

Manitoba Protected Areas Initiative Update 2010

Manitoba's network of protected areas includes all sites where logging, mining, hydroelectric development and other activities that could harm habitat are prohibited through legal means.

Through the Protected Areas Initiative, Manitoba successfully designated five major protected areas committed to in the province's *Green and Growing Strategy* (2006). The five sites include Kaskatamagan and Kaskatamagan Sipi Wildlife Management Areas (protected in late 2009), Nueltin Lake and Colvin Lake Provincial Parks, and permanent protection of Birch Island Provincial Park. These five sites alone protect more than 1 million hectares of the province. The three parks permanently protected this year added more than 610,000 hectares to Manitoba's network of protected areas, an increase from 9.0 to 9.9 per cent of the province.

Work also continued in priority areas across the province including southern Manitoba (agro-Manitoba), the Manitoba Lowlands in southeast Manitoba (Natural Region 5c), the Saskatchewan River Delta (Natural Region 5a), and the Arctic Tundra (Natural Region 2a). Progress was also made on a number of park reserves and smaller sites proposed as ecological reserves. Most of these activities involve sites within the boreal region.

Key Achievements

Manitoba continues to work with participating First Nations in Manitoba and Ontario, and the governments of Ontario and Canada to develop a boreal forest World Heritage Site nomination to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Centre. The Pimachiowin Aki Corporation is coordinating the nomination. In partnership with the Pimachiowin Aki Corporation and The Winnipeg Foundation, Manitoba has established the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Fund. The fund generates income to be used to protect, preserve and celebrate the natural and cultural features of the Pimachiowin Aki area and to demonstrate to UNESCO that there is financial and public support for a world heritage site. Manitoba will contribute up to \$10 million to the fund.

October 2010

- **Fisher Bay Park Reserve** was renewed until October 31, 2015. The renewal of the park reserve status will allow time to conduct further First Nations and stakeholder reviews on the current park reserve boundary in order to confirm a final park proposal for the site.

November 2010

- Manitoba designated two new wilderness provincial parks in northern Manitoba. **Nueltin Lake Provincial Park** captures **447,190 hectares** of the transition zone between the boreal and tundra ecosystems, and provides important winter habitat for the Qamanirijuaq barren-ground caribou herd. **Colvin Lake Provincial Park** covers **163,070 hectares** in northwest Manitoba. Its vast wilderness made up of stunted trees with brief summers is known as the "Land of Little Sticks".
- The Birch Island Park Reserve was permanently designated as **Birch Island Provincial Park**, an **80,066 hectare** protected area on Lake Winnipegosis. This natural park includes Birch Island and a number of small islands, reefs and shoals, all of which have been designated with a Backcountry land use category. The small islands and reefs provide nesting habitat for many colonial nesting birds.

In Progress

- The Protected Areas Initiative is continuing its work in the Saskatchewan River Delta (SRD) Planning Area, located in Natural Region 5a on the west side of the province. The SRD Planning Area is being reviewed in two phases. The Phase 1 review is nearing completion, and is centred on lands extending from the west shore of Lake Winnipegosis to the Manitoba – Saskatchewan border, and south of Highway 60 to Red Deer Lake. The coming Phase 2 review will cover the core of the SRD, which extends north from the junction of Highways 10 and 60 to Clearwater Lake Provincial Park. The Saskatchewan River Delta is recognized as a globally significant Important Bird Area, the largest freshwater inland delta in North America, and one of only two active deltas in the Boreal Plains Ecozone of the western boreal forest. Several salt flats and significant coastal wetlands supporting aquatic plant communities typical of coastal marine environments are found in and around the proposed Red Deer Wildlife Management Area (WMA).
- Protected area proposals covering over 165,000 hectares including 10 proposed ecological reserves and one proposed addition to an existing ecological reserve have been developed in Natural Region 5c (southeastern Manitoba) and are being prepared for review.

Other Related Activities

- Manitoba Conservation, in cooperation with Mosakahiken Cree Nation and the Moose Lake Resource Management Board, initiated a planning process focused on designating Little Limestone Lake Park Reserve as a provincial park, and preparing its park management plan.
- Manitoba Conservation continued to work closely with conservation agencies, such as Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), to advance protection efforts in southern Manitoba where much of the land is privately owned. Part of this work includes collecting and mapping rare and at risk species information and sharing it with these conservation partners, who can incorporate specific species and habitat conservation measures into conservation agreements with private landowners.
- As part of the province's commitment of \$7 million to support the NCC Natural Areas Conservation Program, NCC has acquired conservation agreements and land purchases totalling over 1,680 hectares in the Riding Mountain Aspen Parkland and Tall Grass Prairie over the past year. Other areas of focus for the program include the West Souris Mixed-grass Prairie, Oak Lake Sandhills and Wetlands, Whitemouth River watershed, Souris River Valley Grassland, Interlake Parkland, and Turtle Mountain Woodland and Wetland.
- The rural municipalities of Langford and Lansdowne recently signed the largest conservation agreement in Manitoba with Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation for the Langford Community Pasture. The 3,845 hectare community pasture is one of Manitoba's few remaining areas of native mixed-grass prairie and sandhills habitats, commonly known as sand-prairie. This community pasture provides habitat for the endangered prairie skink, Manitoba's only lizard, and continues to be managed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.
- As of December 31, 2010, the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC) held a total of 537 conservation agreements covering 40,528 (100,143 acres). Of these, 47 conservation agreements covering 7,214 ha (17,826 acres) were acquired since October, 2009. All conservation agreements held by MHHC are in perpetuity. They were donated or acquired through the Potholes Plus Program, the Habitat Stewardship Program focusing on species at risk, the Riparian Conservation Easement Program or through partnership agreements with conservation districts. These conservation lands contain the range of native habitat in Manitoba's prairie ecozone including wetlands, habitat of species at risk, riparian areas, mixed grass prairie, and woodland.
- The protected coastline of Kaskatamagan WMA has been officially counted in Canada's inventory of Marine Protected Areas. This WMA captures the transition from brackish tidal mudflats exposed at low tide to wetland-dominated inland plains characteristic of the Coastal Hudson Bay Lowlands. Beluga whales, polar bears, and coastal caribou can all be found in this area at the same time for a couple of weeks each year.
- A management plan is being prepared for Birds Hill Provincial Park. Lying just outside the city of Winnipeg, Birds Hill is one of Manitoba's busiest parks with over 800,000 visitors per year. The first round of public consultation to review background information and seek input on issues and concerns was held through the summer of 2010. A draft management plan will be prepared for public review in 2011.