

“What We Heard”

Public Open House

Location: Ptarmigan Inn Boardroom – Hay River, NT

Date: January 28, 2015

Time: 7:00pm to 9:45pm

The session was attended by five (5) members of the public and began with introductions by the facilitator and representatives from the GNWT Department of Lands (GNWT-DoL), including a brief description of each person’s background and their role in the development of a Recreational Land Management Framework (RLMF). Following introductions, a representative from the GNWT –DoL gave a short presentation on the RLMF focusing on “where are we, how we got here, where we are going and how you can help”. After the presentation the facilitator lead group discussion through five (5) questions to help draw out local issues and ideas. Feedback from the session is organized by question. A “Parking Lot” was used to capture comments and questions that were important but did not pertain to the five (5) questions.

The Future – In 10 years what should recreational cabin development/use look like?

- There should be a clear understanding of what land is available (or not available) for recreational leases.
- Information that is provided about recreational land leasing (either on a web-page or in other forms presented to the public) should discuss and explain the existing land claim withdraws areas. Have available a map that showed where the interim land claim withdrawals are and provide any high level information about the interim withdrawal.
- Cabins should not exceed a certain size –to be established by the GNWT-DoL. Cabins are not supposed to be houses. (The Taj Mahal is not an acceptable for a recreational cabin).
- Leased cabin areas should be kept clean.
- Clear rules that define the “size” and “use” of Recreational Cabins. This will help prevent people from using their “recreational cabins” as their primary home.
- There should be consistent rules that are applied to all recreational cabin leases – the rules should be accessible for review by the public.
- Sufficient access by road to available recreational cabin lease areas.
- Good lots are available. Good lots are defined as: “Lots that are on a body of water, either a lake or river that has drinkable water.”

New Areas for Cabin Development – What should be considered when planning new areas?

- A mix of “types of recreational leases” would be good, to accommodate different needs (some like a cottage subdivision field, others want to feel more secluded). Two types mentioned include:
 - Group cabin communities – termed as “cabin clusters”
 - Hunting or remote cabin areas – where neighbouring cabins are not close together (usually not in existing cabins sight-line)
- Different policies will have to be created for the different types of recreational cabin leases
- “cluster cabin” areas if at all possible should be close to existing communities, but comprehensive rules and regulations should be in place to deter people from setting up permanent residents in cabins close to town.
- Secluded cabins – there need to be rules that limit what people can develop to access the cabin. For example, building a road may not be acceptable, but a smaller trail could be.

New Lease Allocation – What is the fairest way?

- New surveyed leases or un-surveyed areas open for potential recreational use become available, a ballot draw would be a fair and equitable method for disposition. This would include proper public advertising (not word of mouth advertising).
- The current method of choosing an un-surveyed area and getting a standard size lease is also considered an acceptable method for allocating new recreational lease areas.
- Would like to see a preference for granting leases to NWT residents before non-NWT residents
- Flexibility for the size of a recreational lease parcel would be nice, but there should be limits for maximum and minimum sizes. However, regardless of the size of lease, the structures should still be limited to the size of a small cabin
- The recreational land lease policies should be clear and transparent. Information about process and for acquiring leases and the responsibility for maintaining the leases should be available. Processes that the regional office follows for allocating a lease should be consistent.
- The current system, which feels like a “who you know and when you know” needs to go.

Future Lease Fees – Should all cabin lots be priced the same or should it vary? What should be considered?

- Prices should differ based on the type of access provided. For example, if a road is provided to access a lease, the fees should be different than someone who has a lease that does not have road access.
- Taxation – although it is not handled by the Lands Department, it is connected to the lease and any educational material prepared should address taxation to help people understand that it is a responsibility associated with having a recreational lease.
- Lease fees should consider what the Government pays to develop the lot (i.e. if a road is developed to access the lots that should be reflected in the fees).

- If a lot is deep in the bush with limited access, the lease fee should reflect that it is remote and less valuable – fees shouldn't focus on cost recovery for expensive inspection trips (i.e. flying to a remote lease site is expensive, lease fees shouldn't be set to recover that cost).
- Lease fees should just before the land (not set based on the improvements on the land).

Rules and Responsibilities – What kind of rules and responsibilities should be established?

- There should be rules that deter people from moving to their cabins to avoid the costs of living in town. Clear polices between “Residential and Recreational”
- Size of structure must be “cabin” size (i.e. small footprint)
- There should be minimum and maximum sizes for lease parcels.
- A one-stop-shop for applicants – describes all of the territorial rules (from all departments) for recreational leases (i.e. what are the rules for firesmart, fuel storage etc.)
- Access to a lease must always be maintained (i.e. a lease parcel shouldn't be surrounded on all sides by other leases)
- Set-backs should exist, but they will be different depending on the type of lease area it is (cluster cabins leases will have different setbacks than rural leases).
- In rural, less organized locations, setbacks should be defined and enforced.
- Self-inspection reports, that are standardized could possibly be completed by the lease holder each year and submitted to the lands inspectors.
- Inspections should exist and it should be consistent and on a schedule (i.e. every 2 years an Inspector will be inspecting your recreational lease).
- Create a cabin owners guide to help educate people of their roles and responsibilities as a recreational lease holder.
- Accessibility to recreational leases needs to be considered and regulated.
- Squatters (also referred to as “unauthorized users”)
 - Moving forward the focus should be to deter squatters:
 - Enforcement should intervene when they discover a squatter is constructing a cabin (stop- work order applied) with one of the 2 scenarios
 - If it is possible to acquire a lease for the cabin, the squatter should go through the process and apply for the lease before any further construction can occur.
 - If it is not possible for lease – structure must be removed and the area should be cleaned – if they don't the department will do it.
 - Existing squatters should be dealt with. If it is possible to provide a lease to an existing squatter than that should happen, but their lease fee should include extra charges that reflect the “missed years of paying a fee”. The squatter must also follow the appropriate rules.

Parking Lot Items

- Environmental impacts because of all-terrain vehicles use was noted as a problem that needed to be considered and enforced.