

Seal River Watershed

FACT SHEET

The Seal River Watershed, located in northern Manitoba, is one of the largest remaining ecologically intact watersheds in the world.

The pristine watershed is home to polar bears, peregrine falcons, wolves, moose, wolverines, and even grizzly bears. Where the Seal River flows into Hudson Bay, marine life such as beluga whales and harbour seals thrive.

The watershed is located within the ancestral territory of many Indigenous Nations, including the Sayisi Dene First Nation, Northlands Denesuline First Nation, Barren Lands First Nation, and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation. These four First Nations formed the Seal River Watershed Alliance.

Manitoba, Parks Canada, and the Seal River Watershed Alliance (the Alliance), have collectively determined that it is feasible to establish a protected area or areas in the Seal River Watershed. The feasibility report was published in March 2025 manitoba.ca/sd/parks/_resources/en/pdf/sealriver-report.pdf.

Protected and conserved areas provide important habitat for wildlife and fish, give us clean air and water, store carbon, protect our communities during extreme weather events like storms, floods and wildfire, and support our well-being and mental health. Protected landscapes benefit all Manitobans and will remain accessible for Manitobans to enjoy.

During the feasibility assessment study, the Alliance communities expressed a united desire to permanently protect and conserve the pristine natural landscape of the Seal River Watershed for future generations. Feedback from the public also demonstrates support for protecting this area.

Protected Area Proposal

Fourteen per cent of the Seal River Watershed is currently protected through three existing provincial parks and an ecological reserve (Figure 1). Based on the results of the feasibility study, the Alliance, Manitoba, and Parks Canada are initiating discussions on options for further protection in the watershed. Part of the discussions include considering which legislative mechanisms for protection could be used (federal or provincial legislation) and the proposed boundaries for those areas.

The anticipated outcome of these discussions will include one or more jointly developed protected area proposals for the watershed. The initial proposal(s) will be shared publicly and there will be opportunities for public, stakeholder, and Indigenous engagement. Feedback from engagement will be considered in the development of the final protected area proposal(s).

Indigenous Conserved and Protected Areas

An IPCA is an area where the purpose, development, establishment, and ongoing management of an area reflect and enable Indigenous culture, interests and leadership. IPCAs are places that Indigenous Nations identify for conservation and they can take many forms. IPCAs vary by place, by the goals and values of the communities leading their development, and by the partners involved.

While there are no IPCAs in Manitoba today, in other areas of Canada, IPCAs are often supported and implemented with provincial, territorial and national mechanisms on Crown lands (such as provincial parks and national park reserves) to protect lands and waters.

Manitoba Protected Areas

In protected areas in Manitoba, industrial resource extraction and land conversion are prohibited. Activities such as ecotourism, licensed hunting, fishing, and trapping, lodge operations and outfitting, haying and grazing, winter roads, and other compatible activities are generally allowed.

We say “generally allowed” because in some very sensitive habitats that are protected through ecological reserves, activities may be restricted, except for Indigenous traditional uses. An example is Baralzon Lake Ecological Reserve which protects pristine low arctic tundra habitat.

Further Information

More information on the Seal River Watershed and protected area initiatives is available on the Manitoba government web site at manitoba.ca/sd/environment_and_biodiversity/protected_areas/index.html.

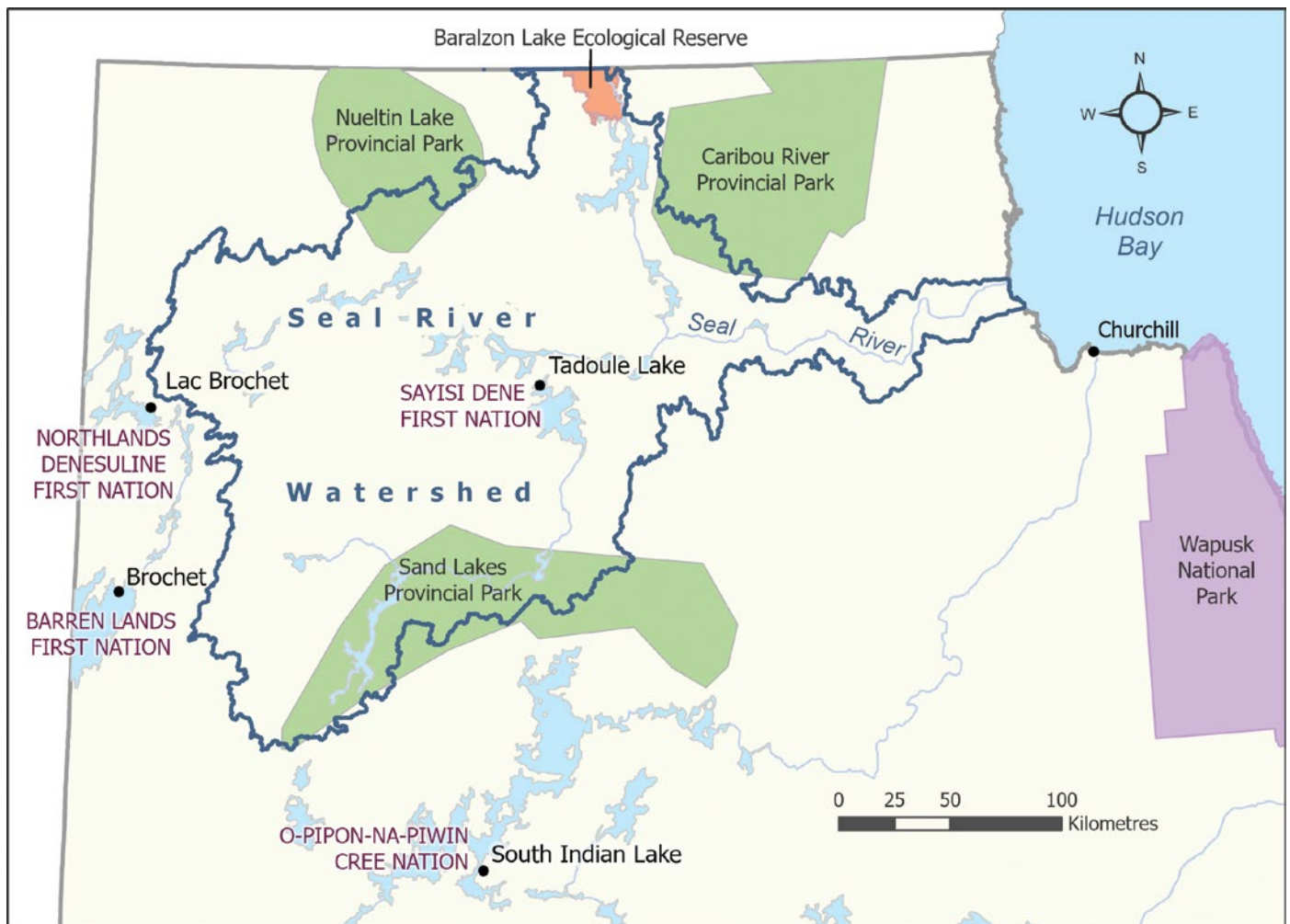


Figure 1. Map of the Seal River Watershed in Manitoba.