



September 15, 2010

Bird's Hill Provincial Park  
Manitoba Parks and Natural Areas  
Box 53, 200 Saulteaux Crescent  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3J 3W3

Honourable Bill Blaikie  
Minister of Conservation  
Room 330 Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Blaikie;

**Re: Bird's Hill Future Park Management Plan**

Manitoba Wildlands is providing comments on the development of Bird's Hill park management plan. We understand the work for a new management plan for Bird's Hill is just starting and public review of the draft plan will occur in 2011.

**Bird's Hill Park Management Plan**

According to the Management Planning Website for the Parks and Natural Areas Branch, there is no plan for Bird's Hill Park, despite being designated in 1964.

The Bird's Hill Park Management Plan Display Board poster states:

*"Birds Hill is classified a natural park. Its purpose is to preserve areas that are representative of the Aspen/Oak Parklands Natural Region, and to accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities."*

How will this plan differ or improve on previous plans made for the park? It should be noted that lands in Bird's Hill Park do not completely represent all enduring features in this natural region.

The display board information shows the park contains rare species, such as Western Silvery Aster, and rare ecotypes such as Native tall grass prairie, which the park is attempting to sustain. Section 1 (2) a. of the Environment Act specifies that developments occurring in the park require a Class 1 Development license. What is the intention of Manitoba Conservation regarding future development? Will the Environment Act be upheld? Will proposals for development in this park be reviewed through the Environment Act (Including Manitoba Conservation proposals)?



The display board materials also indicate there is Native Tall Grass Prairie located within the park. Is this Category A, B, or C tall grass prairie?

The management plan should include more specific information about the listed and endangered species in the park, with management goals for these species.

The display board information indicates that there is an Interpretative workshop within the grounds of the Park, but does not give an additional information as to how the workshop is used. Is the Interpretative Workshop the same thing as an interpretative center? What is its function? Are there plans to build an interpretative center? Are there education plans for the interpretive services based in the park? What do they center on? Where can this information be obtained?

### **Heritage Options**

Birds Hill Park has a number of heritage sites, but no heritage land use classification currently in place. Examples of the heritage sites include the Kudlowich Homestead, the papal site, and a historic cemetery. Other unlisted heritage sites may also exist in the park and surrounding area. Why are these sites not included in the Historical Site Land Use Category?

In particular, the Metis history in the area and Bird's Hill itself park carrying a significant Metis family name provides an opportunity to acknowledge Metis heritage in park plan and programming. How are these historic sites and information integrated into the education/ interpretive program? How are these historic sites and information integrated into the park plan? Have Manitoba Conservation initiated discussions with the Manitoba Metis Federation regarding Bird's Hill, and potential interpretive programming, and/or a heritage site?

### **Map needs to be Complete**

Currently, the information provided contains a very poor map of the park. Manitoba Wildlands would like to see more detailed maps and information provided in future information brochures. As one of the most visited parks in the province, we are sure that the public is interested in more complete mapping, and that it would also increase responses and comments from the public.

### **Folk Festival**

Regarding use of the park by the public, the Folk Festival parking entrances and exits are a significant problem. Will the new plan provide more entrance and exit options for Folk Festival parking lots? We would suggest that there are at least two options available for exits from the parking lots. As the audience size grows the problems with parking – especially exit at the end of the day – have grown. Given we are a three generations family attending the Folk Festival I am available to discuss these options. Summer 2010 parking exit was the worse we have experienced.



### **Access to Information / Public Registry**

Manitoba Conservation needs to resume its practice of setting up a public registry file for any Parks Act review, designation, or park plan. The commitment to include these decisions in public registry contents was made in 1999 and followed for about 5 years. A discretionary summary of unseen and non-public public comments does not meet any standard for a public review, transparency or COSDI standards.

Currently there are 6 designations under the Parks Act with a request for public comments *but no public registry files exist*. It would be best for Manitoba Conservation to establish basic and accessible standards for its public reviews regarding Parks, and post these on its website and in each public registry file.

### **Protected Areas**

Fifty Nine percent of the park is protected under the Backcountry Land Use Category. Additional crown land adjacent to the park could be added to the park and also designated as Backcountry. Has a review been conducted to determine if these crown land can be added to the park? Has a review been conducted to determine if any private lands are available to add to the park? Conservation easements on private lands nearby could assist species whose habitat and/or migration includes parks lands and lands nearby.

### **Climate Change**

The more land Manitoba protects from development and industrial uses, the more action we take in securing carbon in protected areas. Every park should now have climate change goals and operation standards included. Information as to the carbon sequestered in the park can also be one of the thresholds in the management plan. We encourage Manitoba Conservation to begin to take steps to include climate change data, risks and carbon inventories in park plans. A park like Bird's Hill that has a high level of visitor use and is accessible from Winnipeg can provide exciting options for interpretation regarding climate change, species at risk, former ecotypes, and the history of the region.

We encourage the department to consider how to expand the services, while meeting concrete opportunities. The draft management plan for the park needs to include these options.

A schedule that includes all of the steps to arrive at a new management plan for Bird's Hill park should be posted on the department web site as soon as possible. We note that there is no archive function with regard to posting park review information. This oversight should be dealt with as soon as possible. Also the date when park review information is posted on the web side should be part of the public information.

Due to 40 years without a park plan for Bird's Hill, we suggest a third planning phase – bringing the final plan to stakeholders for explanation and buy in.



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We would appreciate a response to this letter at your earliest convenience. We expect to see this letter and all other public comments regarding the development of Bird's Hill Park Management Plan in a public registry file. This letter is being sent to the email address for comments, and to the Minister's office. Please note new address on letterhead.

Regards,

Gaile Whelan Enns  
Director, Manitoba Wildlands