

Chitek Lake Park Reserve

Proposed Provincial Park



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Chitek Lake Park Reserve: Proposed Provincial Park

Chitek Lake Park Reserve Public Consultation - Phase I Summary

Chitek Lake Park Reserve was established in 1998 to recognize the high natural values and cultural significance of the lands surrounding Chitek Lake. This designation was initially requested by Skownan First Nation, and subsequent public consultation has been conducted and reviewed jointly with members of this community. This designation remains in force until September, 2004, at which time a decision on the status of the Park Reserve must be made. *The Provincial Parks Act* requires that all Park Reserves be reviewed by the public in order to determine the most appropriate provincial designation, boundaries and land use classification(s) for the area.

This is the second round of public consultation for the Chitek Lake Park Reserve. The first round of consultation, begun in late 2003, asked what should be included in a vision for the Park Reserve area. This process included public drop-in sessions in Portage la Prairie, Waterhen and Winnipeg. Public meetings provided the opportunity for those attending to present their views on the future of the Park Reserve, as well as to develop an appreciation for the many factors involved in area use and management.

This second newsletter contains draft park purpose and classification statements as well as a complete list of the comments received so far. These comments have helped shape the vision and direction for the proposed park. This phase of the consultation process offers an opportunity for respondents to provide comments on these draft statements. All comments received in this second round of public review will be discussed with Skownan First Nation representatives, and a recommendation on park designation will then be forwarded to the provincial government this fall. A summary of the entire process and the final result will then be provided to all participants.

Summary of the Public Responses Received to Date (see insert for all comments) :

Chitek Lake Park Reserve has been suggested as a new Provincial Park. What do you think?

If this were to occur, what issues need to be addressed to ensure your concept for the Chitek Lake area can be maintained over time?

The most important issues raised were that park designation not affect in any way the exercise of Treaty or Aboriginal rights, and the need to incorporate the views of Portage la Prairie Band members and local communities in decision-making.

Respondents supported continuing the present range of natural and cultural values and existing uses found in the Park Reserve, particularly the maintaining of the roadless peace and quiet of an unpolluted, intact natural setting so the area can continue to provide spiritual renewal for the Skownan First Nation community in the core of their traditional area of use.

Parks and Natural Areas Branch is entering into this consultation with a view that if a park is to be established, all present land values and commitments are to be maintained. What activities \experiences does your vision for the future of Chitek Lake include?

Respondents were firm that existing uses such as commercial fishing, outfitting, trapping and hunting within the park reserve not be adversely affected by park establishment. Commercialization of the area, and development of activities such as road access, beach recreational activities and cottaging were seen as conflicting with the present remote atmosphere and the values of present area users. Emphasis was also placed on the maintaining of the present experience of area users, and the idea of complementing, not displacing existing uses. The importance of Treaty rights and Aboriginal viewpoints regarding future management were also presented.

Do you feel the boundaries for the Park Reserve properly reflect the area's management needs as you see them??

Nearly all respondents wished to see the area set aside and managed to protect habitat and cultural values. The desire to see the entire region maintain its existing values, and the strong wishes of many respondents to protect the Wood Bison herd and habitat for other game species found here were expressed in many proposals to expand the Park Reserve boundaries.

What type of park classification or Land Use Category(ies) best suits the values and commitments you feel are most important in the Park Reserve?

Most respondents suggested that the park classification and Land Use Category should prohibit logging and all-weather road access, and permit commercial fishing, hunting, outfitting and access for existing activities by ATV. The need to allow for an ecotourism development by the Skownan community at Chitek Lake was also expressed. The establishment of a new Land Use Category type to reflect the joint establishment of the area by Skownan First Nation and Manitoba was proposed.

The information gathered and the submissions received during the discussions with Skownan First Nation and the public consultation process to date has indicated the following future direction for the Chitek Lake Park Reserve:

Proposed Management Framework for the Chitek Lake Park Reserve:

Proposed Designation: Provincial Park

Respondents expressed the strong desire to maintain the present natural values and roadless state of the area, and to maintain the site free of logging, mining and Hydro-electric development into the future. It would be difficult to overemphasize the cultural importance of the area to Skownan First Nation community. Park designation at a provincial level was seen as a good way to achieve protection from major land altering uses while maintaining traditional rights and safeguarding present uses. The community is proud of its past history of working with the provincial government during the establishment of the registered trapline system, and is prepared to again work with government to develop a framework for meaningful First Nation and local community involvement in area management through the opportunity provided by provincial park designation.

Proposed Classification: Natural Park

All respondents shared a concern to protect the area's present natural values, cultural importance, roadless state and present range of outfitting operations. **A Natural Park designation** provides the flexibility to include park lands in protected status, recognise the commercial fishery, existing structures, the range of present activities including hunting and trapping and the present methods of access. Provincial park designation also offers Skownan First Nation the potential to develop a complementary ecotourism recreation experience. **Please refer to the brochure insert for a map showing proposed park boundary and Land Use Categories.**

Proposed Boundaries:

The boundaries identified for the Park Reserve are proposed to be maintained for the provincial park, to ensure the preservation of the areas' intact natural condition over time. While expansion was seen as desirable, unknowns such as the final boundary location for the Manitoba Lowlands National Park proposal resulted in the decision to maintain the present boundary. Information received respecting the need to manage the lands outside this boundary to protect and enhance wildlife populations such as Moose, Elk, and Woodland Caribou, and maintain the present level of access to the proposed park lands, emphasises the need to develop a management approach for the surrounding region to complement and safeguard the proposed park's significant natural values.

Proposed Land Use Categories: Backcountry, Access

A Backcountry Land Use Category is proposed for the majority of the park in order to protect and maintain the range of natural and cultural values, user experiences and recreational potential found in this important area into the future. This designation enables the proposed park to be part of Manitoba's network of protected areas, as logging, mining and hydro-electric development are not permitted in this Land Use Category.

An Access Land Use Category is proposed for the hydro transmission right-of-way traversing the eastern portion of the proposed park. This category recognises the existing provincial allocation to Manitoba Hydro. By this means, management direction such as excluding all-weather road access can be applied to this corridor as well.

Proposed Primary Park Purpose Statements:

In order to provide overall direction to land use management in the proposed park and to guide decision-making in advance of the completion of a management plan, the following vision, or primary park purpose statements are proposed:

Park Purpose:

- **To maintain the area's backcountry setting and roadless character so that the cultural values of the Chitek Lake area so central to Skownan First Nation, and the core habitat for the province's only herd of free-ranging Wood Bison, can be maintained over time, and:**
- **To protect the intact natural condition of an area representative of both the Mid-boreal Lowland and the Interlake Plain portions of the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region.**

The Park Will:

- ❖ **Be managed in a manner that recognises and accepts the primacy of all treaty, land claim and Aboriginal rights;**
- ❖ **Recognize present and future commercial fishery opportunities;**
- ❖ **Provide a roadless Backcountry setting for traditional and cultural activities, hunting, trapping, and the development of a First Nations ecotourism opportunity that all depend upon a largely undisturbed environment;**
- ❖ **Protect Wood Bison range and natural habitat in an undisturbed state; and:**
- ❖ **Provide for the meaningful involvement of the area's First Nations and Aboriginal people in park management.**

SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE PROPOSED CHITEK LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK

Proposed Classification: Natural Park

Proposed Boundaries:

The boundary for the area is proposed to remain unchanged.

Proposed Land Use Categories: Backcountry, Access

A **Backcountry Land Use Category** is proposed for the majority of the park in order to reflect the need to protect the area's water quality, animal habitat, range of natural and cultural values and recreational potential.

An **Access Land Use Category** is proposed for the area of the Hydro line right-of-way within the park.

Proposed Primary Park Purpose Statements:

Park Purpose:

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- ❖ Provide a roadless backcountry setting for traditional and cultural activities, hunting, trapping, and the development of a First Nations ecotourism opportunity that all depend upon a largely undisturbed environment;
- ❖ Protect Wood Bison range and natural habitat in an undisturbed state; and:
- ❖ Provide for the meaningful involvement of the area's First Nations and Aboriginal people in park management.

The Park Reserve - Purpose and Process

A Park Reserve is established to provide an interim designation on a piece of land so that all interested parties may consider the implications of such a designation in advance of more permanent land use allocation.

The public consultation process for Park Reserves is intended to assist in:

- Establishing a Primary Purpose for the area;
- Determining the most appropriate Provincial Designation for the subject land;
- Reviewing boundary appropriateness, and:
- Establishing overall Land Use Categories for the area.

What Happens After the Public Consultation?

Manitoba Parks and Natural Areas will review all comments and then recommend a permanent designation to government for the subject area. The appropriate Crown agency (ie: Parks and Natural Areas) will then work through a site-specific management planning process to set out in detail the policies and regulations necessary to achieve the primary purpose statements for the area.

What do YOU think??

As an individual or representative of a group who has already been involved in this process for the Chitek Lake Park Reserve, you are invited to review the results of the consultation to date, and comment on the proposed designation, classification and primary purpose statements. **Please let us know of your comments or suggestions by July 30, 2004.** The recommendations to government will largely be based on the responses received from these public consultations, so let us know what you think.

Please pass this brochure on to anyone you feel may also be interested in this area. If you would like to make your comments in person, or wish at any time to contact someone directly involved in the process, see the contact information below.

Thank you for your assistance in shaping the future of the Chitek Lake Park Reserve.

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Chitek Lake Park Reserve Comment Summary

The following comments resulted from the first Chitek Lake Park Reserve open house meetings in the fall of 2003. The comments have been edited for length so all could be included.

Park Role and Purpose:

➤ *Chitek Lake Park Reserve has been suggested as a new provincial park. What do you think?*

- ❖ Create Chitek Lake as a Provincial Park
- ❖ Chadek (Pelican) Lake is the original Saulteaux name for the area; use this as the final name
- ❖ Establish this park now if you maintain ongoing meaningful consultation with Skownan First Nation
- ❖ Concerns that present process might lead to establishment of a national park – Do not establish national park
- ❖ Chitek Lake park will move Manitoba towards achieving protected areas goals; I support
- ❖ I believe the Chitek Park is a good idea for protecting the ungulates and the cultural riches found there. I like the idea of the area having limited access for people and the First Nations seem to be in agreement as well which is important
- ❖ Park management, not another Memorandum of Understanding. MOU idea too used already, Parks needs to get on with action

➤ *If this were to occur, what issues need to be addressed to ensure your concept for the Chitek Lake area can be maintained over time?*

- ❖ The Chitek Lake area's cultural aspects are central to the values and even existence of Skownan First Nation, and must be maintained over time
- ❖ All aboriginal and treaty land values and activities need to be maintained
- ❖ Maintain the roadless state so the area can continue to provide peace and freedom and maintain wildlife and the livelihood of Skownan members
- ❖ Establishment of this provincial park must not block future land claim or Treaty Land Entitlement issues in any way
- ❖ The maintenance of traditional use and rights are not up for discussion in this area; they are a given in the park reserve and in the final designation
- ❖ Chitek Lake has several features of First Nation sacred and cultural interest; there must be many more archaeological sites to be found
- ❖ Not in support of this initiative until the legal Treaty status of the area is clearly understood and/or taken to the courts and settled – “90 years”
- ❖ Before the Portage community Band members can support this, some underlying community issues must be solved.
- ❖ Develop full participatory comanagement with Skownan First Nation – grassroots, community level
- ❖ Portage La Prairie band members must be directly included in management;
- ❖ The Park Reserve is in the Skownan First Nation traditional hunting and trapping lands, and is included in a community comprehensive land claim. Government should leave this area to the community to manage.
- ❖ all First Nations people with traditional ties to the area must be included in benefits
- ❖ An means to involve other area communities is needed; ie: all-community advisory Committee; should benefit all
- ❖ Supportive, as long as local communities as well as Skownan First Nation receive a share of park business/tourism benefits

➤ ***Parks and Natural Areas Branch is entering into this consultation with a view that if a park is to be established, all present land values and commitments are to be maintained. What activities/experiences does your vision for the future of the Chitek Lake area include?***

- ❖ Do not build roads into the area; limit recreational use to those not requiring all-weather road access
- ❖ No cottaging, no developed campgrounds – backcountry-type activities only
- ❖ Do not permit cabins(cottages); if you start, they will keep on spreading
- ❖ Continue commercial fishing, minimize impact of this use on lake ecosystem
- ❖ Keep tourism to a minimum, help Skownan establish ecotourism and guiding programs
- ❖ Keep airplane and helicopter tourism to a minimum, so as not to disturb bison and traditional activities
- ❖ Maintain treaty and commercial fishery; commercial fishing must not be limited by this designation
- ❖ Keep commercial fishing options open for all park lakes, not just Chitek
- ❖ Reasonable hunting and fishing use is o.k. if the animals are assured a place of refuge as well
- ❖ Hiking, canoeing, skiing and other such activities appear appropriate
- ❖ This designation must ensure that all resident hunting opportunities – especially moose & bear – are maintained
- ❖ Existing commercial and traditional hunting, fishing and trapping must be preserved
- ❖ Maintain existing access routes for ATV and snowmobiles for hunting, commercial fishing and traditional use
- ❖ The park plan must address resource allocation and (eco)tourism allocation in the context of providing opportunities for economic benefit to Skownan First Nation in their traditional area.
- ❖ There is a need to identify that the community has first call on ecotourism opportunities in the park

Boundaries:

➤ ***Do you feel the boundaries for the Park Reserve properly reflect the area's management needs as you see them?? Please explain. A map has been provided overleaf for your convenience.***

- ❖ Expand boundaries to N, W, & S. to encompass entire bison range and possible future expansion
- ❖ Explore expansion of park to meet Federal park to protect landscape, habitat integrity
- ❖ Park boundary is based on habitat, not jurisdictions; comments of other Treaty/aboriginal communities welcome
- ❖ SE corner should be added to park in order to protect Woodland Caribou habitat from logging
- ❖ Add Crab Lake area to park
- ❖ Area is too small – should contain at least all of bison range
- ❖ Expand protected area to include Bison range and projected range expansion; 5km East & South, 10km. North
- ❖ The Provincial park and the proposed National park should abut each other, to protect Bison and Caribou habitat
- ❖ I understand that the Wood Bison range extends north of the proposed boundaries. If this is the case, please extend the northern boundary to include the entire range.
- ❖ Concerned with any development of roads that might result from this proposal – supports park proposal that would not permit roads in the area
- ❖ Buffer park area from adjacent logging; possible access/impact to area via adjacent forestry activities
- ❖ Add land to the Southeast corner to maintain unlogged hunting habitat – park is not just for Bison

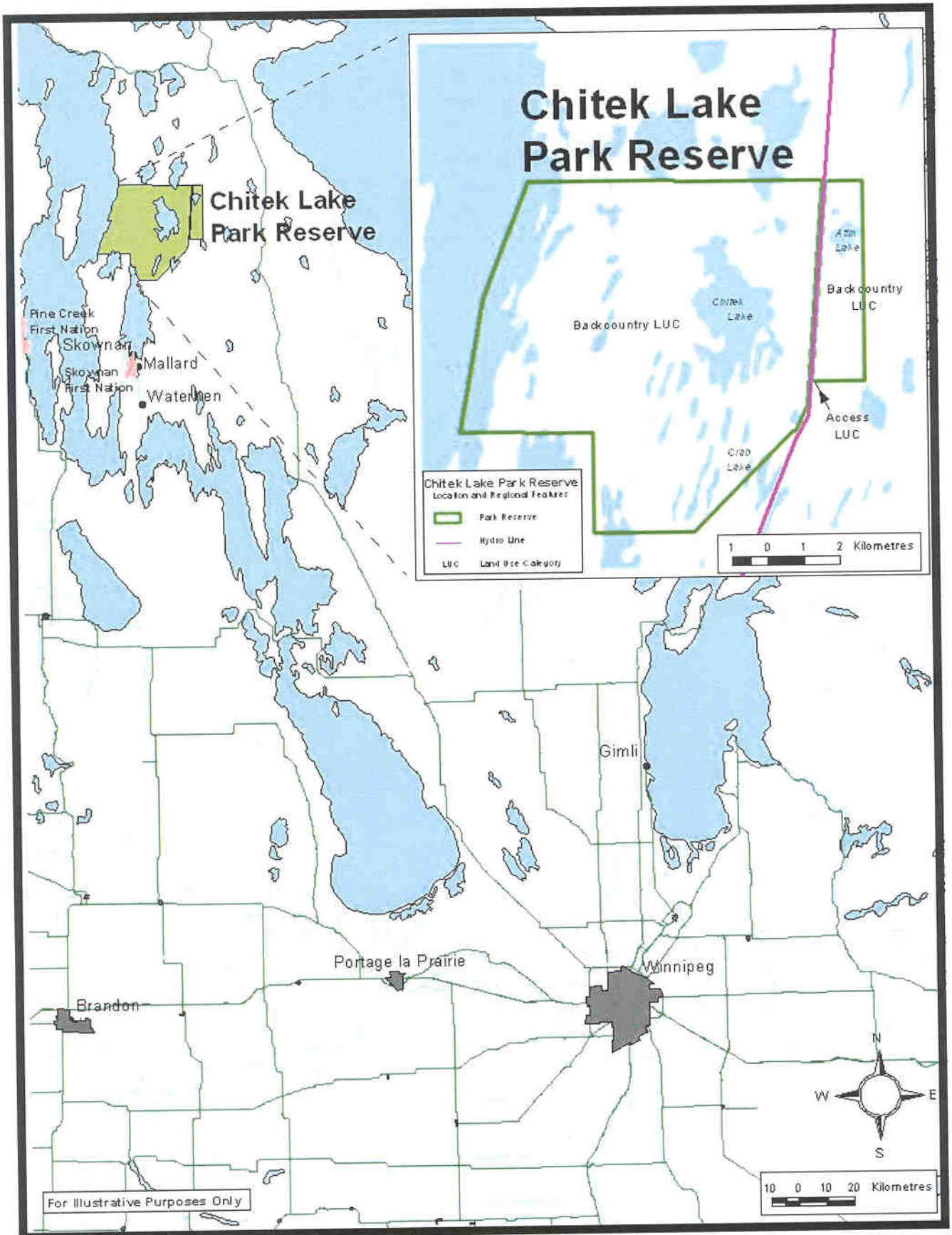
Classification:

➤ *What type of park Classification and/or Land Use Categories (LUC) best suit the values and land use commitments you feel are most important in the Park Reserve area (ie: Recreation, Backcountry or?) Please provide the rationale for your recommendation.*

- ❖ Establish a park classification that keeps the area as is - no roads
- ❖ Make entire park a Backcountry LUC
- ❖ The Chitek Lake area has several unique natural and cultural features. I encourage the Parks Branch to establish Chitek Lake Park Reserve as a provincial park and designate its land use category as a Backcountry
- ❖ Designate as a Wilderness, no recreational quad or seadoo use
- ❖ Establish an aboriginal land use category to reflect the joint establishment with Skownan FN, and the ongoing aboriginal and treaty land use objectives
- ❖ Establish as Backcountry with no all-weather roads; Maintain roadless aspect of area
- ❖ No all-weather road along Hydro line
- ❖ Do not open existing trails to motorized recreational use

Other Ideas you would like to see used to guide the management of this area

- ❖ Need to manage bison in area to minimize impacts on surrounding ranches/agricultural areas, implications of mixing bison & cattle re: TB, etc., communities; liability accountability issues
- ❖ Condition of bison fence, seen as major issue to successful management of all bison in area
- ❖ Need Chitek Lake Wood Bison management plan; why is there no Bison management plan yet?
- ❖ Implement a Bison plan, including a suggestion to protect Core Chitek Lake area from hunting, surrounded by a larger zone where hunting is controlled by Skownan FN, with a “no-go” area close to Highway # 6 and 60 to keep Bison off the roads.
- ❖ Bison and cattle don't mix – need a management plan to see this doesn't happen
- ❖ The park boundaries will not mean much to a Bison; Bison must be managed to limit their expansion towards the highway, agricultural lands and communities
- ❖ Skownan First Nation has to establish a committee for the Bison and take control of this issue; they are our destiny
- ❖ A study is needed to see if the Bison are chasing the Moose away
- ❖ Disappointed that there is no communication/discussion yet with respect to allocation of the Wood Bison.
- ❖ Apply highest standards to outfitters in this area
- ❖ Look into techniques that would increase moose population
- ❖ Work with universities re: studies on bison, habitat & community impact of park, uses
- ❖ Important to develop / ensure that initiatives developed as part of park are designed to succeed financially. Previous joint ventures in the area have not been successful
- ❖ Concern that any tourism development would have an adverse effect on outfitting(bear hunting) that has taken 15 years to build up
- ❖ Do not reduce the existing wildlife allocations hunting in order to add outfitting businesses
- ❖ Garbage management in the area is important
- ❖ I don't understand who will benefit from this
- ❖ First Nations and the wild animals shared this land together; white man's greed and power took this away
- ❖ Use the public registry to advise people of the progress of the proposal
- ❖ What increased role will the province play in this area as a result of this designation
- ❖ Desire to link approval in this area with settlement of the suit currently in front of the courts



Location Map and proposed Land Use Categories for the Chitek Lake Park Reserve