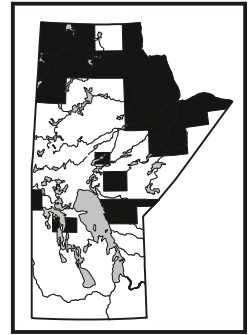


MANITOBA'S PROTECTED AREAS INITIATIVE: AN ASSESSMENT OF MINERAL POTENTIAL IN SELECTED AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

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SUMMARY

A study to examine mineral potential within Areas of Special Interest (ASI) as part of an overall study under the Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative was launched in 1998. Currently, there are 52 ASI or "Candidate Sites" identified as having the highest potential to effectively protect groupings of Enduring Features and associated natural and cultural values. Mineral assessments are being conducted for each ASI, and at the end of this year 15 ASI assessments will have been completed.

INTRODUCTION

The first protected areas in Manitoba were established early in the century for the purpose of wildlife management. Over time the focus has changed from protection of "single species" to protection of wildlife habitat, and more recently to "landscape protection". In 1932, Manitoba started this initiative by establishing its first protected area in Riding Mountain National Park. By 1976, the province created its first Ecological Reserve, beginning a process of building a provincial system of protected areas. In 1992, the Natural Lands and Special Places Policy initiative began to create the framework for a network of protected areas in Manitoba. In the same year, along with other provincial jurisdictions, Manitoba created a "Statement of Commitment to Complete Canada's Networks of Protected Areas". Manitoba has been in the process of assembling a network of lands across the province to protect and conserve representative areas of each of our 18 Natural Regions and Sub Regions in Manitoba. Each natural region must be represented and examples of all the characteristic landforms or enduring features within the region are to be set aside in a protected land status. The lands are protected from industrial extraction such as logging, mining, hydro electric development and oil and gas exploration and development.

In 1997, the lead agency for the provincial Protected Areas Initiative was identified as the department of Natural Resources, Parks and Natural Areas Branch (DNR). DNR has consulted with representatives of Manitoba Energy and Mines, the Mining Association of Manitoba Inc., the Manitoba Prospectors and Developers Association, the Manitoba/Saskatchewan Prospectors and Developers Association, the Mineral Exploration Liaison Committee (MELC), as well as representatives from First Nations, Manitoba Hydro, environmental organizations and the forest industry.

Ongoing consultations with these organizations has provided complete and current information where all parties identify and evaluate opportunities for protecting Areas of Special Interest (ASI). ASI is the term used to describe the "candidate site" picked as having high potential to efficiently protect groupings of Enduring Features and associated natural and cultural values identified through the Protected Areas consultation process. To date a selection of ASI sites have been identified in the province with some boundaries changing, some disappearing and others replaced as new information is put forth.

DATA COMPILATION

In 1998, the first phase of evaluation was a compilation of existing information on mining and exploration activity available through Manitoba Energy and Mines. Information is obtained from non-confidential assessment reports, historical claims and leases, Mineral Inventory Files, Mineral Deposit reports and other technical information covering the area.

A ranking system is being used to represent each of the areas under mineral assessment review.

A Rank 1 signifies an area with minimal mineral potential and is an approved candidate site by the mining sector. On the other hand, a Rank 4 signifies an area of high mineral potential with known mineral resources and would not go forward for protection.

PROGRESS

In 1999, mineral assessments of 15 ASI areas have been completed, with some pending further review. The department of Natural Resources has generated a Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative, ASI, Mining Sector Map (Edition 2) that is available through that department. A copy of that map can be obtained by contacting Natural Resources at (204) 945-4365.