

PUBLIC REVIEW – PAINT LAKE PARK RESERVE

Paint Lake Provincial Recreation Park was established in December, 1971. Paint Lake is well-known regionally for its high quality cottage, fishing and boating recreational opportunities. East Paint Lake Park Reserve was originally part of Paint Lake Provincial Recreation Park, but was established as a separate, temporary designation with protected status in 1997.

The Park Reserve designation was used to allow time to evaluate the establishment of this area as a permanent protected landscape. The boundary between the Park Reserve lands and the portion of Paint Lake Provincial Park that was kept as a permanent designation, was the then-known limit of the Thompson Nickel Belt. At the time of designation, a joint regional government-industry-university collaborative study (CAMIRO) was just getting underway. The local community and the mining industry provided strong representation in previous consultations that a decision on the permanent designation of this area should be made in conjunction with the results of this study, which, it was hoped, would confirm whether or not the park reserve lands were part of the Thompson Nickel Belt. Discovered in the 1950's, the Thompson Nickel Belt has already hosted five producing nickel mines, and presently has a total production now worth about \$2 billion dollars a year. The City of Thompson, the third largest city in Manitoba, is largely dependant upon existing and future mining initiatives in this globally-significant area. After the first six-month designation, East Paint Lake Park Reserve was extended for two additional five-year terms, pending the results of the CAMIRO study.

The \$2.02 million dollar CAMIRO project and subsequent work has confirmed that rocks of the same type and age as those hosting producing mines in Thompson, mixed with much older rocks that have low mineral potential, are found throughout the Park Reserve. This mix of high potential rocks and older low potential rocks is one of the defining features of the Thompson Nickel Belt. Claims have since been recorded southwest and northeast of the Park Reserve, clearly indicating that the industry considers the region to have high mineral potential.

The results of the past consultation processes regarding the establishment and renewal of the East Paint Lake Park Reserve suggest that the maintaining of a natural environment, protection of the water quality and recreational values, and maintaining options for mineral exploration are also highly desired for this area. As a result, Manitoba Parks and Natural Areas is proposing that the boundary of Paint Lake Provincial Park be extended to include East Paint Lake Park Reserve, that the park classification for the combined park area be established as Natural Park, and a Recreational Development land use category be applied to the entire resulting area.

Your comments respecting a permanent designation for the East Paint Lake Park Reserve area, and additional permanent park land designation in the Grass River area, are requested before June 29, 2007. Please respond electronically to parksystem@gov.mb.ca or call Cara Gill at (204) 945-4874 to discuss the project in more detail.

Thank you for your interest in Manitoba's provincial park system.