

# Saskatchewan Area Network Frequently Asked Questions

## **Q. What is a representative area?**

**A.** Saskatchewan is made up of various landscapes. A representative area is a sample or piece of a particular landscape which has been set aside to preserve natural and/or cultural features. Representative areas will also serve as benchmarks for us to monitor activities and their effect on the environment.

## **Q. Why do we need representative areas?**

**A.** Objectives of the Representative Areas Network program include:

preservation of natural areas relatively undisturbed by human activities and maintenance of their ecological integrity so that they can serve as reservoirs of biological diversity and ecological benchmarks which promote better management of the broader landscape;

protection of areas known to contain species at risk;

preservation of areas of high scenic value and unique physical features, such as waterfalls, badlands and sand dunes; and

provision of appropriate recreational, educational and research opportunities.

## **Q. What activities would be permitted in a representative area?**

**A.** Activities which are in harmony with the objectives of the program are generally allowed. For example, traditional uses such as recreational hunting (including outfitting) and trapping as well as hiking or cross country skiing are permitted. As well, grazing has been shown to be acceptable so long as carrying capacities are developed and adhered to. The intention is to prepare a management plan or strategy with public input for the representative areas, and additional needs, concerns, or issues can be addressed on a site-by-site basis..

## **Q. Will existing land users be removed when new RA sites are designated?**

**A.** No. New sites will be selected based on a scientific approach, however in most cases, this allows for flexibility in choosing specific sites. If an existing use is not compatible with ecological preservation principles, alternate sites will be sought out for the RAN. If this is not possible, attempts are made to work cooperatively with the user to minimize the impact on the ecological resources of the area. For example, outfitting, which includes setting baits, can usually continue within a representative area. However, Saskatchewan Environment will work more closely with outfitters inside of designated sites to ensure the types of baits used and their clean up at the end of the hunting seasons do not negatively impact the area's other resources. Existing users will not involuntarily be removed from the land.

## **Q. Will new RAN sites exclude future use and development?**

**A.** Just as the reasons for choosing a particular site vary, so too do the levels of protection afforded them. In some sites, human activities and access may be limited, while in others, multiple land use objectives are pursued. Site-specific analysis and feedback from local interest groups and users will largely determine the kinds and levels of activity that may be acceptable in a particular site. Some sites will be managed through land use plans; others may be managed through cooperative partnership agreements (like Ducks Unlimited and pastures); still others may be formally legislated as Ecological Reserves, Wildlife Refuges, or Parks under The Parks Act. Consultation and input from local users will help to determine the best option.

## **Q. How are representative areas selected?**

**A.** Representative areas protect important natural and cultural areas. The selection of natural areas is largely based on soil and vegetation, supplemented by unique features like bogs, land

formations and species habitats. In the instance of the Pasquia - Porcupine area, the importance of some lands for park and other purposes has been recognized for some time. Areas such as McBride Lake or Woody River have important recreational features in addition to providing opportunities for landscape representation.

**Q. How much land will be preserved as part of the Network?**

**A.** Approximately 6% of Saskatchewan's land base was already designated as provincial parks, protected areas, recreation sites, wildlife habitat lands and game preserves at the time the RAN program was launched. The goal of the RAN is to improve on this value, by continuing to preserve ecologically important land and aquatic areas across the province. Our approach is to represent the province's biological diversity found within Saskatchewan's 11 ecoregions. Ideally, each ecoregion should have at least one very large (>100,000 ha) and several smaller representative areas in order to ensure complete ecosystems are preserved, along with unique features. In some ecoregions, this will not be feasible because large tracts of native land are not available. In these cases, the RAN will seek out smaller sites that together represent as much of the native landscape as possible. The use of partnership agreements with other land-administering agencies (like Ducks Unlimited and PFRA) are important tools in helping Saskatchewan achieve this objective.