

# MAPCHAT

## A MapChat Co-op for the Skeena Region: Community-Based Geomatics in Environmental Planning Skeena Salmon Habitat Conference Smithers, B.C., 2009 September 15-16

### Overview

MapChat is one of several new technologies developed by the recently completed GEOIDE-funded National Centres of Excellence in Geomatics project *Promoting Sustainable Communities through Participatory Spatial Decision Support*. MapChat is a software tool for Web-based social deliberation concerning matters of local spatial importance. MapChat Version 1 was field tested in the Bulkley Valley in collaboration with the Bulkley Valley Stewardship Coalition, the British Columbia Ministry of Environment, and the Town of Smithers. The screenshots shown in this poster relate to one project that focused on Salmonid habitat within the Valley.



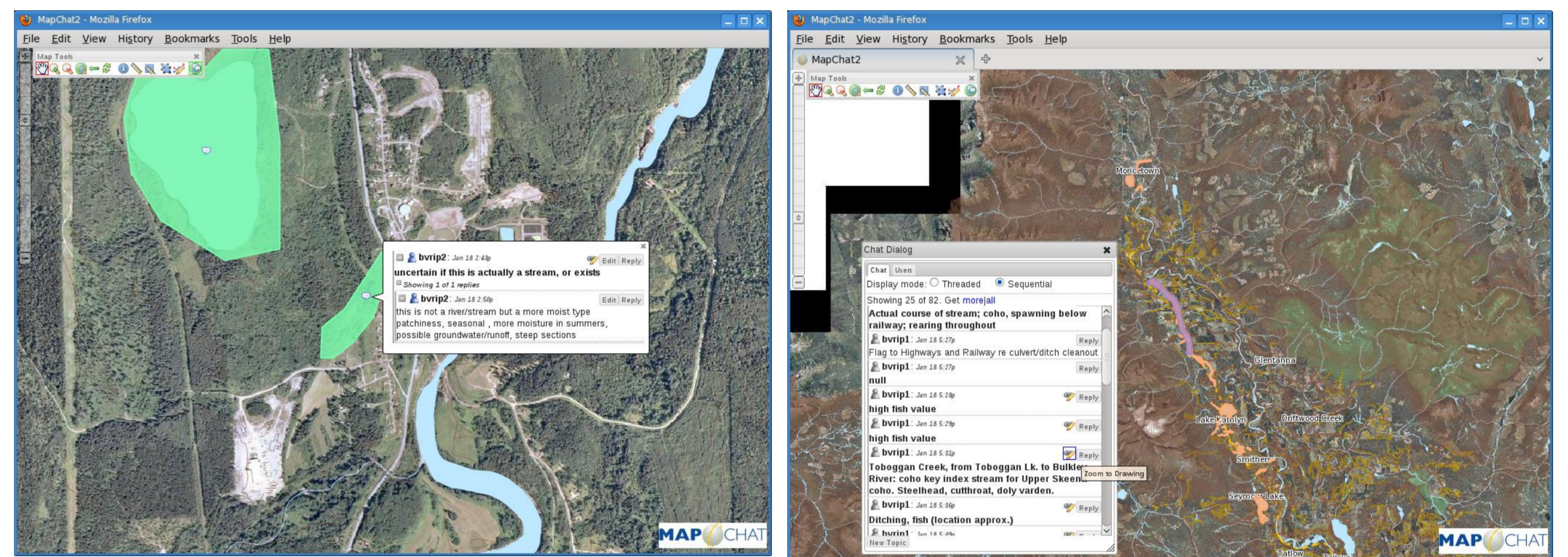
Photograph © 2009 Dirk Yuricich  
Source: <http://www.dirkphotoz.com>



Steelhead fishing on the Bulkley River near Smithers  
Source: <http://www.flyfisherman.com/westerncanada/rpbulkley.jpg>

### Geochatting

The geochatting concept is implemented in MapChat with a Web-map that forms the medium of communication among either dispersed or co-located users. Customized, instant messaging facilitates collaborative discussion, and each participant can geotag map features while chatting, via private and public messaging with other individuals. In contrast with similar tools such as Google Earth, MapChat enables direct discussion in which chatters can visualize the geotagging of other parties simultaneously within a common map interface.



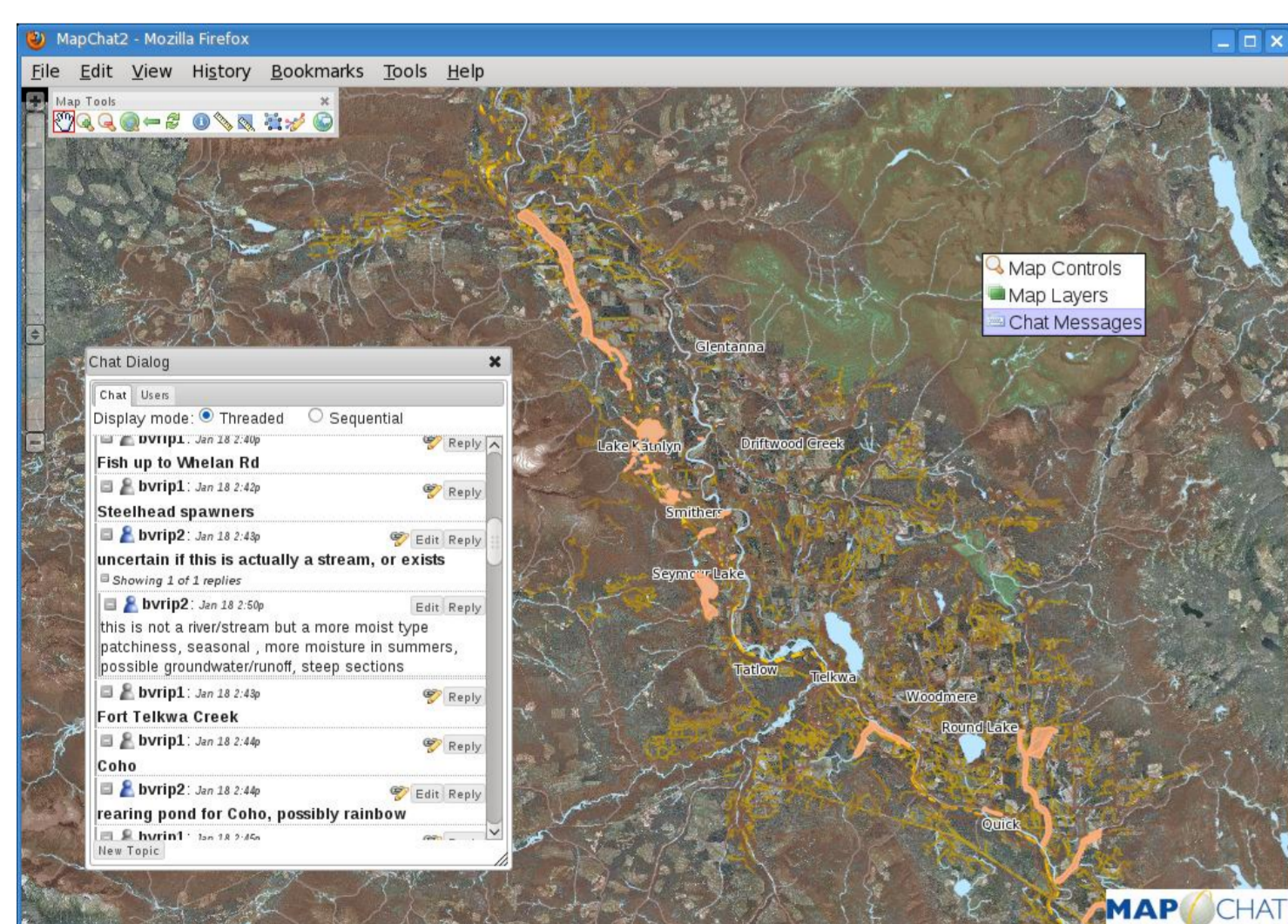
Geochatting as implemented in MapChat 2

### Formation of a Prospective Skeena MapChat Co-operative

Geomatics tools of the MapChat sort have great potential to facilitate direct democracy in environmental decision-making at the regional scale. Because MapChat was developed from open-source software components, access to obtain it, use it and modify it for a specific purpose requires only time and knowledge. No purchase costs are involved. However, small groups and organizations require technical assistance to customize its features and apply it. Currently efforts are under way to establish a Skeena Regional MapChat Co-op by pooling the resources of local governments and community organizations interested in using the tool for their own purposes.

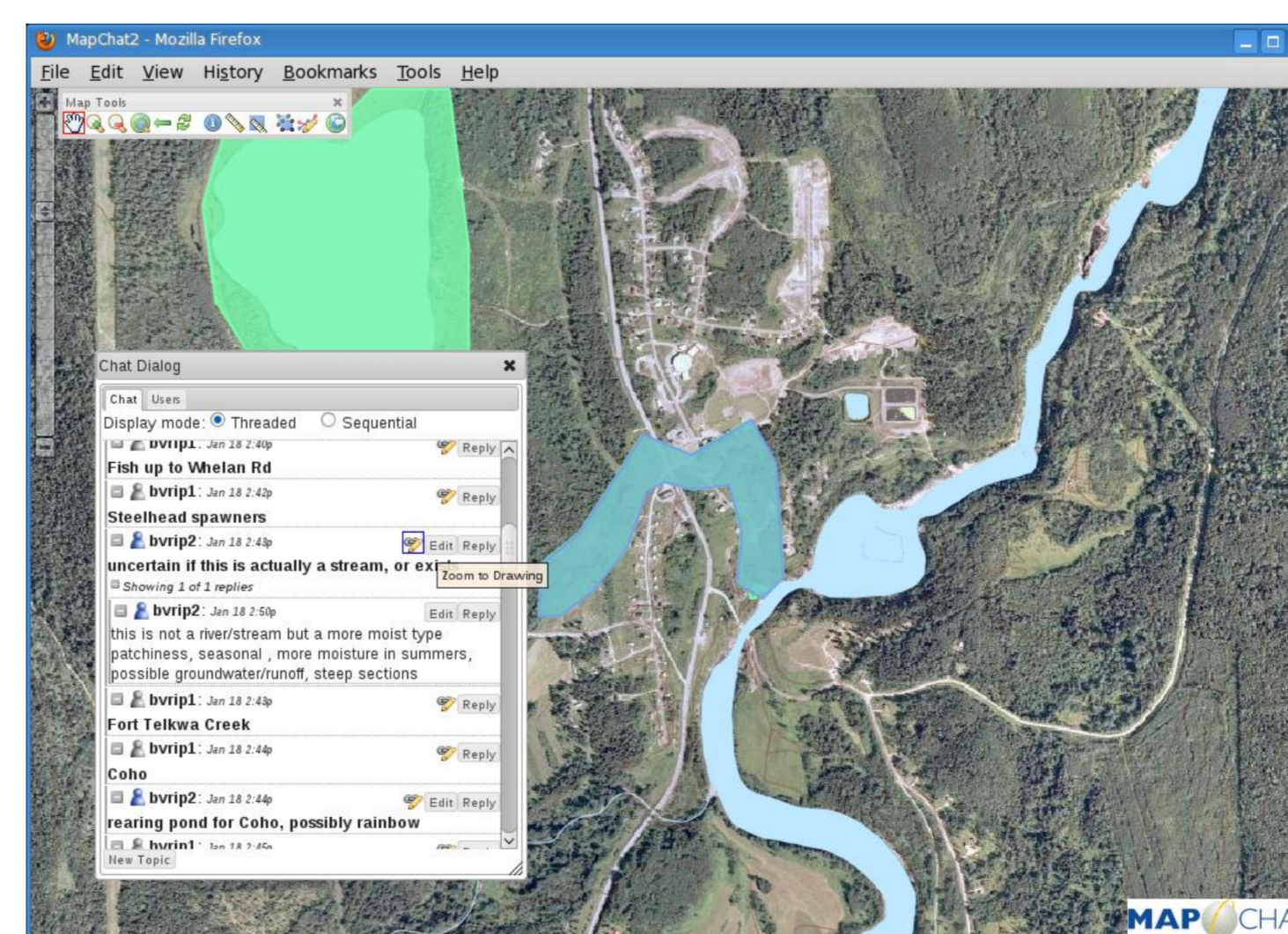
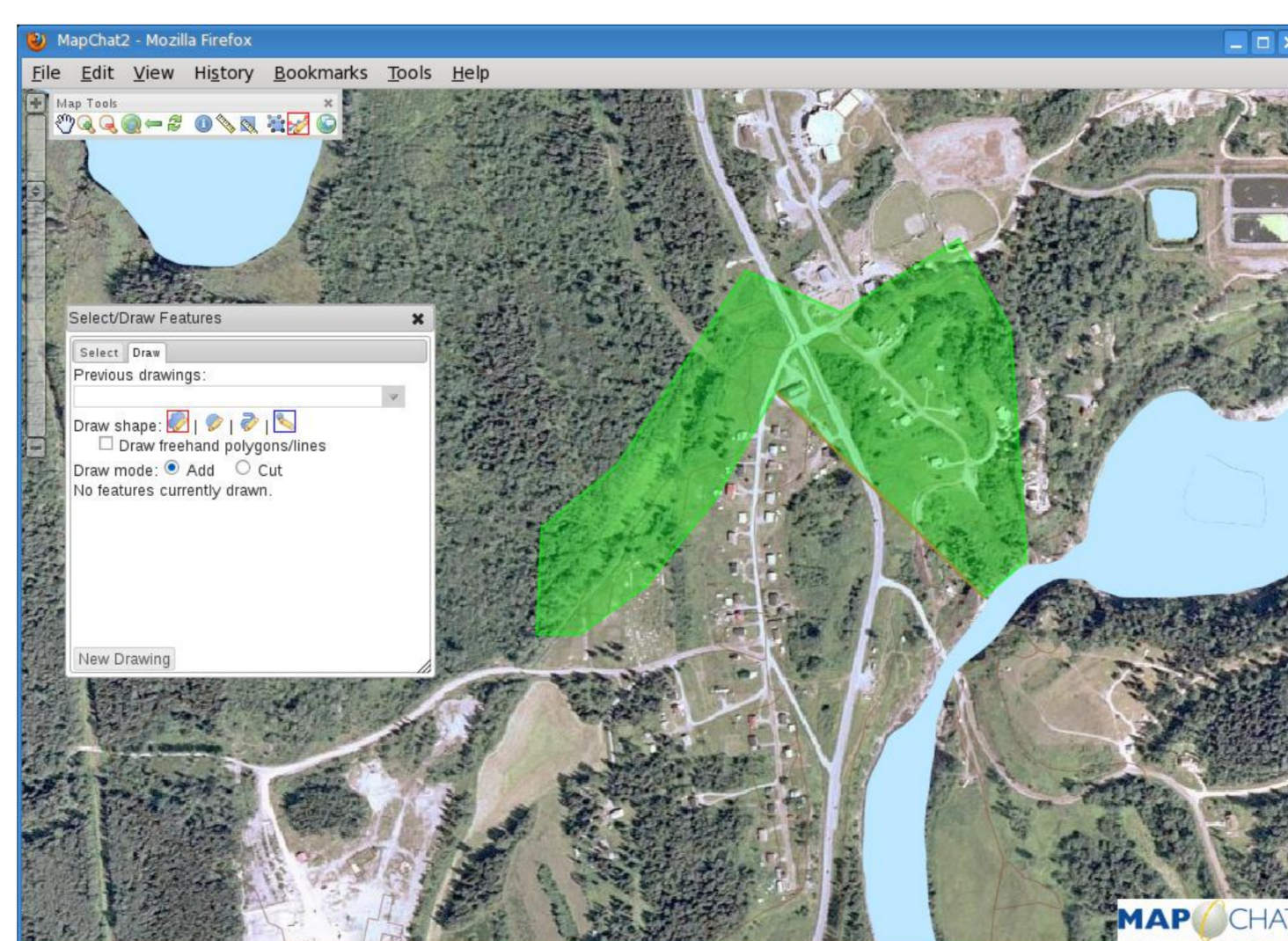
MapChat is ideally suited to facilitating public participation in sport fishery planning, riparian conservation efforts, and general watershed management.

### Using MapChat to Share Local Knowledge of Salmonid Habitat in the Bulkley River Valley



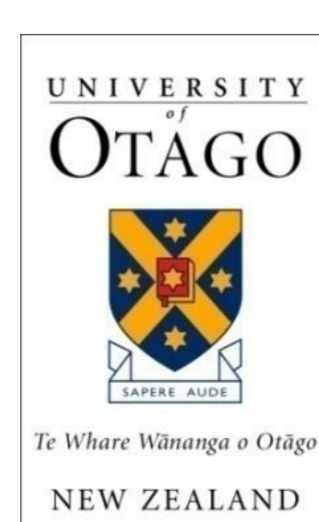
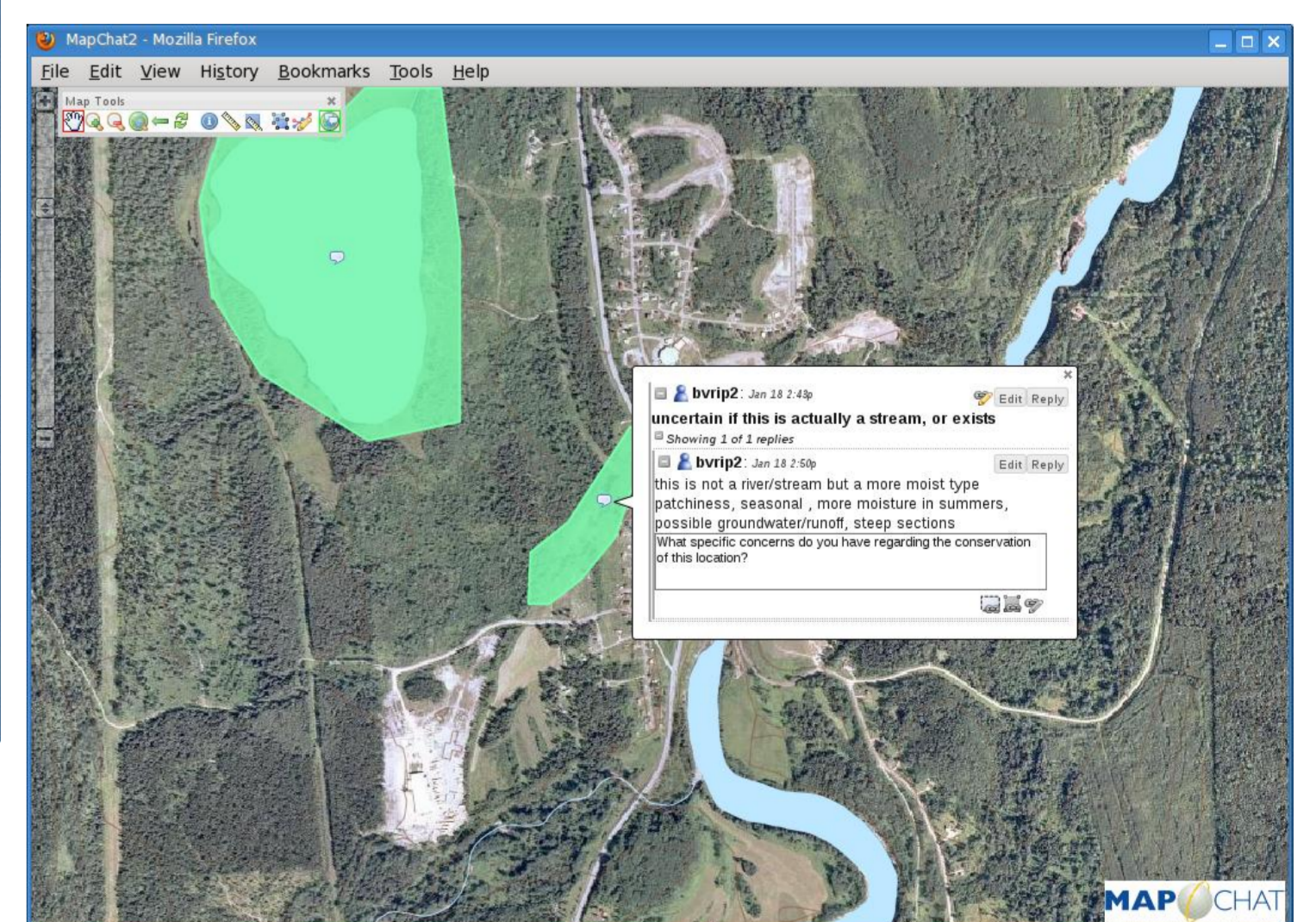
Access a variety of map layers, tools and real-time (and asynchronous) chat via the main MapChat interface.

Use feature selection tools and drawing tools to interact with and create features on the map, and link them to chat messages in a discussion.



Explore and participate in threaded online discussions, and zoom-to/highlight features on the map that people have linked to their chat messages.

Have private or public discussions with other participants directly within the map interface.



### Researchers:

Dr. Ray Chipeniuk, University of Northern B.C.  
Prof. G. Brent Hall, University of Otago, New Zealand  
Michael G. Leahy, Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario

Contacts: [chipeniuk@xplornet.com](mailto:chipeniuk@xplornet.com)  
[brent.hall@otago.ac.nz](mailto:brent.hall@otago.ac.nz)