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This draft plan was prepared for Manigotagan River Provincial Park in consultation with park users under the authority of The Provincial Parks Act.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
Parks and Protected Spaces Branch
Fall 2015
1.0 Introduction

The Provincial Parks Act (2015) 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 protection, use and development of park land. The draft management plan for Manigotagan River 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 and people who wish to provide input into park management. The final plan is to be used in conjunction with park regulations, directives and other departmental and government policies and legislation.

Generally, the preparation of a park management plan is divided into five steps:

Step 1: Identification of management issues and public consultation (Phase 1).
Step 2: Distribution of a report on public comments.
Step 3: Preparation of a draft management plan.
Step 4: Public consultation (Phase 2) and review of a draft management plan.
Step 5: Revisions and finalization the management plan.

In the fall of 2014, phase one of public consultation was held in conjunction with the Nopiming Provincial Park management plan process. Approximately 300 responses in total were received for both Nopiming and Manigotagan River. These comments along with scientific data, academic resources and current park policies and principles were considered during the winter of 2015. This document is the draft plan that was developed in steps one and two above. With a draft plan complete, the second phase of public consultation will begin. After the consultation and review of the draft plan, the management plan will be finalized. It is anticipated that the plan will be completed in 2016. The process of preparing this draft management plan and co-ordinating the public involvement is the responsibility of a team involving staff from Parks and Protected Spaces branch and regional staff of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship.

Once finalized, the management plan will guide the work of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship over the next 10 to 15 years. In this context the plan will be used and examined on an ongoing basis. When 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 Manigotagan River Provincial Park are acknowledged and respected within the context of this draft management plan.
2.0 Background Information

Manigotagan River Provincial Park was established in 2004. Extending from the northwest point of Nopiming Provincial Park, this park was created in order to maintain the backcountry experience along the Manigotagan River, preserve the river’s water quality and to protect the intact natural condition of the area. Acting as an access point to the eastern portion of Manitoba, Manigotagan River was a valuable route for Indigenous peoples in the area and still serves as a popular canoe route today. The total area of the park is 74.3 square kilometres, which includes the river and a 750 metre corridor surrounding the shore on each side.
3.0 Park Purpose and Role

Under the authority of The Provincial Parks Act (2015) Manigotagan River is classified as a Natural Park and thus is intended to both preserve areas of an ecoregion and accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses. A System Plan for Manitoba Parks (2015) describes the purpose and role of each provincial park in Manitoba. The purpose of Manigotagan River Provincial Park is to maintain the backcountry canoeing experience along the Manigotagan River, preserve the river’s water quality and protect the intact natural condition of areas representative of the Lac Seul Upland Ecoregion, a portion of the Precambrian Boreal Forest Natural Region.

In addition, the park will:

• provide a backcountry setting for activities such as canoeing and traditional and cultural activities that depend largely on an undisturbed environment

• preserve the Manigotagan River’s aquatic and shoreline habitats

• promote public appreciation of the natural and cultural values of the Manigotagan River corridor and emphasize the need to respect and maintain the river’s values and water quality

• be managed in a manner which will recognize and respect treaty rights and the goals and values of the regional communities

Manigotagan River Provincial Park is divided into two land use categories (LUC) as shown on Map 1. These land use categories further define the purpose of specific areas of the park.

The Backcountry LUC (B) protects natural, cultural and recreational values found in this corridor and helps maintain the river’s water quality. The Backcountry LUC comprises 7,416 hectares or 99 per cent of the park.

The Recreational Development LUC (RD) accommodates a pre-existing mining claim near Mud Turtle Lake which has recently expired. This LUC comprises 16 hectares or one per cent of the park.

Manigotagan River Provincial Park and Manitoba’s Protected Areas Initiative

This park is part of the protected areas network Manitoba is building to represent the biodiversity found in each of its 16 ecoregions. It helps maintain the overall ecological integrity of the Lac Seul Upland ecoregion by capturing a representative sample of the biodiversity found within that ecoregion.

Currently 99 per cent of the park is classified as Backcountry LUC. Land included in a Backcountry LUC contributes to Manitoba’s network of protected areas and legally prohibit commercial logging, mining, hydroelectric development, oil and gas exploration or development, exploring for and harvesting peat, and other activities that significantly and adversely affect habitat.

Protected areas help conserve biological diversity, including natural gene pools, by allowing the environment to maintain its natural cycles and processes, and reducing the potential for future costs of species recovery by maintaining intact habitat. They also serve as ecological benchmarks for measuring environmental and climatic changes over time, and provide an opportunity to ensure that management practices of existing and future developments employed in the region are sustainable.

This protected river corridor provides connectivity between Nopiming Provincial Park, Observation Point Wildlife Management Area and Lake Winnipeg. The free movement of wildlife populations between intact habitats can help strengthen their overall genetic diversity. The designation of Manigotagan Provincial Park helped increase representation of the enduring features in this ecoregion.
4.0 Park Features: Strategic Objectives and Proposed Guidelines

The following sections provide specific background information on the features that make Manigotagan River Provincial Park unique in the park system: natural features, recreation and use by park visitors, commercial resource use, cultural features and interpretation. Each section contains the strategic objectives and specific guidelines to support those objectives. Once finalized, the guidelines listed in this section will direct park management actions in Manigotagan River Provincial Park over the next 10 to 15 years. The final plan will be used 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.

4.1 Natural Features

Manigotagan River Provincial Park has spectacular topography ranging from sheer rock faces covered with stems of Jack pine and lichen near the Manigotagan’s headwaters, to moist verdant stands of balsam poplar, green ash and elderberry near the river’s mouth. This exposed Precambrian shield is representative of the intense glaciations that occurred over the province hundreds of years ago.

Within the forest stands, plants like prickly pear cactus and Canada yew can be found. Other plant species that are rare or uncommon in Manitoba can be found within the park including the chestnut sedge, white-haired panic-grass and running pine.

Wildlife that may be found in the park include black bear, boreal woodland caribou, timber wolf, moose, river otter, mink, loon, barred owl and other birds, furbearers and small mammals. The rivers and lakes within the park abound with many fish species, such as, northern pike, walleye, cisco (tulibee), yellow perch and small mouth bass.

Manigotagan River Park and surrounding areas (including Nopiming Provincial Park) represent the southern-most habitats in eastern Manitoba that are still considered capable of supporting viable, self-sustaining populations of moose. Moose habitat is comprised of early-seral mixed deciduous /coniferous forests with wetland complexes and networks of creeks, rivers and ponds. Moose populations are influenced by an interrelated series of human and natural factors. The main threats to moose in the Manigotagan River area are those influencing mortality rates: hunting, wolf predation and the transmission of pathogenic parasites associated with white-tailed deer. Moose habitat in the area has not previously been considered limited. However, a lack of wildfires over the last 25 years has created concerns that high quality moose habitats are not being regenerated in sufficient supply. While the habitat in these areas is favorable, most of the landscape disturbances in the project
area over this period have been of logging origin. While the habitat in logged areas is favorable to moose, these areas are associated with elevated threats from predation and hunting due to their extensive networks of roads and trails. Between 2000 and 2010, the moose population in Nopiming and surrounding areas had declined significantly, which triggered a series of management actions in order to curtail the decreasing number of moose. A recent survey appears to show a stabilisation of the moose population. In light of recent concerns with the local moose population, a regional moose management plan will be developed in collaboration with local communities and stakeholders in an effort to maintain a healthy and sustainable moose population in Manigotagan River and surrounding areas.

Manigotagan River Provincial Park provides some important habitat for Manitoba’s southern-most herd of boreal woodland caribou – the Owl-Flintstone population – which consists of about 50 to 60 animals. Caribou face a variety of threats, including human developments and natural events which cause loss of habitat or alter habitat that expose caribou to increased risk of predation and disease. In 2006, Manitoba developed a conservation and recovery strategy for the species. This was followed in 2011, by a draft action plan specifically targeting the Owl-Flintstone caribou range (as well as the Atikaki-Berens range). The Manigotagan River Provincial Park Management Plan will function alongside these and any future government policies relating to the management of woodland caribou in Manitoba.

As with all of Manitoba, concerns regarding the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) and the potential impact on both the natural environment and water based recreation opportunities are increasing. These concerns are currently managed through both federal and provincial legislation, and by providing information to the public on how to “clean, drain, dry and dispose”, to reduce the risk of transporting and introducing AIS to new water bodies.

A 16 hectare piece of land near Turtle Lake within the park is currently classified as Recreational Development LUC and accommodated a previous mining claim that existed at the park designation. The area of the claim was categorized as Recreational Development LUC to recognize the existence of the mining claim while still designating the park as a contiguous corridor along the river. The claim has recently expired and the current LUC is inconsistent with the remaining 99 per cent of the park that has a Backcountry LUC. One other mining claim that originally fell within the park had its boundaries amended prior to park designation to allow for the protection of the current corridor.
4.1.1 Natural Features: Strategic Objectives and Proposed Guidelines

The following guidelines and objectives will guide management decisions in Manigotagan River Provincial Park over the life of the management plan (10 to 15 years) regarding the park's natural features. Should an activity or development arise that would constitute a change in land use, have the potential to affect the natural, geological or cultural values of the park, or impact the Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Manigotagan River an appropriate review and consultation process will be designed and implemented.

Objective: To increase the amount of protected area within Manigotagan River Provincial Park to achieve 100 per cent protected status.

Guideline:
1. Pursue rezoning the Recreational Development Land Use Category to Backcountry Land Use Category, making 100 per cent of land within the park designated as Backcountry Land Use Category.

Objective: To support Wildlife and Fisheries branch’s efforts in protecting moose and caribou populations and minimize park visitor impact on those populations.

Guidelines:
2. Work with Wildlife and Fisheries branch to support initiatives to re-establish and maintain moose and caribou populations within and near the park, which includes the implementation of recovery strategies and action plans. New developments (including trails, campsites and portages) should be located to have minimal impact.

3. Management actions will be communicated with the Eastern Manitoba Caribou Advisory Committee and the Moose Management Committee. Wherever possible, recommendations from the committees will be supported.

4. Work with the provincial wildfire program and Wildlife and Fisheries branch to investigate long-term fire management options that reflect and support wildlife management objectives.

Objective: To document and avoid impacts on species of special concern.

Guideline:
5. Impacts on known species of conservation concern will be avoided or minimized. Any new developments or locations will be vetted through the Manitoba Conservation Date Centre (CDC) prior to establishment. Any sightings of rare species (gathered through the backcountry surveys, regular patrols or personal conversations) will be tracked and shared with the CDC.
4.2 Recreational Use

Manigotagan River Provincial Park provides users with a true backcountry experience. The river itself serves as a whitewater route for canoeing and kayaking. It originates in Ontario’s Woodland Caribou Provincial Park and then flows through Nopiming and into the Manigotagan River Provincial Park before spilling into Lake Winnipeg. This canoe route is one of eastern Manitoba’s most popular due to its accessibility, proximity to Winnipeg, variety of navigable rapids and wilderness experience. The river serves as a good introduction point for canoeists and backcountry travellers who are looking to transition between the highly used and marked canoe routes to the south, and the more rugged and unmarked canoeing located farther north.

There are 23 designated backcountry sites and the 45 kilometre long river includes 20 portages of varying difficulty. A suggested trip length of five days provides ample time to negotiate the route. Most people start their trip in Nopiming Provincial Park at either Quesnel or Long Lake. Several outfitters provide guided canoe trips along the river, and a local service in the community of Manigotagan, ferries canoeists’ vehicles from their selected drop off point to their point of exit from the river at the community. Due to the river route’s popularity, concerns about crowding, garbage and site damage are reported and monitored through the River Steward program (which is based in the nearby town of Bissett). An interactive web-based GIS map of the river was developed by Manitoba Eco-Network in partnership with Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship. The map provides detailed trip planning information about the Manigotagan River.

Due to the remote nature of Manigotagan River Provincial Park, off-road vehicle (ORV) use is currently a long-standing, non-conforming practice in a few locations in the park. Due to the narrow nature of the park corridor, ORVs have been used to access the park from outside of its boundaries along roads and trails that were developed through forestry, mining and other resource uses. Due to the increasing popularity of ORVs across Manitoba there are increased concerns for safety, environmental damage and conflicts between park visitor’s expectations. Unconstrained ORV use is incompatible with the park’s purpose, and under the The Provincial Parks Act (2015), ORV use can only occur where designated.

Other activities park users take part in include hunting, hiking and fishing. The river inside the park is known more for being a popular canoe route than for an angling destination location. In accordance with the The Provincial Parks Act, hunting in all provincial parks is prohibited within 300 metres of any development (including backcountry campsites).

The private caching of boats is a concern in neighbouring Nopiming Provincial Park, where the practise facilitates angling in remote locations. However, it is currently a non-conforming use with the The Provincial Parks Act and has often resulted in a build up of garbage and other environmental concerns. During the initial round of public engagement, many respondents felt that private boat caches were not a compatible use within Manigotagan River.

The narrow nature of the park and the terrain is limiting to the inclusion of official hiking trails, as well any trails in the park may also provide unintended access for ORVs. There are several points along the canoe route where small unofficial trails lead to interesting feature or locations.
4.2.1 Recreational Use: Strategic Objectives and Guidelines

The following guidelines and objectives will guide management decisions in Manigotagan River Provincial Park over the life of the management plan (10 to 15 years) regarding the park’s recreational use. Should an activity or development arise that would constitute a change in land use, have the potential to affect the natural, geological or cultural values of the park, or impact the Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Manigotagan River an appropriate review and consultation process will be designed and implemented.

Objective: To set backcountry route standards (including campsite development levels) that minimize impact on the landscape and protect the integrity of the backcountry experience by addressing concern of environmental damage, garbage and crowding.

Guidelines:

6. A site inventory will be created and maintained. Information from this inventory information will be placed online with designated site locations as well as Leave No Trace information to minimize group impacts and reduce the creation of undesignated campsites. This information will be distributed through Manitoba Parks (online, local offices, river stewards) and partnerships with local communities and operators. Route surveys will continue to be monitored to assess the number of backcountry visitors and impacts on the environment.

7. Within the Backcountry Land Use Category, developments will be limited to infrastructure associated with the backcountry canoe route and appropriate for the route type. This may include garden thrones, bear boxes, fire pits and natural looking portage markers. All designated sites will be equipped with a fire pit. Conservation of natural features will take precedence over development of recreational facilities where the two cannot co-exist.

8. Damaged backcountry sites may be closed as necessary. Mitigation measures, education and enforcement will be used to avoid the creation of new sites. Sites will be assessed on an ongoing basis to identify environmental damage and missing or damaged infrastructure.

9. Designated campsites will be evaluated on an ongoing basis for number and location. Any new designation of backcountry campsites will emphasize the quality of experience and protection of natural features over quantity of campsites. Backcountry campsite designations will take into consideration increased visitor impact on natural features, archaeological sensitivities, wildlife populations and other users prior to designating.

10. The development of a permit system to manage backcountry camping and mitigate concerns will be investigated. It will be based on the number of available sites, protecting the integrity of the experience (ex: moderate instance of encountering people but ability to experience solitude) and protecting the landscape. When developed, any new system should accommodate both guided and individual recreational opportunities.

11. Backcountry travel groups with over nine people will continue to need a special event permit so that activities can be monitored and appropriate sites used for larger groups.
Objective: To mitigate concerns about the current ORV use in the park.

Guidelines:

12. No recreational ORV trails will be developed.

   1. ORV use may occur for licensed hunting purposes under the following conditions:
      
      i. for access to areas for the purpose of hunting deer, moose, or bear along marked identified routes designated in conjunction with Wildlife and Fisheries branch to achieve park and wildlife management objectives
      
      ii. for retrieval of big game by the most direct route (valid big game hunting licence required)
      
      iii. and under Park Permits issued by the district to authorize the use of ORVs for hunting related purposes including, but not limited to, the maintenance of bait stations, and the set up and take down of hunting camps or tree stands.

13. Registered trapline (RTL) holders may use an ORV on their registered trapline for purposes directly related to their trapping activities. Possession of a valid RTL permit is required.

14. Commercial operators (including outfitters) and service providers may be authorized by Park Permit to use ORVs for purposes directly related to the provision of their operation or service.

15. Snowmobile access is allowed on frozen water bodies, portages and generally used routes. Areas or routes may be closed by notice or signage to address wildlife concerns, unwanted access, environmental, or other concerns. No trail clearing or development is allowed except under the authority of a Park Permit for winter access.

Objective: To mitigate concerns about private boat caches and the associated environmental concerns.

Guideline:

16. No private or commercial boat caches to be developed. Any existing boats on the landscape will be removed.

Objective: To provide guidelines for trails within the park.

Guidelines:

17. Due to the narrow nature of the park, no hiking trails to be developed or maintained. Small access trails may be established from campsites or portages to points of interest.

18. Work toward an inventory of existing roads and trails within the park boundaries. Trails that are no longer passable should be removed from the list. Any applications to use or reopen those trails that have been removed from the active list should be treated as new developments.
4.3 Commercial Resource Use

There are several different types of commercial resource in Manigotagan River Provincial Park. These include trapping, wild rice harvesting, and outfitting.

Manigotagan River Provincial Park is part of a registered trapline (RTL) area, this means that a person, or community, is granted the exclusive opportunity to harvest (trap) furbearing animals in a certain area (the RTL). There are four RTLs which fall within the park boundary, and are managed by Wildlife and Fisheries branch for sustainable harvest. There are some cabins associated with these lines that are within the park as well.

There are several lakes in the river corridor where wild rice grows. Wild rice is not actually rice, but an annual grass that is harvested either mechanically or by hand, toward the end of the summer or early fall.

Licensed outfitters offer guided hunting and fishing throughout the area. There are currently no permitted structures associated with outfitting inside the park. Outfitting is managed through the Resource Operators Tourism Licences.

4.3.1 Commercial Resource Use: Strategic Objective and Guidelines

The following guidelines and objectives will guide management decisions in Manigotagan River Provincial Park over the life of the management plan (10 to 15 years) regarding the park’s commercial resource use. Should an activity or development arise that would constitute a change in land use, have the potential to affect the natural, geological or cultural values of the park, or impact the Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Manigotagan River an appropriate review and consultation process will be designed and implemented.

Objective: To provide guidelines for development of commercial facilities, including wild rice leases, outcamps, commercial boat caches and road developments.

Guideline:

19. No infrastructure associated with these operations (wild rice leases, outcamps, commercial boat caches and road developments) will be approved within the park. Only applications for operations that support the park purpose statements will be considered.
4.4 Cultural Features

Archeological surveys conducted over the years have revealed thousands of artifacts indicating the importance of this river as a travel route for variety of people. The route was used by the Blackduck and Laurel cultures as far back as 2200 years ago. Since then, the river has also been used by trappers, loggers and gold miners as a route to the natural resources in the region. Rusting log boom anchor bolts, an occasional trappers cabin and an ‘alligator’ (a unique, ill-fated piece of mining equipment) have joined the more timeless portage routes, different campsites and ancient pottery shards.

The Wanipigow archaeological site, just north of the park, is where the first evidence of wild rice and goosefoot harvesting can be found. Distinctive types of pottery remnants are found in the area, which date back over 700 years, and have been recovered in large quantities. They were likely made by a variety of Aboriginal peoples who occupied this area between 700 and 1640 A.D.

With the beginning of the fur trade in the 17th century, and the gold rush in the 20th century, the Manigotagan River was used as a major transportation route to access the mines near Bissett. The route had already gained importance as a transportation route to access the timber logs in the surrounding area.

The first permanent settlements in the area dates back to the 19th century and were centred around the Manigotagan Post.

Manigotagan River Provincial Park is used for rights-based activities by members of several different First Nations. Rights-based hunting and gathering are common and occur in many areas of the park at different time throughout the year. The park has extensive natural lands where traditional medicines and foods can be found. This management plan acknowledges and respects the exercising of Treaty and Aboriginal rights in the park. Within provincial parks across Manitoba, off-road vehicles may be used when hunting, trapping or gathering for food or traditional ceremonial purposes on lands where there is a right of access. When possible, accommodation for camping is made available outside of designated campsites providing there are no issues with safety, conservation, environmental or other significant concerns. If concerns about wildlife populations or environmental damage require additional protections that would impact Treaty and Aboriginal Rights, a dedicated consultation process will be undertaken with communities prior to any changes.
4.4.1 Cultural Features: Strategic Objectives and Proposed Guidelines

The following guidelines and objectives will guide management decisions in Manigotagan River Provincial Park over the life of the management plan (10 to 15 years) regarding the park’s cultural features. Should an activity or development arise that would constitute a change in land use, have the potential to affect the natural, geological or cultural values of the park, or impact the Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Manigotagan River, an appropriate review and consultation process will be designed and implemented.

Objectives: To provide guidance for Alligator structure and any other historical equipment or structures along the route.

Guideline:

20. The Alligator structure will be occasionally monitored through patrols. Whenever feasible, it will document the general condition and any changes to the site. Restoration or conservation work will not be undertaken at the site.

Objective: To provide acknowledgement and guidance for archeological sites within the park boundaries.

Guideline:

21. Disturbance of culturally and/or archaeologically significant sites in the park will be avoided. Information on specific archaeological sites will not be made available to the public if there is a significant risk that increased access or visitation could pose a threat to the sites. Prior to the public release of any specific site information Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will confer with Historic Resources branch. Where loss of, or damage to archaeological values due to natural causes is unavoidable, artifacts will be documented and salvaged wherever possible in co-operation with Historic Resources branch.
4.5 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. A Strategy for Interpretation (Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, 2015) outlines the following specific goals for interpretation in Manitoba’s provincial parks:

- to provide a range of thematic programs, based on research and planning, to personally connect the visitor to our natural, cultural and historical resources
- to encourage respect, appreciation and a keener understanding of our park resources
- to help make visits rich and enjoyable experiences for all traveller types
- to promote the principles of Leave No Trace to minimize negative human impacts
- work co-operatively with stakeholders and interest groups, aboriginal peoples and other organizations to develop partnerships in the development and delivery of programs, services and facilities
- to encourage and promote the concept of environmentally responsible development and integrated resource management
- to promote public understanding and support of the goals, programs and messages of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship

Due to the backcountry nature there are no formal interpretive structures within the park boundaries. Interpretive information is provided online for park visitor’s to access prior to their travels.

4.5.1 Interpretation: Strategic Objectives and Proposed Guidelines

The following guidelines and objectives will guide management decisions in Manigotagan River Provincial Park over the life of the management plan (10 to 15 years) regarding the park’s interpretation. Should an activity or development arise that would constitute a change in land use, have the potential to affect the natural, geological or cultural values of the park, or impact the Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Manigotagan River an appropriate review and consultation process will be designed and implemented.

Objective: To provide direction for the park interpretation of Manigotagan River.

Guideline:

22. Work with partner organizations to develop an interpretive park map which includes information about the park, Leave No Trace, campsite locations and permit information. Self-guiding products will be the delivery method for park interpretation.

Objective: Provide direction for an ongoing conversation about the park with communities.

Guideline:

23. Pursue opportunities to share information and engage local communities in the park interpretation and management.
5.0 Bibliography


Manitoba Conservation Data Centre. Personal communications. 2015.

Historic Resources Branch. Personal communications. 2014.


