

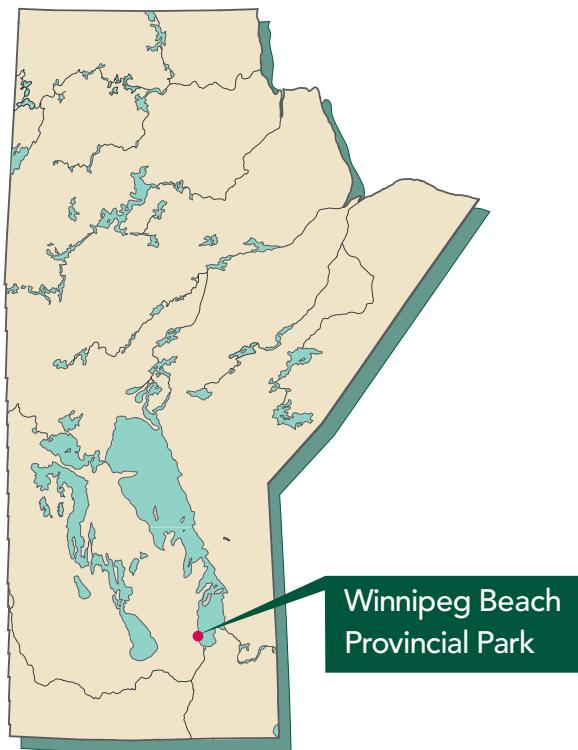
Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park

Management Plan



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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 Winnipeg Beach 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 and at a public drop-in session at the park in August of 2013. Once the public consultation process was completed in September 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 Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park are acknowledged and respected within the context of this management plan.

2. Park History

In 1900, then president of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) William Whyte envisioned and facilitated the extension of the rail tracks north from Winnipeg to Winnipeg Beach after he identified the site as a suitable location for recreational development. The first train arrived in 1903 at a community featuring a boardwalk, train station and dance pavilion. For the next six decades, Winnipeg Beach was a popular destination for Winnipeggers. Development over this period included cottages, various hotels and an amusement area with numerous attractions including carousels, rollercoasters, a theatre and shooting gallery. The railroad played a large part in the early success of Winnipeg Beach. So-called because of its midnight departure back to Winnipeg on Saturday nights, the Moonlight Special travelled between Winnipeg and Winnipeg Beach for fifty years, allowing thousands of city dwellers to enjoy what Winnipeg Beach had to offer.

Over the years as vehicular travel supplanted train travel, the popularity of Winnipeg Beach declined and the amusement park was closed in 1964 and demolished by 1967. Following the park's closure, the province acquired a portion of CPR's property and designated the area Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park in 1968. The park served as a day-use area only until 2011 when a full service campground opened in the south end of the park.

3. Park Attributes

Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park is 40.56 hectares in size and is situated on the western shore of Lake Winnipeg in the community of Winnipeg Beach. It is located 64 kilometres north of the city of Winnipeg and is accessed from Highway 9. The majority of the land within the park is owned by the province with the exception of four private residences along Elm Avenue. There is also one leased residence in the park, on Kernstead Road.

3.1 Natural

Winnipeg Beach is in the Interlake Plain portion of the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region. A two kilometre long beach is the dominant natural feature. Much of the park contains areas of manicured lawn with large shade trees. Along the lake at the south end of the park, a strip of littoral vegetation, including aspen, ash, poplar and dogwood, provides habitat for nesting birds and protection from shoreline erosion. Boundary Creek flows into Lake Winnipeg at the north end of the park. The mouth of the creek has been dredged extensively to create a marina.

3.2 Recreational

Situated within the community of Winnipeg Beach, the park is a highly modified environment and is well used by the town's residents and visitors alike. Visitors can expect a high level of interaction with other park users. The most recent addition to the park is a campground providing 120 fully accessible, full service (sewer, water and electrical) nightly campsites that opened in 2011. Many recreational activities center on the beach including swimming, fishing, waterskiing and sailboarding. The province's beach safety program currently operates within the park during the summer months. A commercial marina operates under a lease agreement with the province.

Other recreational facilities include tennis courts, beach volleyball courts, a soccer pitch, playground, picnic areas, walking paths with interpretive signs and modern washroom facilities. A boardwalk and bandstand are well used features in the park that are owned by the town. Special events, such as concerts and weddings, commonly take place in the park. A day camp located between the marina and the tennis courts operates under a lease agreement with the province.

The Town of Winnipeg Beach has a strong interest in the park. The park is the recreational center of the town and the town provides shopping and other commercial establishments available to park users. The town developed the bandstand and boardwalk through agreements with the province. Currently, the community hosts Boardwalk Days, which is an annual summer festival complete with midway rides that recall the amusement rides of the past.

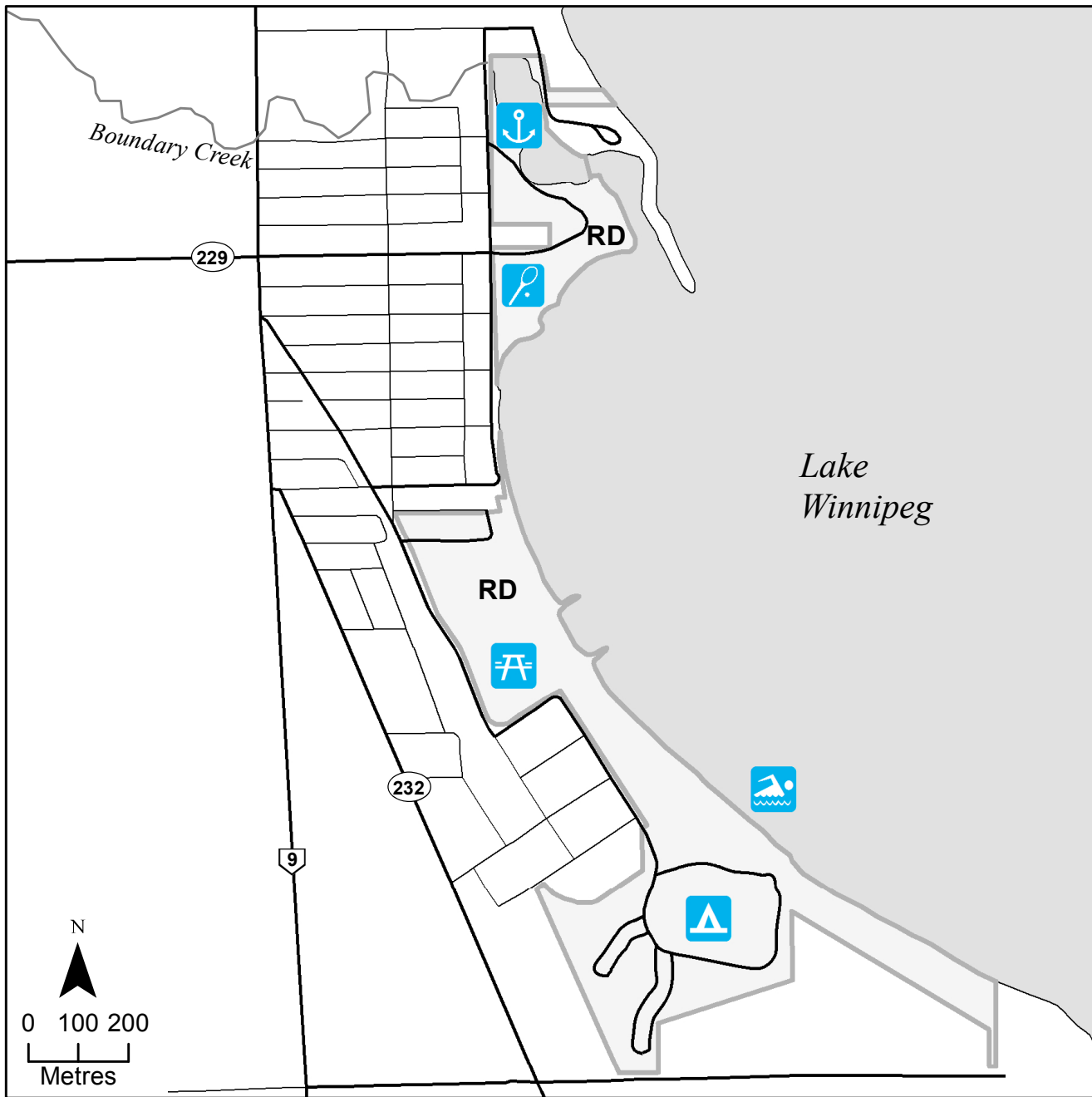
3.3 Cultural

The 40 metre tall iron water tower located on the lakefront at the south end of the park is owned by the town. It was built by CPR in 1928 and designated a provincial heritage site in 1998 by Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism. The tower is commemorated in a series of interpretive plaques located at its base.

Another feature in the park is "Anishinaabe", a red cedar carving standing nearly 11 metres tall. Carved by Peter Toth, it honours the Ojibway, Assiniboine and Cree of Manitoba and is part of his whispering giant series. It is owned and maintained by the town.

Local history is also commemorated in plaques located in the town's Hurst and Ritchie Parks site near the marina, and in the park office.

Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park



Map shown for illustration purposes only

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.

Winnipeg Beach 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 Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park is to provide recreational opportunities and experiences in an outdoor setting for residents of the south Interlake Region and Winnipeg. The park will:

- provide swimming, beach , picnicking and day-use opportunities
- provide access to Lake Winnipeg for fishing and other water-based recreational activities
- provide camping opportunities in a near urban environment
- promote public awareness and appreciation of the park's cultural history
- accommodate appropriate special events

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.

Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park has a Recreational Development (RD) LUC. The main purpose of this category is to accommodate recreational opportunities. Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park includes:

- Interpretive signage, boardwalk, parking lots, playground, washrooms, tennis courts, boat launch, marina, picnic facilities and campground.
- The water tower, a provincial historic site, is located on the lakefront.

5. Park Management Guidelines

5.1 Natural Values

Winnipeg Beach is a highly developed park with few natural areas. The beach and shoreline is the most significant natural feature and shoreline erosion is a significant issue in some areas. Natural vegetation exists on the beach ridge at the south end of the park and on the shoreline near the tennis courts. Maintaining these vegetated areas helps protect the shoreline and wildlife habitat. The balance of the shoreline is protected by a sea wall and rip-rap. Two groynes located in the centre of the beach were designed to help halt erosion of the sand along the beach. Observations and studies confirm that they continue to serve that function.

Guidelines

1. The seawall and shoreline rip-rap will continue to be monitored and repairs made as required.
2. Development or clearing of vegetation will not be permitted along the south shoreline or near the tennis courts in order to assist in stabilizing the shoreline and providing habitat for birds and other wildlife.

5.2 Recreation

Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park has highly developed recreational facilities in an urban environment. With the services provided by the businesses in the town and the marina, visitors can find recreational opportunities ranging from picnic areas and beaches, to camping, boating, shopping, dining and amusements. All of these combine to create the diversity that has become synonymous with a visit to Winnipeg Beach.

A redevelopment study for the south end of the park was completed in 2007 (McGowan Russell Group). This study engaged park users in determining a series of desirable development options for the south end of the park. Maintaining the green space of the park was very highly rated by park users while completion of the boardwalk, viewing areas, playgrounds and a campground were considered desirable developments. The campground and its associated facilities were developed in response to this study. The other priority development opportunities still exist and may require partnerships to be developed.

The campground has become quite popular with an occupancy rate of 52 per cent in its first full year of operation. This makes it one of the busiest campgrounds in Manitoba for nightly camping. The campground occupies the entire southern portion of the park leaving no room for expansion. Seasonal camping opportunities in the area are provided by several private campgrounds near Winnipeg Beach.

Guidelines

1. The area from the campground to Park Avenue will continue to function as the park's principle picnic area/green space. It will be managed and developed to maximize its suitability for casual picnicking, beach and day-use. It will feature extensive green space, with trails, viewpoints, picnicking and beach facilities. It will be managed to ensure that private residences in the park near Elm Avenue and Prospect Street, and the Winnipeg Beach Day Camp, have appropriate buffering from other park activities.
2. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will investigate partnerships with the Town of Winnipeg Beach to develop and operate selected high priority development options as suggested in the 2007 redevelopment study for the park, with emphasis on completion of the boardwalk and associated viewing areas, and a large playground facility.
3. No piers or other similar structures along the beach will be permitted to avoid erosion and public safety concerns.
4. Regular monitoring of the beach safety program will continue to ensure that the program responds to changes in demand.
5. Development proposals for sports facilities such as soccer pitches or baseball diamonds will be directed to the Town of Winnipeg Beach for consideration on town property.
6. Management of the campground will focus on offering nightly, full service camping opportunities with additional amenities such as Wi-Fi. Provision of seasonal camping will not be considered unless occupancy data indicates there is significant underutilized capacity for nightly camping.
7. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will investigate tying the park sewage system in with the Town of Winnipeg Beach system when a regional system is developed in the future.

5.3 Cultural and Heritage Resources

The CPR water tower is the iconic feature that represents Winnipeg Beach and its early days as a railway resort. The tower is owned by the Town of Winnipeg Beach but is located on park land owned by the province. It was designated a Provincial Heritage Site in 1998.

Guideline

1. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will cooperate with the Town of Winnipeg Beach and Manitoba Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection in managing the CPR water tower to preserve its heritage values.

5.4 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*. Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park has a history that is interesting for many park visitors. Interpretive displays in the park office are the principle means by which the park promotes public awareness, appreciation and understanding of the history and culture of Winnipeg Beach. Various features and programs in the town are additional sources of information for visitors.

Guideline

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

5.5 Commercial Operations

Commercial activities in a park have the ability to enhance or detract from the park experience and must be managed to best suit the park environment and user needs. The proximity of the main beach to commercial establishments in the town diminishes the necessity for commercial operations to be established in the park. The Town of Winnipeg Beach has bylaws governing the operation of businesses which apply in the park.

The marina operates under a lease agreement with Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship and offers valuable services for boaters. It is an important boating facility on Lake Winnipeg being the most southerly protected harbour on the lake. It is a busy site and the docks and parking lot are often congested with traffic. A design for redevelopment was done in 2011 to guide improvements to the boat launch and parking lot. Other improvements are needed to ensure the marina area continues to function effectively and provide high quality boating opportunities.

Guidelines

1. Except for the marina, permanent commercial operations will not be permitted within the park. Should Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship determine that an additional service is required within the park, commercial operations may be considered subject to the following conditions:
 - Opportunities for commercial operations will be allocated through a public tender process.
 - Concessions will be restricted to specified areas of the park.
 - No permanent structures will be allowed.
 - Concessionaires will be subject to the licensing requirements of the Town of Winnipeg Beach.

2. The area from Park Avenue to the north end of the park will be managed specifically for marina development and operation. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship will continue its program of redesign and improvements to facilities and landscaping in the marina area to improve the utilization of space and to enhance its “green space” character.
3. Any development proposals for the marina will be subject to the following principles:
 - Development proposals must be presented as part of an integrated, overall development plan for the site and must demonstrate suitability for a park setting.
 - Proposals should be consistent with the natural and cultural values of the park.
 - Proposals must demonstrate a direct benefit to the park and park users, and be compatible with existing and adjacent site use.
 - Proposals must demonstrate economic viability, and will be subject to appropriate review and applicable environmental assessment.

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.

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

McGowan Russell Group Inc. "Winnipeg Beach Provincial Park Redevelopment Options". 2007