

# Manitoba Protected Areas Initiative Update 2012

Manitoba's network of protected areas includes a variety of Crown lands with different legal designations including ecological reserves, traditional use planning areas, national and provincial parks, wildlife management areas, and provincial forests. Through Memorandums of Agreement, private lands owned by conservation agencies are also recognized as part of Manitoba's network.

Over the past year, Manitoba expanded the Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve by over 50 per cent and designated two traditional use planning areas under *The East Side Traditional Lands and Special Protected Areas Act*, which form part of the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site. Currently, over 7 million hectares are included in Manitoba's protected areas network, covering 10.8 per cent of the province.

This year Manitoba unveiled "TomorrowNow – Manitoba's Green Plan", government's new eight-year strategy for protecting the environment while ensuring a prosperous, environmentally-conscious economy. Protected areas are a cornerstone of the plan because they are the surest and most economical way to protect species and natural landscapes. "TomorrowNow – Manitoba's Green Plan" commits to expanding and creating up to 15 new protected areas over the next eight years.

## Key Achievements

### June

- The **Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve Expansion** protects an additional **677 hectares** of rare calcareous fen containing more than 70 per cent of Manitoba's orchid species. The Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve is located along Highway 59 northeast of the Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation. The Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve features 23 species of provincially rare and uncommon plants, eight species of insect-eating (carnivorous) plants and 28 of Manitoba's 36 native orchid species including the rare ram's head lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*). An interpretive trail and boardwalk adjacent to the ecological reserve is expected to be completed in 2014, which will allow access for viewing and research while protecting the ecological integrity of the wetlands area.

### December

- Manitoba designated the 472,500 hectare **Little Grand Rapids Traditional Use Planning Area** that makes up part of Little Grand Rapids First Nation's traditional territory on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Ni-Kes, the community's approved land use plan, includes part of Atikaki Provincial Park and adds **97,010 hectares** of boreal forest and wetlands to the protected areas network.
- Manitoba designated the 313,685 hectare **Pauingassi Traditional Use Planning Area**, which makes up Pauingassi First Nation's traditional territory on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Naamiwan - The Land of Fair Wind, the community's approved land use plan, adds **272,450 hectares** of boreal forest and wetlands to the protected areas network.

## In Progress

- Phase 1 of the Saskatchewan River Delta (SRD) Planning Area is complete and pending a decision by government. Review of Phase 2 proposals will allow for more input from First Nations, local communities, industry, and other interested parties in this ecologically and economically complex area. The SRD is recognized as a globally significant Important Bird Area, the largest freshwater inland delta in North America, and one of only two active deltas in the Boreal Plains Ecozone of the western boreal forest.

## Other Related Activities

- The Canadian Council on Ecological Areas awarded Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative the 2012 Gold Leaf Award for ensuring protection of private conservation lands.
- The Manitoba Chapter of the Wildlife Society presented its 2012 Conservation Award to the Protected Areas Initiative program for outstanding work in the field of conservation.
- In January, the nomination bid for a Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Site on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and northwestern Ontario was formally submitted to UNESCO. The Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project is a collaboration between five First Nations and two provincial governments committed to securing world heritage status for the largest conserved area - 33,400 square kilometres - in the North American boreal shield. The four land use plans proposed by participating First Nations in Manitoba have been approved and provide strategic direction for lands traditionally used by these First Nations. These lands are part of the proposed Pimachiowin Aki UNESCO World Heritage Site, an initiative that seeks to conserve, present and transmit to future generations the cultural and natural heritage values of this area of the province.
- An amendment process was initiated for Bloodvein First Nation's land use plan to include a prohibition on peat mining in the First Nation's traditional use area. A decision on the amendment is expected in early 2013.
- Parks and Natural Areas Branch is working with Manitoba Innovation, Energy and Mines towards a strategy for sustainable mining in parks as part of the commitment outlined in "TomorrowNow - Manitoba's Green Plan".
- In June, the province announced it was developing a new strategy to better protect species at risk that will include new funding for population recovery projects and developing new habitat protection legislation. Furthermore, an additional 27 species were declared as extirpated, endangered or threatened under The Endangered Species Act. The 27 species include one mammal, 13 birds, one lizard, six moths, one butterfly, one snake, one mussel, and three plants.
- Manitoba has provided \$4.5 million in funding as part of the province's commitment of \$7 million to support the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) Natural Areas Conservation Program. Since the beginning of the agreement in 2008, NCC has acquired over 10,870 hectares in conservation agreements and land purchases in the Riding Mountain Aspen Parkland, the Tall Grass Prairie, the Whitemouth River Watershed, the Oak Lake Sandhills and Wetlands, the West Souris Mixed-grass Prairie, and the Pembina/Tiger Hills. Other areas of focus for the program include the Interlake Parkland and Turtle Mountain Woodland and Wetland.
- As of December 31, 2012, the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC) held a total of 642 conservation agreements (CAs) covering 48,087 hectares. Of these, 44 CAs covering 3,211 hectares were acquired since January 1, 2012. All CAs held by MHHC are in perpetuity. They were donated or acquired through the Potholes Plus Program, the Habitat Stewardship Program focusing on species at risk, the Riparian Conservation Easement Program or through partnership agreements with conservation districts. These conservation lands contain the range of native habitat in Manitoba's prairie ecozone including wetlands, habitat of species at risk, riparian areas, mixed grass prairie, and woodland.