



PETER BALLANTYNE CREE NATION

Chief Joseph Custer Reserve

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BRIEFING NOTE

RE: PBCN 2017 WILDFIRES

SUBMITTED TO THE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

November 7th, 2017

BACKGROUND:

The Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation (PBCN) is a large multi-community band located in the province of Saskatchewan and has a population of 10,655 members, seven distinct northern communities and one community located just outside of Prince Albert. The seven northern PBCN communities are spread throughout a vast traditional territory of approximately 51,000 square km.

During the first week of August 2017, several fires were started due to lightning strikes that were in the vicinity of a number of PBCN communities. The notable fires were the Preston, Granite and Wilkin (see appendix #1 and #2). Although the fires began as small and manageable, they grew daily, and impacted the PBCN communities of Birch Portage, Pelican Narrows, Kinoosao, Denare Beach, Sturgeon Landing, Sandy Bay, and smaller family settlements on traditional lands.

Three of the communities were significantly impacted, resulting in evacuations. Poor air quality led to evacuations of health priorities beginning August 14th and as the fires grew they directly threatened the communities of Birch Portage, Kinoosao, and Pelican Narrows. This led to the general evacuation of approximately 2,800 PBCN band members. These evacuated members were displaced for approximately 34 days (see appendix #3). During Wildfire Management's "actioning" of the fires and the efforts to evacuate, shelter and repatriate PBCN community members, several issues surfaced. These issues fall under the areas of:

1. Communication
2. "Actioning" of Fires
3. Funding

ISSUE: **Communication**

- Clarity is needed in the definition and terminology used by Wildfire Management describing operations. Differing definitions used throughout the event were confusing and at times misleading. **Example 1:** "Actioning" a fire. This term was defined as actively fighting a fire with equipment and man power on the ground. It was also defined as simply noting the fire on satellite imagery. **Example 2:** "At Risk/Not at Risk" – This term was used by Wildfire Management when referring to critical infrastructure or ground assets without clear definition and led to confusion and differing interpretations of "Risk" amongst stakeholders.
- Wildfire Management strategy zone thresholds of 20 kms appeared not to have been followed. (See appendix #4 Wildfire Management Strategy Zone Map and appendix #2 Preston Fire chronology)
- Due to terminology issues above, it was difficult to evaluate when equipment or manpower actually began engaging strategic flanks of the Granite and Preston fires. First Nations must be able to assess

the Province's actions and efforts where their communities, traditional lands, infrastructure or assets are at risk.

- Provincial teleconferences regarding strategy and event management were closed to the PBCN Leadership and the Emergency Operations Center, resulting in a question of transparency of operational communications.

Request:

1. Operational terms be clearly defined along with current fire "actioning" policies and made available to First Nation stakeholders.
2. During an emergency event affecting a First Nation, it should be deemed standard procedure to have First Nation representation at all Provincial/Federal meetings where decisions will be made regarding the event management, strategy or provision of services affecting the First Nation.

ISSUE: "Actioning" of Fires

- The timeliness of "actioning" fires with manpower and equipment is a major concern. Impacts to the communities would have been minimized if the original small fires would have been controlled earlier. Instead, major roads, critical infrastructure and public safety were compromised significantly.
- The delayed action taken on the fires resulted in six communities being directly impacted by poor air quality.
- Direct fire threat and road closures to three communities eventually led to the evacuation of more than 2,800 people.
- Over 185,000 hectares of traditional lands were impacted by these fires affecting PBCN member's ability to hunt, trap and gather either traditional medicines or other plants. (See appendix #5)

Request:

1. Standard operating procedures or guidelines utilized by Wildfire Management to define the "actioning" threshold for a fire need to be reviewed.
2. In our opinion, the fires could have been managed better to minimize the effects on the communities and the large traditional land area. We are requesting a review of the fire suppression efforts of Wildfire Management by an impartial third party. This should result in improved outcomes in future fires.

ISSUE: Funding

- Wildfires have significant financial and human resource costs to the Bands and its agencies. Expectations for these costs to be absorbed by the Band are unrealistic based on current funding practices and models.
- Standard or routine INAC/FNIHB covered services and expenses are not clearly identified and appear ad hoc in approvals and delivery. The First Nations understand that all expenses for every emergency cannot be foreseen or predicted. However, undue stress and strategic hurdles become amplified when even standard expenditures have no guarantee of reimbursement.
- Both Health Services and the Band are mandated to have Emergency Response plans in place however no funding is allocated towards this.
- During this event, it was clearly apparent that having an Emergency Response Coordinator in place to provide leadership and coordination through a Band led, Emergency Operations Center, had major benefits for all stakeholders. This position has worked to conduct All Hazard planning and has taken an evidence based approach to risk assessments and contingency planning. Further, this position has delivered First Responder, First Aid/CPR, Advanced Life Support and coordinated many Basic Emergency Management, Incident Command System and Emergency Operation Center training at the community level. The Emergency Response Coordinator positions had been funded for 5 years through

Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority. As this funding stream has ended the above efforts will not be able to be maintained.

- Unfunded costs associated for community security, local fire suppression, maintaining sustenance and supply chain to essential services remaining in the community.
- It is essential to have health workers and other community agency staff working with community members at evacuation sites to provide support and continuity of care and is another unfunded cost.
- First Nations have expressed the desire to identify and/or retrofit First Nations facilities to serve as shelter locations. The First Nations understand that there are many facets such as access to clean water, medical services and social services that are required on top of any building requirements. The First Nations have had little to no support in moving forward with supported and funded Shelter in place options.
- Congregate shelter management issues were complex and varied from site to site. This was amplified by the extended duration of the displacement. Congregate shelters have had on-going concerns regarding such things as the safety of “at-risk” populations, maximum length of stay, utilization of traditional foods and activities to name a few.

Request:

1. The LaRonge 2015 wildfires resulted in INAC giving a verbal indication of funding for the Lac La Ronge Indian Band (LLRIB) Health Emergency Coordinator (ERC) position. This should be extended to include the PBCN Health ERC position as well.
2. Standard covered services should be clearly defined by INAC/FNIHB.
3. INAC and the Province should work with First Nations to identify locations within First Nation communities that could serve as alternative shelter locations and support them the same as any other shelter facility.
4. Permanent clean air shelters should be supported to reduce health risks during times of delayed evacuation, when sheltering in place and/or as respite during poor air quality due to high smoke levels.
5. First Nations should be supported through funding and manpower in the areas earlier identified as funding deficiencies.
6. Where congregate shelters are absolutely necessary, a First Nations committee should be engaged to advise on standardized shelter management policies and procedures.

Recent Wildfires in 2015 and 2017 have had significant impacts on northern Saskatchewan communities. There are two documents currently being completed regarding these impacts. The Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority commissioned the “2015 Northern Saskatchewan Wildfire Study” and is due to be complete within the next month. The review of PBCN wildfires of 2017 will be completed this fiscal year. Both documents will be forwarded upon their completion.

In closing, I would like to stress the need for improvements in three key areas:

- There must be further reconsideration of the response to fires that threaten communities, community members or their traditional lands.
- A review of policy regarding reimbursement of expenses incurred by Bands during the evacuation events.
- As key stakeholders First Nations need to be actively included and consulted in all aspects affecting the First Nation.

Submitted By:

Chief Peter A. Beatty
Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation

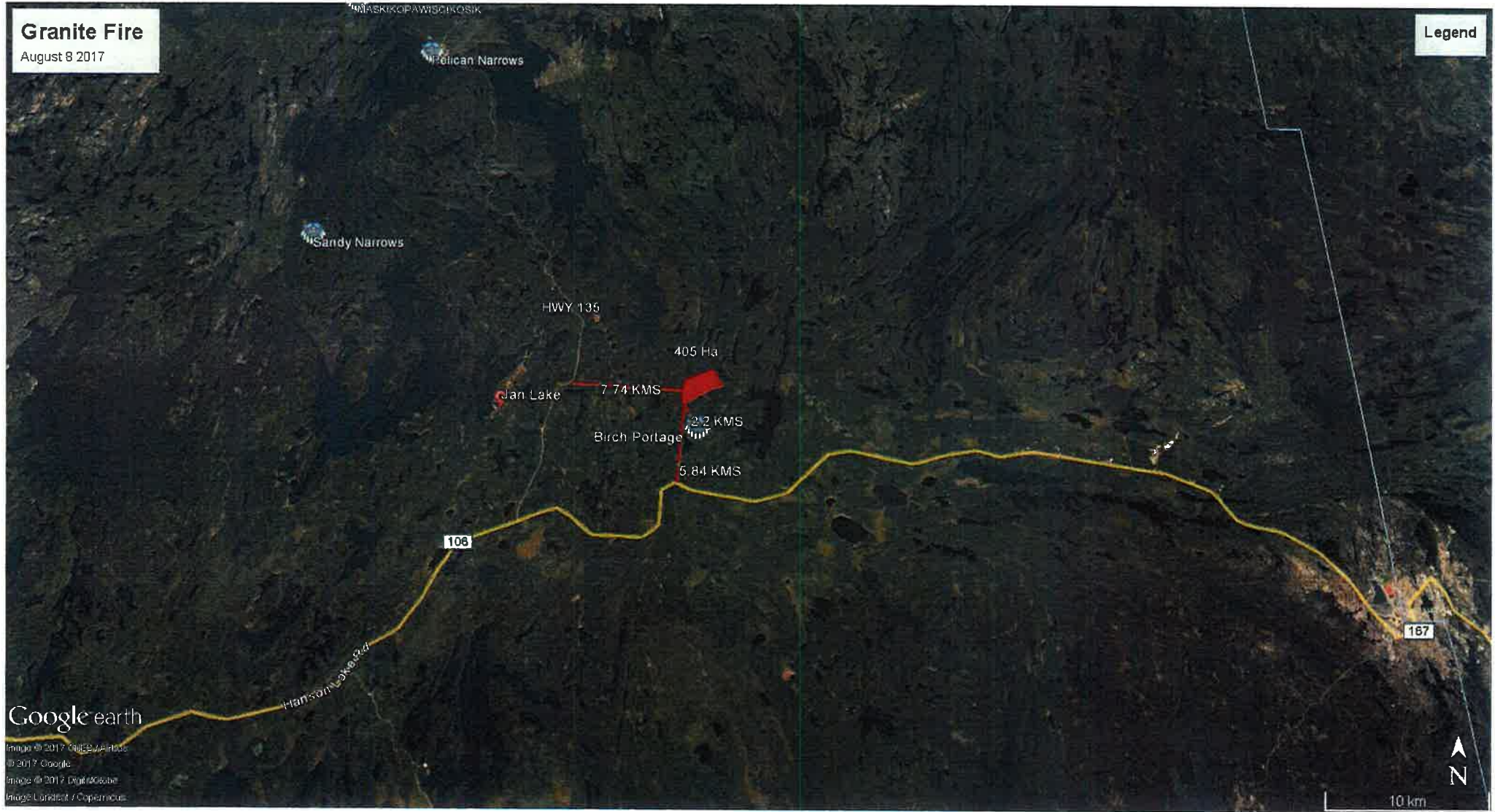
Appendix 1

Granite Fire Chronology and Distance to Infrastructure

Granite Fire

August 8 2017

Legend



Google earth

Image © 2017 QUESA Airphoto
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Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image © 2017 Copernicus

Granite Fire

August 14 2017

Legend



Google earth

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Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

Granite Fire

August 15 2017

Legend



Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES/Airbus
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Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

Granite Fire

August 18 2017

Legend



Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES/Airbus
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Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

10 km

Granite Fire

August 24 2017

Legend



Google earth

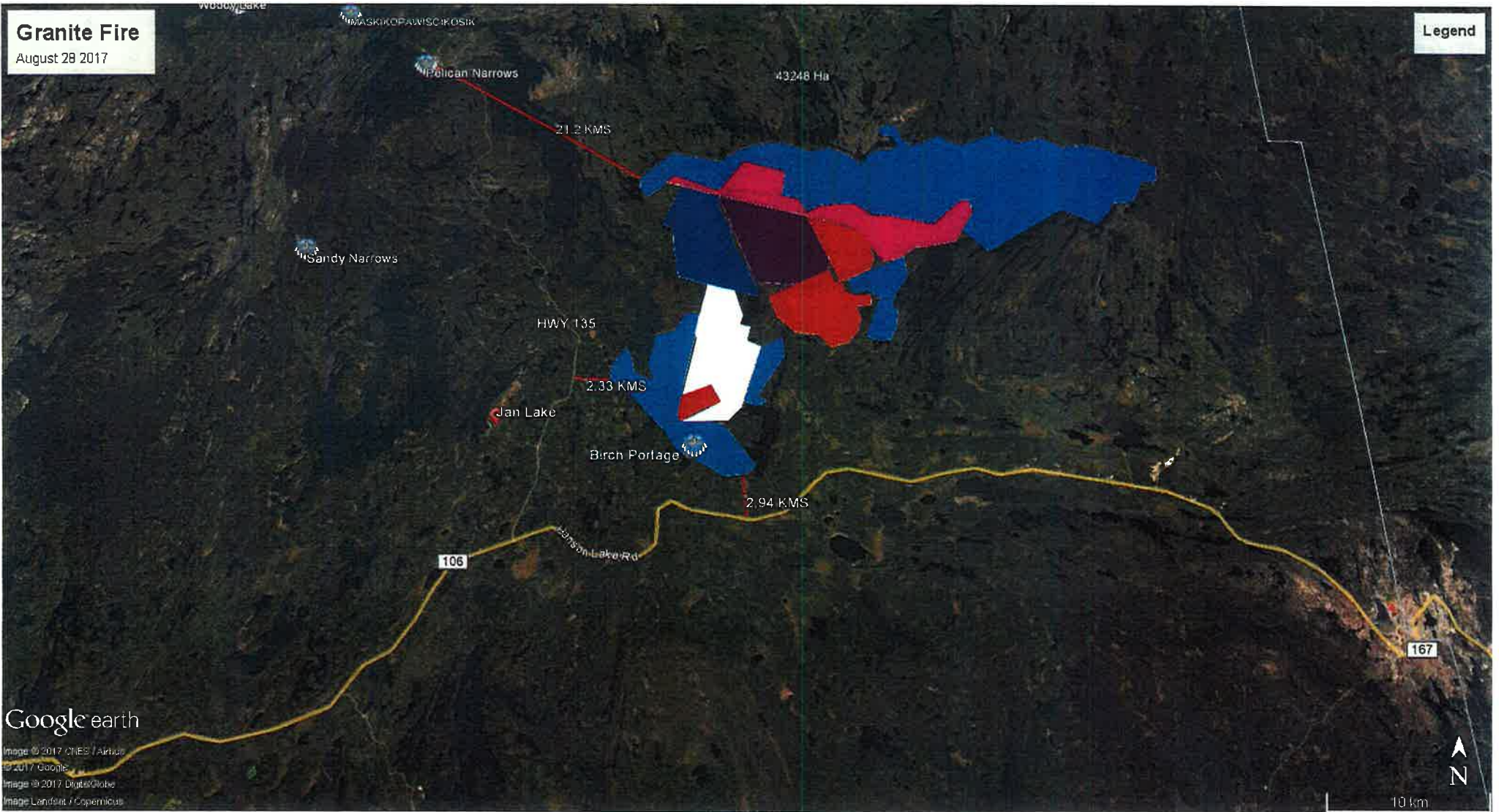
Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
© 2017 Google
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

10 km

Granite Fire

August 28 2017

Legend



Google earth

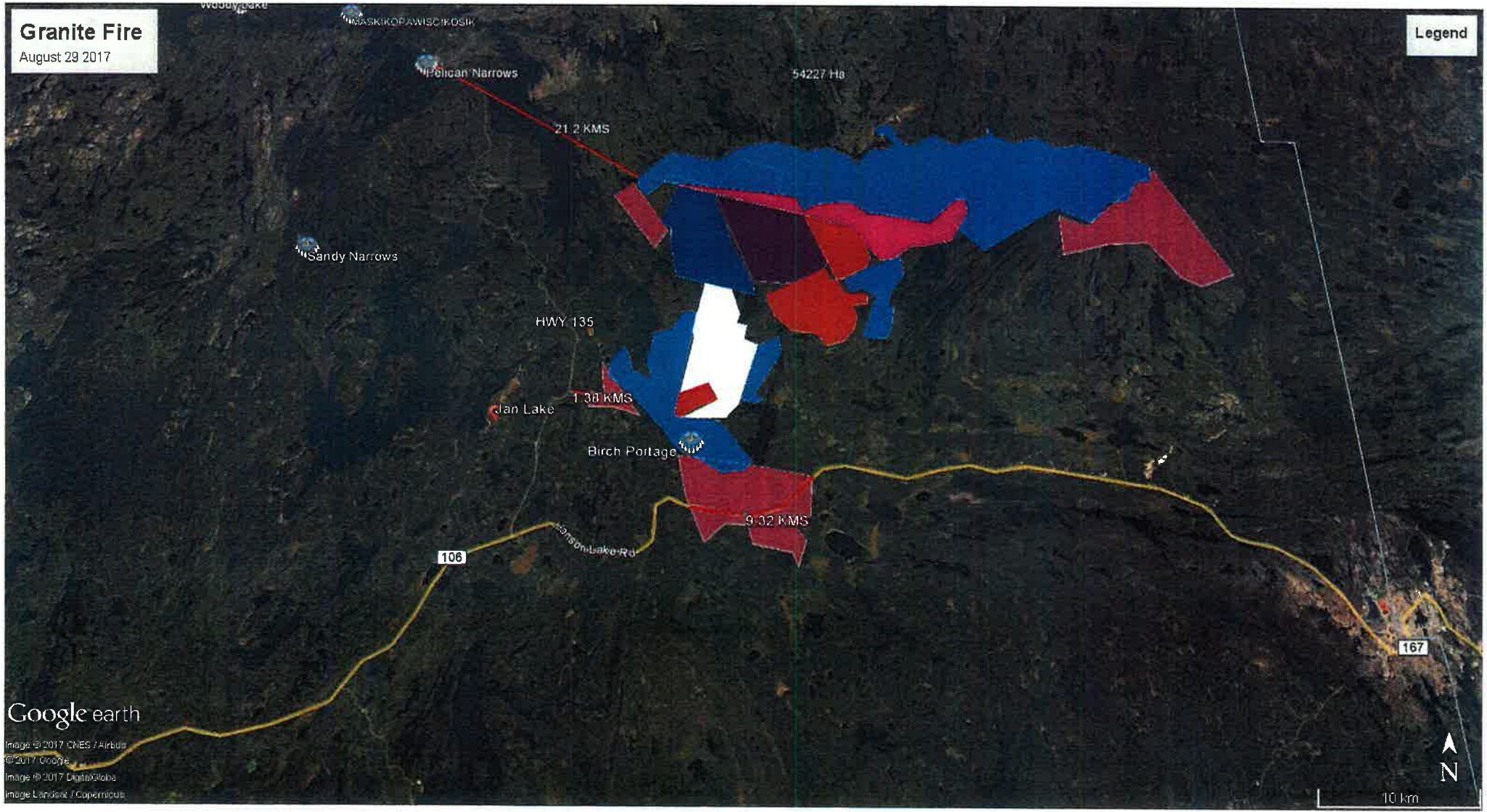
Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
© 2017 Google
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

10 km

Granite Fire

August 29 2017

Legend



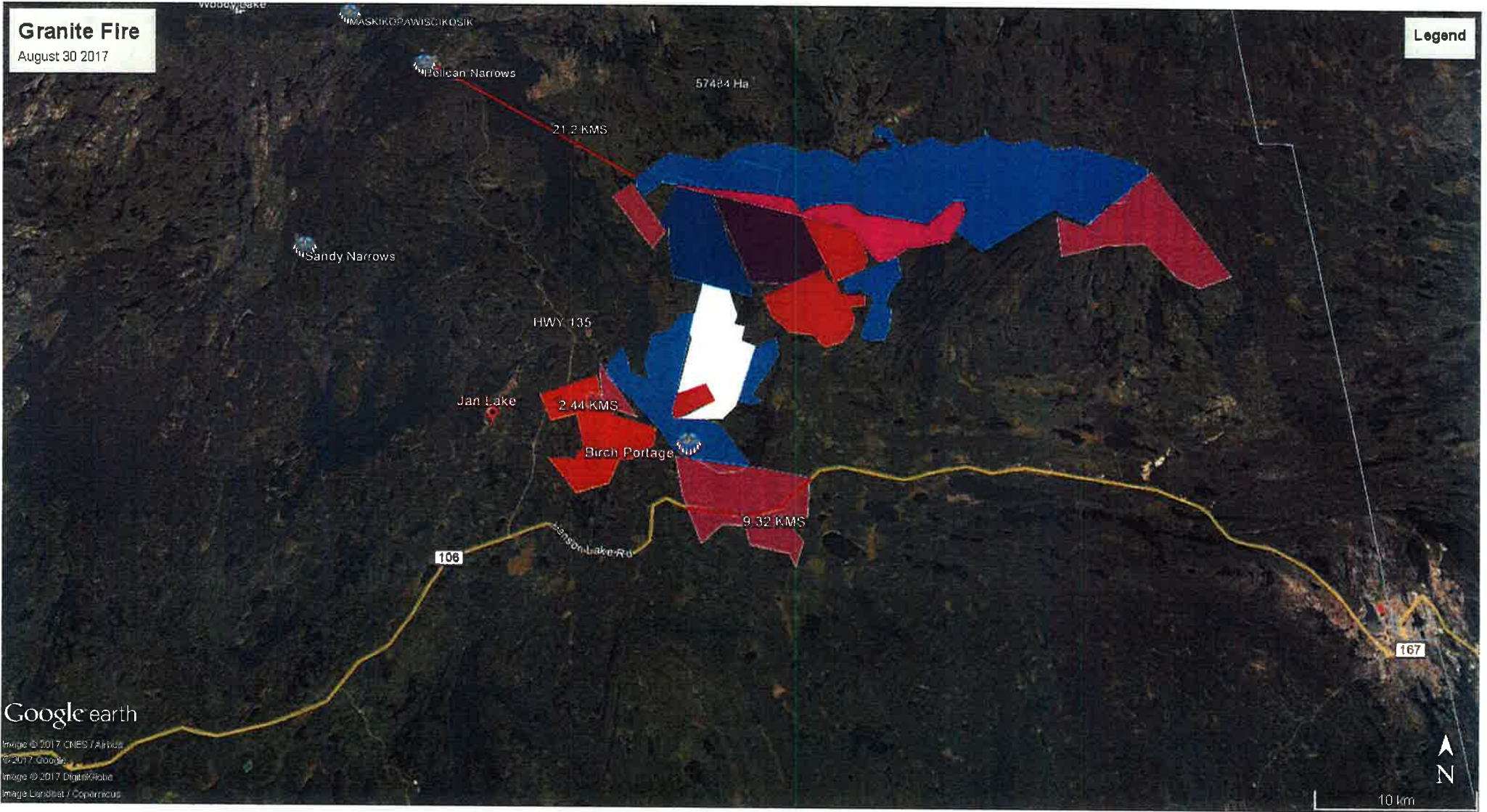
Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
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Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

Granite Fire

August 30 2017

Legend



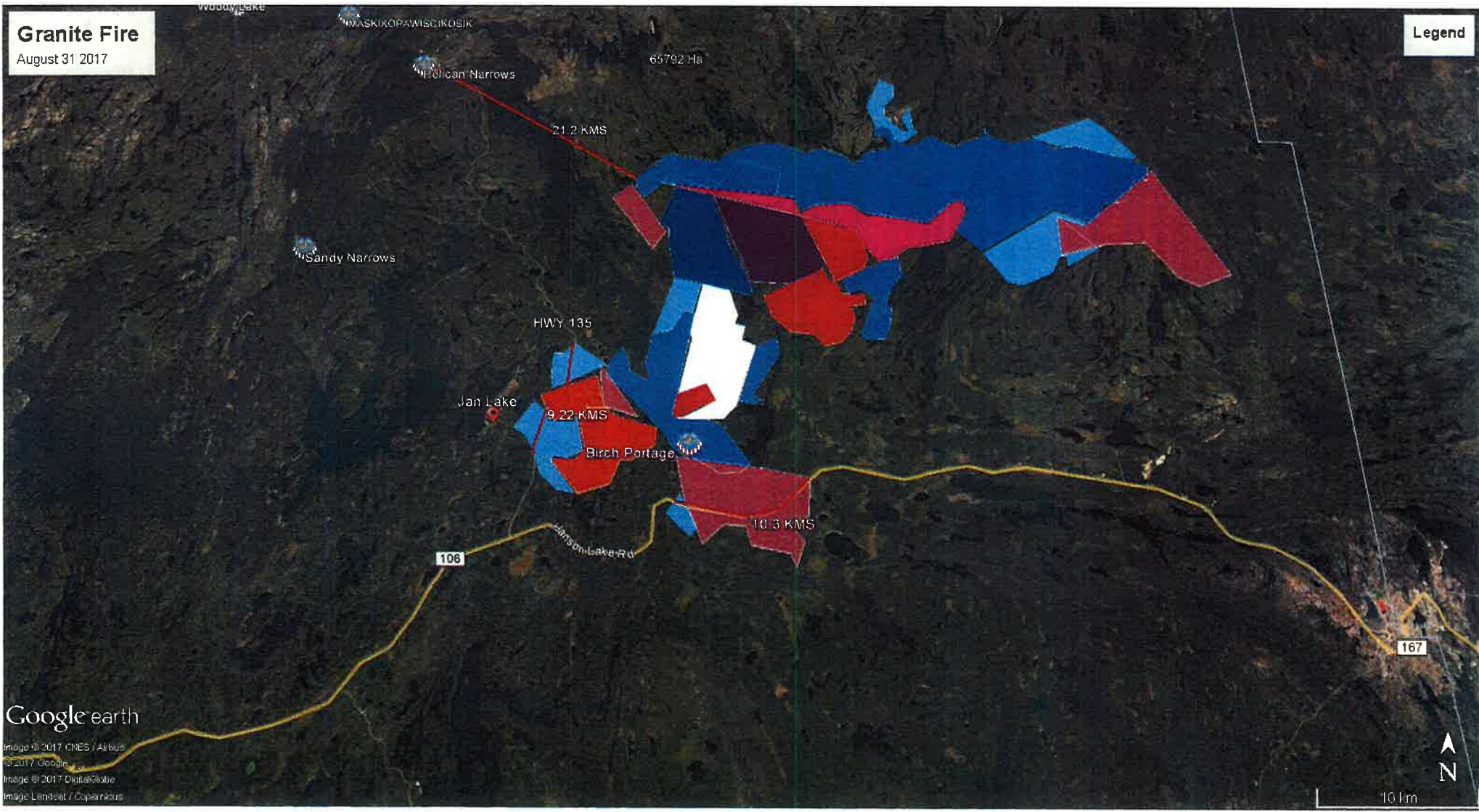
Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
© 2017 Google
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

Granite Fire

August 31 2017

Legend



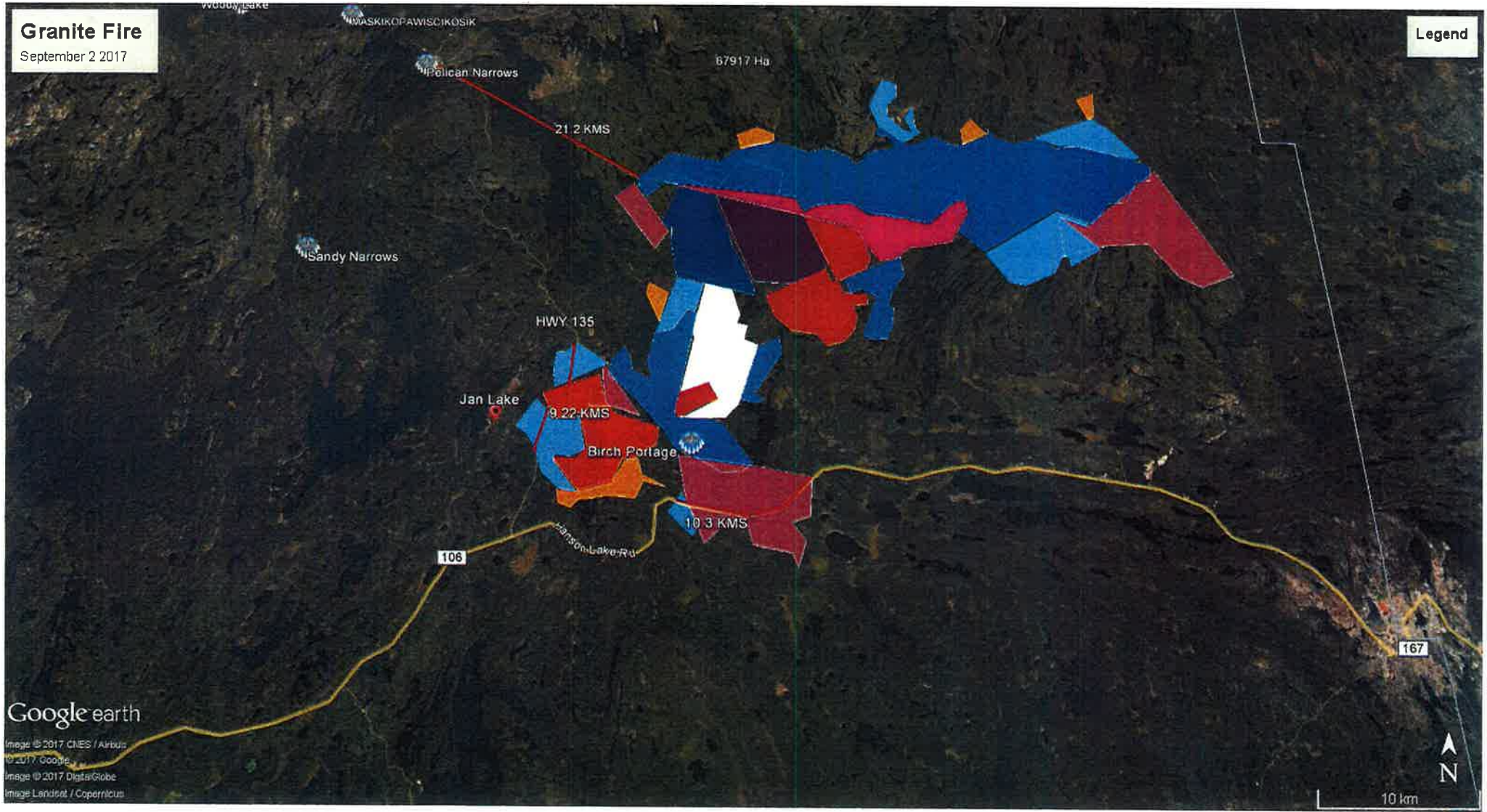
Google earth
Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
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Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

10 km

Granite Fire

September 2 2017

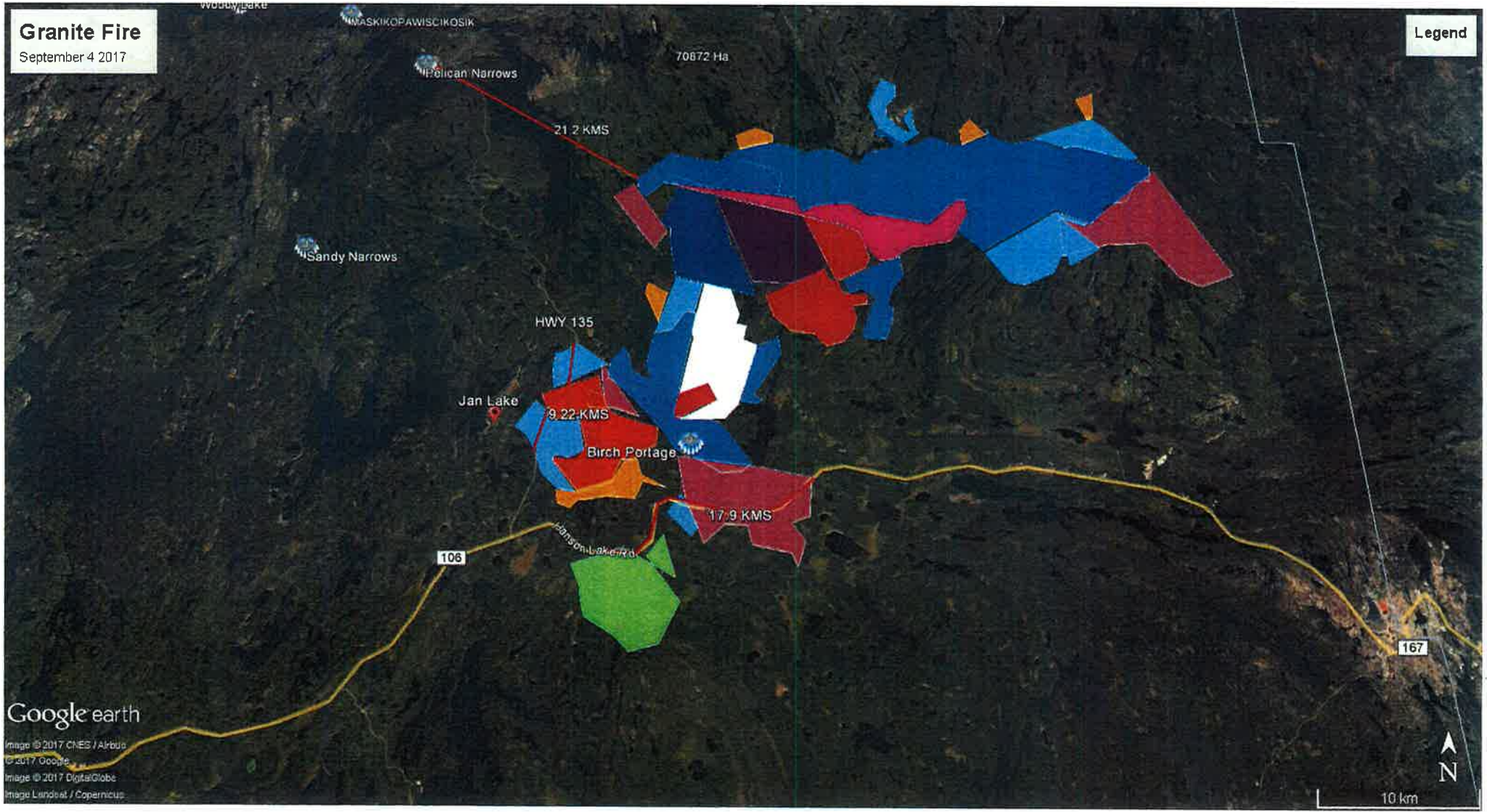
Legend



Granite Fire

September 4 2017

Legend



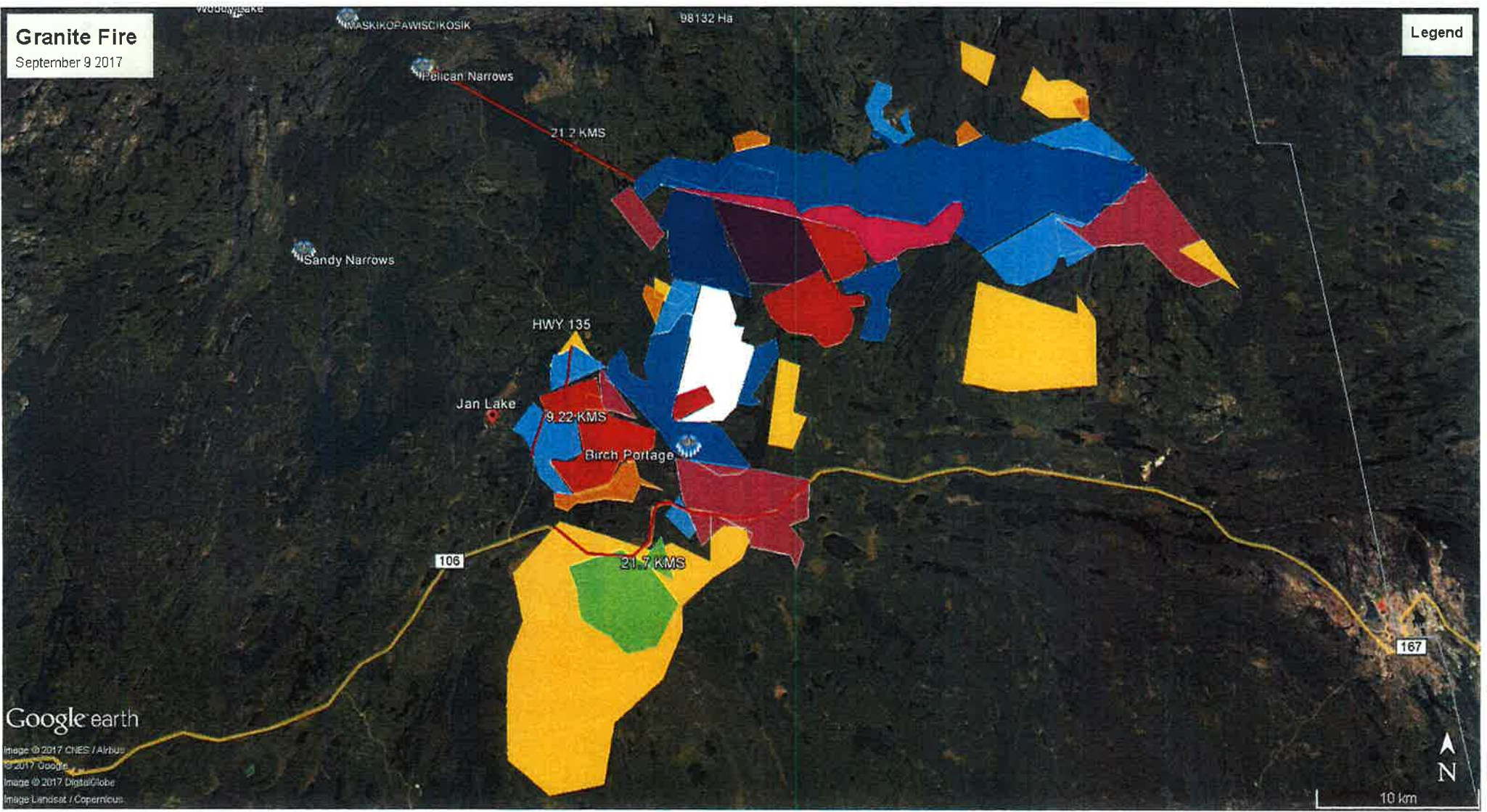
Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
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Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

Granite Fire

September 9 2017

Legend



Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
© 2017 Google
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
Image Landsat / Copernicus

10 km

Appendix 2

Preston Fire Chronology and Distance to Infrastructure

Preston Fire

August 8 2017

Legend

359 Ha

13.9 KMS

14.2 KMS

Woody Lake

MASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

Pelican Narrows

Pelican Lake

10 km



Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe



Preston Fire

August 14 2017

Legend

2950 Ha

12.2 KMS

12.7 KMS

Woody Lake

MASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

Pelican Narrows

Pelican Lake

10 km



Google earth

Image © 2017 QIES / Airmap

Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe



Preston Fire

August 15 2017

Legend

MANAWANSTAWAYAK

3721 Ha

12.2 KMS

12.7 KMS

Woody Lake

MAASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

Pelican Narrows

Pelican Lake

Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe

10 km



Preston Fire

August 21 2017

Legend

MANAWANSLAWAYAK



Woody Lake

MASKIKOPAW:SCIKOSIK

Pelican Narrows

Pelican Lake

12.7 KMS

9.51 KMS

10 km



Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe

Preston Fire

August 23 2017

Legend

MANAWANSTAWAYAN

Woody Lake

MASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

Pelican Narrows

Pelican Lake

4409 Ha

12.7 KMS

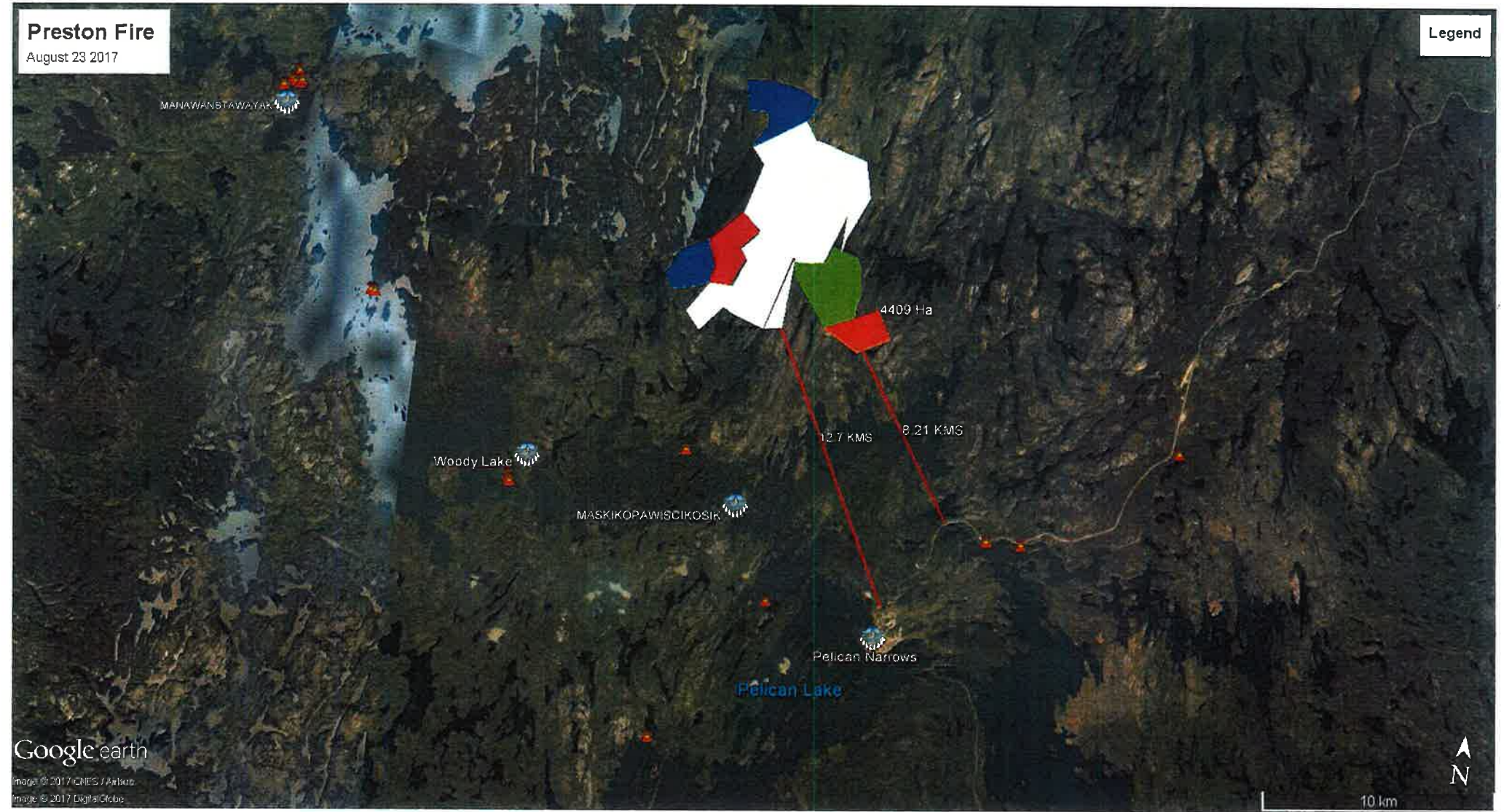
8.21 KMS

10 km

N

Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe



Preston Fire

August 28 2017

Legend

MANAWANSTAWAYAK

13848 Ha

6.73 KMS

Woody Lake

2.12 KMS

MASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

8.34 KMS

5.89 KMS

Pelican Narrows

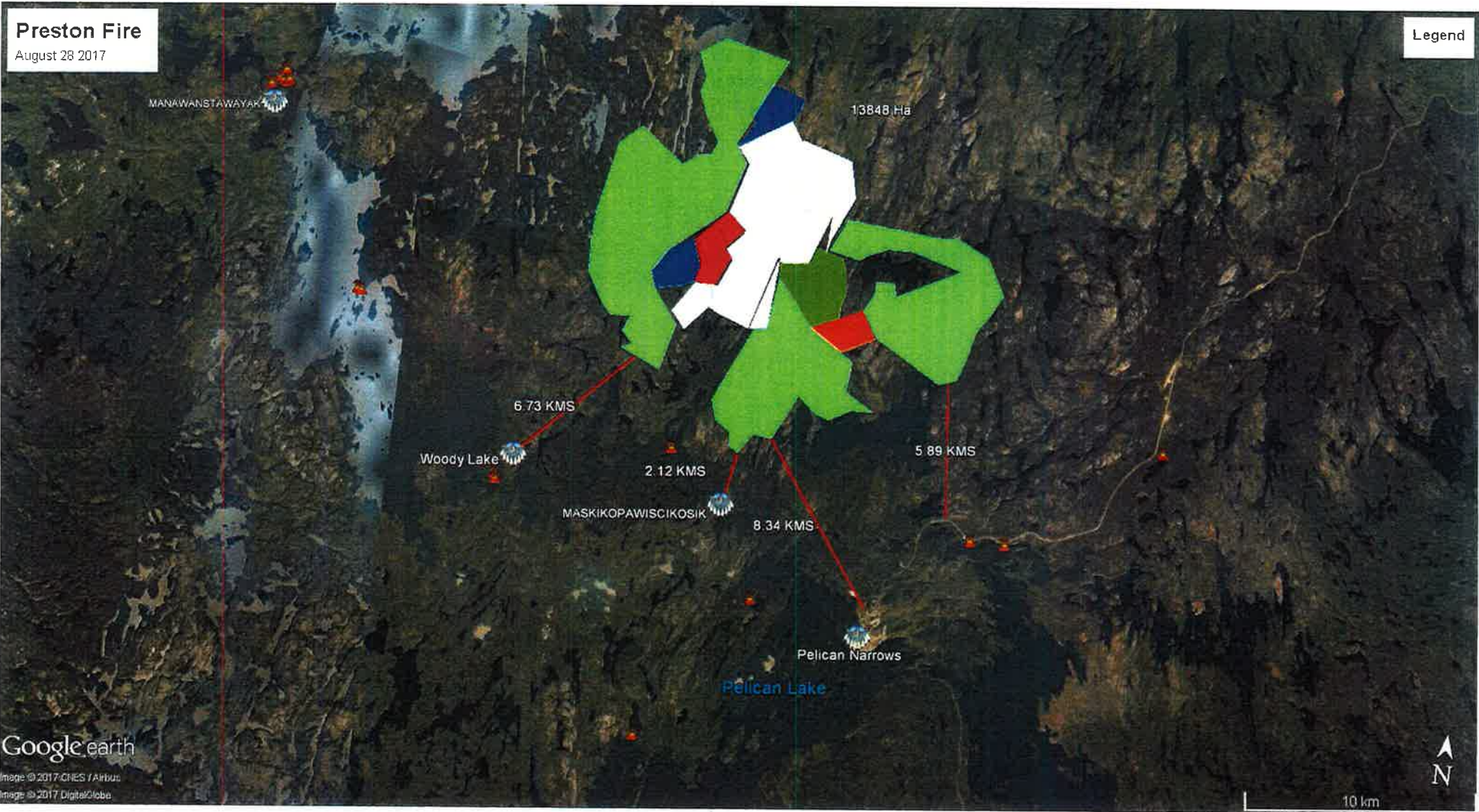
Pelican Lake

10 km



Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe



Preston Fire

August 29 2017

Legend

MANAWANSTAWAYAN

19075 Ha

4.10 KMS

Woody Lake

2.12 KMS

MASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

8.34 KMS

4.10 KMS

Pelican Narrows

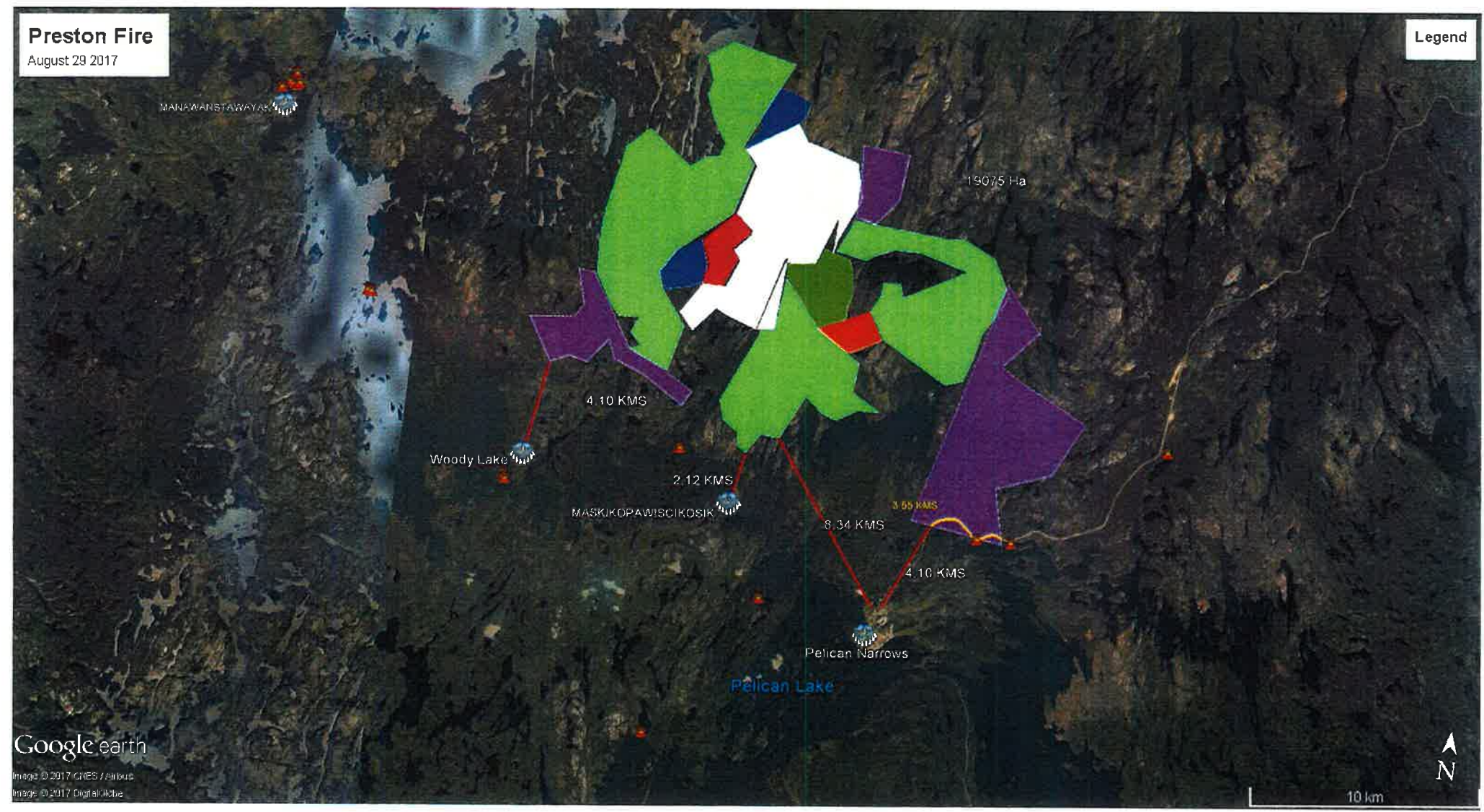
Pelican Lake

3.55 KMS

Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe

10 km



Preston Fire

August 31 2017

Legend

MANAWANTAWAYAK

21398 Ha

2.47 KMS

Woody Lake

MASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

3.65 KMS

4.32 KMS

Pelican Narrows

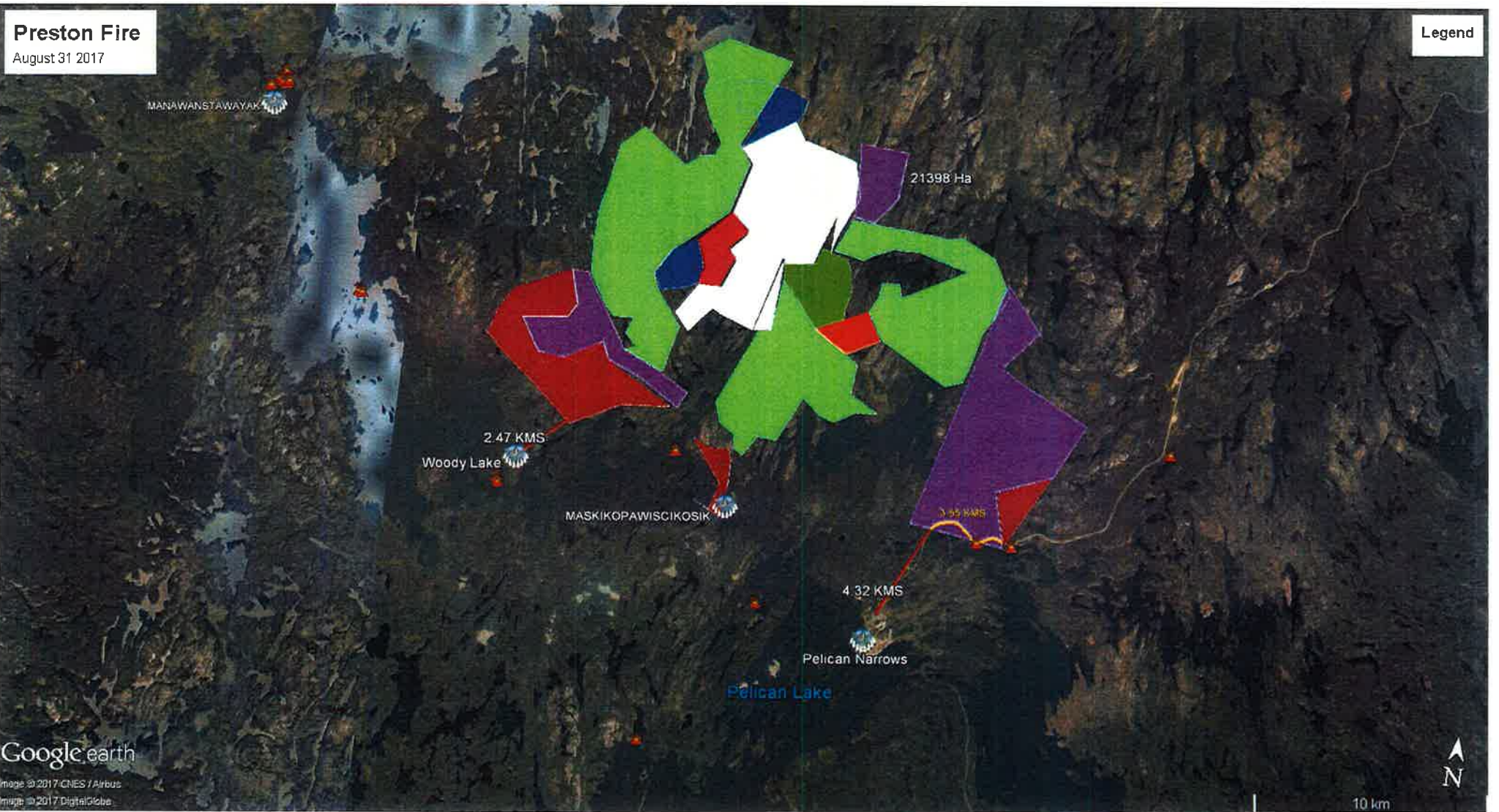
Pelican Lake

10 km



Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe



Preston Fire

September 2 2017

Legend

MANAWANSTAWAYAN

22942 Ha

2.47 KMS

Woody Lake

MASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

3.55 KMS

4.32 KMS

Pelican Narrows

Pelican Lake

10 km



Google earth

Image © 2017 CHES / Airbus

Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe



Preston Fire

September 4 2017

Legend

MANAWANSTAWAYAK

26170 Ha

2.47 KMS

Woody Lake

MASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

4.32 KMS

Pelican Narrows

Pelican Lake

3.87 KMS

2.53 KMS

10 km



Google earth

Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe



Preston Fire

September 9 2017

Legend

42132 Ha

MANAWANSTAWAYAK

Woody Lake

MASKIKOPAWISCIKOSIK

Pelican Narrows

Pelican Lake

12.3 KMS

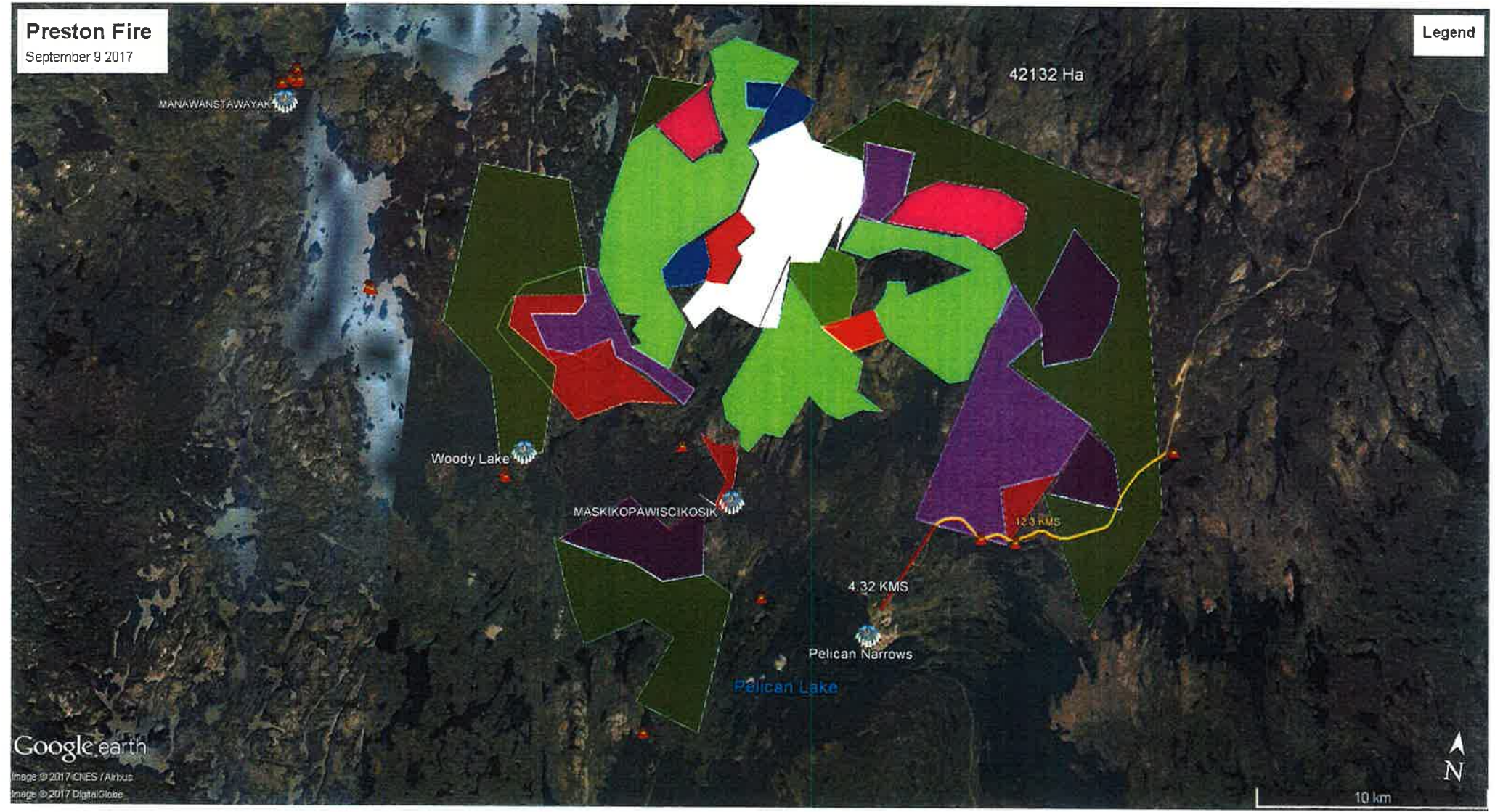
4.32 KMS

10 km



Google earth

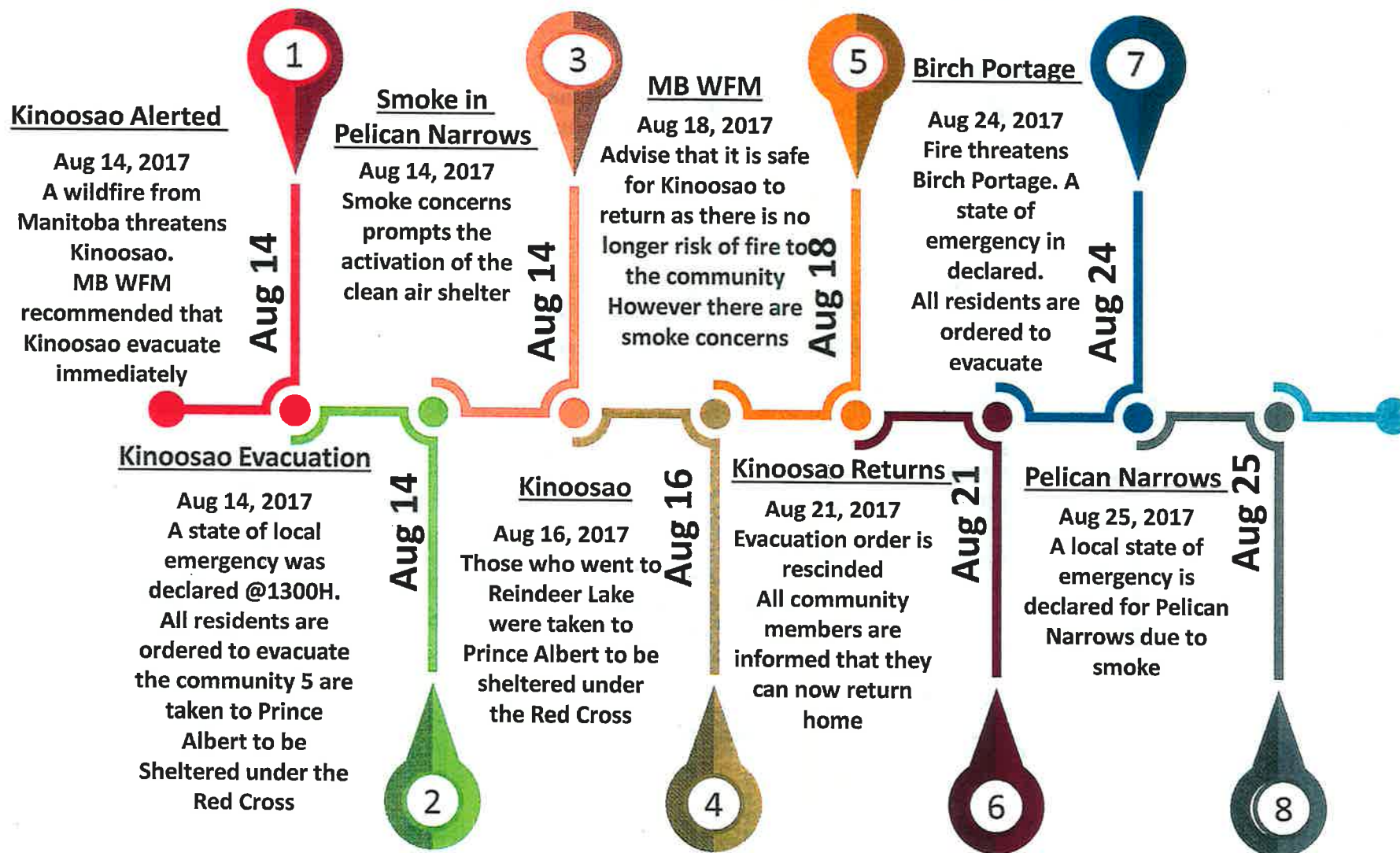
Image © 2017 CNES / Airbus
Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe



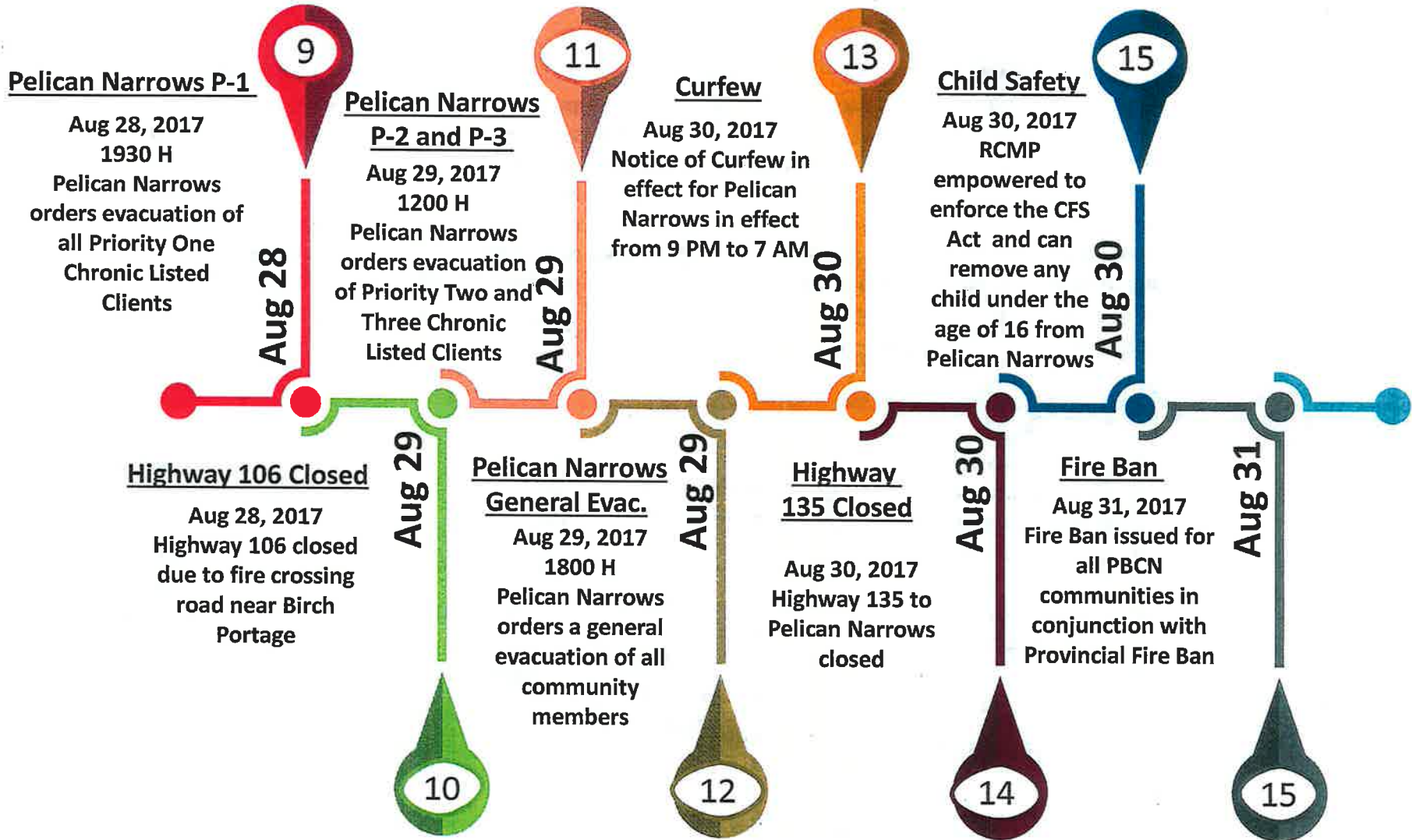
Appendix 3

Timeline of Events

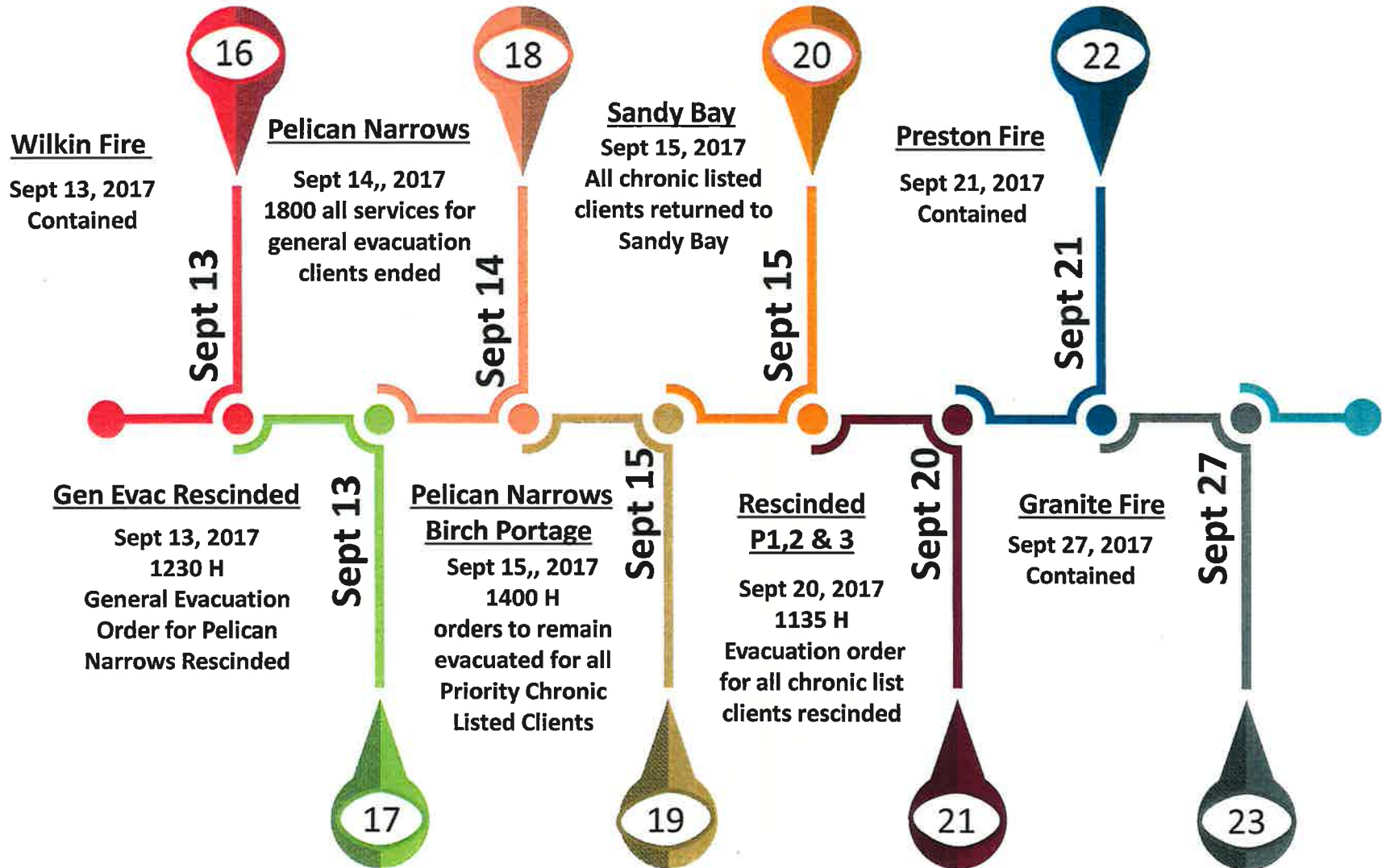
Timeline of Events



Timeline of Events Con't



Timeline of Events Con't



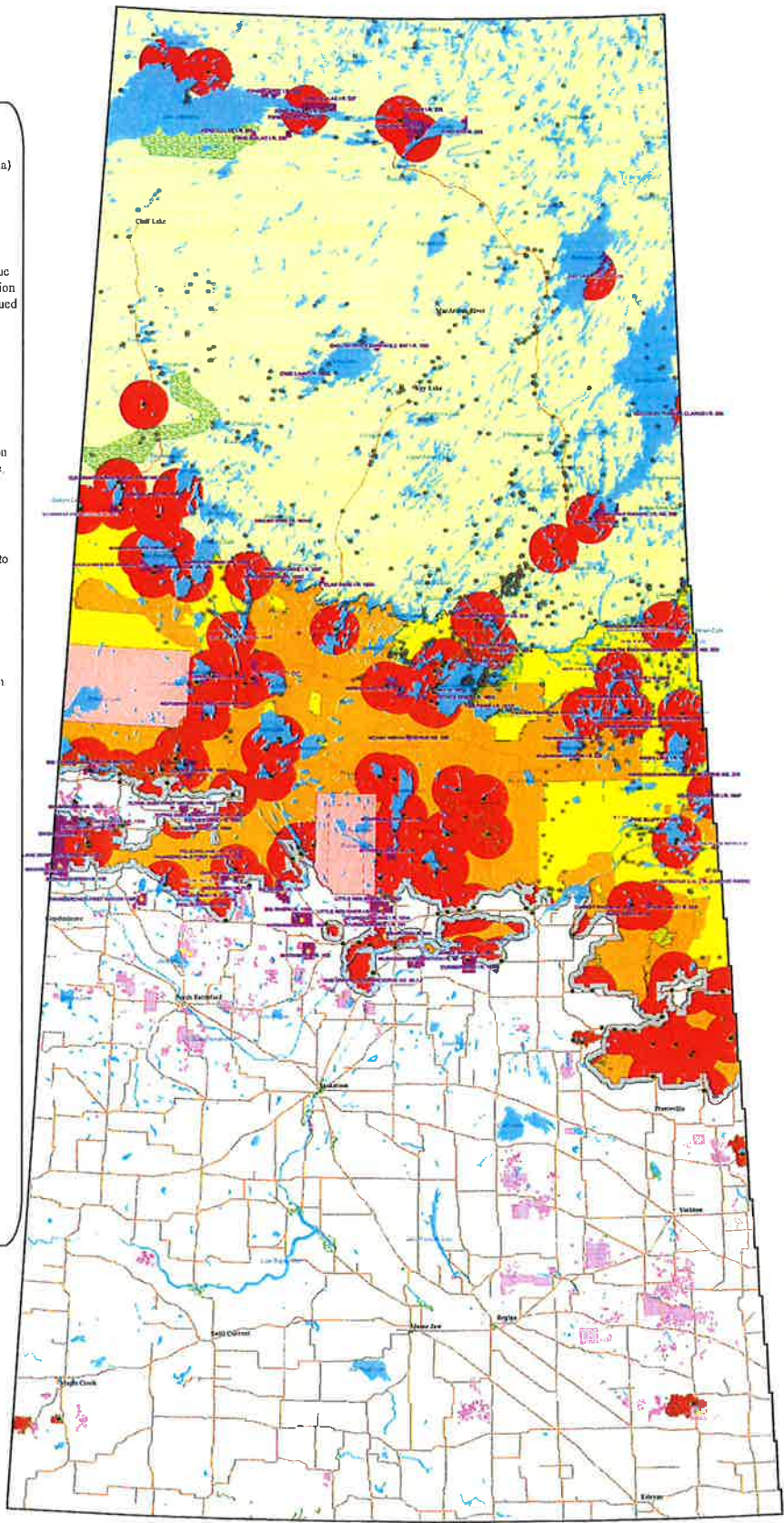
Appendix 4

Wildfire Management Strategy Zones

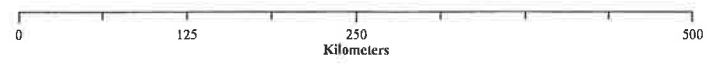
Wildfire Management Strategy Zones in Saskatchewan

Legend

- Full Response Zone- Community Value (7.6 million ha)
-Initial Attack and Sustained Action within 20 km of communities with intent to extinguish all fires that pose a threat.
 - Full Response Zone- Timber Value (4.08 million ha)
-Initial Attack and Sustained Action in high timber value areas to control and suppress fires. Ongoing consideration of values and costs will be undertaken to ensure continued fire action is warranted.
 - 4.5 km Burning Permit Area (1.1 million ha)
-Initial Attack and Sustained Action to control and suppress fires.
 - PANP/CLAWR (1 million ha)
PANP -10 km border agreement zone with a protection response the same as surrounding provincial land base.
CLAWR -Treat protection response the same as surrounding provincial land base (values at risk).
 - Modified Response Zone (2.69 million ha)
-Consideration for Initial Attack and Sustained Action to contain fires to the zone based on assessment of values and financial cost. If unsuccessful pull back resources and protect Full Response Zone.
 - Observation Zone (20.6 million ha)
-Assess values at risk with intent to allow for fire in ecological processes. Consider intervention based on values vs. the cost of suppression.
 - Rural/ Urban landbase (27.9 million ha)
-Fire suppression on vacant Crown land primarily by agreement with municipalities.
 - Aboriginal Lands
 - Northern AANDC - Protected Communities
- 20 km Full Response Zone - Community Value
-beyond 20 km - response is same as adjacent provincial land
 - Northern AANDC - No Community
- response is the same as adjacent land
 - Provincial Parks
 - Representative Areas
 - Waterbodies
 - Interface Communities
 - Southern AANDC- Protected Community
- Full Response Zone - Community Value to reserve boundary
 - Structural value
 - Prince Albert National Park Border Agreement (10km)
 - Highways
- * Hectareage includes waterbodies



Date: 5/16/2014
 Document Name: priority2014
 Author: Wildfire Management Branch
 Coordinate System: NAD 1983 CSRS UTM Zone 13N
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: North American 1983 CSRS
 False Easting: 500,000.0000
 False Northing: 0.0000
 Central Meridian: -105.0000
 Scale Factor: 0.9996
 Latitude Of Origin: 0.0000
 Units: Meter



Appendix 5

PAGC Resolution on PBCN Wildfires

RESOLUTION #01

PRINCE ALBERT GRAND COUNCIL

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

October 23 & 24, 2017

SENATOR ALLEN BIRD MEMORIAL CENTRE

PRINCE ALBERT, SASKATCHEWAN

NORTH EASTERN SASKATCHEWAN WILDFIRE

WHEREAS wildfires on Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation Reserve and Traditional Territorial Lands have had a significant negative impact of lives of First Nations people.

WHEREAS PBCN members rely on the many benefits from our lands in terms of the social, economical and cultural way of life of PBCN members

WHEREAS Treaty Six provides our First Nation a guarantee to continue our way of life which includes hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering.

WHEREAS the current and past practices of the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan by their policy entitled, " LET IT BURN POLICY " have absolved themselves of their obligations enshrined in Section 12 of the Natural Resource Transfer Act of 1930, as well as the Saskatchewan Natural Resource Act – 1930.

WHEREAS Section 12 of the Saskatchewan Natural Resource Act of 1930, explicitly states;

" In order to secure to the Indians of the Province the continuance of the supply Game and Fish for their support and subsistence , Canada agrees that the laws respecting in force in the Province from time to time shall apply to the Indians within the boundaries thereof, provided, however, that the said Indians shall have the right , which the Province hereby assures to them, of hunting, trapping, and fishing game and fish for food at all seasons of the year on all unoccupied crown lands and any other lands to which the said Indians have a right of access"

WHEREAS Section 10, of the Saskatchewan Natural Resource Act states;

“ all lands included in Indian reserves within the Province included those selected and surveyed but not yet confirmed as those confirmed shall continue to be vested in the Crown and administered by the Government of Canada for the purposes of Canada”

The Government of Canada is obligated to ensure and assure that of Canada’s dealings with PBCN either by Treaty or by any of Canada’s laws that apply to Canadians including Canada’s public safety laws, equally and fairly.

WHEREAS the Let it Burn policy played a significant part in the response time it took to take action on this fire whereby the fire became **out of control**

WHEREAS this year fire could have been contained had immediate action been taken which could have reduced the amount of land that was consumed by fire

WHEREAS this land that was destroyed by this fire has resulted in PBCN members not being able to hunt, trap and or gathering medicines and other plants,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Prince Albert Grand Council immediately organize, facilitate and coordinate, a high level meeting between Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation and the both the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan for the purpose of a an examination of how this fire was managed as well as the evacuations of PBCN members from Pelican Narrows and Sandy Bay

Further examine the full impacts of not being able to exercise the right of PBCN members to hunt, fish, trap and gather, for years to come, from the loss of land use as a result of this fire, which includes any mitigation measures to which both levels of Government have obligations.

Moved by: Chief Peter Beatty

Seconder: Chief Tammy Cook-Searson

In Favour (89)

Opposed (0)

Abstentions (0)

** Need wording from Vice Chief Tsannie – Red Cross Issue