

CANADA 4: DELTA MARSH, MANITOBA

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Effective Date of Information: The information provided is taken from the List of Canadian Wetlands Designated as of International Importance, May 1982 and updated by the Canadian Wildlife Service – Prairie and northern Region in October 2001.

Reference: 4th Ramsar site designated in Canada.

Name and Address of Compiler: Environmental Conservation Branch, Environment Canada, Twin Atria Bldg., Room 200, 4999 - 98th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T6B 2X3.

Date of Ramsar Designation: 24 May 1982.

Geographical Coordinates: 50°05'N., 98°00'W.

General Location: Situated in the Lake Agassiz Basin at the southern edge of Lake Manitoba in the Province of Manitoba, 22 km north of Portage la Prairie.

Area: 23 000 ha.

Wetland Type (Ramsar Classification System): *Inland wetlands:* Type O - permanent freshwater lakes; Type Sp - permanent freshwater ponds, marshes and swamps.

Altitude: 248 m.

Overview (Principal Characteristics): Delta Marsh consists of large basins and small sloughs connected to Lake Manitoba by several natural beaches.

Physical Features (Geology, Geomorphology, Hydrology, Soils, Water, Climate): The area is subject to low level natural fluctuations caused by wind tides from Lake Manitoba. Average water depth is 1.2 m and maximum depth is 4 m.

Ecological Features (Habitats, Vegetation): Vegetation consists mainly of cattail *Typha* sp. with giant reed grass *Phragmites australis* and whitetop *Scolochloa festucacea* meadows which grade into wet prairie vegetation at slightly higher elevations. Sand ridges extending into the marsh contain considerable areas of bur oak *Quercus macrocarpa*. The beach ridge is dominated by Manitoba maple (box-elder) *Acer negundo* and green ash *Fraxinus pennsylvanica*.

Land Tenure:

(a) **Site:** A combination of provincial Crown land and private land.

(b) **Surrounding Area:** Private land.

Conservation Measures Taken: About 16 600 ha are in public ownership as provincial Crown lands administered by the Wildlife Branch of the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources. 2 000 ha of this area are protected as a game bird refuge and 7 700 ha as public shooting grounds. The Delta Waterfowl Research Station controls a further 1 600 ha of the

marsh. The remaining land is under private ownership. The provincial Crown land of this site is designated as Heritage Marsh.

Conservation Measures Proposed: None currently.

Current Land Use/Activities in:

(a) **Site:** Parts of the area are cut annually for hay and the marsh provides valuable fur harvests. The Marsh is important for recreational birding activities and as a waterfowl harvest area. Hay and waterfowl harvests are regulated and the use of motorized boats is restricted.

(b) **Surrounding Area:** Private and provincial Crown land.

Threats to Integrity of:

(a) **Site:** The privately-owned west portion of the marsh is periodically flooded by the Portage Floodway, causing excessive siltation and vegetational growth.

(b) **Surrounding Area:** There is pressure to develop additional cottage sites and recreational facilities on nearby Lake Manitoba beaches.

Hydrological/Physical Values:

Social/Cultural Values:

Noteworthy Fauna: The area is particularly important as a staging marsh for waterfowl now averaging over 50 000 Anatidae during the fall, with past peak populations of duck and geese over 2 million. Some 285 species of birds have been recorded of which 37 are of accidental occurrence and one has been extirpated.

Noteworthy Flora: Hybrid cattail *Typha* sp. *x glauca* is now the dominate cattail species. It is highly invasive and out-competes the native *Typha latifolia* and occupies habitats unsuitable for *Typha latifolia*.

Current Scientific Research and Facilities: Permanent research programs have been conducted since 1938 by the Delta Waterfowl Foundation at the Delta Waterfowl Research Station, dealing mainly with waterfowl ecology and behaviour and the University of Manitoba since 1967, whose research has concentrated on plant ecology, hydrology and local history. Over 100 publications in journals have resulted. Ducks Unlimited Canada has been a cooperator in many of the research programs.

Current Conservation Education: Both the Delta Waterfowl Research Station and the University of Manitoba have public education facilities. Public access to the Marsh is not restricted and is available at numerous points on the perimeter of the Marsh.

Current Recreation and Tourism:

Management Authority:

Wildlife Branch

Manitoba Conservation
P.O. Box 24
200 Saulteaux Crescent
P.O. Box 24
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3J 3W3

Jurisdiction: Mainly provincial - Manitoba Conservation.

Selected Bibliography:

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Reasons for Ramsar Designation: The area is particularly important as a staging marsh for waterfowl now averaging over 50 000 Anatidae during the fall. In the past, peak staging populations have exceeded two million ducks and geese.

Status of Management Plan: Management plans have been proposed by the province and by Ducks Unlimited Canada in the 1978 *Delta Marsh Plan*. These include water level control and development of a public-private cooperative marsh management district. A *Development Plan* covers Lake Francis.