



THE FUTURE IS Wild

Manitoba's Parks Need You

THE TIME IS NOW TO PROTECT NATURE



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Summer sunrises in Nopiming Provincial Park have offered me such glorious sights. Sure, there's a struggle to wake up when the alarm goes off at 4 am but magic often awaits as I get out of the tent to capture the golden morning glow. I'm attached to the nature I get to witness. It feeds my soul.

People across the province have grown up with memories of our parks and of time spent in nature. Wonderous camping trips as kids often lead to comfortable cottage trips as adults. We yearn for a connection to nature.¹

Like many of you, I remember when there was more nature around us, when the drive in the country had more wild spaces than subdivisions or clearcuts. In Manitoba, we still have more wilderness than most countries in the world. But as we've all seen, our favourite wilderness areas may not be here to enjoy forever unless we choose to keep nature around.

There has never been a more essential time to stand up for parks and protected areas in this province. Along with specific threats to our parks presented in this paper, two stunning reports were released last year highlighting just how absolutely crucial it is to protect more nature.

One of the most shocking reports, signed off by governments from

There has never been a more essential time to stand up for parks and protected areas in this province.

120 countries, is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report *Global Warming of 1.5°C* stating we have 12 years to halve our fossil fuel use or face climate catastrophe. It also states forests are the best solution for us to reverse the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which causes deadly climate change.² In addition, the Zoological Society of London's *Living Planet Report* warned 60 per cent of wildlife on the planet has disappeared since 1970.³ Poorly planned industrial activity is putting the natural interconnected balance of life on Earth — our life support system — at grave risk.

With the scientific community offering critical direction on how essential nature is to our survival, one would think governments would seize the opportunity to protect our lands and waters. One would think they would preserve and expand parks and protected areas. But that's not the case in Manitoba.

A majority of countries have agreed to a UN initiative to protect 17 per cent of the lands and water on Earth by 2020.⁴ Canada has signed on

and is actively moving towards this goal. The Wilderness Committee has been advocating to protect 20 per cent by 2020 for years and even published the roadmap to get there in our report, *Keep It Wild, a Conservation Vision for Manitoba*.⁵

But just last year, Manitoba's Sustainable Development Minister Rochelle Squires stated that while the government of Manitoba supports Canada pursuing a 17 per cent protected areas goal, they do not support increasing protected areas in the province.⁶ It's hard to comprehend the logic behind that kind of thinking — or find any excuse for such inaction.

Protecting parks from industrial activity and preserving biological diversity across the province must be every government's top priority for our future. In fact, the most effective measure we can take to act on climate in Manitoba is protecting our peatlands, as we'll explain in this report.⁷ Unfortunately, Premier Brian Pallister is **talking** about clean and green more than he's following through with policies that will make it so. Read on to find out what **policies** we need to ask for now.

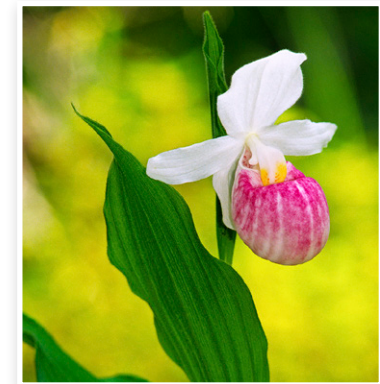


Photo top: Nopiming Provincial Park (Eric Reder).
Photos above: showy lady's slipper (Mike Grandmaison), moose in Nopiming Provincial Park near area bulldozed for mineral exploration (Eric Reder).

CLIMATE ACTION IS IN OUR NATURE

As Manitobans, we love our time outdoors. The diverse array of life around us is important for slowing down and grounding us. It is also helping us adapt to climate change. We know now more than ever we need to act on climate. Protecting biodiversity comes from preserving the parks we spend time in. **Our love of nature is within us. We must recognize climate action is in our nature.**



Photo: prickly rose (Mark Degner).

END LOGGING IN PARKS

WHY NOW? *The controversial licence to log Duck Mountain Provincial Park expires on December 31, 2019. We can stop the logging in Duck Mountain.*

The hangover from a bygone era still haunts Duck Mountain Provincial Park — 61 per cent of the park is open for clearcutting.⁸ This is Manitoba’s shame. “The Ducks,” as they’re so often called, joins Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario as the last two parks in Canada still being logged.^{9,10}

In the 90s, Louisiana-Pacific Corporation was given an Environment Act Licence for extensive logging of the Ducks. A large new mill was licenced and built with overestimated information about timber availability. The provincial biologist who raised alarm bells about the dangerous ecological impacts was subsequently fired.¹¹

This new large-scale logging operation was so controversial concerned citizens submitted thousands of pages of documents in opposition to the government, yet a 10-year licence was still issued. In 2005, the licence was set to expire but year



Photo: logging in Duck Mountain Provincial Park (Eric Reder).

after year the government extended this questionable contract. In 2008, when the Manitoba government finally banned logging in most provincial parks, Louisiana-Pacific was allowed to continue clearcutting the Ducks. The last outrageous chapter in the Duck Mountain Provincial Park saga occurred

in 2013 when the government secretly extended the logging licence for six more years.¹²

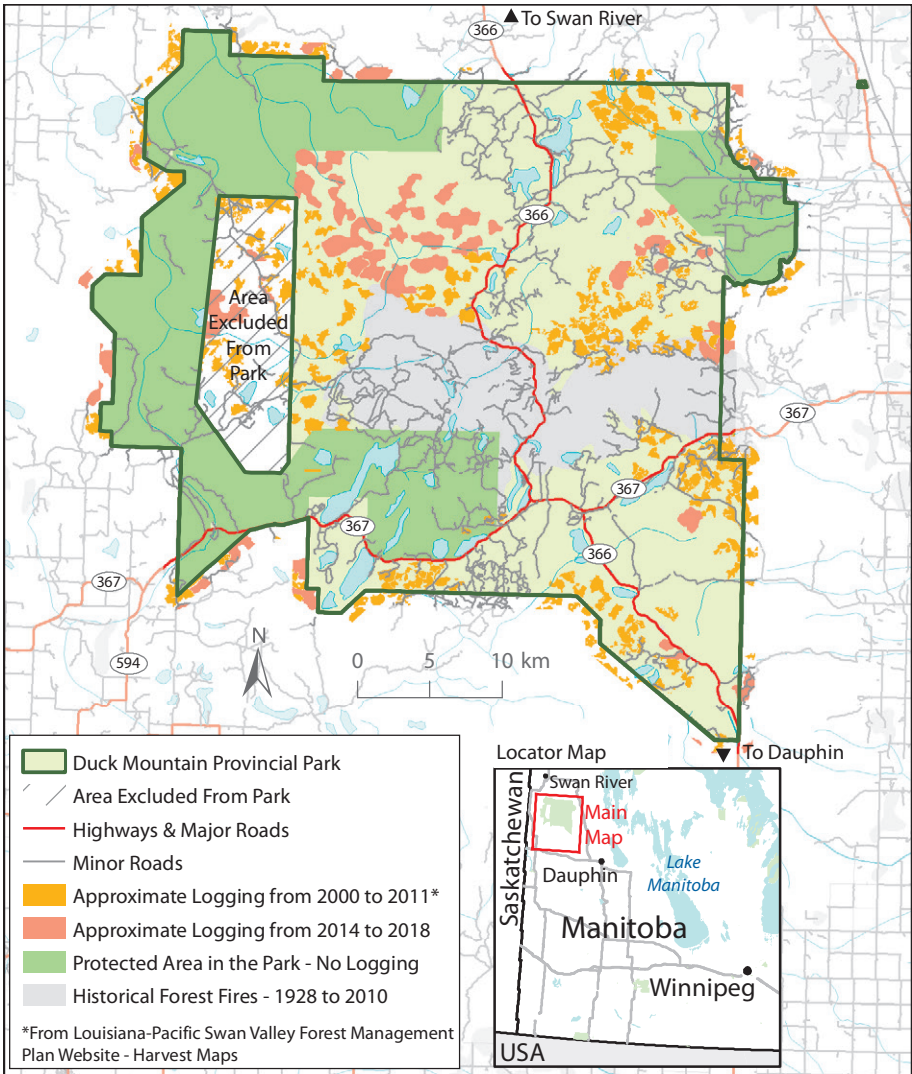
The devastating impact of 25 years of industrial clearcut logging in the Ducks can be seen with newly released historical satellite imagery. Visit WildernessCommittee.org/DucksLogging to

see a video of the destruction. In 1993, the Clean Environment Commission — Manitoba’s government arbiter — stated logging in all provincial parks had to be phased out.¹³ Now, 26 years later, the time has finally come to stop this logging once and for all.

POLICY FIX:

- Write the Manitoba government and tell them to remove Duck Mountain Provincial Park from Louisiana-Pacific’s logging licence.

Duck Mountain Provincial Park



Photos left to right: Whiteshell Provincial Park (Mike Grandmaison), damselfly (Eric Reder), rusty blackbird (Robert McCaw).



SPOTLIGHT: Bravely on for the lower Bird River

Protected area progress has been painfully slow with Pallister’s government. After five years of work advocating the lower Bird River be kept safe from mining activity destruction, the Wilderness Committee helped nearly 10,000 Manitobans send messages to the government asking the 17 km stretch of wilderness be preserved.¹⁴ Unfortunately, last year the government said it “will not proceed with protecting the lower Bird River in the future.”¹⁵

Despite the provincial government’s refusal to preserve the river, the leadership of Sagkeeng First Nation has asserted the lower Bird River must remain free from mining destruction.¹⁶ The Wilderness Committee will continue to advocate for legislated protection for the lower Bird River, according to the wishes of Sagkeeng First Nation. **Join us on the river every September for our annual Paddle for Protection day trip on World Rivers Day.**



Photo: paddlers on the lower Bird River (Eric Reder).



STOP MINING IN PARKS

WHY NOW? *Pallister's government reversed a halt on mineral exploration in parks, allowing Nopiming to be bulldozed in 2018. Expect a similar fate for Whiteshell Provincial Park.*

Last year, the Wilderness Committee was shocked to discover extensive new park destruction in two different places in Nopiming Provincial Park in an area set aside as sensitive moose habitat. Boreal woodland caribou also occupy this area, a species whose habitat is protected under both federal and provincial species at risk legislation. Communication obtained under a freedom of information request showed the parks staff concerns for development in the area were ignored.¹⁷

The Manitoba government's allowance of new park mineral exploration has created a boom spreading to Whiteshell Provincial Park. Extensive new claims in northern Whiteshell put this beloved park at risk from mining exploration bulldozers as well.¹⁸

Eight years ago, the Wilderness Committee discovered many newly bulldozed mineral exploration roads in Nopiming Provincial Park and even one in a proposed ecological reserve. The



Photo: mineral exploration in Nopiming Provincial Park (Eric Reder).

following year, after the Wilderness Committee published the report *Ban Mining in Provincial Parks*, the conservation minister of the day agreed to change the system that allowed such destruction and that parks should be off limits to mineral exploration.¹⁹

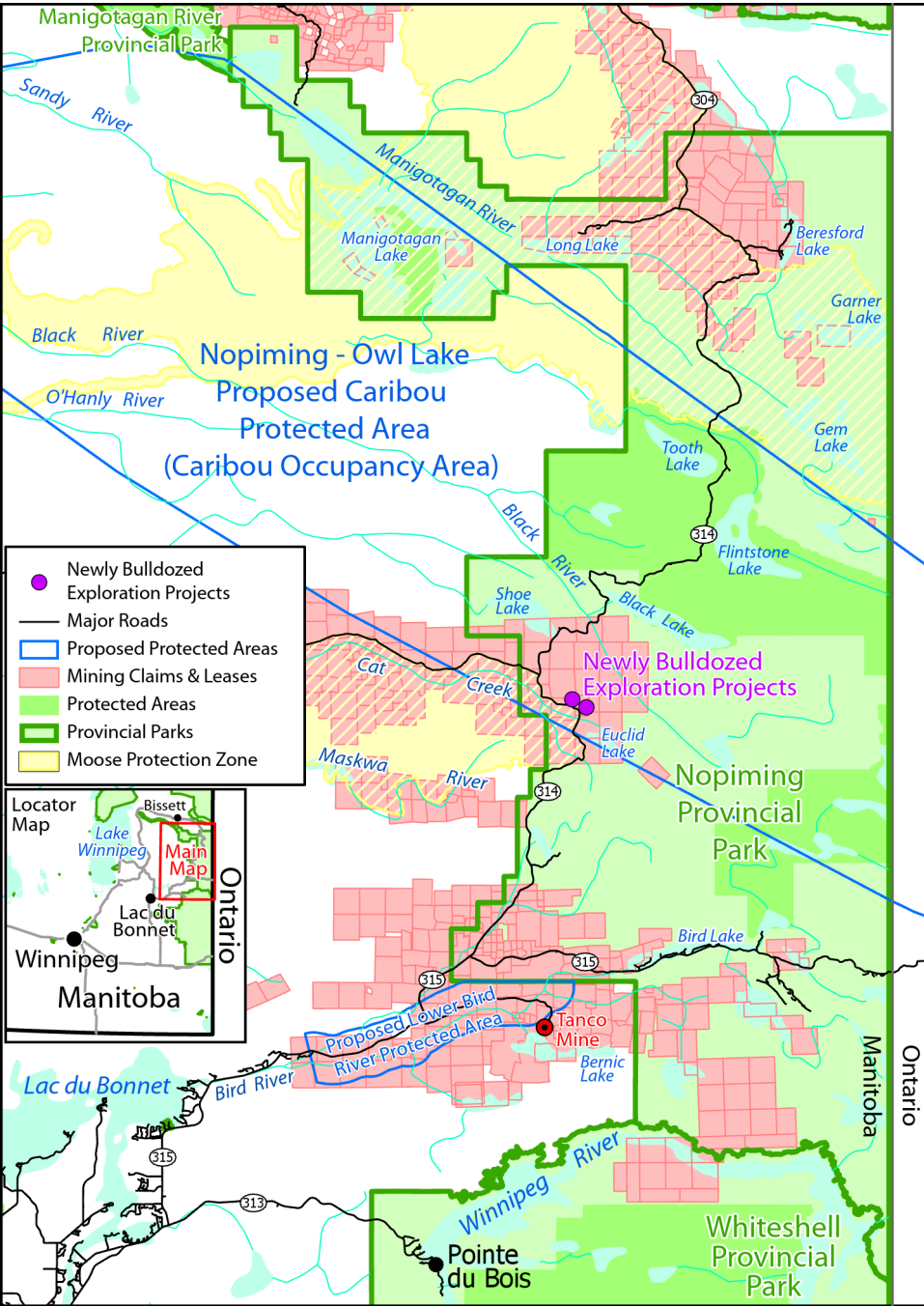
Most jurisdictions in the world don't allow you to look for minerals in parks. Federally we eliminated mining in parks in 1930.²⁰ But the government of Manitoba is bent on backsliding and is not recognizing the need for protecting nature or preserving parks.

Last summer a poll found **more than 70 per cent** of Manitobans want industrial activity including logging and mining phased out of provincial parks. For years, polling in the province continually shows strong support for more protected areas. While Premier Pallister is enacting regulations to open up our nature to destruction, most Manitobans are opposed.²¹

POLICY FIX:

- Halt all new mining claims in provincial parks.
- Put a time limit on existing claims in parks and require publication of exploration plans before starting projects.

Nopiming Provincial Park



PEATLANDS ARE CLIMATE POWERHOUSES

WHY NOW? *A growing global movement aims to lock up the carbon stored in peatlands.*

The flat forest expanses of Manitoba provide us with the ultimate climate action tool — peatlands. Peatlands cover three per cent of the world's surface yet contain 30 per cent of the world's carbon, making them superstars of carbon storage. The peatlands are so extensive here they cover one-third of the province, more vast than nearly any other jurisdiction on the planet.

Peatlands are wetlands containing at least 40 cm of dead vegetation, most often from sphagnum moss, preserved in the low oxygen and acidic waters they're submerged in. They are natural filters providing and storing clean, clear, fresh water. Manitoba's peatlands may not be much to look at: spindly trees, if any, dot these vast wetlands. However, they provide important habitat for moose and unique plant species like the carnivorous pitcher plant. But the most significant benefit of peatlands is they store vast amounts of carbon — almost half of the peat is made up of carbon.²²

There are 10 peat harvesting companies in Manitoba right now.

While there was a brief ban on new peat leases in Manitoba, it was lifted in 2016.²³ Our climate powerhouse peatlands are at risk from expanded harvesting operations. New peat leases have been staked, although new mines have yet to be established.²⁴

Indigenous traditional territories in Manitoba contain vast peatlands. One path to accelerating legal protection for these peatlands that would support local Indigenous communities, is to utilize the Alternate Land Use Services (ALUS) model. Premier Pallister has been pushing for this program, which compensates land owners for preserving ecologically important areas. In this way, remote Indigenous communities could be compensated for being caretakers of our climate.²⁵ Internationally, the UN Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) is offering the same opportunity.²⁶

The Wilderness Committee is calling for the government to commit to **a new protected area goal of legal protection for two-thirds of the province's peatlands by the year 2030.** This must be done in accordance with the wishes of local Indigenous communities.

POLICY FIX:

- Ban all new peat leases.
- Commit to a protected area goal of 66 per cent of our peatlands by 2030.
- Offer REDD and ALUS for Indigenous traditional territory.



Photos: tiger lily, peatlands creek in Heart of the Boreal (Eric Reder).

A NEW DEAL TO UPHOLD NATURE

If you're like me, you've known in your heart for a long time we need to take care of nature and wilderness. More people are coming around to this realization. Our world must evolve towards working within nature instead of compromising it — from exploitation to collaboration.

Right now we're receiving a wake-up call from the scientific community to look after lands and waters for our very survival. Report after report is telling us nature must come first in developing our ideas, in recreation, in lifestyle choices and in industrial environmental licencing decisions.²⁷ It's the only way our growing populations can survive on this finite planet. To put nature first will be a fundamental shift — a hard turn from our current trajectory — which the Manitoba government is failing to take.

Premier Pallister is failing Manitobans on the environment. For instance, he hasn't revitalized the antiquated Environment Act as recommended by the Manitoba Law Reform Commission.²⁸ Because of this, we can predict disasters like the Hollow Water First Nation territory frack sand mine travesty. The frack sand mine has been a fiasco from the start, with the forest clearcut and bulldozed before the

project was even given an environment licence.

Additionally, Pallister promised to protect wetlands in his farcical Climate and Green Discussion Paper. Then we watched in horror as he introduced regulations on how landowners could pay to drain them instead.²⁹

And then after so much bluster about a made-in-Manitoba plan on climate action, the premier broke his promise and is failing to place even a modest price on carbon pollution. He's now wasting time and money on a doomed legal fight with the federal government



Photos: student climate strikers at Manitoba Legislature, wetland in agricultural Manitoba (Eric Reder).

over a carbon tax.³⁰

Neither stagnant politicians nor political parties rooted in the past will lead us out of this mess. They're attached to the system that got us here. Local grassroots communities will need to step up and show the way forward.

Around the world a revolution is stirring — a movement to put nature first to solve the climate crisis. In London, UK people rallied together under the Extinction Rebellion banner to shut down major intersections and bridges.³¹ In Quebec, 150,000 students took to the streets, following the lead of 15-year-old Greta Thunberg who began striking from school in Sweden.³² And in the United States, the Green New Deal is mobilizing people to push for policy supporting nature and people.³³

It's time for community leadership like never before. Leaders from schools, hockey clubs, news organizations, farm communities and all walks of life need to rise up. This is leadership Manitobans can provide. And as we stand up and ask for nature — for a future — we must bring people together instead of dividing them. We must demand regulations from corporations, governments and society that put nature first.

TAKE ACTION

- 1 Step up, get involved, lead. Ask for more nature. The solution takes all of us.
- 2 In addition, please write the premier and tell him that our wild future requires bold policy steps:
 - ▶ End logging and mining claims in parks.
 - ▶ Ban all new peat mine licences.
 - ▶ Commit to a two-thirds protected peatlands goal by 2030.



Photo: red fox (Mike Grandmaison).

WildernessCommittee.org/Manitoba

Premier of Manitoba ✉ premier@leg.gov.mb.ca or ☎ 204-945-3714

🏠 **Room 204 Legislative Building, 450 Broadway, Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8** 🐦 **@Brian_Pallister**

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ECO-ANXIETY

A never-ending stream of heartbreaking news about how we've upset Earth's fragile balance is taking a toll on people. A new phrase for this mental trauma is emerging that's resonating with folks — eco-anxiety. A psychotherapist will tell you one of the treatments for trauma is talk.³⁴

We need to come together to talk as a community, including business leaders, educators and government decision makers.

Please join the Wilderness Committee and Manitoba's Climate Action Team at our events. Collectively we will work out the personal and policy answers to bring forward more nature.

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