

Section 6.0 – Biodiversity

Section 6.1 – Wildlife Resources of the La Salle River Watershed (Source: Manitoba Conservation)

The La Salle River Watershed's main land use is the production of agricultural crops. Over 80% of the area is categorized as agricultural. Although agricultural crops provide some habitat for wildlife the key habitat areas are along riparian corridors, forested and grassland areas, which would total less than 10% of the watershed. One Provincial Wildlife Management Area (WMA), the Portage Sandhills WMA, is located in the watershed. This 1,600 ha WMA provides habitat for deer and grouse and consists of sand dunes, aspen-oak forest and mixed grass-prairie. Sand dune ecosystems are extremely fragile and this one is protected from vehicle use. The watershed supports a significant population of white-tailed deer, and a variety of fur bearing animals and neo-tropical birds.

The key element, from a wildlife standpoint, will be the preservation and enhancement of what little habitat remains. By definition wildlife habitat is the environment where animals, plants and other organisms survive and where they receive their life requisites, namely food, water and cover. It is anticipated that the watershed management plan will adopt a no net loss philosophy for these key areas. In addition to habitat, the plan should address the species of concern from the biotics database.

Manitoba Conservation staff from the Interlake Region have relatively little species specific information to provide as baseline data for the plan. Very limited survey information has been collected over the years, except for white-tailed deer survey information in Game Hunting Area (GHA) 33. The last deer survey was flown in January 1998 with a total GHA population estimate of 4,210 ($\pm 30\%$). In 1991 a more area specific survey was flown in GHA 33, with 221 deer observed in the La Salle river corridor.

Wildlife staff will contribute to the Integrated management plan through specific wildlife concerns and will review specific requests on an as needed basis.