

# Tłıchq Management Proposal – Tree Planting

<b>1. Applicant Information</b>	
Project Title: Reforestation on Tłıchq lands	
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<b>2. Management Proposal Summary</b>	
Start Date: September 1, 2023	Projected End Date: December 31, 2025
Length: 2 years	Project Year __1__ of __3__
Provide a summary description of your management proposal (350 words or less).  <p>Tłıchq Government (“TG”) aims to plant 1 million trees on Tłıchq lands to help combat the effect of climate change related forest fire activity as well as to actively support the regeneration of habitat preferred by Tqdzı and Ekwò in the region. This project is a pilot project (1 million trees is enough to replant 6 Km Sq), through which TG hopes to study the effects of tree planting on habitat restoration time lines, and learn about the process of tree planting on a large scale. TG will be working with project partners and industry experts so as to build</p>	

capacity among Tłıchq̓. The hope is that future planting projects can be carried out by TG utilizing the knowledge and experience gained from this project. Preliminary work on this project took place in October of 2023. This work included the collection of tree cones. The cones were then transported to a processing plant in Prince Albert Saskatchewan to extract the seeds from the cones. The seeds will then be transported to a tree seed nursery in Northern BC where they will be germinated and grown to a size where they can be planted. That growing phase will take place over 2024 so that the seedlings are ready for planting in 2025.

As a result of the forest fires this summer (2023), TG is in the process of determining the areas where the trees will be planted to best meet the aims of this project. Once planting areas are determined, maps will be provided as supplement to this proposal.

Please list all permits required to conduct proposal.

This project is in a preliminary phase. Work is taking place to identify areas for planting, planting camp size and location, and duration of the project. Once this information has been determined, the project will use the thresholds laid out in the applicable acts and regulations to identify the necessary permits.

### 3. Background

Provide information on the affected wildlife species and management issue.

Tłıchq̓ lands and Mq̓whì Gogha Dè Nı̄łłtłèè have experienced significant forest fire activity over the past decade. Many thousands of hectares have been burned in recent years. TG recognizes that forests are fire dependent for regeneration, but recent fires have been more frequent and more intense than Tłıchq̓ Elders report experiencing in the past. As the effects of climate change continue to be felt, continued fire activity is expected in years to come. Fire activity is disruptive to important migration corridors for Tq̓dzı, Ekwò and habitat that supports bio diversity. This is a small-scale pilot project, covering

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6 Km Sq. of previously burned land. It will help us determine how reforestation relates to ecosystem regeneration. Based on preliminary research, including guidance from the United Nations Decade on Restoration (<https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/Interactive/tree-planting-and-ecosystem-restoration-crash-course>) and others, it is our hope that this project will generate many long-term benefits including reestablishing habitat for wildlife, increasing bio diversity, and insuring that forests are healthy and thriving in a way that will protect animals and the Tłıchq culture, language and way of life into the future.

#### 4. Description of Proposed Management Action

Describe the proposed management action, including implementation, location and Tłıchq Citizen involvement.

The management action proposed through this project includes the planting of 1 million seedling on Tłıchq lands. Proposed location is identified on Slide 7 of the attached Power Point Presentation. At this time the proposed site (Unit 1 on the attached map) is to the West of James Lake, however with recent fire activity this summer (2023) planting areas may change as new priorities are assessed.

The activities that have and will take place on Tłıchq lands involved in this project include:

Black Spruce and Birch Cone and Seed Collection (October 2023) – Cones were collected from trees close to the proposed planting areas. Cones were harvested by removing the tops of trees where the cones are located. Trees were not cut down. Harvesting took place by using a saw mounted on a long pole. It was important to this preliminary cone collection this fall so that the first round of seedlings will be ready for planting in 2025.

Planting Prescription Developed (May 2024) – Environmental evaluators from B.A Blackwell and Associates, along with Tłıchq Elders, environmental monitors and DCLP staff, will spend 10 days living on, and traveling on foot through the proposed planting areas. During that time, they will take soil and vegetation samples and will assess the various soil types, moisture levels and topography of the areas. This information will be used along with climate projections, existing maps and existing forest management information to develop a detailed planting

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prescription. This prescription will outline the numbers, species and locations that will result in the best chance of tree survival from a western science perspective. These findings will then be presented to Tłıchq Elders and other Tłıchq Community members for input and guidance on tree planting from a Tłıchq cultural and traditional perspective. This information will then be integrated to create a final planting prescription.

White Spruce and Tamarack Cone and Seed Collection (August 2024) – Cone and seed collection experts will work with a Tłıchq workforce to collect White Spruce and Tamarack cones and seeds to be processed, grown and planted in the summer of 2025. Cone collection areas have been identified near Whatı, however more research is needed to select the exact areas where the White Spruce and Tamarack cones will be collected.

Training – Once the planting prescription is complete, we will be able to determine the number and types of jobs involved in this project. Training needs may include: Environmental monitoring, Camp Cook training, A-Z Trucking, Firearms Safety, Predator Defense, Heavy Machinery operator and maintenance, Tree Planter training. This training will take place throughout 2024 so that Tłıchq citizens have the capacity to fill the jobs needed to complete this project.

Tree Planting - During the summer and fall of 2025, planting camps will be developed to house up to 100 planters and camp staff who will plant 1 million seedlings over the course of 3-4 weeks. These planting camps will be temporary in nature and any equipment that is brought in to support planting activities will be removed when the planting project is complete.

TG will be involved in every aspect of this project. Employment opportunities will be available to Tłıchq Citizens in cone harvesting, environmental monitoring, camp development, transportation, camp staffing and management, planting and project monitoring. 1 million trees is enough to replant 6 Km Sq. The exact locations have yet to be identified and will be identified through the planting prescription process in May of 2024, at which time the WRRB will be provided with updated location information.

Fire Smart planting may also be included in this project based on the interest of the community of Behchokq. Fire Smart planting would involved planting deciduous trees around the community as a way to slow down forest fires that may approach the community in the future. The current scope of the project

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however, does not include any planting on community government of Behchoko Lands, only on Tłıchq Lands.

What are the desired outcomes of the proposed management action?

The desired outcome of this project include:

1. Supporting forest and ecosystem regeneration to rebuild habitat for Tqdzı, Ekwò, and other animals.
2. Combatting the effects of climate change through natural carbon sequestration through tree planting.
3. Supporting the recovery from forest fires in the areas near Behchokò and Edzo following fire activity in the summer of 2023
4. Creating green jobs for Tłıchq Citizens in the region.

What, if any, outcomes may be incidental to the management action?

As TG will be planting trees, grown from seed stock gathered from Tłıchq lands, it is not believed that there is a risk of introduction of new genetic materials. TG is eager to work with its project partners to use this opportunity to study how forests regenerate following tree planting versus forests left to natural regeneration after a fire. This study will be developed with guidance from TG and GNWT researchers.

What monitoring, if any, will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the management action?

For 3 years following the planting activities, project partners will return annually to assess growth and mortality of the newly planted trees. Tłıchq citizens will be involved throughout and will learn how to assess and maintain the new growth forests. After 3 years, trees are considered “Free Growing” and the monitoring and maintenance activities will become the responsibility of TG.

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#### 5. Rationale for Proposed Management Action

Describe the purpose of your proposal and how it will address the management issue.

The purpose of the project is to support the regeneration of habitat preferred by Ṯdzı, Ekw̱ and other animal life in the region which has been affected by the increase in frequency and intensity of forest fires due to climate change. We recognize that this is a pilot project and we are interested in learning more about the effects of 'whole-ecosystem' regeneration on animal life in our region. By planting 1 million trees on Ṯcẖ lands, it is hoped that we will support the return of Ṯdzı, Ekw̱ and other animal life so that they thrive as they once did in those areas. The regeneration of forests on Ṯcẖ lands is essential for Ṯcẖ to be able to practice and pass down to future generations, the Ṯcẖ culture, language and way of life. In the face of increased fire activity, TG feels compelled to take an active role in protecting and supporting life on our land. We are looking at this pilot project as an exploratory project with hopes that it will increase the land management tools at our disposal.

Describe alternatives to the proposed management action and reasons for why these were rejected.

Forests can be left to regenerate themselves, however Ṯcẖ Elders have asked that TG take steps to support the regeneration and creation of Ṯdzı and Ekw̱ habitat. Natural forest regeneration in Ṯcẖ lands includes the growth of Jack Pine first which are not preferred by Ṯdzı and Ekw̱. Where conditions are right for spruce, after 50-80 years the Jack Pine die, allowing for the growth of Black Spruce, White Spruce and other species preferred by Ṯdzı and Ekw̱. By planting Black and White Spruce, Tamarack, Birch and other native plant species immediately after a fire, the time needed to create and restore Ṯdzı and Ekw̱ habitat may be reduced by 50-80 years, and overall the forest may regenerate more quickly. This is a pilot project for 6km<sup>2</sup> to be reforested. The vast majority of forest will continue to be left to natural

regeneration. The recent fire activity this past summer has also led the TG to look seriously as 'FireSmart planting', (planting deciduous trees close to communities as a natural fire break) to help protect our communities. FireSmart planting will be explored as part of this project as well. Overall, we would like to continue learning more about what the broader opportunity may be for ecologically-responsible and sustainable reforestation, and we hope to continue engaging WRRB and WRRB staff (and also GNWT) for advice during this project, and as we explore other potential projects in the coming years.

#### 6. Consultation

Describe any consultation undertaken in preparation of the management proposal and the results of such consultation.

TG has met with representatives of the GNWT, WRRB, and WLWB for early discussions about reforestation ideas. TG is familiar with the processes for applying for permits and will work with the necessary boards and agencies to acquire them as needed.

GNWT officials raised some concerns which TG was able to speak to. For example, GNWT officials were under the impression that TG would be clearing existing Jack Pine trees to plant other tree species. In fact, TG is anxious to start this project so that Black and White Spruce and other seedlings can be planted in the ground ahead of the Jack Pine. TG will not clear existing species to make room for other species. Rather, new locations will be identified where Jack Pine have not yet been established. And we will only be planting trees that match the soil and growing conditions of the planting location.

#### 7. Communications Plan

Describe the management proposal's communications activities and how the Tłı̨ch̨ communities will be informed of the proposal and its results.

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Working with project partners and communications staff at TG, regular updates about this project will be posted on the TG website and social media pages. TG will also be hosting community consultation sessions regularly and will continue to seek the guidance from Tłıchq Elders and Tłıchq Citizens and other community residents during each stage of this project.

#### 8. Relevant Background Supporting Documentation

List or attached separately to the submission all background supporting documentation, including key references, inspection/incident reports and annual project summary reports.

Please see the attached Power Point Presentation and map for more information.

#### 9. Time Period Requested

Identify the time period requested for the Board to review and make a determination or provide recommendations on your management proposal.

We conducted preliminary cone collection activities in late October of 2023. After meeting with project partners in the Spring of 2024, we will have a better idea of the timeline of activities. At that time we will have a full project plan and accurate timelines developed. We will keep WLWB updated regularly as the program plan is developed.

#### 10. Other Relevant Information

If required, this space is provided for inclusion of any other relevant project information that was not captured in other sections.



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TG understands that tree planting on this scale has not happened in Wek'èezhìi to date. TG understands that there could be much interest about this project and its intended outcomes. TG appreciates the input of the WRRB. TG is happy to provide additional information requested however this project is still in the planning phase so at times, information requested may take some time to gather. Any question or concerns are welcome as TG and its treaty and co-management partners move forward with care, excitement and hope as to the benefits this project can provide to Tłıchq Citizens and their way of life; the Tqdzı, Ekwò and other animals whose habitat has been disrupted due to forest fires and to the biodiversity of Tłıchq lands.

#### 11. Contact Information

Contact the WRRB office today to discuss your management proposal, to answer your questions, to receive general guidance or to submit your completed management proposal.

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