

Cottage Subdivision Development Program on Park Land and Crown Resource Land

May 2004 Update

Introduction

- Saskatchewan Environment (SE) established the Cottage Subdivision Development Program (CSDP) to examine cottage subdivision development opportunities on lands administered by SE
- Program was developed in response to SE's 2002-2005 Strategic Planning Report, which identified areas with economic development potential on Park lands and Crown resource lands
- CSDP also relates to a Government development initiative that was announced in the 2003 Throne Speech
- Main Program Objective: to enhance opportunities to acquire a recreational cottage lot on park land and Crown land

Background

- The proposed Cottage Subdivision Development Program received SE's executive committee endorsement in January 2002
- A committee, including representation from an FSIN perspective, was assembled to identify potential opportunities for development and to provide an integrated approach to program development

Program Principles

- Maintain high standards of environmental protection when establishing subdivisions
- Focus development in core areas to avoid impacts to pristine, undeveloped locations and ensure the preservation of ecosystem biodiversity
- Provide economic development opportunities in locations selected for development
- Avoid direct competition with private sector initiatives;
- Ensure the public, First Nations, and local stakeholders receive accurate information and encourage public participation throughout the process
- Consult and work with First Nations on resource initiatives that impact Treaty and Aboriginal rights
- Explore economic development opportunities with First Nations in the proposed development areas
- Implement the CSDP at minimal cost to the Province.

Short Term Objectives

- Expand existing development in three locations in Meadow Lake Provincial Park (MLPP) in 2004/05 (proposed numbers: 100 to 200 new lots at Lac des Iles; 30 to 50 additional lots at Howe Bay subdivision [*Pierce Lake*]; and 10 lots on Cold Lake)
- Conduct a Biophysical Inventory, Heritage Resource Impact Assessment, and prepare an Environmental Protection Plan for Environmental Assessment screening (summer 2004)
- Develop and implement an allocation strategy for private sector development opportunity (summer 2004)
- Tender development opportunity (fall 2004); and
- Advertise and allocate lots (summer/fall 2005)

Long Term Objectives

- Review recommended development locations in other areas of the province. Potential locations proposed for further examination include: Makwa Lake Provincial Park; Weyakwin Lake Recreation Site; Dore/Smoothstone Lake; and Cluff Lake Road Corridor (LaLoche N)

Progress to Date

- Identified several potential development locations
- Compiled and prioritized a list of potential locations into a phased development approach
- Identified potential issues that may arise with proposed development (i.e. impacts to commercial fishing quotas, impacts on Aboriginal use of resources, and forestry-related issues)
- Hired a consulting firm to conduct environmental studies for the first development phase
- Completed public consultations
- Initiated a First Nation consultation strategy

Positive Contributions of CSDP

- Provides opportunity for sustainable use and enjoyment of our natural resources
- Contributes to the equitable allocation of our natural resources
- Increases recreational opportunities on provincial park and Crown resource lands
- Increases economic benefits based on sustainable use of natural resources.
- Increases park entry revenue and lease revenue
- Creates opportunity to develop business partnerships with Aboriginal groups

Provincial Revenue Projections

- New subdivision development in our provincial parks system would contribute significantly to the province's total park revenue
- Preliminary analysis indicates that the provincial parks system could accommodate up to an additional 750 to 1,000 new cottage lots, following a long term phased development approach
- New subdivision development on Crown resource land outside of provincial parks would contribute significantly to the overall general revenue of the province
- Preliminary analysis indicates that Crown resource land outside of provincial parks could accommodate an additional 400 to 500 cottage lots, following a long term phased development approach

Economic Impacts

- Construction of several new cottages in a local area would generate a significant cash injection into a local economy and provide significant job opportunities
- New development on Crown land outside of provincial parks would significantly increase municipal tax revenues
- Revenue from the sale of Crown resource land outside of provincial parks would significantly increase the overall general revenue of the province

Summary of Positive Impacts

- Promotes economic development opportunities
- Increases provincial revenue
- Crown land development outside of parks increases municipal tax revenues
- Supports Tourism Saskatchewan's strategy to attract out-of-province tourists
- Satisfies increasing public demand for cottaging

Consultation Goals

- To demonstrate and confirm SE's commitment to responsible stewardship of our province's land and resources
- To engage public participation in subdivision development planning

Consultation Efforts

- Met with MLPP Advisory Committee on December 2003
- Attended municipal council meetings with the RMs of Meadow Lake and Beaver River in January 2004
- Held public meetings in Meadow Lake, Dorintosh, Goodsoil, & Pierceland in February 2004

- Held interviews on a provincial scale with various media
- Initiated a consultation process with the Waterhen Lake, Big Island Lake and Cold Lake First Nations in February 2004
- Discussed CSDP and development proposal at FSIN/SE Bilateral Task Force meeting in March 2004
- Discussed program and development proposal with Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association (SPRA)

Public Consultation Results

- Received general support for the program with an average of 75 per cent support in each one of four public meetings
- Received concerns that upper ranges of the proposed number of lots is too high
- Received a consistent call to implement a Saskatchewan allocation priority for the leasing opportunity
- Opposition to the program was generally low and originated mainly from existing cottage owners

First Nation Consultations

- SE met with the Big Island Lake Cree Nation, the Waterhen Lake Cree Nation and the Cold Lake First Nation in February 2004
- First Nations did not support the program and focused on several issues relating to land and resources, expressing various concerns about their ability to practice traditional lifestyles
- The Waterhen Lake and Cold Lake First Nations expressed an interest in economic development opportunities
- No First Nation expressed specific concerns relating to the actual sites proposed for development in MLPP

Next Steps in First Nation Consultation Process

- Explore opportunities to deal with First Nation issues and concerns within SE's control
- Meet with the three local First Nations for a second round of meetings
- Meet with Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) to discuss their issues and concerns
- Meet with the FSIN at the Lands and Resources Commission meeting in Meadow Lake in May 2004

What are SE's objectives in meeting with the First Nations?

- Determine if First Nation people use any of the specific areas proposed for development for any traditional or cultural purposes

- Identify First Nation interests and concerns with respect to specific land and resource use initiatives
- Attempt to jointly resolve issues and concerns that SE can address
- Explore opportunities for First Nation partnerships in development opportunities

Critical Steps Required to Move Forward

- Finalize First Nation consultations
- Decide on level of development at each proposed location
- Decide on a sewage management plan (RM lagoon or MLPP lagoon?)
- Develop an allocation process for the subdivision development opportunity

Conclusion

- The CSDP contributes to provincial general revenue and to the provincial parks system's Commercial Revolving Fund
- The CSDP promotes significant economic development in target areas
- The private sector builds public infrastructure at user cost (lessees pay all development fees up front)
- Improves cost-efficient subdivision expansion opportunities for SE (plan for future expansion in original design at user cost)
- Program implementation cost is minimal