



Fisher River Cree Nation

CONSERVATION AREAS INITIATIVE

Engagement Package





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This initiative is led by Fisher River Cree Nation in partnership with Peguis First Nation and the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). The initiative has the support of the governments of Manitoba and Canada.



The Region

Just a couple hours north of Winnipeg lies the beautiful south eastern Interlake region—abundant with a huge variety of plants, animals, birds, and fish.

The lands and waters that make up this area are a wonderfully wild place—a boreal region of forests, wetlands, and sandy shorelines lining inlets and islands.

The People

For centuries, Indigenous people made their homes and livelihoods in the area.

They were joined by settlers whose families have lived in the region for generations and newer residents who were attracted by the quiet forests and fish-filled waterways.

Thousands of Manitobans now visit the region as cottagers, campers, and day-trippers.

Conservation Value

The region's forests and wetlands are key to restoring the health of Lake Winnipeg because they act as natural filters against damaging nutrients. They help to prevent floods and also serve as a massive carbon sink.

The lands and waters provide habitat for **53 species of conservation concern**, of which 15 are endangered or threatened including: trumpeter swan; piping plover; little brown myotis & northern myotis bats; and the monarch butterfly.

The region is also a major migratory stop for ducks, Canada Geese and other waterfowl. It hosts **three Important Bird Area** (Riverton Sandy Bar, Louis Island, and Gull and Sandhill Island) along with a number of significant waterfowl areas.

About the Conservation Areas Initiative

The goal of the Conservation Areas Initiative is to protect the health of our thriving natural landscape so it can continue to provide sustainable economic opportunities and to support our cherished lifestyles and cultures.

The initiative is designed to support regionally developed management plans for the Fisher River watershed⁷ and the Icelandic River and Washow Bay Creek watershed.

We are developing a conservation proposal within a study area that stretches from Riverton to Kinnow Bay Provincial Park and includes a section of Lake Winnipeg.

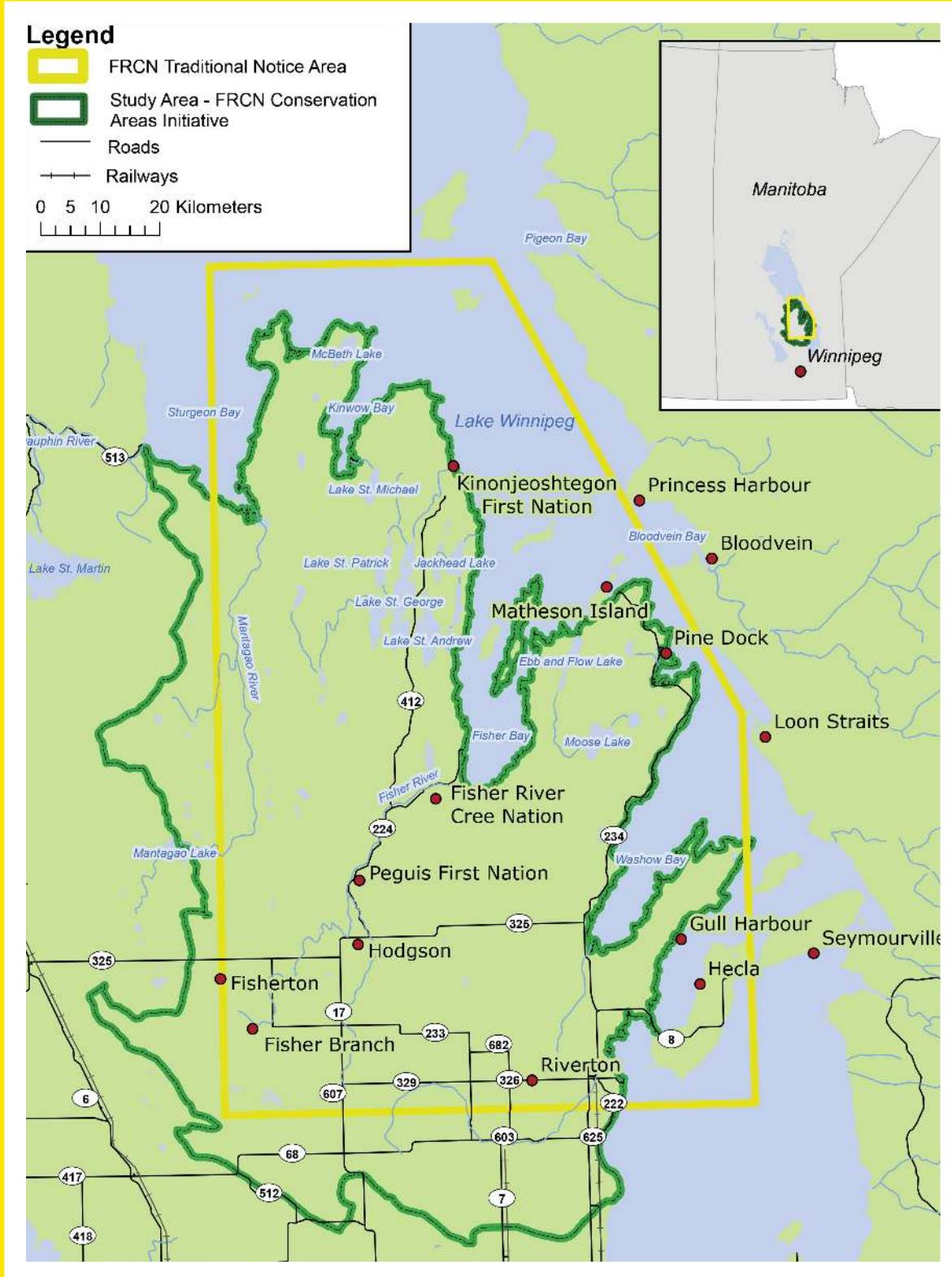
We do not expect every piece of this area to be protected: we are studying the broad needs of the region in order to develop an appropriate and successful conservation proposal.

Preserving the natural landscape will also provide sustainable economic opportunities such as tourism and a healthy fishing industry.

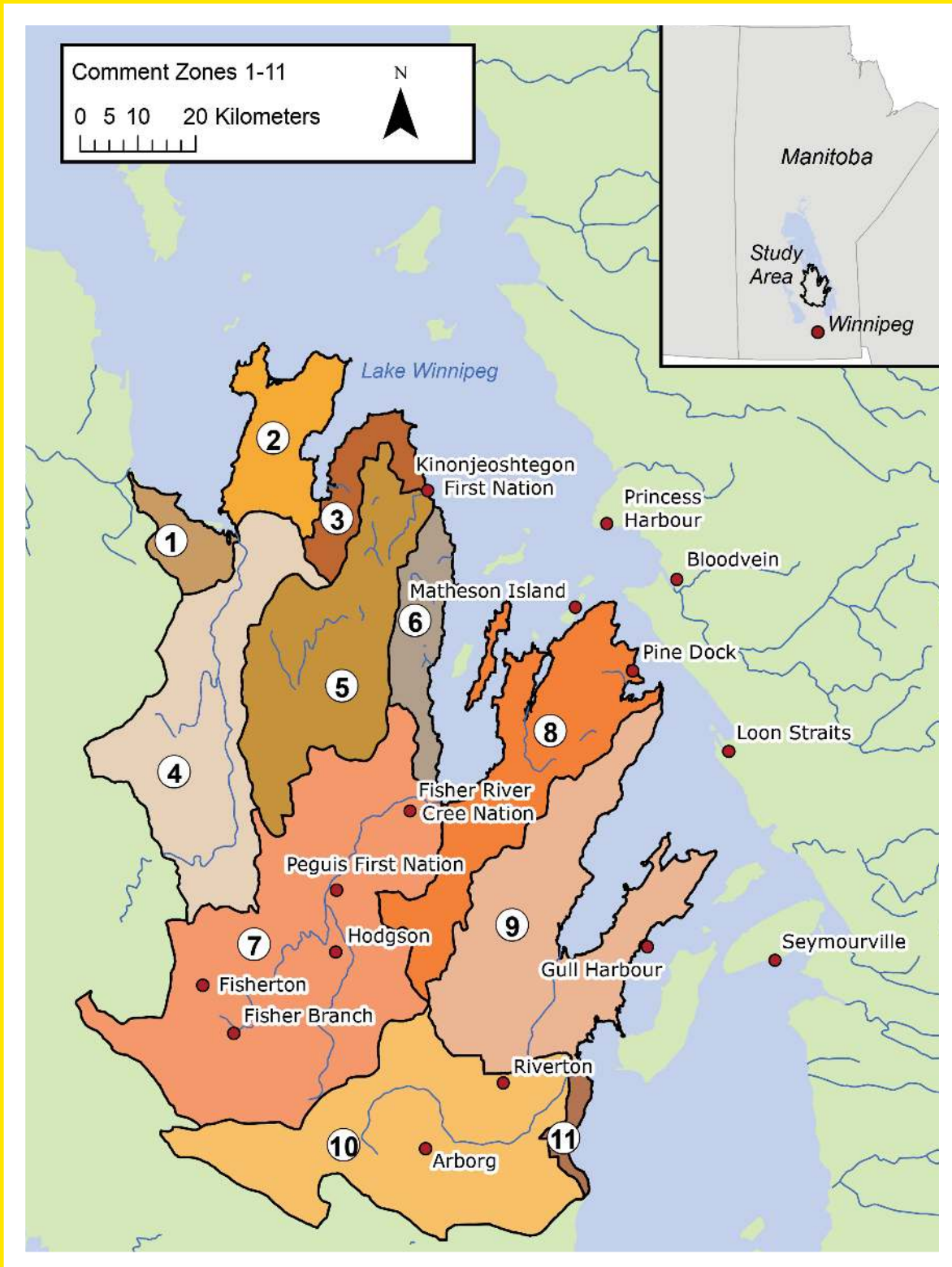
These lands are key to restoring the health of Lake Winnipeg because they act as natural filters against damaging nutrients. They help to prevent floods and provide habitat for an incredible array of wildlife. The forests and wetlands serve as a massive carbon sink, which helps to mitigate climate change, and the trees clean the air we all breathe.

⁷ The Fisher River Integrated Watershed Management Plan (2015) and the Icelandic River and Washow Bay Creek Integrated Watershed Management Plan (2008) were developed by the East Interlake Conservation District (EICD) in partnership with watershed residents, local municipalities, Fisher River Cree Nation, Peguis First Nation, and the Province of Manitoba. Both plans identified preserving natural areas as a core goal.

FRCN Conservation Areas Initiative Study Area



Comment Zones Map



Why We Need a Conservation Initiative

FISHER RIVER CREE NATION
CHIEF DAVID CRATE



When I was growing up, the Fisher River was so clear you could see pebbles on the river bed. Our lakeshore beach used to be filled with people enjoying the cool, clean water. Our boats would come back to shore with enough fish to earn a good living. Our forests were filled with moose and deer to feed our community.

Today, algae has sullied Lake Winnipeg. Our beach is eroded. Our river is dirty and no longer fit for swimming. The moose are nearly gone. Many of the wetlands which once served to filter the water entering Lake Winnipeg have been lost.

We need a comprehensive plan to responsibly manage our land and water so our grandchildren's grandchildren can enjoy the lifestyle many of us take for granted. We need to create new jobs and opportunities so our children stay close to home instead of leaving us for the bright lights of the city.

Our aim is to support and complement the Fisher River Integrated Watershed Management Plan and the Icelandic River and Washow Bay Creek Integrated Watershed Management Plan. The plans were developed by the East Interlake Conservation District in partnership with watershed residents, local municipalities, Fisher River Cree Nation, Peguis First Nation, and the Province of Manitoba.

Fisher River Cree Nation is leading the Conservation Areas Initiative to develop a conservation plan for our region which will support many watershed management goals and spur sustainable economic development.

The study area consists of more than 934,000 hectares within the south eastern Interlake Region stretching from Riverton in the south to Kinnow Bay Provincial Park in the north. We do not expect every piece of this area to be protected: we are studying the broad needs of the region in order to develop an appropriate and balanced conservation plan.

The area we are studying is Fisher River Cree Nation's Traditional Notice Area.

We are not the only people who love this land. So we are asking our neighbours to help us determine the best way to protect the beauty and natural richness of the region.

“We are doing this so our grandchildren’s grandchildren will be able to hunt, fish, and hike in the region.

We are asking our neighbours to help us determine the best way to protect the beauty and natural richness of our region.

The conservation plan we eventually propose to the government will contain no significant restrictions on recreational or subsistence activities such as hunting and fishing.”

FISHER RIVER CREE NATION CHIEF DAVID CRATE

We hope you will share your views and knowledge of the region with us either at a public meeting, by mail, or through our [website](#).

We will use these comments to help us develop a draft conservation proposal tailored to the specific needs of our region.

The process doesn’t end there. We will present the draft conservation proposal to area residents and other stakeholders for additional comment. We will then refine the proposal based on what we heard before presenting it to the ministerial level of the provincial government.

The provincial government is on board and will be participating in engagement meetings and open houses.

We can get this done. So let’s get it done right.

We all stand to gain from a regionally tailored conservation plan which is based on the best combination of ecological, cultural, and economic considerations.

***Fisher River Cree Nation
Chief David Crate***



Regional Benefits From Conservation



Up to 20% Increase in Property Values¹

Proximity to protected forests and provincial or national parks has been shown to increase rural property values by 5-20 percent.

Support Regional Water Management Goals²

1. Protect and restore natural areas.
2. Preserve and improve water quality in lakes and streams.
3. Improve watershed health awareness.



More Than \$14 million a Year³

Estimated economic impact from park operations and visitor spending if a full-service provincial park is established in the region.

¹ Rural property values increase 5-20 percent when they are close to a protected forest or a national or state/provincial park, according to a series of studies in the United States and United Kingdom. The creation of new state parks in Pennsylvania had an immediate on property values, which increased by an average of 13% in five years, a 1971 study found. For further reading: John L. Crompton (2001) *The Impact of Parks on Property Values: A Review of the Empirical Evidence*, *Journal of Leisure Research*, 33:1, 1-31, John L. Crompton (2005) *The impact of parks on property values: empirical evidence from the past two decades in the United States*, *Managing Leisure*, 10:4, 203-218, Gibbons, S., Mourato, S. & Resende, G.M. *The Amenity Value of English Nature: A Hedonic Price Approach* *Resource Econ* (2014) 57: 175

² source: [Icelandic River and Washow Bay Creek Integrated Watershed Management Plan and Fisher River Integrated Watershed Management Plan](#)

³ This estimate was produced by the Center for Indigenous Environmental Resources using the Canadian government's Economic Impact Model for Parks and Protected Areas (EIMPA). Turtle Mountain Provincial Park was used as a proxy to estimate visitor counts and park operating costs for a new full-service provincial park. Read the [2009 economic impact report](#) prepared as part of the process of establishing Fisher Bay Provincial Park, which is presently a non-operational park.



Protect moose populations which are down 57% in the region

Protect 53 Species

of Conservation Concern, of Which 15 are Endangered or Threatened Including:⁴

- Trumpeter Swan
- Piping Plover (bird)
- Little Brown Myotis & Northern Myotis bats
- Monarch butterfly

The study area holds over **360 million tonnes of carbon** – that's equivalent to the annual emissions of over **287 million passenger cars**.⁵

Moose could soon disappear completely from the southern Interlake. Despite hunting bans, moose populations are “critically low” in hunting area 21 and are down 57% in hunting area 21A, according to a 2017 aerial survey. Protecting moose habitat is a critical part in helping this iconic species to survive.



108 Jobs

A full-service provincial park would bring an estimated 108 jobs to the region as a result of increased tourism and park support services.⁶

The study area provides an estimated \$175 million a year in **Ecosystem Services**

Ecosystem Services such as flood control, water filtration, and pest control by boreal birds.⁷

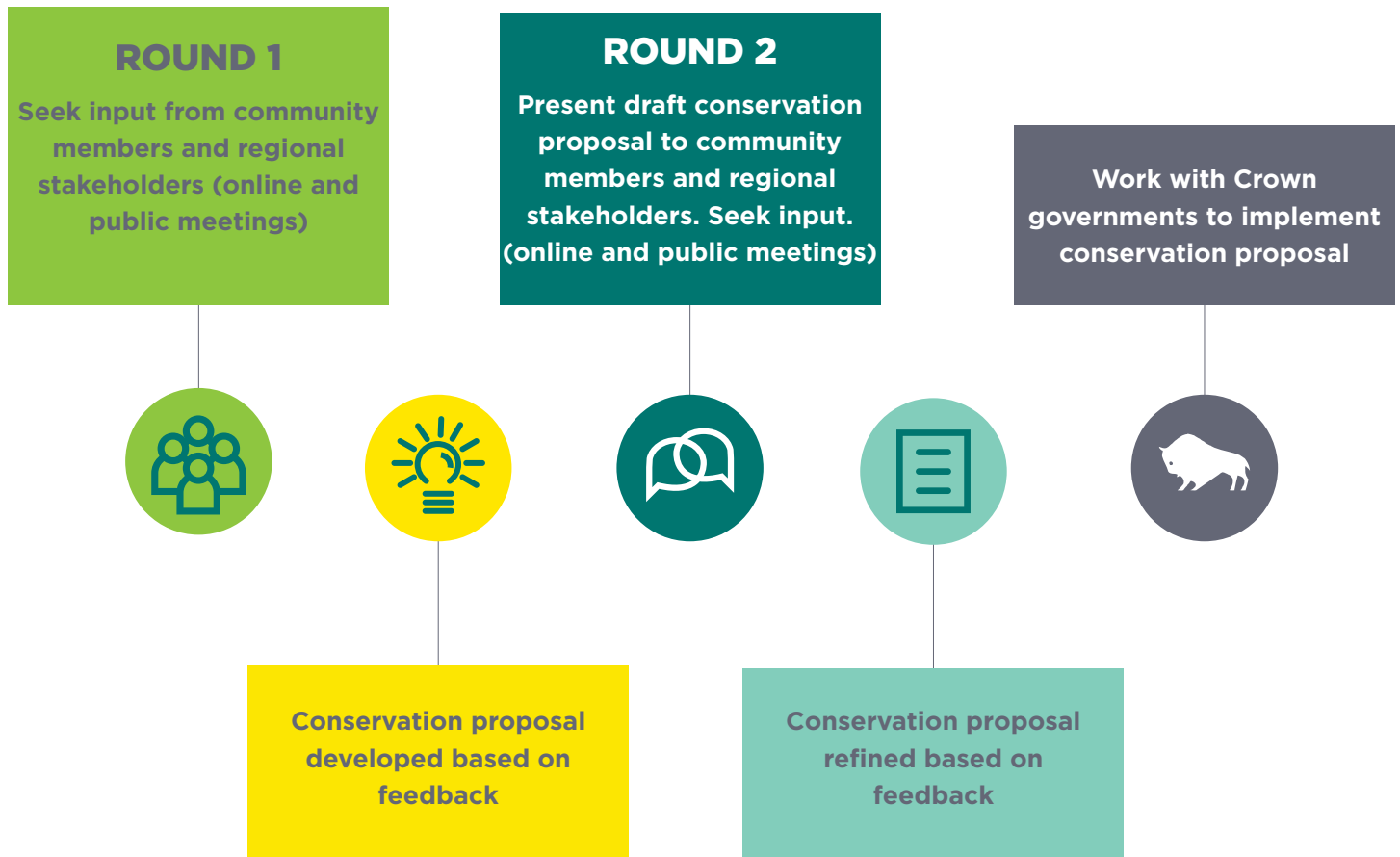
⁴ source: Manitoba Conservation Data Center, [analyzed by CPAWS](#)

⁵ source: [Soil Organic Carbon Estimates in the Fisher River Cree Nation Notice Area](#). April 2021. Prepared for CPAWS Manitoba and Fisher River Cree Nation by Ducks Unlimited Canada.

⁶ This estimate was produced by the Center for Indigenous Environmental Resources using the Canadian government's Economic Impact Model for Parks and Protected Areas (EIMPA). Turtle Mountain Provincial Park was used as a proxy to estimate visitor counts and park operating costs for a new full-service provincial park. Read the [2009 economic impact report](#) prepared as part of the process of establishing Fisher Bay Provincial Park, which is presently a non-operational park.

⁷ source: [Counting Canada's Natural Capital Assessing the Real Value of Canada's Boreal Ecosystems](#), by Mark Anielski and Sara Justine Wilson, Pembina Institute (2008)

Community and Stakeholder Engagement Process



The Engagement Process

The purpose of this engagement process is to ensure that the voices and wishes of Manitobans—especially area residents, Indigenous peoples, local communities, and regional stakeholders—are considered when determining which areas should be conserved within the study area.

We are conducting meetings with community leaders and stakeholders and inviting residents to webinars and open houses throughout the region. We are also soliciting comments by mail and on our dedicated [website](http://www.FRCNconservation.ca).

After this initial engagement process is complete, we will draft a conservation proposal informed by the input we receive.

The draft conservation proposal will be presented to local communities, stakeholders, and the general public for comment. We will then refine the proposal based on what we heard. Once the conservation plan is ready, we will work on implementation with Crown governments.

The Study Area

The study area consists of more than 934,000 hectares in the south eastern Interlake stretching from Riverton to Kinnow Bay Provincial Park. It is the Traditional Notice Area of Fisher River Cree Nation. The study area also includes traditional territory of Peguis First Nation and Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation.

The study area is comprised of many developed and undeveloped areas. This gives us the opportunity to enable a healthy balance of development and conservation that will be beneficial for our well-being and prosperity.

Most of the study area is a vast boreal region of forests, waters, and wetlands that are vital habitat to hundreds of species of wildlife, plants, and fish.

Present activities in the region that result in significant landscape and habitat changes include forestry and peat moss harvesting. Mining companies have staked claims.

The study area has been divided into subwatersheds to provide a widely used ecological basis for conservation planning. A watershed is the area or region that drains into a particular stream, river, or lake. In this case, the entirety of the study area is within the Fisher River/

Washow Bay, Icelandic River/Willow Creek, and the Mantagao River/Saint Lakes watersheds.

The study area contains 11 subwatersheds within the larger three watersheds identified above. Each subwatershed serves as a comment zone. Please see the Feature Maps for more detailed information.

Through reasonable and effective conservation measures, this region can continue to maintain a healthy ecosystem that will sustain cultural, recreational, and resource-based economic activities for present and future generations.

How to use the Engagement Package

Our goal is to create a widely supported conservation proposal based on the best combination of ecological, cultural, and economic considerations.

We want to hear from you so we can ensure that the conservation proposal is tailored to the needs of the region.

We have created a series of maps to help inform your comments. These maps identify ecological values, economic use or established interests, and developed areas. We have done our best to be inclusive of all present designations and known interests. We're hoping that those engaged in providing comments will provide additional details if they have them.

Some people may have an interest in the entire study area. Others may be more concerned with specific zones, areas, lakes, or forests. You can share your views and information on the entire area, individual or multiple zones, or specific areas within zones.

We will be conducting meetings with regional community leaders and stakeholders and inviting residents to webinars and open houses to discuss this opportunity and seek input. You may also share your comments by mail or on our dedicated [website](#).

We need a long-term plan to balance industrial extraction interests with conservation so the forests are full of moose to hunt, the rivers are clean and teeming with fish, and Lake Winnipeg's shoreline is once again a place to build sandcastles and teach our children to swim.

Questions & Answers



Will this initiative stop me from hunting or fishing in the area?

No. Licensed hunting, fishing, and trapping and activities such as personal berry gathering would not be significantly affected by any conservation plan we propose.

Would traditional practices of Indigenous people in the area be affected?

No. All rights-based activities would be respected and upheld. We will work with Indigenous communities throughout the process to address any concerns.

How will this affect my plans to go camping or hiking in the area?

It depends. Recreational use rules vary from one type of protected area to another. If a new provincial park is established you may (or may not) need to buy a park pass or permit to use the area. If a wildlife management area is established, no pass will be required.

Once a draft conservation plan has been developed based upon comments from area residents and stakeholders we will be able to address this question more specifically.

The purpose of this engagement process is to determine which areas should be protected in the region and what the most appropriate designations would be for those areas.

What could I lose if a protected area is established?

Our goal is to create a conservation plan which enhances the quality of life of area residents and spurs sustainable economic development.

We would like these changes to cause the least amount of disruption possible. However, some restrictions may be necessary in order to preserve our land and water for future generations.

That could mean putting your dog on a leash when you go for a hike in a newly designated park, switching to a new snowmobile or ATV trail, or avoiding a new cottage development during hunting season.

Once a draft conservation plan has been developed based upon comments from area residents and stakeholders we will be able to address this question more specifically.

The purpose of this engagement process is to determine which areas should be protected in the region and what the most appropriate designations would be for those areas.

There are a wide variety of legal designations used to protect and conserve land in Manitoba. Some, like ecological reserves, can be highly restrictive. Others, like wildlife management areas, have little impact on recreational or subsistence activities. More information is available from the province.

How will appropriate protections help spur sustainable economic opportunities?

Eco and cultural tourism are among the fastest growing industries in the world. The Interlake is already one of Manitoba's most popular tourism destinations because of its beaches, cottages, and many opportunities for hunting, fishing, bird watching, and camping.



New parks and/or protected areas would draw more tourists. Protected areas would also serve as breeding grounds for the wildlife which attract tourists.

The area is also important for protecting commercial and recreational fishing in Lake Winnipeg. The forests and wetlands serve as filters for damaging nutrients which are responsible for the algae blooms that sully the water and shoreline.

As the initiative will also serve to indicate where conservation designations will not be placed, industrial resource extraction companies will have increased certainty regarding what areas may be options for their activities in the area.



Would private property such as homes and cabins be impacted?

No. Private property will not be affected by any conservation plan we propose. The initiative is studying how best to manage undeveloped Crown and traditional lands in the region. Some leased Crown lands may be considered when developing the proposal, but only after discussion with the lease holder.

What are the different conservation designations being considered?

At this time, we are not considering this level of detail. We want to first hear from local communities and stakeholders before we propose any designations. That being said, our intention is to propose a plan that does not significantly restrict recreational and subsistence use such as hunting or fishing in the region.

How did you come up with the study area and the zones?

The study area is based on the Traditional Notice Area of Fisher River Cree Nation. The study area also includes traditional territory of Peguis First Nation and Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation.

The study area has been divided into subwatersheds to provide a widely used ecological basis for conservation planning.

A watershed is the area or region that drains into a particular stream, river, or lake.

The study area contains three watersheds that are comprised of 11 subwatersheds identified in the Feature Maps section. Each subwatershed serves as a comment zone.

How will my comments be used?

We are seeking comments from area residents and other stakeholders so we can ensure that the conservation proposal is tailored to the region's particular needs.

We want your help to determine where conserved areas should be and whether some parts of a zone should be excluded from protection.

Comments will be shared with the Manitoba government and may potentially be used in promotional materials. Names will not be shared publicly without permission from the provider.

What is Fisher River Cree Nation's Traditional Notice Area?

FRCN's Traditional Notice Area for consultation was identified through extensive research and consultation with elders, traditional knowledge holders, hunters, fishers, trappers, and other resource users. This area is only a small portion of the vast area that has been used and occupied by the Fisher River Cree Nation for centuries. The Notice Area boundaries were set for purposes of implementing the consultation protocol agreement between Manitoba and Fisher River Cree Nation.

What happens after the initial engagement process?

We will ensure Manitobans will have an opportunity to comment on the proposal before it is finalized. After this initial engagement process is complete, we will draft a conservation proposal informed by the comments. The draft conservation proposal will be presented to the public for comment. We will then refine the proposal based on what we heard.

Once the conservation plan is ready, we will work on implementation with Crown governments.





This initiative is led by Fisher River Cree Nation in partnership with Peguis First Nation and the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). The initiative has the support of the governments of Manitoba and Canada.

The initiative is also supported by the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation.



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