

**Abstract Submission for 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian River Heritage Conference**

Title of Presentation:  
SASKATCHEWAN'S WATERWAY BASED  
URBAN PARK PROGRAM

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## **SASKATCHEWAN'S WATERWAY BASED URBAN PARK PROGRAM**

Seven cities in Saskatchewan are located along waterways that constitute a major focal point for their urban fabric. One by one these waterways and their environs have been given special status as urban parks and conservation agencies. Wascana Centre Authority, the first of these, was established along Wascana Creek in Regina in the early 1960's. It incorporated the provincial legislative grounds that had been planned early in the century by Thomas Mawson as well as other public lands around Wascana Lake. Van Isman's presentation on the "Big Dig" at this conference will give you a broader glimpse into this key part of Regina's fabric and the setting for a number of other public institutions in the province's capital. The story is remarkable given the beginnings of Wascana Lake as a man made reservoir that was enhanced through a 1930's relief work project using shovels and wheel barrows and then again in this century using the ultimate in machinery.

After my overview of the program Bob Wills is going to give you a visual tour of the seven urban parks and the facilities and programs they provide. We are proud of this Saskatchewan initiative and welcomed the opportunity to give you an incite into prairie rivers and their importance to a number of communities that benefit from them.

Meewasin Valley Authority in Saskatoon followed Wascana. It incorporated the South Saskatchewan River corridor as well as other public lands including the University of Saskatchewan. It too was based on cooperative agreements between a provincial government, the city and the university.

Wakamow Valley Authority in Moose Jaw was created on river valley lands that had been part of Moose Jaw's green space since the cities inception. Agreements with the province and rural municipalities broadened the mandate and the funding base and focused its development and protection into one "Authority" which, similar to Wascana and Meewasin, were stand alone bodies from the existing city parks departments. All three also were established by statute under their own Acts of the Legislature. Each also has its own "Minister responsible". The urban parks program in terms of issuing funding, preparing legislation and provided a coordinating function within the provincial government falls within the mandate of the Parks Service of Saskatchewan Environment.

Another characteristic of the, now seven, urban parks is that they do not absorb or assume responsibility for all the parks, play grounds and green space in each of the cities involved. They are focused on the key waterway through the city and enhance the perception of each city's fabric and by presenting it in its best light and making it accessible and a part of each citizen's life.

Funding formulas stating the provincial, city and universities were established by statute for the three parks which were established by their own acts and by agreement with each of the other four which were established by agreements among the partners. Recent

agreements, including two signed in the recent months, commit the province to \$3.85 per capita, which is matched by the city partners. Substantial fund raising and volunteer help supplement this and one time special funds such as during the province's centennial were made available. In 2007-08 the province will provide \$4.1 million to the urban parks program.

The cooperation within each urban park act or agreement between different levels of government and public agencies is just one level of the cooperative arrangements making the whole greater than the sum of the individual parts. Through the Association of Urban Parks and Conservation Agencies or 'ASUPCA', of which each of these urban parks is a member, there is also a mutually supportive network and an effective contact point and lobby group.

Urban park boards representing each of the urban parks guide their management and development. Each partner in the agreement appoints board members for two or three year terms.

Critical to each park is a master plan supported by public input and which is reviewed at regular intervals. Typically Landscape Architects have undertaken these and they provide the direction needed by each agency and its board. As well, these documents have become items of great public interest, have increased public understanding of the intended direction and have become sources of civic pride along with the parkways themselves to the citizens of each community.

Urban parks are key elements in the Saskatchewan "family of parks". They are able to supply a substantial part of the province's need for a supply of outdoor recreation opportunities. Saskatchewan's population is thinly spread across the province and is known as having more miles of road per capita. Each year half the province's population uses one of these popular waterway based urban parks. Urban parkways also complement the other park systems in Saskatchewan, and together provide a full spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Other park systems include the provincial park system consisting of 34 provincial parks, 130 recreation sites and 24 protected areas; the regional park system that consists of 100 independently operated local regional park authorities; and the two national parks and the national historic sites system.

Waterways involved in the urban parks program include the South Saskatchewan River; North Saskatchewan River; the Souris River; Swift Current Creek; Moose Jaw Creek; and, Wascana Creek. The urban parkways which exist along these waterways provide trails, recreational facilities, and learning opportunities. They conserve and restore valuable open spaces and provide a natural backdrop around which these cities have developed. Popular for family gatherings, they are also the setting for many civic events and have hosted many national events. Through his selection of slides Bob Wills will provide more details on the settings, programs, facilities and opportunities offered in Saskatchewan's seven waterway based urban park.

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Presenters: Wayne Schick, Parks System Planner, Parks Branch, Saskatchewan Environment and Bob Wills, General Manager of Wakamow Valley Authority in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

Wayne Schick has worked as a park planner in Manitoba, Ontario and, for the last 22 years, Saskatchewan. Current responsibilities include parks system planning, liaison with the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Program, the Saskatchewan Urban Parks Program, Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve.

Since its inception Wayne has been involved in Saskatchewan's participation in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, preparing the Clearwater River nomination and seeing this thru to designation. Working with Parks Service colleagues and Stanley Mission people, Wayne hopes to see cooperative management of the Churchill River in Lac La Ronge Provincial Park and protection its heritage features before retiring.

#### Bob Wills

Bob was born and raised in the handsome little community of Moose Jaw Saskatchewan. He left the province in the 1970's to pursue his education at the University of Alberta. In 1977, Bob obtained a bachelor degree in Outdoor Education and, following a year and a half of travels, returned to the U of A complete his master's degree in community development. After a 20 year hiatus in Alberta where Bob was employed in the recreation, education and community planning fields, he returned to Moose Jaw.

For the last 13 years has been the General Manager of the Wakamow Valley Authority. All but one of Bob's four children have left the nest but remain in Saskatchewan.