

# **Brief – Heritage Rivers**

**February 2007**

## **What is a Heritage River?**

Heritage Rivers are rivers listed through the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) as a river that reflects Canada's river heritage and the diversity of Canada's river environments.

The CHRS was established in 1984 with the goal of conserving the best examples of Canada's river heritage, to provide national recognition to these rivers, and to encourage the public to enjoy and appreciate them. It is a cooperative program among all Canadian governments. The program is driven by voluntary participation, partnership, cooperation, and community involvement; CHRS has no legislative authority.

Of the 39 Heritage Rivers across Canada, two are in Manitoba – the Bloodvein and the Seal Rivers. The Hayes River is in the process of being designated under the program, and in 2005, the Government of Manitoba and Rivers West initiated steps towards nominating the Red River as a Heritage River. Heritage River selection steps are taken jointly by Heritage Canada and the provincial government department responsible for Crown lands and water designations.

Although Heritage River status does not carry legal weight in the same way that designation as a protected area restricts certain activities, it does place an expectation on all governments that the heritage features of the river will be preserved and managed sustainably. Industrial activities may continue in heritage river corridors as long as they do not affect heritage features. Essentially, Heritage Rivers will receive some extra care to ensure they are stewarded responsibly; all Heritage Rivers are to be managed according to a management plan/heritage strategy.

### *Criteria for Becoming a Heritage River:*

- River must have outstanding natural, cultural and/or recreational values
- High level of public support
- Must demonstrate sufficient measures in place to ensure values maintained

### *Requirements:*

- Background Study
- Nomination Document
- Review by CHRS Board formally and recommendations to Minister of Canadian Heritage and appropriate provincial minister
- Management plan/heritage strategy (prepared by responsible/nominating government)
- Board accepts the management plan and 'designation' is approved by Ministers
- Annual status reports regarding the condition of the river required
- "State of the River" report submitted to the Board every 10 years

## **Implications for Aboriginal Traditional Lands / Rights / Management**

Aboriginal traditional territories may encompass Heritage River corridors in part or in their entirety. Management plans / heritage strategies may restrict industrial activities in heritage river corridors so as to maintain heritage features. The process to select a Heritage River is one where “[c]ommunities, Aboriginal Peoples, landowners, and other stakeholders have their rights and concerns respected” (CHRS [http://www.chrs.ca/About\\_e.htm](http://www.chrs.ca/About_e.htm)).

“To date, all protective actions on Canadian Heritage Rivers have depended on enforcement of existing laws and regulations, and on the voluntary actions of stakeholders.”

(CHRS [http://www.chrs.ca/Questions\\_e.htm](http://www.chrs.ca/Questions_e.htm))

### Sources:

Canadian Heritage Rivers System

<http://www.chrs.ca>

Manitoba Conservation – Heritage Rivers

[http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/parks/regions/heritage\\_rivers.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/parks/regions/heritage_rivers.html)

Canadian Heritage Rivers System Annual Report 2003-2004

[http://www.chrs.ca/Publications\\_e.htm#annual](http://www.chrs.ca/Publications_e.htm#annual)