

## **Re: Wildfire Response Plan and Emergency Sprinkler Deployment Plan**

**Cottagers in Paint Lake Provincial Park rely on Helitac and the Paint Lake Volunteer Fire Department (PLVFD) for wildfire protection. These two forces work co-operatively at fires, with Helitac covering the forest and PLVFD covering the structures; vehicles; boats and RV's in the campgrounds. The PLVFD has extinguished 3 wildfires before; during and after the fire season, when Helitac crews were unavailable. Most PLVFD members have been trained in wildfire suppression by the same Manitoba Conservation people, who train Helitac.**

**The PLVFD has 25 members and has fund raised to purchase equipment and trucks. The current fire hall was built for one truck, and houses 2 trucks. Plans are complete for an extension to the current building, which will have 3 truck bays; a water system and renovations to the current building, which includes an office; handicapped toilet and classroom, which can double as a community wellness centre for meetings, or other activities. The fire hall is the heart and soul of any fire department.**

**The PLVFD is an officially recognized fire department by the Office of the Manitoba Fire Commissioner, and has over 1600 rolling gallons of water in their three trucks. The PLVFD achieved a partially protected community status in 2005 from the insurance industry. In addition to trucks, the PLVFD owns an ice auger; generator with lights and chords; 12 portable pumps; chainsaw; the usual fire fighting tools, including safety clothing and first aid supplies.**

**In the event of any fire, a call is made to Thompson Fire and Emergency Services, who contact the PLVFD. The PLVFD scrambles their crew. Response times average 11 minutes for water on fire. If the fire is serious, Thompson Fire and Emergency Services will send a truck and crew, if they are not otherwise engaged, and their crews have air capabilities. It takes at least half an hour for the trip to Paint Lake.**

**Some cottagers have their own pumps and sprinkler systems set up for summer use. Remote cottagers have barrel pumps strategically placed at cottage clusters, and training in their use. Each barrel contains a 4hp Honda high**

pressure pump; standard 1 ½ inch fire hoses; intake hose; nozzle; plus printed instructions. That is the best that the PLVFD has been able to do for remote cottage owners. The PLVFD also protects their boats while docked in the largest boat marina in Manitoba.

Liz and Paint Lake are natural fire barriers. Since 1993, more forest has been removed for roads and a 5 cottage block expansion. What was a burn pile for brush was turned into a playground and wildfire barrier opposite the Lakeview Campground in 1994. There is still some heavy timber to the west of this. The logging currently taking place outside of the park's boundaries tends to lessen the wildfire hazard significantly, until re-growth eventually replaces the harvested forest.

The tri fold, "Wild fires in Manitoba" which is available in the restaurant lobby is a great read for all cottagers in Paint Lake Provincial Park. It has the best available information on family fire practice; what to pack if an emergency evacuation is necessary; and other valuable information. The only road is 375 into and out of the park, which could isolate the park from number 6 highway, which is a major issue.

Some of the park's old white spruce trees are nearing their life span with some having fallen on cottages and vehicles. Spruce budworm has infested the balsam and white spruce, which adds to the hazards of wildfire. Brush and wood pile locations and ladder fuels are being evaluated jointly by the PLVFD and Fire Control Officer, Shauna Kortz, (CWS) to avoid a repeat of the Slave Lake Fire, which destroyed part of that community in 2011, due to arson.

This evaluation will take some time and cooperation between the PLVFD and Mb. Conservation. Cottagers will receive feedback from these assessments, so that fire hazards may be reduced, and a new Emergency Plan can be formulated for this community.

Prepared for: PLCOA by Jim Nicholls, PLVFD

