

Walter Cook Caves Park Reserve

Proposal to Renew Walter Cook Caves Park Reserve



Introduction

Walter Cook Caves Park Reserve is located approximately 410 kilometres north of Winnipeg, and 28 kilometres northwest of Grand Rapids. The park reserve is 32 km² in size.

The park reserve overlies unique karst landscapes within near surface limestone and dolomite bedrock. The landscapes feature sinkholes, caves and other features shaped by the dissolving action of water on limestone and dolomite. A number of caves are located in the area including, *Walter Cook Caves*, *Iguana Crypt*, *Ice Cascade*, *4-Eyed*, *Caprock* and *Anticipation*.

The park reserve is home to the most northerly known bat hibernacula in Canada. The rare calypso orchid and sandhill crane are also found seasonally in the park reserve. Bats, moths and red squirrels frequently winter in the caves. Black bears will also hibernate in the caves. The area supports pockets of jack pine and aspen poplar forests. Area forest stands have been affected by forest fires.

What is a Park Reserve?

To assist in the creation of new provincial parks and protected areas, *The Provincial Parks Act* provides for the establishment of park reserves. Park reserves provide interim protection while being considered for inclusion in the provincial park system or protected areas network.

Park reserves are placed on candidate areas for an initial period of six months and can be extended for a period of five years. Public review occurs during this period to confirm boundaries and determine a final designation for the area.

Walter Cook Caves was first established as a park reserve in August 2001. To continue protecting important natural and cultural values for the area while discussions took place, the park reserve was renewed in 2007 for a second five-year period ending March 2012.



Proposal

- To renew Walter Cook Caves Park Reserve for an additional five-year term in order to conduct further consultations considering a proposed ecological reserve designation for the Walter Cook Caves area.

The Ecological Reserves Act specifies that ecological reserves are set aside for preservation, research, education and nature study. Ecological reserves are the most protected of the provincially designated sites within Manitoba's network of protected areas.

The park reserve area is classified as "Backcountry" land use category under *The Provincial Parks Act*. A Backcountry land use category protects natural areas and contributes to Manitoba's network of protected areas by legally prohibiting commercial logging, mining, hydroelectric development, oil and gas development and any other activity that may significantly or adversely affect habitat.

The rights of First Nations and other Aboriginal people to access the areas for hunting, trapping, fishing and other traditional pursuits would be respected and maintained.

Share your Views

We want to hear from you. Your input will help shape the future of Walter Cook Caves Park Reserve.

To obtain a comment sheet, please visit www.manitobaparks.com or call Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship at 204-945-6784 or (toll free) 1-800-214-6497.

Your comments must be received no later than **February 20, 2012**.

You can email us directly at parksystem@gov.mb.ca or send your comments to:

Park Reserves

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