

Submission from Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation

Thank you for providing the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC) an opportunity to provide input into the planning process for the Willow Creek integrated watershed management plan. Although MHHC is not in a position to comment, in detail, about specific issues in the Willow Creek watershed, we are happy to provide the project management team some general information which you may choose to investigate further.

The mandate of the MHHC is to conserve, enhance, and rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitat in Manitoba. With this in mind, we wish to advise the planning team of the following:

- Dennis Lake and the Narcisse WMA have been identified as a “Heritage Marsh Candidates” by the Manitoba’s department of Conservation. These marshes function as waterfowl refuges during periods of drought and are important molting and staging areas and may warrant special protection measures or mention within your plan. The Manitoba Implementation Plan (MIP) of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan does not include direct expenditures for large marshes but partners are striving to pursue a no loss of wetland function goal as well as cost-effective restoration and heightened awareness of large wetland function and diversity. See the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Prairie Habitat Joint Venture - Manitoba Implementation Plan (1988) and the Manitoba NAWMP Implementation Plan, 2007-2012 for details or: http://www.manitoba.ca/conservation/wildlife/managing/heritage_marshes_list.html
- A further area of conservation potential in Manitoba, and the Willow Creek watershed specifically, is Tall Grass Prairie habitat. The government of Canada, through the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, has identified the southern Interlake (defined as south of Ashern, between Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg and north of Winnipeg) as a priority landscape in which habitat conservation and protection should occur. While MHHC does not have specific programs targeting tall-grass prairie in the Interlake, the Nature Conservancy of Canada may have more resources available.
- MHHC would welcome the opportunity to partner with stakeholders in the Willow Creek watershed, particularly with the East Interlake Conservation District, to deliver conservation agreements (easements) and wetland restorations in areas the management team deems to be a priority.