



# Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve

## Land Designation

Ecological reserves play a key role in Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative by protecting unique, rare and representative examples of plants, animals, geological features and ecosystems. They are the most protected of the provincially designated sites within Manitoba's network of protected areas.

## Landscape Description

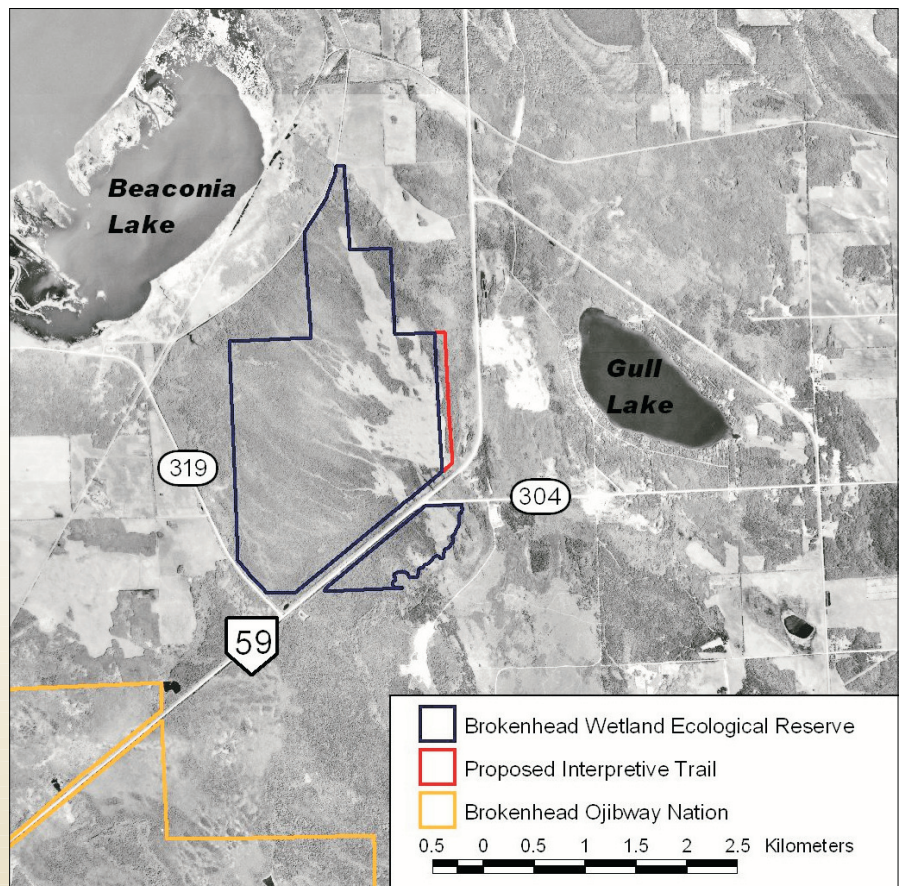
The Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve, 563 hectares in size, is located along Highway 59 northeast of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation Reserve. The area is unique in that it contains a rich, calcareous fen and a white cedar forest community.

## Outstanding Features

Brokenhead Wetland is a calcareous fen, a wetland type considered rare in North America. A calcareous fen is a kind of peatland characterized by a fluctuating water table. Groundwater and surface water movement is a common characteristic of fens and can be observed in the channels and pools in the Brokenhead Wetland. The water is rich in calcium carbonate. Fens are more mineral rich and less acidic than bogs.

The reserve contains 23 species of provincially rare and uncommon plants. Twenty-eight of Manitoba's 36 native orchid species, including the rare ram's head lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*), are found in the wetland along with eight of Manitoba's ten species of carnivorous (insect-eating) plants. A rare white cedar community also forms part of the wetland area.

People have been attracted to this wetland for many years. The local First Nation communities have used it for collecting medicinal plants, for cultural activities and for hunting, and continue to do so to this day. Orchid lovers and eco-tourists visit it to see the many beautiful and rare species found there. Although this area is



wonderfully attractive, for safety reasons and because it is easily disturbed, individuals are not encouraged to visit. There are only very rudimentary trails at present and it is important to stay on them in order not to damage the rare plants and their habitat.

Manitoba Conservation is working to make Brokenhead Wetland more accessible and to highlight many of the unique and rare features of the wetland. Through a partnership with Riverside Gravel, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, Manitoba Model Forest, and Native Orchid Conservation Inc., Manitoba Conservation is working to develop an interpretive trail and boardwalk on Crown land adjacent to the ecological reserve. The installation of boardwalks and interpretive signage will allow the public to safely visit the area for aesthetic, educational and cultural reasons without causing further damage to the native plants and their habitat.