

Elk Island Provincial Park

Management Plan



Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Park History.....	3
3. Park Attributes.....	4
3.1 Natural.....	4
3.2 Recreational.....	4
4. Park Management Framework	4
4.1 Park Classification	4
4.2 Park Purpose	4
4.3 Land Use Categories.....	5
5. Park Management Guidelines.....	6
5.1 Natural Values	6
5.2 Recreation	6
5.3 Interpretation	6
Appendix	7
A. Park Classification and Land Use Categories	
Bibliography	8



history of use. Information collected was then used to prepare a draft plan. The public was invited to comment on the draft plan through the Manitoba Parks website. Once the public consultation process was completed in August of 2013, the plan was finalized based on planning objectives and any new information received through the consultation process.

This management plan will guide the work of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship for a minimum of 10 to 15 years. In this context the plan will be utilized and examined on an ongoing basis. Where an update or new direction on any matters described in this management plan may be needed, a process for publicly reviewing and updating the plan will be undertaken.

The treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Elk Island Provincial Park are acknowledged and respected within the context of this management plan.

1. Introduction

The Provincial Parks Act (1993) requires that a management plan be prepared for each of Manitoba's provincial parks. Management plans establish long-term direction for parks and address issues pertaining to resource protection, land use and development. The management plan for Elk Island Provincial Park is based on its role in Manitoba's system of parks and the participation of those who use and care about the park. The plan is to be used in conjunction with park regulations, directives, and other departmental and government policies and legislation.

The process of preparing the management plan and co-ordinating the public involvement process was the responsibility of a team involving staff from Parks and Protected Spaces branch, regional staff of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, and a consultant contracted to work on the project.

Preparation of the management plan involved a number of steps. The first step was to review the current operation of the park, its attributes, and

2. Park History

Elk Island was a common stopping point along a former fur trade route that followed the Winnipeg River to Lake Winnipeg. Over its history, it has been known by a number of names including Isle du Biche (Deer Island), Isle of Hinds, Stag Island and Island of Elks. Early in the 20th century, the Victoria Beach Investment Company acquired the island for resort development, which included fishing stations, a mink ranch and a group camp (Penziwol & Blahut, 2011).

In 1970 Elk Island was incorporated into Grand Beach Provincial Park and classified as a "primitive environment zone". The designation was intended to maintain the wilderness isolation of the island for recreational use and to allow a natural progression of ecological communities (Manitoba Department of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, 1976). Elk Island was designated as a separate provincial park in 1974.

3. Park Attributes

Elk Island Provincial Park is approximately 1069 hectares in size, located 100 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg and 29 kilometres north of Grand Beach Provincial Park. It is accessed from Provincial Road 504. The island makes up the majority of the park but a small portion of the mainland to the south is also within the park boundary.

The water between the island and the mainland varies with lake levels and although the island is normally accessed via boat, it can be reached on foot when the lake is low and calm.

3.1 Natural

A diverse range of topographical features exist on the island, including a small lagoon in the southeast corner of the island, open sand beaches, limestone outcrops and glacial debris. Much of the island is boreal forest including species such as jack pine, spruce, fir, aspen and black ash. A wide variety of birds can be seen on or around the island including grebes, loons, gulls, sand hill cranes and pelicans. The beaches around the island are nesting habitat for the endangered piping plover (Species at Risk Public Registry, 2011).

3.2 Recreational

Activities within the park include hiking, canoeing and kayaking, beachcombing and berry picking. There is virtually no development on the island, which provides a natural environment, rich with wildlife viewing and bird watching opportunities. Because access to the park is limited, use of the park is low and visitors can expect to experience a high degree of solitude. One structure, a remnant of an old group camp, is occasionally used as a warm-up shelter by snowmobilers.

4. Park Management Framework

4.1 Park Classification

Manitoba's provincial park system is made up of almost 100 different parks and park reserves. The role of an individual park within this system is identified by its classification. Classification descriptions can be found in Appendix A.

Elk Island Provincial Park is classified as a Natural Park. The main purpose of a Natural Park is both to preserve areas of a natural region and to accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses as stated in *The Provincial Parks Act (1993)*.

4.2 Park Purpose

Manitoba's provincial park system was established to conserve ecosystems and maintain biodiversity; to preserve unique and representative natural, cultural and heritage resources; and to provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities in a natural setting. Within this larger framework, individual parks contribute towards the overall objective of the provincial park system.

A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks (1997) states that the purpose of Elk Island Provincial Park is to preserve areas representative of the Lake of the Woods portion of the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region and accommodate nature-oriented recreational opportunities. The park will:

- preserve the island's mixed-wood, shoreline and wetland habitats and protect habitats for species such as the endangered piping plover
- provide an undisturbed backcountry setting for nature-oriented recreational activities such as hiking
- promote public appreciation and understanding of Elk Island's natural features.

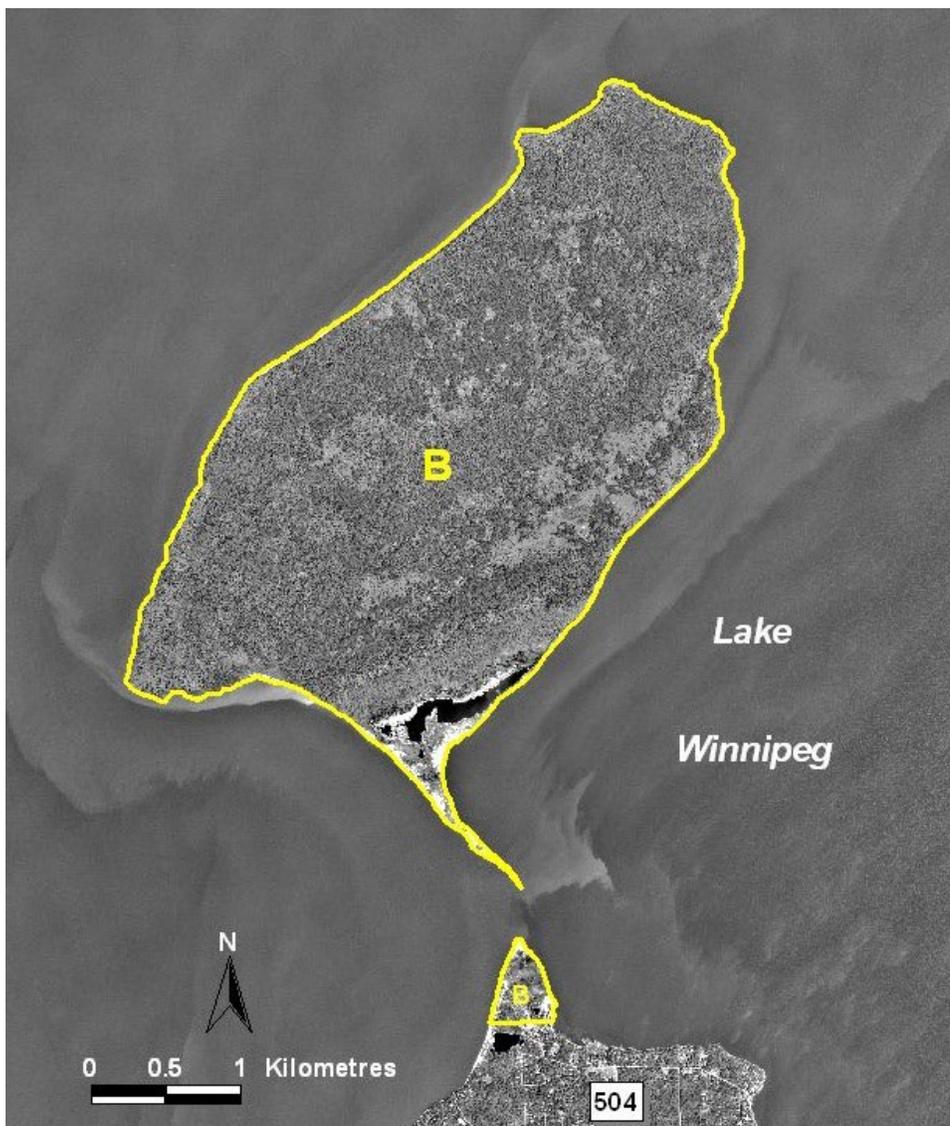
4.3 Land Use Categories

Land Use Categories (LUCs) identify the important attributes of broad areas within a provincial park. Land may be categorized in Wilderness, Backcountry, Resource Management, Recreational Development, Heritage or Access LUCs. LUC descriptions can be found in Appendix A.

Elk Island Provincial Park has a Backcountry (B) LUC. The main purpose of this category is to protect examples of natural landscapes and provide basic facilities and trails for nature-oriented recreation in a largely undisturbed environment. Elk Island Provincial Park:

- Protects isolated natural communities and provides nesting habitat for piping plovers
- Provides opportunities for nature-oriented recreation such as hiking and wildlife viewing

Elk Island Provincial Park Map



Map shown for illustration purposes only

5. Park Management Guidelines

5.1 Natural Values

Elk Island Provincial Park provides an undisturbed natural environment. The park is important habitat for some species such as the piping plover.

Guidelines

1. No new development will be permitted in order to retain the park's natural environment.
2. Monitoring of the beach for piping plovers will be done in conjunction with the Manitoba Piping Plover Recovery Action Group. Any nesting occurrences will be documented and appropriate protection measures for nesting birds will be put in place under the direction of the Manitoba Recovery Action Plan.

5.2 Recreation

All recreation in the park is based on its natural features and surrounding environment, providing visitors the opportunity to experience a unique natural setting. The main recreational activities in the park, such as hiking, canoeing and kayaking, are adequately accommodated by the park's natural state.

Guideline

1. No new development will be permitted in the park in order to support the current nature based recreational activities.
2. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will permit the local snowmobile club to maintain the existing structure on the island as a warm-up shelter for basic safety and convenience of snowmobilers only.

5.3 Interpretation

Providing outdoor educational opportunities and experiences in a natural setting is one of the purposes of provincial parks as stated in *The Provincial Parks Act*. The undeveloped nature of Elk Island provides opportunities for interpretation through self-discovery.

Guideline

1. Interpretive information will be made available through publications such as maps, brochures, and the Parks and Protected Spaces website.

Appendix A – Park Classification and Land Use Categories

Park Classifications

In accordance with section 7(2) of *The Provincial Parks Act* (1993), all provincial parks are classified as one of the following types:

- (a) a wilderness park, if the main purpose of the designation is to preserve representative areas of a natural region;
- (b) a natural park, if the main purpose of the designation is both to preserve areas of a natural region and to accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses;
- (c) a recreation park, if the main purpose of the designation is to provide recreational opportunities;
- (d) a heritage park, if the main purpose of the designation is to preserve an area of land containing a resource or resources of cultural or heritage value;
- (e) any other type of provincial park that may be specified in the regulation.

Land Use Categories

In accordance with section 7(3) of *The Provincial Parks Act* (1993), all provincial parks are categorized into one or more of the following land use categories:

- (a) a wilderness category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to protect representative or unique natural landscapes in an undisturbed state and provide recreational opportunities that depend on a pristine environment;
- (b) a backcountry category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to protect examples of natural landscapes and provide basic facilities and trails for nature-oriented recreation in a largely undisturbed environment;
- (c) a resource management category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to permit commercial resource development or extraction in a manner that does not compromise the main purpose of the park classification;
- (d) a recreational development category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to accommodate recreational development;
- (e) a heritage category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to protect a unique or representative site containing a resource or resources of cultural or heritage value;
- (f) an access category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to provide a point or route of access in a provincial park or a location for a lodge and associated facilities;
- (g) any other category that may be specified in the regulation.

Bibliography

Manitoba Department of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, Parks Branch.
Outdoor Recreation Master Plan – Grand Beach Provincial Park. 1976.

Manitoba Natural Resources. "A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks." 1997.

Penziwol, S. and Blahut, P." From Asessippi to Zed Lake: A guide to Manitoba's provincial parks."
Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications. 2011.

Species at Risk Public Registry. "A to Z Species Index." www.sararegistry.gc.ca. 2011

The Provincial Parks Act. C.C.S.M., c. P20. 1993.