



# Pisew Falls Provincial Park

Draft Management Plan



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## 1. Introduction

The Provincial Parks Act requires that a management plan be prepared for each provincial park. Management plans establish long-term direction for parks and address issues pertaining to resource use, development of park land, environmental protection, and the preservation of culturally significant areas. They are used in conjunction with park regulations, procedures and other departmental and government policies and legislation.

This draft management plan includes proposed guidelines that will inform management of Pisew Falls Provincial Park. The final plan will be based on the role of the park in Manitoba's system of parks and will take into account feedback received from the public on the draft management plan. Once finalized, the management plan will guide management of the park over the next 10 to 15 years. Implementation of the plan will occur on a gradual basis, and will be partially dependent on the availability of resources to sustain proposed initiatives.

The rights of Indigenous Peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Pisew Falls Provincial Park are acknowledged and respected within the context of this draft management plan.



## 2. Background and Park Attributes

### 2.1 Park History

Pisew Falls Provincial Park was designated in 1974. One of Manitoba's most spectacular parks, Pisew Falls offers visitors a stunning view of the Grass River dropping over 13-metre waterfalls. Located off of PTH 6, the park is approximately 75 kilometres (km) south of the City of Thompson and 50 km south of Paint Lake Provincial Park. Sasagiu Rapids Provincial Park is only six km south of Pisew Falls.

Pisew Falls is located along the Grass River waterway, which was part of the "upper track" trade route between Cumberland House and York Factory during the fur trade era. At that time, Indigenous Peoples, who had travelled this route for thousands of years, showed traders from Hudson Bay that they could reach the Saskatchewan River and the interior of western Canada by this route. Along the Grass River, competition between the "Bay" men and North West Company traders was intense during the 1790's and early 1800's as both companies vied for furs. "Pisew" is the Cree word for lynx.







## 2.2 Natural Features

Located in the Hayes River Upland Ecoregion, Pisew Falls Provincial Park is only 92.86 hectares (0.93 km<sup>2</sup>). The land in and around the park is mixed forest composed of species such as black spruce, jack pine, tamarack, trembling aspen and balsam poplar. The central feature of the park is Pisew Falls, which thunders over a 13 metre drop before the water changes direction and jets down through a gorge. The spray from the falls causes the area nearby to have a more moderate and humid climate than the surrounding upland. As a result, the nearby slopes are dominated by white spruce and balsam fir, but only a short distance away the forest consists more of black spruce. At the base of the falls, mist and spray form a tower of ice during the winter and create a unique microclimate on an island in the river channel. This ice can persist well into the summer, resulting in a community of plants that favour a short growing season and very moist conditions. From Pisew Falls, the Grass River carries on downstream toward Kwasitchewan Falls, Manitoba's highest waterfalls, which have a 14.2-metre drop.

Black bears are common in the area. Other wildlife species that inhabit the ecoregion include moose, woodland caribou, lynx, wolf, and various small mammals and birds. A notable bird species which has been recorded in the park is the olive-sided flycatcher, which is listed as Threatened under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

## 2.3 Recreation and Interpretation

Pisew Falls offers opportunities for relaxing day use as well as more strenuous hiking. Facilities in the park include a day use area with picnic tables, fire pits and non-modern washrooms, as well as a short boardwalk and staircase leading to observation platforms overlooking the falls. A short 0.5 km trail out of the parking lot takes visitors to the Rotary Bridge, a suspension bridge over the Grass River downstream of Pisew Falls. The bridge provides access to a 22 km (return) hiking trail that heads out of the park downriver to Kwasitchewan Falls. A small number of backcountry campsites are located at the far end of the loop trail. In conjunction with the preparation of the park management plan, Manitoba Sustainable Development is investigating the possibility of expanding the park boundary to incorporate the trail and campsites into the park.

A self-guiding trail map is available which advises hikers of the difficulty and dangers of the Kwasitchewan Falls Trail, and informs users of "Leave No Trace" camping principles. All visitors to Pisew Falls Provincial Park are advised to stay on the designated trails, bridge and boardwalk, as the slippery rocks in the area and strong current of the river pose real danger, with fatalities having occurred at the site in the past.



Pisew Falls also provides access to the Grass River for canoeists, with an area suitable for launching canoes located immediately north of the park on the west shore of the river. Two water-route backcountry campsites can be found along the river just downstream of Kwasitchewan Falls.

## 3. Park Purpose and Role

### 3.1 Park Classification and Purpose

Manitoba's provincial park system is made up of almost 100 different parks and park reserves. The role of each park within this system is identified by its classification. Parks may be classified as one of five types: wilderness, natural, recreation, heritage or Indigenous traditional use.

Pisew Falls Provincial Park is classified as a recreation park. The main purpose of a recreation park, as defined in The Provincial Parks Act, is to provide recreational opportunities.

The objectives of Manitoba's provincial park system are 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. The purpose of each park within the system is to contribute to these overarching objectives while fully recognizing and incorporating local considerations.

The purpose of Pisew Falls Provincial Park is to provide outdoor recreational opportunities and experiences at Pisew Falls while preserving the unique natural phenomenon of the area. In doing so, the park will:

- preserve the natural landscape of the area, including the unique microclimate below Pisew Falls in the falls' spray zone
- provide opportunities for hiking, picnicking, photography and viewing of the falls
- promote public understanding and appreciation of the falls

### 3.2 Land Use Categories

Land Use Categories (LUCs) are used to designate lands within provincial parks for various purposes. There are eight LUCs in which land may be categorized: wilderness, backcountry, resource management, recreational development, heritage, access, winter road access or Indigenous heritage.

Pisew Falls Provincial Park is categorized under the recreational development (RD) LUC. The main purpose of this category is to accommodate recreational development. Within Pisew Falls Provincial Park, this includes:

- providing facilities including a boardwalk, picnic area and viewing areas
- providing access to a suspension bridge and trail leading from the park to Kwasitchewan Falls downstream



Pisew Falls Provincial Park



## 4. Park Management Guidelines

The following guidelines will direct management decisions in Pisew Falls Provincial Park over the life of the management plan.

### 4.1 Natural Features

Pisew Falls is one of Manitoba's most stunning natural features, providing visitors with the opportunity to be amazed by the sheer power of nature while also experiencing feelings of peace and contentment amid the beauty of the site. Future management of the park must ensure that the unique nature of the falls and surrounding area is preserved.



### Guidelines

1. Ecological values in undeveloped portions of the park will be maintained and these areas will remain free of development beyond that needed for safety purposes.
2. If species of conservation concern are identified in the park, any negative impacts on those species associated with park use will be minimized or avoided. Any sightings of rare species will be tracked and shared with the Manitoba Conservation Data Centre.
3. Access to the island in the river channel opposite the falls will not be provided. The natural features of this unique microclimate will be kept intact.
4. Parks and Protected Spaces Branch will participate in departmental efforts to prevent aquatic and terrestrial invasive species from spreading within the park or into the Grass River system. This may include but not be limited to the promotion of proper decontamination procedures for watercraft and water-related equipment, and educating park visitors on how they can stop the spread of invasive species.

### 4.2 Recreation and Interpretation

The recreational experience offered by Pisew Falls Provincial Park is unique in Manitoba. It is important that the significance of the site is recognized and that opportunities for natural heritage appreciation and self-guided interpretation continue to be provided safely.

### Guidelines

1. Pisew Falls Provincial Park will be maintained in a manner that ensures continued access for viewing the falls safely. Public access off of the boardwalk and viewing platforms will not be permitted.
2. Pisew Falls will continue to be promoted as an iconic destination in the province. Manitoba Sustainable Development will work with partners to ensure that the unique values of the site are recognized and promoted in media and other publications.

3. No new trails will be developed in the park. Interpretive signage in the park and related materials will be used to promote the trail to Kwasitchewan Falls.
4. No commercial operations or development will be permitted in the park.
5. Manitoba Sustainable Development will develop an interpretive brochure which includes information about Pisew Falls Provincial Park, the Kwasitchewan Trail, "Leave No Trace" camping principles and backcountry campsite locations. Self-guiding products will be the delivery method for park interpretation, with information also provided on the Manitoba Parks website. Opportunities for partnership on interpretive products will be considered where appropriate.
6. The development of an interpretive kiosk to be installed at the canoe launch area located on the west shore immediately north of the park will be considered.
7. Manitoba Sustainable Development will explore the possibility of expanding Pisew Falls Provincial Park to incorporate the Kwasitchewan Trail and Falls and the nearby backcountry campsites. Should the trail and associated facilities be added to the park, they will be managed in the following manner:
  - a. The trail will remain open and available for recreational use in order to ensure continued access by foot for viewing of Kwasitchewan Falls. Temporary closures may be required from time to time if safety concerns arise or to address effects of weather events.



- b. Maintenance of the trail will be limited in order to preserve the current level of difficulty offered by the trail and the remote and rugged nature of the experience provided.
- c. There will be no facility development along the trail or at Kwasitchewan Falls beyond the existing backcountry campsites and non-modern washrooms.



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