

THE BOREAL TRAIL GUIDE-MEADOW LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK

The Boreal Trail

The Boreal Trail is a multi-use trail that spans almost the entire width of Meadow Lake Provincial Park. The trail was designed for hiking and backpacking, if you choose to try out the trail on your mountain bike, be extra cautious, as the trail was not designed for such use.

This trail system links several of our existing front country campgrounds, some of which will have water, showers, and camping. You can also utilize existing parking areas to leave a vehicle, it that happens to be your destination.

The trail is marked approximately every kilometer and at intersections with other trails. If you are hiking west to east the markers should be on your right hand side, and if hiking east to west they will be on your left hand side. The trail markers will be either yellow or white in color and will have the Boreal Trail emblem on them.



Meadow Lake Provincial Park

The Boreal Trail is located within Meadow Lake Provincial Park in northwestern Saskatchewan. Some of mother nature's best work is on display in the park. Lush boreal forest, laced with sparkling clean lakes and the winding Waterhen River makes this natural environment park a vacation dream. The park covers an area of almost 1600 square kilometers and is roughly 113 km in length and up to 32 km wide.

The park was established in 1959 and since that time has seen considerable development as a public recreation area. There are 12 campgrounds with over 750 campsites and 25 lakes that provide excellent fishing opportunities.

You have chosen a special place to enjoy a back country experience, here are a few tips to make your trip more enjoyable:

- Your safety is your personal responsibility. Please remember that all outdoor activities involve some degree of risk.
- Water borne parasites are spread by humans and some domestic and wild animals. These parasites can be in any surface water. Boiling, filtering, or treating water is recommended.
- Remember wildlife is wild and can be dangerous.
- Consider leaving your dog at home. Wild animals see dogs as either prey or predator. Dogs must be leashed at all times.

Camping along the trail is allowed in the designated back country sites marked as BT1, BT 2 etc. Payment for these campsites must be made at the point of registration. If for some reason you cannot make it to one of the designated sites, you can camp along the trail, however no open fires are allowed, so bring along a back packing stove. All trash and garbage must be hauled out, refer to the Leave No Trace principles on the back cover for proper disposal of human waste.

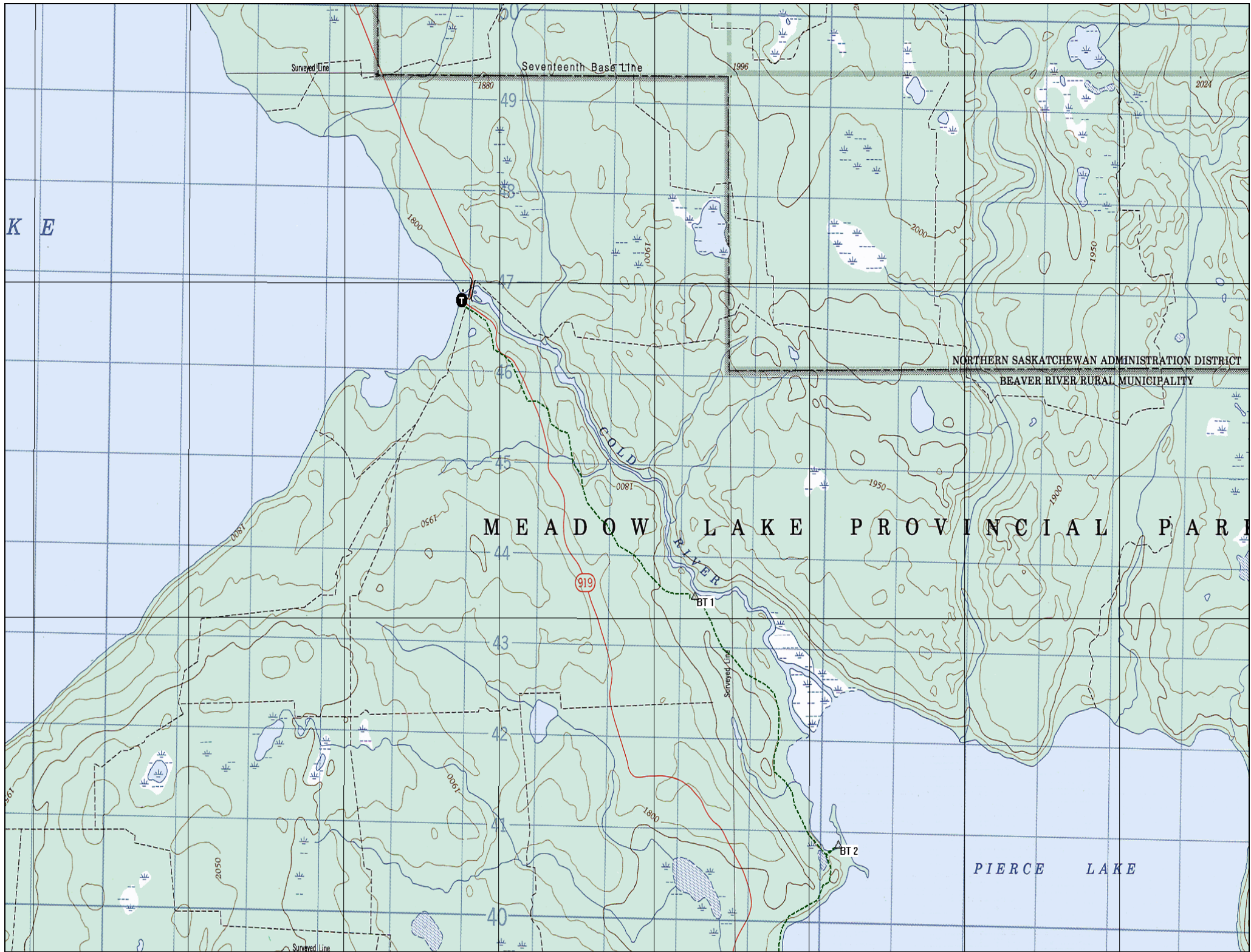
Cold River to Sandy Beach Campground

The trail head is located approximately 800 metres south of the Cold River campground on highway 919. This first section of trail parallels the road for a short distance and then you are walking through a mixed wood forest close to the Cold River. There are several faint trails off of the main trail that will take you down to the Cold River. Be careful going down the bank as the incline is very steep.

The first back country site (BT 1) is located on a high cliff overlooking the Cold River and is approximately 5.1 km from the trailhead.

The second back country site (BT 2) is 4.1 km from BT1 and is located in a sheltered bay on Pierce Lake.

At each back country site there is a bear proof food locker, pit toilet and barbecue.



The pit toilets are going to be located at least 60-70 metres from the barbecue and bear proof food-lockers. This will provide some privacy, but it is also common practice in the back country to separate your sleeping areas from your “kitchen” and the location where you dispose of waste. You are expected to bring your own toilet paper.



The food lockers that are found at each back country campsite are put in place for you to store all of your food items, garbage, and anything else that may have a scent. These food lockers will prevent bears and other wildlife accessing the previous listed items.

Ensure that the doors are secure before you turn in for the night and remember to take your garbage with you. These lockers are for food not garbage. If a previous hiker has left items in the food-locker please consider packing them out or advise park staff of the location, when you de-register after your trip.



If you are not able to make it to one of the designated sites and end up camping along the trail, your food and garbage needs to be securely stored away from your sleeping area. It is highly recommended that someone in the group has enough rope to safely hang the food items so that they are not accessible by bears. Ideally, the items should be 4 to 5 metres off the ground and away from the trunk of the tree.

The barbecues at each designated campsite are department approved for open fires. If there is a fire ban in place then all open fires are prohibited. There are no open fires allowed other than in the supplied barbecues. Gather dead and down wood for your fire. Leave No Trace has some excellent tips on size of firewood.



BT2 -Sandy Beach Campground-Howe Bay

After leaving BT2, the trail continues south along the shore of Pierce Lake. There are some excellent view points of the lake, excellent spots for picture taking. You are 6.7 km from Sandy Beach campground.

The trail will gradually start swinging to the west and will eventually come out on Highway 919. Continue south down the road for approximately six hundred metres and the trail then goes back in to the east and will take you back to Pierce Lake.

The last 1.5 km is trail that does not have an established footpath, as long as you keep the lake to your left, you will come out on the beach, a short distance from the boat launch at Sandy Beach campground. This campground has a service centre with showers, a fast food concession, running water and campsites. These sites are available on a first come first serve basis, and if you plan on camping here for the night, you must check in with the campground office.

To continue on the Boreal Trail, find campsite 79 where the trail takes you south, crosses the park access road and connects to the Humphrey Lake Trail. You are 8.2 km from Howe Bay. The trail will follow along the edge of Humphrey Lake, then continue south up a hill to a viewing tower. This provides an excellent view of where you have been!

From the viewing tower the trail heads southeasterly until it connects with an old access road. This is a well established road and runs easterly until it connects with the main access into Howe Bay.



Approximately 2 km to the north is Howe Bay, which has a small cottage subdivision and Pierce Lake Lodge, a commercial operation that has cabin rentals, a store, and campground.

If you plan on camping at Pierce Lake, you should contact the Lodge ahead of time to check availability of sites. (306 839-4517)

Howe Bay to BT 3

If this is not a stopover, you have 8.7 km to campsite BT 3. The trail starts on the east side of the road and follows an old trail down to the bridge between Pierce Lake and Lepine Lake. Using the existing bridge the trail continues along the road's edge for approximately 4.5 km (Plans are underway to establish the trail along Lepine Lake, but for now you will have to use the road), from this point the trail heads south to the eastern tip of Lepine Lake. Along this section of the trail you will see evidence of gas exploration and very close to BT 3 are the remnants of an old trapping cabin. Trapping is still carried out today within the park.

BT 3 is an excellent campsite overlooking the Cold River as it enters into Lac Des Isles.

The trail leaves BT 3 going east and the next 1-2 km will offer some challenges. The trail crosses two different creeks and depending on water levels you may have to wade across the creek. Under most circumstances, you will be able to pick your way across both creeks and then the trail gets back onto solid ground.

The trail comes down to the edge of Lac des Isles before it leaves in a northeasterly direction as it heads back to Highway 224.

Did you know.....Meadow Lake Provincial Park hosts a wide array of animal species, including 175 bird species, 25 fish species, 48 mammals, 5 reptile and amphibian species. Some of these animals are abundant, such as the white-tailed deer, while others retain relatively small populations, such as the northern leopard frog. Some animals, like the red squirrel, are commonly seen while others remain reclusive, like the pine marten.

History of the Boreal Trail

Meadow Lake Provincial Park is classified as a natural environment park with a mandate to protect the ecological integrity of the local ecosystems, but also to provide a natural area for recreational pursuits. The Boreal Trail was created to expand these recreational pursuits for the park. The park has always been known for the excellent hiking trails, and the Boreal Trail expands these opportunities immensely.

Over a number of years, park staff started a GPS inventory of all existing roads and trails in the park. It soon became evident that the possibility of an extensive trail system existed and that with a little work these existing trails could be joined. The end result is that out of the total 150km of trail that currently exists within the system, only 11 km had to be created. Where the trail met with natural barriers such as muskegs and creeks that were impassable by foot, the trail was routed to an existing road to utilize existing bridges etc to cross these barriers and then routed back into the forest. In addition the trail links eight existing front country campgrounds, providing a variety of start and end points.

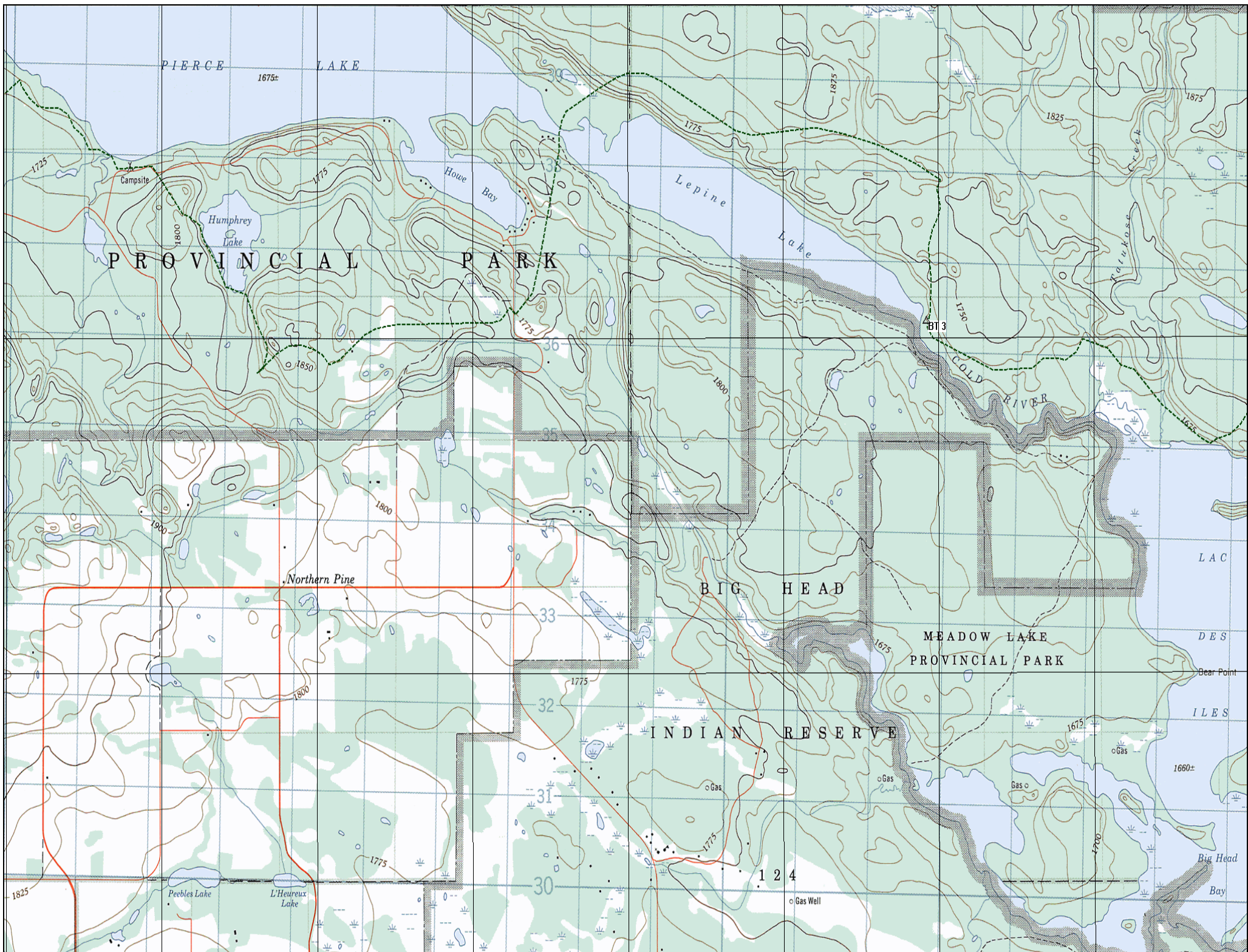
Future of the Boreal Trail

There are plenty of opportunities to expand the current trail system. The focus in the future will be to eliminate those sections that exist on well traveled roads, and also to extend the trail from the east trail head on the west of Greig Lake, north into areas of the park that will provide that wilderness experience. There are also opportunities to create several loop type trails that start and end at the same location.

We will rely on suggestions from people who have hiked the trail and welcome any comments that you may have for improving the trail. We also expect that you will be extra careful when traveling in the back country of Meadow Lake Provincial Park, and that the future of the trail, and the experiences it provides, is the responsibility of all.

Resource Users of the Park

Meadow Lake Provincial Park has always had a variety of resource users since its inception, and many existed before the area was designated as a park. There are several First Nation communities that utilize the area, there are cattle grazers in certain areas, trappers have cabins and trap lines in the park, outfitters offer hunting opportunities and the area is well known for sport hunting as well. We ask that everyone that utilizes the trail respects the cultural diversity of our resource users and in turn we ask that the wilderness experience that our hiking community is seeking is respected as well.



Bears

(The following information on bears was adapted from the “Bears and You” brochure)

The American Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) is one of the largest and impressive animals found in Saskatchewan Provincial Parks. Despite their “Walt Disney” or cartoon image, all bears are potentially dangerous and should be treated with respect. It is up to you, as a visitor in bear country, to minimize the conflicts that can arise when humans and bears share the same territory.

Bears are scavengers, which means they will investigate anything that looks like a potential meal. If bears learn to associate people with food, they may lose their natural fear of humans. Proper food storage, cooking methods, and garbage handling for essential for safe camping in bear country.

Here are a few items to consider when traveling in the back country.

- Cook at least 100 m downwind from your tent.
- Cache all of your food, garbage and other scented items in the supplied food lockers, or in a tree 4-5 metres high, 1 m from the tree trunk and 400 m from camp.
- Pitch your tent in the open, away from dense bush, streams and game trails.
- Stay on trails and make noise when you travel to warn bears of your presence.
- Always be aware of your surroundings, look for signs of bear activity such as tracks, scat and digging.

- Be especially cautious if your visibility or hearing is obstructed by dense bush or running streams.
- Bears are most active during dawn and dusk, plan your travel accordingly.
- Practice the Leave No Trace principles on the back cover of this guide.

If you happen to encounter a bear remember:

- Never feed or approach a bear or cubs.
- Make a wide detour if you see a bear at a distance or wait for the bear to move on.
- If you suddenly encounter a bear, calmly back away, speaking in low tones and do not look directly at the bear.
- Stay calm, DO NOT RUN! You cannot outrun a bear.
- Climbing a tree is not an escape, black bears can easily climb trees.
- In almost all cases, if a black bear charges it is a bluff. Stand your ground and make yourself as big as possible, waving your hands in the air.
- If an attack does occur, and no escape is possible, you should defend yourself.
- Keep your pack on, and lie with your face down, hands clasped behind your neck. If you are flipped over, roll back on to your front.
- Remember, there is safety in numbers.

There are many products on the market, that if used properly can assist in protecting you in bear country. Ensure that you know how to use these products and their limitations before your trip.

BT 3-BT 4-Murray Doell Campground

The distance between BT 3 and BT 4 is 14 km. Some of this section has been previously described in the last trail description.

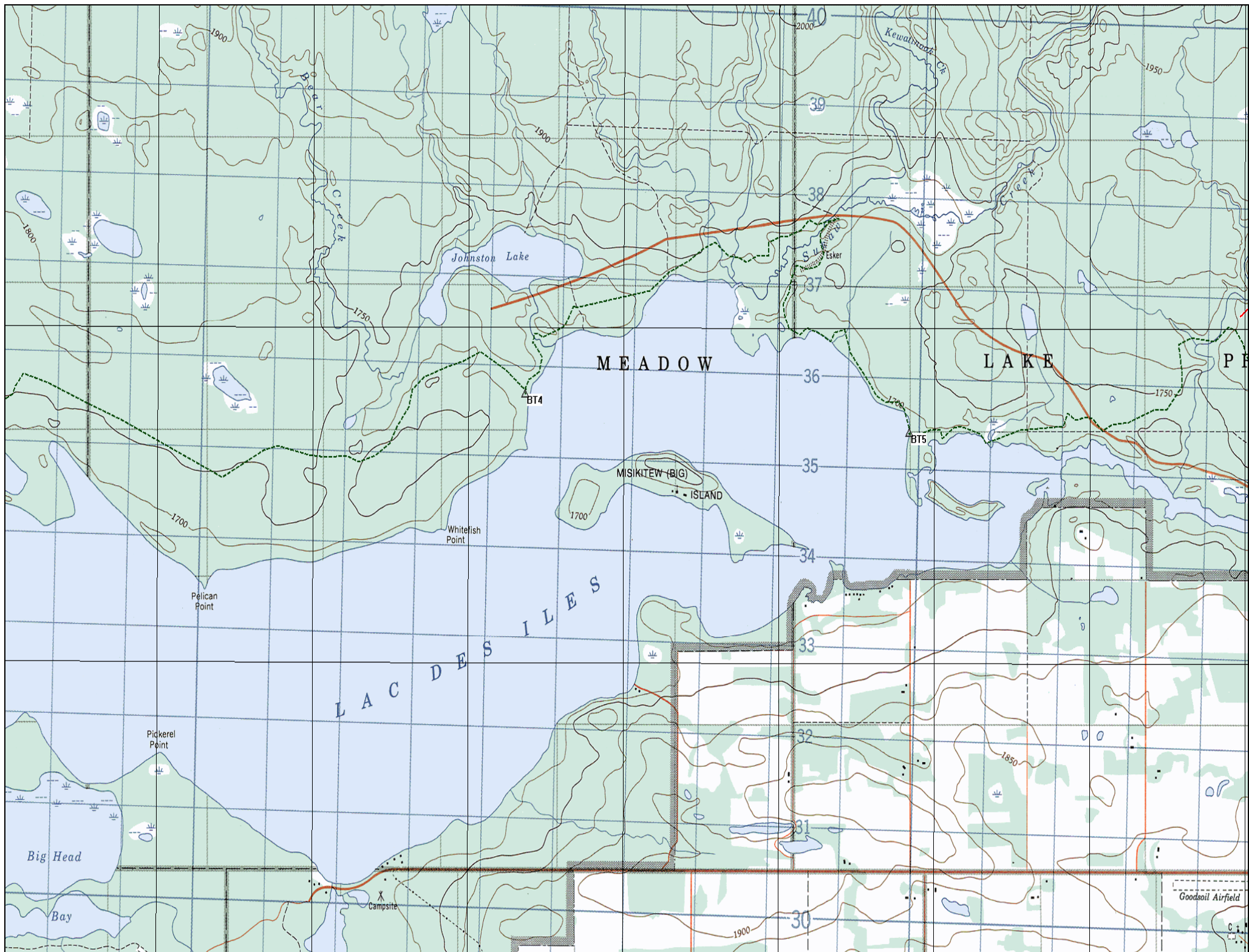
The trail eventually becomes a well worn trail and will take you to Highway 224, the main road through the park. When you reach the road you have a short hike to the east along the road, before the trail heads back into the forest. This next section was originally cleared for the original road several decades ago. The trail path is well defined and continues in a easterly direction until it comes back on to Highway 224.

From here you have two options, hike easterly along the road to Murray Doell campground which is approximately 2 km away. If you continue south across the road, the trail will take you down to the shore of Lac des Isles and campsite BT 4.

BT 4 is 1.7 km from Murray Doell campground, and between the two, the trail crosses a beaver flood. If it is not possible to cross the beaver flood (in some cases, walking on the beaver dam) you will have to backtrack out to the road and then to the campground.

The trail enters the campground not far from the campground office. This campground has showers, water and campsites. There are walk in sites available near the camp kitchen close to site 50. These sites can be accessed from a trail that starts near the boat launch south of the campground office.

The Boreal Trail departs the campground from the parking lot at the public beach.



Murray Doell Campground-BT 5

The trail leaves the campground at the beach area parking lot and follows the interpretive trail for a short distance before heading east off the interpretive trail. The trail parallels the lake and crosses several creeks. You should have no problems crossing these creeks. This is a fairly low lying area until you get closer to Sukaw creek. Again there are two options from this point, follow the trail out to the road and cross Sukaw creek on the road, or check out the creek and see if there are any natural crossings that you could use.

Once you have crossed the creek, the trail climbs to the top of a high esker and winds its way through mixed forest, wetlands and meadows. This is one of the most picturesque sections of the trail.

The trail eventually arrives at the shore of Lac des Isles once again and parallels the shore line until it comes out on an old trail. Head south down this old trail and you will find BT 5 nestled in a nice little spot with a great beach out front.

Did you know..... Lakes within Meadow Lake Provincial Park are all the result of glaciation. Most are kettle lakes that occupy collapsed basins that formed when ice blocks from the retreating glacier, melted. Mistohay Lake occupies a valley that was cut into the till by glacial meltwaters and sits about 200 m higher than Matheson Lake, and is older. Greig Lake and Waterhen Lake are remnants of glacial Meadow Lake.

BT 5- Goodsoil Entry Gate

The trail leaves BT 5 and heads east crossing the small peninsula that extends into Lac des Isles. This next section is most likely one of the most challenging. There is fairly dense willows along the lake shore and roughly 1 km from BT 5, the trail comes to the mouth of a creek, that no matter how you look at it, you will get wet. It is not far across the mouth of the creek, and water levels will fluctuate. It is probably best if one person finds the best route across, and then others can follow. If your party decides that the crossing is too risky, then you will have to back track from BT 5 and follow the trail north until you reach the road. You can then hike east along the road until you connect with the trail where it crosses the road again between BT 5 and De Balinard Lake.

The trail will come out on Highway 224 and crosses to the north-east. The trail path is well established and is fairly easy traveling. Eventually you will come to a junction and you could choose to continue north east to De-Balinard Lake, which has a back country site, or at the junction swing back to the south and you will come out again on the road just north of the Goodsoil entry gate. If the gate is staffed, you could check in here and there are pit toilets not far from the gate which is just north of the Waterhen River.

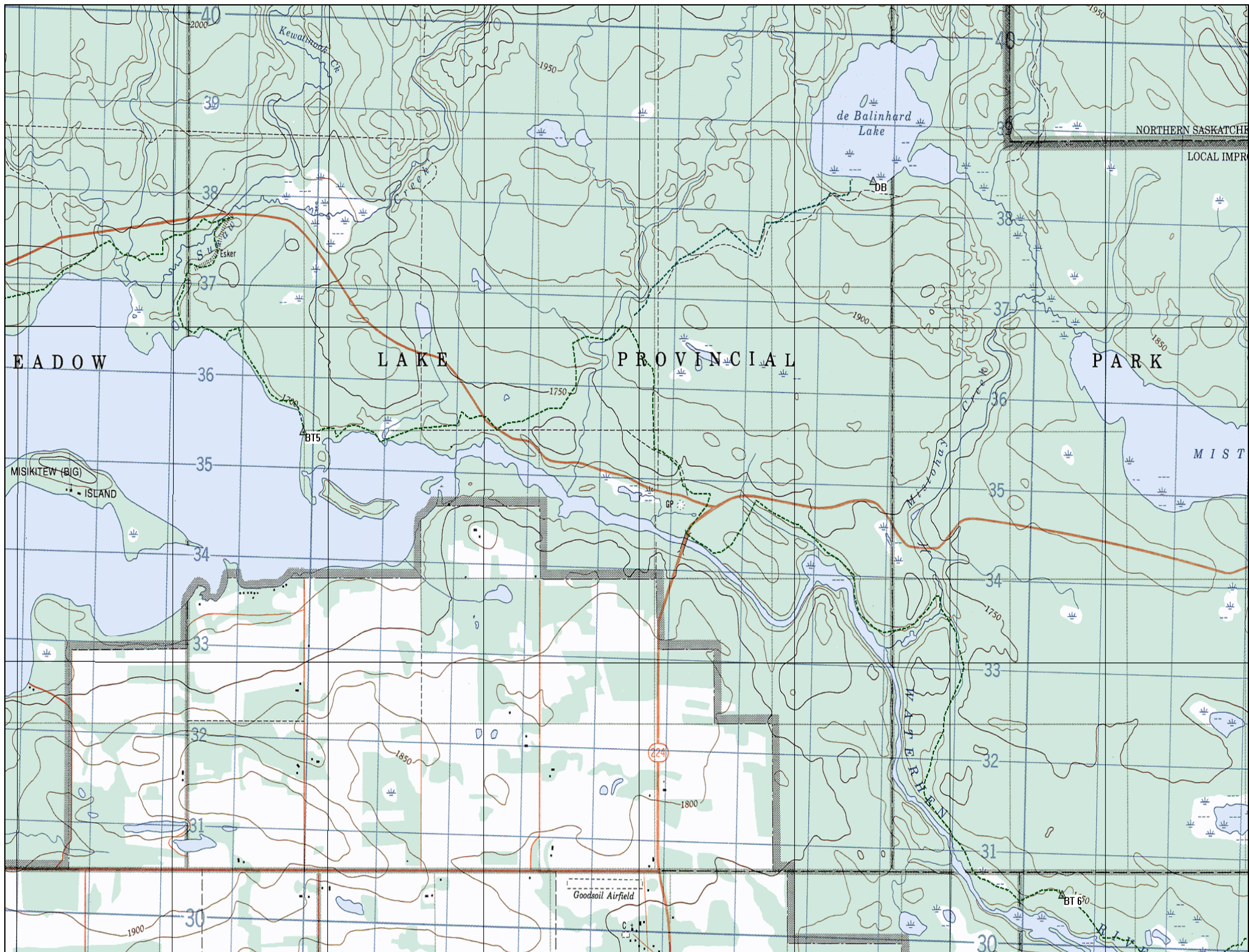
The distance between BT 5 and De Balinard Lake is 9.7 km and between BT 5 and the Goodsoil entry gate, the distance is 8.8 km.

Did you know.... Meadow Lake Provincial Park is located in the Hatfield Valley, between the Mostoos Hills and the Thickwood Hills. As the glacier melted, some of the material in the ice was sorted by water to form stratified deposits overtop of bedrock. These glacial deposits vary in thickness from 14 m to 250 m in the Meadow Lake area. Depending on the deposition process various glacial features can be found in the park.

If you happen to be low on supplies, the village of Goodsoil is south of the entry gate. There are a couple of stores where you could restock your supplies, or perhaps this is the take out point for your trip.

If you are planning on starting your trip here, make sure that you have registered with one of the administration offices in either Dorintosh (306 236-7680) or Pierceland (306 839-6250). If you have registered electronically then advise the gate staff that you are beginning your trip.

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Goodsoil Gate-BT 6- Mistohay Junction

The trail heads east from the entry gate and follows a well worn path along the Waterhen River for a short distance before it sings to the north for approximately 1 km, you almost reach highway 224, but the trail then turns back to the southeast and eventually ends up at the Waterhen River once again.

This section of the trail has some different topography compared to the rest of the trail. The trail runs along the edge of hills, and in one area you will be able to look over Mistohay Creek for quite a distance. Keep you eyes open for moose in this area.

Once the trail crosses Mistohay creek, it turns south and comes to the edge of the Waterhen River once again. This section of the trail will bring you into the area where cattle grazing occurs. The trail crosses a couple of fence lines, but there are gates at these crossings, if the gate is open when you go through, leave it open, and if is closed, please close it, or climb over/through the fence.

The distance between Goodsoil Gate and BT 6 is 10.4 km. The BT 6 campsite is located on the north shore of the Waterhen River.

BT 6-Mistohay Junction

Before leaving BT 6, you should confirm your travel plans with your group. The trail junction to Mistohay Lake is 4.9 km from BT 6 and the Mistohay campground is 7.4 km north of the junction. As you get close to the junction, there will a fence line to the north, there is a trail marker close to the fence indicating where to cross, then follow the trail marker north to the campground. The trail goes through some low lying areas, but there should be no problem crossing these areas. Mistohay campground has non-electric sites, water and the lake itself is excellent for fishing.

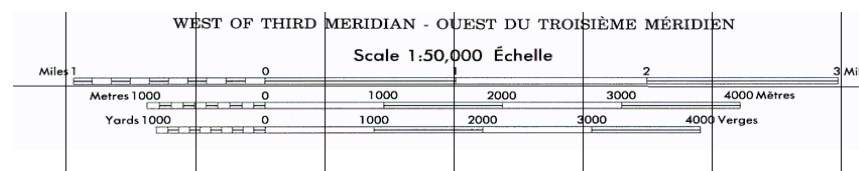
If your plans are to hike to BT 7, you are looking at a distance of 8.9 km from BT 6. The trail follows the north shore of the Waterhen River and as mentioned earlier, this area has cattle grazing.

Both the BT 6 and BT 7 campsites are prime spots to see wildlife. Moose and white-tailed deer are common in the area, and there will be plenty of birds on the river.

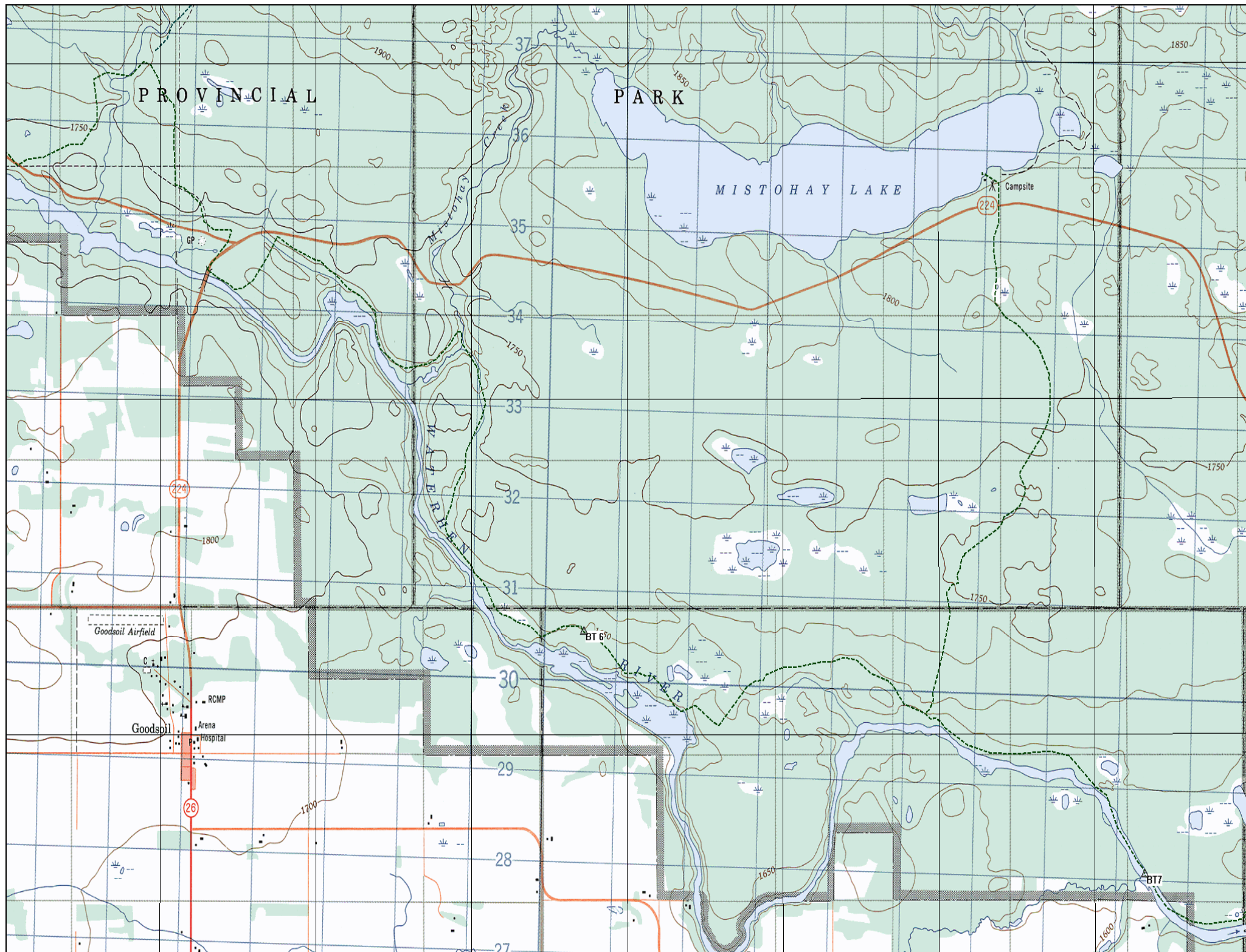
Boreal Trail Distances

Trail head (Cold River) to campsite BT1	5.1 km
Campsite Bt1 to campsite BT 2	4.1 km
Campsite BT 2 to Sandy Beach campground	6.7 km
Sandy Beach campground to Howe Bay	8.2 km
Howe Bay to campsite BT 3	8.7 km
Campsite BT 3 to campsite BT 4	14 km
Campsite BT 4 to Murray Doell campground	1.7 km
Murray Doell campground to campsite BT 5	9.2 km
Campsite BT 5 to De Balinard Lake	9.7 km
Campsite BT 5 to Goodsoil Bridge	8.8 km
Goodsoil Bridge to campsite BT 6	10.4 km
Campsite BT 6 to Mistohay junction	4.9 km
Mistohay junction to Mistohay campground	7.4 km
Campsite BT 6 to campsite BT 7	8.9 km
Campsite BT 7 to Chalet camp	5.6 km
Chalet camp to Kimball (via Little Raspberry	12.4 km
<u>North Route</u>	
Chalet camp to Tall Timber Trails	4.8 km
Tall Timber Trails to New Branch junction	1.6 km
New Branch junction to Kimball Lake	6.2 km
campground	
Kimball Lake Campground to First Mustus	2.3 km
campground	
First Mustus campground to trail end	9 km
New Branch junction to campsite BT 8	3 km
Campsite BT 8 to campsite BT 9	6.4 km
Campsite BT 9 to trail end	11.6 km

The scale below can be used to approximate the distances on all the maps contained in this guide.



The declination that you should be using on your compass in 2011 should be 12 degrees 18 minutes east of north, with the declination decreasing 10.8 minutes annually.



BT 7-Chalet-Kimball Lake

As you prepare to leave this campsite, the group should be aware of the travel plans for the day. The Chalet is 5.6 km to the east, and from that point there are several different options that you can take. The Chalet is used as a warm up shelter in the winter. This section of the trail is part of Route 66, the Trans Canada snowmobile trail. The chalet camp has a small cabin, fire pit and outdoor toilet.

If your plan is to continue along the trail that parallels the river, you are looking at a distance of 12.4 km to Kimball Lake. Along the way you will pass Little Raspberry Lake just before the trail encounters the shore of Kimball Lake, with one of the best known beaches in Canada. Kimball Lake campground has two service centres with showers, campsites, store, and water. The trail will take you right past a small service centre and the store before you arrive at the boat launch parking lot.

From the chalet camp, if you decide to go north, you will come to Tall Timber Trails, an operator that offers horse back riding. From Tall Timber Trails you can access Matheson campground, to the northwest, or Vivian campground to the east. Both campgrounds have limited services, Matheson does have water.

Going north from the Chalet, offers a different option to access Kimball Lake. From Tall Timber Trails follow the trail to the east. The trail is north of Vivian and Stanley Lakes, and you will end up on north shore of Kimball Lake. The trail passes a cottage subdivision before arriving at the boat launch. Distance from the Chalet to Kimball on this route is 12.6 km

Kimball Lake-Third Mustus-Greig Trailhead

If you are continuing on the trail, the trailhead on the west side of Greig Lake is 11.3 km. As you leave the boat launch parking lot, follow the paved road to the north where it intersects with the gravel highway 224. Follow this gravel road to the east. Cross the bridge and the trail then heads north to the First Mustus Environmental campground. This campground has group tent site, a camp kitchen with food lockers, composting toilet and a solar powered water system. This campground is 2.3 km from Kimball Lake. To reach the trail head at Greig Lake, the trail leaves First Mustus campground going east along the road until it heads north along a well worn path, locally referred to as the Dennis Creek trail, The Greig Lake trailhead is 9 km from First Mustus.

Chalet Camp-BT 8-BT 9-Greig Trailhead

To access the backcountry site BT 8 and BT 9, follow the trail north to Tall Timber Trails, which is 4.8 km from the Chalet. The trail that heads east to Kimball will reach a junction 1.6 km from Tall Timber Trails, that takes you north to BT 8 which is on the shore of Third Mustus Lake and 3 km from the junction. The Boreal Trail here doubles as the New Branch trail.

The trail leaves BT8 heading northwest before it crosses the creek between Peitahigan and Third Mustus Lake and heads northeast to BT9 on the shores of Fourth Mustus Lake, 6.4 km from BT 8.

The area around the Mustus chain of lakes is beautiful country and offers a variety of topography.

The end is almost near! The trailhead on the west side of Greig Lake is 11.6 km from BT9, and is located in open fields that were farmed many years ago.

Some basic information to consider while venturing in the back country

- Your group travel will only be as quick as the slowest person in the group.
- Be familiar with your equipment. You do not want to find out that your new stove does not work when you are kilometers away from anywhere.
- Do not rely on only a GPS for navigation. Someone should be carrying a compass and know how to use. The maps in this guide are digitally scanned maps of the original topographic maps. Many of these maps were originally made in the 1980-s, so remember things may have changed since the maps were made.

Meadow Lake Provincial Park Contact Information:

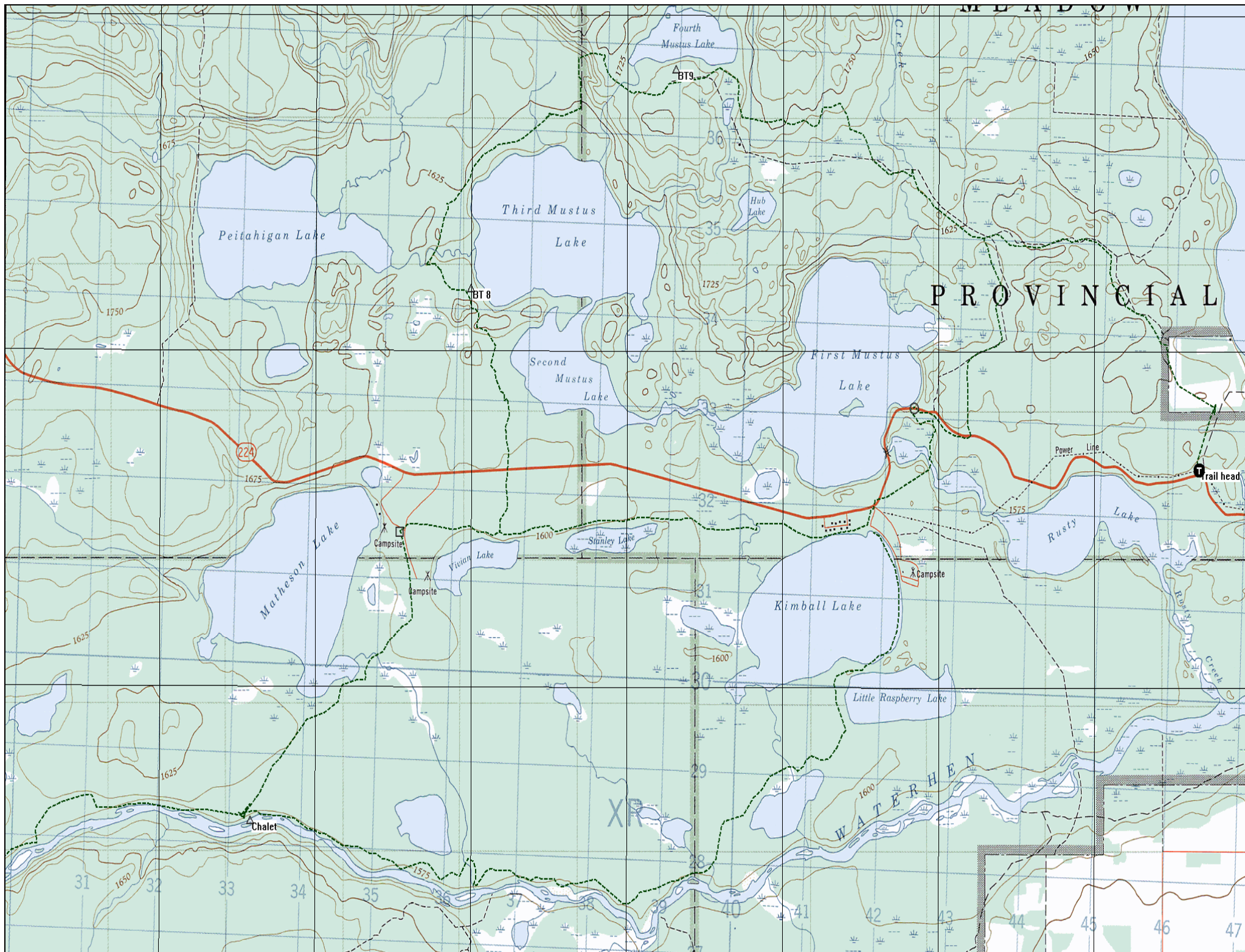
Park Offices

Dorintosh 306 236-7680
Pierceland 306 839-6250

Website

www.saskparks.net/borealtrail

Emergency 911



LEAVE NO TRACE OUTDOOR ETHICS

PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you will visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass and GPS to eliminate the use of rock cairns or flagging tape.

TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 70 metres from lakes, streams (if possible)
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

In popular areas

- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites
- Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.

In Pristine areas

- Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in cat holes dug 15 to 20 centimetres deep, at least 70 metres from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cat hole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 70 metres away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap.
- Scatter strained dishwater.

LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, camp furniture, or dig trenches.



MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a light-weight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

RESPECT WILDLIFE

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other visitors on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.