



Prime wetland area in the heart of the Mackenzie Valley on the road to permanent protection

Fort Good Hope, NWT, November 21, 2007 – A vast wetland-dominated expanse of Northwest Territory wilderness is on the road to permanent protection following the Federal Government’s announcement of interim protection for Ts’ude niline Tu’eyeta (pronounced Tsoo-den-ı-len Too-yuh-ta). Also called the Ramparts River and Wetlands, the more than 15,087 km² protected area will help maintain the culture and traditional way of life of nearby Aboriginal communities, and some of the most important wetlands and waterfowl habitat in the Mackenzie Valley.

“This is definitely cause for celebration” says Edwin Erutse, President of the Yamoga Land Corporation, the organization in Fort Good Hope that’s been leading efforts to advance Ts’ude niline Tu’eyeta through the NWT Protected Areas Strategy. “Ts’ude niline Tu’eyeta is our community’s most important natural area and has always been identified as an area that should be protected.”

“We are absolutely thrilled that interim protection status has been granted to Ts’ude niline Tu’eyeta,” says Shannon Hazard, Northwest Territories Manager for Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). “For several years, DUC has worked closely with the Fort Good Hope Dene and Métis to see this area become protected. It is great to see the community achieve their wish to protect their most sacred place and the place that generations have used for hunting, trapping, fishing and spiritual renewal.”

Ts’ude niline Tu’eyeta is located approximately 800 km northwest of Yellowknife at the Arctic Circle. The interim protection status safeguards the natural and cultural values of the area by prohibiting all industrial development over the next five years while information needed to make informed decisions about long-term management and permanent protection as a National Wildlife Area is gathered. Protecting this prime representative area of the northern boreal forest will help maintain the north’s biodiversity, cultural values and ecological goods and services in perpetuity, and will allow residents of Fort Good Hope and surrounding communities to maintain a traditional lifestyle for generations to come.

Lucy Jackson, former Chief of Fort Good Hope, helped spearhead the protection process and is excited about the announcement. “The community recognizes that there is high potential for resource development, but believes that some areas are so culturally and ecologically rich that they need to be protected,” Jackson says. “The NWT Protected Areas Strategy allows communities like Fort Good Hope to find a long-term balance between the benefits of economic development and the preservation of ecological and cultural values and traditional land use.”

Ts’ude niline Tu’eyeta has been targeted for protection as a National Wildlife Area by the Canadian Wildlife Service because of its importance to vast numbers of North America’s waterfowl as well as two species at risk: boreal woodland caribou and peregrine falcons. Mountain woodland caribou, grizzly bears, wolverine, moose and aquatic furbearers also depend on this wetland-rich region.

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“The productive capability of this landscape is impressive,” says Eric Butterworth, DUC’s provincial/territorial manager for the western boreal forest. “The wetland systems that flow through this region are critical components to maintain the continent’s migratory birds and contribute towards regulating climate change. The health of the six watersheds that intersect Ts’ude niline Tu’eyeta is important not only for Northerners but all Canadians.”

“We are thankful for the Federal Government’s commitment to Ts’ude niline Tu’eyeta; however, much work remains to be done,” says Larry Innes, Executive Director of the Canadian Boreal Initiative. “The boreal forest is under increasing development pressure. We must strike a balance economically and environmentally. We have learned it is far easier to protect intact systems while there is still opportunity. We must act on that opportunity now.”

DUC is a partner in the Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy, and is working with local communities, the Canadian Boreal Initiative, WWF-Canada, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the federal and territorial governments to secure protection for ecological and cultural values in advance of major development.

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Since 1938, Ducks Unlimited Canada (www.ducks.ca) has conserved, restored and managed wetlands and associated habitats for North America’s waterfowl. These habitats benefit other wildlife and people.

Yamoga Land Corporation (YLC) is the lead community organization advancing Ts’ude niline Tu’eyeta through the Protected Areas Strategy. Elected by fellow residents of Fort Good Hope, the Board of Directors is responsible for most land management decisions concerning Fort Good Hope.

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