

Parks and Natural Areas Branch  
Box 50 - 200 Saulteaux Crescent  
Winnipeg MB R3J 3W3

June 20, 2011

Paloma Corrin  
Manitoba Assistant Campaigner  
Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Manitoba Field Office  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 303 Portage Ave.  
Winnipeg MB R3B 2B4

Dear Ms. Corrin:

Thank you for your letter regarding mining activities within Manitoba's provincial parks. Mining in Manitoba has a long standing history with mining being the second largest industry in Manitoba. Mining in Manitoba pre-dates the establishment of the first provincial parks and in some cases, parks were established where mineral extraction was already occurring (e.g. Hecla/Grindstone Provincial Park).

At present, mining activities in provincial parks are largely pre-development or pre-extraction activities focused on primary mineral exploration and mineral claim staking. Mineral extraction activities in parks primarily include quarry material extraction (e.g. stone, gravel, sand). Although outside operators may apply for a permit to use these quarries, they are required and used by Manitoba Conservation to maintain roads, pathways, campgrounds, beaches and other public used infrastructure within parks. Currently, there is no active mining for base metals or peat deposits within provincial parks. Abandoned or "orphaned" metal mines are located within Grass River, Nopiming, and Whiteshell Provincial Park.

As you noted in your letter, mining activities are prohibited within protected areas of provincial parks. Not all areas of provincial parks are legally protected under the international definition that Manitoba, and all of Canada, uses to describe our protected areas. Within provincial parks, areas classified as backcountry, heritage, and wilderness land use categories are legally protected. Access, recreation development, and resource management land use categories are not protected areas. The latter three land use categories allow for uses within parks that do not conform to international protected standards; uses which include such things as natural resource extraction and intensive recreation areas like cottage subdivisions, roads, and park infrastructure such as full service campgrounds and lagoons, etc. When establishing new provincial parks, Manitoba Conservation applies protected land use categories to the greatest extent possible. Since publishing '*A System Plan for Manitoba Parks*' in 1997, only two new parks have been created that accommodated existing mining claims.

The total provincial park area (including park reserves) in Manitoba is approximately 5.0 million hectares. The majority, 82% of provincial park lands, are legally protected under backcountry, heritage and wilderness land use categories. Provincial parks classified as Natural Parks, which have land use categories where mining activities may be permitted, make up approximately 1.0 million hectares of the total park lands. Approximately 12% of these lands have mining encumbrances. This amounts to mining occurring on only 2.5% of provincial park lands.

Mining activities in parks are regulated through several pieces of legislation and are more restricted than in other areas of the province. Under *The Provincial Parks Act*, Work Permits are required for all stages of a mining development, from initial exploration and claim staking to mineral extraction and production. Work Permits, issued by Manitoba Conservation, identify conditions to be adhered to by the proponent to ensure that activities do not compromise "*the main purpose of a park classification*", and to reduce environmental impacts, impacts to visitors (including owners and occupiers of lands within provincial parks), and impacts to park operations and infrastructure.

Manitoba Conservation works to ensure that mining activities in parks do not compromise the primary park purpose and that recreational values and the environment are conserved in perpetuity for the people of Manitoba. Again, thank you for writing.

Yours truly,



Barry Bentham  
Director of Parks and Natural Areas