



Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative is a government program dedicated to building a network of protected areas that contains the tremendous biodiversity found in Manitoba's varied landscapes. 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 (areas that are differentiated from one another by their geographic, climatic and vegetative features).

Manitoba's commitment to establish a network of protected areas began in 1990, when the province became the first jurisdiction in Canada to commit to the World Wildlife Fund Canada's Endangered Spaces Campaign. In doing so, Manitoba became a partner and a leader in an international effort to protect the environment.

Protected areas prohibit, through legal means, logging, mining, hydroelectric development, oil and gas development, and other activities that significantly and adversely affect habitat. Activities such as intensive agriculture, urban or major recreational developments are avoided when establishing protected areas. Protected areas respect Aboriginal and treaty rights and agreements such as the Manitoba Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement. Protected areas remain open for activities such as hunting, trapping and fishing.

Since the start of the Protected Areas Initiative the area of protected lands has increased from 350,000 hectares to just over 5.4 million hectares in 2006. Approximately 8.4% of Manitoba's lands are protected. Manitoba's network of protected areas is made up of a number of different land designations including national parks, provincial parks and park reserves, ecological reserves, wildlife management areas, provincial forests, and private lands owned by conservation agencies.

Maintaining protected areas provides many ecological and social benefits. In addition to allowing the land to maintain its natural cycles and processes, protected areas conserve biological diversity including natural gene pools. Protected areas can serve as scientific benchmarks when measuring environmental change over time and can serve as a model for the growth and succession of an ecosystem. 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.

Representation is the underlying principle in designing our network of protected areas. It is a measure of the degree to which an individual protected area, or the network of protected areas, portrays the biodiversity of Manitoba. Enduring features analysis is used to determine where new protected areas should be established. Enduring features are combinations of soils and surficial geology that are used to represent the biodiversity within each natural region. Enduring features analysis allows for the identification of Areas of Special Interest (ASI) and aids in prioritizing which areas are most critical for protection. ASIs are study areas selected so that they represent all of the enduring features found within the natural region that are still needed to complete representation. They are not protected in any formal manner.

Protected areas proposals are reviewed through the Protected Areas Initiative's consultation process with the First Nations and Aboriginal communities, forestry and minerals sectors, and other key stakeholders. These consultations are an integral aspect of the program because they form a foundation of general agreement upon which a protected area can be granted permanent protection.

All Manitobans are encouraged to get involved and help complete Manitoba's network of protected areas. Contact us if you are aware of areas that have significant or unusual natural features, wildlife, birds or vegetation or contact the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation if you own land you wish to protect.

For more information on the Protected Areas Initiative please visit our website www.ManitobaProtectedAreas.com or contact us:

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