

# Manitoba Protected Areas Initiative Update 2009

Manitoba's network of protected areas includes all sites where logging, mining, hydroelectric development, and other activities that adversely and significantly affect habitat are prohibited through legal means. Manitoba's *Green and Growing* strategy (2006) commits to a goal of permanently designating five new, major protected areas by 2010 and increasing the number of ecological reserves and wildlife management areas.

It was an eventful year for the Protected Areas Initiative, which saw the protected portion of Manitoba rise from 8.4% to 9.0%. Over 409,800 hectares were added to Manitoba's network of protected areas, including two major new protected areas committed to under the *Green and Growing* strategy – a portion of Kaskatamagan Wildlife Management Area, and Kaskatamagan Sipi Wildlife Management Area in the Hudson Bay Lowlands.

## Key Achievements

New protected areas were established in southern Manitoba (agro-Manitoba), in the Manitoba Lowlands in southeast Manitoba (Natural Region 5c), and in the Hudson Bay Lowlands (Natural Regions 2b and 3). As well, the protected areas priority planning exercise in Tembec's Forest Management License #1 (Natural Region 4c) was wrapped up with the designation of a new protected wildlife management area. Work continued in other priority areas, including the Saskatchewan River Delta (Natural Region 5a), the Arctic Tundra (Natural Region 2a), the Northern Transition Forest (Natural Regions 1a and 1b) and a number of smaller sites proposed as ecological reserves. Most of these activities involve sites within the boreal region.

The Manitoba government continues to work with participating First Nations in Manitoba and Ontario, and the governments of Ontario and Canada to develop a boreal forest World Heritage Site nomination to the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Pimachiowin Aki Corporation is coordinating the nomination, and will establish the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Fund. The Fund will demonstrate to UNESCO that there is financial and public support for the site, generate revenue for governance and operation of the site, and create jobs and opportunities for First Nation communities by funding community-driven projects related to the site. Manitoba will contribute up to \$10 million to the fund.

## March 2009

- 2,285 hectares of **Nature Conservancy of Canada-owned lands** located in agro-Manitoba were added to the protected areas network through an amendment to the 2004 Memorandum of Agreement between the province and NCC.
- The newly designated **Whitemouth Bog Ecological Reserve** added 5,020 hectares of rich peatland bog to the protected areas network. It is the third largest ecological reserve in the province, provides habitat for the yellow rail, a species of special concern under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*, and contains calcareous fens, one of the rarest wetland types in North America.
- The province designated **Whitemouth Bog Wildlife Management Area**, a 3,010 hectare protected area bordering the Whitemouth Bog Ecological Reserve, to provide additional protection for the bog while allowing existing recreational activities, such as snowmobiling along designated trails, hunting, and berry-picking to continue.

- The newly designated **Observation Point Wildlife Management Area** added 6,010 hectares of invaluable natural boreal forest wetlands to the protected areas network, concluding Protected Areas Initiative work with Tembec in Forest Management License Area #1 (Natural Region 4c).

### April 2009

- The province added 129 hectares of land to the **Pembina Valley Wildlife Management Area**, located along the Canada - United States border in southern Manitoba. A unique paper birch-ironwood forest occurring along a steep, dry, northwest facing slope of this addition is now included in the protected areas network.
- The **Pinawa Dam Provincial Park** was expanded in partnership with the Friends of Old Pinawa, adding 87.5 hectares of protected lands to the park within a Backcountry land use category.

### September 2009

- **Chitek Lake Park Reserve** and **Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve** were renewed until September 2014.

### October 2009

- The newly protected core of the **Kaskatamagan Wildlife Management Area** added 259,530 hectares to the protected areas network. This area captures the transition from brackish tidal mudflats exposed at low tide to wetland-dominated inland plains characteristic of the Coastal Hudson Bay Lowlands. The greater Kaskatamagan Wildlife Management Area, made up of the former Cape Tatnam Wildlife Management Area and including new lands further inland, encompasses the spectacular Hudson Bay marine coastline from the mouth of the Nelson River to the Ontario border.
- The province established the new **Kaskatamagan Sipi Wildlife Management Area**, protecting 133,820 hectares of land in the transition zone between boreal forest and Arctic tundra. This portion of the Hudson Bay Lowlands is dominated by peat-covered till deposits and relic marine beaches, and supports a diverse and noteworthy mammal population.

### In Progress

- The Protected Areas Initiative is continuing its planning exercise in the Saskatchewan River Delta, which includes Red Deer Lake Area of Special Interest (ASI), in Natural Region 5a on the west side of the province. The Saskatchewan River Delta 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. Several salt flats and significant coastal wetlands supporting aquatic plant communities typical of coastal marine environments are found in and around the Red Deer ASI.
- Protected area proposals covering over 165,000 hectares have been developed in Natural Region 5c and are ready for internal and external review. Ten proposed ecological reserves and one proposed addition to an existing ecological reserve have also been identified.

### Other Related Activities

- Manitoba Conservation continued to work closely with conservation agencies, such as Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), to advance protection efforts in southern Manitoba where much of the land is privately owned.
- The province committed \$7 million over the next five years supporting the NCC Natural Areas Conservation Program to acquire and preserve ecologically significant lands in eight areas in southern Manitoba. Some of the areas of focus for the program include the West Souris mixed-grass prairie, Oak Lake sandhills and wetlands, Whitemouth River watershed, Turtle Mountain Woodland and wetland, and Delta and Netley-Libau marshes.
- In April 2009, commercial logging was banned in all provincial parks with the exception of Duck Mountain Provincial Park.
- Manitoba committed to a new Boreal peatlands stewardship strategy in December, 2009.
- Manitoba committed to launching a Wetland Protection and Restoration Initiative in November 2008, including plans to restore the province's major marshes.