

2.0 SCOPE

This chapter of the environmental assessment report describes the scope of the proposed All-Season Road, linking Pauingassi First Nation and Little Grand Rapids First Nation to the Little Grand Rapids Airport (P7a All-Season Road Project), and the scope of the environmental assessment for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project. The project and assessment scope serves to focus the assessment on important components of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project and the environmental setting. The chapter outlines the adequacy of the existing baseline information, identifies regional environmental issues and lists valued environmental components. Also provided in this chapter are the project's temporal and spatial boundaries for the identification and assessment of potential environmental effects.

2.1 Scope of Project

The scope of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project includes: construction of a new all-season road; two one-lane Acrow panel bridge crossings; six culvert crossings and a number of equalization culverts; new quarry and borrow areas; temporary bridge crossings, temporary construction access roads and trails; and temporary staging areas and construction camps. The Acrow panel bridges may be replaced in the future (approx. 25 years) by permanent two lane steel girder bridge structures located at or adjacent to the Acrow structures. The project scope includes pre-construction, construction, and operation and maintenance stages. It includes upgrades to the proposed All-Season Road, demobilization of temporary access roads, staging areas and construction camps, restoration of disturbed areas including quarries and borrows areas, and decommissioning of Acrow panel bridges and a short segment of the existing winter road.

The scope of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project does not include the approximately 3.4 km of Community Access Roads located on Pauingassi First Nation and Little Grand Rapids First Nation Reserve lands. These access roads will be subject to environmental assessments under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* following Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development procedures. Decommissioning of the P7a All-Season Road is not included in the project scope as it is expected that the road continue to be operational for at least 100 years or well beyond the foreseeable future.

The main components of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project include:

1. All-season road (36.4 km) from Little Grand Rapids First to Pauingassi First Nation and two all-season road access spurs (1.7 km) to the Little Grand Rapids Airport area and Northern Affairs Community;
2. Two Acrow panel bridge structures at two locations between Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids First Nations;
3. Two steel girder bridge or similar structures to replace the Acrow panel bridges (future);

4. Six stream crossings using corrugated metal culverts and a number of flow equalization culverts;
5. Temporary construction bridges to facilitate construction of permanent crossings;
6. Temporary construction access roads and trails;
7. Rock quarries and granular borrow areas;
8. Temporary construction staging areas; and
9. Temporary construction camp facilities.

Construction of distribution power and communication lines and other developments along the road alignment are not considered in the scope of the proposed Road Project. A maintenance facility will be located in the Little Grand Rapids Northern Affairs Community at a future date.

2.2 Scope of Assessment

The scope of the environmental assessment of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project includes consideration of the following factors:

- Purpose of the proposed road;
- Alternative means of carrying out the proposed road that are technically and economically feasible, and the environmental effects of the alternatives;
- Environmental effects of the proposed road, including the environmental effects of malfunctions or accidents that may occur;
- Cumulative environmental effects that are likely to result from the proposed road in combination with the effects of other projects and activities that have been or will be carried out for the reasonably foreseeable future;
- Change to the proposed road that may be caused by the environment;
- Comments that are received during the assessment engagement program;
- Measures that are technically and economically feasible that would mitigate adverse environmental effects;
- Requirements of any follow-up program; and
- Significance of the residual environmental effects.

The definition of “environment” considers ecological, social and economic components of the environment consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

2.3 Scope of the Factors Assessed

The biophysical and socio-economic environments and Aboriginal communities and land use of the east side of Lake Winnipeg are described with particular reference to the Lac Seul Upland

Ecoregion (90), and the Nopiming (373) Ecodistrict. Biophysical, socio-economic and Aboriginal assessment factors used in the identification of environmental effects of proposed P7a All-Season Road Project are provided in Table 2-1.

Table 2 - 1 Biophysical, Socio-economic and Aboriginal Environmental Factors

Biophysical, Socio-economic and Aboriginal Environmental Factors		
Biophysical Environment Factors	Socio-economic Environment Factors	Aboriginal Community and Land Use Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate / air quality / noise • Geology / surficial materials • Soils / terrain • Surface water quantity / quality • Groundwater quantity / quality • Vegetation • Fish / Aquatic Habitat • Mammals • Birds • Amphibians/reptiles • Species of special interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land / resource use • Parks / protected areas • Tourism / recreation • Aesthetics • Health / safety • Infrastructure / services • Economic conditions • Archaeological artifacts / sites /structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional land / resource use • Cultural heritage features (ceremonial/spiritual) • Heritage sites / areas / structures / human remains

Alternative means of carrying out the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project were evaluated using traditional knowledge, water, soil, vegetation, wildlife, fish, land use, resource use, heritage, technical and cost factors and criteria. Factors used to assess adversity of environmental effects included biophysical features and values, socio-economic conditions and comments from Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Significance evaluation factors included ecological and societal context, magnitude, geographic extent, frequency, duration, reversibility and likelihood of occurrence.

2.4 Adequacy of Baseline Information

The East Side of Lake Winnipeg has been the subject of various planning programs, regional ventures, multidisciplinary studies and environmental assessments over the past decade including Ecoregion 90 studies, East Side Planning Initiative, East Side East Side of Lake Winnipeg Large Area Transportation Network Study, PR 304 to Berens River Environmental Assessment, Pimachiowin Aki:World Heritage Project. In support of this environmental assessment, ESRA conducted traditional knowledge workshops with Pauingassi First Nation and Little Grand First Nation, contracted a traditional land use and knowledge study with the MMF and contracted specific studies on resource components: 1) wildlife; 2) aquatics, 3) vegetation; 4) heritage, 5) geophysical surveys and 6) quarry assessments. ESRA also under

took a comprehensive Aboriginal and public engagement program involving design workshops, community meetings and open houses.

2.5 Regional Factors

Regional factors for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project were identified from various regional and local land use and management plans, planning initiatives and environmental assessments carried out for the east side of Lake Winnipeg. The plans reviewed included “Promises to Keep...” Towards a Broad Area Plan for the East Side of Lake Winnipeg (East Side Planning Initiative 2004) and the Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids First Nation lands management plans (Pauingassi First Nation and Government of Manitoba 2012, Little Grand Rapids First Nation and Government of Manitoba 2012). Questions and comments raised during the Aboriginal and public engagement program for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project were also taken into account in the identification of the regional factors:

- Regional transportation
- Economic development and employment opportunities
- Cost of goods and services
- Aboriginal and community development
- Country foods
- Caribou population
- Brainworm
- Protected areas
- Mining exploration and development
- Forestry resources
- Aesthetic values
- Tourism and recreation

Regional factors are discussed in Chapter 6 of this environmental assessment report.

2.6 Valued Environmental Components

Valued environmental components were identified from the baseline studies, Aboriginal and public engagement program, past environmental assessments and studies including work on Pimachiowin Aki, and the present environmental assessment report. Valued environmental components for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project are listed below for the biophysical, socio-economic and Aboriginal environments.

2.6.1 Biophysical Environment

Valued biophysical environment consists of:

- Endangered or threatened species that are protected under The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act (MBESEA)

- Extirpated, endangered or threatened species that are protected under Schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act (SARA)
- Species and components that are protected under various federal or provincial acts
- Of special interest
 - Species of special concern under Schedule 1 of the SARA
 - Species considered endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC)
 - Species considered rare in the province of Manitoba by the Manitoba Conservation Data Center (MBCDC)

The valued biophysical environmental components for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project are:

- Water quality: Manitoba Water Quality Standards, Objectives and Guidelines Regulation
- Aquatic Species at Risk: mapleleaf mussel (endangered, SARA) and shortjaw cisco (threatened, SARA), lake sturgeon (endangered, COSEWIC);
- Fish and Fish habitat: protected under the *Fisheries Act*, also Fisheries Protection Policy Statement
- Boreal woodland caribou: threatened under *MBESEA* and SARA
- Birds of Prey: Vultures, eagles, hawks, osprey and falcon protected under *The Wildlife Act*
- Forest songbirds: Eastern Whip-poor-will (Threatened, SARA & MBESEA), Canada Warbler (Endangered, SARA and Threatened, MBESEA), Common Nighthawk (Threatened, SARA & MBESEA), Olive-Sided Flycatcher (Threatened, SARA), Rusty Blackbird (Special Concern, SARA); migratory species protected under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*
- Waterfowl: Tumpeter Swan (protected under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*)
- Marsh Birds: Yellow Rail (Special Concern, SARA) migratory species protected under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*
- Turtles: Eastern Snapping Turtle (special concern, SARA)
- Amphibians: Green Frog (rare, MBCDC)
- Plants: Tesselated Rattlesnake Plantain (rare, MBCDC)

2.6.2 Socio-Economic Environment

- Tourism: commercial value, local employment
- Hunting and fish outfitters & lodges: commercial value, local employment
- Recreation: local employment, local revenue
- Trapping: commercial value, local revenue, cultural importance

- Heritage resources: protected under the *Heritage Resources Act*
- Human Health and Safety

2.6.3 Aboriginal Communities & Land Use

- Moose: harvested species, subsistence value, cultural importance
- Furbearers: subsistence value, harvested species of economic importance
- Fish: subsistence value, spawning locations in streams
- Medicinal and culturally important plants: used by Aboriginal people for medicines, food and cultural purposes
- Birds of prey: cultural importance, subsistence value
- Waterfowl: subsistence value
- Forest songbirds: cultural importance, delineation of season
- Heritage resources: burial sites and Thunderbird nests
- Water: important for animal and plant species
- Cultural heritage: Ceremonial/spiritual sites and practices
- Travel Routes: trails and navigation routes to access resources and cultural areas

Valued environmental components are described in chapter 6 of this environmental assessment report.

2.6.4 Species Not Carried Forward in Effects Analysis

The following species were not carried forward in the effects analysis based on the following information:

- **Short-Eared Owl** (special concern, SARA) (Threatened, MBESEA) is a nomadic breeder that breeds mainly in the south in areas associated with farming, and also in the northern tundra. It is a migrant or non-breeding visitor to the P7a Regional Assessment Area, and is therefore not carried forward in the effects analysis (MB Avian Research Committee, 2013; MBBA 2015).
- **Little Brown Bat** (endangered, SARA), **Big Brown Bat** (endangered, SARA) – given the landcover associated with the all-season road Local Assessment Area, bat hibernacula are unlikely to be present. Baseline studies also indicated an absence of hibernacula in the Local Assessment Area. Based on these criteria, these species were not carried forward in the effects analysis.

2.7 Spatial and Temporal Boundaries

2.7.1 Spatial Boundaries

The spatial boundaries for the environmental assessment of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project consisted of project, local and regional assessment areas as described below.

Project Assessment Area: Footprint of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project including the road, bridges, access roads, stream crossings, quarry and borrow areas, staging areas and construction camps (approximately 4.4 km²; 440 ha) (Figure 2-1). Direct environmental effects are most likely to occur within this area.

Local Assessment Area: The local assessment area is a 10 km diameter (5 km radius) around the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project (approximately 387.3 km²; 38,727.7 ha) (Figure 2-2). Direct and indirect environmental effects are most likely to occur within this area.

Regional Assessment Area: The regional assessment area selected for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project is the Atikaki-Berens Management Unit defined in Manitoba's Boreal Woodland Caribou Strategy (2014 draft) (approximately 21,059 km²; 2,105,916 ha) (Figure 2-3). Indirect socio-economic effects and cumulative environmental effects would likely occur within this area.

2.7.2 Temporal Boundaries

The temporal boundary of the environmental assessment covers the normal life expectancy of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project, which is estimated to be approximately 100+ years. The time-frame covers the duration of any residual environmental effects and any required follow-up including monitoring activities.

2.8 Summary

This chapter of the environmental assessment report described the scope of the P7a All-Season Road Project, and the scope of the environmental assessment for the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project. The project and assessment scope serves to focus the assessment on important components of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project and the environmental setting. The chapter outlined the adequacy of the existing baseline information, identifies regional environmental issues and lists valued environmental components. Also provided in this chapter are the project's temporal and spatial boundaries for the identification and assessment of potential environmental effects. This next chapter provides a description of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project as the as a second step towards the completing the environmental assessment of this development.

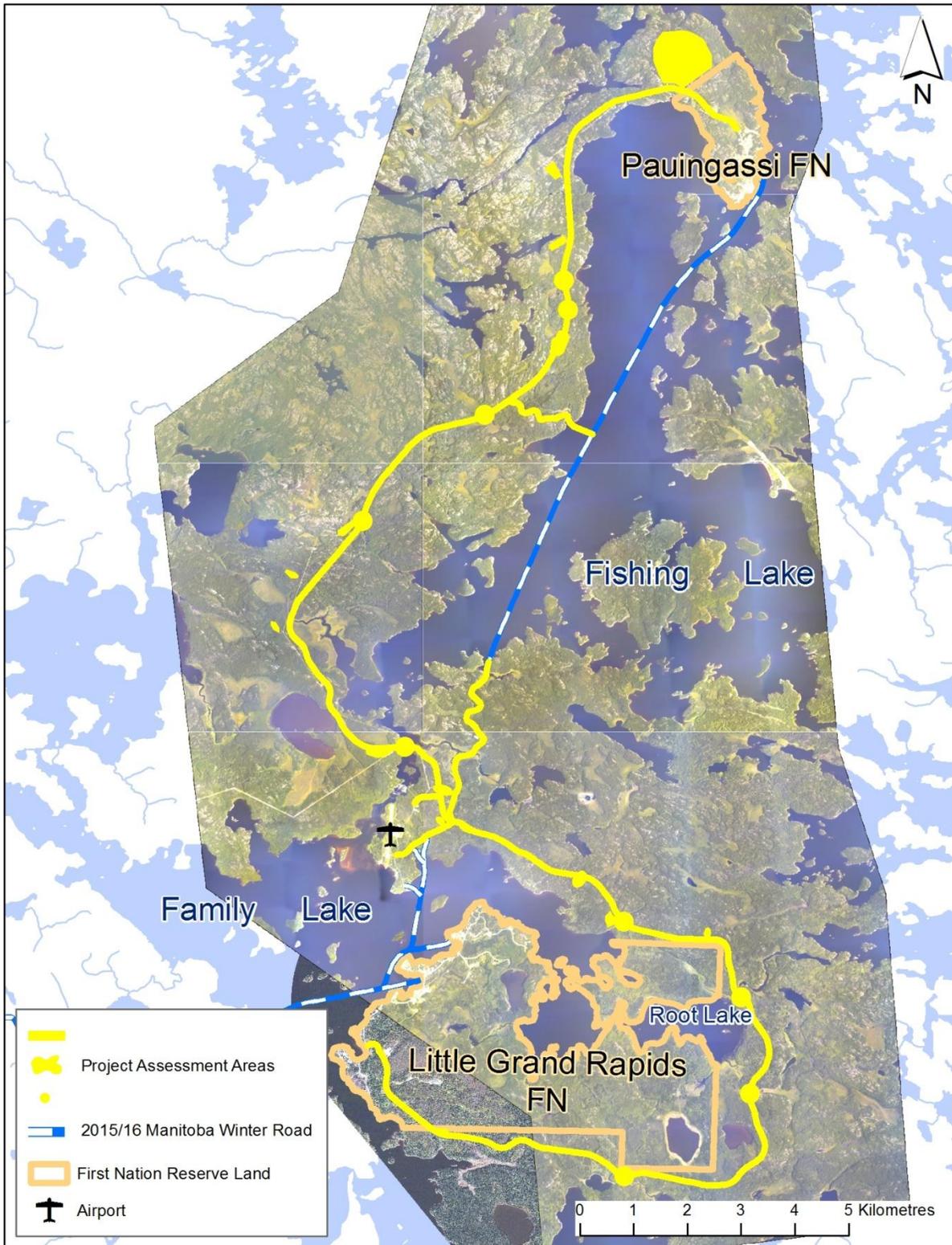


Figure 2 - 1 Project Assessment Area

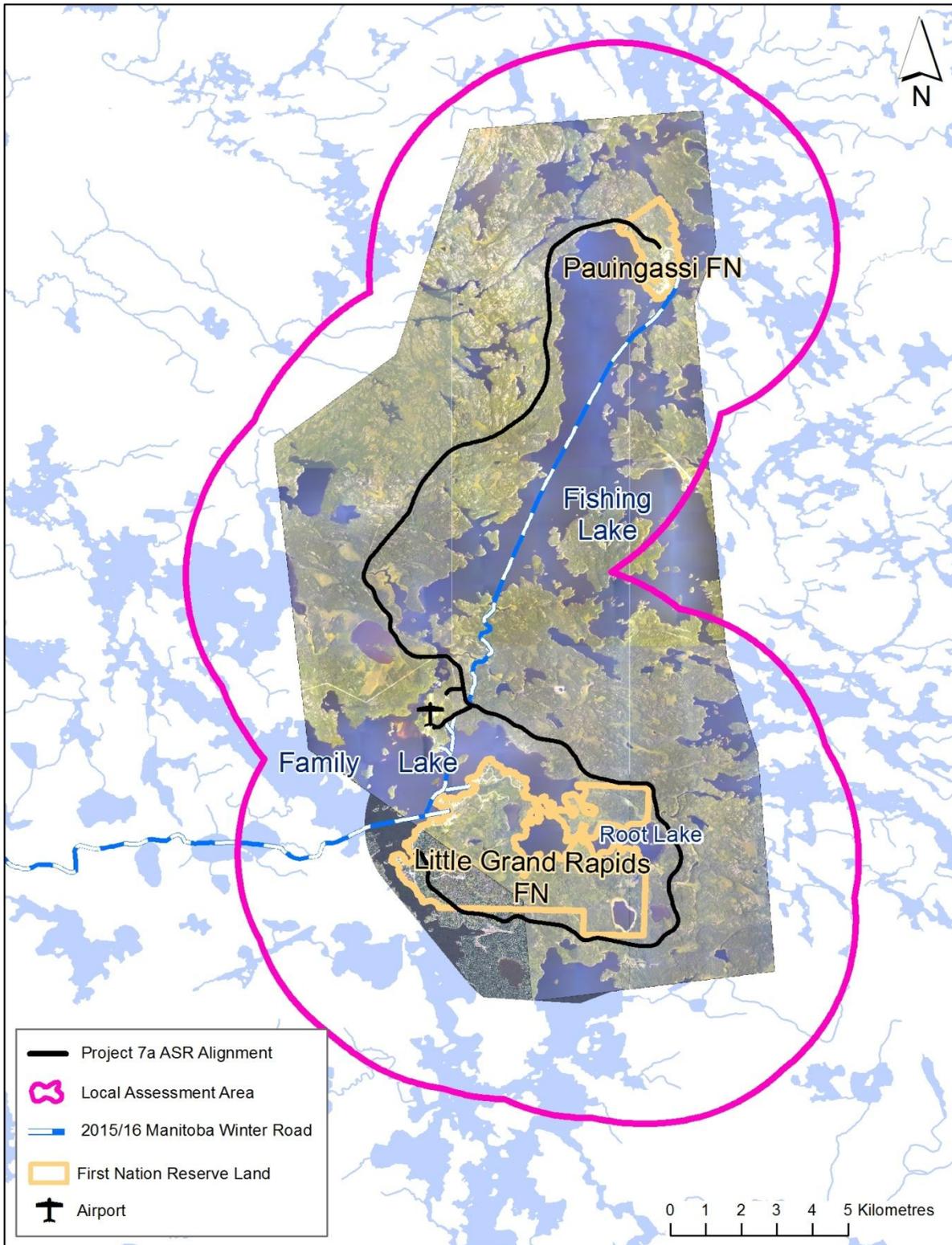


Figure 2 - 2 Local Assessment Area

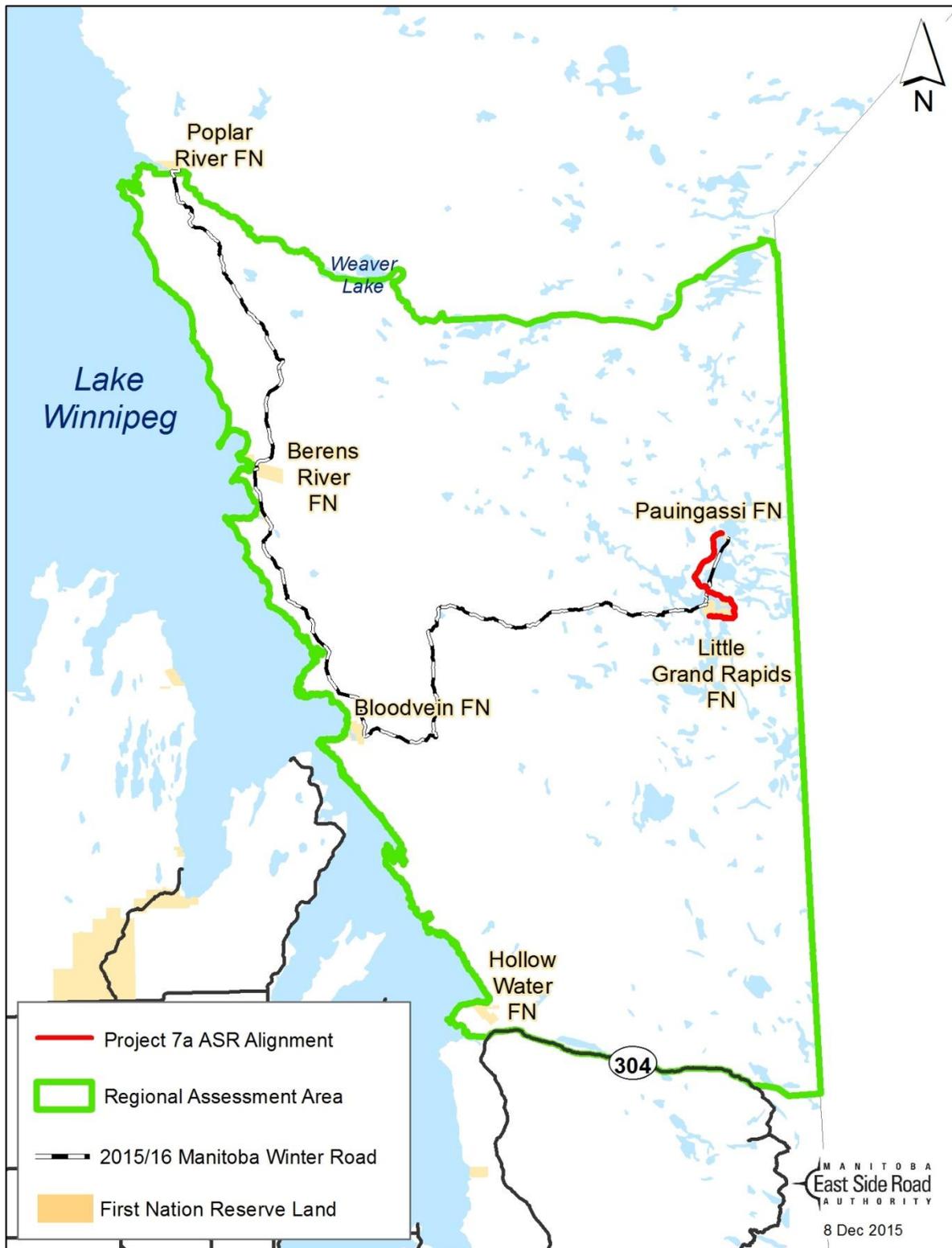


Figure 2 - 3 Regional Assessment Area