



First Nation Calls for Park Special Report Released Today

The Fisher River Cree Nation (FRCN) is proposing a scenic wilderness park four times the size of Winnipeg (160,000 ha) be created to permanently safeguard the area from all industrial developments. This initiative is part of the community's journey to protect nature, culture, and economic opportunity.

“Securing the area in its natural state will ensure that traditional activities can continue and will allow us to build our local economy with eco- and cultural tourism ventures,” said the FRCN Chief David Crate. “It’s a good way to make sure our treaty rights are upheld and abundant wildlife populations remain strong.”

The Ochiwasahow (Fisher Bay) park reserve was established in 1999 based on a nomination by the FRCN. The park reserve is protected from industrial activities such as logging and mining while a park is being considered. Through this process, the province is obligated to consult local First Nations and gather input from all Manitobans about the future of the area.

Special Report

The FRCN, along with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) and the Wilderness Committee (WC), recently released a report entitled ***Ochiwasahow: the Fisher Bay area***. The report proposes new expanded boundaries for the park reserve based on what the FRCN and the environmental groups consider the best marriage of ecological and cultural considerations.

“CPAWS commends the FRCN for their vision to protect their lands and waters for future generations,” said CPAWS Manitoba Executive Director Ron Thiessen. “We look forward to working with the government, local communities, and all Manitobans to honour the FRCN’s plan for Fisher Bay and its surrounding landscape,” Thiessen added.

Public Support

Manitoban’s support for protecting the lands and waters of Fisher Bay is overwhelming. Over 5,800 letters have been sent by citizens to Premier Doer encouraging government action to grant the FRCN’s request for permanent protection of the area. Also, Peguis First Nation, Jackhead First Nation, Arborg, Riverton, and the RM of Coldwell have formally supported Fisher River Cree Nation’s protected area request.

“Manitobans have demonstrated they understand the need to preserve the lands and waters of our province, and the Fisher River Cree Nation has taken great steps to do just

that." said Wilderness Committee Manitoba Campaign Director Eric Reder. "Now it's important that our provincial government makes protection of this area a high priority," added Reder.

The Area

Located on the south-west basin of Lake Winnipeg, the Ochiwasahow (Fisher Bay) park reserve is First Nations traditional territory and home to wildlife such as bears, moose, fox, eagles, and a variety of songbirds. The picturesque area is blessed with treed shorelines, long sandy beaches, large islands covered with old-growth forests, reefs, and the water of the Bay.

Why we should save it

The Ochiwasahow (Fisher Bay) park reserve is part of the Earth's largest forest, the wild boreal region. The boreal forest is the world's greatest source of fresh water and is deemed the "northern lungs of the planet." As the biggest single land storehouse of carbon, it also plays an important role in regulating global climate. The report states that since 25% of the Earth's remaining intact forests are in Canada, we have a huge responsibility to ensure big wild places like the Fisher Bay region continue to flourish as an essential part of the Earth's life support system.

The report also states that every Canadian relies on the boreal for either a job, food, supplies, or recreation while local communities depend on it for traditional activities and emerging sustainable economic opportunities.

Government Action Required

The FRCN, CPAWS, and WC are asking the Manitoba government to take immediate action to establish a new park according to the specifications requested by the FRCN. The groups state this government action will be a huge step toward a healthy and sustainable future for Manitobans, Canadians, and the Earth.

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The educational report is available online at:
www.cpawsemb.org/conservation/fisherbay1.php

Print resolution images and map of the Fisher Bay area are available online at:
www.wildernesscommittee.mb.ca/media.htm