

2008 MANITOBA ENVIROTHON
ORALS QUESTION

Feather River First Nation has been the driving force in the creation of an Ecological Reserve on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. This land is to be set aside as a large tract of undisturbed Boreal Forest that is the traditional territory for the community. It encompasses 200,000 hectares of provincial crown land. The area is representative of the Boreal Shield Ecoregion, with rocky ridges of Jack Pine, and extensive areas of peaty organic soils giving rise to lowland Black Spruce. The area is free from commercial uses such as logging, mining and hydroelectric development. It is rich in wildlife and has supported local trappers for generations. Wildlife species include Pine Marten, Fisher, Lynx, Moose, Black Bear, Wolf, Woodland Caribou, Wolverine, and many species of birds such as ducks, geese, and the Common Loon which arrive in the spring to feast on the abundant insect population as they raise their young.

The area has several fast flowing rivers draining west into Lake Winnipeg. It has some of the best canoeing and whitewater rafting in Canada. Because of this, the people of Feather River want to promote a number of outdoor recreation activities in the area as a means of economic development for their community. They have completed their own land use plan, which outlines their goal to balance no resource extraction with some recreational development. The community will continue to pursue their traditional uses such as fishing, hunting, trapping and wild rice harvest, while promoting recreational tourism.

Chief and Council wish to promote the economic development in their community and are intending to employ community members who will provide services to visitors. These employees have an intimate knowledge of the land and its history. Chief and Council is prepared to invest in equipment and services for clients and they will charge fees for these services. It is expected that clients will travel down the river where they will camp, fish, and watch wildlife. They will end the trip at the mouth of Feather River which flows into Lake Winnipeg, and then be flown back to camp. Float planes will ferry the clients and their equipment back to the community at the end of the trip. Visiting public that are not clients of Feather River's recreation activities will also be able to pursue both consumptive (i.e., fishing, ATV, cabin development) and non-consumptive (i.e., wildlife viewing, canoeing) recreation activities under the oversight of Chief and Council.

Because Feather River is not road accessible, everything must be flown in, including clients and other visitors. Feather River's population of 1,000 lives right beside Feather Lake, which is the headwater of Feather River. It is covered by ice until June 1 and is open until the end of the Labour Day Weekend.

You are advisors to the Feather River First Nation, which is pursuing development of these outdoor recreation activities. Your job is to recommend actions which guide Feather River Chief and Council to create recreational activities that:

1. encourage compatible uses of the area between the different user groups to minimize conflict (e.g., public camping, canoeing, cabin development, ATV/snowmobile trail development);
2. minimize the environmental impacts that users will have, such as fuel spills, garbage handling, fuel wood cutting, etc.;
3. ensure recreational activities integrate and respect the traditional uses of the area;
4. maximize the economic benefits to the community while ensuring that ecology and culture are respected.