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Crown Lands

- Designation of crown lands
 - order-in-council areas
- CLCC coding System

Wildlife and Habitat

General:

This portion of the Manitoba landscape provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. Ungulates such as white-tailed deer, elk and moose are common to all of the watersheds. Populations of ungulates are generally considered healthy and support hunting opportunities, eco tourism and other forms of recreation. Black Bear inhabit the watersheds however population estimates for bear are difficult to determine although the population is generally considered to be healthy and expanding in some areas.

Deer numbers from past surveys have been in the order of five deer per square mile in some of the Game Hunting Areas.

Moose numbers appear relatively healthy and are more frequently found in the more open farm country. Other than RMNP there have been no recent aerial surveys of moose in much of the area.

Elk numbers have fluctuated considerably over the last number of years as a result of disease management policies. The population

in and around RMNP is approximately 2000 elk with a population target of 2500 animals.

Black Bear appear to be thriving . We do not have an accurate population estimate of bear in the region or an effective method of estimating the population.

A variety of furbearers including beaver, muskrat, coyote, red fox, timber wolves, mink, fisher (and others) are found within the watersheds as well as numerous small mammals. No population estimates are available for these species.

Hunting (resident and non resident) and trapping are important in assisting in the management of wildlife populations in the area and provide economic spin-offs for the area however the number of resident hunters as well as trapping activity had decreased significantly.

(resident hunters 10,000 waterfowl, 28,000 deer)

In excess of 200 bird species can be found throughout these watersheds.

A host of other wildlife species are found within the watershed. Again, population information is generally not available for most wildlife species. All you have to do is search the internet for a wealth of information on wildlife species that inhabit these ecoregions .

Rare, threatened and endangered species occur in the watersheds and will be dealt with in a separate presentation.

Non Native species:

No information other than the presence of some game farms that may have exotic species such as wild boar, ostrich and emu.

Wildlife Habitat:

Both private and public lands provide important wildlife habitat within the watersheds with the majority of the lands being in private ownership.

Riparian areas provide key habitat for wildlife and play an important role with respect to movement of wildlife. The maintenance/ protection of connective habitat such as riparian areas and other habitat corridors between larger habitat areas is important for the maintenance of wildlife populations. Riparian systems will be dealt with in a separate presentation.

Key wildlife areas and ecologically significant lands:

Boreal Plains Ecoregion
Mid Boreal uplands
Aspen Parkland
Prairie

A number of provincially designated Wildlife Management Areas are situated in the area. These are sites designated through order – in–council for the protection of wildlife habitat. They are available for public use and provide for both consumptive and non

consumptive recreational activities. Some WMA's provide a limited amount of agricultural use (hay permits) to local producers. A number are protected from commercial resource extraction through Manitoba's Network of Protected Areas.

WMA lands: Parkland (several units) Horod C. Stuart Stevenson ,
Little Saskatchewan River, Proven Lake, Otter Lake, Onanole .

Riding Mountain National Park is an important area for wildlife both inside the park and the surrounding areas. The park influences the adjoining watersheds in a variety of ways.

Other conservation agencies such as Ducks Unlimited, Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation and The Nature Conservancy have interests in the landscape either through ownership of lands or conservation agreements with landowners.

Crown lands are spread throughout the watersheds and are coded through the Crown Land Classification System for a variety of uses including agriculture, wildlife, forestry, recreation and mining. Many parcels of crown land are coded with multiple codes to reflect a number of resource interests.

Private lands throughout the watersheds provide significant wildlife habitat.

With respect to habitat for ungulates, the Canada Land Inventory Classification (CLI) System probably provides some of the best information on upland habitat capability presently available. CLI class 1 through 3 provide the best habitat and those with a "W" represent important wintering habitat.

Although one could argue CLI may not be the best reference I would say that CLI - combined with other information being presented

during this process will give a pretty good indication of where we need to pay attention to habitat issues.

ISSUES:

Maintaining and Enhancing Biodiversity:

Maintaining and enhancing biological diversity is the most important objective with respect to wildlife in the area.

Biodiversity is key to maintaining a healthy ecosystem and is important from a social and economic perspective.

Canada is home to thousands and thousands of wildlife species some of which have not even been identified.

We should probably pay more attention to some of the less conspicuous wildlife species to get a sense of the health of our ecosystems. Rather than noticing deer and ducks perhaps we should be looking at dragon flies and insects as indicators of ecosystem health.

If I have heard it once I have heard it a thousand times.

“ There’s lots of wildlife – I see deer all over the place.” Well that is probably not the best measure of the state of our wildlife.

Habitat loss and fragmentation:

Loss and degradation of upland, wetland and mixed-grass prairie habitat is an ongoing issue. Habitat loss and fragmentation pose the greatest threat to bio diversity.

Protecting biological diversity will play a significant role in maintaining and enhancing the social and economic well being of the region. Including the concept of “**no net loss**” in landscape planning would benefit wildlife.

Maintaining healthy riparian areas, large contiguous blocks of habitat and connective habitat corridors is of particular importance to wildlife. Habitat protection programs should focus on these areas as well as the higher CLI rated lands within the watersheds. Habitat connections both east/west and north/south (climate change) are important.

It is no more acceptable or functional to have all of our wildlife and habitat consolidated in one place than it is to send all of our children to one school or have all of our medical services in one location.

Wetlands / riparian areas :

The ongoing loss of wetlands and management of water and riparian areas is an issue in the watersheds. Wetlands and riparian areas will be dealt with by others in the plan.

Problem wildlife:

Probably one of the fastest growing issues respecting wildlife. Depredation on crops and predation on livestock is an ongoing component of wildlife and agricultural programs in the watersheds. Beaver management is also an issue in the watersheds. The proximity of RMNP and policies with respect to wildlife and landscape management also plays a role. Currently programs for compensation for wildlife damage, predator and beaver control are in place in an attempt to deal with these issues however some

view them as inadequate and requiring changes and improvements.

Disease:

Disease and interaction between wildlife and livestock is an ongoing issue. Currently both the provincial and federal governments as well as producer and special interest groups are heavily involved in the Bovine Tuberculosis issue.

Invasive species:

An issue that deserves attention and can negatively affect biological diversity and agricultural productivity.

Land use planning:

Land use policy and planning have a huge impact on the health of the watershed. Decisions regarding agricultural practices as well as agricultural, industrial and residential development can affect wildlife and habitat in a variety of ways.

Planning should take place on a larger scale (eco region) rather than a smaller scale.

Socio – economic:

From a social and economic perspective wildlife and the natural landscape play an important role and provide opportunities for economic development through tourism. The area provides

excellent opportunities for eco tourism, hunting and trapping and agri-tourism - all activities which provide considerable economic benefits to local residents and communities.

(50 deer outfitters & 20 bear outfitters)

The concept of paying landowners for Ecological Goods and Services is an emerging program that can have benefits society.

Action:

Identify information gaps

- **wildlife populations**
- **habitat requirements**
- **eco-tourism opportunities**
- **economic benefits**

Habitat and biological diversity

- **protection of high quality habitat**
- **develop habitat protection incentives for private land owners -- ecological goods and services**
- **protection of habitat corridors**
 - **protect undeveloped rights of way ,**
 - **reclaim encroached rights of way**
 - **consider needs of wildlife when planning development**

- include the concept of “ no net loss” in land use planning
- mitigate loss of habitat – secure and replace
- public land management
 - ensure proper use of a public resource
- develop a wildlife habitat protection extension program
 - educate people on the value of protecting natural areas

Assess current programs

- wildlife damage and prevention programs

Change of attitude – paradigm shift

- think of wild lands and wild life as assets rather than liabilities

There is an opportunity through development of an integrated watershed plan - **AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THAT PLAN** - to have a positive influence on wildlife, the natural landscape and people in the watershed.

Ever since we stopped dragging our knuckles on the ground we have been tinkering with the landscape in an attempt to make it a better place for people. We seem to forget sometimes that people are only one piece of the puzzle - perhaps we need to take a more “holistic” approach.