

**DELTA MARSH, MANITOBA**  
**Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands**

**Effective Date of Information:** The information provided is taken from the List of Canadian Wetlands Designated as of International Importance, May 1982 and updated by the Canadian Wildlife Service in March 1993.

**Reference:** 4CA004

**Name and Address of Compiler:** Environmental Conservation Branch, Environment Canada, Twin Atria, 2nd Floor, 4999 - 98th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T6B 2X3.

**Date of Ramsar Designation:** 24 May 1982.

**Geographical Coordinates:** 50°05'N., 98°00'W.

**General Location:** Situated in the Lake Agassiz Basin at the southern edge of Lake Manitoba in the Province of Manitoba, 22 km north of Portage la Prairie.

**Area:** 23 000 ha.

**Wetland Type (Ramsar Classification System):** *Inland wetlands:* Type 5 - permanent freshwater lakes; Type 8 - permanent freshwater ponds, marshes and swamps.

**Altitude:** 248 m.

**Overview (Principal Characteristics):** Delta Marsh consists of large basins and small sloughs connected to Lake Manitoba by several natural beaches.

**Physical Features (Geology, Geomorphology, Hydrology, Soils, Water, Climate):** The area is subject to low level natural fluctuations caused by wind tides from Lake Manitoba. Average water depth is 1.2 m and maximum depth is 4 m.

**Ecological Features (Habitats, Vegetation):** Vegetation consists of *Phragmites communis* and *Scolochloa festucacea* meadows which grade into wet prairie vegetation at slightly higher elevations. Sand ridges extending into the marsh contain considerable areas of mossy-cup oak *Quercus macrocarpa*. The beach ridge is dominated by box-elder *Acer negundo* and red alder *Fraxinus pennsylvanica*.

**Land Tenure:**

(a) **Site:** A combination of provincial Crown land and private land.

**(b) Surrounding Area:** Private land.

**Conservation Measures Taken:** About 16 600 ha are in public ownership as provincial Crown lands administered by the Wildlife Branch of the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources. 2 000 ha of this area are protected as a game bird refuge and 7 700 ha as public shooting grounds. The Delta Waterfowl Research Station controls a further 1 600 ha of the marsh. The remaining land is under private ownership. The provincial Crown land of this site is designated as Heritage Marsh.

**Conservation Measures Proposed:** None currently.

**Current Land Use/Activities in:**

**(a) Site:** Parts of the area are cut annually for hay and the marsh provides valuable fur and fish harvests. Hay and waterfowl harvests are regulated and the use of motorized boats is restricted.

**(b) Surrounding Area:** Private and provincial Crown land.

**Threats to Integrity of:**

**(a) Site:** The privately-owned west portion of the marsh is periodically flooded by the Portage Floodway, causing excessive siltation and vegetational growth.

**(b) Surrounding Area:** There is pressure to develop additional cottage sites and recreational facilities on nearby Lake Manitoba beaches.

**Hydrological/Physical Values:**

**Social/Cultural Values:**

**Noteworthy Fauna:** The area is particularly important as a staging marsh for waterfowl now averaging over 50 000 Anatidae during the fall, with past peak populations of duck and geese over 2 million. Some 285 species of birds have been recorded of which 37 are of accidental occurrence and one has been extirpated.

**Noteworthy Flora:**

**Current Scientific Research and Facilities:** Permanent research programs have been conducted since 1938 by the Delta Waterfowl Research Station, dealing mainly with waterfowl ecology and behaviour. Over 100 publications in journals have resulted.

**Current Conservation Education:** The University of Manitoba opened a field station in the western portion of the marsh in 1967 where research has concentrated on plant ecology, hydrology and local history.

## **Current Recreation and Tourism:**

### **Management Authority:**

Wildlife Branch  
Manitoba Department of Natural Resources  
1495 St. James Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3H 0W9

**Jurisdiction:** Mainly provincial - Manitoba Department of Natural Resources.

### **Selected Bibliography:**

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**Reasons for Ramsar Designation:** The area is particularly important as a staging marsh for waterfowl now averaging over 50 000 Anatidae during the fall, with past peak populations of duck and geese over 2 million.

**Status of Management Plan:** Management plans have been proposed by the province and by Ducks Unlimited Canada in the 1978 *Delta Marsh Plan*. These include water level control and development of a public-private cooperative marsh management district. A *Development Plan* covers Lake Francis.