

Seager Wheeler Lake

Representative Area

-- Concept Management Plan --

**Saskatchewan Environment and
Resource Management
January, 1999**

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 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 Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area lies within the Mid-boreal Lowland Ecoregion, an 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.

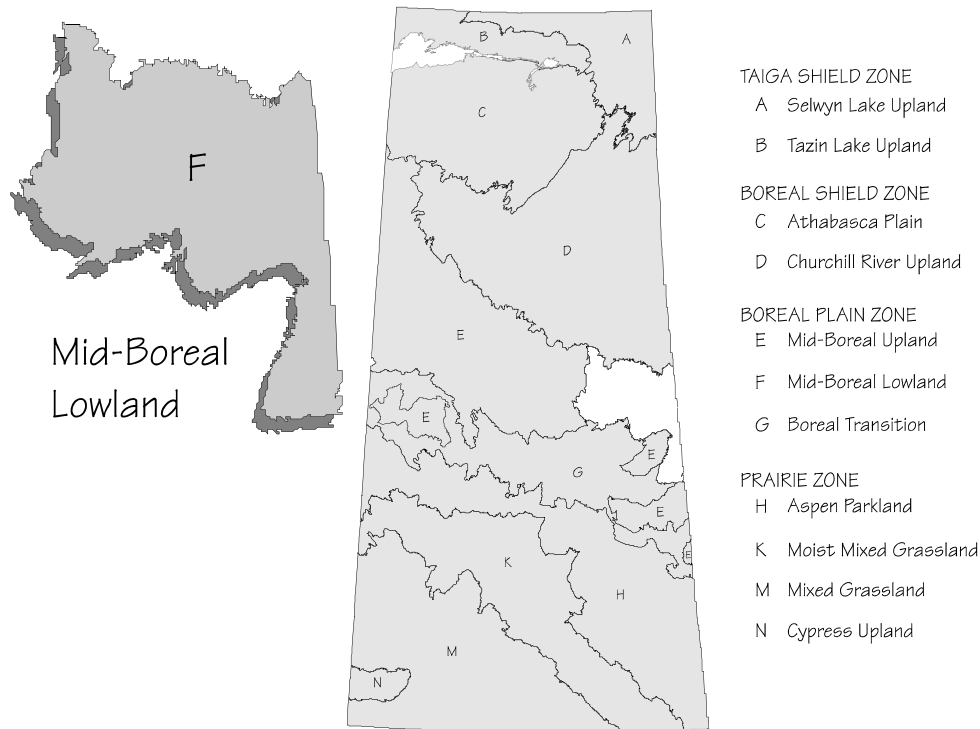
Discussions with First Nations people of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation and the Cumberland House Cree Nation along with a wide range of users interested in this area, have been meeting and discussing potential uses within the Seager Wheeler Lake area for the past year. Through these discussions, recommendations have been made to SERM regarding use, future management, and designation of the Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area. These recommendations, achieved through a group consensus process, are documented within this Concept Management Plan.

Description of the Mid-boreal Lowland Ecoregion

The Mid-boreal Lowland Ecoregion contains 2,164,000 hectares (about 3% of the province), and is predominantly Crown land administered by SERM.

At an average elevation of less than 400 meters, this relatively flat, low-lying ecoregion is dominated by wetlands. Peatlands supporting open stands of tamarack and black spruce are prevalent in the northern part, although sandy glacial deposits and limestone outcrops also occur there. To the south lies the flood plain of the Saskatchewan River featuring both active and abandoned river channels and their associated levees. The levees, which are built up by the periodic deposition of river sediments, rise abruptly from the river channel and then slope gently back from the river into an area of marshes, fens and poorly drained meadows. Most of the levees are well drained and represent some of the most productive forest lands in the province. Large white spruce, balsam poplar and aspen are found here along with an assortment of less common hardwoods such as American elm, green ash and Manitoba maple. The forest productivity in this area has resulted in forestry being the most important land use in the Ecoregion although fishing, hunting and trapping are also important resource uses.

Ecoregions of Saskatchewan:



Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area

Important Features and Topography

The Seager Wheeler Lake site is representative of the range of natural ecosystems that occur within the mid-boreal lowland ecoregion, outside of the Saskatchewan River Delta. Six different soil associations (enduring features) are present within this large (nearly 180,000 hectare) site including bogs and fens, and morainal soil types like sand, sandy loam and loam. There are no developed roads throughout the site which means that the ecological and natural resources within the area are largely undisturbed.

Vegetation on the site is mostly composed of plant types normally associated with bogs and fens. Stands of black spruce occur throughout the area with some being quite extensive. In some of the area, particularly at slightly higher elevations, black spruce/white spruce and jackpine stands occur along with a variety of plants that make up the understory normally associated with these stand types. Many of these tree stands would be considered “very old growth” forests in Saskatchewan, largely because they have not been subjected to fire or other natural disturbances.

The mixed bog/fen forest, in conjunction with the absence of roads within the area, provides ideal habitat for a large population of woodland caribou. This species is provincially protected and recognized nationally as being threatened. Other large mammals in the area include moose and white-tailed deer. Both of these species are hunted by traditional resource users as well as sport hunters. The area is also a known breeding ground for great grey owls.

The representative area also contains important water resources. The Mossy River and its tributaries flow through the site. The “headwaters” of the Puskwakau River, an important northern walleye river, are contained within the area. Seager Wheeler Lake and several smaller lakes, some of which are also “headwater” lakes, are also contained in the site. The Seager Wheeler Lake area may contain as many as 15 species of fish, many of them minnow or bait species. The deepwater sculpin, a threatened species can be found here. The smaller headwater lakes are likely devoid of fish, meaning that their aquatic invertebrate communities are different than fish-bearing water bodies.

The area provides an important fur resource to the First Nations people of the area. Muskrat, beaver and wolf are trapped by many of the people from Deschambault Lake and Cumberland House. Other important fur resources include mink, weasel and martin.

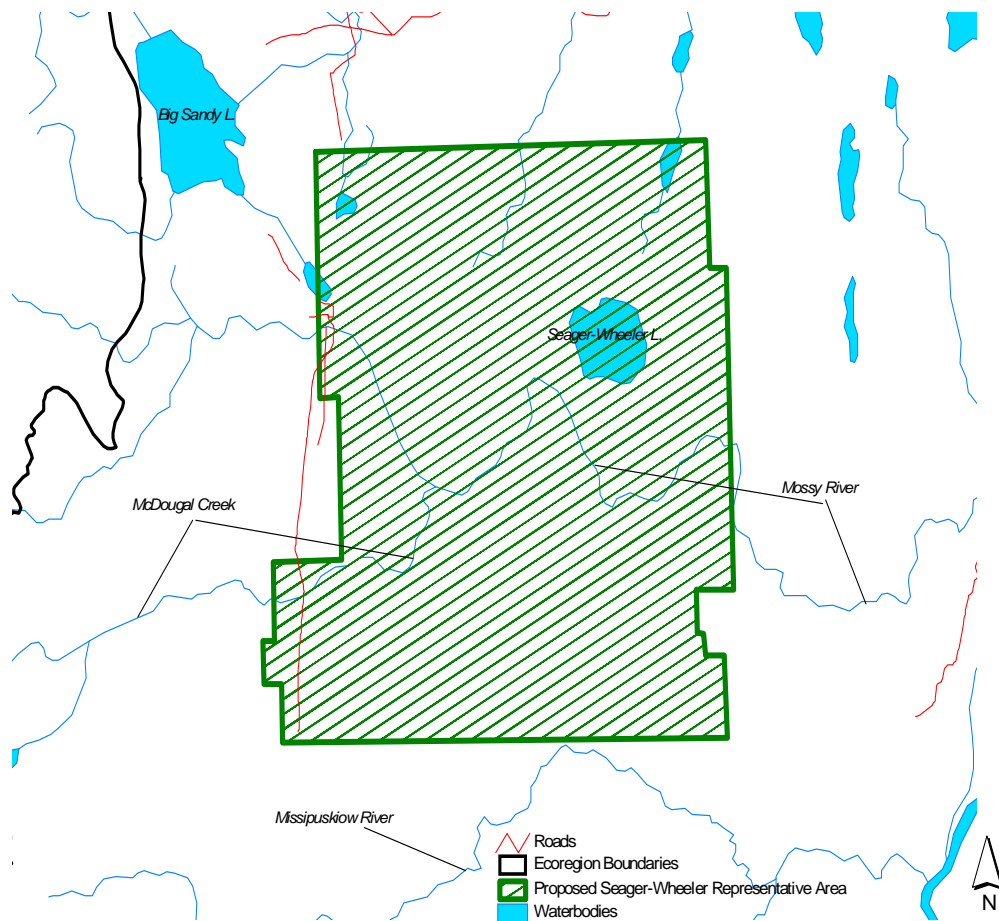
Enduring features are used to guide site selections in the Representative Areas Network program. Enduring features are specific rock, soil and land-form types that are very stable over long periods of time, and are likely to support characteristic plant and animal communities. Enduring features are defined 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**

Within the overall Representative Areas Network, the Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area is important because of the number and diversity of enduring features represented in the site. Six different enduring feature types occur within this large (177,961 ha/439,736 ac) area.

The boundary of the Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area is shown on the following map.

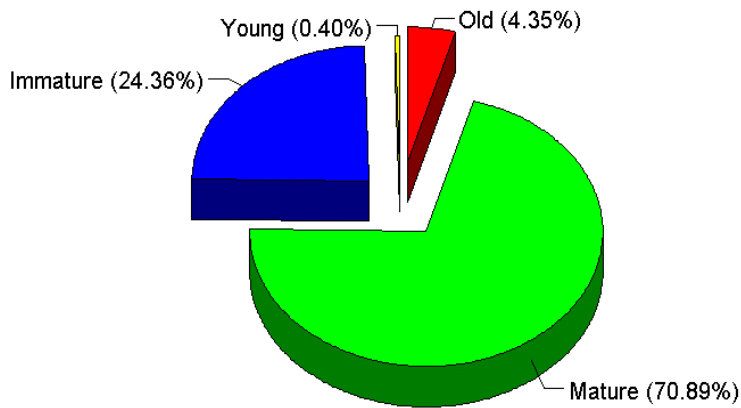
SEAGER WHEELER LAKE REPRESENTATIVE AREA



Site Condition

Significant portions of the area remain virtually untouched by humans, making this site pristine and unique. Most likely due to its wet and rough topography, the site has not had any significant road or major trail development. A few bush trails provide limited access to only a portion of the site on the west side, leaving most of the area largely undisturbed. The forest is a mixture of black spruce, jackpine, birch, and balsam fir, and includes a number of mature stands that have not been subjected to major fires or other disturbances for an unusually long time.

Age Class



Current

The Seager Wheeler Lake area has been used for many generations for traditional hunting, trapping and gathering purposes. There are several trappers who annually set traplines throughout the area. Associated with these traplines are several relatively primitive cabins that continue to be used on an annual basis. Many of these are covered by SERM-issued traditional use permits, with some others built and maintained as part of individual recognized treaty rights. Activities like mushroom and berry picking have taken place in the area for many years.

One wild rice licence has been issued by SERM on the south side of Herman Lake and lies within the proposed boundary.

Two outfitters are licensed within the representative area. One of these is entitled to outfit

Uses

for deer within a portion of the Seager Wheeler Lake area, but has no camps or fixed-roof facilities located within the site. The second outfitter is licenced to outfit for bear (including baits) as well as moose. This outfitter maintains a base camp on the Mossy River. There is also one recreational cottage lease in the area.

The Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area lies within an area of Crown land unallocated for the purpose of harvesting its timber resources, therefore the site has not been commercially harvested. The Amisk-Atik proposed timber supply area lies to the northeast of the site, while the Weyerhaeuser Reserve Number 2 timber supply area lies directly north of the representative area.

Site Use and Management

Allowable Activities and Developments:

- U** trapping
- U** hunting
- U** angling
- U** bait fishing
- U** mushroom picking, where mushrooms may be sold
- U** berry picking, where berries may be sold
- U** outfitting, including setting of bear bait stations
- U** exercise of treaty rights
- U** development of reasonable access to support traditional or treaty uses
- U** hiking and backpacking on existing trails
- U** existing wild rice growing
- U** snowmobiling on existing trails
- U** educational and research related activities
- U** existing recreational cottage lease

Carrying out of these activities would be 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** mineral development and/or mineral exploration
- Y** recreational cottage subdivisions
- Y** new residential and/or recreational cabin leases
- Y** new base camps to support tourism or commercial ventures
- Y** hydroelectric projects
- Y** gravel pits
- Y** new or expanded outfitting operations
- Y** new wild rice growing areas
- Y** fire salvage logging
- Y** weirs, dams or control structures on or in streams
- Y** commercial harvest of non-timber forest products
- Y** collection of rare and endangered plants
- Y** exotic fish introductions

Seager Wheeler Lake Advisory Board

Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM) will establish an advisory board comprised of representatives of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, Cumberland House Cree Nation, stakeholders, interest groups, users, and/or any other party recognized as having an interest or role in the ongoing management and use of the Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area.

The Seager Wheeler Lake 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.

Activities and uses not specifically stated in this Concept Management Plan that are under consideration for the Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area shall be reviewed by the Advisory Board prior to implementation.

Site Designation

Formal designation of the surface area of the Seager Wheeler Lake 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 which 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 Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area contains features and resources that fit each of these ecological purposes.

The Crown minerals underlying the surface of the Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area will be managed 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 site's full range of resources.