

Mistik Public Advisory Group Tour

June 25, 2024

The Mistik Public Advisory Group (“PAG”) met for a field tour on June 25, 2024. The tour was held in the Meadow Lake Provincial Park. This year’s field tour explored some of the ways the strategic 20-Year Forest Conservation Management Plan (FCMP) for the Meadow Lake Provincial Park (MLPP) and the Ecosystem Based Management Plan for MLPP, both developed by the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport are being implemented.

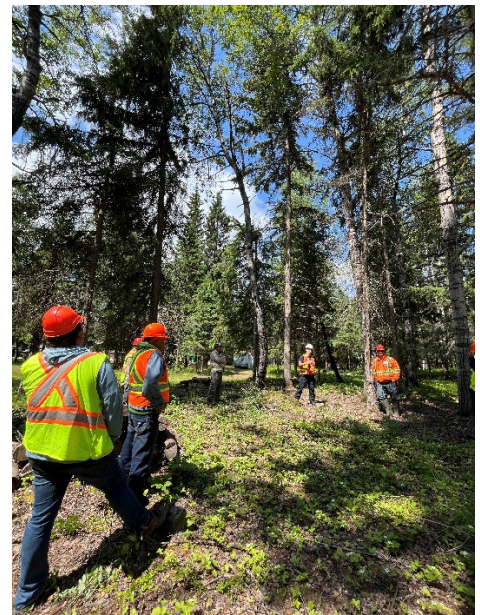
Tour stop #1 - Fuel Management Project

The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA) has leveraged the federal government’s Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund (DMAF) and starting in 2019, began to implement fuel management projects. There are 84 communities throughout Saskatchewan identified for fuel management projects to take place between 2019-2027. Since 2019, approximately 1690 ha has been treated on municipal, crown land, and park land.

Fuel management projects reduce the amount of fuel available for a fire which results in lower intensity fires, better visibility and thus more effective firefighting done by aircraft, and increased safety for ground crews to get in and directly attack a fire. It also makes fires easier to locate. The operation involves removing dead trees, ladder fuels (lower branches), and creating crown separation between coniferous trees.

Through intensive planning and consultation, multiple areas have been identified and treated in MLPP (Howe Bay, Jeannette Lake, Greig Lake, Matheson Lake, Waterhen Lake). In 2024/25 additional work is planned for the Kimball Lake and Waterhen Lake areas.

We stopped at one of the fuel management project areas at Greig Lake.



Fuel management project at Greig Lake



Example of a stand before and after fuel management is done.

Tour stop #2 – 2003 Prescribed Burn (*Revised – we received more info. on this project after the tour.*)

We made a brief stop at an area where prescribed burn was conducted in May, 2003. The intent of the project was to burn a small area of trembling aspen in decline within the Meadow Lake Provincial Park to increase the stand health and vigor. The small burn would act as a test burn to see if prescribed fire would be a useful vegetation management tool in decadent stands of trembling aspen within the Park.

Parks was working towards implementing the Ecosystem Management Plan. Forest Fire Protection Branch was improving their knowledge of the science of burning conditions, fine fuels, rates of fire spread, etc. Forestry Branch staff provided the confirmation that the aspen was in decline in the location and that it would benefit from fire. There was good communication with all participants with regard to logistics and plans.

The burn site lies within a triangle of forest surrounded by three roads. Three small sections of trembling aspen were identified within this triangle as part of the prescribed burn, totaling 6.5 ha in area. The southeast corner of the burn site is at the junction of Highway #4, Highway #904, and Highway #224. On the day of the burn there was a helicopter in the air with the bucket already attached. This turned out to be a good thing as there were a couple of loads dropped to slow down the fire front. In the following days, Fire Protection staff did mop up to put out any “hot spots”. The project worked well and the area is now a healthy, regenerating aspen forest. It is unlikely that a similar treatment would be used as a forest renewal method today as the potential for fire to escape onto the adjacent landscape remains too great.



2003 prescribed fire renewal area (on right)

Tour stop #3 – Meadow Lake Provincial Park Renewal Project – Jeanette Lake

The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Landscape Protection Unit developed a 20-year Forest Conservation Management Plan (FCMP) for the Meadow Lake Provincial Park (MLPP) in March 2018 and an Ecosystem Based Management Plan (EBMP) for MLPP in May 2019. These plans outline goals and management strategies to maintain, protect, and restore the natural landscape ecosystem and species diversity of the MLPP while enhancing visitor experience, public appreciation, and understanding of the forest dynamics in the park in a safe outdoor environment.

Key benefits of this project are to reduce fire risk across the landscape over time, restore the historical age classes of the forest that existed prior to management of wildfire in the park, and slow the spread of insect and disease in healthy stands. Stakeholder engagement for this 5-year project started in 2019 and 2024/25 will be year 5th of the 5-year project. To date, approximately 1700ha have been treated near Vivian Lake, Jeanette Lake, and Little Raspberry Lake. As of this spring, 174,556 seedlings have been planted in the treated areas. For more information about the project visit www.mlppwaterhenmistik.ca.



Treatment area near Jeanette Lake

The following groups/organizations were represented at the PAG spring tour:

Cold Lake First Nations
Flying Dust First Nation
Junior Forest Wardens
NorSask Forest Products Union staff
Ministry of Environment – Forest Service
Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation
Meadow Lake interested citizens

English River First Nation
Ducks Unlimited
Zone 8 Trappers
Ministry of Environment – Fish & Wildlife
Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency
Ministry of Parks, Culture, and Sport

Mistik would like to thank everyone who took part in the tour this year. We enjoyed having you join us and appreciate your questions and feedback. We would also like to give special acknowledgement to those who presented information on the specific projects at the tour stops – Pat MacKasey, April Lesko, Mike McColgan, Bob Wilson, and Randy Songer.

Photo credits: Nadine Penney, Wendy Soulsby, Pat MacKasey, Niska Hodgson