

May 24, 2024

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault, Director
Department of Culture & Lands Protection
Tłıchǫ Government
Email: tammy.steinwand@tlicho.ca

Via Email
tammy.steinwand@tlicho.ca

Re: Management Proposal for Reforestation on Tłıchǫ Lands

Dear Ms. Steinwand-Deschambeault:

As per section 12.5.1 of the Tłıchǫ Agreement, the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) considers the above-mentioned proposal, submitted by the Tłıchǫ Government (TG) on April 4, 2024, a wildlife management proposal. The Board understands the goal of the management proposal is to help combat the effect of climate change related forest fire activity as well as to actively support the regeneration of habitat preferred by Tǫdzı (boreal caribou) and Ekwò (barren-ground caribou) in the region.

While this management proposal was submitted seven months after the start date of September 1, 2023, based on the WRRB's Rule for Management Proposals, the WRRB determined to undertake a Level 1 review to ensure Board input. The joint management proposal was posted for public review to the WRRB's website on the Management Proposals page from April 4, 2024 to April 25, 2024. No formal comments were submitted by the public. During their recent May 2024 meeting, the Board reviewed all the information available on the record for this matter and approved the management proposal as a pilot project only for 2024 and 2025 (Motion #921-16-05-2024).

The WRRB provides the following recommendations and requirements related to the implementation of the pilot project in 2024 and 2025:

- Elders shall be consulted about planting prescription, reforestation location, and timing and location of seed collection;
- The WRRB shall be updated when significant changes are made to the pilot project, including changes to the site locations and timing of work;
- Steps shall be taken to ensure bird nests are not disturbed on the ground or in trees. Samuel Hache, Environment and Climate Change Canada, should be contacted for information on working within the migratory and nesting bird seasons. A mitigation measure shall be developed regarding bird and bird nest disturbance and shared with the Board;
- Steps shall be taken to ensure invasive plant species are not accidentally brought in during replanting. A plan shall be developed for mitigating invasive species and shared with the Board;
- All reports related to this work shall be shared with the WRRB;
- Following the 2024 field season (before summer 2025), a presentation to the WRRB shall be made by a project member in-person at a board meeting. Additionally, a report on the work completed, including results and outcomes (both positive and negative), information provided

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by elders, and the species of birch collected, as well as a detailed work plan for 2025 shall be provided to the WRRB;

- Following the 2025 planting season, a presentation to the WRRB shall be made by a member of the project team in-person at a board meeting. Additionally, a report on the work completed, including results and outcomes (both positive and negative), shall be provided to the WRRB. An update on the removal of the camp location shall also be provided; and,
- In order to have a reforestation management proposal, including monitoring of the plot, approved for July 2026, the WRRB will need a management proposal submitted by no later than January 15, 2026. The Board has attached its recently revised Rule for Management Proposals and Rules of Procedure as a reminder to TG of the WRRB's process and timelines.

The WRRB also noted the following concerns that TG and its project partners should consider when implementing the pilot project:

- Currently, snowshoe hare are at the peak of their population cycle in Wek'èezhìi, which may impact new growth;
- The project will affect natural plant regeneration. The Board has enclosed information about regrowth following the Tibbitt Lake fire in 1998; and
- Currently, water levels in Wek'èezhìi are at record lows, which may interfere with or be exacerbated by reforestation.

The WRRB looks forward to continuing conversations with TG about reforestation activities in Wek'èezhìi. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our office.

Sincerely,

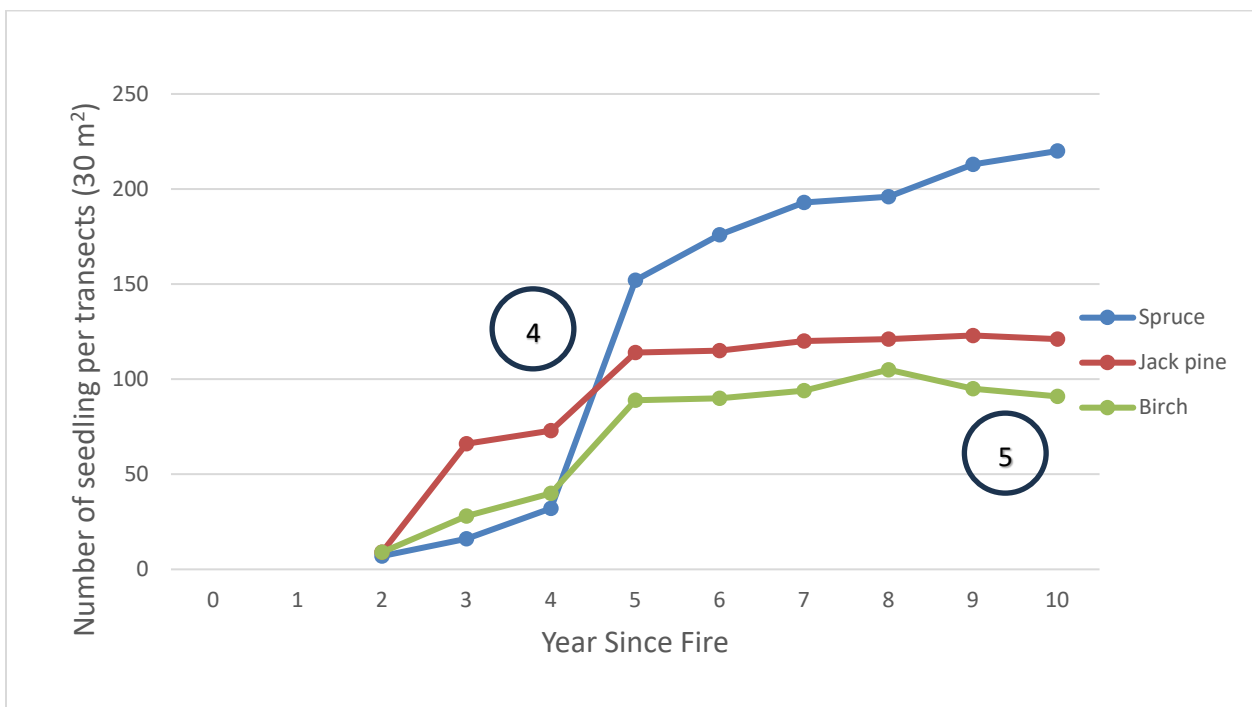
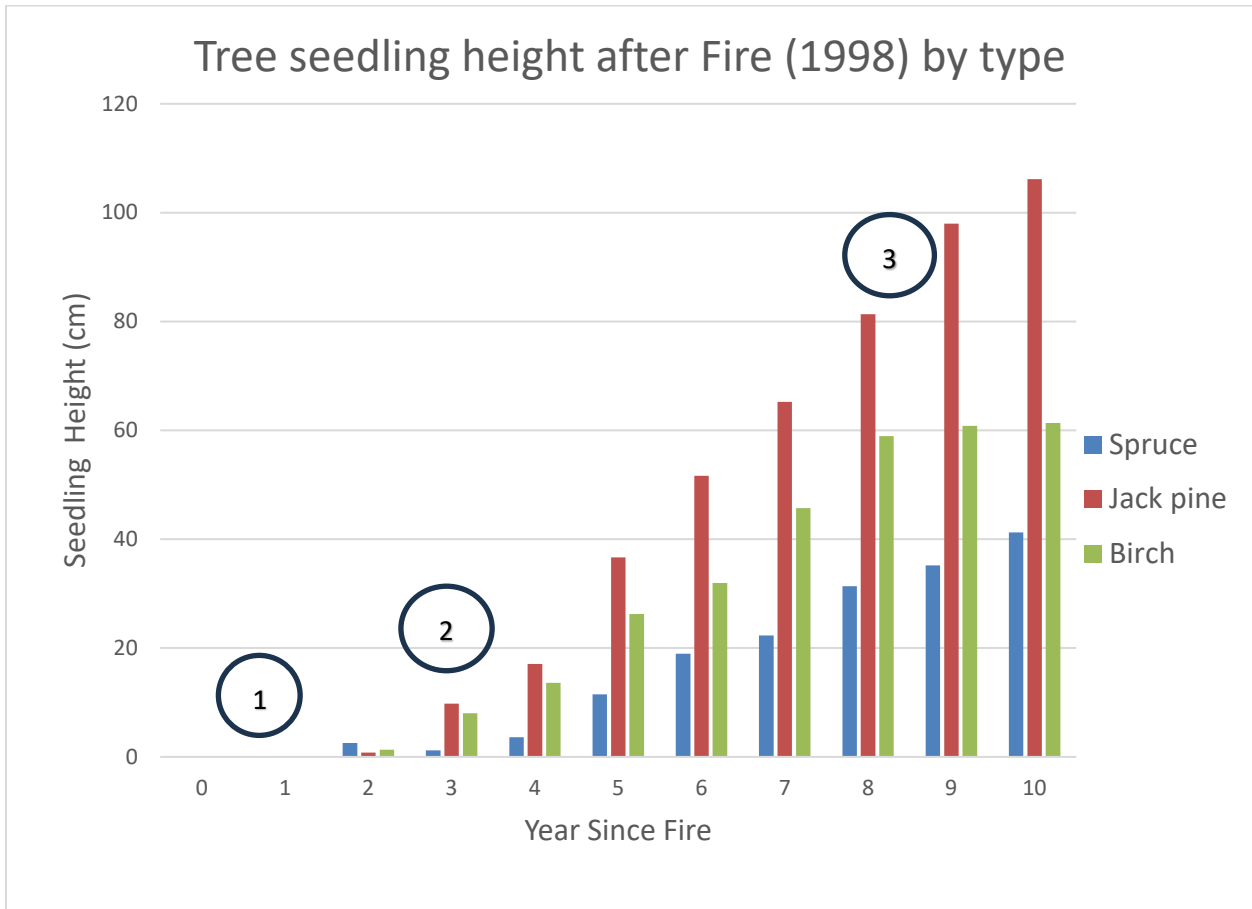


Joseph Judas
Chair

Enclosure

Cc Michael Birlea, Manager
Culture and Lands Protection, Tłıchǫ Government

Enclosure:



Tibbitt Lake fire occurred in 1998 and was located at the end of the Ingraham Trail extending north to Gordon Lake, NWT. Seedlings were tagged and measured every year for 10 years. Seedling types were spruce = black spruce and white spruce, birch = Alaskan paper birch and white paper birch, and jack pine.

1. There were no seedlings in September the year of the fire (year 0) nor one year after.
2. A few seedlings appeared above ground 2 years after the fire but most seedlings became established in years 3 to 5.
3. Jack pines grew fastest, followed by birch, then spruce.
4. The density (number of seedlings per set of plots – total 30 m²) increased at different rates. The number of spruce seedlings increased annually, whereas pine and birch numbers changed little after year 5.
5. The reduction in seedling numbers and height in some years (years 9-10) is due to browsing or diebacks (e.g., from low moisture).

Papers and raw data from the study are available online:

Baltzer, J.L. et al. 2021. Increasing fire and the decline of fire adapted black spruce in the boreal forest. PNAS 118(45), e2024872118. <https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.2024872118>

Day, N.J., Carriere S., and Baltzer J.L. 2017. Annual dynamics and resilience in post-fire boreal understory vascular plant communities. *Forest Ecology and Management* 401: 264-272. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378112717304887?via%3Dihub>

Day, N., Baltzer, J., Carriere, S. 2021. Repeated measure plant community data after fire in boreal forest, Taiga Shield, Northwest Territories, Canada, 1998-2018 [Dataset]. Dryad. <https://doi.org/10.5061/dryad.gqnk98sph>
<https://datadryad.org/stash/dataset/doi:10.5061/dryad.gqnk98sph>

For questions contact WRRB, board member S Carriere.