



Sand Lakes Provincial Park

Management Plan



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This management plan for Sand Lakes Provincial Park was prepared under the authority of *The Provincial Parks Act*.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
Parks and Protected Spaces 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 Sand Lakes 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 Protected Spaces branch, and regional staff of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship. 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 October of 2014, 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 used and examined on an ongoing basis. Where an update or new direction on any matters described in this management plan may be needed, a process for publicly reviewing and updating the plan should be undertaken.

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

2. Background

Established in 1995, Sand Lakes Provincial Park occupies 8310 km² of the northern Manitoba landscape. This wilderness park features several outstanding water bodies including the South Seal River and the 113 km long Big Sand Lake which lends its name to the park. The park is representative of the Selwyn Lake Upland and Churchill River Upland Ecoregions and is a transition from the boreal forest to tundra. As with many other parks in the region, dramatic eskers and bedrock outcrops dot the landscape.

Sand Lakes Provincial Park provides habitat for many northern species of wildlife including black bear, moose, wolves, waterfowl and shorebirds. The park protects part of the migratory range and travel corridors of the barren-ground caribou. Several bird species which are listed as species of conservation concern use the park as breeding or migratory grounds.

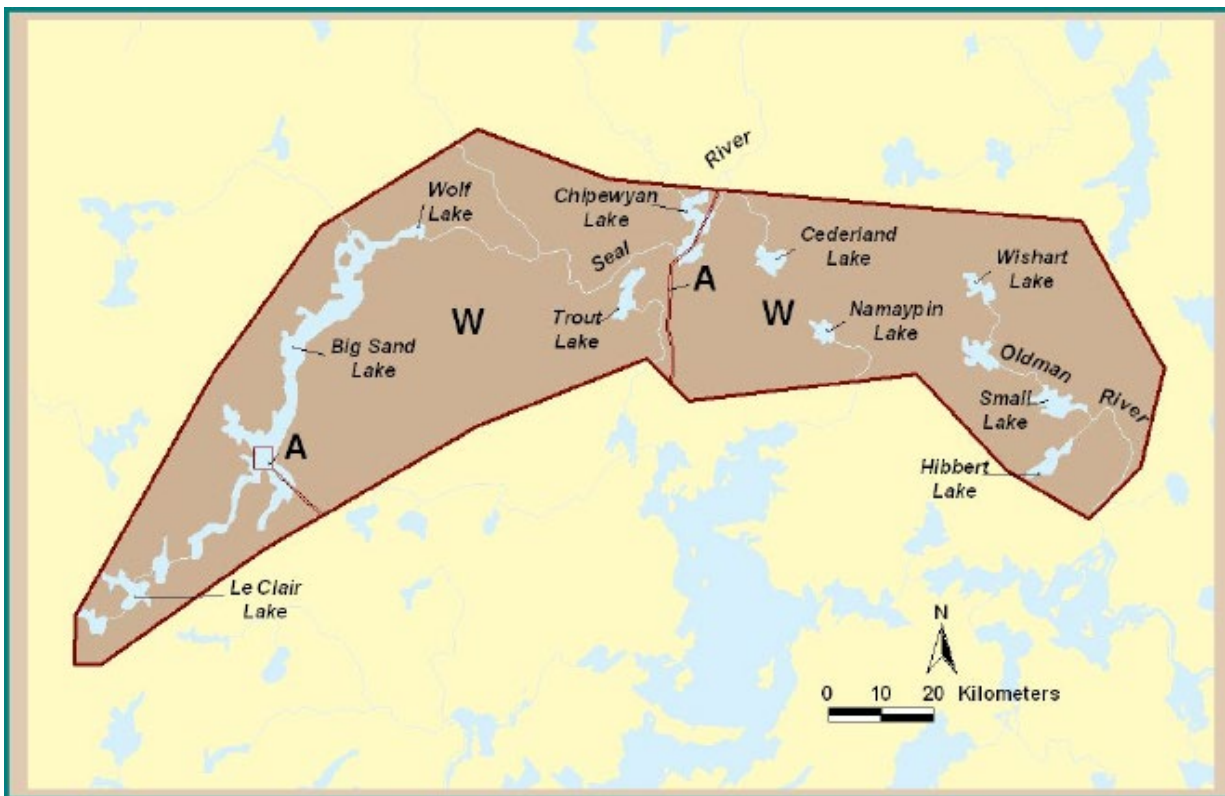
The olive-sided flycatcher which is listed as Threatened under *Canada's Species at Risk Act (2002)* and the common nighthawk listed as Endangered under the *Manitoba Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act* are both found within the park. The park also shelters a nationally significant caspian tern nesting site. Northern pike, walleye, trout and grayling are sought by fly-in anglers.

The park receives a limited number of visitors who use the park for hunting, fishing and canoeing. There are limited facilities located within the park. One lodge is located within the Access Land Use Category and several out camps located on lakes provide accommodations to anglers and hunters through licensed outfitters. The centre of the park contains a strip of land categorized as Access which was used as a winter road in the late 1990s and now accommodates snowmobile travel through the park.

The South Seal River canoe route starts at the southwest tip of the park and travels through Big Sand Lake, Loon Lake and Chipewyan Lake before it exits the park and continues on to the Seal River (a designated Canadian Heritage River). The park is designated for wilderness camping; there are no designated campgrounds and backcountry visitors at sites that show previous signs of use when ever possible. There is no direct road to the park and visitors contract private operators for fly-in access.

The park is used by the Sayisi Dene First Nation and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation for traditional uses and there is archaeological evidence of historical use by Aboriginal peoples for hunting, fishing and trapping.

Sand Lakes Provincial Park Map



3. Park Purpose

Sand Lakes is classified as a Wilderness Park. The main purpose of a wilderness park, as defined in *The Provincial Parks Act (1993)*, is to preserve representative areas of a natural region.

A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks (2015) identifies the purpose of Sand Lakes Provincial Park as being to conserve physical features and biological communities representative of the Selwyn Lake Upland and Churchill River Upland Ecoregions. According to that plan, the park will:

- protect winter range barren-ground caribou in an undisturbed state
- provide opportunities for a range of outdoor recreational experiences that depend on a pristine environment
- promote public appreciation and understanding of the park's natural features and cultural heritage

This park is part of Manitoba's network of protected areas, which was designed to represent the biodiversity found in each of Manitoba's 16 ecoregions. It helps maintain the overall ecological integrity of the Selwyn Lake Ecoregion by capturing a representative sample of the biodiversity found within that ecoregion. Nearby Colvin Lake, Nuelin Lake and Numaykooks Lake Provincial Parks provide additional protection for this ecoregion.

Large protected areas such as this park help conserve biological diversity including natural gene pools by allowing the environment to maintain its natural cycles and processes; reducing the potential for future costs of species recovery by maintaining intact habitat; and allowing migratory species to have access to various life-stage habitat across their range (ex: caribou calving grounds and overwintering grounds). They also serve as ecological benchmarks for measuring environmental and climate change over time, and provide the opportunity to ensure that management practices of existing and future developments employed in the north are sustainable.

Eight hundred and twenty-six thousand, four hundred (826,400) hectares or 99 per cent of the land comprising Sand Lakes Provincial Park has been categorized using the Wilderness Land Use Category (LUC). The main purpose of this LUC is to protect representative or unique natural landscapes in an undisturbed state and provide recreational opportunities that depend on a pristine environment.

Four thousand, six hundred (4,600) hectares or one per cent of the park has been categorized as Access LUC. The main purpose of this LUC is to provide a point or route of access in a provincial park or a location for a lodge and associated facilities.

All of the lands within this park contribute to Manitoba's network of protected areas and legally prohibit commercial logging, mining, hydroelectric development, oil and gas development, peat harvesting and any other activities that may significantly or adversely affect habitat.

4. Park Management Guidelines

The following guidelines will direct park management actions in Sand Lakes Provincial Park.

1. Monitoring of natural and cultural values of the park will be accomplished through observations during patrols by departmental staff and through investigations in response to specific reports.
2. Negative impacts on known species of conservation concern will be minimized or avoided.
3. Facilities for recreational use will not be provided by Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship. Traditionally used trails within the park will not be maintained or improved and will be allowed to regenerate naturally. Information about the park will notify people of the challenges in accessing it.
4. New commercial boat cache locations in the park will be reviewed by the Northeast Region Integrated Resource Management Team (IRMT) on a case by case basis to ensure the placement and number of caches are managed to preserve the natural landscape of the area and maintain the wilderness experience. No private caching of boats will be permitted.
5. Information about the park will be provided primarily through the Manitoba Provincial Parks website.
6. Developments which might adversely impact the ecological, geological or cultural values of the park will not be permitted. Activities that might have a deleterious effect on the park will be managed through the department's normal permitting process.
7. Should an activity or development arise that would constitute a change in land use or have the potential to affect the natural, geological or cultural values of the park, an appropriate review and consultation process will be designed to consider concerns from First Nations, stakeholders, interest groups and the public at large.
8. Management actions will be communicated with Split Lake Resource Management Board and the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board. Where ever possible, recommendations from the board will be supported by Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship.
9. Disturbance of culturally and/or archaeologically significant sites in the park will be avoided. Information on specific archaeological sites will not be made available to the public if there is a significant risk that increased access or visitation could pose a threat to the sites. Prior to the public release of any specific site information Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will confer with the Sayisi Dene First Nation and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation. Where loss of or damage to archaeological values due to natural causes is unavoidable, artifacts will be documented and salvaged wherever possible in co-operation with Historic Resources Branch.

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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