based on the species and habitats likely to be present within the THP area, the potential for wildlife and wildlife habitat to be impacted by the proposed activities, regulatory requirements, and the importance and value of wildlife to the Kaska Dena and the broader local community. As such, the following valued wildlife components have been identified for the THP:

- Moose;
- Fur bearers (e.g., beaver, lynx, marten, muskrat);
- Wolves;
- Bears (grizzly and black);
- Birds, including migratory species;
- Fish; and
- Species of conservation concern including caribou, little brown myotis, western toad, wolverine, rusty blackbird, barn swallow, bank swallow, five dragonfly species and two vascular plant species.

4.3 WILDLIFE HABITAT AND MITIGATIONS

Timber harvest in the THP area has the potential to affect wildlife and wildlife habitat directly (e.g., through habitat loss, wildlife mortality) and indirectly (e.g., displacement, disturbance from sound, light and noise, changes to water or soil quality, introduction of invasive species). Areas within this THP that have significant ecological value such as riparian areas or areas containing important wildlife features will be protected from harvesting disturbance in accordance with FMB operational standards and guidelines and reflecting LFN sources of Kaska knowledge

There will be no targeted harvesting of standing live trees and shrubs, except where incidental harvesting is required for the clearing of roads, trails and landings. There will be a minimum of 10 per cent overall retention of standing dead trees (heavily burnt stems and snags) and coarse woody debris throughout the THP to promote biodiversity. This retention strategy will help to maintain wildlife habitat features for cavity nesters and other species, and to provide habitat connectivity. In addition, wildlife tree patches have been located and developed between the harvest blocks as part of the overall retention plan.

All activities within this THP will also follow the FMB Wildlife Features Standards and Guidelines designed to protect wildlife species. These standards provide direction in the event of a

significant wildlife feature being encountered during harvest operations. These standards can be found at Yukon.ca/forestry-policies-standards.

Further site-specific mitigations that are not included in FMB's operational standards and guidelines will be developed during site planning and may include, as applicable:

- Initial site reconnaissance during harvest block and road layouts that includes identifying wildlife habitat features (e.g., nests, dens, bat maternity roosts) within the harvest area;
- Avoiding vegetation removals during sensitive wildlife timing windows, or the application of mitigation measures such as migratory bird sweeps and/or routine monitoring of the work area for:
 - Bats (April 1 to September 30); and
 - Breeding birds (May 1 to August 31);
- Preparation of a Spill Prevention and Mitigation Plan;
- Ceasing operations if ungulates are encountered and until the wildlife has moved out of the immediate area, on their own accord;
- Reporting of wildlife observed during operations;
- Information for project personnel to identify Species at Risk, wildlife habitat features such as nests and dens, and reporting requirements for wildlife observations;
- Implementing speed limits on forest resource roads;
- Developing measures in access management plans or site plans for forest resource road and landing rehabilitation; and
- Post-harvest monitoring to determine regeneration success or the need for silvicultural interventions.

4.4 HERITAGE RESOURCES

The definition of heritage resources in the FRA adopts that found in the Yukon First Nation Final Agreements. In the THP context, heritage resources could include: moveable non-documentary works or assemblies of works of people or of nature that are of scientific or cultural value for their archaeological, palaeontological, ethnological, prehistoric, historic or aesthetic features, including moveable structures and objects ("moveable heritage resource"), and an area of land which contains Moveable Heritage Resources, or which is of value for aesthetic or cultural reasons ("heritage site").

LFN identifies heritage resources one form of evidence of Kaska Rights. Consideration of heritage resources alone does not address all potential impact on Kaska Rights. Timber harvesting

activities have the potential to cause harm to heritage resources, including where the presence of heritage resources is yet to be identified. Identifying the location and nature of heritage resources, the potential for activities to cause harm and finding ways to mitigate that harm takes time, significant financial support, technical skills, cross cultural understanding, specific intergovernmental protocols and commitment.

For the purposes of a THP and recognizing the evolving nature and importance of this work, an adaptive management approach will be implemented where new information about heritage resources in a THP area will be shared between LFN and FMB. Where appropriate, new information will be incorporated into decision making processes, which may result in conditions on authorizations or amendments to existing plans.

Heritage resources, and historic resources, as defined by the *Historic Resources Act*, are important to Kaska people and other Yukoners. Their discovery, conservation and preservation are considered when planning any type of development or resource management activity. A heritage resource overview assessment was completed in March 2024, by Ecofor Consulting Ltd., which identified several areas of high heritage potential. A heritage resource impact assessment was completed in the fall of 2025 which further refined and delineated the areas of heritage potential.

Due to the location of these areas, all of which are near the Cabin Creek corridor or otherwise on knolls and terraces near the edge of a harvest block, harvest blocks have been laid out to exclude areas of heritage potential. The exclusion of areas of heritage potential, the application of the FMB Historic and Archaeological Resources Standards and Guidelines, and the use of harvesting methodology described in Section 7 result in the likelihood of impacts on heritage resources largely being eliminated. A copy of the FMB Historic and Archaeological Resources Standards and Guidelines can be found at [Yukon.ca/forestry-policies-standards](https://www.yukon.ca/forestry-policies-standards).

4.5 TRAPPING AND FUR BEARERS

The THP area is overlapped by trapping concession #358. Harvesting will include consideration for the maintenance of the quality of trapping opportunities within the timber harvest planning area. The primary considerations for maintaining the quality of trapping opportunities are:

1. Maintain routes for snowmobile access throughout the timber harvest planning area;
2. Prevent damage and/or interference with trapping equipment and activities, and;
3. To the extent feasible, maintain an abundance of coarse woody debris on the ground and elevated above the ground, as habitat for rodents, small mammals and to provide winter shelter and hunting opportunities under the snow for furbearers.

Effects on trapping-related values will be partially mitigated by the partial cut or patch cut harvesting system. Most of the THP area will remain unharvested under this plan, which is anticipated to provide continued, and improving, trapping opportunities over time.

LFN has informed Yukon that LFN citizens trap fur bearers, hunt, fish, gather food, medicine and other natural resources as exercises of Kaska Rights. Understanding and accommodating for potential harm to Kaska Rights is of paramount concern to LFN.

5 Fuelwood Harvesting Overview and Methodology

5.1 LICENCING PROCESS FOR FUEL WOOD HARVESTING

Prior to commencing commercial fuel wood harvesting activities, operators must obtain a fuel wood licence ("FWL") or a timber resource license ("TRL"), and cutting permit, from the FMB (s. 24(e) of the *FRA*) that meets the requirements of the *FRA* and the objectives of this THP.

The licence and permit will have terms, conditions and a site plan which must be followed during harvesting operations. The site plan will outline detailed information on the timber resources in the area and the harvesting methods to be applied. Site plan requirements are defined in s. 22 of the *FRR*. Conditions that larger diameter sawlogs and building logs be directed to or utilized for log home manufacturing and other valued-added processing will be incorporated into authorizations where appropriate.

Areas and features, including areas reserved from harvest, areas with significant ecological or heritage values, areas identified by LFN where harvesting activities will have the potential to seriously impact the meaningful exercise and enjoyment of Kaska Rights in their preferred manner, as well as associated mitigations, will be considered in the site plan and these factors will be accommodated where feasible.

The *FRA* requires that affected First Nations and the public are notified of licence applications and provided no less than a 30-day period to make representations to the Director, FMB, on each harvest licence application (s. 18 of the *FRA*). LFN considers the notification provisions in the *FRA* to be inadequate for fulfilling Yukon government's constitutional consultation obligation. Both governments look forward to finding ways to achieve the objective of reconciliation and informs more effective approaches to relevant legislation and other policy or regulation.

5.2 SCHEDULE FOR TIMBER HARVESTING

The timing of timber harvesting in the Yukon can be difficult to predict because it is driven by private industry and market of fuel wood, sawlogs and building logs. As economic conditions in

the Yukon continues to change, the demand for fuel wood, sawlogs or building logs will determine when the blocks within this THP will be harvested. Best management practices for wildlife conservation, soil conservation and riparian protection will also help to determine the appropriate timing of timber harvesting.

Detailed annual and seasonal schedules for timber harvesting will be provided in the site plan of each cutting permit issued within this THP. Current demand suggests that most of the timber harvest will occur within the first five years of this THP being approved. Further, recent experience suggests from one to three licensees will apply for authorizations to harvest fuel wood and sawlog-sized timber from this THP. Vehicle traffic within the THP and on the Robert Campbell Highway associated with operations in this THP would be less than 10 additional vehicles per day.

There are opportunities for harvesting operations to occur throughout the year but these would be subject to factors related to soil conservation, wildlife values, heritage values and where feasible, in consideration of the impacts on Kaska Rights. All harvesting is subject to FMB's operational standards and guidelines and may be further informed by LFN policies associated with helping to ensure Kaska Rights remain meaningful.

5.3 TIMBER HARVESTING METHODS

Harvesting operations will focus on salvaging merchantable standing dead and downed stems to be utilized as fuel wood, saw logs and building logs. A range of timber harvesting methods may be used within this THP, including the use of specialized mechanized harvesting equipment such as feller bunchers for felling timber, skidders for forwarding timber to landings, and processors for mechanically processing trees into log lengths at roadsides or landings. Manual methods including hand-falling with a chainsaw and skidding log lengths to roads and with an ATV or snow machine may be used. Other harvesting methods may be proposed in the site plan and will be considered on an individual basis.

Considerations of other harvesting methodologies will be based on how the proposed activities meet the following:

- The requirements and intent of this THP including optimizing utilization and recovery;
- The requirements of *FRA* and *FRR* including soil conservation and riparian protection; and
- The requirements of the FMB operational standards and guidelines.

Timber harvest methods are specified in the site plans and those that are least likely to impact Kaska Rights will be preferred.

5.4 Access Management Considerations

In developing new access to natural resources, the management of access for the public, industry and those exercising Kaska Rights needs to be done transparently and thoughtfully.

The THP area is accessible via an existing road access into an active Highways and Public Works gravel pit at approximately kilometre 53 on the Robert Campbell Highway. While an old, grown-in fire guard from the 2018 Poison Lake burn exists in the area, it is relatively short and will not be utilized as it crosses an area of wet ground.

All proposed new roads to access this THP will be constructed and managed as forest resources roads under the *FRA*. Approximately 6.4 kilometres of new forest resources roads are anticipated to be constructed to facilitate timber harvesting, mostly as in-block access roads. Road development will follow the applicable FMB operational standards and guidelines and will be considered and reviewed with LFN. Roads may require routine maintenance and snowplowing to maintain access and ensure road integrity.

LFN and FMB will develop a more detailed Access Management Plan. The intention of having an Access Management Plan would be to help ensure that any newly constructed roads for timber harvest meet the objectives of a final timber harvest plan. These objectives include supporting continued safe access for the exercise of Kaska Rights during and after the implementation of the THP. An Access Management Plan for the THP may address which, if any, access structures will be left in place to promote Kaska Rights following harvest. All authorizations will be consistent with the timber harvest plan and include provisions to ensure they are also consistent with an approved Access Management Plan. The access management plan should consider and identify how the use of the THP area will enable ongoing exercises of Kaska Rights including continuing the harvesting of forest resources.

If a more detailed Access Management Plan is not approved, access management will proceed, in consultation with LFN, in a reasonable manner as detailed in the following section.

5.5 ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Access Management Plan will include but is not limited to the following:

Signage

Signs will be posted at entrance points to the THP area and will:

- Indicate commercial/industrial traffic when present;
- Indicate the potential of multiple vehicles/users;
- Provide information on access restrictions; and
- Provide contact information for FMB, LFN, and Compliance Monitoring and Inspections.

Access Control

FMB may control access to new forest resources roads through the use of gates, which can minimize environmental impacts and damage to the roads by unauthorized users. Gates can also increase safety to the public and the timber harvesters. Access may be available to LFN citizens when engaged in exercising Kaska Rights in ways laid out in the Access Management Plan.

A gate will be installed at the main access point for all new forest resources roads and will remain locked with access only to authorized timber harvesters and associated personnel. Access may be available to LFN citizens engaged in exercising Kaska Rights.

Access control will be monitored by FMB and LFN to ensure the timber harvest plan objectives are being met, and any approved Access Management Plan may be revised or updated on an as-needed basis.

Snowplowing

Maintaining periodic gaps in snow berms to facilitate wildlife movement, particularly in areas with deep snow and high snowbanks.

Decommissioning

Upon completion of harvesting in the THP, FMB in accordance with any approved access management plan will implement road decommissioning if not completed by an operator under their authorization. Decommissioning of forest resources roads may include:

- Deactivation (providing for natural drainage), by blocking of access to allow for potential future use through reactivation, or:
- Rehabilitation (including ripping or decompressing compacted road surfaces and scattering of organic materials and coarse woody debris over the rehabilitated road surface).

Decommissioning generally occurs within two years of the completion of timber harvesting but may be delayed allowing for reforestation activities.

6 THP Map and Volume Table

6.1 ESTIMATED FUEL WOOD AND TIMBER VOLUME

During the process of developing this THP, FMB conducted an enhanced forest inventory to determine the approximate amount of dead and downed fuel wood available for harvest within this area. LFN and FMB netted down this estimate based on field work in the THP area and recent experience in Cosh Creek and Scoby Creek where anticipated volumes were not achieved due to operational limitations and poor log quality. Original volume estimates from the enhanced forest inventory were netted down by 30 per cent. Approximately 19,393 cubic metres of net merchantable volume is anticipated to be harvested across seven blocks. This volume includes any merchantable timber that will be harvested to access the proposed blocks within the plan.

Similar to the reality of harvesting sawlogs and building logs in a salvage operation (Section 4.5 Economics of Timber Supply), the salvage of timber for fuel wood may not meet these volume expectations. Blown down trees are subject to accelerated rates of decay (rot) and windthrow.

Cabin Creek Timber Harvest Plan

Rot and windthrow as well as the density of non-merchantable trees can also alter the predicted volume recovery and make harvest in some areas uneconomical for some operators.

Cabin Creek THP Block Areas (Ha) and Volumes (m³ and m³/Ha)				
Block Number	Gross Volume per Ha (m³/Ha) from EFI	Block Area (Ha)	Gross Volume (m³)	Net Volume (m³) less 30% Retention
CC1 – 1	100	46.4	4640	3248
CC1 – 2	90	4	360	252
CC1 – 3	120	16.9	2028	1420
CC1 – 4	105	69.7	7319	5123
CC1 – 5	120	21.8	2616	1831
CC1 – 6	120	39.2	4704	3293
CC1 – 7	125	48.3	6038	4226
TOTALS		246.3	27,704	19,393

Figure 5: Cabin Creek THP volume estimates.