

Pinawa Dam Provincial Park

Management Plan

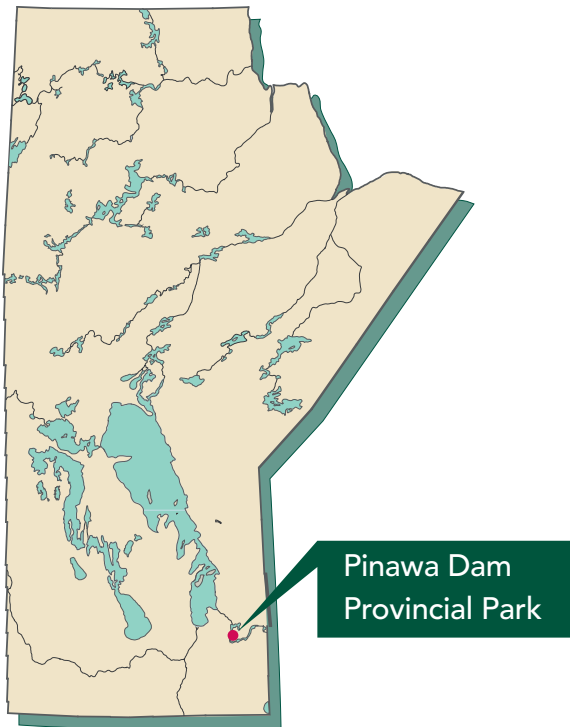


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This management plan for Pinawa Dam Provincial Park was prepared in consultation with park users under the authority of *The Provincial Parks Act*.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
Parks and Natural Areas Branch
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1. Introduction

The Provincial Parks Act (1993) 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 management plan for Pinawa Dam 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 its history of use. Information collected through that process was used to prepare a draft plan. The public was invited to comment on the draft plan. Involving park users was an important part of preparing the management plan. Public input was primarily collected through the Manitoba Parks website. Once the public consultation process was completed in August of 2012, 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 over the next 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 should be undertaken.

The Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Pinawa Dam Provincial Park are acknowledged and respected within the context of this management plan.

2. Park History

Pinawa Dam Provincial Park was designated to commemorate Manitoba's first year-round hydro-electric generating station, the Pinawa Dam. The dam began operating in 1906 and was a very important factor in the rapid growth of Winnipeg in the years leading up to World War I. It was developed in response to the city of Winnipeg's demand for residential and commercial power. The dam was built on a branch of the Winnipeg River. An intake channel, called the Pinawa Channel, was developed in order to divert water from the Winnipeg River toward the dam. The channel was widened and dredged to ensure a steady flow of water year-round.

The generating station at Pinawa Dam was closed in 1951 in order to allow the full flow of the Winnipeg River to serve the Seven Sisters Hydro Station, which had been begun operating on the main channel of the river in 1931. In the 1970s the provincial government began investigating the possibility of designating the site for recreation purposes (Merkl, 1982). As a result, Pinawa Dam Provincial Park was designated at the Pinawa Dam townsite in 1985. In 2009 the park boundaries were expanded to include the actual dam structure as well as an area of adjacent Crown land. In total, 168 hectares were added to the park at that time (Province of Manitoba, 2011).

3. Park Attributes

Pinawa Dam Provincial Park is 193 hectares (1.93 square kilometres) in size. The park is located only five kilometres northwest of the town of Pinawa and approximately 95 kilometres northeast of the city of Winnipeg.

3.1 Natural

The park is situated on the Pinawa Channel in the Lake of the Woods portion of the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region. Natural areas in the vicinity tend to consist of mixed vegetation in upland areas, as well as fens and bogs on wetter sites (Smith et al., 1998). The land within Pinawa Dam Provincial Park is a mix of developed areas, open spaces, forested areas and rock outcrops. Tree species in the park include bur oak, trembling aspen, white spruce, black spruce, tamarack and birch.

Wooded areas in and around the park provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. Species that frequent the park include white-tailed deer, black bear, fox, snapping turtle, otter and other small mammals. Several different fish species are found within the Pinawa Channel, such as walleye, northern pike, catfish and smallmouth bass. The Pinawa Channel, particularly the area around the dam ruins, also provides habitat for the carmine shiner, a small fish that is at risk in Manitoba and listed as Threatened under Canada's Species at Risk Act (2002) (Species at Risk Public Registry, 2011). Red-sided garter snake hibernacula have also been recorded in the area and precautions are taken in order to avoid disturbing the snakes through park maintenance activities.

3.2 Recreational

Pinawa Dam Provincial Park is a popular site for day-use recreation and for people looking to explore Manitoba's history. Visitors can expect a highly modified landscape and frequent interactions with other park visitors in the area around the dam. Facilities include picnic areas, a picnic shelter, trails and non-modern washrooms. The park also contains interpretive facilities, including an amphitheatre, several interpretive signs, a walking bridge and two self-guiding trails. A snowmobile trail runs through the park in the winter. There is considerably less development in the more natural areas of the park, where visitors can go for a more solitary experience. Recreational activities in the park include fishing, hiking, picnicking and exploring the old dam site. There are no designated swimming areas in the park.

A mix of trails in the park provide visitors with opportunities to tour the ruins of the dam, walk through the old townsite, explore natural areas of the park and cross the waterway via a walking bridge. This bridge is also used as a portage by canoeists paddling the Pinawa Channel. The Trans Canada Trail runs through the park toward Lac du Bonnet to the north and Pinawa to the south. The portion of the trail that is inside the park was developed in cooperation with the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association and local trail groups.

The two self-guiding interpretive trails in the park highlight the history of the site. The Dam Ruins Walk is a self-guiding trail that takes approximately one hour to walk. Interpretive signage along the trail explains the history of the dam, the process of generating electricity from moving water and the history of the former Pinawa Dam townsite. The Old Pinawa self-guiding trail leads visitors past landmarks of the former townsite. A brochure is available to provide visitors with information to accompany the trail markers found along the way.

Pinawa Dam Provincial Park is a popular and well used area. A variety of special events, such as weddings and community events, are occasionally held at the park.

3.3 Cultural

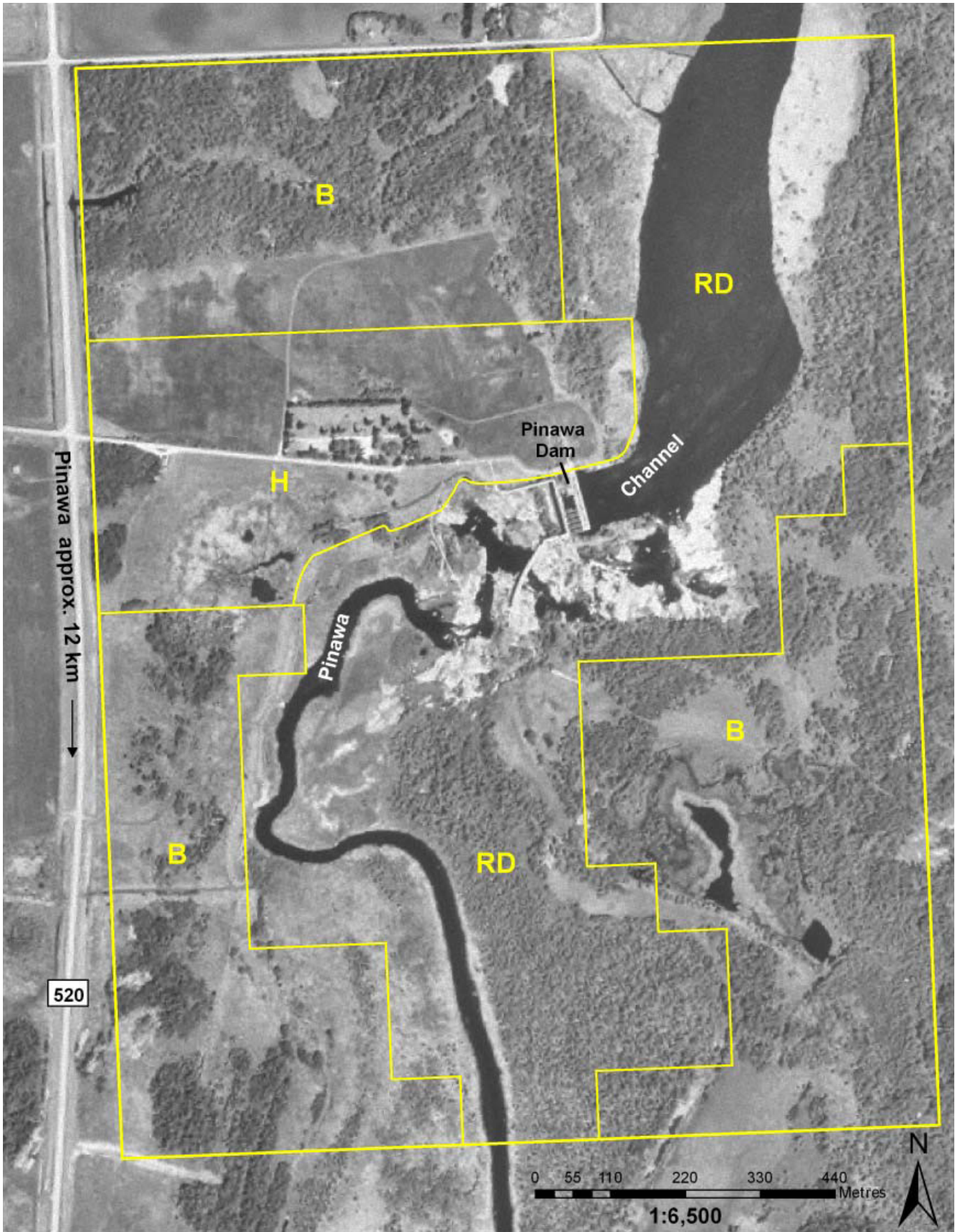
The focus of the park is on the ruins of the old Pinawa Dam, which is considered an important part of Manitoba's heritage. The Pinawa Dam began operating in 1906 and was Manitoba's first year-round hydro-electric generating station. Many people were employed by Winnipeg Hydro at the dam and lived in the nearby townsite. By the time the Pinawa Dam generating station was closed in 1951, the Pinawa Dam townsite was nearly deserted. All of the town's buildings have since been torn down, but traces of the town still remain. In the late 1950s, the Canadian Armed Forces conducted demolition exercises with explosives at the Pinawa Dam site. Parts of the dam were destroyed, however much of the ruins are still in place. Water continues to flow through the ruins today, though at a considerably lesser volume than in the past.

3.4 Additional Features

The Friends of Old Pinawa is a non-profit co-operating association that was formed in 1996. This group is focused on the preservation and promotion of Pinawa Dam Provincial Park and on facilitating access to the site (Friends of Old Pinawa, 2006). The partnership between Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship and this association has resulted in the development of a variety of interpretive facilities in the park, including the amphitheatre, interpretive signage, a walking bridge, a picnic shelter and a nature trail. The group also played a significant role in the 2009 expansion of the park, and regularly engages in promotional, fundraising and community events related to the park.

A portion of Pinawa Dam Provincial Park is located within the Winnipeg River Water Power Reserve. This limits activities and development in that area to those which are considered to be compatible with risks associated with flooding and erosion.

Pinawa Dam Provincial Park Map



4. Park Management Framework **4.3 Land Use Categories**

4.1 Classification

Manitoba's provincial park system is made up of almost 100 different parks and park reserves. Each of these areas plays a role in conserving ecosystems, preserving natural, cultural or heritage resources, and providing outdoor recreation or educational experiences. Classification descriptions can be found in Appendix A.

Pinawa Dam Provincial Park is classified as a Heritage Park. As defined by *The Provincial Parks Act (1993)*, the main purpose of a Heritage Park is to preserve an area of land containing a resource or resources of cultural or heritage value.

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 Pinawa Dam Provincial Park is to preserve the area surrounding Pinawa Dam and to promote public awareness and appreciation of its heritage value. According to that plan, the park will:

- protect the site and remnants of the first hydro-electric dam in Manitoba
- promote appreciation and public understanding of the current and historic value of hydro-electric power to Manitoba
- provide recreational opportunities including picnicking, fishing, hiking and viewing of the Pinawa Dam.

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

The land comprising Pinawa Dam Provincial Park has been categorized in several LUCs. Thirteen per cent (the original 25 hectares) of the park is classified under the Heritage LUC (H). The main purpose of this categorization is to protect a unique or representative site containing a resource or resources of cultural or heritage value - in this case, the Pinawa Dam townsite. Forty-five per cent (87.5 hectares) is classified under the 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. The remaining 42 per cent (80.5 hectares) is classified under the Recreational Development LUC (RD). The main purpose of this categorization is to accommodate recreational development.

5. Park Management Guidelines

The following guidelines will direct park management actions in Pinawa Dam Provincial Park.

5.1 Natural Values

1. The park will be maintained as a natural-looking area that is characteristic of the surrounding landscape.
2. Ecological values in undeveloped portions of the park will be maintained and these areas will remain free of development beyond trails, trailheads and associated facilities.
3. When species of conservation concern are identified in the park, any negative impacts on those species associated with park use will be minimized or avoided.
4. Carmine shiner habitat will be conserved in accordance with the federal recovery strategy for the carmine shiner in Canada.

5.2 Recreation

1. Basic facilities for day-use activities will be provided.
2. The trail system in the park may be extended or modified in order to provide further non-motorized opportunities for visitors to experience all aspects of the park. Except for the existing snowmobile trail, no trails for motorized vehicles will be permitted.
3. The natural and historical aspects of the Pinawa Dam and townsite will be recognized using interpretive information such as signs and brochures. Programs or special events may be offered in cooperation with local groups.

4. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will work with the Friends of Old Pinawa and other partners and stakeholders on projects consistent with the park purpose.
5. No designated swimming areas will be provided. A management program to ensure public safety will be maintained.

5.3 Cultural and Heritage Resources

1. Restoration of the dam for historic value will not be undertaken.
2. If alteration or loss of the dam due to natural causes is unavoidable, the ruins will be documented for the public record.

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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