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Manitoba government mismanaging parks

New development announcement highlights lack of management plan and direction

The Wilderness Committee is again disappointed with the Manitoba government's decision to randomly allow private developments in undisturbed areas of provincial parks. This morning, Manitoba Conservation announced plans to authorize a private youth camp on undeveloped Sylvia Lake in cherished Whiteshell Provincial Park.

This announcement highlights the fact that Manitoba Conservation has no publicized and accepted management for parks. Less than 10% of Manitoba's parks have management plans, and even some of those aren't current. The Whiteshell Park Management Plan was published in 1983. On page three of the plan, it states:

"A general update of the Master Plan will be undertaken every ten years."

Whiteshell Provincial Park is already heavily developed. Business owners in the park have stated that Manitoba Conservation has had a de facto no development policy has been in place for several years. According to the most recent Whiteshell Management Plan, published in 1983, the Whiteshell was already overdeveloped:

"The plan recognizes that most of the intensively used areas in Whiteshell have been developed to maximum levels."

In 2009, Conservation secretly began construction of a private camp at Meditation Lake, bulldozing a roadway across remnant old forests and wetlands. A public outcry subsequently stopped this misdirected development.

"This discussion again comes down to our parks, and how we want to preserve them." said Eric Reder, Campaign Director for the Wilderness Committee. "Does the Whiteshell need more forest bulldozed for development? In 30 years, will the wilderness of Sylvia Lake be as valuable to Manitobans as it is today? Is real and competent long-term management of our parks being exercised? The Wilderness Committee asserts the answer to these questions is no. Instead of chumming around with a big corporation, discussing how to give away or destroy more of our wild lands, the Conservation Minister should be completing the Whiteshell Park Management Plan update that is at least 17 years late."

The Wilderness Committee is calling on the Manitoba government to complete a park management plan update of Whiteshell Provincial Park before allowing this or any development to proceed.

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For more information please contact:

Eric Reder, Manitoba Campaign Director: (204) 997-8584