

Clearwater Lake Provincial Park

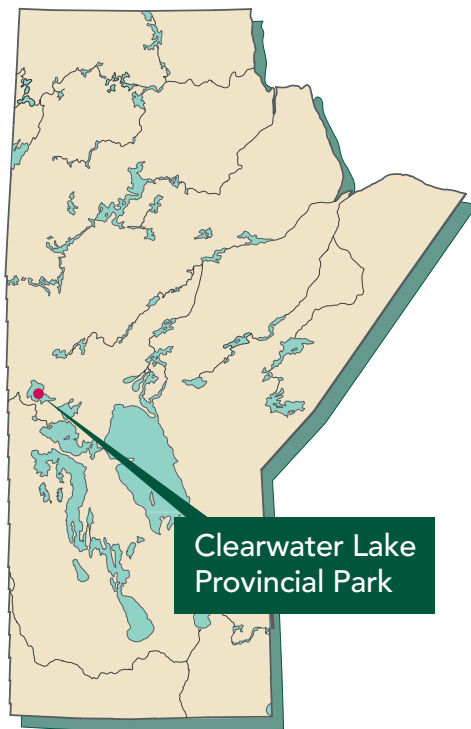
Management Plan



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



1. Introduction

The Provincial Parks Act (1993) requires that a management plan be prepared for each of Manitoba's provincial parks. Management plans establish long-term direction for parks and address issues pertaining to resource protection, land use and development. The management plan for Clearwater Lake 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. The plan 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, regional staff of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship and a consultant contracted to work on the project.

Preparation of the management plan involved a number of steps. The first step was to review the current operation of the park, its attributes, and history of use. Information collected was then used to prepare a draft plan. Public input on the draft plan was collected primarily through the Manitoba Parks website, at a public drop-in session in The Pas in September of 2012 and in meetings and discussions with park users. Once the public consultation process was completed, the plan was finalized based on planning objectives and any new information received through the consultation process.

This management plan will guide the work of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship for a minimum of 10 to 15 years. In this context the plan will be utilized 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.

The treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Clearwater Lake Provincial Park are acknowledged and respected within the context of this management plan.

2. Park History

Recreational development at Clearwater Lake is linked to the construction of the Hudson Bay Railway line which ran northeast from The Pas and provided rail access to Clearwater Lake from the 1920s to 1940s. From the railway's Atikameg flag stop at Mile 25, campers and cottagers were able to walk from the rail line to Pioneer Bay on Clearwater Lake.

Development in Campers Cove area of Clearwater Lake was facilitated by the construction of a road by the United States Air Force to the airport/USAF base near the lake during WWII. Following the war, the airbase was converted to a sanatorium hospital and a residential school was built at Guy Hill.

Further recreational development on Clearwater Lake, including fishing and hunting lodges and cottages, was spurred by the establishment of the Cormorant Forest Reserve in 1948 (Penziwol and Blahut, 2011).

Clearwater Lake and the surrounding lands were designated as a provincial park in 1962. The Opaskwayak Cree Nation has 48 acres (10.4 hectares) of reserve land on the east shore of the lake within the park boundary.

3. Park Attributes

3.1 Location/Access

Clearwater Lake Provincial Park is comprised of Clearwater Lake and surrounding lands including most of the shoreline. The total area of the park is 59,265 hectares (59 square kilometres). Some of the land within the park is privately owned. The park is located 24 kilometres north of The Pas and accessed from Provincial Road 287.

3.2 Natural

Clearwater Lake Provincial Park is located in the Mid Boreal portion of Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region. Vegetation in the park includes spruce bog and boreal forest species such as jack pine, white spruce and black spruce, which are representative of the region (Tallosi and Porteous, 1991). Smaller lakes, string bogs and other wetlands are also found within the park.

The majority of the park's land base is undeveloped, providing habitat for a range of animals including bears, coyotes, moose and boreal woodland caribou (Tallosi and Porteous, 1991). A wide variety of birds can be seen in the park and the lake is a popular fishing area for whitefish, lake trout and pike. Clearwater Lake is an important source of wild genetic stock for Manitoba's lake trout stocking program.

Clearwater Lake has outstanding water quality but is susceptible to degradation due to its small watershed and low rate of water renewal. The water volume leaving the lake, primarily through evaporation, is also low. Clearwater Lake was given a "high quality surface water" designation in 1989.

Other natural features in the park include intriguing bands of purple sand at beaches along the north and east shores of the lake created by high levels of manganese. Caves and snake hibernacula are also found in the park.

3.3 Recreational

Recreational development is focused along the south shore of the lake where cottage subdivisions and three recreation nodes provide opportunities for cottaging, camping, boating, and year-round angling.

Sunset Beach is a large day-use area with a volleyball court, playground structures, beach area, picnic shelters and boat launch. Campers Cove is the site of a medium sized campground offering a range of recreational opportunities, electrically serviced campsites, yurts, modern washrooms and showers and boat launch. Pioneer Bay campground also provides campsites with electrical service, modern washrooms and showers, change rooms, playgrounds, picnic shelter, beach and a concession stand.

The Caves Self-guiding Trail is a hiking trail that leads to deep crevices that were formed by rock separating from dolomite cliffs. Other non-motorized trails include a hiking trail at Campers Cove and a cross-country ski trail.

Use of motorized off-road vehicles in the park is limited to designated trails. There are two designated Snoman trails, maintained for snowmobile use by local snowmobile club members, and two designated ATV access trails that provide routes from the park to Crown lands beyond the park boundary.

Several resorts, concessions and services have leases to operate within the park. This includes three lodges, two of which are partially on private and leased Crown lands. Over 380 cottages, many of which are permanent residences, are located along the south shore of the lake. Two sites are leased for use by Scouts Canada and Girl Guides of Canada.

3.4 Cultural

First Nations people have a long history of land use in the area as evidenced by the discovery of "Clearwater Lake" pottery artifacts around the lake. Clearwater was once known as Atikameg Lake, which is a Cree word for whitefish.

Artifacts from the early to late Woodland culture have been found in the park and recorded by Manitoba Historic Resources branch (Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship Data Base, 2012). Sites containing artifacts are important areas that need to be respected and preserved.

The former Guy Hill School, one of many residential schools that once operated in Canada, is located in the park. There is also a cairn in memory of the late Helen Betty Osborne. The site is frequently used for commemorative and healing events.

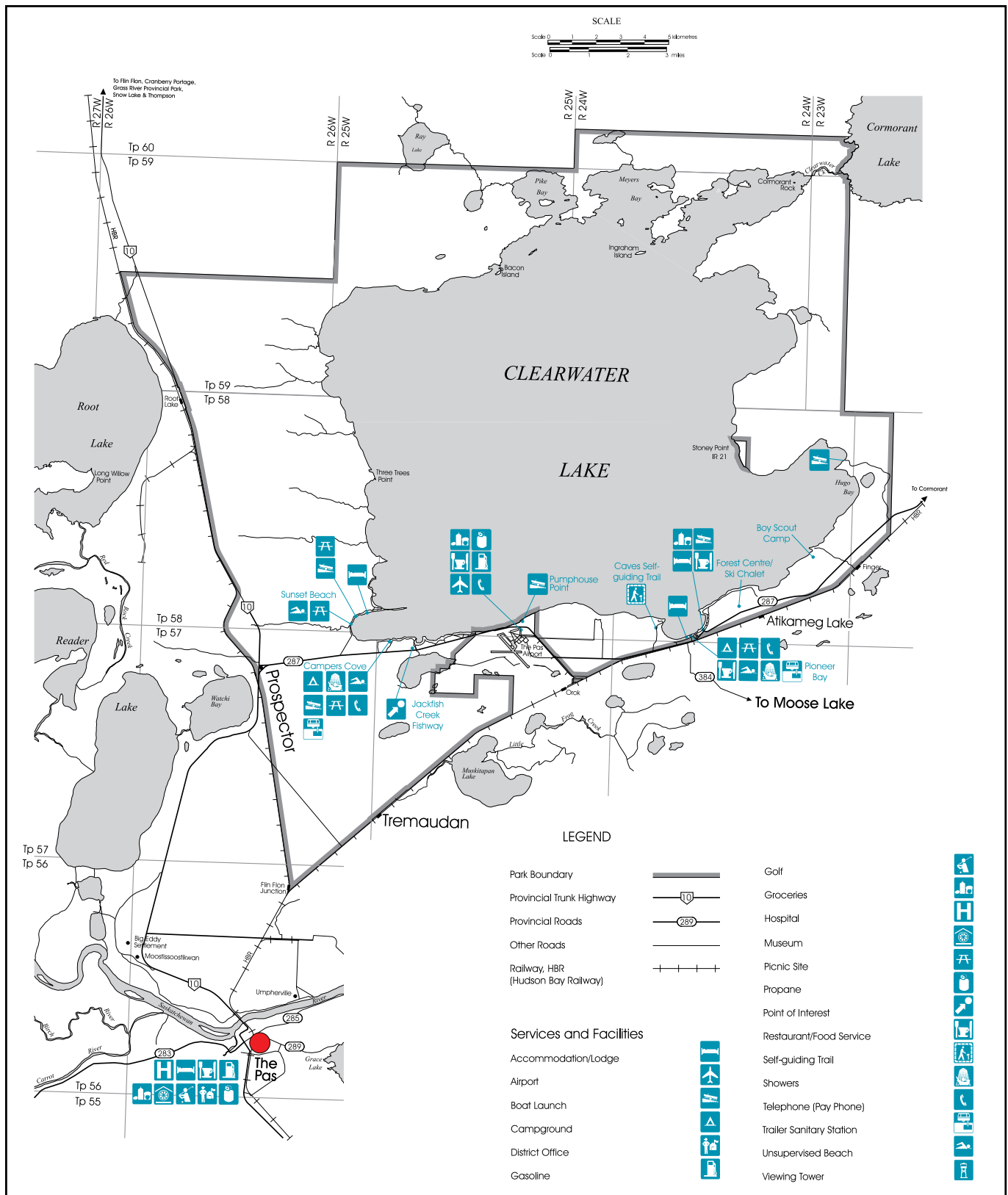
3.5 Additional Features

Historically, commercial resource uses such as mineral exploration and forestry were permitted in the park. In 2009, *The Forest Act* was amended prohibiting the issuance of commercial timber cutting rights in most provincial parks, including Clearwater. Mineral exploration continues to be allowed in portions of the park, but there are no active claims.

The town of The Pas owns and operates The Pas airport and commercial and residential development areas adjacent to the park.

A local business operates on a small parcel of private land in the park at the junction of Provincial Trunk Highway 10 and Provincial Road 287.

Clearwater Lake Provincial Park



4. Park Management Framework

4.1 Classification

Manitoba's provincial park system is made up of almost 100 different parks and park reserves. The role of an individual park within this system is identified by its classification. Classification descriptions can be found in Appendix A.

Clearwater Lake Provincial Park is classified as a Natural Park. The main purpose of a Natural Park is both to preserve areas of a natural region and to accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses in accordance with *The Provincial Parks Act* (1993).

4.2 Park Purpose

Manitoba's provincial park system was established to conserve ecosystems and maintain biodiversity; to preserve unique and representative natural, cultural and heritage resources; and to provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities in a natural setting. Within this larger framework, individual parks contribute towards the overall objective of the provincial park system.

A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks (1997) states that the purpose of Clearwater Lake Provincial Park is to preserve lands that are representative of the Mid Boreal portion of the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region; and accommodates a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses. The park will:

- preserve the water quality of Clearwater Lake
- provide high-quality cottaging, camping, boating and fishing opportunities and permit related facilities and services
- accommodate commercial resource use in a manner that does not compromise water quality or other park purposes
- promote public appreciation and understanding of Clearwater Lake's natural features

4.3 Land Use Categories

Land Use Categories (LUCs) identify the important attributes of broad areas within a provincial park. Land may be categorized in Wilderness, Backcountry, Resource Management, Recreational Development, Heritage or Access LUCs. LUC descriptions can be found in Appendix A. Clearwater Lake Provincial Park is divided in several LUCs.

Twenty per cent of Clearwater Lake Provincial Park, or 12,085 hectares, has been categorized as a Backcountry LUC (B). The main purpose of this categorization is to protect examples of natural landscapes and provide basic facilities and trails for nature-oriented recreation in a largely undisturbed environment. *A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks (1997)* states that Clearwater Lake Provincial Park's Backcountry LUC:

- protects string bog habitats and colonial bird and fish-rearing areas
- contains upland areas which help to maintain the "High Quality" water designation of Clearwater Lake

Fifty-seven per cent of Clearwater Lake Provincial Park, or 33,565 hectares, has been categorized as a Recreational Development LUC (RD). The main purpose of this categorization is to accommodate recreational development. *A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks (1997)* states that Clearwater Lake Provincial Park's Recreational Development LUC:

- accommodates existing recreational development such as cottages, lodges, campgrounds and day-use areas along the PR 287 corridor
- provides lake-based recreation opportunities including fishing, boating and snowmobiling
- permits commercial resource use while recognizing the recreational values of the park

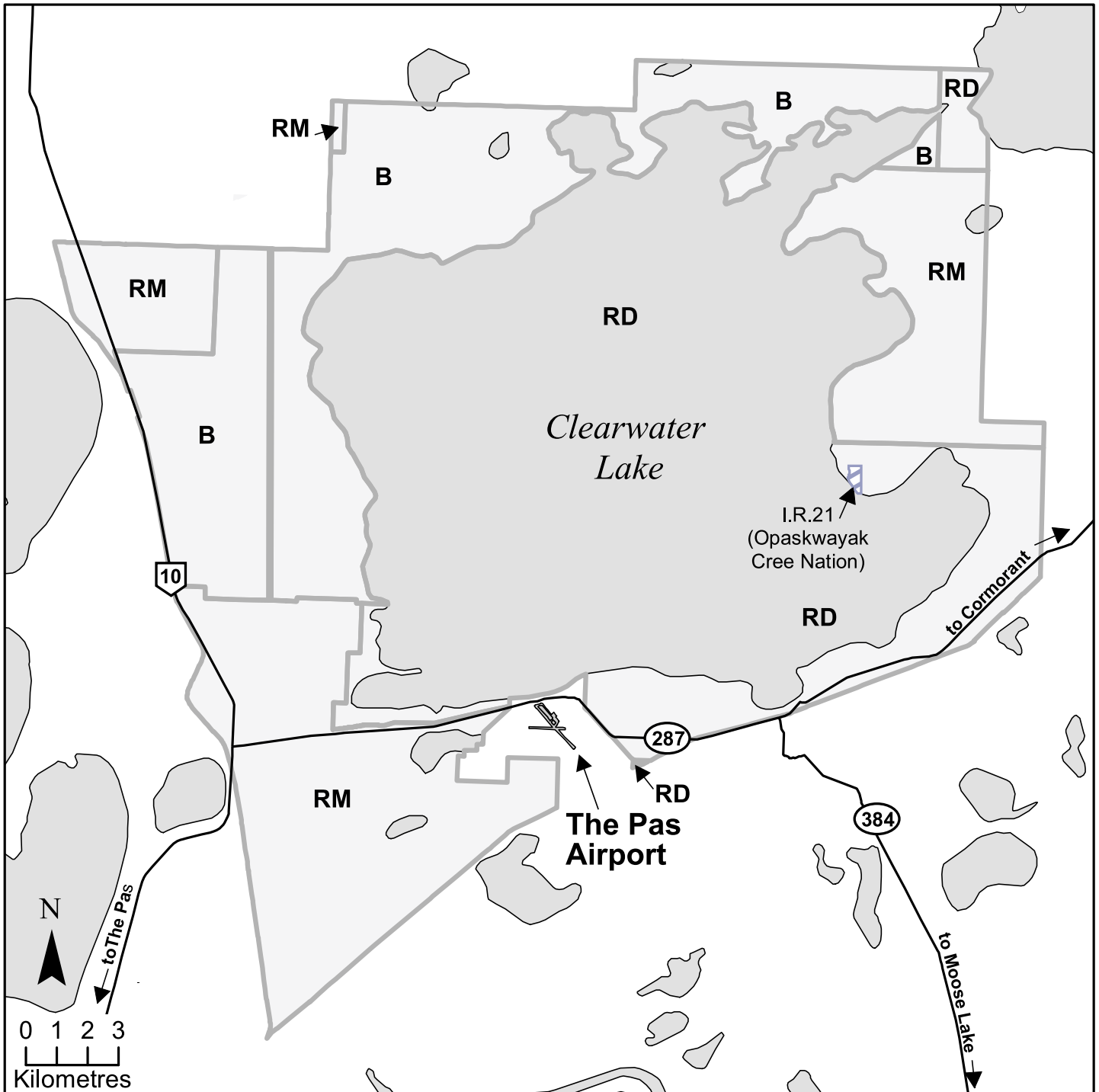
Twenty-three per cent of Clearwater Lake Provincial Park, or 13,530 hectares, has been categorized as a Resource Management LUC (RM). The main purpose of this categorization is to permit commercial resource development or extraction in a manner that does not compromise the main purpose of the park classification. *A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks (1997)* states that Clearwater Lake Provincial Park's Resource Management LUC:

- permits commercial resource opportunities
- provides recreational opportunities such as hiking, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling

Less than one per cent of Clearwater Lake Provincial Park, or 85 hectares, has been categorized as an Access LUC (A). The main purpose of this categorization is to provide a point or route of access in a provincial park or a location for a lodge or associated facilities. *A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks (1997)* states that Clearwater Lake Provincial Park's Access LUC:

- provides access for hydro lines passing through the Backcountry LUC

Clearwater Lake Provincial Park Land Use Categories



5. Park Management Guidelines

5.1 Natural Values

Clearwater Lake Provincial Park has an abundance of valuable aquatic and terrestrial natural resources. The park is managed to maintain the high water quality of the lake and protect the ecological integrity of undeveloped areas. Due to the lake's low rate of water renewal, contaminants that enter the lake are likely to remain and compromise water quality. Logging restrictions introduced in 2009 and a reduction in mining exploration activity provide an opportunity to better protect natural landscapes in the park.

Guidelines

1. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will work in co-operation with local partners to monitor water quality on Clearwater Lake.
2. Educational programs to promote the protection of lake water quality will be investigated and implemented as appropriate.
3. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will work to maintain a healthy lake trout population to support angling opportunities and Manitoba fish hatchery genetic stock requirements.
4. Development will be restricted to existing developed areas within the Recreational Development LUC to help preserve lake quality and adjacent lands.
5. Negative impacts to known species of conservation concern and/or unique geographic features will be minimized or avoided.
6. A review of lands within the Resource Management LUC and Recreational Development LUC will be conducted to assess their suitability for reclassification to a protected Backcountry LUC.

5.2 Recreation

Campground facilities are well used resources that serve local and regional populations, and campsite demand in the park is sufficient to support an expansion of campground facilities. Land for expansion is available at Camper's Cove, but Pioneer Bay is fully allocated, precluding its expansion.

There are over 380 cottages within the cottage subdivisions along the south shore of Clearwater Lake, increasing numbers of which are used as permanent residences. Use of the cross-country ski trails has diminished over the years and the chalet at the trailhead is now seldom used.

Guidelines

1. The potential for a new camping loop in the Campers Cove campground will be investigated.
2. No further land will be allocated for cottage development.
3. Snowmobile and ATV use in the park will be limited to their respective designated trails.
4. Options for managing the ski chalet will be investigated and may include working with potential partners, relocation or use of the chalet for an alternate purpose.

5.3 Interpretation

Providing outdoor educational opportunities and experiences in a natural setting is one of the purposes of provincial parks. At Clearwater Lake Provincial Park, information to promote public awareness, appreciation and understanding of the natural and cultural history of the area is provided through non-personal means. Opportunities for interpretation also exist outside the park.

Guidelines

1. Interpretive information will continue to be provided through signage and publications such as maps, brochures, and the Parks and Natural Areas website.
2. Opportunities for strategically placed interpretive signage along the Caves Self-guiding Trail will be investigated.
3. Potential for off-site interpretation of local history will be investigated through partnerships with The Pas airport and the Sam Waller Museum.
4. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will continue working with First Nations organizations on appropriate use and commemoration of the Guy Hill School site and the Helen Betty Osborne cairn.

5.4 Commercial Operations

Commercial activity can enhance or detract from the park experience and must be managed to best suit the park environment and user needs. There are currently three lodges in Clearwater Lake Provincial Park, and one concession at Pioneer Bay. The town of The Pas is actively encouraging commercial development on airport lands.

Guidelines

1. Development of additional commercial facilities within the park will not be permitted.
2. Commercial development proposals will be directed to the nearby commercial development area at The Pas airport.
3. Proposals for mobile commercial operations in the park will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Appendix A – Park Classification and Land Use Categories

Park Classifications

In accordance with section 7(2) of *The Provincial Parks Act* (1993), all provincial parks are classified as one of the following types:

- (a) a wilderness park, if the main purpose of the designation is to preserve representative areas of a natural region;
- (b) a natural park, if the main purpose of the designation is both to preserve areas of a natural region and to accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses;
- (c) a recreation park, if the main purpose of the designation is to provide recreational opportunities;
- (d) a heritage park, if the main purpose of the designation is to preserve an area of land containing a resource or resources of cultural or heritage value;
- (e) any other type of provincial park that may be specified in the regulation.

Land Use Categories

In accordance with section 7(3) of *The Provincial Parks Act* (1993), all provincial parks are categorized into one or more of the following land use categories:

- (a) a wilderness category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to protect representative or unique natural landscapes in an undisturbed state and provide recreational opportunities that depend on a pristine environment;
- (b) a backcountry category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to protect examples of natural landscapes and provide basic facilities and trails for nature-oriented recreation in a largely undisturbed environment;
- (c) a resource management category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to permit commercial resource development or extraction in a manner that does not compromise the main purpose of the park classification;
- (d) a recreational development category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to accommodate recreational development;
- (e) a heritage category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to protect a unique or representative site containing a resource or resources of cultural or heritage value;
- (f) an access category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to provide a point or route of access in a provincial park or a location for a lodge and associated facilities;
- (g) any other category that may be specified in the regulation.

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