

# Manitoba's Boreal Wetlands – A Vital Resource.

## Boreal wetlands are one of Manitoba's greatest resources.

**B**oreal wetlands purify our water and air; contribute to flood and erosion control and provide important social and cultural benefits. They are rich in biodiversity providing key habitat for many species of wildlife including waterfowl, songbirds, moose and the threatened woodland caribou. Boreal wetlands are often connected to each other by streams, rivers and subsurface flows transporting water over long distances, making them vulnerable to impacts of development.

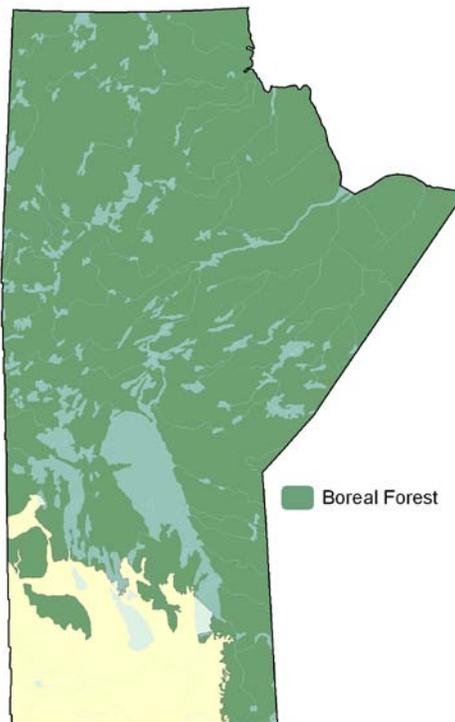
Canada's western boreal forest is a region critical to sustaining continental waterfowl populations, some of which are in long term decline including scoter and scaup. Each year during the breeding season approximately 1.6 million waterfowl call the boreal forest of Manitoba home.

Large portions of Manitoba's boreal forest are considered a "working forest" supporting important economic activities including mining, forestry, hydro-electric developments and tourism. However, the natural value of this vast area should not be taken for granted and policies that balance economic development with wetland conservation are required. Wetland conservation should include sustainable land-use practices and wetland protection.

## Carbon in the boreal forest – keeping it where it belongs

Manitoba's boreal forest helps to moderate the effect of climate change by storing large amounts of carbon. A staggering 19 billion tonnes of carbon is estimated to be stored in the peatlands of boreal Manitoba alone. This amount of carbon is equivalent to almost a century of Canada's total green house gas (GHG) emissions, and is released when wetlands are altered. Clearly, degradation of boreal wetlands could offset many provincial strategies to reduce GHG emissions, negating their positive impacts on climate change.

**The Government of Manitoba must develop and implement policies to ensure these vast stores of carbon remain intact.**



*Lesser scaup*



**More than 80 per cent of Manitoba is boreal forest (7 times the size of New Brunswick).**

**More than 40 per cent of the boreal forest is made up of wetlands.**

**Boreal wetlands are diverse and include bogs, fens (called peatlands), marshes and shallow water.**

### *We need boreal wetlands:*

- Manitoba is home to North America's largest inland river delta. The Saskatchewan River Delta is 190 km long and covers an area 20 times the size of Winnipeg. This vast and important wetland area has some of the highest densities of waterfowl found in the western boreal forest and an important area for fishing, hunting and trapping.
- Most of Manitoba's lakes, including Lake Winnipeg, are within the boreal forest. Wetlands function to help maintain the health of these lake ecosystems.
- Boreal wetlands are important habitats for the woodland caribou, a threatened species in Manitoba.



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# Needed: A Wetland Policy for Manitoba

*Freshwater coastal wetland*



## **Manitobans need boreal wetlands:**

- Manitoba's great lakes (Lake Winnipeg, Lake Winnipegosis, and Lake Manitoba) have significant shoreline wetland areas providing erosion protection, fish and wildlife habitat and recreational areas.
- Most of boreal wetlands are peatlands, which provide significant ecosystem services by storing carbon and moderating the impact of climate change.
- Aboriginal communities depend on boreal wetlands for food, medicine and other traditional pursuits like trapping and hunting.

*Saskatchewan River Delta*



## **Manitobans want wetland conservation**

A survey conducted by the University of Alberta and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) shows there is strong support in Manitoba for the provincial government to demonstrate leadership in wetland conservation.

People that were surveyed supported a provincial wetland policy. This confirms that once people understand the multiple values wetlands provide society they want the Manitoba government to invest in wetland conservation.

## **Needed: A Wetland Policy for Manitoba that includes boreal wetlands**

A provincial wetland policy that includes sustainable use and protection of Manitoba's boreal wetlands makes sense from an environmental, social and economic perspective.

Your support and involvement for boreal wetland conservation is important! Encourage the government to develop a provincial wetland policy that includes boreal wetlands. A phone call or a letter can go a long way.

*Peatland complex*



## **Call or write your MLA today.**

***TELL THEM MANITOBA NEEDS A WETLAND POLICY THAT INCLUDES BOREAL WETLANDS.***



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