

Birds Hill Provincial Park

Management Plan



This management plan for Birds Hill Provincial Park was prepared in consultation with park users under the authority of *The Provincial Parks Act*.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
Parks and Natural Areas Branch
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1. Background Information

Birds Hill Provincial Park was legally established April 6, 1964, and after several years of development, was officially opened on July 15, 1967, to celebrate Canada's 100th birthday. Located less than 20 kilometres from the city of Winnipeg, Birds Hill has become one of Manitoba's busiest parks with hundreds of thousands of visitors per year participating in a variety of activities. Its proximity to Winnipeg, popularity and high quality facilities have helped shape a special role for Birds Hill in the park system. It is a highly cherished park for many Manitobans and is the first provincial park many will visit.



1.1 Purpose and Role of the Park

Under the authority of *The Provincial Parks Act* (1993) Birds Hill is classified as a Natural Park, and as such, it is intended to both preserve areas of a natural region and to accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses.

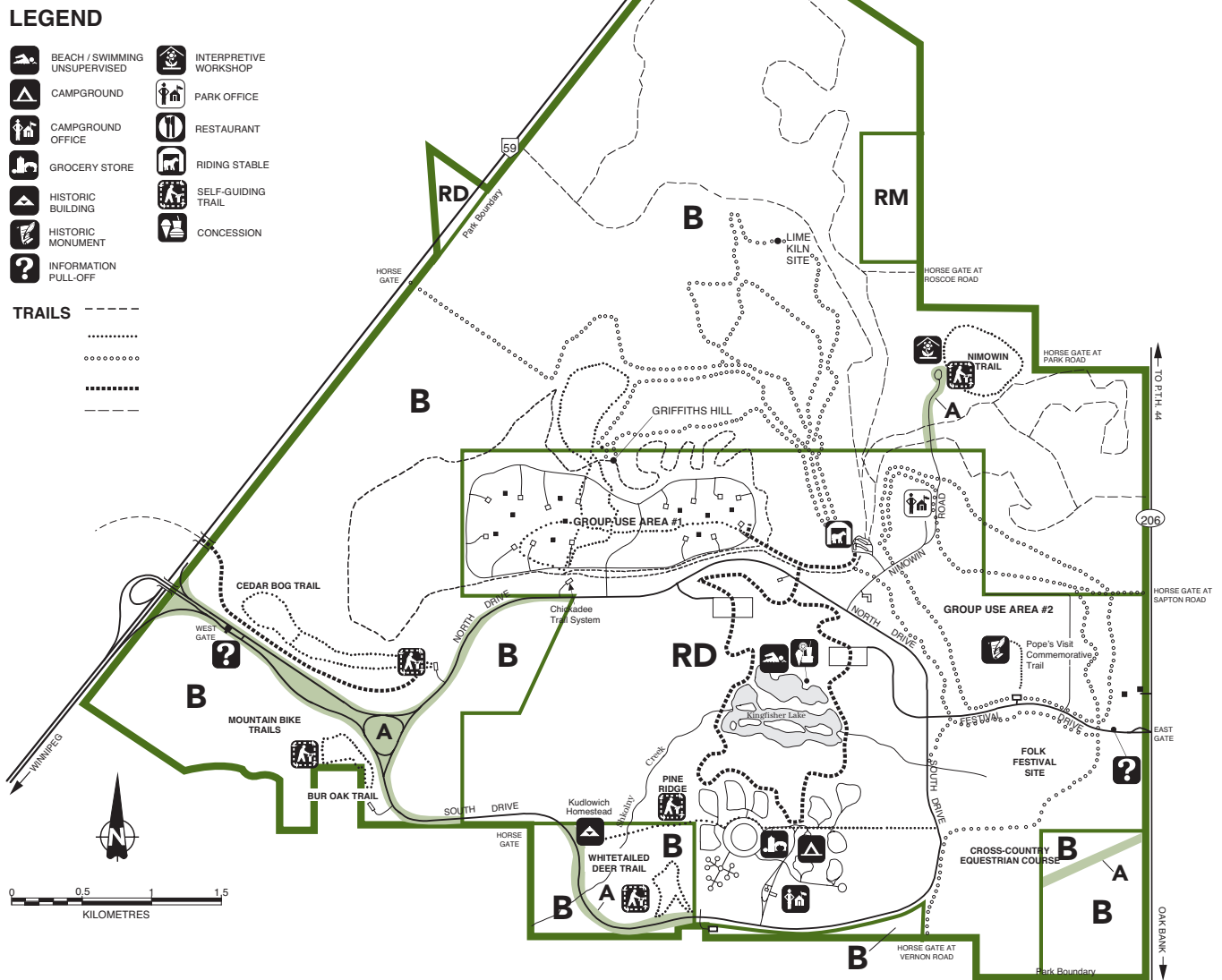
A System Plan for Manitoba Provincial Parks (1997) describes the purpose and roles of each provincial park in Manitoba. The purpose described for Birds Hill is to preserve areas that are representative of the Aspen/Oak Parklands Natural Region, and to accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities.

In addition the park will:

- provide nature oriented recreational opportunities such as hiking, horse-back riding, cross country skiing, mountain biking and wildlife viewing in a largely undisturbed environment
- provide opportunities for a wide range of high-quality, intensive, recreational activities and permit associated developments such as campgrounds, trails and day-use areas
- promote public appreciation and understanding of the park's natural features and cultural heritage, serving as a key, year-round natural setting for introducing visitors to the provincial park system

Birds Hill Provincial Park is divided into four land use categories (LUCs), as shown in Map 1, which further define the purposes of specific areas of the park.

Map 1. Land Use Categories of Birds Hill Provincial Park



The **Backcountry (B)** LUC is intended to protect the variety of habitats in the park and offers nature oriented recreational opportunities for hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking and snowmobiling. This LUC comprises 2,060 hectares or 59% of the park.

The intensive recreational developments in the park such as the campground, beach, day use areas, roadways, riding stable and equestrian centre, and the Folk Festival site are within the **Recreational Development (RD)** LUC. Accommodating the associated intensive recreational activities is the

primary purpose of this LUC although it does contain considerable natural habitat as well as cultural features such as the Kudlowich homestead and the Papal site. Its size is 1,350 hectares or 38% of the park.

The **Resource Management (RM)** LUC encompasses a Forest Protection Services office, nursery and equipment storage complex in the northern part of the park. It consists of 40 hectares or 1% of the park.

The **Access (A)** LUC accommodates existing roads and hydro transmission line rights-of-way through the Backcountry LUC. The Access LUC is 60 hectares or 2% of the park.

1.2 Natural Features

1.2.1 Forest and Prairie Landscapes

Protecting Manitoba's natural heritage is one of the main goals of the provincial park system. Birds Hill is the only natural park in Manitoba's Aspen/Oak Parkland Natural Region. The park's 35.1 square kilometres are composed of a variety of landscapes, including esker ridges, dry prairie, wet meadows, bogs, aspen/oak and mixed boreal forest. Birds Hill is unique because it supports many different plant communities in a relatively small area. In the past, many non-native trees and shrubs were planted at homesteads and other sites that are now in the park. In recent years management of the park environment has focused on maintaining natural features and native species.

1.2.2 Wildlife

Birds Hill is home to over 40 mammal species, more than 200 bird species, six amphibian species, three fish species and two reptile species (Kress, 1978). The wildlife includes a large white-tailed deer herd, estimated at 300 animals. If deer living outside of the park boundaries are included, the herd total is approximately 600 animals (Imrie, 2005). The size of the deer population is a concern for motorists in and near the park and collisions have increased over the past several years. To help address this problem, crops favoured by deer have been removed from around the park, particularly from the floodway.

There are several rare or very rare plant species found in the park. These include prairie moonwort, pinweed, sideoats grama and dioecious sedge (Manitoba Conservation Data Centre, 2010). The meadows and prairies of Birds Hill also provide habitat for the endangered rough agalinis, and the threatened western silvery aster (Species at Risk Public Registry, 2010). Protection of these listed species is a legal requirement through *Manitoba's Endangered Species Act* (1990) and/or the *Federal Species at Risk Act* (2002). Specific protection or recovery plans may direct how that protection is to be accomplished.



Dip-netting

1.3 Recreation

1.3.1 Day-use

Day-use areas are located throughout the park, in particular at trailheads and near the beach. Most sites have picnic tables and fire pits, and some sites also have picnic shelters. Day-use areas are popular and well used year-round. The 23.47 hectare lake in the park was originally created in 1967 when the park was first developed. It now offers a swimming area and a separate fishing area and is a very popular destination for park users.

The main road and lake in Birds Hill Provincial Park were upgraded in 1997/98 to prepare for the 1999 Pan Am Games. Upgrading of the lake involved separating the swimming area from the rest of the lake, dredging it out and installing a water aeration system with two fountains. These improvements resulted in park use increasing significantly, to about one million visitors annually.

The park is a very popular area for horseback riding and equestrian events. The Manitoba Horse Council leases land in the park near the riding stable for barns, polo fields, riding facilities and equestrian events. It also maintains a cross country equestrian course in the southeast corner of the park. Normally, there are equestrian events at these facilities 25 to 30 times per year. Casual horseback riding and horse drawn vehicle driving occur year round on the six trails dedicated for those uses.

1.3.2 Camping

Birds Hill has a 470-unit campground with 254 basic sites, 171 electrical sites and 45 full service sites with electricity, water and sewer hookups. A 100 to 125 site expansion to the campground is scheduled for 2015-2018. The campground offers a range of amenities including modern washrooms, showers, store, paved roads and an amphitheatre.

At the height of summer, the campsites are heavily booked. The campground has operated at between 45 and 55% occupancy - about 30,000 camping nights - over the past decade. The Birds Hill campground is consistently Manitoba's busiest provincial park campground.

Two areas, with 13 separate sites, are also available for group use. These sites have become very popular for group outings of all kinds. Occupancy of the group use sites averages about 27% seasonally, or around 400 group camping nights per year.

1.3.3 Trails

Birds Hill Provincial Park contains approximately 100 kilometres of all-season trails as shown on Map 2. In summer, the trails are used for hiking, cycling, in-line skating, running, horseback riding, and driving horse-drawn carriages. Winter uses include skiing, riding horse-drawn sleighs and snowmobiling. The group use road is maintained in the winter for skate-skiing, skijoring and kick-sledding. The shoulder of the main road in the park is also used for cycling, walking and running, and in-line skating. Several trails link the campground to other areas of the park, including the beach and riding stable, allowing people to travel about much of the park without going onto roadways. The trails pass through the various natural and cultural features of the park giving visitors an opportunity to explore and appreciate all the park has to offer. In 2010/2011, a pedestrian overpass on Highway 59 was constructed by the Manitoba Floodway Authority to facilitate a connection between trails in the park and a new trail along the Red River floodway.

1.3.4 Interpretation

Interpretive programs are offered for visitors of all ages, and for school groups, throughout the year. Public programs often involve the amphitheatre located at the campground, or the five interpretive trails and many interpretive displays in the park. Over 100 school programs are conducted in the park each year, most at the small interpretive workshop in the northeast corner of the park. Interpretive staff in the park conduct a total of about 250 interpretive events each year, contacting as many as 10,000 people. Development of a new visitor centre at a more central location in the park is scheduled for 2017-2020.

1.3.5 Special Events

Birds Hill regularly hosts a variety of special events such as equestrian events and competitions, company picnics, fundraisers, movie filming, weddings and organized sporting events. These events utilize group use sites, picnic and beach areas, trails, the main road, the equestrian facilities and many other locations. The park averages 140 special events per year.

The largest special event regularly held at Birds Hill is the Winnipeg Folk Festival – one of the biggest outdoor music festivals in North America. This event has been held in the park every July since 1974 and has grown to attract as many as 50,000 people over its five days. The Winnipeg Folk Festival site is located in the southeast corner of the park and is managed under a lease agreement with the Winnipeg Folk Festival.

1.4 Cultural History

Through time the land that is now known as Birds Hill Provincial Park has been home to many groups of people, including those of Assiniboine, Métis and European descent. The area's first inhabitants were Aboriginal people who moved through the area hunting and gathering food and medicines. When Manitoba became a province in 1870, much of the land was granted to the Métis, most of whom did not stay in the area.

With the arrival of British and German settlers to the area in the late 1800s, small parcels of land in and around Birds Hill were homesteaded and farmed. The sandy soil proved to be poor for cultivation, however, and farms were sold in the early 1900s to a new wave of Polish and Ukrainian immigrants. By the 1930s and 40s, a strong Polish - Ukrainian community had become established at what was then known as Pine Ridge.

In 1984, Pope John Paul II visited the park and conducted a multicultural celebration of faith. This took place at a site now commonly referred to as Pope's Hill. The site is managed under the terms of an agreement with the Archdiocese of Winnipeg.

Birds Hill Provincial Park was named after the Bird family, which had been granted land in the vicinity of the park by the Hudson Bay Company in 1824. Because of its elevation, Birds Hill was a place to which people fled during the floods of 1826 and 1852.

1.5 First Nations' Use of the Park

Use of Birds Hill Provincial Park by Aboriginal and First Nations people and organizations is minimal, in part because of the relatively high level of development in the park. Some areas of the park may be used for gathering traditional medicines from time to time. The treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Birds Hill Provincial Park are acknowledged and respected.

The park is occasionally used for traditional ceremonies by First Nations peoples. Since the early 1990s most of these ceremonies have taken place at a sweat lodge located near the interpretive centre at the end of Nimowin Road. Other events, including a sundance, have occasionally been held at other sites in the park. The Red Spirit Society now conducts ceremonies at the sweat lodge site several times each year.

1.6 The Park's Neighbours

Birds Hill Provincial Park is surrounded by farmland, some businesses, a number of gravel quarries, and growing rural residential communities. It is outside the neighbouring rural municipalities of Springfield and St. Clements. An agreement with Springfield provides firefighting services in the park. Emergency medical services and 911 services are also available.

Both the Rural Municipality of St. Clements (through the Selkirk and District Planning Area) and the Rural Municipality of Springfield have provisions in their development plans to manage land uses adjacent to the park in ways that will not detract from the park but will still accommodate appropriate land uses in the municipalities. These provisions assist in maintaining the natural and recreational values of the park.

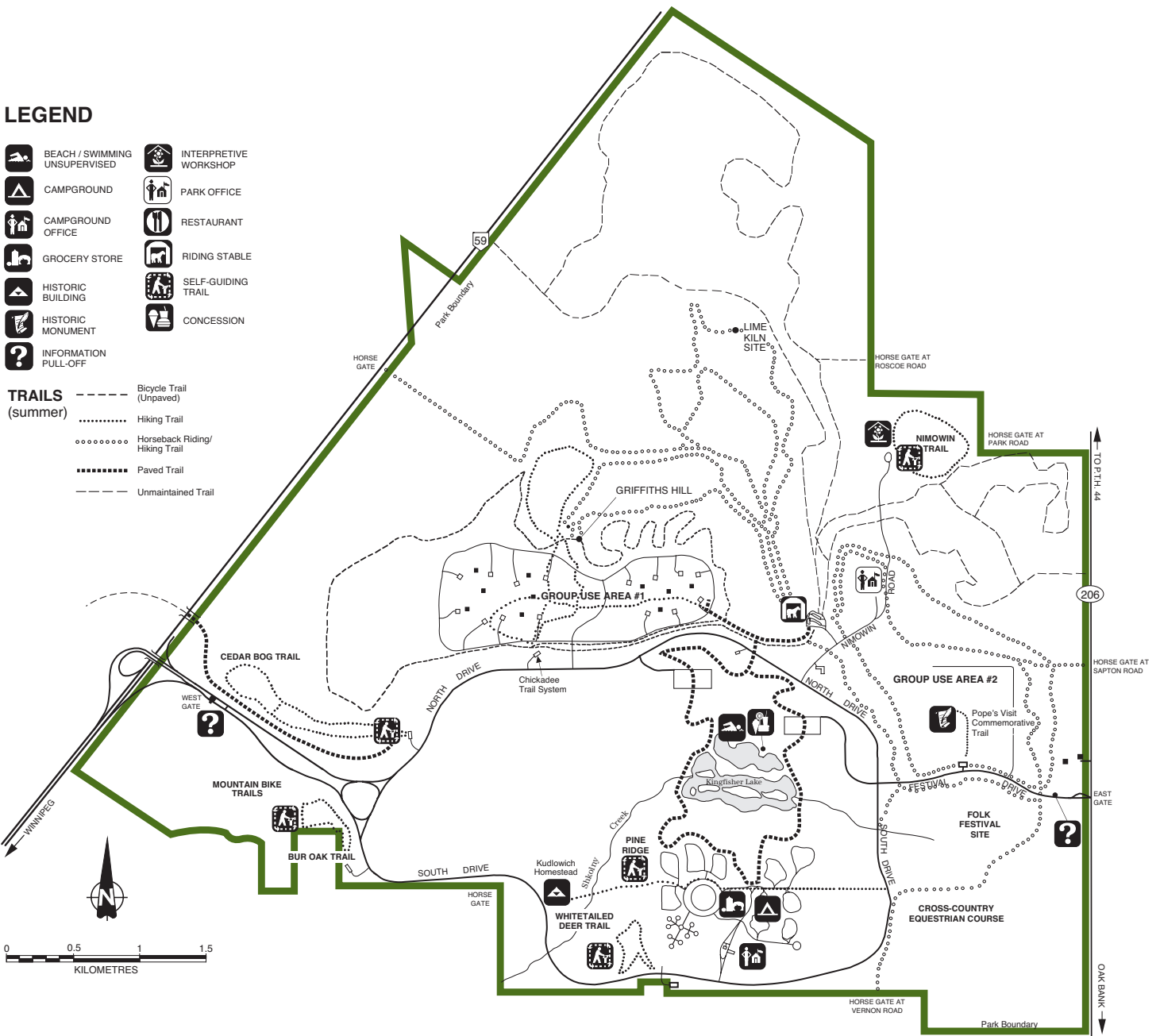
Map 2. Recreational features and trails

LEGEND

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | BEACH / SWIMMING UNSUPERVISED | | INTERPRETIVE WORKSHOP |
| | CAMPGROUND | | PARK OFFICE |
| | CAMPGROUND OFFICE | | RESTAURANT |
| | GROCERY STORE | | RIDING STABLE |
| | HISTORIC BUILDING | | SELF-GUIDING TRAIL |
| | HISTORIC MONUMENT | | CONCESSION |
| | INFORMATION PULL-OFF | | |

TRAILS (summer)

- Bicycle Trail (Unpaved)
- Hiking Trail
- Horseback Riding/Hiking Trail
- Paved Trail
- Unmaintained Trail



1.7 Preparation of the Management Plan

The Provincial Parks Act (1993) requires that a management plan be prepared for each provincial park. A management plan is to establish long term direction for the park and is to deal with issues pertaining to resource protection, use and development of the park. It is to be used in conjunction with park regulations, directives and other departmental and government policies and legislation.

The process of preparing this management plan and co-ordinating the public involvement process was the responsibility of a team involving staff from Parks and Natural Areas branch, staff at Birds Hill Provincial Park and regional staff of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship. Involving park users was a key part of preparing the management plan for Birds Hill. The future of the park is based on what the public and particularly park users expressed as concerns. This plan reflects their aspirations for the future of the park.

The management planning process started in 2010 with public drop-ins at the park to inform people of the management planning process and to hear their ideas, comments and concerns. Information was distributed through a newsletter and postings on the Manitoba Parks website. Over 400 people participated in the consultations by attending the drop-ins or completing questionnaires. A newsletter summarizing public comments was distributed to participants in early 2011. A draft management plan was prepared for public review in early 2012. Over 150 people participated in the review of the draft plan by attending a drop-in or by submitting comments on-line. The comments received helped in revising the draft to a final management plan.

This management plan is to guide the work of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship over the next 10 to 15 years. In this context, the plan will be utilized and examined on an ongoing basis. A formal review of this plan should be undertaken every five years. Where an update or new direction on any matters described in this management plan may be needed, an appropriate process for publicly reviewing and updating the plan should be undertaken.

2. Park Management Guidelines

2.1 Natural Resource Management

Birds Hill is a special natural area. It has a variety of natural habitats including tall grass prairie, aspen-oak parkland, wetlands and cedar bog. These habitats are home to common wildlife species such as white-tailed deer as well as very rare species such as the western silvery aster. Ensuring that these habitats and species continue to exist and thrive is a critical function of the park. Because the park has a limited amount of natural habitat, and recognizing that the demand for recreational use of the park may increase over time, it will be important to assess proposed developments carefully to avoid new impacts on natural habitats.

2.1.1 Strategic Objectives

- To maintain the natural habitats throughout the park and to ensure there is no net loss of natural area in the park.
- To protect the habitats of species which are both unique and representative of the aspen/oak parklands natural region with the intent of contributing to the maintenance of viable populations.

2.1.2 Guidelines

a) Natural Areas

Much of the park is in a natural state interrupted only by the park's trail network. Even within the core area of the park around the beach, campground, riding stable and Winnipeg Folk Festival site there are small sites which may have significant natural values such as concentrations of wildflowers or rare species. Maintaining both the larger intact areas as well as the smaller sites will be important in achieving the strategic objectives for natural resource management in the park.

Because many of these natural sites are relatively small, their integrity may also be threatened at times by events such as flooding as a result of beaver activities, or tree mortality due to pests or diseases. Because the park is relatively small and isolated from other natural areas, many of these issues cannot be left unchecked without possible severe consequences for the park as a whole.



Cedar Bog Trail

Guidelines:

1. All proposed developments or activities which may have the potential to impact habitats will be subject to an impact assessment to help avoid or minimize detrimental impacts on the park's natural areas.
2. Within the Backcountry Land Use Category development will be limited to trails, trailheads and associated facilities. Conservation of natural features will take precedence over development of recreational facilities where the two cannot co-exist.
3. Commercial removal of sand, gravel and clay will be prohibited in all areas of the park.
4. Degraded sites in the park, such as old gravel pits, will be rehabilitated. Depending on site conditions, the rehabilitation may involve active management or the site may be allowed to recover naturally. Rehabilitation may be done as compensation for the loss of natural habitat due to development in other areas of the park in a manner that respects the principles of a no net loss concept (State of Washington, 2010).
5. At such time as a new visitor centre is constructed [see Guidelines 2.4.2 (1) and (2)], the site of the existing interpretive workshop will be rehabilitated as a natural area. Nimowin Road and trails north to Rosco Road will be retained for use as an emergency exit route only.
6. In the event that the Forest Protection Services site in the northern part of the park should be decommissioned, that site will be rehabilitated as a natural area.
7. Issues associated with problem wildlife, disease and pest management, and forest protection will be handled on a case by case basis with the intent to maintain the natural environment of the park, avoid severe degradation of any component of the environment, and minimize impacts on recreational use and infrastructure.

8. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will work with partners interested in helping to manage the natural areas of the park. This might include, for example, updating species lists for the various ecosystems in the park, conducting research on certain natural features of the park, or carrying out specific management activities such as the eradication of invasive species.



Western Silvery Aster

b) Species at Risk

Western silvery aster, prairie moonwort, pinweed, rough agalinis, side oats grama and dioecious sedge are the rare plant species that are known to occur in the park. Birds Hill is particularly important for the western silvery aster because it has Canada's largest concentration of this wild flower. The northern shrike is a rare bird occasionally found in the park. Not only is it important to protect these species and their habitat, it is a legal obligation under endangered species legislation. It is also important to identify any other species of concern in the park and to ensure important habitats are not disturbed in ways that will harm such species.

Guideline:

1. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will participate with federal and local partners in the development and implementation of recovery strategies and recovery action plans for species at risk found in the park.

c) Prairie Remnants

Surveys from 1872 showed the park area to be mostly prairie interspersed with spruce-tamarack swamps. Fire suppression associated with agricultural and rural settlement was likely a causative factor in the expansion of forested areas in what is now the park. Extensive mowing of grasslands for several decades after park establishment may have also had a deleterious effect on the species composition of the prairie sites. In the late 1990s ten sites in Birds Hill Provincial Park were identified as having potential to contain remnants of native prairie (Dangerfield, 1998). They represent samples of both native prairie and bur oak grassland. The encroachment of woody vegetation and changes to species composition due to lack of disturbance have affected the condition of these native prairies.

Guideline:

1. A prairie management plan for Birds Hill Provincial Park will be prepared to guide management activities for selected prairie remnants. Goals of the prairie management plan will be to:
 - i. *conserve existing prairie remnants*
 - ii. *maintain the health and vigour of the prairie sites*
 - iii. *rehabilitate disturbed prairie areas where possible*
 - iv. *provide greater opportunities for interpretation of grasslands*
 - v. *facilitate research on grasslands*
 - vi. *support the re-introduction and/or propagation of species at risk where appropriate*

d) **Non-native Species**

Non-native plants and animals can have a negative effect on natural environments by displacing native species or introducing diseases. Leafy spurge and spotted knapweed are invasive weeds that have been found in the park and have the potential to displace native species. There are no natural controls of these plants in North America so active management is required to control their spread. Many areas in the park have other non-native species such as Scots pine, smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass and sweet clover. Some of these may be remnants of agricultural activities that occurred in the area prior to park designation. These species are not as invasive as leafy spurge and spotted knapweed but can still displace native species and severely alter native habitats.

Guideline:

1. A risk assessment will be done for the various non-native species in the park, particularly invasive species, and control measures will be established and implemented to eradicate the species or reduce the risks associated with their presence.

e) **Wildlife**

Birds Hill Provincial Park and its surrounding area are well known for an abundance of white-tailed deer. Seeing deer has become an important part of people's visit to the park. In the 1980s when there were less than 100 deer in the park, a number of management efforts, including a feeding program, were undertaken to support the herd. Deer/vehicle collisions increased through the following years and



White-tailed Deer

the deer population in the park and surrounding area eventually increased to almost 600 animals by 2005 (Imrie, 2005). With these changing circumstances some components of the earlier program, such as the feeding program, were cancelled in the early 1990s. The pattern of deer movements has changed over the past number of years as a result of increased rural residential development around the park and the removal of forage and cover along the Red River Floodway. Most deer/vehicle collisions now occur on Provincial Road 206 rather than Highway 59.

Guideline:

1. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will continue to work with other departments and partners on various deer management initiatives and, in particular, efforts to reduce deer/vehicle collisions.

f) **Kingfisher Lake**

Kingfisher Lake and the swimming area were originally one waterbody constructed at the time the park was developed in the 1960s. Over the years, it gradually filled in with organic matter and its appeal for swimming diminished substantially. In 1997/98 the swimming area was dredged and separated from what is now Kingfisher Lake. Kingfisher Lake was later developed for and managed as a stocked trout fishery. Despite efforts to aerate the lake, the fish often did not survive through the winter and within a few years the management approach was changed to a "put and take" fishery. Without management intervention Kingfisher Lake is expected to again gradually fill in over time.

Its sheltered, quiet waters and wheelchair accessible fishing pier make Kingfisher Lake a special fishing experience for many park visitors.

Guidelines:

1. A strategy will be developed to guide maintenance of Kingfisher Lake as a lake/wetland complex with suitability for a stocked trout fishery.
2. Use of motorized boats on Kingfisher Lake will be prohibited.

2.2 Recreational Activity Management

Birds Hill Provincial Park plays a significant role in Manitoba's outdoor recreational setting. It is the closest large natural park for the Winnipeg area and over half of Manitoba's population. It offers some of the province's best recreational opportunities for camping, beach use, picnicking and trail use in a natural setting. The lack of commercial development makes the park appealing to those people wanting to get away from Winnipeg's urban atmosphere. Importantly, its trails and circular roadway have a unique role in providing some of Manitoba's best opportunities for outdoor sport and fitness activities such as cycling, roller sports, running and walking. Maintaining these facilities and opportunities, and continuing to provide the recreational experience people are seeking will require conscious decisions on how the park is managed in order to avoid a gradual erosion in the quality of the visitor's recreational experience.

The park's proximity to Winnipeg has made it a favoured site for special events. Requests to hold special events such as sporting events, fundraising events, or family, school or social events are increasing. By their nature, special events disrupt the normal operation of the park and may impact other park users. Careful management of special events is needed to ensure the park maintains its role as a desirable site for these events while continuing to offer a quality recreational experience to the average visitor.

2.2.1 Strategic Objective

- Birds Hill Provincial Park will accommodate high levels of recreational use with a focus on those activities which require or significantly benefit from a natural setting and are non-commercial in nature. Visitors can expect frequent or high interaction with other users in the more developed areas of the park and moderate levels of interaction in the less developed parts of the park. On-site management of visitor activities will be prevalent and obvious, particularly in the developed areas of the park, to ensure visitors will have a high quality recreational experience. Trails, day use and camping facilities, and interpretive facilities and programs will be high quality.



Cross-country Ski Trail

2.2.2 Guidelines

a) Recreational Opportunities

To assist with implementing the strategic objective two levels of recreational opportunities are established in Birds Hill in conjunction with the park's existing land use categories as shown on Map 1.

Guidelines:

1. The Recreational Development and Access Land Use Categories will offer outdoor recreation in a natural setting. Park users can expect a high level of interaction with other visitors. Visitors can expect a high level of safety and convenience through appropriate park infrastructure. All major facilities will be accessible for persons with disabilities. Vehicle access will be available to all facilities. There will be a high level of on-site management of visitor activities through signage, communication and enforcement.
2. The Backcountry Land Use Category will offer visitors a chance to experience nature first hand while participating in non-motorized recreational activities. Snowmobiling will be limited to the northern most portion of this LUC. Users can expect to have only moderate interaction with other users. Infrastructure will be limited and generally non-modern with the intent of providing for the safety and basic convenience of visitors. There will be a moderate to high level of management of visitor activities through signage, communications and enforcement.

b) Boundary Issues and Buffering

Along the entire boundary of Birds Hill Provincial Park there are many designated access points as well as unauthorized access points, some of which link to adjacent residential or commercial properties. In some locations park facilities, roads or trails are very close to the boundary. This proximity can result in negative impacts to park users and resources, and conflicts in areas where park activities might affect adjacent residents. It can also lead to unauthorized activities in the park, such as ATV riding. Managing access along the park boundary will help avoid such conflicts.

Guidelines:

1. Lands within Birds Hill Provincial Park along its boundary will be managed to ensure adequate separation between park users and adjacent landowners. This will be done by minimizing park developments adjacent to the boundary, managing vegetation to provide visual buffering, and maintaining fences in places where park facilities are particularly close to the park boundary. No new access points in to the park will be provided for properties outside the park. Unnecessary or problematic access points will be eliminated.
2. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will work with neighbouring municipalities to ensure any proposed developments or subdivisions adjacent to the park will have minimal negative impact upon the park.
3. The triangular portion of the park west of PTH 59 along Kirkness Road will continue to be made available for selected recreational activities. No permanent developments or services will be permitted or provided on this parcel of land.

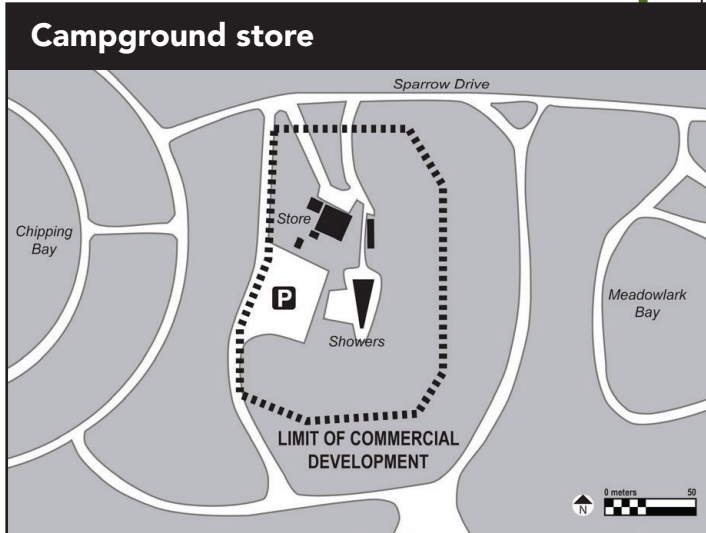
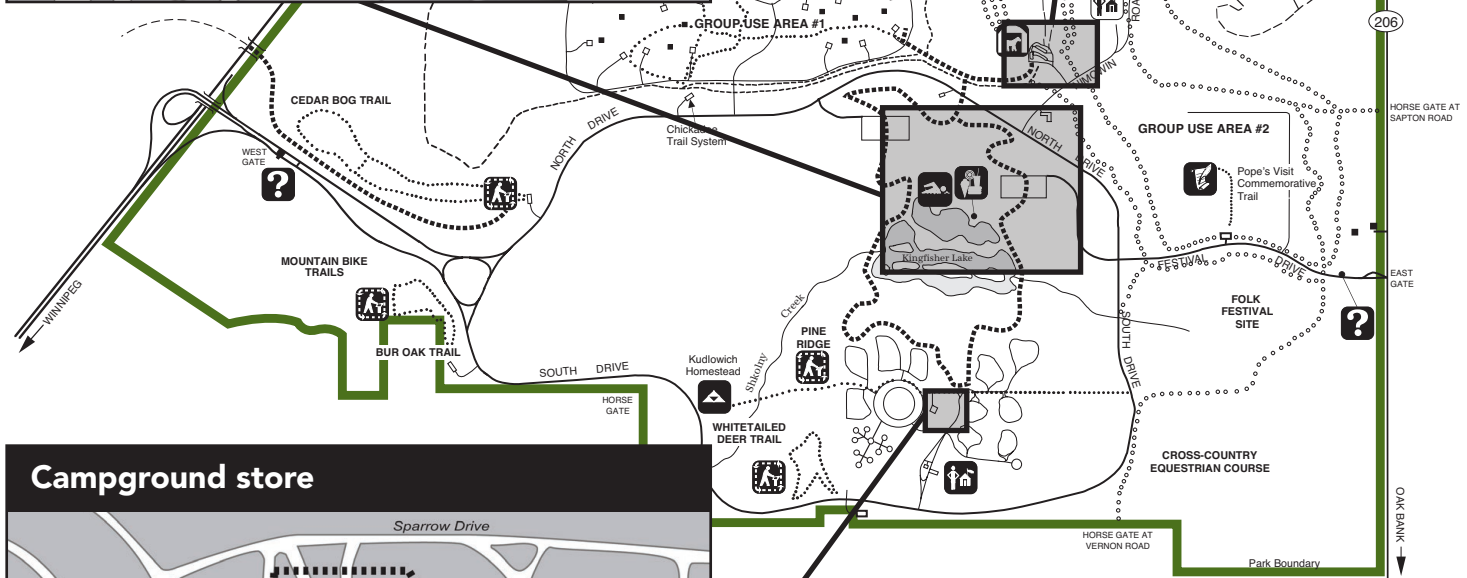
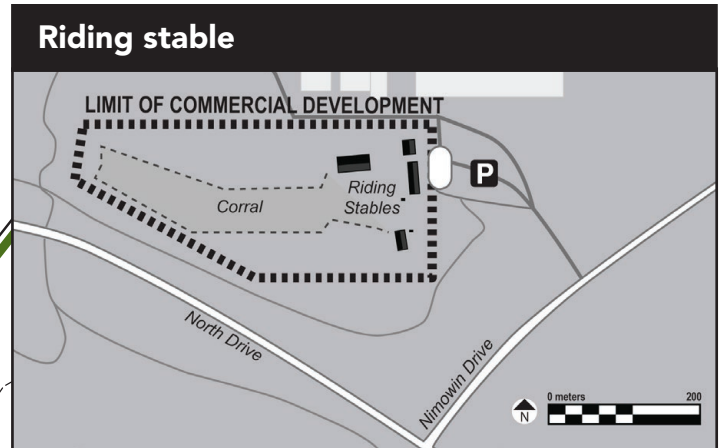
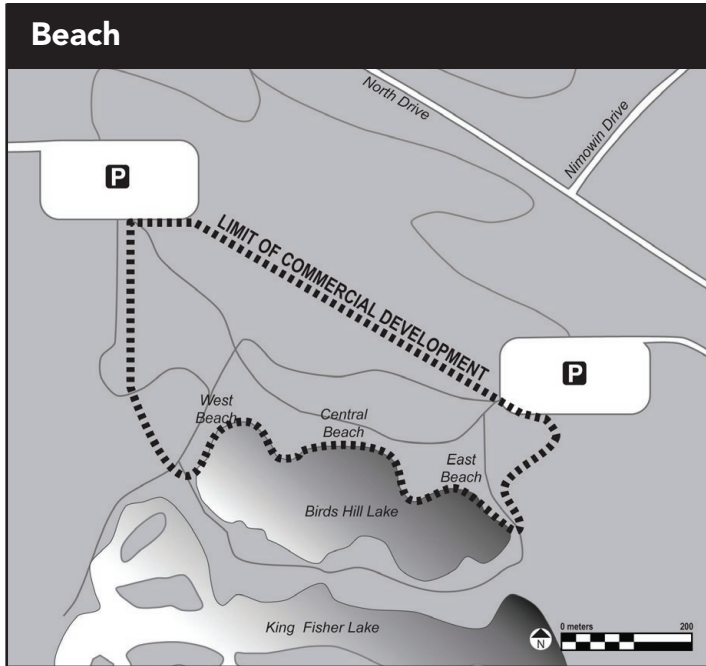
c) Commercial Developments in the Park

Some of the characteristics of Birds Hill Provincial Park that are most valued by its visitors are its natural landscapes and its limited amount of commercialization. People tend to seek out Birds Hill to get away from the more commercialized landscape of the city. Maintaining these characteristics of the park will require specific management direction. There are currently three sites in the park with commercial operations: the riding stable, the campground store, and the beach at which there are concessions and a bicycle rental operation. Commercial operations are also present at the Folk Festival site for the five days of the festival.

Guidelines:

1. Commercial activities and developments in Birds Hill Provincial Park will be limited to the existing commercial sites at the riding stable, campground store, and beach as shown on Map 3. A new visitor centre [see Guideline 2.4.2 (1)] may also include a commercial operation depending upon its final design. Commercial operations will be permitted at the Folk Festival site for the duration of the festival.
2. Proposals for expanding, upgrading or adding facilities within the existing commercial sites will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may be subject to a request for proposals process. Proposals may be subject to a public review process depending on the degree to which they might alter these sites. Proposals will be assessed on the following principles:
 - i. *Development proposals must be presented as part of an integrated, overall development plan for the site and must demonstrate suitability for the setting at Birds Hill Provincial Park.*
 - ii. *Proposals must demonstrate a direct benefit to the park and park users, and must be compatible with existing and adjacent site uses. Commercial operations or services at the beach will be considered only if the service provided is directly related to beach activities.*
 - iii. *Commercial accommodation facilities will not be permitted.*

Map 3. Commercial development areas



d) Beach

The swimming area and Kingfisher Lake were originally one waterbody that was constructed at the time the park was developed in the 1960's. It gradually filled in with organic matter and had outbreaks of swimmers itch causing its appeal for swimming to diminish substantially. In 1997/98 the swimming area was dredged and separated from what is now Kingfisher Lake - the remainder of the original waterbody. Water does not flow naturally through the swimming area so it is filled and replenished with groundwater through a system of pumps and fountains. The upgrading of the beach has resulted in it becoming one of the main attractions in the park and a very popular beach destination for Manitobans. As had happened with the original lake, the swimming area is gradually filling in with organic matter and will need to be dredged and rehabilitated on a regular basis to maintain its suitability for swimming. A project to expand the beach area and upgrade facilities around the beach is scheduled for 2012-2015.

Safety for beach users is the primary concern for managing the beach area. Because the park is close to Winnipeg use levels at the beach can change very quickly as weather conditions change. Several times each year, the 2,000 parking spaces at the beach fill and access to the park has been restricted because of overcrowding at the beach. This overcrowding raises concerns about emergency response and risk management on the beach and in the beach parking lots. Because there are many pedestrian access routes to the beach, managing the number of visitors is very challenging. As an alternative, managing parking areas around the beach has been used to indirectly manage beach capacity.

Guidelines:

1. A strategy will be developed for the regular rehabilitation of the swimming area in order to maintain water quality and its suitability as a public swimming area. Rehabilitation and management of the swimming area will take into account impacts on the aquifer supplying



Crowded Beach at Birds Hill

water to fill the lake. It will also consider the surface watershed of Shkolny Creek, through which the lake is drained each fall.

2. To maintain a safe environment for beach users, the beach area and beach safety program will be managed following these principles:
 - i. *Regular monitoring of the beach safety program will continue. The beach safety program will be adjusted in conjunction with changes in the levels of use at the beach.*
 - ii. *The existing beach parking lots will be redesigned to reduce traffic congestion. There will be no net increase in parking area and parking will continue to be restricted on roadways adjacent to the beach area in order to limit visitation to levels which can be effectively managed by the beach safety program.*
 - iii. *Improvements to the beach will be initiated in a phased approach and effects on beach safety and visitor experience will be monitored to ensure visitors have a safe and desirable experience.*
 - iv. *Improvements will be made to the method of informing the public when access restrictions to the park are in place because the beach is at capacity.*

e) Camping

The Birds Hill campground is the most popular campground in the provincial park system. It also has some of the most highly developed camping facilities in the province with 254 basic campsites, 171 electrically serviced campsites and 45 fully serviced campsites. The campground typically operates at a 45% to 55% occupancy rate, and is at capacity on summer weekends. An expansion to this campground of 100 to 125 additional fully serviced sites is scheduled for 2015-2018.

There are 13 group camping sites in two different locations in the park. Group Use area 1 offers individual sites with electrical service while Group Use area 2 is a large open area with basic services only. These group use sites are very popular and operate at about 27% occupancy seasonally. Both group use areas are leased to the Winnipeg Folk Festival for camping during the festival.

Guidelines:

1. The Birds Hill campground will continue to offer a range of nightly public camping opportunities from basic tent sites to fully serviced sites. Emphasis will be placed on providing more campsites with electrical and full service. Fixed roof accommodations will not be provided.
2. The Birds Hill campground will be managed to provide maximum opportunity for Manitobans to enjoy nightly camping. Provision of seasonal camping will not be considered unless occupancy data indicates there is significant underutilized capacity for nightly camping.
3. An area on the east side of the campground, as shown on Map 4, is identified for expansion of the campground. Development of this area will be done in a manner that will minimize environmental impacts, and may include rehabilitation of degraded areas elsewhere in the park consistent with the intention to have no net loss of habitat as per Strategic Objective 2.1.1. Campgrounds will not be developed at other locations in the park.
4. Birds Hill Provincial Park will continue to offer both basic and electrical group use facilities at the two existing group use areas only. Over time, group use sites may be upgraded with electrical service, shelters or other amenities.



Camping at Birds Hill

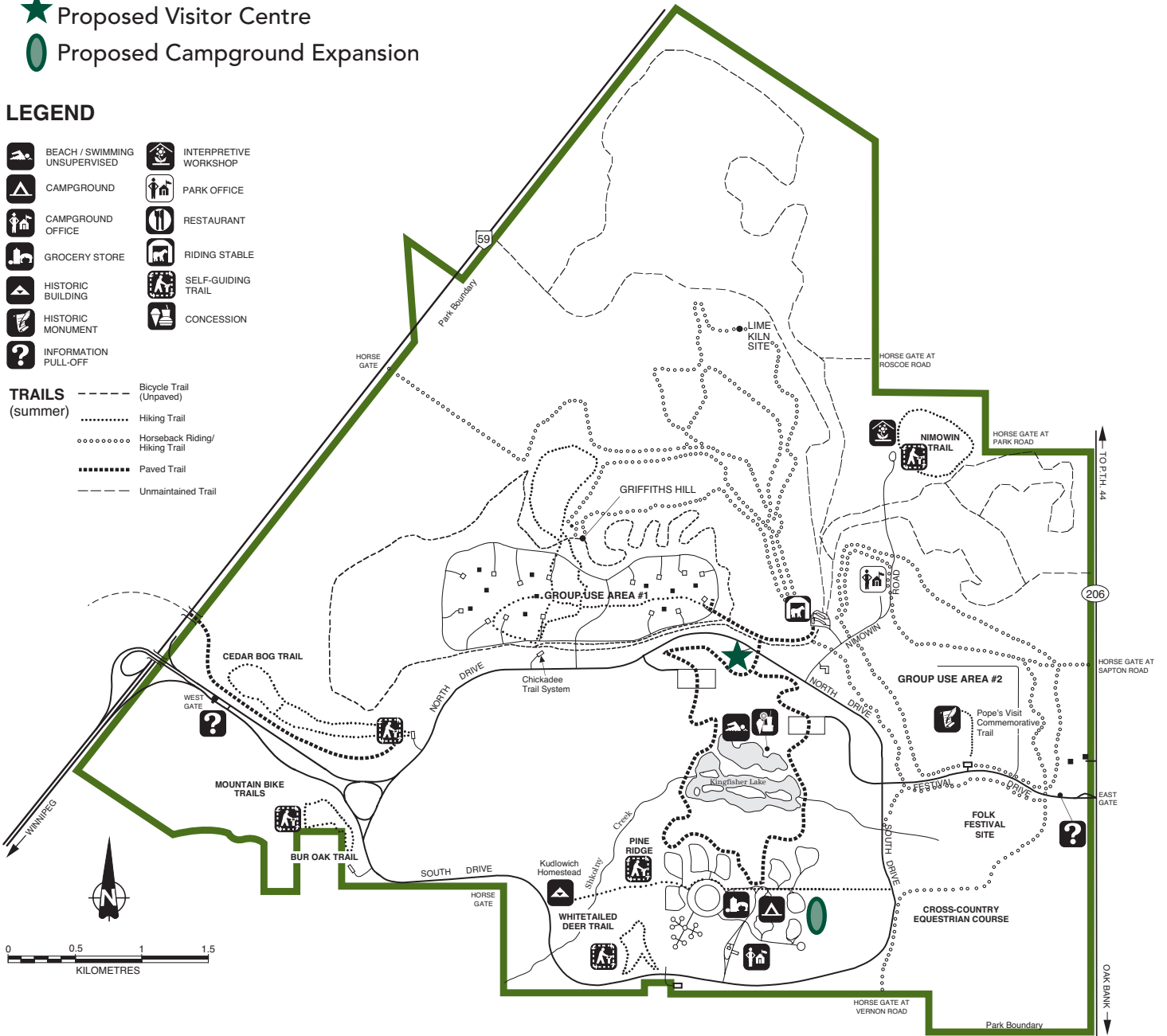
Map 4. Locations of proposed campground expansion and proposed visitor centre

- ★ Proposed Visitor Centre
- Proposed Campground Expansion

LEGEND

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | BEACH / SWIMMING UNSUPERVISED | | INTERPRETIVE WORKSHOP |
| | CAMPGROUND | | PARK OFFICE |
| | CAMPGROUND OFFICE | | RESTAURANT |
| | GROCERY STORE | | RIDING STABLE |
| | HISTORIC BUILDING | | SELF-GUIDING TRAIL |
| | HISTORIC MONUMENT | | CONCESSION |
| | INFORMATION PULL-OFF | | |

- TRAILS (summer)**
- Bicycle Trail (Unpaved)
 - Hiking Trail
 - Horseback Riding/Hiking Trail
 - Paved Trail
 - Unmaintained Trail



f) Trails

The trails in Birds Hill Provincial Park are some of the most important facilities for park users. The park boasts a complex network of about 100 kilometres of trail that covers much of the park. These trails provide opportunities for exploring the park, for healthy outdoor exercise and for travelling within the park. The trails vary from paved surfaces to narrow clearings in the bush to self-guiding trails with interpretive signs and features. Most of the trails in the park are designated for specific uses to avoid conflicts between users.

Not all trail users are aware of the specific use designations of the trails and conflicts between users, such as between skiers and snowmobilers, or cyclists and horseback riders, can arise. There are also occasional requests to allow a new use on a trail which is not always compatible with the trail's primary intended use. Not all of the major sites in the park are linked by high quality trails and users often use the roadway to travel between these sites. Some of this use of the roadway could be directed to trails to reduce traffic congestion on the roadway. Use of the snowmobile trails in the park has changed over time as the nature of snowmobiling has evolved. Most snowmobile traffic now tends to follow trails adjacent to the park along Highways 59 and 206, using the trails through the park as a connector route. The proximity of the snowmobile trails and the cross-country ski trails in the park results in some conflicts between users.



Guidelines:

1. A trails plan will be prepared for Birds Hill Provincial Park that will guide management of the overall trail system. It is to encompass all the primary types of trails in the park – self-guided interpretive, hiking, cross-country skiing, cycling, equestrian and snowmobiling. The plan will establish specific direction for:
 - i. *ensuring the network of summer trails links all the major recreational sites in the park*
 - ii. *hard surfacing of only major access trails between facilities, trails specifically for persons with disabilities, or trails providing an alternative to the roadway for walking and roller sports*
 - iii. *rerouting the snowmobile trails in the park to provide a basic connecting trail from PTH 59 to PR 206, and to achieve maximum spatial separation from other trails in the park*
 - iv. *improving trail signage at trailheads and along trails to indicate the specified uses for each trail*
 - v. *improving awareness of the entire trails system in the park so park users will be more aware of the variety of trails available*
 - vi. *developing a program for monitoring the use and condition of all trails in the park. Trails that show signs of deterioration from high levels of use may be rested or rehabilitated. Trails may be decommissioned where there is little or no use, or where they contribute to conflicts with other facilities or park users.*
 - vii. *the conditions under which secondary activities might be accommodated on existing trails, such as skijoring on cross-country ski trails, so such activities do not present conflicts with the primary trail users*
2. Improvements will be made in communicating trail conditions to the public through a variety of communication media, especially the internet.

g) Park Roadway

North Drive, South Drive and Festival Drive are the three major traffic circulation routes in the park. Since 1997/98 when these roads were upgraded, the smooth pavement and relatively low volume of slow moving traffic have made them an attractive eleven kilometre cycling, running, walking or roller sport track. As a long “fitness track” these roads are a unique facility in Manitoba. At low levels of use these physical fitness activities can co-exist with vehicle traffic but at higher levels of use, which are common during the summer, there can be conflicts and greater risk of accidents. Special events, such as cycling and roller sport races, have the potential to exacerbate the conflicts and risks.

Guidelines:

1. Use of the roadway will be monitored and management approaches such as reducing speed limits for motor vehicles and employing more stringent management of special events may be considered if needed.
2. Efforts will be made to maintain as smooth a road surface as possible within the constraints of normal road maintenance.
3. Development of trails to provide an alternative to the roadway for walking and roller sports will be investigated [see Guideline 2.2.2 (f) 1.] with the intent of separating pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

h) Special Events

Birds Hill Provincial Park receives an ever increasing number of requests for special events each year. Its proximity to Winnipeg and its high quality facilities make it particularly attractive for many types of events. These special events range in size from small weddings to major sporting events and movie productions. The main park road is particularly desirable for many sporting events such as cycling and roller sport races. Special events are managed through a permitting process whereby conditions for conducting the event are established to avoid or minimize impacts on the park environment



Special Event at Birds Hill

and other park users. Due to its high level of use, Birds Hill utilizes park specific guidelines in addition to those used in most other parks. These specific guidelines deal with seasonal and location restrictions to avoid congestion at peak use times, and special requirements for traffic management.

An increased awareness amongst park users of the permit requirement for special events will aid in ensuring that these events can co-exist with normal park use.

Guideline:

1. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will investigate ways to notify the public regarding the requirement for permits for special events in the park and the conditions under which special events may occur. It will also consider methods by which to improve communications to the public of when and where major special events are happening in the park.

i) Folk Festival Site

The Winnipeg Folk Festival has become an integral part of the park through its many years of bringing music and people together in this outdoor setting. It has become the major public event in the park. Over the years there has been very good cooperation between Folk Festival staff and park staff and that relationship will be key to the ongoing success of both the Folk Festival and Birds Hill Provincial Park. The Folk Festival leases a parcel of land for the festival site (Map 5) as well as the two group use areas for

festival camping. In 2007, the Winnipeg Folk Festival initiated a long term redevelopment plan for the festival site to improve the site's infrastructure, enhance the operation of the festival, enhance visitors' experiences, and mitigate environmental impacts and the impact of weather events. Such improvements are expected to continue as the event evolves over time.

Guidelines

1. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will continue to work with the Winnipeg Folk Festival on improvements at the concert site to enhance visitor experience, improve visitor safety and minimize environmental impact. Expansion of the festival site will not be permitted beyond the lease area as shown on Map 5. No additional locations will be allocated for folk festival camping beyond the two group use areas currently used.
2. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship and the Winnipeg Folk Festival will continue to investigate ways to reduce impacts on other park users, in particular traffic congestion associated with the festival.



Horseback Riding

j) Equestrian Facilities

Birds Hill has always been a popular area for horseback riding. Over the years the equestrian activities have grown from casual riding around the stable to formal equestrian events, polo, and competitive riding and jumping. Equestrian activities are now an important part of the recreational opportunities associated with the park. The Manitoba Horse Council leases a parcel of land near the riding stable for show rings, polo fields, barns and associated facilities. There is also an agreement allowing the Manitoba Horse Council to operate and maintain a cross-country equestrian course in the south east corner of the park (Map 5). Most equestrian events occur in these areas. Use of other areas of the park for equestrian events occurs occasionally through special event permits. Casual horseback riding occurs on the many trails in the eastern and northern parts of the park. The riding stable is owned by Manitoba and leased to a commercial operator [see Guideline 2.2.2 (c) (1)].

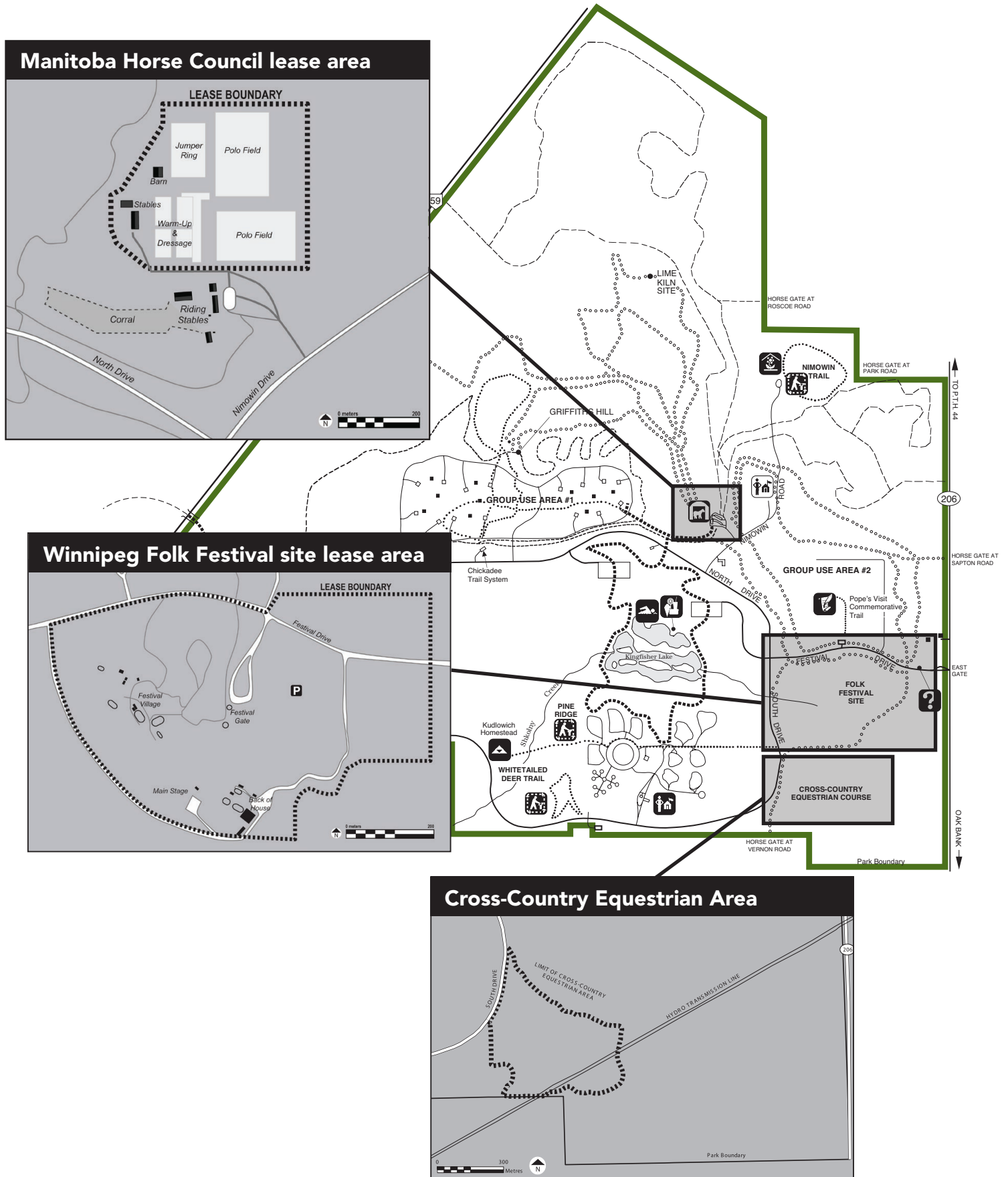
Guideline:

1. No expansion of the area leased to the Manitoba Horse Council will be permitted. Overnight use of the area will be limited to that required in hosting equestrian events.



Horse Stable

Map 5. Winnipeg Folk Festival and Manitoba Horse Council lease areas



2.3 Cultural Features

Several visible reminders of the area's early 20th century settlement history can be found in the park. These include the Kudlowich homestead - a partially stabilized farmhouse, summer kitchen and barn on the Pine Ridge Trail; stone remnants from the base of an old kiln on the Lime Kiln Trail; and a cemetery established by the original community of Pine Ridge and located near the junction of North Drive and Nimowin Road.

An assessment of the Kudlowich homestead conducted in 2003 by the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism found the house and summer kitchen to have potential local significance, while the barn had potential local significance with serious challenges due to its deteriorated condition. The 1995 *Birds Hill Provincial Park Interpretation Concept Plan* directed that the buildings of the homestead would be stabilized to help prevent further deterioration.

2.3.1 Strategic Objective:

- Birds Hill Provincial Park will maintain cultural features and/or recognize sites that depict the local settlement history of the park area, particularly as it relates to Polish and Ukrainian immigration in the 1900s.



Kudlowich Homestead

2.3.2 Guidelines:

1. The Kudlowich homestead buildings and the lime kiln will continue to be stabilized to help prevent or delay deterioration. Restoration work will not be undertaken at either site.
2. If the Kudlowich homestead buildings deteriorate significantly and pose a public safety risk, an assessment and course of action will be determined in consultation with Historic Resources Branch. Documentation and removal of buildings may be considered as an option. If buildings are removed, the site will be commemorated using plaques, signage and/or displays.
3. The Pine Ridge Cemetery will continue to be operated in cooperation with the Immaculate Conception Church, Cook's Creek, Manitoba.

2.4 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 Natural Resources, 1994) outlines the following specific goals for interpretation in Manitoba's provincial parks:

- i. to assist the visitor in developing a keener understanding and appreciation of our natural and cultural resources
- ii. to help make visits rich and enjoyable experiences
- iii. to encourage thoughtful use of recreational resources thereby minimizing negative human impacts
- iv. to encourage respect for, and protection of, the natural and cultural resources in parks
- v. to promote public understanding and support of the goals and programs of the department
- vi. to encourage and promote the concept of sustainable development



Overlook Picnic Area

Over 10,000 people participate in an interpretive program at the park each year, including guided hikes, amphitheatre programs, family programs, campfire programs and school programs. Birds Hill is especially popular for school programs due to its proximity to Winnipeg. It may be the first provincial park many people ever visit. It provides an ideal opportunity to communicate messages about Manitoba's system of provincial parks to new visitors as well as to long time park visitors.

There are five self-guiding trails dispersed through the park, an amphitheatre in the campground, an interpretive workshop used for special group programs in the northeast corner of the park, and workspace for the interpreters in the park office. The lack of a readily accessible and high profile facility for interpretation has limited the program's ability to reach more park visitors. Development of a new visitor centre at a central location in the park is scheduled for 2017-2020.

2.4.1 Strategic Objective

- Birds Hill will continue to provide a high quality interpretation program that will include year-round personal and non-personal interpretation that adapts to current trends, opportunities and issues. The park will feature high quality interpretive facilities including trails, displays, an amphitheatre and a visitor centre.

2.4.2 Guidelines

1. An area near the Overlook Picnic Area as shown on Map 4 is identified for the development of a new visitor centre. The centre is to include interpretive exhibits and space for school/group programming, park administrative offices, as well as possible commercial space. New interpretive trails and day use facilities will be developed in close proximity to the new visitor centre. The amphitheatre in the campground will continue to function as the primary amphitheatre in the park.
2. The existing interpretive workshop at the end of Nimowin Road will be decommissioned and removed in conjunction with the development of a new visitor centre. The site will be rehabilitated consistent with the intention to have no net loss of habitat as per Strategic Objective 2.1.1. The existing park office along Nimowin Road may be used for other operational requirements or may be decommissioned and removed once new offices are constructed.

2.5 First Nations' Use of the Park

First Nations organizations often look for natural areas to hold traditional events for members of the large urban, aboriginal population in Winnipeg. Birds Hill Provincial Park is the best known natural area around Winnipeg and as a result there are many requests each year to host traditional events at various locations in the park. These requests are sometimes directed to the Red Spirit Society which operates a sweat lodge in the park. Requests for larger sites or for other locations in the park are generally directed to areas outside of Birds Hill Provincial Park due to the high levels of development and use of the park, and the intention to maintain undeveloped areas in their natural state.

The one site in the park that is used for a sweat lodge by the Red Spirit Society is located near the interpretive workshop at the end of Nimowin Road. The development of a new visitor centre in the park will lead to the closure of Nimowin Road and the elimination of vehicle access to the site.

2.5.1 Strategic Objective

- Birds Hill Provincial Park will continue to provide a site for First Nation traditional ceremonial events.

2.5.2 Guidelines

1. Requests for sites for traditional ceremonial events will be directed to the Red Spirit Society and the site of the existing sweat lodge where possible. New sites will not be made available for such events.
2. Prior to Nimowin Road being decommissioned [see Guideline 2.4.2 (1)] an alternative location for the sweat lodge will be selected in cooperation with the Red Spirit Society.

3. Implementation

Some aspects of this management plan will be implemented immediately while others will occur over several years or may be ongoing. For those guidelines that involve specific tasks the relative priorities are described below.

The priorities for natural resource management are:

1. species at risk
2. non-native species
3. prairie management
4. Kingfisher Lake

The priorities for management of recreational activities are:

1. beach refurbishment, expansion and management
2. trails plan and communication
3. use of the roadway
4. special events management
5. campground expansion

The priority for management of cultural features is:

1. the Kudlowich homestead

The priority for interpretation is:

1. a new visitor centre

The priority for First Nations use of the park is:

1. a new site for the sweat lodge when Nimowin Road is decommissioned

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