

# Critique Government of Manitoba Green and Growing Policy and NDP Caucus Green Plan Policy

In the absence of an update to the *Action Plan for Network of Protected Areas* (no update since previous Plan was allowed to lapse at the end of 2003 – see <http://manitobawildlands.org/pa.htm#pai>), Manitoba Wildlands has sought out other policy statements from the Government of Manitoba with respect to protected areas policies and commitments. We are providing commentary and critique of selected content found on the following two web pages:

- **Green and Growing – Protecting Our Natural Areas** (January 2006) [http://www.gov.mb.ca/greenandgrowing/natural\\_areas.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/greenandgrowing/natural_areas.html)
- **New Democratic Party Caucus of Manitoba: Manitoba's Green Plan – Leading the Way in Protecting our Natural Areas** (Current as of September 2006) [http://www.ndpcaucus.mb.ca/reports/natural\\_areas.html](http://www.ndpcaucus.mb.ca/reports/natural_areas.html)

Click here (<http://manitobawildlands.org/pdfs/AuditPAPolicyStatementsApr06.pdf>) to view Manitoba Wildlands' critique of current (as of 2006) Government of Manitoba protected areas policy.

## **Green and Growing – Protecting Our Natural Areas (January 2006)** [http://www.gov.mb.ca/greenandgrowing/natural\\_areas.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/greenandgrowing/natural_areas.html)

### *Highlights*

*The Manitoba government, along with local First Nations, has announced support for the nomination of a UNESCO World Heritage site on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.*

**NO ACTION – The Manitoba government is delaying steps needed to secure permanent protection for the Poplar/Nanowin River Protected Area, and interim protection for the traditional territories of two other east side First Nations.**

*Apart from designating six new provincial parks since 1999, the government has moved significantly on new and expanded park and ecological reserves - like the expansion of Delta Marsh and Tall Grass Prairie Preserve and the protection of urban green spaces like Bois Des Esprits and Omand's Creek.*

**CORRECTION – Only five new provincial parks have been designated by the Government of Manitoba since September 1999:**

**Criddle/Vane Homestead Provincial Park  
Pembina Valley Provincial Park  
Rivers Provincial Park  
Trappist Monastery Heritage Park  
Manitotagan Provincial Park**

These five new parks total 7,786 ha of land. In contrast, 5,336,675 ha of lands are protected from development in Manitoba as of October 1, 2006. The 10 new park reserves (11 less one that expired – Hudwin Lake) designated since September 1999 total 134,521.24 ha and the five ecological reserves designated since September 1999 total 1,031 ha,

Omand's Creek and Bois Des Espirits are *NOT* protected from development yet. ([http://manitobawildlands.org/pa\\_grades.htm#pa\\_audit](http://manitobawildlands.org/pa_grades.htm#pa_audit))

*We will build on this by:*

- *setting the goal of permanently designating five new, major protected areas by 2010 - adding to our growing network, including the six provincial parks designated since 1999*

**NO ACTION YET IN 2006** – The quote above amounts to the designation of one new major protected area per year, which means that a designation for 2006 is outstanding. At this rate, it would take the province of Manitoba the next 50 years to actually make the decisions regarding the candidate areas for protected status that are currently in the system now.

- *continuing to increase the number of ecological reserves, adding to the five designated since 1999, as well as designating new wildlife management areas*

**New Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) need to come into the system as protected areas, based on existing provincial policy. Two of those WMAs designated June 2006 are *not* protected.**

- *expanding the number of rivers with special status, including designation of the Hayes as a Canadian heritage river*

**The Manigotogan River Park is the only protected river corridor in Manitoba; it was protect in December 2004. A plan is needed to begin to protect more river corridors in Manitoba from industrial development. The Hayes River is now a Heritage River, but corridor is *not* protected from development by this designation. Similarly, the Bloodvein Heritage River on Manitoba's east side is also *not* protected from development.**

- *introducing new special protection and management designations that recognize unique areas such as Little Limestone Lake, the traditional territories of Little Grand and Pauingassi First Nations, sacred sites and urban green spaces*

**NO ACTION** has been taken with respect to Little Limestone Lake or the traditional territories of Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi First Nations. “New special protection and management designations” are a smokescreen designed to delay protected areas decisions (see below); the tools to designate the ‘unique areas’ referred above already exist under currently legislation.

- *building on the foundation of ecotourism training offered since 2002 at Keewatin Community College and further promoting ecotourism opportunities throughout the province*

*Some communities have put forward a proposal to have their traditional territories, along with Atikaki Wilderness Park and land on the Ontario side of the border, nominated for a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Manitoba government supports this effort and has brought together First Nations governments and the governments of Ontario and Canada to further this work.*

**These First Nation communities announced their intention to pursue World Heritage Site (WHS) status for their traditional lands in 2002, and the Government of Manitoba public stated its support for the First Nations-led WHS nomination in 2004.**

**NO ACTION** – the Manitoba government’s support for the WHS nomination has been lip service only:

- **Poplar River First Nation has been requesting steps be taken to secure permanent protection for the Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Protected Area since 2005 . NO ACTION** – The government’s response has been to employ stalling tactics
- **Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids First Nations have both requests for interim protection of their traditional lands since 1999 . NO ACTION**
- **The Manitoba Government is also delaying protected areas decisions for these First Nations under the guise of moving forward with legislation for a new designation that will take years, when mechanisms are already available under existing legislation – e.g. the government has already demonstrated this with the recent use of the Forest Act to protect the Bell and Steeprock Canyons Protected Area, and the Wildlife Act can also be used to protect areas from development,**
- **No funds/support for WHS process (aside from WHS Assembly meetings) or lands planning (a requirement of UNESCO as part of the WHS designation process) from the Government of Manitoba.**

*A land planning initiative is also proposed that will combine traditional and western scientific knowledge to inform future decision making. This program is also intended to provide local job and training opportunities for future community based resource management.*

**UNCLEAR.** The East Side Planning Initiative (ESPI) has been ongoing since 2002. No lands plans have resulted from the ESPI or its successor, the Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawim (WNO). Community–driven, conservation-based lands plans are a first step and must be supported by the province. In April 2006, the Manitoba government announced \$500,000 for community land use planning but **NO ACTION** has been taken since.

*In addition, sustainable economic opportunities will be pursued including energy efficiency and green energy projects, community based sustainable forestry activities and ecotourism.*

**NO COMMENT.**

*Work is also underway to provide special designations for sacred sites throughout the East Side area and forest harvesting is now limited to low historic levels pending recommendations from community plans, currently being developed.*

**Manitoba already has several options under current legislation for designation and protection of sacred sites on the East Side (see above). NO ACTION in this regard. NO COMMUNITY PLANS are being developed, as funding not in place. Forest harvesting decisions are about more than historic cut levels, they are also about where harvesting takes place. Much of the East Side is *not* currently allocated for forestry.**

*The boreal forest is also being sustained through careful resource management. For example, there is no timber harvesting in a major part of the east side, pending the outcome of the Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawim (East Side planning) process.*

**See comments above.**

*Several timber companies are currently seeking Forest Stewardship Council certification and are working closely with First Nations communities on local forestry opportunities, in keeping with Manitoba's Sustainable Forestry strategy.*

**Forest Stewardship Council of Canada's website does not confirm this information.**

*We will build on this by:*

- *moving forward with First Nations on the proposed UNESCO world heritage site on the east side of Lake Winnipeg*

**The World Heritage Site (WHS) Assembly has been established and is meeting regularly, but no financial support to WHS First Nations to undertake lands plans, as required for WHS designation, has been forthcoming from the Manitoba government.**

- *providing formal support for the goals of the Canadian Boreal Initiative*

**NO ACTION**

- *ensuring as hydropower development in Manitoba expands that the east side boreal area remains intact and not harmed by any new electricity transmission projects*

**CONGRATULATIONS DUE – The Manitoba government has been consistent in making this commitment. Other commitments regarding the East Side need urgent action. Other boreal regions in Manitoba require similar focus and lands planning support to communities. Protected areas in Manitoba boreal forest regions are significant in their absence.**

- *working with First Nations communities in the east side area to aggressively promote local sustainable economic development and land use planning*

**NO LAND USE PLANS are in place, with the exception of Poplar River First Nation's *Asatiwisipe Aki Lands Management Plan* ([http://www.poplarriverfirstnation.ca/poplar\\_river\\_land.htm](http://www.poplarriverfirstnation.ca/poplar_river_land.htm)), which was completed without government support. See comments above re: \$500,000 fund.**

- *helping to fund community plans for the east side as part of the Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawim process*

**See comments above.**

- *expanding the successful River Stewards program, currently operating on the Manigotagan River, to other east side communities.*

**NO ACTION YET.**

**New Democratic Party Caucus of Manitoba**  
**Manitoba's Green Plan –**  
**Leading the Way in Protecting our Natural Areas**

[http://www.ndpcaucus.mb.ca/reports/natural\\_areas.html](http://www.ndpcaucus.mb.ca/reports/natural_areas.html)

\*\*Information current as of September 26th 2006

*During the 1990s, while many areas were set aside as park "reserves", few areas received permanent park protection. Since then, the Manitoba government has focused its efforts on permanently protecting our most beautiful natural areas and working with aboriginal and First Nations communities to ensure that they may continue to benefit from living on the land.*

**During the 1990s Manitoba went from 350,000 ha of protected land to almost 5.5 million ha of protected lands. Certain of these new designations were permanent, others had interim protection. Manitoba led the country in 2000 for the proportion of our lands and waters protected from development during the 1990s.**

*The David Suzuki Foundation has recently ranked Manitoba's climate change plan as the best in Canada.*

**CONGRATULATIONS DUE for October 2005 ranking/grade. This year (October 2006), Manitoba's ranking slipped. According to the David Suzuki Foundation, Manitoba "needs to rectify weaknesses such as rising emissions from transportation and agriculture, plus over-reliance on big, new hydro projects." Manitoba also needs to report on its actions and demonstrate accountability, update its plan, and stop relying on displaced emissions, which is a questionable way of emissions accounting, to skew its greenhouse gas emissions reductions and obscure the full picture Manitoba's on-the-ground climate change achievements and challenges.**

1. *Since 1999, five permanently protected Provincial Parks have been established. These include, Caribou River Provincial Park, Pembina Valley Provincial Park, Criddle Vane Provincial Park, Trappist Monastery Provincial Park and, most recently, the Manigotagan River Provincial Park.*

**Note: discrepancy between claim of six new provincial parks in Green and Growing policy statements above and this claim of five permanently protected provincial parks. CORRECTION – Although the number of new permanently protected parks (5) is accurate, the information above includes Caribou River Provincial Park, which was already under interim protection when the current government came to power in September 1999, and fails to include Rivers Provincial Park.**

[http://manitobawildlands.org/pa\\_grades.htm#pa\\_audit](http://manitobawildlands.org/pa_grades.htm#pa_audit)



2. *Through this designation, protection for the Manigotagan River was extended from 250m to 750m from each side of the banks of this beautiful river.*

**CORRECTION – The previous Manigotagan River Park (250 m) was a NOT protected designation. It took over three years for Manitoba government to protect this 7,432 ha river park, which only really amounts to a buffer zone for riparian areas on either side of the river.**

3. *The designation of South Atikaki Provincial Park offers protection from logging.*

**CORRECTION – This partial protection for South Atikaki (no protection from mining, hydroelectric development) occurred despite support from the mining sector to protect most of the lands designated.**

4. *We also established the Bell and Steeprock Canyons Protected Area in the Porcupine Provincial Forest.*
5. *Whole or parts of twenty-two Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) have been protected since 1999 and seven WMAs have had their area of protected land increase since that time*
6. *Private lands were added to Manitoba's network of protected areas for the first time with the protection of a number of parcels of land owned by the Nature Conservancy Canada.*

**CONGRATULATIONS DUE.**

7. *In the last year alone, we have designated four new ecological reserves that received Manitoba's highest level of protection.*

**There are six ecological reserves (ER) in Manitoba. Whitemouth Island ER was protected in 1999, Little George Island ER was protected in May 2004, Shay ER was protected in November 2004, Brokenhead Wetland ER was protected in June 2005, Birch River ER was protected in September 2005, and Armit Meadows ER was protected in September 2005. Manitoba needs to maintain its commitments to the minimum level of protection for lands and waters under the 4 Acts that provide the tools to complete our regional networks of protected areas.**

8. *In addition to permanent designations, protected status has been granted to nine new park reserves and we have extended interim protection for four other park reserves.*

**Ten new park reserves (11 less one that expired – Hudwin Lake) have been designated since September 1999, totaling 134,521.24 ha, Interim protection has been extended for six other park reserves since September 1999 (1,059,955 ha).**

9. *The boreal forest is an area of special concern because of the potentially devastating impacts of climate change. Prior to 1999, proposals for forestry, road and hydro development through the boreal forest on the east side of Lake Winnipeg were being contemplated. In 2001, the Manitoba government put a hold on development decisions to engage communities in an East Side Planning process. As a result of 80 community meetings, recommendations to support*

*sustainable economic development, land-use planning, and a nomination for a UNESCO World Heritage Site were accepted in an announcement in December 2004 by the Premier and Conservation Minister Stan Struthers.*

*10. In order to better protect Manitoba's wildlife, the Manitoba government was the first in Canada to pass legislation banning the practice of penned hunting. In addition, a Polar Bear Protection Act was brought in to restrict the practice of sending our northern polar bears to southern zoos. Regulations have been introduced to ban the practice of elk baiting. Manitoba's woodland caribou populations have been listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act to strengthen steps already taken by the province to protect herds, in a move applauded by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee.*

**CONGRATULATIONS DUE – It should also be noted that environmental groups had been pressuring the Manitoba Government for years to list woodland caribou under Manitoba's Endangered Species Act (MESA) before it finally took the steps needed to so do. Woodland caribou should and could have afforded the protection of MESA a long time ago, given that:**

- **the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed woodland caribou as being a 'Vulnerable' species in 1984**
- **in 2003, the federal government listed woodland caribou as 'Threatened' under Schedule 1 of the federal Species At Risk Act**
- **in 1994, the Manitoba Endangered Species Advisory Committee assessed the status of boreal woodland caribou in Manitoba as 'Endangered'**
- **in 2002, the status of woodland caribou was reassessed as 'Threatened', excluding coastal populations.**

**The Minister of Conservation did not announce the listing of woodland caribou under MESA until June 8, 2006.**

*11. Since 1999, the Manitoba Government has provided support for over 60 new and existing trails across the Province. These trails make it possible for Manitobans and visitors alike to hike and bike their way through our most beautiful areas.*