



August 2, 2024

Stephanie Thorassie
Executive Director
Seal River Watershed Alliance

Nicole Armstrong
A/Assistant Deputy Minister
Government of Manitoba

Adriana Bacheschi
Director
National Park Establishment
Parks Canada

Attention: rivere-seal-river@pc.gc.ca

Re: Seal River Watershed

Please consider this the Manitoba Wildlife Federation (MWF)'s formal comments on the proposal to establish a national park reserve and Indigenous protected and conserved area in the Seal River Watershed.

Summary of MWF Position

While the MWF supports the conservation of our natural spaces, we are firmly opposed to the establishment of a national park in the Seal River Watershed, given the historical and ongoing exclusion of licensed hunters from public lands designated as national parks. While there are many alternative legal mechanisms available to conserve the Seal River Watershed while maintaining public access, designation of this area as a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is the preferred option.

Background

Manitoba's licensed hunters and anglers have enjoyed the heritage of hunting and angling in northern Manitoba for up to five generations, and many Manitobans live and work in this province because of the access we enjoy to these outdoor public spaces. In addition to this emotional connection, a 2019 Economic and Social Impact study funded by Travel Manitoba found that licensed hunters and anglers directly invest \$1.035 billion annually into Manitoba's economy.

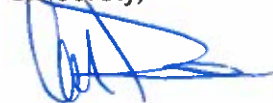
Notwithstanding the importance of hunting and angling, access to public spaces is increasingly threatened by conservation agendas that exclude licensed hunters and anglers, and reserve public spaces for the exclusive use of a few. All too often, designation under the *Canada National Parks Act*, as is proposed for the Seal River Watershed, prohibits licensed hunting. An example can be found nearby in Manitoba's Wapusk National Park, where hunting is prohibited for most Manitobans.

Withdrawing the opportunity for licensed hunting and angling in this large area of northern Manitoba will directly impact not only hunters and anglers but also lodges and outfitters, putting at risk the revenue and employment opportunities that these lodges contribute to Manitoba's economy.

Many alternative mechanisms are available to preserve the ecological integrity of the Seal River Watershed without discriminating against licensed hunters and anglers. For example, Manitoba's *Wildlife Act* authorizes the provincial cabinet to designate public lands as WMAs for the better management, conservation, and enhancement of wildlife resources. Over 2.5 million hectares (5.0 million acres) of wildlife habitat have been designated as WMAs to conserve biodiversity and increase their productivity for wildlife *while maintaining opportunities all Manitobans to enjoy hunting, trapping and eco-tourism activities on these public lands.*

The MWF urges the provincial and federal governments to preserve the ecological integrity of the Seal River Watershed *and* the opportunity for *all* Canadians to enjoy it.

Sincerely,



Carly Deacon
Managing Director,
Manitoba Wildlife Federation

Cc: Hon. Wab Kinew, Premier of Manitoba
Hon. Jamie Moses, Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources
Hon. Tracey Schmidt Rossmere, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Hon. Steven Guilbeault, Member of Parliament – Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Pierre Poillievre, Leader of the Official Opposition
Niki Ashton, Member of Parliament – Churchill - Keewatinook Aski, MB
James Bezan, Member of Parliament: Selkirk – Interlake – Eastman, MB
Ben Carr, Member of Parliament – Winnipeg South Centre, MB
Raquel Dancho, Member of Parliament – Kildonan - St. Paul, MB

Terry Duguid, Member of Parliament – Winnipeg South, MB
Ted Falk, Member of Parliament – Provencher, MB
Leah Gazan, Member of Parliament – Winnipeg Centre, MB
Kevin Lamoureux, Member of Parliament – Winnipeg North, MB
Branden Leslie, Member of Parliament – Portage – Lisgar, MB
Larry Maguire, Member of Parliament – Brandon – Souris, MB
Dan Mazier, Member of Parliament – Dauphin – Swan River – Neepawa, MB
Marty Morantz, Member of Parliament – Charleswood – St. James – Assiniboia
Headlingly, MB
Dan Vandal, Member of Parliament – Saint Boniface – Saint Vital, MB
Blaine Calkins, Member of Parliament – Red Deer – Lacombe, AB