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Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park Management & Development Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY DOCUMENT

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September 2014



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Executive Summary

The *Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park Management and Development Plan* establishes the appropriate levels of use and development using a long-term vision with management objectives – providing a balanced plan that meets today's needs while preserving the natural environment for the enjoyment of future generations. The planning process researches the current state of the park and related concerns or issues, reviews the success of the previous management plan, and establishes the scope for the new plan. A planning and design firm was engaged to provide background support for the zoning and development opportunities. Workshops with the Park Advisory Group clarified issues, long-range goals and development priorities. An upcoming formal review period will allow broad public, First Nations and Métis engagement and feedback on this plan. The *2012 Saskatchewan Provincial Parks Camper Survey* provided an extensive overview of visitor concerns and expectations. Stakeholder, public, First Nations and Métis involvement is an important part of the present and future planning process to ensure this plan is practical, desirable and achievable. The plan will exist as a “living” document, to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park (with an area of 5,534 ha) is significant for its combination of geological, palaeontological, archaeological and ecological features. The park was first designated in 1973 as a result of the Lake Diefenbaker reservoir creation and under the authority of *The Parks Act* as a provincial park and was later listed as a Natural Environment Park. The purpose of the designation was to ensure the long-term sustainability of the park's natural and prehistoric resources while supporting the pursuit of outdoor recreation that is consistent with the protection of natural landscapes. This plan upholds those intentions and follows the themes of protection, recreation and education that are established in the *Saskatchewan Parks System Plan*.

The rich geologic and palaeontologic history of Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park makes it unique among Saskatchewan's parks. As part of the mixed-grass eco-region, it is the largest area of undisturbed native prairie in the provincial parks system. The area was heavily shaped by glacial movement, which left exposed till and bedrock and created rugged valleys. Many of the alluvial fans, or terraces, created at the mouths of the coulees are now inundated by the lake, which plays its own part in the ecological cycle. Fossils date back 70 to 140 million years and are occasionally found along the shorelines. In terms of recent history, the park has a fascinating First Nations and Métis-settlement history; a few of the archaeological sites are interpreted and others are protected or yet to be discovered.

Lake Diefenbaker is a popular recreation lake, known for its water-based activities such as fishing, boating and sailing. At nearly 240 kilometers in length, the lake is one of the largest in Saskatchewan. The lake supports a wide range of recreational and tourism attractions, including 3 provincial parks, 1 provincial recreation site, 5 regional parks, 1 private campground, 6 cottage subdivisions, 4 grass green golf courses, 3 marinas and 5 boat launches. Considered the western gateway to the lake, Saskatchewan Landing hosts a large camping program of approximately 313 camp sites along with numerous private partnerships that enhance the recreational and tourism attractions.

The educational component of the park bridges the recreational needs with the nature and heritage protection. There are several interpretive hiking trails, an interpretive visitor centre and summer programming that bring the history of the park and area to life for the park visitors. Many visitors prefer to create their own form of nature appreciation through individual exploration or study. It is this diverse range of geologic, palaeontologic, archaeological and ecologic features that creates the uniqueness of Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park.

Working through the planning process a vision statement and objectives were developed as a means of creating a cohesive long-range plan to guide the future growth and management of the park toward its desired future state.

The Vision:

Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park will provide a safe, secure and relaxing environment for all visitors to rediscover nature and reconnect with family and friends through experiences with the four elements - earth, fire, wind and water.

Identification of the future needs, as well as current issues and concerns, within a framework of key objectives forms the basis of the action items necessary to achieve the vision and future state. The key objectives of this plan fall within five areas: Protection, Education, Recreation, Service and Operations, and Zoning. Planning analysis, camper surveys, advisory group workshops and public feedback all contribute to determining the concerns and desires for the park management and development. Those items are collected and reviewed within the objectives and then prioritized into definable action items or major project initiatives.

Through the initial scoping of this plan, it was recognized that improved park zoning could more accurately define the geographic limitations of the park and the need to manage development or intensification in an environmentally responsible and financially sustainable manner. A planning and design consultant was engaged to assist with the zoning review and preparation as well as provide guidance on the project initiatives. An ecologically-based, quantifiable method, the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum allowed an objective mapping of the park's diversity of recreation and tourism settings. Sub-zoning parameters were then established based on a spectrum of recreation opportunities and constraining features. A new and more detailed zoning plan is proposed as part of this plan. Key changes to the major land use zones include: one area (162 ha) changing from Development Zone to Resource Management; one area (310 ha) changing from Natural Zone to Resource Management; one area (38 ha) changing from Development Zone to Natural; and a fourth area (16 ha) from Natural to Development.

The final section of this plan brings together the action items in a way that is within the vision and objectives, prioritized to keep a logical order based on available or planned servicing/infrastructure and wider issues or evolving trends. Major priorities focus on improving existing services and infrastructure to better meet visitors' expectations; enhancing and making better use of existing, underutilized areas; and expanding upon the number of recreational activities available. Many of the action items will also help to meet Saskatchewan's changing population. Some of the first steps are geared toward gaining a better understanding of the site history, archaeology and palaeontology to help create an interpretation strategy and better define some of the recreation and partnership opportunities.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the key stages of the plan process from Vision to Objectives to Implementation.

Park Vision

Park Roles
 Defining the roles that the park serves within the overall park system and to its visitors.

Park Values
 Defining the culture and identity of the park
 - What value does the park hold for its visitors?

Theme Objectives

Protection	Education	Recreation	Service & Operations	Zoning
To identify and to enact the resource management priorities that will preserve the unique flora, fauna natural heritage and landscapes of this river valley ecosystem for future generations.	To encourage learning of the natural and cultural heritage of the park.	To identify opportunities to promote and increase recreation activities that sustainably utilize the natural features of this park.	To improve the quality of existing services and facilities while offering a range of experiences.	To establish management and direction, identifying appropriate development areas and guidelines.

Implementation Strategies

2 yrs ⇒	5 yrs ⇒	10 yrs ⇒	15 yrs ⇒
A. Immediate Priorities			
A.1 Addressing Amenity Gaps			
B. Near Term Priorities			
B.1 Making Better Use of Existing Spaces			
B.2 Understanding Our Assets and Our Needs			
C. Mid-Term Priorities			
C.1 Building for New Experiences			
C.2 Expanding Visitation and Promotion			
C.3 Updating the Interpretive Strategy			
D. Long Term Priorities			
D.1 Managing Vegetation Health			
E. Ongoing Priorities			
E.1 Continual Improvement			

Figure 1: Management and Development Plan Relationship Diagram

In total, there are 8 key strategies identified. These cover capital initiatives, operating improvements, suggestions for outside agencies and opportunities for private partnerships. The implementation period of the plan is phased in sequence and will take 15 years to complete, depending on budget allocation, resources and private partnerships. The major project initiatives include:

- Group Campground Revitalization
- Campground Beach Area Improvements
- Day-Use Area Revitalization
- New Shoreline Trail System
- New Visitor and Administration Building
- Campground Expansion around Nighthawk and Riverside Campgrounds

The *Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park Management and Development Plan* maintains a balance between recreational needs and ecosystem protection. It recognizes there is a shared interest and a balance between the short-term recreational needs of its visitors and the long-term eco-system protection necessary to maintain the health and integrity of the landscape. This plan is a fluid and dynamic document that provides guidance toward a long-term vision. Lastly, it is intended that this plan be reviewed and adjusted to reflect changing needs, trends and priorities.