

November 27, 2007

2007 Protected Areas Grade Shows Net Loss

This year, the Protected Areas grade for Manitoba is a 'C-'. A net loss in protected lands in Manitoba this year is a deciding factor in the grade. The grade also includes a significant bonus for the decision to keep BiPole III out of Manitoba's east side.

Despite many new protected areas commitments in the last two years from Mr. Doer's government, little action occurred this year (see Section 5 of Technical Assessment). As a result, since the 2006 Grade, there has been a net loss in protected lands and waters, totaling 8,961 ha.** Please refer to Manitoba Wildlands' annual Protected Areas Audit, released November 14th, for details about protected areas decisions.

"Manitoba's political leaders make lots of promises about protecting boreal lands and waters. The reality is quite different, and the lack of action on the east side worries the NRDC. Manitoba's leaders need to act – rather than lose protected lands," said Susan Casey-Lefkowitz, Director, Natural Resources Defense Council Canada Program.

The Manitoba government continues to operate without a public plan for establishment of protected areas. A significant amount of new development is intended in natural regions where protected areas networks are not completed, especially forest regions.

Manitoba Wildlands director Gaile Whelan Enns said, "The Manitoba government has significant protected areas commitments unfulfilled. While Little Limestone Lake has been protected, the World Heritage Site nomination is moving slowly. The government seems to be ignoring the important role protected lands and waters play in addressing climate change. Calling development zones in our parks 'protected' contradicts Manitoba's Provincial Parks Act."

There is little provincial funding in place to support WHS First Nations' lands plans, and still no action on requests from First Nations for interim protection during planning.

Boreal lands on the east side are important for many reasons. Ron Thiessen of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Manitoba Chapter told Manitoba Wildlands, "Granting large land protection requests from First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg will go along way toward fulfilling the province's legal obligation to protect woodland caribou habitats under the *Manitoba Endangered Species Act*."

See 2007 Protected Areas Grade Technical Assessment, list of Bonus and Penalties, and set of Links.

The Manitoba Protected Areas grade is based on government of Manitoba policies, protection standards, regulations, and commitments. Grading criteria has been applied for fifteen years.

*** Note: The net loss in protected lands for the 2007 Grade has been adjusted to reflect some outstanding survey maps and regulations made accessible since release of the Protected Areas Audit November 14, 2007*