



Protecting Manitoba's Outstanding Landscapes

Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative

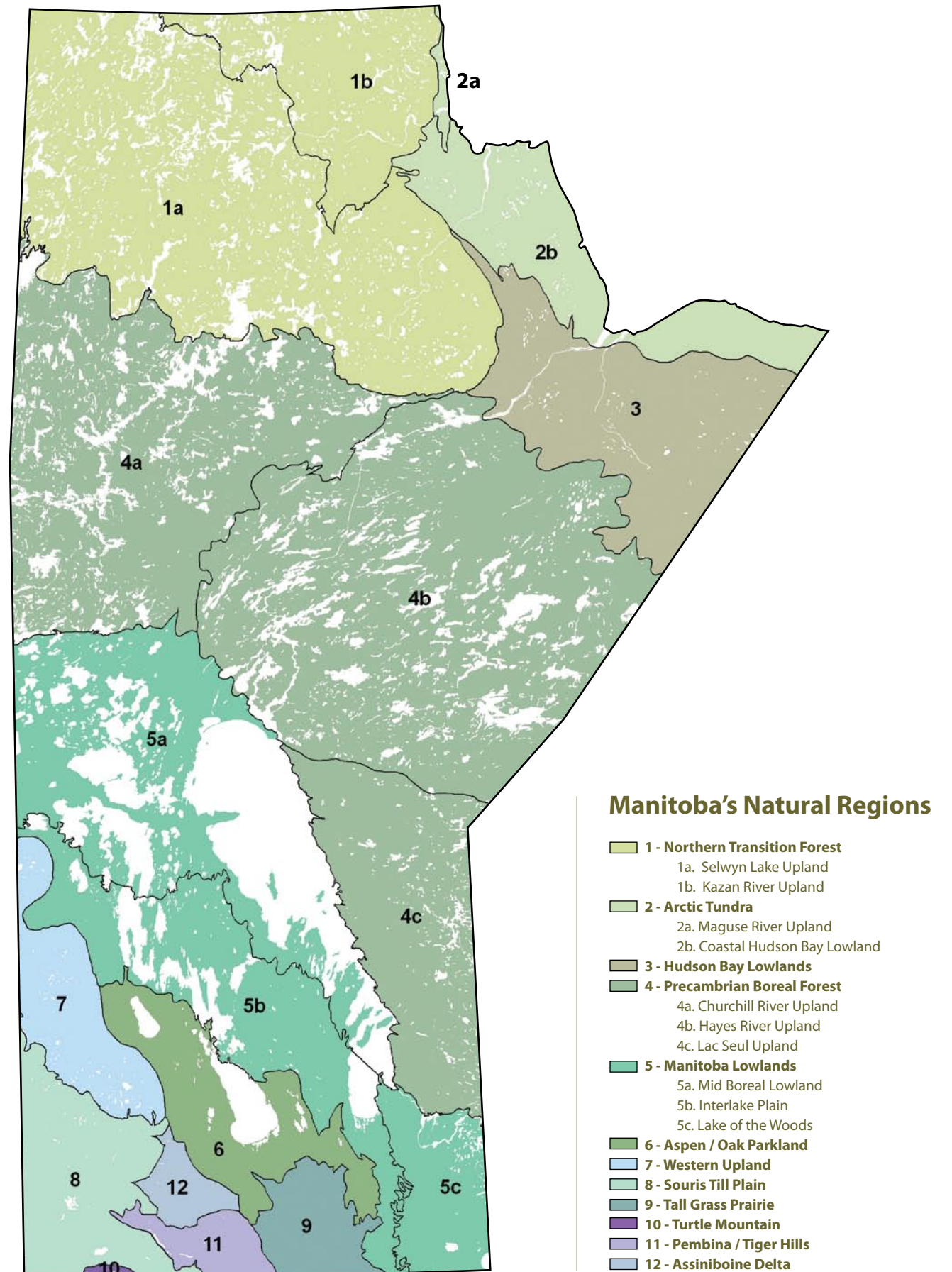


Protecting Manitoba's Biodiversity

From rugged Precambrian shield and northern tundra to rich agricultural land and rolling central hills, Manitoba's 65 million hectares (160 million acres) of land are composed of a wealth of diverse landscapes. Sharing a connection to these landscapes is an abundance of biological diversity – or biodiversity – the variety of all plant and animal species living in a particular environment. Unfortunately, some of Manitoba's most precious landscapes are being destroyed and biodiversity is being lost due to human activities. The Government of Manitoba recognizes that the conservation of biodiversity is essential for the long-term maintenance of healthy ecosystems, resources and human well-being.

There are several natural regions in Manitoba distinguished from one another by common geography, climate and vegetation. The goal of the Protected Areas Initiative is to permanently protect a representative sample of each of the province's 18 natural regions and sub-regions therefore conserving the biodiversity of the Province of Manitoba.

Cover Photo: Little Limestone Lake





Manitoba Responds to the Challenge

In 1990, the World Wildlife Fund Canada issued a challenge to all Canadian provinces and territories to protect a representative sample of each of the country's natural regions by the year 2000. Manitoba became the first jurisdiction in Canada to commit to the campaign and developed the Protected Areas Initiative to respond to the challenge. Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative has demonstrated a Provincial commitment to the environment and natural diversity and continues to work towards protecting representative areas in each of Manitoba's natural regions.

The total land area protected under the Protected Areas Initiative increased from 0.6 per cent in 1990 to 8.4 per cent in 2006. This corresponds to a total of 5.4 million hectares (13.5 million acres). Although significant progress has been made, much more remains to be done to reach the goal of adequately representing and protecting Manitoba's natural regions from activities which adversely affect the environment.

The Importance of Protected Areas

Maintaining protected areas provides many ecological, social, economic and health benefits.

In addition to allowing the environment to maintain its natural cycles and processes, protected areas conserve biological diversity including natural gene pools. The establishment of protected areas also helps to meet our national agreements and international commitments and treaties on biodiversity conservation. Protected areas act as "insurance policies" against species loss, reducing the potential for future costs of reviving a species on the brink of extinction. Protected areas can serve as scientific points of reference for measuring environmental change over time by serving as sites to study ecosystems.

Natural environments also provide a range of ecosystem services which provide economic benefits to businesses and communities. These ecosystem services include natural regulation of water flow and water quality, carbon storage and oxygen release, and the removal of wastes. Economic benefits also result from tourism as protected areas attract visitors into the area who may purchase a range of goods and services such as guiding, accommodation, food and beverages, souvenirs, transportation needs and other recreational activities.

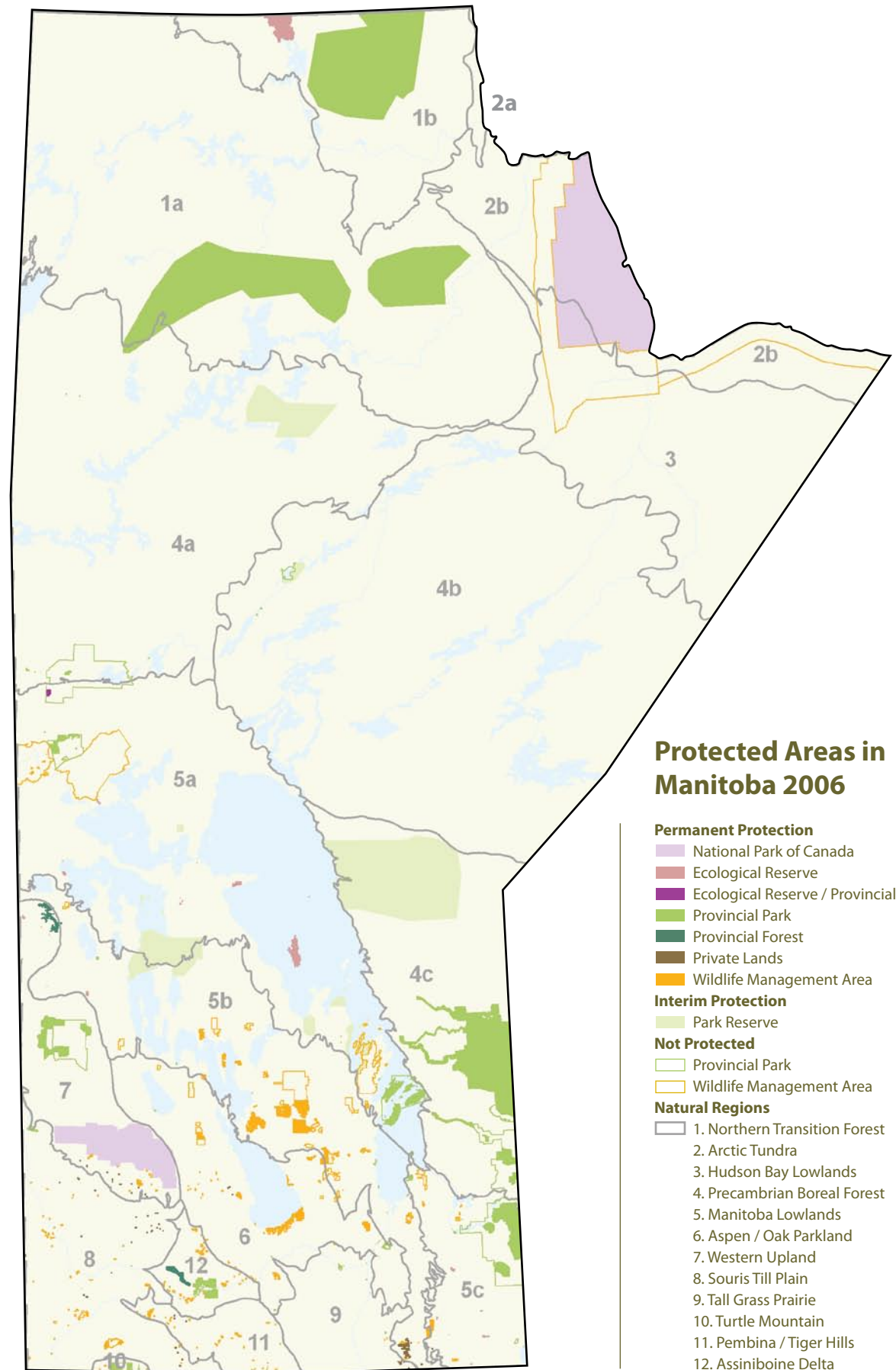


Recreational and aesthetic experiences in protected areas contribute to human physical and mental well-being. Protected areas may also preserve land where Aboriginal people can maintain their traditional ecological knowledge and continue traditional activities such as trapping, hunting and fishing. Protected areas endure as a natural legacy for future generations.

What is a Protected Area?

Protected areas are land, freshwater or marine areas, where logging, mining, hydroelectric development, oil and gas development, and other activities that significantly and adversely affect habitat are prohibited through legal means.

Manitoba's protected areas network is comprised of a collection of Crown lands with different land designations including ecological reserves, 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.





Ecological Reserves

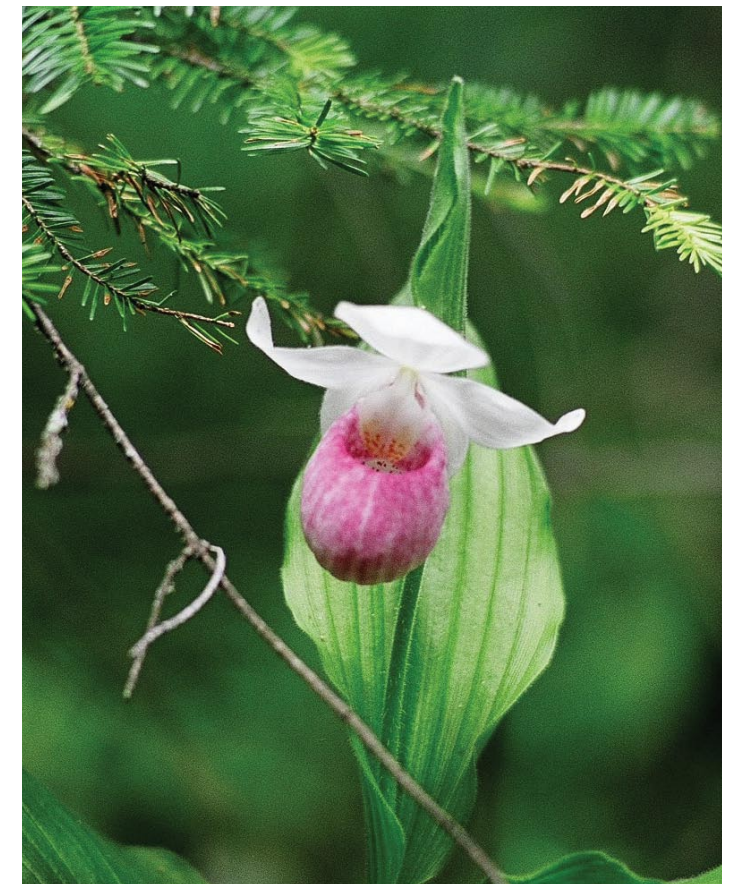
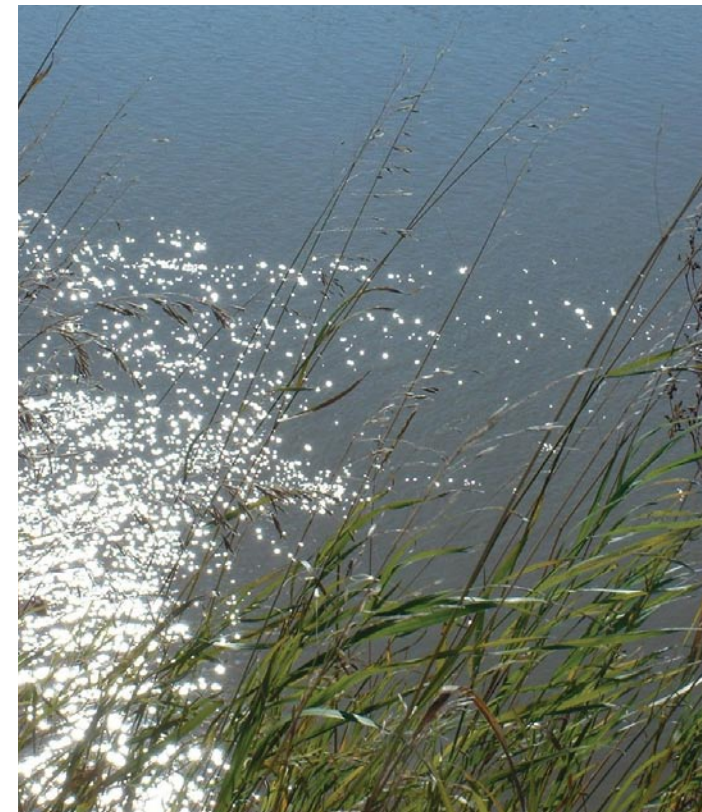
Ecological reserves play a key role in Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative by protecting unique, rare and representative examples of plants, animals, geological features and ecosystems. Current ecological reserves, for example, protect river-bottom forest, rare-orchid habitat, colonial bird nesting sites and unique limestone caves.

Ecological reserves are the most protected of the provincially designated sites within the network of protected areas in Manitoba. *The Ecological Reserves Act* specifies the purpose of ecological reserves and what activities are permitted in them. These sites are set aside for preservation, research, education and nature study. Under the act, approval is required to conduct any activity in an ecological reserve but most ecological reserves are open to the public for non-destructive, observational uses (e.g., walking, wildlife viewing). As of 2006, 21 ecological reserves have been created for a total protected area of 61,456 hectares (151,861 acres).

Jennifer And Tom Shay Ecological Reserve

Forests growing along Manitoba's Red River provide essential corridors for the movement and dispersal of wildlife in a region with large tracts of land used for agriculture. Relatively undisturbed river-bottom forest, such as the one located within and around the Jennifer and Tom Shay Ecological Reserve established in 2004, is a rare occurrence in the Red River Valley.

Over 150 plant species are distributed throughout this seven hectare (17 acre) ecological reserve including the very rare false indigo and several other plant species uncommon to this region of Manitoba. Over 180 bird species have been sighted including the red-headed woodpecker, a species listed as Special Concern by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). Archaeological research indicates that this site may have been occupied up to 2000 years ago.



Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve

This ecological reserve established in 2005 encompasses 563 hectares (1,391 acres) of calcareous fen, a wetland type considered rare in North America. The ecological reserve contains 23 species of provincially rare and uncommon plants. Twenty-eight of Manitoba's 36 native orchid species, including the rare ram's head lady's-slipper, are found in the wetland along with eight of Manitoba's ten species of carnivorous (insect-eating) plants. A rare white cedar community also forms part of the ecological reserve.

People have been attracted to this wetland for many years. Local First Nation communities have used it for collecting medicinal plants, for cultural activities and for hunting, and continue to do so to this day.



Provincial Parks & Park Reserves

Many Manitobans have enjoyed the outdoor recreational opportunities afforded to them, and appreciate the natural resources preserved for them, in Manitoba's provincial parks. Few may realize that in addition to providing recreational opportunities, parks serve the purpose of preserving biodiversity, our cultural heritage, and protecting natural lands.

Parks and park reserves are Crown lands designated under *The Provincial Parks Act*. A series of land use categories have been established to identify the main purpose of specific areas within each park. Park areas categorized under the wilderness, backcountry and heritage land use categories are included within Manitoba's protected areas network. Industrial resource extraction

including logging, mining, hydroelectric development, and oil and gas development are prohibited on these park lands but activities such as hiking, canoeing, trapping and hunting are allowed. As of 2006, 28 provincial parks are protected in whole or part, contributing over 2.6 million hectares (6.4 million acres) of land to the network.

Park reserves may be established to provide interim protection of Crown lands while providing time for public consultation as required by *The Provincial Parks Act*. As of 2006, there are 14 park reserves, providing interim protection to almost 1.2 million hectares (3 million acres) of land.

Manigotagan River Provincial Park

This natural park established in 2004 is composed of a corridor stretching 750 metres from each bank of the Manigotagan River, for a distance of 45 kilometres, between Nopiming Provincial Park and the community of Manigotagan. The landscape along the river is varied, ranging from the sheer rock faces topped with jack pine at the beginning of the river, to lush stands of balsam poplar, green ash and elderberry near the mouth of the river. Prickly pear cactus, Canada yew and some of the area's majestic wildlife (moose, black bear, wolf or woodland caribou) can also be seen in this protected area.

Caribou River Provincial Park

Permanently protected in 2002, with the support of the Sayisi Dene First Nation of Tadoule Lake and the community of Churchill, this wilderness park protects the landscape and wildlife of Manitoba's northern transition forest. Its incredible diversity includes gently rolling plains, pristine beaches and a wild river with rapids and waterfalls. This protected area provides habitat for barren-ground caribou, and a variety of small mammals and birds. The remnants of a Hudson Bay Company post can be found at Caribou Lake.



Pembina Valley Provincial Park

In 2001, this 171 hectare (423 acre) natural park was established as a result of a cooperative effort by the provincial government, Nature Conservancy of Canada and a private landowner. This park protects the representative features of a glacial spillway and river valley ecosystem. Featuring boulder-filled creeks, towering hills and picturesque valleys this park offers moderate to challenging hiking trails and spectacular wildlife viewing to the outdoor enthusiast.

The park borders the Pembina Valley Wildlife Management Area and jointly they provide a larger habitat for an abundance of plants and wildlife. Ridges of aspen and oak deciduous forest give way to mixed and tall grass prairie plants such as asters, harebells and blazing stars. Many raptors, such as red-tailed and Swainson's hawks, are seen soaring above the park during migration and a few spend the summer here rearing their young.



Provincial Forests

Manitoba has 15 provincial forests, some of which were originally established as federal timber reserves over 100 years ago. Today, these special places are used for a variety of activities including production of timber and non-timber forest products, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, hunting, berry picking, medicinal plant collection and scientific research. Manitoba's forests contain a wealth of information and are managed to meet the varied needs of users as long as there is no permanent loss of the forest. In 1998 Douglas Marsh Protected Area within the Spruce Woods Provincial Forest was the first protected area designated under *The Forest Act*.

Bell and Steeprock Canyons Protected Area

Located in the Porcupine Provincial Forest in western Manitoba, this protected area established in 2004, adds 11,310 hectares (27,948 acres) of protected land to the network. This protected area captures a cross-section of the Manitoba Escarpment complex and spectacular river canyons. The escarpment complex represents a series of western beach edges of Lake Agassiz, the massive lake which was left after the final retreat of the glaciers some 8,000 years ago. Wave action, erosion and the eventual draining of Lake Agassiz created a varied landscape which results in a high degree of biodiversity over a relatively small area. The canyons, carved as a result of glacial melt water, are the most outstanding feature within the escarpment.

The Bell and Steeprock Canyons Protected Area is a species-rich, diverse and unique landscape encompassing spectacular forests, wetlands, clear lakes and deeply cut river valleys. The protection of this ecologically significant landscape ensures that future generations will have the opportunity to explore and enjoy this wilderness.





Wildlife Management Areas

The *Wildlife Act* provides for the designation of Crown lands as wildlife management areas for the management, conservation and enhancement of wildlife resources. Wildlife management areas exist for the benefit of wildlife and for the enjoyment of people. They play an important role in biodiversity conservation and provide for a variety of wildlife-related forms of recreation. There are a total of 80 wildlife management areas in Manitoba, encompassing some 1.9 million hectares (4.7 million acres) of habitat.

As of 2006, 46 wildlife management areas, in whole or part, contribute about 131,000 hectares (323,708 acres) to the protected areas network. This is accomplished by way of the *Use of Wildlife Lands Regulation* which prohibits hydroelectric exploration or development, logging or commercial forest harvesting, quarry mineral exploration or extraction, or any other activities that significantly and adversely affect habitat in the areas specified. Hunting, trapping, grazing, and harvesting hay are generally permitted in protected wildlife management areas.



Delta Marsh Wildlife Management Area

Delta Marsh is an extensive freshwater coastal wetland at the south end of Lake Manitoba. Established as an 11,000 hectare (27,181 acre) wildlife management area in 2006, the protected portion of the Delta Marsh encompasses 8,125 hectares (20,077 acres).

Delta Marsh is one of the largest and most important marshes in the Canadian prairies. In 1982, the Delta Marsh was listed as a wetland of international importance under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Ramsar Convention. It is recognized provincially as a "Manitoba Heritage Marsh" and nationally as an "Important Bird Area" due to its significance for waterfowl and neotropical migrants. Although traditionally noted for its abundance of waterfowl, such as canvasbacks, lesser scaup and mallards, Delta Marsh is also a critical site for migrating songbirds.



Private Lands

The Government of Manitoba has signed Memorandums of Agreement with three conservation agencies to ensure that their private lands meet Manitoba's standard of protection. Conservation agencies acquire land through purchases and donations for the purposes of protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems, wildlife and fisheries habitat, and plant or animal species. As a result of their conservation efforts, an additional 7,900 hectares (19,521 acres) of land has been added to Manitoba's network of protected areas.

These lands are of great benefit to the network because many of these lands are within the southernmost natural regions of the province where very little Crown land remains and where intensive development limits the establishment of large protected areas.

Nature Conservancy of Canada Memorandum of Agreement

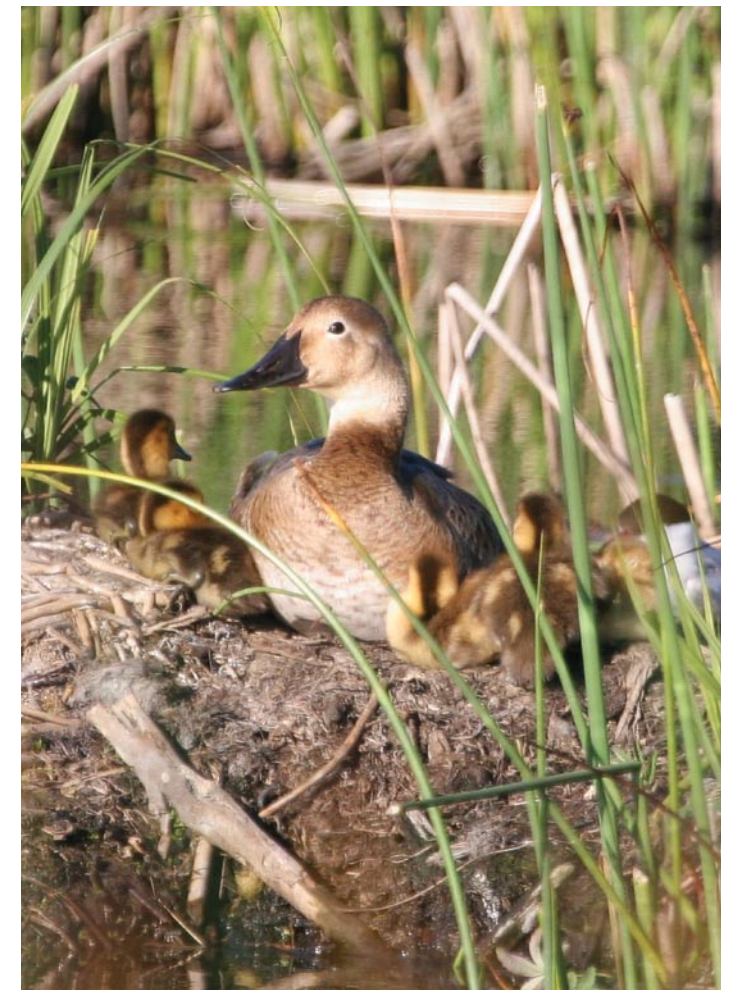
In 2004, the Government of Manitoba and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) signed the first Memorandum of Agreement that added 4,118 hectares (10,176 acres) of NCC-owned land to Manitoba's network of protected areas. The NCC-owned lands include some of the tall grass prairie, one of the rarest and most endangered ecosystems in North America.

Establishment of a protected area within this region has increased protection for several endangered and threatened species. The western prairie fringed orchid and small white lady's slipper are two plant species that have been listed provincially and federally as endangered species. Great Plains ladies'-tresses, Culver's root and Riddell's goldenrod are listed under Manitoba's *Endangered Species Act*. This area also provides habitat for the powesheik skipperling, a threatened butterfly whose very limited range includes this region of southeastern Manitoba.



Manitoba Naturalists Society Memorandum of Agreement

The Manitoba Naturalists Society (MNS) and the Manitoba government signed a Memorandum of Agreement in 2005 adding 355 hectares (877 acres) of MNS-owned endangered tall grass prairie land to Manitoba's network of protected areas. The MNS played a leadership role in conducting an inventory of tall grass prairie remnants in the 1980s which led to the eventual establishment of the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve in southeastern Manitoba.



Ducks Unlimited Canada Memorandum of Agreement

In 2005, the Government of Manitoba signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) to more effectively identify areas of mutual interest and opportunities for conservation efforts. Governing principles of the MOU include promoting the stewardship of threatened habitats with increased conservation efforts in areas such as southern Manitoba's prairie pothole region and Manitoba's boreal forests.

In 2006, DUC and the Government of Manitoba followed up the MOU with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement adding 3,443 hectares (8,500 acres) of DUC-owned land in the southwest prairie parkland to Manitoba's network of protected areas. This area of Manitoba is home to one of the most productive wetland landscapes in North America for breeding waterfowl, such as canvasback ducks. In addition to enhancing biodiversity, the natural uplands and wetlands provide numerous hydrological benefits to the area.



National Parks of Canada

National Parks are created by the Federal Government to protect natural areas of Canadian significance. They are established under the *Canada National Parks Act* for public education, appreciation and enjoyment. Manitoba has two national parks protecting over 1.4 million hectares (3.5 million acres) of land.

Riding Mountain National Park is a picturesque area in the Manitoba escarpment which provides habitat for species such as black bears, moose, elk, timber wolves, great grey owls and red-sided garter snakes. Designated as a national park in 1930, Riding Mountain was Manitoba's first protected area. Wapusk National Park is located in the wild and remote sub-arctic region bordering Hudson's Bay. This unique park is home to one of the largest known polar bear denning areas in the world and is a major staging area for polar bears in the fall.

Traditional Activities in Protected Areas

Cultural, spiritual, and ecological values are important to First Nations and other Aboriginal people, and will be considered when identifying and designating protected areas. As part of the Protected Areas Initiative's land evaluation process, we communicate with First Nations and other Aboriginal communities who may be affected by the establishment of a protected area.

In 1998, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the establishment and management of new protected areas was signed with Manitoba First Nations organizations. The MOU required consultation with affected First Nations communities before new protected areas are established and outlines the principles that guide the consultation process. Although the MOU has concluded, Manitoba continues to be committed to working with First Nations and other Aboriginal people on the establishment of new protected areas.

The Government of Manitoba is working with First Nations and other Aboriginal people to ensure that areas designated as protected areas will not infringe upon any existing Aboriginal or Treaty rights, or the exercise of those rights, of First Nations and other Aboriginal people. The right of First Nations and other Aboriginal people to access protected areas for hunting, trapping,



fishing, and other traditional pursuits will be respected. Where the feature being protected could be placed at risk by traditional use, the Government of Manitoba will consult in a meaningful way and attempt in good faith to substantially address the concerns of First Nations and other Aboriginal people about the potential adverse effects of the government action or decision on the exercise of Treaty or Aboriginal rights.

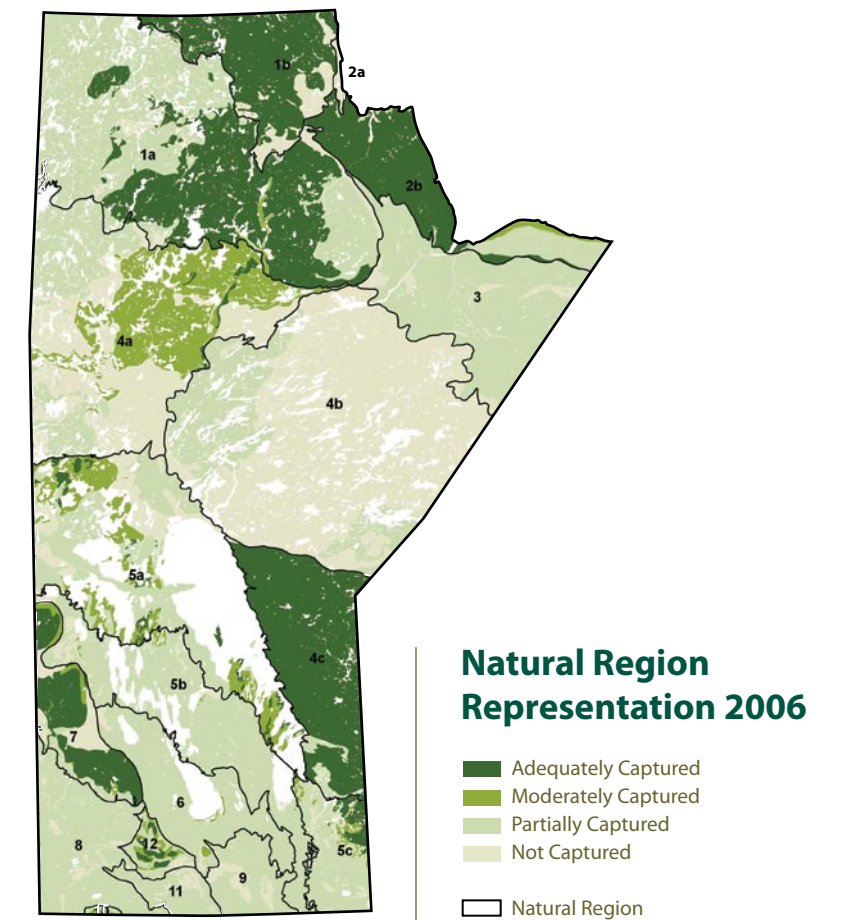
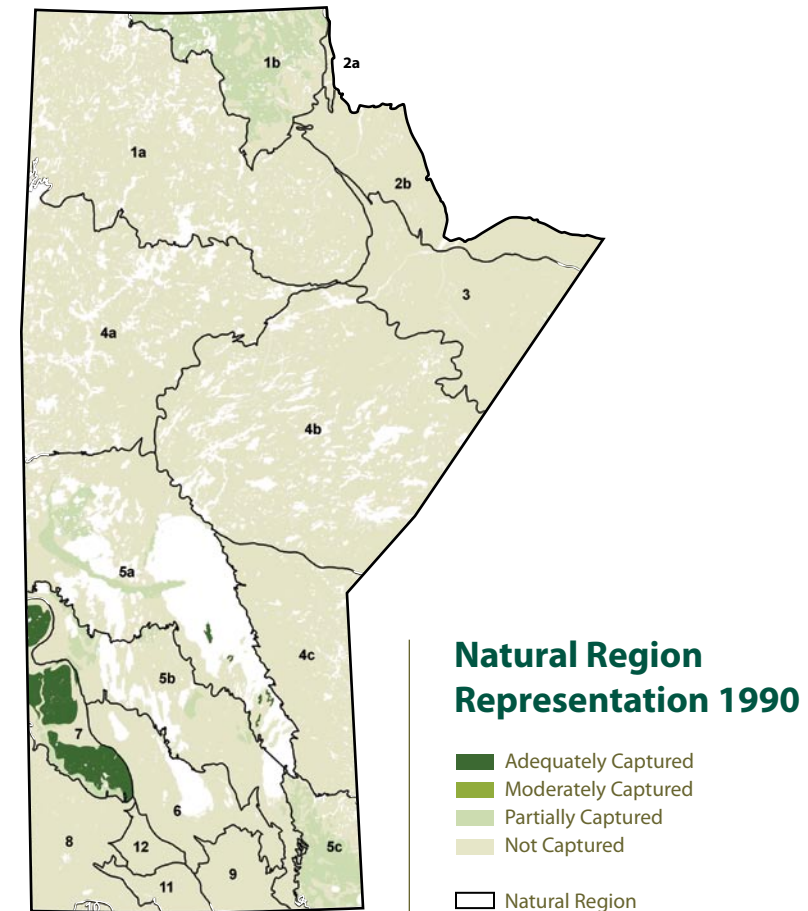
Identifying and Establishing Protected Areas

Sound Ecological Principles

To establish protected areas, the Protected Areas Initiative follows a specific scientific process, based on sound ecological principles and criteria.

The Protected Areas Initiative has adopted an “enduring features” approach to assess the adequacy of existing protected areas and to identify lands that would best complete natural region representation. Each natural region is divided into units called enduring features based on surficial geology, soil type, and terrain features. These features are relatively stable over time and support unique groupings of plants and animals.

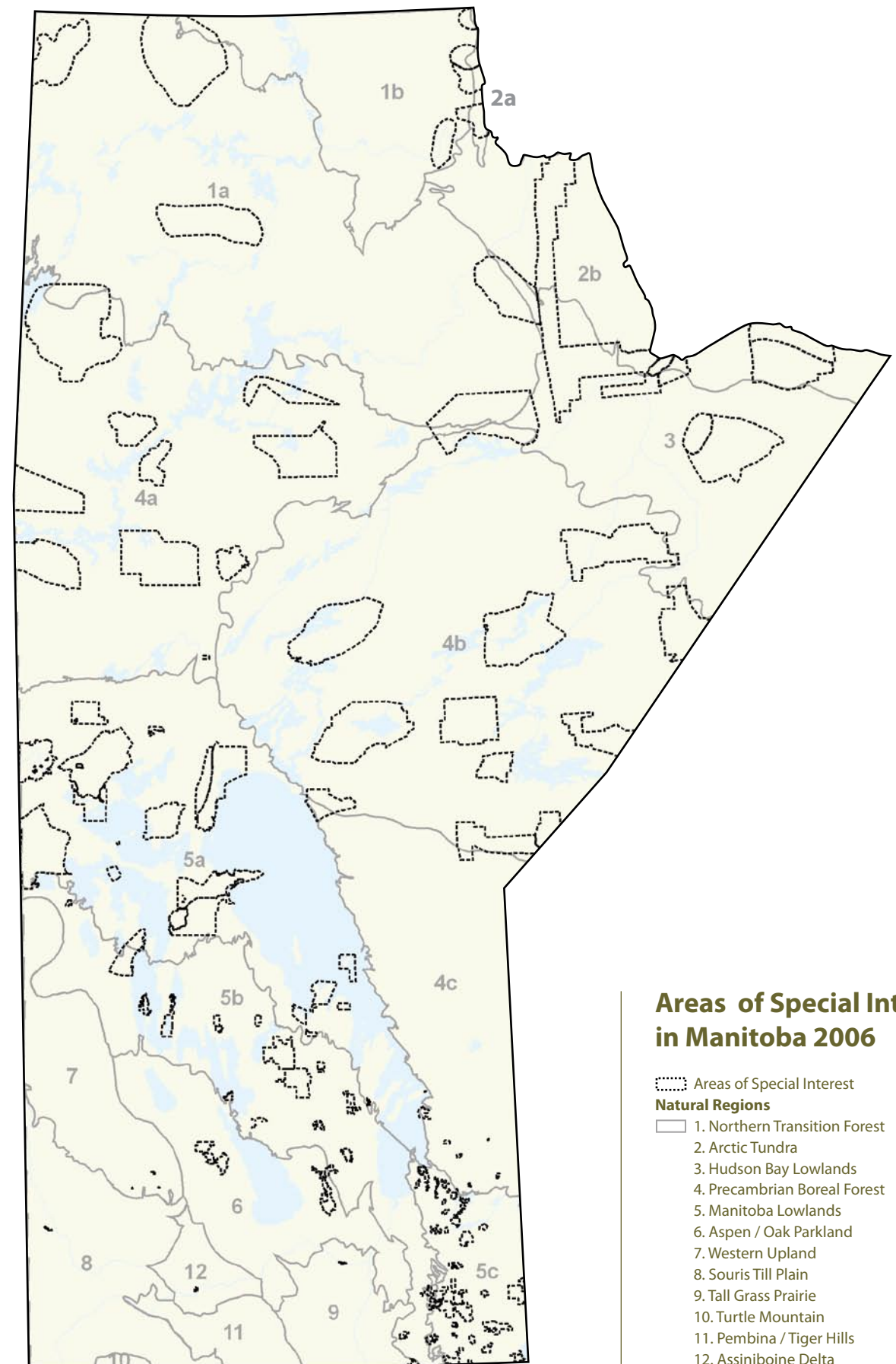
“Representation” is a term reflecting the proportion of each enduring feature that is protected, and the confidence that ecological integrity is likely to be maintained over time. Representation is said to be Adequate, Moderate, Partial or Not Captured based on the rating system proposed by the World Wildlife Fund Canada’s Endangered Spaces Campaign in 1995.



Areas of Special Interest

Areas of Special Interest are selected to represent the enduring features found within a natural region that still need to be captured to achieve adequate representation. These are study areas for discussion purposes and they are not protected in any formal manner.

When establishing boundaries of candidate protected areas from within Areas of Special Interest, features identified from scientific surveys or through local and traditional knowledge are considered. Areas supporting rare or endangered plant and animal species, unusually high biodiversity, extremely sensitive sites and unique landscapes are important to consider.



Areas of Special Interest in Manitoba 2006

- Areas of Special Interest
- Natural Regions**
- 1. Northern Transition Forest
- 2. Arctic Tundra
- 3. Hudson Bay Lowlands
- 4. Precambrian Boreal Forest
- 5. Manitoba Lowlands
- 6. Aspen / Oak Parkland
- 7. Western Upland
- 8. Souris Till Plain
- 9. Tall Grass Prairie
- 10. Turtle Mountain
- 11. Pembina / Tiger Hills
- 12. Assiniboine Delta

A Balanced Approach

In 2003, the Protected Areas Initiative program made improvements to the process of establishing new protected areas in Manitoba. Greater emphasis was placed on integrating knowledge from a variety of scientific fields to develop and review candidate sites. An Integrated Science Advisory Committee (ISAC) and regionally-based Integrated Technical Teams, along with improved digital information, contributed to a more effective means of expanding the protected areas network.

ISAC is made up of Manitoba government staff with ecological expertise who can identify ecological features important for consideration when designing proposed protected areas. First Nations are invited to participate in ISAC meetings so that local and traditional ecological knowledge can be incorporated at a very early stage of the protected areas planning process. Because protected area proposals seek to balance conservation needs and resource commitments, protected area boundaries are proposed by regionally-based Integrated Technical Teams who are knowledgeable about local land use.

Protected area proposals are reviewed with First Nations and other Aboriginal communities, the minerals and forestry sectors, and other stakeholders potentially affected by the proposed protected area, including municipal governments and Manitoba Hydro. These discussions are an integral aspect of the program because they form a foundation of general agreement which can lead to a protected area being granted permanent protection. Comments and concerns generated from these consultations are used to finalize boundaries of the proposed protected area. Once all issues and concerns have been examined, and when all parties agree, the area is granted permanent protection.

Recent advancements in geographic information science have greatly improved protected areas planning. A key tool is our geographic information system (GIS) which is used for capturing, storing, analyzing and managing protected areas data. The Protected Areas Initiative has spent considerable time and effort in recent years standardizing and enhancing our protected areas data for national and international initiatives.

The Protected Areas Initiative has been heavily involved in the development of the Conservation Areas Reporting and Tracking System (CARTS) schema (standardized groups of data) and the associated Canadian guidebook to IUCN (World Conservation Union) protected area management categories. The Canadian Council of Ecological Areas is leading the development of CARTS which will allow public access to federal, provincial and territorial protected areas information. CARTS will allow Canada to report nationally and internationally on protected areas progress in a standardized manner.

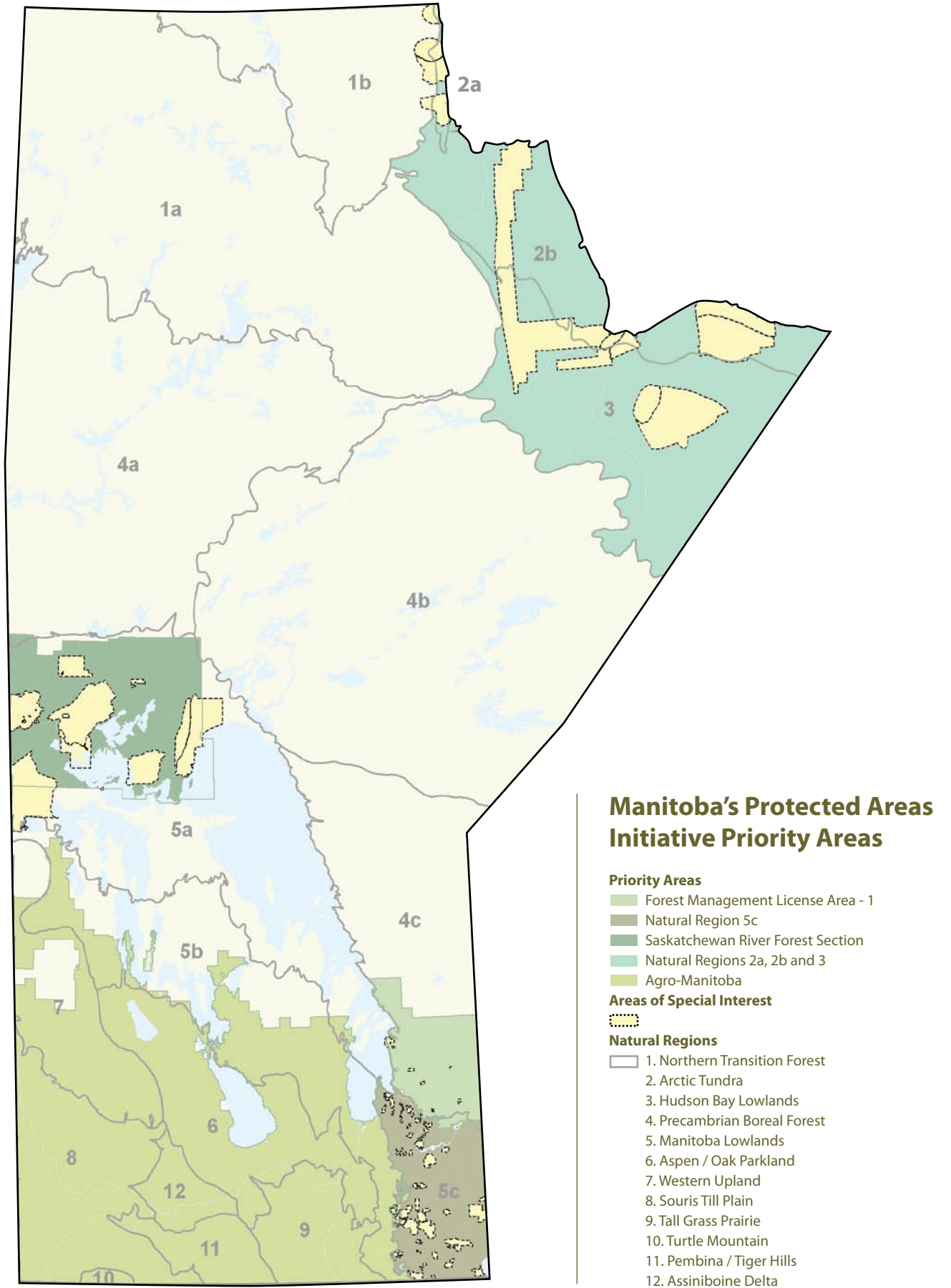


Priorities for the Future

Since *An Action Plan for Manitoba's Network of Protected Areas* was distributed in 2000, Manitoba has refocused its priorities for the Protected Areas Initiative. This affected the anticipated success in meeting the initial targeted dates for completing various items in the last Action Plan. The extent of consultations required for establishing new protected areas led to some delays. In some cases, however, opportunities arose that led to the creation of new protected areas and initiatives that were not foreseen in 2000.

Today, a landscape level approach is being taken to protected areas planning with southern Manitoba (agro-Manitoba) and a number of forested regions being identified as priority areas. Establishing new protected areas has become much more difficult because the Protected Areas Initiative is now examining high use areas that have many competing interests. We take a balanced approach to protected areas planning and adequate time must be allowed to review protected area proposals with First Nations and Aboriginal communities, industry, and various stakeholders prior to designation.

The Protected Areas Initiative has recognized several priority areas that will be the focus of the program's work throughout the next few years. These include Tembec's Forest Management License #1 (FML-1) in eastern Manitoba (Natural Region 4c), the Manitoba Lowlands in the southeastern corner of the province (Natural Region 5c), the Saskatchewan River Forest Section (Natural Region 5a), southern Manitoba (agro-Manitoba), the Arctic Tundra and the Hudson Bay Lowlands (Natural Regions 2a, 2b, and 3), and a number of smaller sites proposed as ecological reserves. It will be exciting to see which of the outstanding sites from these regions will be the next to join Manitoba's network of protected areas!





Get Involved

All Manitobans are encouraged to get involved and help complete Manitoba's network of protected areas. Here are some ways to participate:

- Contact us if you are aware of areas that have significant or unusual natural features, wildlife, birds or vegetation.
- Contact the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, Ducks Unlimited Canada or Nature Conservancy of Canada if you own land in agro-Manitoba you wish to protect.
- Contact your First Nation Chief or Councillor or staff at the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), Manitoba Keewatinook Ininew Okimowin (MKIO) or the Southern Chiefs Organization (SCO) to identify areas you would like protected.
- Contact the Mining Industry Association of Manitoba or your mining industry representative.
- Contact the Forest Industry Association of Manitoba or your local quota holder association.

Glossary

Allele

One of the different forms of a gene or DNA sequence that can exist at a single locus. Alternatively, one of several alternate forms of a gene occupying a particular location on a chromosome.

Calcareous fen

A fen is a peatland with a fluctuating water table. The waters in calcareous fens are rich in dissolved calcium carbonate.

Denning areas

Where female polar bears move inland in autumn and give birth to their cubs in winter.

Ecological integrity

Ecosystems have integrity when they have their native components (plants, animals, and other organisms) and processes (such as growth and reproduction) intact.

Gene pool

The gene pool of a species or a population is the complete set of unique alleles that would be found by inspecting the genetic material of every living member of that species or population. A large gene pool indicates extensive genetic diversity, which is associated with robust populations. Low genetic diversity can cause reduced biological fitness and an increased chance of extinction.

Glacial spillway

A valley formed by a river of glacier meltwater carving into the landscape.

Hydrological benefits

The hydrological benefits of wetlands include storage and eventual release of surface water, recharge of local and regional groundwater supplies, reduction in peak floodwater flows, erosion prevention, and the retention of nutrients in buried sediments.

Infringement of Treaty or Aboriginal rights

A law, regulation or government action that (i) unreasonably limits a right, or (ii) imposes undue hardship, or (iii) denies the rights holders their preferred means of exercising the right (*R. v. Sparrow*, [1990] 1 S.C.R. 1075).

Landscape level

Consideration is given to the traits, patterns, and structure of a specific geographic area, including its biological composition, its physical environment, and its anthropogenic or social patterns.

Meaningful or good faith consultation

A consultation in which government provided the consulted party with full information in respect of the proposed legislation or decision and seeks to substantially address the concerns of the consulted party (*Halfway River First Nation v. British Columbia* (1997), C.N.L.R. 45 (B.C.S.C.), *aff'd* [1999] 4 C.N.L.R. 1 (B.C.C.A); *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010).

Neotropical migrants

Birds that spend the winter months in Central and South America and summers in North America.

Surficial geology

Geology relating to surface layers, such as soil, exposed bedrock, or glacial deposits.

For more information on Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative or additional copies of this document, please contact us at:

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