

CARIBOU FLATS

Representative Areas

-- Concept Management Plan --

**Saskatchewan Environment and
Resource Management
April, 2001**

Saskatchewan's Representative Areas Network Program

The Government of Saskatchewan, through Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM), is committed to the establishment of a system of ecologically important land and water areas across the province by the year 2000. This system is called the "Representative Areas Network".

Saskatchewan is made up of various landscapes. A representative area is a sample or piece of a particular landscape identified because of its important land-forms, wetlands, soils, plants, animal resources or cultural values. Representative areas are intended to allow for natural processes to occur. They can also serve as test sites that can be studied and monitored to measure how well we are managing natural resources and ecosystems elsewhere in the province.

As its name suggests, the Representative Areas Network must include lands and waters that represent a broad range of ecological diversity. Saskatchewan's landscapes have been divided into 11 distinct "ecoregions", each characterized by its geology, soils, climate, plants and animals. The proposed Caribou flats Representative Area lie within the Mid-boreal Upland ecoregion that is currently under represented within the provincial Network.

Just as the reasons for choosing a particular site vary, so too, do the uses that are acceptable within new sites. In some sites, human activities and access may be limited so that the area's ecological resources and integrity can be managed or restored. In the majority of sites, however, land uses that are compatible with the program's ecological objectives can be accommodated. Suggestions and needs identified by local interest groups and users will largely determine the kinds and levels of activity that may occur within a particular site.

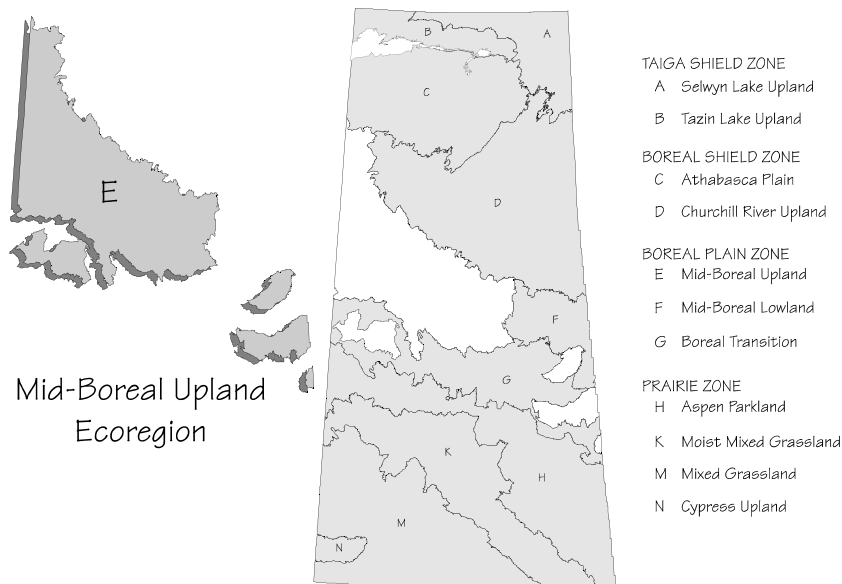
Consultation and input from local users helps to determine the best option for each site. Through these discussions, specific needs, concerns or issues can be addressed on a site-by-site basis and outlined in a management plan or strategy for the area.

For the past several years, representatives from SERM have been working with the Dore-Smoothstone/Advisory Co-management Committee and the Beauval Co-Management Board to discuss the merits of having representative areas established in the Dore, Smoothstone and Lac La Plonge Lakes areas that would protect and preserve important wildlife habitat and traditional lifestyles. These groups have been very instrumental in providing information and support for these representative area initiatives. Recommendations made through these discussions form the basis of this Concept Management Plan and will help guide future management of this very important site as part of the Representative Areas Network.

Description of the Mid-boreal Upland Ecoregion

The Mid-boreal Upland Ecoregion includes the area in central and western Saskatchewan immediately south of the Shield, as well as several prominent upland areas known locally as the Thickwood, Pasquia and Porcupine Hills. This ecoregion occupies over 10 million hectares or 16 per cent of the province. It is characterized by a mosaic of forests, open and treed fens, bogs and water. In addition, an ascending sequence of steeply sloping, eroded escarpments, hilly glacial plains and level plateau-like tops are typical of the upland. Intervening areas are comparatively level, with large, sparsely treed peatlands being common. Most of the ecoregion is characterized by loamy, gray soils, although near the Shield the soils are sandy and often poorly drained.

The forest grows taller here than on the Shield and accounts for the bulk of the province's merchantable timber. Aspen occurs throughout the ecoregion and is dominant on the south-facing slopes of the major uplands. Where moisture conditions are favorable, white spruce is often mixed with aspen. Jack pine, in addition to its usual dominance in sandy areas, is found mixed with black spruce on the plateau-like tops of the uplands. Black spruce and tamarack dominate the low-lying peatland areas.



Wildlife populations are high and diverse with moose, mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, black bear, timber wolf and beaver being most prominent, while woodland caribou occur but are less common. Great gray owl, blue jay, sharp-shinned hawk, broad-winged hawk, yellow-bellied sapsucker, common goldeneye, sandhill crane, many species of warblers, solitary vireo, western tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak and ruby-throated hummingbird are typical birds. Fish populations include northern pike, walleye, whitefish, burbot, white sucker, some perch and scattered populations of lake trout.

A combination of cold climate, sandy soils and hilly topography has limited agricultural development to less than 10 per cent of the area. Forestry is the primary resource use for this ecoregion, and much of the region is currently allocated as timber supply areas under various Forest Management License Agreements with forest companies. Additional resource uses include mining, and oil and gas extraction. Hunting, fishing, trapping and outfitting are also significant resource uses for the region.

Caribou Flats Representative Area

Important Features and Topography

The Dore/Smoothstone area is representative of Canada's mixedwood forested region, containing a variety of different types of forest cover at various stages of growth. The surrounding landscape is relatively level, with the exception of several areas of high relief which include Dore Mountain and lookout point both at 2000 feet above mean sea level. Several large peatlands of both bog and fen origin can be found in the vicinity of Sled and Beauvre lakes. The Caribou flats Representative Area site contains a selection of geological features which support a variety of plants and animals adapted to the northern landscape and climate. Enduring features are used to guide site selections in the Representative Areas Network Program. Enduring features are specific rock, soil and land-form types that are very stable over long periods of time, and are likely to support characteristic plant and animal communities. Enduring features are defined based on four specific factors:

- < the origin of the parent material: this relates to the method by which material such as soil, gravel or rocks was deposited (i.e. wind, water, glacial melt water)
- < soil development: how soils were formed through various factors like climate, soil organisms, the nature of the parent material, the topography of an area, and time
- < surface form: physical landscape features such as eskers or potholes
- < slope: refers to the steepness or grade of the surface terrain

The Caribou Flats Representative Area (8,660 hectares) provides an area of protection on the north end of Dore Lake and includes the islands of Northern and Charbonneau Bays of Dore Lake. The Representative Area does not include Big Island in Northern Bay of Dore Lake, because of its importance to the people of Beauval. The area is characterized by mature black spruce and jack pine mixed stands. Ninety one per cent of the trees in this area are 100 years and older. White spruce, tamarack and trembling aspen can be found in the area, but to a much lesser degree.

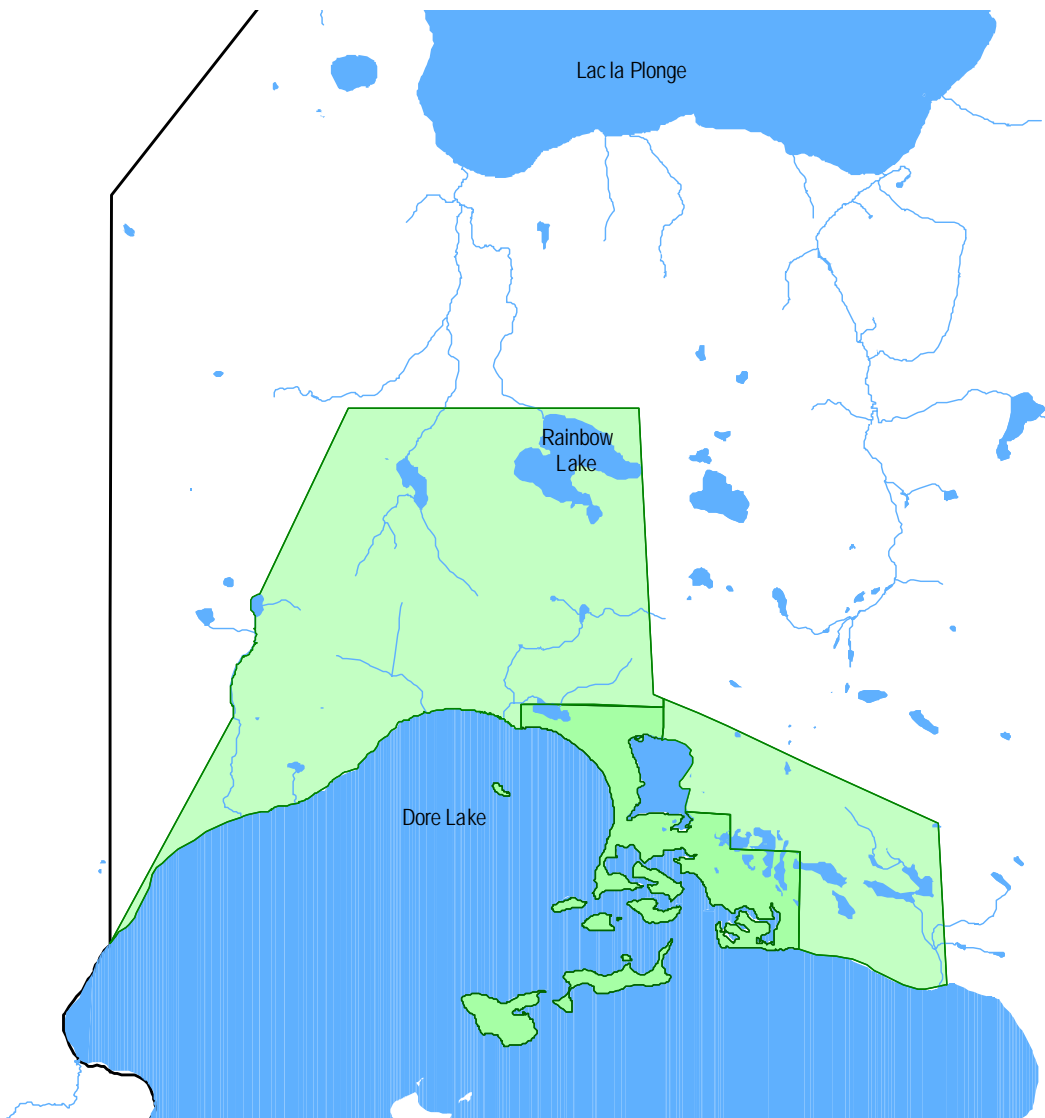
The area is relatively flat and on lies on the enduring feature FFDB, which is the only place that this feature occurs in the Mid-boreal Upland Ecoregion. These sandy-loam soils provide good forest productivity for black spruce and jack pine growth (38 per cent of the total area) making the area good woodland caribou habitat. The area contains two winter

trails(snowmobile access), but is otherwise free from roads and trails.

The Caribou Flats site protects some of the province’s best white sand beaches found on the north shore of Dore Lake. These beaches are reported to be world class and although they may not increase the protection of biological diversity, they are worthy of protection from an esthetic standpoint.

Five outfitters for bear and deer use the site, and the site is trapped by trappers from the N-12 fur block. The site is used by local people from the Beauval and Dore-Smoothstone areas for traditional use activities like mushroom and berry picking. The area is of cultural significance for local First Nations people.

The boundaries of the representative area are shown on the following map.



Site Condition

A few bush trails provide limited access to only a portion of the site, leaving most of the area largely undisturbed. The site is relatively intact and has high ecological integrity. The majority of the forests within the site are mature and have not been logged. Major fires have not occurred in the area since the 1960's, although parts of the Caribou Flats site have been burned as late as 1995.

Current Uses

The Caribou Flats site has been used for many generations for traditional hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering purposes. There are several trappers from the N-12 Fur Block who annually set traplines throughout the site. Associated with these traplines are several relatively primitive cabins that continue to be used on an annual basis. In addition, several outfitters are licensed within the representative area.

Dore Lake is fished commercially by people from Beauval and Dore Lake. Located within the representative area and associated with the commercial fishing operation are several structures such as ice houses and cabins to store equipment. These structures are generally by the waters edge and do not lessen the integrity of the representative area to a great degree.

The area is used infrequently by sport hunters to harvest white-tailed deer, moose and to a lesser extent elk. Limited amounts of recreation occur in the area due to the remoteness of the site. There are no recreational cabins or leases in the representative area site. Wild rice growing takes place in several locations within the Caribou Flats site.

Site Use and Management

Allowable Activities and Developments:

- U** exercise of treaty rights (hunting, trapping {including building and maintaining associated trappers' cabins}, fishing, gathering, including the harvest of medicinal plants)
- U** trapping
- U** hunting
- U** fishing
- U** outfitting
- U** mushroom picking
- U** berry picking
- U** walking, hiking, backpacking and nature observation and appreciation
- U** research and educational activities;
- U** use of existing trails
- U** existing wild rice growing and harvesting

Carrying out of these activities is subject to normal licensing or permitting requirements, as may be applicable.

Activities and Developments Not Allowed:

- Y** commercial timber harvesting
- Y** new trails that could be used for recreational purposes by motorized vehicles
- Y** disruptive mineral development and/or mineral exploration
- Y** recreational cottage subdivisions
- Y** residential and/or recreational cabin leases
- Y** new hydroelectric projects
- Y** gravel pits
- Y** new or expanded outfitting base camps
- Y** fire salvage logging
- Y** new weirs, dams or control structures on or in streams
- Y** fish introductions of exotic or non-native species
- Y** new utility corridors

Advisory Board

Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM) will establish an advisory board comprised of representatives from the Dore/Smoothstone area, and/or any other party recognized as having an interest or role in the ongoing management and use of the representative area.

The Advisory Board shall meet at the request of SERM to act in an advisory capacity to review and recommend specific activities, management tools, research and educational activities that may be considered for application within the representative area. Once the Board has been struck, a comprehensive Terms of Reference shall be established and adopted by the Board and SERM.

NOTE: Should the Caribou Flats Representative Area be removed from the Representative Areas Network at a future date, SERM will consult with the community of Beauval regarding management of the area.

Site Designation

Formal designation of the surface area of the site is as a Representative Area, created by regulations established pursuant to *The Ecological Reserves Act*.

A representative area is a legally protected natural area that may serve as a benchmark for measuring environmental changes and the ecological health of this and other areas in Saskatchewan. Representative Areas can also be used to preserve ecological and geological features and provide opportunities for scientific research and study related to ecological health. The Caribou Flats site contains features and resources that fit each of these ecological purposes, as well as supporting a variety of plant and animal communities.

The Crown minerals underlying the surface of the site will be protected by a Crown

Reserve established by Saskatchewan Energy and Mines pursuant to *The Crown Minerals Act*. A Crown Reserve withdraws the minerals from disposition for exploration or development purposes, thereby affording maximum protection for the sites' full range of resources.