



Ojibway Prairie

Park Management Plan





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APPROVAL STATEMENT

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am pleased to approve the **Ojibway Prairie Park Management Plan** as the official policy for the protection and management of this nature reserve. The plan reflects the Ministry of Natural Resources' and Ontario Parks' commitment to manage the Ojibway Prairie for the people of Ontario as a nature reserve, protected from the impacts of human activity, now and in the future.

The plan outlines a prioritized implementation strategy and summarizes the public consultation that occurred as part of the planning process.

The plan for Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve will be used to guide the management of the park over the next twenty years. It may be reviewed or amended to address changing issues or conditions, as required.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to all those who participated in the public consultation process.

Yours truly,


Adair Ireland-Smith
Managing Director
Ontario Parks


Date

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Résumé

Parcs Ontario tient à reconnaître les contributions courantes de la Ville de Windsor, partenaire dans la gestion de la réserve naturelle provinciale d'Ojibway Prairie. Dans le cadre de ce partenariat, la réserve a vu l'élaboration d'un Plan d'intendance des ressources, la publication de documentations et l'exécution de brûlages dirigés pour y assurer la vitalité de la prairie d'herbes longues et de l'écosystème de la savane de chênes. La ville est également propriétaire d'autres terres locales d'importance environnementale et administre les services du Centre de la nature de la prairie Ojibway.

Le Plan de gestion approuvé *du parc de la prairie Ojibway* contient toutes les politiques et déclarations d'orientation aux fins de la gestion à long terme de la réserve.

Le but de la réserve naturelle provinciale d'Ojibway Prairie est de: **préserv**er l'intégrité de la prairie d'herbes longues et de l'écosystème de la savane de chênes. Elle est gérée au nom de tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes en tant que réserve naturelle à protéger contre les effets des activités humaines.

Parcs Ontario est fondé sur quatre objectifs: *protection, loisirs, appréciation du patrimoine et tourisme*. En tant que réserve naturelle provinciale, Ojibway Prairie répond principalement aux principes de protection des caractéristiques biologiques et d'appréciation du patrimoine.

La réserve naturelle provinciale d'Ojibway Prairie est réglementée en vertu de la *Loi sur les parcs provinciaux* depuis 1977 (règlement de l'Ontario 630/77) dans le but de protéger la prairie d'herbes longues et la savane de chênes, qui sont parmi les dernières au Canada. La partie réglementée de la réserve naturelle s'étend sur quelque 60 pour 100 de la superficie totale projetée. Une proportion importante des terres acquises par la province doivent encore être définies en application des règlements gouvernant les réserves naturelles. On a également reconnu plusieurs parcelles municipales adjacentes, ainsi que des emprises routières et des propriétés privées en vue de leur acquisition éventuelle.

La prairie Ojibway est classée comme *Réserve naturelle* et toute sa superficie fait l'objet d'un zonage conforme à ce statut, en raison de ses écosystèmes exceptionnels de prairie d'herbes longues et de savane de chênes. L'utilisation de la réserve naturelle par le public se limitera aux sentiers désignés, sauf en ce qui concerne les activités de recherche reconnues. La réserve naturelle provinciale d'Ojibway Prairie sera gérée conformément aux politiques qui gouvernent la catégorie des réserves naturelles, telles que décrites dans *les politiques de gestion et de planification de Parcs Ontario*. Les activités compatibles avec les politiques gouvernant les réserves naturelles comprennent la randonnée et l'observation de la nature. Les projets de gestion des ressources dont tient compte la version approuvée du *Plan d'intendance des ressources de la prairie Ojibway* pourront être exécutés par les partenaires et les commanditaires.

On envisage aussi la rédaction d'un plan opérationnel qui guiderait le personnel du parc et ses partenaires dans la poursuite des activités courantes. On y énoncerait en détail les programmes d'éducation sur le patrimoine naturel, de recherche scientifique, de commercialisation, de gestion des loisirs, d'urgence, d'application des lois et d'entretien.

Tout l'aménagement proposé se limitera à l'amélioration des sentiers, la pose de clôtures sur les limites de la propriété, la pose d'enseignes requises et de panneaux d'interprétation et d'installations provisoires de recherche et de gestion des ressources. Toute construction sera conforme aux plans du terrain and sujet à un examen par des écologistes et généralistes des ressources, selon les besoins, en vue de limiter les effets indésirables sur les caractéristiques importantes. Les installations approuvées seront aménagées de manière à respecter l'environnement.

La définition et la mise en œuvre des politiques de gestion garantiront la conformité à la *Loi sur les parcs provinciaux*, *Loi sur les espèces en voie de disparition* et à la *Loi sur les évaluations environnementales*. Tout aménagement et projet d'intendance des ressources sera précédé d'un processus de planification et de consultation

publique adéquat. La mise en chantier des projets d'aménagement et d'intendance, ainsi que la rédaction des plans, dépendront de la disponibilité des fonds nécessaires, des circonstances et des modifications apportées aux priorités et politiques.

Une lettre invitant le public à participer au processus de planification avait été envoyée aux intervenants, propriétaires de terres adjacentes et groupes d'intérêts provinciaux dès le lancement du projet en août 1998. On a inclus les renseignements généraux disponibles combinés aux points de vue offerts au départ par tout particulier ou groupe intéressé dans la rédaction du *Plan de gestion préliminaire de la réserve naturelle provinciale d'Ojibway Prairie* qui a été publié en août 1999. On a tenu compte des commentaires reçus du public dans la rédaction de la version approuvée du *Plan de gestion du parc de la prairie Ojibway*.

Le public a eu une dernière occasion d'examiner le plan de gestion approuvé pendant une période de 45 jours suivant sa publication officielle. Cela a permis aux personnes intéressées au processus de planification de déterminer une dernière fois si l'on avait tenu compte de leurs préoccupations et de lancer un appel quant au contenu du plan, le cas échéant.

Le plan de gestion du parc orientera la gestion de la réserve naturelle pendant les vingt prochaines années. On pourra l'examiner et le modifier en fonction de l'évolution des dossiers ou des conditions, selon les besoins. Un examen peut comprendre une réévaluation du plan en tout ou partie, y compris la classification, le zonage, les objectifs poursuivis et toutes les politiques de gestion des ressources, d'exploitation et d'aménagement. Toute modification du plan sera envisagée selon l'existence de problèmes ou de besoins précis.

Statement of Environmental Values and the Environmental Bill of Rights

In 1994, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) finalized its *Statement of Environmental Values* (SEV) under the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR). The SEV is a document that describes how the purposes of the EBR are to be considered whenever decisions are made in the ministry that might significantly affect the environment. This includes decisions made as a result of the park management planning process.

The primary purpose of the EBR is “to protect, conserve and, where reasonable, restore the integrity of the environment.” From the ministry’s perspective, that broad statement of purpose translates into four objectives in its SEV:

- to ensure the long-term health of ecosystems by protecting and conserving our valuable soil, aquatic resources, forest and wildlife resources as well as their biological foundations;
- to ensure the continuing availability of natural resources for the long-term benefit of the people of Ontario;
- to protect natural heritage and biological features of provincial significance; and
- to protect human life, the resource base and physical property from the threats of forest fires, floods and erosion.

During the development of the Ojibway Prairie Park Management Plan, the ministry considered its SEV. The Management Plan will further the objectives of managing Ontario’s resources on an environmentally sustainable basis.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A prairie landscape, consisting of two meter high grasses, numerous large purple and yellow wildflowers swaying in the ever present prairie breezes, and vast open spaces interrupted by scattered clumps of trees, once dominated portions of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, the City of Windsor, and Essex and Lambton Counties. Tallgrass prairie covered thousands of square kilometres of the eastern edge of the Great Plains and extended in restricted locations as far east as Pennsylvania and southwestern Ontario. European settlement and subsequent

farming have diminished tallgrass prairie until, at present, only a small portion of this ecosystem remains.

Located within the City of Windsor and the Town of LaSalle, the 65 hectare Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve was regulated under the Provincial Parks Act in 1977 (Ontario Regulation 630/77) to protect one of the largest remnants of tallgrass prairie and oak savanna in Canada.

Adjacent to the nature reserve is Ojibway Park, operated by the City of Windsor. A nature centre located in Ojibway Park provides interpretive and educational programs relating to the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. Other neighbouring land uses include residential, a horse race track and a hydro transmission corridor.

A number of areas with tallgrass prairie vegetation are found adjacent to or nearby the nature reserve, which form part of the Ojibway Prairie Remnants Life Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest¹ (ANSI). The ANSI comprises a total area of approximately 360 hectares. Some of these areas are suitable for inclusion in Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. The ANSI has also been identified as a Carolinian Canada site. Carolinian Canada is a popular name for the extreme southwest region of Ontario where the Eastern Deciduous Forest of North America has its northernmost limits.

Provincial Parks situated within a 100 kilometre radius of the nature reserve include Wheatley, Rondeau, East Sister Island, Fish Point and Lighthouse Point. The closest national park is Point Pelee. The nature reserve is located within the area managed by the Essex Region Conservation Authority. The authority operates several conservation areas in the vicinity.






¹ ANSIs are areas of land and water containing natural landscapes or features which have been identified as having values related to protection, natural heritage appreciation, scientific study or education.



Ojibway Prairie

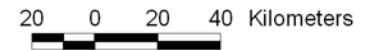
Figure 1: Regional Context

Legend

-  Ojibway Prairie Provincial Park
-  Provincial Parks
-  Waterbodies
-  Highways
-  Roadways

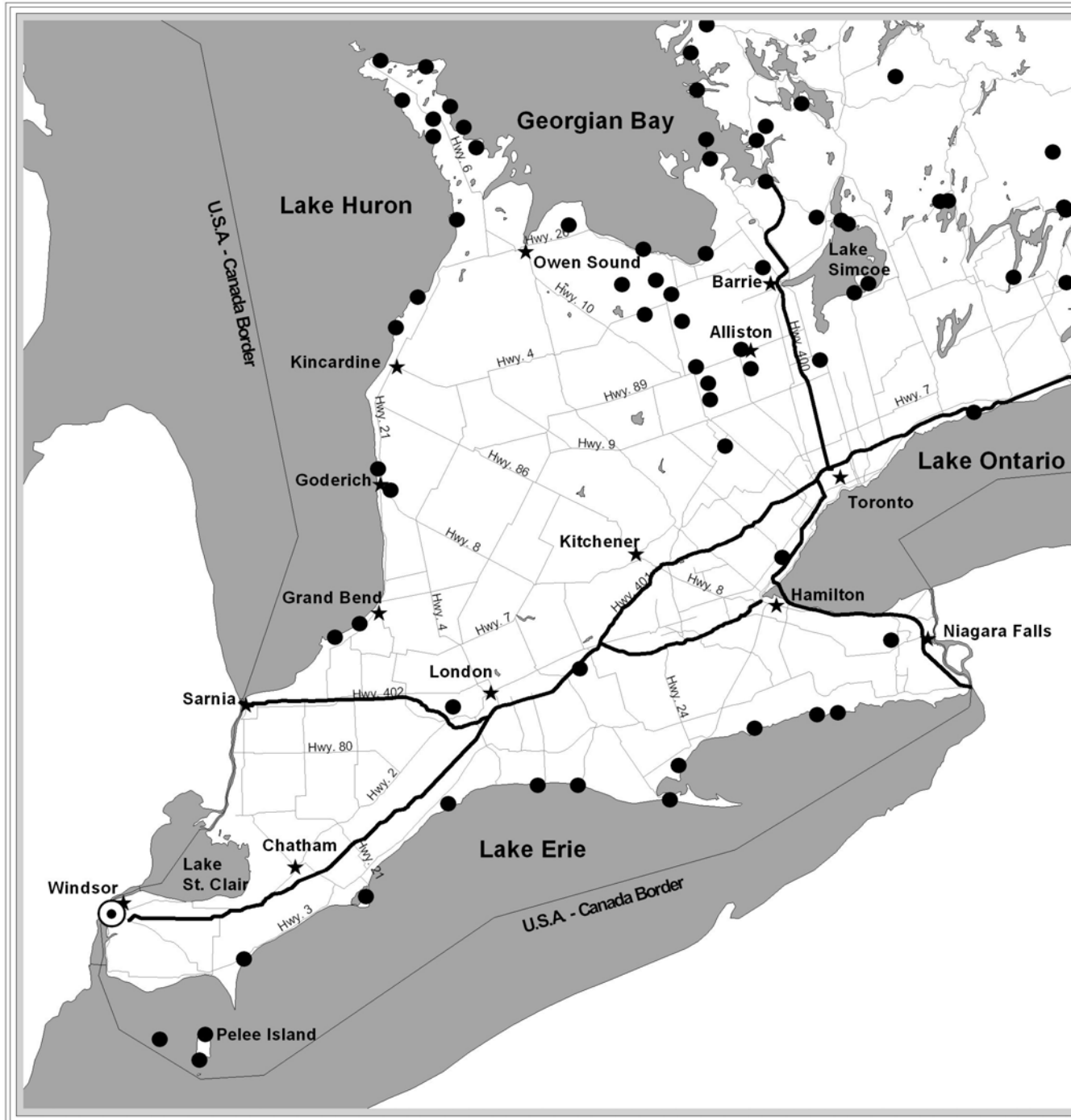


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2.0 CLASSIFICATION

All provincial parks in Ontario fall into one of six classes: *wilderness, nature reserve, historical, natural environment, waterway and recreation*. Ojibway Prairie is classified as a *nature reserve* park in recognition of the need to effectively protect the remnant tallgrass prairie and oak savanna ecosystems.

Nature reserves are areas selected to represent the distinctive natural communities and landforms of Ontario. They are protected for educational purposes, as gene pools for research and for their intrinsic values. Permitted activities and management practices are directed solely toward the achievement of protection and heritage appreciation objectives as outlined in regulations and objectives of the Provincial Parks system.

3.0 GOAL

To preserve the integrity of the Ojibway Prairie tallgrass prairie and oak savanna. It will be managed for the people of Ontario as a nature reserve, protected from the impacts of human activity.

The Provincial Parks Act and the Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies govern all provincial parks, including Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve.

4.0 OBJECTIVES

There are four established objectives for the Ontario Parks system: *protection, recreation, heritage appreciation and tourism*. As a provincial nature reserve, Ojibway Prairie contributes primarily to protection of life science features and to heritage appreciation. These are elaborated upon as follows.

4.1 Protection

To protect provincially significant elements of the natural and cultural landscape of Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve.

The protection objective of Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve will be accomplished through appropriate provincial park zoning, land use controls, research, monitoring and a greater park ecosystem approach to park planning and management. The greater park ecosystem can be defined as the area of influence surrounding the nature reserve from an ecological, social and economical point of view. It is also the area where most of the impacts affecting the nature reserve occur.

The nature reserve will be managed to protect and perpetuate tallgrass prairie and oak savanna vegetation communities and the numerous rare plant communities and significant species that it hosts. Expansion of the nature reserve may be undertaken to protect additional tallgrass prairie and oak savanna habitat.

4.1.1 Life Science

Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve is adjacent to the provincially significant Ojibway Prairie Remnant Life Science ANSI, which is located in Ecodistrict 7E-1. A map showing the ANSI remnants, including Spring Garden, is contained within the Ojibway Prairie Resource Stewardship Plan.

The dominant feature in the nature reserve is the tallgrass prairie plant community. However, related plant communities, including oak savanna, also thrive in the nature reserve. Altogether 533 flowering plant species have been documented in and around Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve, of which more than 60 are of prairie and western affinity.

The nature reserve's southerly location has encouraged the growth of limited areas of forest dominated by pin oak, black oak and small stands of red hickory. These features and over 60 species of plants that are rare in Ontario are considered significant in the nature reserve.

Some portions of the nature reserve are former agricultural lands. Prairie species are now growing on these old fields and appropriate management will ensure their conversion to tallgrass prairie.

Animal species representative of prairie habitats and found in the nature reserve include Butler's Garter Snake, Eastern Fox Snake and Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake.

4.1.2 Earth Science

Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve lies on a flat sandy plain seven and a half to nine metres above the Detroit River. The medium-grained sand was deposited during a short-lived postglacial lake, representing a quiet water environment. About one metre below the surface sands is a thick layer of clay till and a thin layer of sandy till. These were deposited by glacial ice during the Wisconsinan glaciation period. The nature reserve is underlain by mid-Devonian limestone of the Dundee Formation.

4.2 Heritage Appreciation

To provide opportunities for unstructured individual exploration and appreciation of the life science features of Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve.

The nature reserve may provide visitors with the opportunity to explore and appreciate a landscape and ecosystem that once dominated larger portions of extreme southwestern Ontario and vast areas of the midwestern part of North America.

To provide opportunities for exploration and appreciation of natural environments through education and interpretation based upon the character and significance of the nature reserve.

Low key, self-use interpretative and education programs will be developed that are compatible with and complimentary to the protection of life and earth science features. Visitors to the site may gain an appreciation of the significance of life and earth science features through a self-use interpretive trail and brochure. Further heritage appreciation opportunities may be partnered with the City of Windsor's tallgrass prairie ecosystem interpretive and educational programs.

5.0 PARK BOUNDARY

Figure 2 shows the regulated Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve boundary. Botanical inventories have identified areas of relatively undisturbed tallgrass prairie vegetation adjacent to the present boundary of the nature reserve. These additional properties will be acquired and incorporated into Ojibway Prairie Provincial

Nature Reserve, subject to the availability of funding.

The first priority will be the proposed acquisition and regulation of approximately 40 hectares of land located southeast of the nature reserve. A portion (15 hectares) of this area is acquired provincial land; the remainder consists of unopened road allowances and private land.

Part of Lots 50 and 51, Concession 1 is unregulated and leased to the City of Windsor as a baseball field. Transfer of this property to the municipality may eventually be negotiated.

6.0 ZONING

Lands and waters contained within provincial parks classed as nature reserves are zoned in accordance with the significant features and level of protection required. Zoning categories are based on the Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies that establish permissible development, use and management practices.

The entire Ojibway Prairie site is zoned as nature reserve because of the distinctive tallgrass prairie and oak savanna ecosystems. All additions to Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve will be zoned as nature reserve.

Public use of the nature reserve will be confined to designated trails, with the exception of approved research activities.

7.0 RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP POLICIES

Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve will be managed in accordance with the policies set out in the Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies. Resource management initiatives may be accomplished through partnerships and sponsorships.

The Ojibway Prairie Resource Stewardship Plan has been prepared to recommend specific management techniques or practices for flora and fauna. Both may be addressed in the following sections.



Ojibway Prairie

Figure 2: Boundaries and Zoning

Legend

- Regulated Area/
Nature Reserve Zone
 - Proposed Boundary
 - Trail
 - Stream/River
 - Pond/Reservoir/Lake
 - Large Scale Structure
 - Baseball Diamond
- Road Segment
- Primary
 - Secondary
 - Railway
 - Lot Fabric

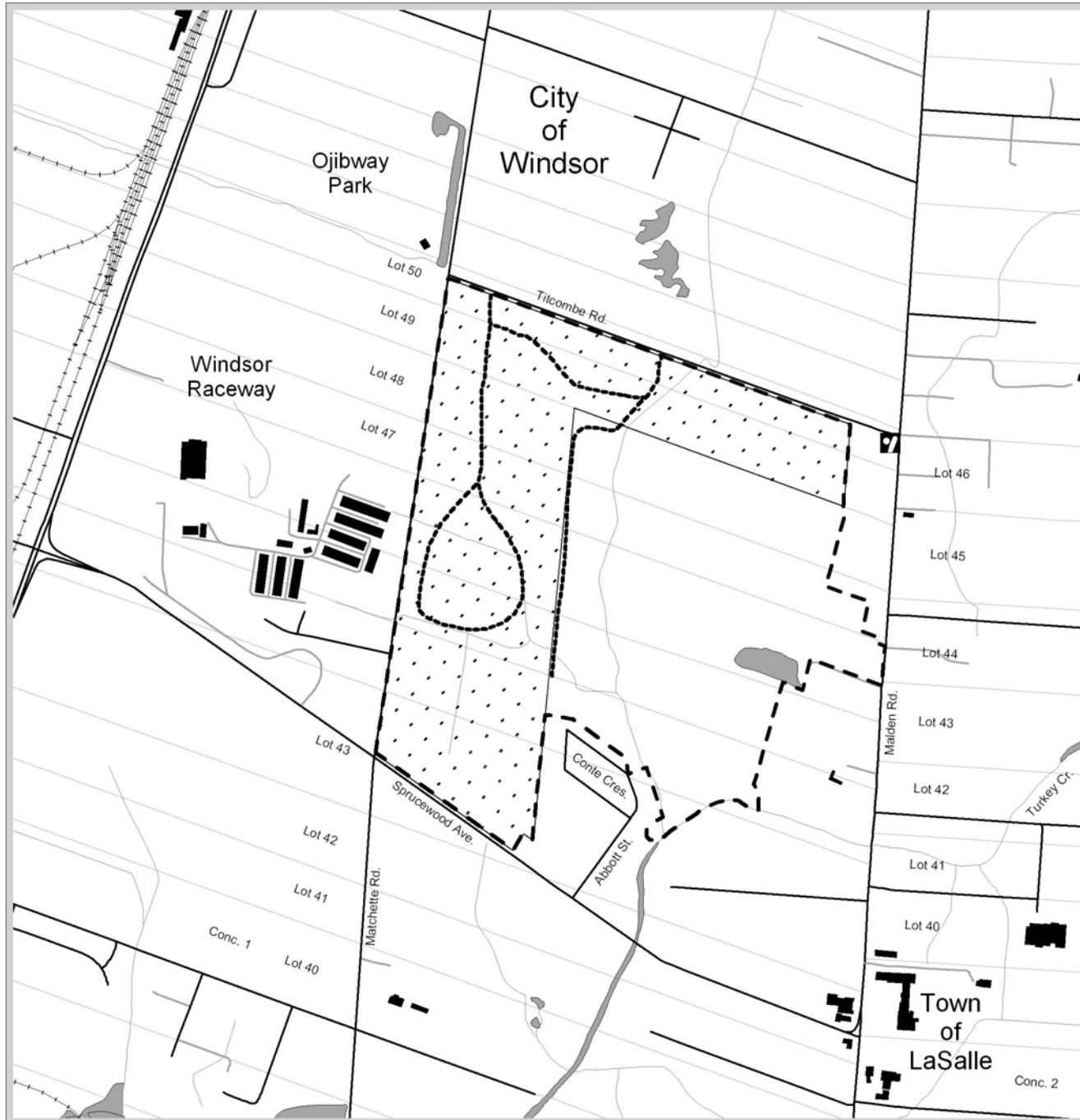


Scale 1:15,000

100 0 100 200 Meters

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7.1 Integrated Ecosystem Management

Active management of vegetation and wildlife must be undertaken to meet the goals and objectives established by this park's Management Plan (sections 2.0 and 3.0).

Rare and significant species that occur within Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve will be protected. Specific enhancement and reintroduction programs may occur as deemed necessary. All rare species will be periodically monitored to ensure their continued existence.

Prior to European settlement, frequent natural fires helped preserve tallgrass prairie from invasion by woody plants. More recently, fires have been suppressed, allowing most of the prairie that escaped cultivation to evolve into thickets and forests. To simulate natural conditions, the OMNR has carried out prescribed burning of the nature reserve. The condition of the tallgrass prairie, along with changes over time, may be monitored and prescribed burns will be conducted as required according to a Prescribed Burn Plan.

Alien or non-native plant species will not be intentionally introduced into the nature reserve. The control of alien species and noxious weeds may occur. Native insect and disease control may occur where there is a threat to the nature reserve's natural features or adjoining private lands. Chemical control may occur when no other means of control is feasible.

Ojibway Prairie can be a very important gene source of prairie material for other areas. Subject to Ontario Parks' approval, seed collection from the site may be permitted to support restoration of tallgrass prairie elsewhere. Seed collection will be of a low scale, low impact nature. Ojibway Prairie can also be a repository of seed/plugs of native prairie plant material found only at one or a very few other locations, but not currently existing in the nature reserve.

Hunting will not be permitted within the nature reserve. However, control of particular species may be required for public safety, protection of property and perpetuation of natural values. Nuisance animals may be removed or controlled under the direction of the Ontario Parks staff.

Adaptive management strategies may be employed. Adaptive management is a dynamic process in which planning and management strategies are modified frequently as better information becomes available. It applies scientific principles and methods to improve management activities incrementally, as managers learn from experience and new scientific findings, and adapt to changing social expectations and demands.

7.2 Mineral Rights

Mineral rights have been leased to allow the removal of salt deposits beneath the nature reserve, subject to conditions protecting the surface from disturbance. Excavation of the salt zones of the Salina Formation occurs at depths of 289 metres and 511 metres. Where land acquisition is undertaken, existing leases will continue. New leases may be granted, subject to the same conditions that apply to the present nature reserve.

The current lease agreement is in effect until December 31st, 2002. Under this agreement, the lessee has the option of renewing the lease by notifying the lessor within 90 days before lease expiry. As part of this notification, the lessee is required to demonstrate to the lessor that the productive life of the mine is longer than the current term of the lease. If this is satisfactorily demonstrated, a renewal may be signed for up to a maximum of 28 years.

8.0 OPERATIONS POLICIES

A Park Operations Plan will be developed and implemented to guide the day-to-day operations of Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve by park staff and partners. It will provide details regarding natural heritage education, research, recreation management, emergencies, enforcement and maintenance.

8.1 Natural Heritage Education

Natural heritage education for visitors to Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve, including community and school groups, will be oriented towards self-use. Ojibway Prairie offers a unique opportunity to develop an understanding and appreciation of the tallgrass prairie as well as

other plant communities and wildlife. Interpretive panels will be located at strategic locations along the trail.

Information relating to the nature reserve may include the following:

- features, facilities and management;
- promotion of respect for the park environment; and
- provision of a means for visitors and stakeholders to communicate with Ontario Parks regarding park management.

The nature reserve will also complement programs offered by the City of Windsor in Ojibway Park, and is to be available to groups from the City's nature centre for interpretive educational use.

8.2 Research

Appropriate research by universities and qualified individuals may be encouraged. All research will require the approval of Ontario Parks under Policy PM 2.45 and must meet all requirements under applicable provincial and federal legislation. Approved research activities must be consistent with Ontario Parks' Research and Information Strategy. All research will be non-intrusive in order to safeguard protection objectives. Ontario Parks' priorities for research may be identified by the approved Ojibway Prairie Resource Stewardship Plan.

8.3 Recreation Management

Ontario Parks' policies establish acceptable recreation activities in provincial parks. Those recreational activities that occur within Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve will have low environmental impacts and will focus on nature appreciation of the area. Permissible activities include hiking, nature appreciation, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Other activities such as camping, cycling, all-terrain vehicle use and snowmobiling will not be permitted.

9.0 DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Proposed development will be limited to trail improvements, boundary fencing, necessary signage, interpretive panels and temporary

facilities for research and management. Fences will be maintained to discourage uses that could damage the prairie environment.

All development will be guided by site planning to ensure review by appropriate ecologists and resource generalists in order to minimize undesirable impacts upon significant features. Approved facilities will be developed in an ecologically sustainable manner.

9.1 Trails

No new trails are to be developed within the nature reserve. However, existing trails may be re-routed if deemed necessary to maintain the ecological integrity of the nature reserve. Existing trails will be upgraded to provide self-interpretive opportunities.

9.2 Interpretive Facilities

Development of interpretive facilities will be modest. Self-interpretive panels may be provided at strategic locations along existing trails.

10.0 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Requirements of the Provincial Parks Act, Endangered Species Act and Environmental Assessment Act will be met in defining and implementing management policies. An appropriate level of planning and public consultation will precede all development and resource stewardship initiatives. Development projects, resource stewardship initiatives and preparation of implementation plans will be contingent upon the availability of funding and unforeseeable changes in priorities or policy.

Implementation priorities include:

- undertaking prescribed management as addressed in the approved Resource Stewardship Plan,
- developing an interpretive brochure,
- acquiring and regulating targeted lands as part of the park; and
- acquiring and regulating intervening municipal road allowances.

11.0 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

A number of individuals, organizations and agencies have provided input into this plan, either directly or indirectly. During preparation of an approved interim Resource Management Plan in 1982, input was actively solicited from local municipalities and the scientific community as well as prairie experts from the United States. A Resource Stewardship Plan was prepared in 1997. This, together with comments from other interested individuals and organizations, was taken into consideration at that time and is the basis for the Park Management Plan.

Public consultation is a very important part of the park management planning process. There were four phases to the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve management planning process:

- Phase 1 - Terms of Reference
- Phase 2 - Background Information
- Phase 3 - Preliminary Management Plan
- Phase 4 - Approved Management Plan

Phase 1 consisted of a 45-day public opportunity to inspect the approved Terms of Reference for the management planning process in August 1998. An initial invitation to participate was mailed out to 54 local residents and stakeholders announcing the upcoming public consultation and planning process and a public notice was also posted on site. In addition, a policy proposal file was posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) Environmental Registry.

Phase 2 involved the distribution of a letter to 54 stakeholders and local residents on October 19, 1998, stating that background information had been compiled and made available for public review. The major issues raised during this stage of the public consultation process were:

- protection of the natural features;
- non-conforming uses and related levels of environmental impacts;
- land securement;
- plant seed collection; and
- control of non-native species.

Phase 3 included the preparation, approval and publication of the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve Preliminary Management Plan

during August 1999. Copies of the document were mailed directly to 119 stakeholders, adjacent property owners and other interested individuals. An updated policy proposal file was posted on the EBR Environmental Registry. A paid advertisement was placed in local newspapers to invite written comments and advise of an information drop-in centre. Six persons attended an open house held at the Ojibway Nature Centre in Windsor on August 28, 1999.

Phase 4 involved the preparation of the recommended Park Management Plan. All comments received during the previous phase of the process were fully considered in the preparation of the final document. Once approved, the Ojibway Prairie Park Management Plan was published and released in March 2002 in conjunction with the insertion of a paid advertisement in the Windsor Star and the posting of a policy decision file on the EBR Environmental Registry. Copies of the document were mailed directly to 173 stakeholders, adjacent property owners and other interested individuals. Mandatory contacts and all those persons who directly contributed to the planning process received a copy of the final document. The public was given a final opportunity to inspect the approved Management Plan for a period of 45 days after its formal release. This allowed interested participants in the planning process a final opportunity to determine if their concerns had been considered and addressed, and to initiate an appeal concerning the plan contents where appropriate.

The Ojibway Prairie Park Management Plan will guide the management of the nature reserve over the next twenty years. It may be reviewed or amended to address changing issues or conditions, as required. A review may involve a reassessment of all or part of the plan, including classification, zoning, goal, objectives and all resource management, operations and development policies. Plan amendments may be considered to address specific issues or needs.

Ontario Parks will retain on file reference copies of the Terms of Reference, background material, Preliminary Management Plan, approved Park Management Plan and any subsequent plan reviews or amendments.

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