

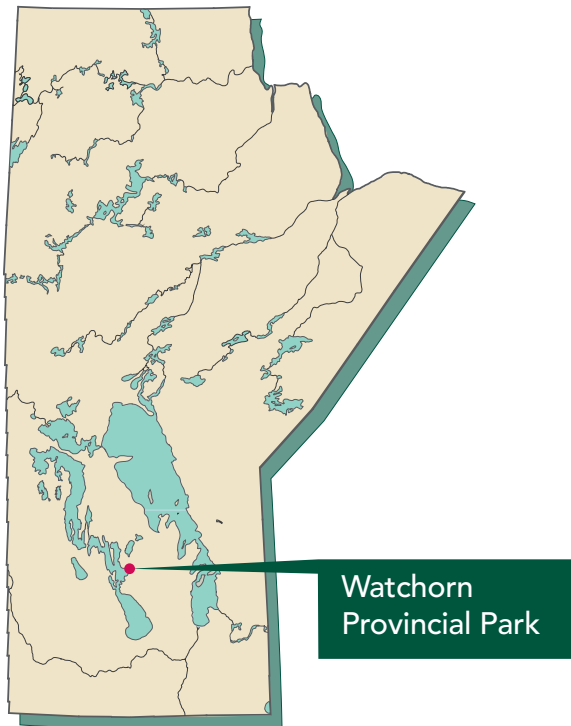
Watchorn Provincial Park

Management Plan



Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Park History.....	3
3. Park Attributes.....	3
3.1 Natural	4
3.2 Recreational.....	4
3.3 Additional Features	4
4. Park Management Framework... 	4
4.1 Park Classification	4
4.2 Park Purpose	4
4.3 Land Use Categories.....	5
5. Park Management Guidelines....	6
5.1 Natural Values	6
5.2 Recreation	6
5.3 Interpretation	6
5.4 Commercial Operations	6
Appendix	7
A. Park Classification and Land Use Categories	
Bibliography	8



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 Watchorn 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 the management plan and co-ordinating the public involvement process was the responsibility of a team involving staff from Parks and Protected Spaces 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. Once the public consultation process was completed in August of 2013, 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 Watchorn Provincial Park are acknowledged and respected within the context of this management plan.

2. Park History

Named after H.T.D. Watchorn, a postmaster who settled in the area in 1903, this narrow strip of land on the east shore of Lake Manitoba was designated Watchorn Provincial Park in 1962. Like many others, H.T.D. Watchorn traveled the Fairford Trail to the area, which was the only means of travel until the railway was established. Remnants of this hard packed trail are still visible along a beach ridge within the park.

3. Park Attributes

Watchorn Provincial Park is 2.8 hectares in size and is located on the east shore of Lake Manitoba, just south of Watchorn Creek. It is approximately 190 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg and 12 kilometres west of the town of Moosehorn. It is accessed from Provincial Road 237. The park plays a vital regional role in terms of camping, beach and boat launching opportunities.

Because of the meandering nature of the creek, some park facilities built to the edge of the creek straddle the park boundary. In particular, the boat launch and a portion of the boat trailer parking area are located on private land adjacent to the park. No formal agreement exists between the land owner and the province. The main road to the boat launch is also outside of the park on a municipal road right-of-way.

3.1 Natural

Watchorn is located within the Interlake Plain portion of the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region. It is a narrow strip of land with a beach, a vegetated beach ridge, and areas of mowed lawn. Tree species in the park include trembling aspen, poplar, oak and white spruce. A nearby marsh provides opportunities for viewing water birds.

On small islands visible from the shore is a double-crested cormorant rookery. The beach near the Watchorn Creek is documented nesting habitat for the endangered piping plover (Province of Manitoba, 2011). However, plovers have not been recorded there for many years. The mouth of the Watchorn Creek is located in the northern portion of the park and the creek itself is habitat for spawning northern pike and white mullet.

3.2 Recreational

The campground contains 47 basic and electrical campsites, offering beach front nightly and seasonal camping. The beach on Lake Manitoba offers recreational access to the lake. Swimming also occurs in Watchorn Creek. Other facilities include a group use area, non-modern washrooms, a modern washroom/shower building, picnic shelter, picnic area, concession stand and playground to support the campground and day-use. Upgrades to the campsites and other facilities are being undertaken as a result of major flooding that occurred in 2011.

A boat launch on Watchorn Creek is an important lake access point for the surrounding region. Access through the creek to the lake is limited during periods of low water.

3.3 Additional Features

A concession stand in the park provides food services and firewood. The building is owned by the lessee while the land is leased from the province.

4. Park Management Framework

4.1 Park 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.

Watchorn Provincial Park is classified as a Recreation Park. The main purpose of a Recreation Park is to provide recreational opportunities 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 Watchorn Provincial Park is to provide outdoor recreational opportunities and experiences in a natural setting in Manitoba's Interlake.

The park will:

- Provide camping, picnicking and beach opportunities
- Serve as an important regional park for residents of nearby communities and visitors to the area
- Provide boat access to Watchorn Bay on Lake Manitoba when lake levels permit

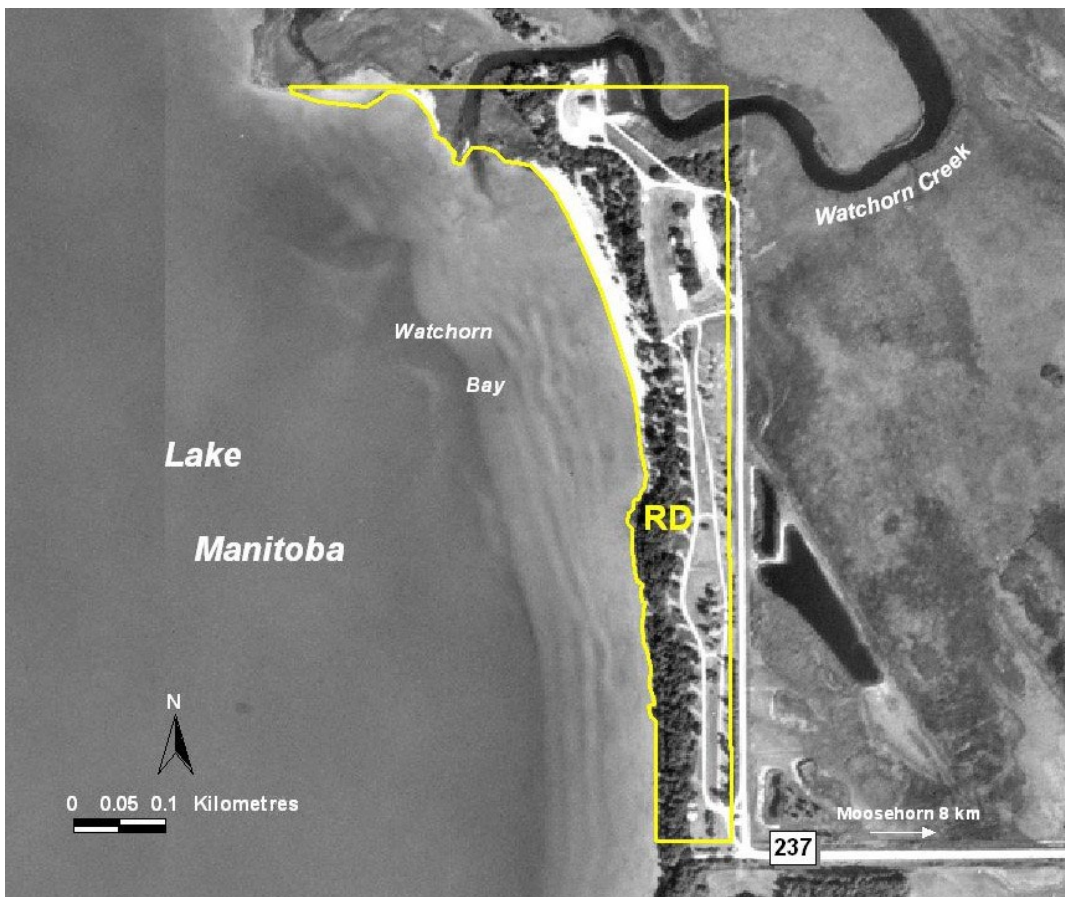
4.3 Land Use Categories

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.

Watchorn Provincial Park has a Recreational Development (RD) LUC. The main purpose of this category is to accommodate recreational development.

- Park facilities include campground, beach, playground, boat launch and concession
- The park has a picnic area and is adjacent to Watchorn Creek

Watchorn Provincial Park Map



Map shown for illustration purposes only

5. Park Management Guidelines

5.1 Natural Values

Watchorn Provincial Park is a moderately modified environment with some small natural areas that provide valuable habitat for wildlife. The vegetation along the beach ridge is vital to its structural integrity, which provides a protective measure against flooding in the campground. Some deterioration to the beach ridge has occurred and measures are required to prevent further erosion. Although nesting has not been observed in recent years, the beach is potential nesting habitat for the endangered piping plover.

Guidelines

1. Vegetation along the beach ridge will be retained to help protect the structural integrity of the beach ridge.
2. Vehicular traffic along the beach ridge will be restricted and campsites located along the ridge will be converted to and maintained as walk-in sites.
3. Monitoring of the beach for piping plovers will be done in conjunction with the Manitoba Piping Plover Recovery Action Group. Any nesting occurrences will be documented and appropriate protection measures for nesting birds will be put in place under the direction of the Manitoba Recovery Action Plan.

5.2 Recreation

Watchorn Provincial Park offers a range of recreational opportunities. The boat launch, which is located on private land outside the park boundary, is an important facility in the local area.

Guidelines

1. Watchorn will continue to offer facilities for picnicking and beach use as well as basic and electrical service campsites.

2. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will continue to explore opportunities to formalize its use of land at the boat launch at the north end of the park (south of Watchorn Creek), and the main access road on the east side of the park.

5.3 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*. The Fairford Trail is the key cultural feature in the park. Interpretive information will celebrate the trail as well as the history and culture of the area.

Guideline

1. Interpretive information will continue to be provided through publications such as maps, brochures and the Parks and Protected Spaces website.

5.4 Commercial Operations

Commercial activity within a park has the ability to enhance or detract from the park experience and must be managed to best suit the park environment and user needs. Watchorn Provincial Park will continue to provide opportunities for commercial activities suitable to the park setting. The existing concession stand is meeting the current demand of park visitors for commercial services.

Guidelines

1. Watchorn Provincial Park will continue to provide one commercial opportunity.
2. Expansion of commercial activity will be considered only if the service provided is directly related to park activities.

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.

Bibliography

Manitoba Natural Resources. "A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks." 1997.

Province of Manitoba. "Species At Risk." www.manitoba.ca/conservation/wildlife/sar/sarlist.html (2011)

The Provincial Parks Act. C.C.S.M., c. P20. 1993.