



**MANITOBA WATERSHED  
DISTRICTS PROGRAM**  
2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT



## Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Minister responsible for Efficiency Manitoba

Legislative Building, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8 CANADA

Her Honour the Honourable Anita R. Neville, P.C., O.M.  
Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba  
Room 235 Legislative Building  
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

Your Honour,

As Minister of Environment and Climate Change, I am pleased to share the accomplishments of Manitoba's Watershed Districts Program for 2023-24.

Manitoba's 14 watershed districts have a successful, long-standing partnership with local municipalities, enhancing the health and sustainability of watersheds across almost all of agri-Manitoba. Watershed districts promote and enhance watershed health and resiliency through land and water stewardship programs and the development of integrated watershed management plans. Watershed districts deliver projects and programs that reduce the impacts of flood and drought, conserve and enhance habitats, reduce nutrients in waterways, improve water quality, protect drinking water, and increase watershed awareness through education.

The program expanded again in 2023-24, bringing two new rural municipalities and one town on board (Rural Municipalities of Headingley and Morris, and the Town of Melita), and expanding the area of participation for two previously included municipalities (Portage la Prairie and Rockwood). We continue to pursue expansion to allow all municipalities the opportunity to participate in the program. The program's successes are largely due to the cooperative and voluntary nature of local watershed district boards. On behalf of our government, thank you to all watershed district board members and staff for enhancing watershed health across Manitoba.

Sincerely,

Mike Moyes  
Minister of Environment and Climate Change



# THE MANITOBA WATERSHED DISTRICTS PROGRAM

## WATERSHED DISTRICTS IN MANITOBA

Manitoba's Watershed Districts Program enhances the health and sustainability of watersheds through stewardship programs and partnerships. With funding from the Manitoba government and municipalities, locally appointed watershed district boards make planning and management decisions to improve watershed health across most of municipal Manitoba.

## VISION

The Watershed Districts Program strives for healthy watersheds that support watershed residents, the environment, and the economy for the present and the future.

## MANDATE

Watershed districts lead integrated watershed management planning and play a key role in plan implementation. Through shared governance and citizen engagement, watershed districts deliver local solutions to complex issues – contributing to healthier, more resilient watersheds.

## PRINCIPLES

The Watershed Districts Program:

- functions as a partnership between levels of government and engages local citizens
- is cost-shared by provincial and municipal government partners
- is incentive-based and non-regulatory
- relies on local decision-making through local boards with support from technical experts to solve local issues
- uses watershed management planning to guide decision-making and programming

### Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that Manitoba is on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, and Nehethowuk peoples.

We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis.

We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and Treaty Making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.

# WATERSHED DISTRICTS IN MANITOBA

The Watershed Districts Program is a partnership between Manitoba and 116 municipal partners, with a long-standing history of grassroots decision-making to improve watershed health.

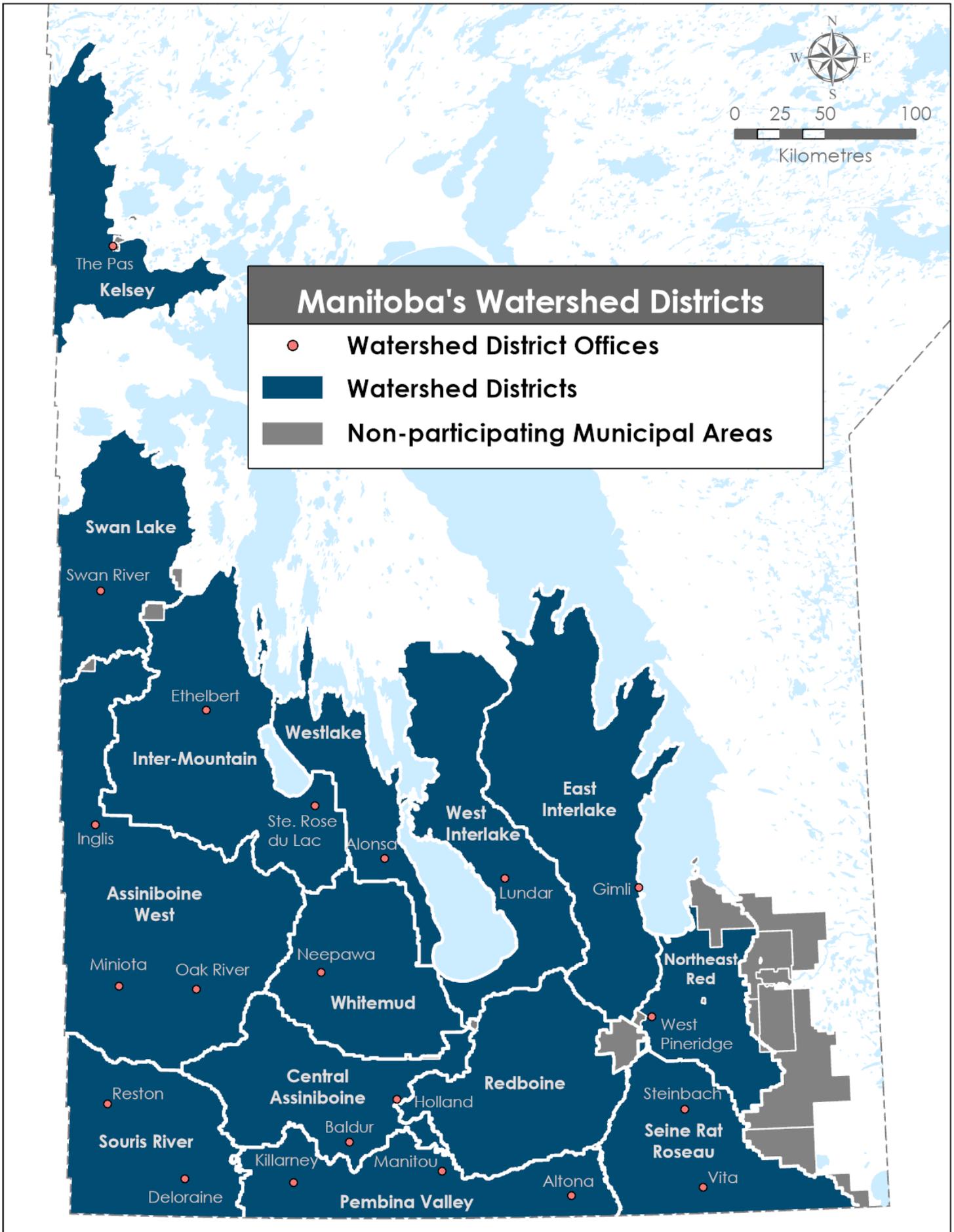
## PROGRAM EXPANSION

In 2023-24, the Manitoba government allocated additional funding to expand the Central Assiniboine, Pembina Valley, Redboine, Seine Rat Roseau, and Souris River Watershed Districts. In March 2024 with support from municipal councils, Manitoba amended the Watershed Districts Regulation, formally expanding these five districts. Through this expansion process, two new municipalities and one town joined the program (Rural Municipality of Headingley, Rural Municipality of Morris, and the Town of Melita), and two municipalities expanded their included areas (Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie and the Rural Municipality of Rockwood).



## PROVINCIAL GRANTS

Watershed District	Provincial Grant	Watershed District	Provincial Grant
Assiniboine West	\$703K	Redboine	\$390K
Central Assiniboine	\$414K	Seine Rat Roseau	\$390K
East Interlake	\$300K	Souris River	\$446K
Inter-Mountain	\$862K	Swan Lake	\$225K
Kelsey	\$155K	West Interlake	\$225K
Northeast Red	\$700K	Westlake	\$418K
Pembina Valley	\$617K	Whitemud	\$910K



# PROGRAM FUNDING AND EXPENDITURES

**Provincial Grant:**  
**\$6,755,000**

Manitoba provides an annual grant to each watershed district to implement integrated watershed management plans in their local watersheds. The 2023-24 provincial grants to watershed districts included \$88K for the expansion of five watershed districts.

**Municipal Levies:**  
**\$2,222,333**

Participating municipalities provide \$1 for every \$3 Manitoba contributes to watershed districts. Municipalities appoint representatives to participate in the development and delivery of watershed district programs and activities.

**Additional Funding:**  
**\$9,429,432**

**Federal** \$2,175,873  
**Additional municipal** \$424,049  
**Additional provincial** \$4,237,940  
**Non-governmental** \$2,591,570

Additional funding is obtained from a variety of sources, including environmental organizations, industry, and government programs.

**TOTAL PROGRAM FUNDING: \$18,406,765**

## PROGRAM SPENDING BY ACTIVITY

Watershed district programming reflects provincial and local priorities. Watershed districts design programming to meet goals, objectives, and actions identified in their integrated watershed management plans (IWMPs). Although programs vary between individual watershed districts, they can be grouped into five main categories:

### Surface Water Management

**45%**

Water retention, erosion control, and drain maintenance

### Nutrient Reduction and Water Quality Protection

**34%**

Riparian area fencing, alternative watering systems, cover crops, forage establishment, and grassed waterways

### Natural Area Protection and Enhancement

**14%**

Wetland restoration and enhancement, tree planting, aquatic habitat restoration, nature trails, and conservation agreements

### Watershed Education and Awareness

**5%**

Water festivals, producer workshops, project tours, watershed health monitoring, and development of IWMPs

### Drinking Water Protection

**2%**

Source water protection activities such as wellhead remediation, abandoned well sealing, and drinking water testing

# 2023-24 FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

## DISTRICTS RECEIVE ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM A NUMBER OF OTHER PARTNERS:

### LEVERAGING FUNDING

The Manitoba government provides an annual grant to each watershed district to implement programming to enhance the health and sustainability of watersheds through IWMPs. Participating municipalities are required to match the provincial grant; for every \$3 that the province provides, municipalities in the watershed district are required to collectively contribute a minimum of \$1. This cost-shared funding enables locally-appointed district boards to offer programs that address priorities identified in integrated watershed management plans.

Thanks to the success of watershed districts in on-the-ground project implementation, all 14 watershed districts leverage their core cost-shared funding to obtain additional funding from a variety of external sources. These external sources include non-government environmental organizations, industry, and government programs, and in 2023-24, totalled over \$9 million.

Manitoba's Watershed Districts Program offers a cost-effective way to leverage funding for local watershed health: for every \$1 that municipalities contributed to the program in 2023-24, watershed districts leveraged \$6 in combined Manitoba government and external funding sources. In addition to these funding sources, watershed districts partner with landowners and residents to complete projects on the landscape. The invaluable contributions of individual partners include labour, equipment, materials, access, and additional cost-sharing.

### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Conservation, GROW and Wetlands GROW Trusts  
Manitoba Building Sustainable Communities Program  
Manitoba Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund  
Manitoba Hometown Green Team

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
2 Billion Trees Program  
Canada Summer Jobs  
Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Natural Resources Canada  
Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership

### NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

ALUS Canada  
Carthy Foundation  
Ducks Unlimited Canada  
Elkhorn and Area Foundation  
Manitoba Beef Producers  
Manitoba Forage and Grasslands Association  
Manitoba Recreational Trails Association  
Mound Wildlife  
Nature Conservancy of Canada  
RBC Tech for Nature  
Tundra Oil & Gas  
Other local organizations, community foundations, corporate sponsors, and individual donors

In addition to these partnerships, many municipalities contribute more than the required matching funds in support of the high quality programs and projects completed by districts.

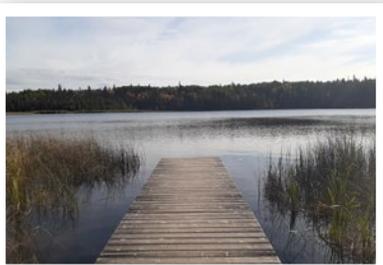
# PROGRAM OUTCOMES 2023-24

## MANITOBA'S WATERSHED DISTRICTS PROGRAM:



### ENHANCES WATERSHED PLANNING

- develops a shared vision and coordinated action for watersheds
- provides funding for targeted, on-the-ground action to address local and provincial priorities
- builds local capacity for cooperation, improved communication, and local knowledge sharing
- builds and strengthens local, provincial, and federal partnerships



**24**

watershed management plans in action

**5**

new watershed plans in development

**5**

existing watershed plans under renewal



### REDUCES IMPACTS OF FLOODING AND DROUGHT

- improves watershed resiliency to adapt to a changing climate
- targets and prioritizes water retention and peak flow reduction projects
- identifies and coordinates surface water projects
- mitigates flood events
- builds soil health and water retention capacity of soils
- manages waterway networks to reduce flooding impacts, while considering the environment



**35**

water retention projects with 665 cubic decametres of storage created

**276 km**

drains maintained or reconstructed

**144**

crossings replaced or repaired



### IMPROVES LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- conserves and restores aquatic, riparian, and prairie habitat
- protects and enhances ecological goods and services
- fosters linkages between land development planning and watershed planning
- promotes sustainable land management



**39 ha**

wetlands enhanced

**62,744**

trees planted

**173 km**

shelterbelts established

# HEALTHY AND RESILIENT WATERSHEDS • STRONG RURAL COMMUNITIES SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION



## IMPROVES WATER QUALITY

- implements projects to improve water quality and reduce nutrient loading
- increases local capacity to monitor and understand trends in water quality
- improves soil health and reduces the over-application of nutrients on agricultural lands
- fosters collaboration between technical professionals and local land managers to improve water quality



## PROTECTS DRINKING WATER

- conducts source water protection planning for public drinking water systems
- provides recommendations and implements actions to improve drinking water quality
- fosters collaboration between technical professionals and local people to monitor groundwater quality, assess groundwater issues, and implement projects aimed at protecting local groundwater sources



## SUPPORTS PROSPEROUS RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- provides provincial government funding to rural communities, increasing ability to leverage additional sources of external funding
- supports rural employment and local businesses
- educates youth and local land managers
- manages waterway infrastructure to support a productive agricultural landscape and rural development



**12**

erosion control structures established

**11**

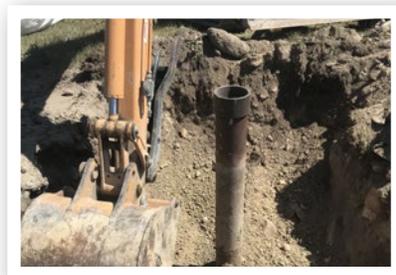
grassed waterways created

**24**

streambank and gully stabilization projects completed

**139 ha**

buffer strips established



**877**

private wells tested

**156**

abandoned wells sealed



**68**

tours and demonstrations with 1,039 attendees

**1,550**

youth attended water festivals

**63**

full-time and 37 part-time and seasonal staff employed

# CUMULATIVE PROJECT OUTCOMES

(2019-24)

MITIGATING FLOOD AND DROUGHT IMPACTS:

**252**

water storage projects

**5,407**

cubic decametres storage capacity

MAINTAINING INFRASTRUCTURE:

**7,599**

kilometres drain brushing or mowing

**722**

crossings maintained, repaired, or replaced



REDUCING EROSION:

**93**

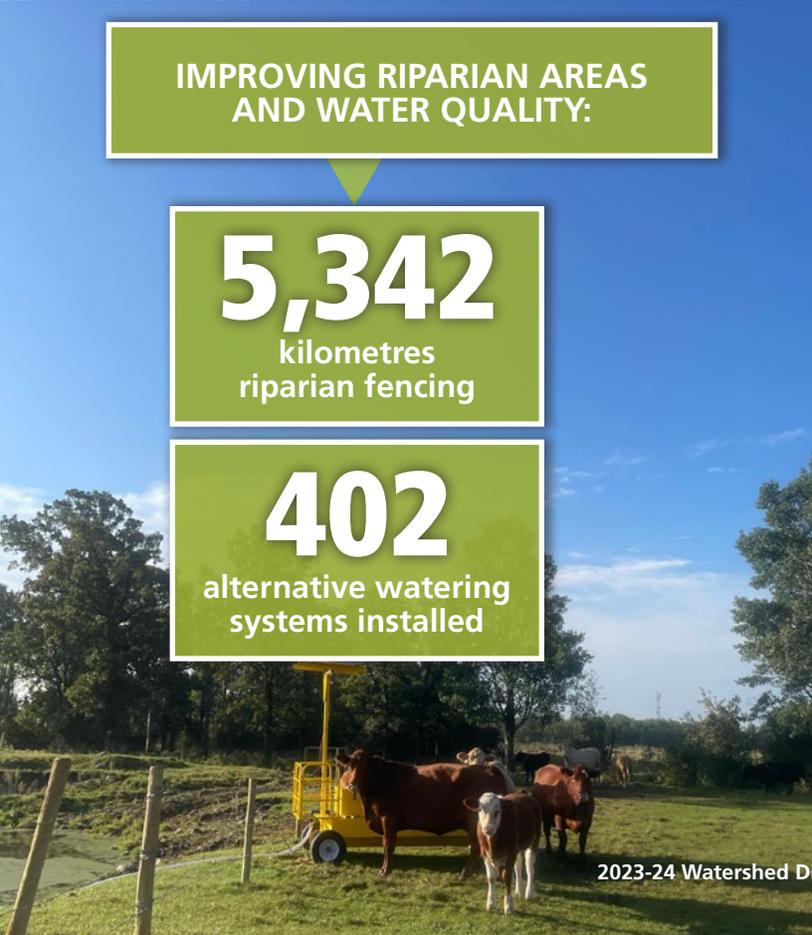
erosion control structures

**71**

grassed waterways

**142**

gully and streambank stabilization projects



IMPROVING RIPARIAN AREAS AND WATER QUALITY:

**5,342**

kilometres riparian fencing

**402**

alternative watering systems installed



PROTECTING DRINKING WATER SOURCES:

**785**

abandoned wells sealed

**6,458**

drinking water test results provided to landowners

# WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Integrated watershed management plans (IWMPs) provide a decision-making framework for the protection, restoration, and management of water, aquatic ecosystems, and drinking water sources. The planning process engages watershed residents, organizations, and government to identify and prioritize watershed issues, gather and analyze local, technical, and traditional knowledge, and develop recommendations to address priority issues in targeted areas. Plan implementation is shared by watershed districts, all levels of government, watershed residents and organizations.

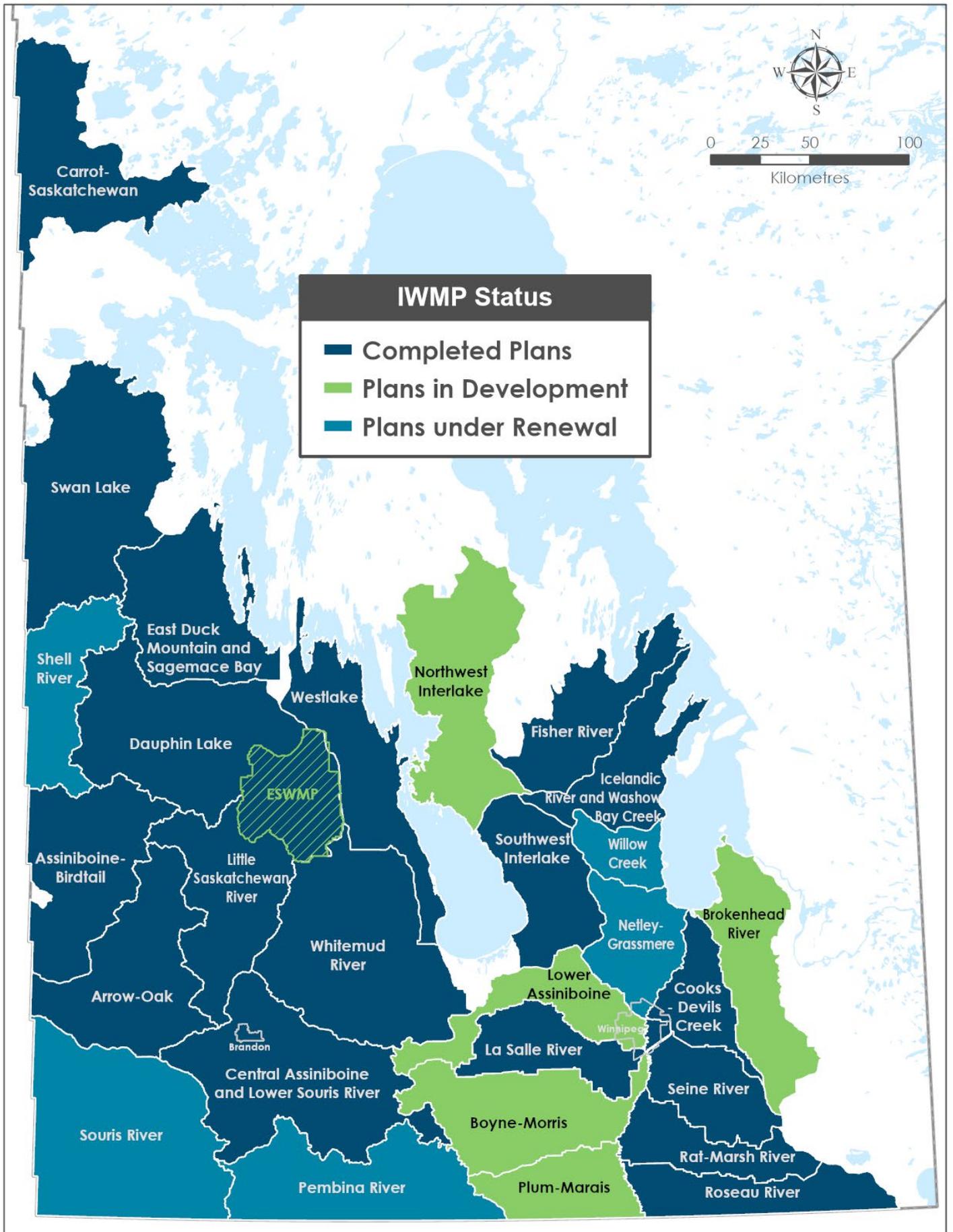
Planning grants are provided to watershed districts for the development of IWMPs, as outlined in the Watershed Management Regulation under The Water Protection Act. As of 2024, watershed districts have completed 24 first generation watershed management plans. There are an additional five first generation plans (Brokenhead River, Boyne-Morris, Lower Assiniboine, Northwest Interlake, and Plum-Marais) and four second generation plans (Pembina River, Shell River, Souris River, and Netley-Grassmere-Willow Creek) in development. An enhanced Surface Water Management Plan (ESWMP) for the Ochre River and Turtle River sub-watersheds is being piloted under the IWMP process. The ESWMP will outline short and long-term goals for the sub-watersheds by identifying priority projects to enhance watershed resiliency in the region.

For more information on integrated watershed management planning in Manitoba, please visit [www.manitobawatersheds.ca](http://www.manitobawatersheds.ca)

## PROVINCIAL WATERSHED SUPPORT

The Watershed Planning and Programs Section (Water Science and Watershed Management Branch) of Environment and Climate Change administers and manages the Watershed Districts Program under the authority of The Watershed Districts Act. The section also coordinates and supports watershed management planning as outlined in The Water Protection Act.

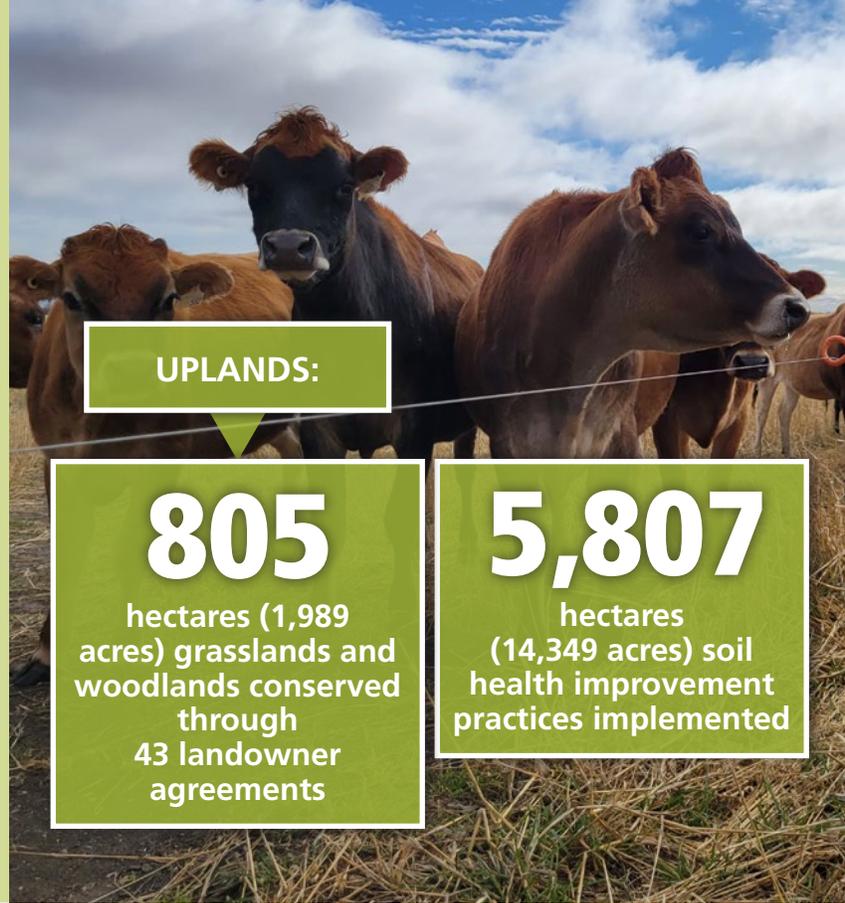
For more information, please visit [www.manitobawatersheds.ca](http://www.manitobawatersheds.ca) or call 204-945-6784



# GROWING OUTCOMES IN WATERSHEDS 2023-24

Growing Outcomes in Watersheds (GROW) supports delivery of ecological goods and services in Manitoba. GROW enhances watershed health and resiliency by prioritizing and funding projects that mitigate and prepare for drought and flooding, improve nutrient management, and improve water quality. In addition, GROW projects can improve on-farm water management, enhance sustainable agricultural production, improve biodiversity and habitat, and sequester carbon.

As the delivery agents for GROW, watershed districts work with landowners to develop and deliver projects that align with GROW priority outcomes and co-benefits. In addition, watershed districts develop locally relevant programming to ensure the projects they deliver support actions identified in local watershed management plans and address watershed needs. Each district delivering GROW has established a local GROW committee with representation from agricultural producers, watershed district members, technical experts, and other partners.



## UPLANDS:

**805**

hectares (1,989 acres) grasslands and woodlands conserved through 43 landowner agreements

**5,807**

hectares (14,349 acres) soil health improvement practices implemented

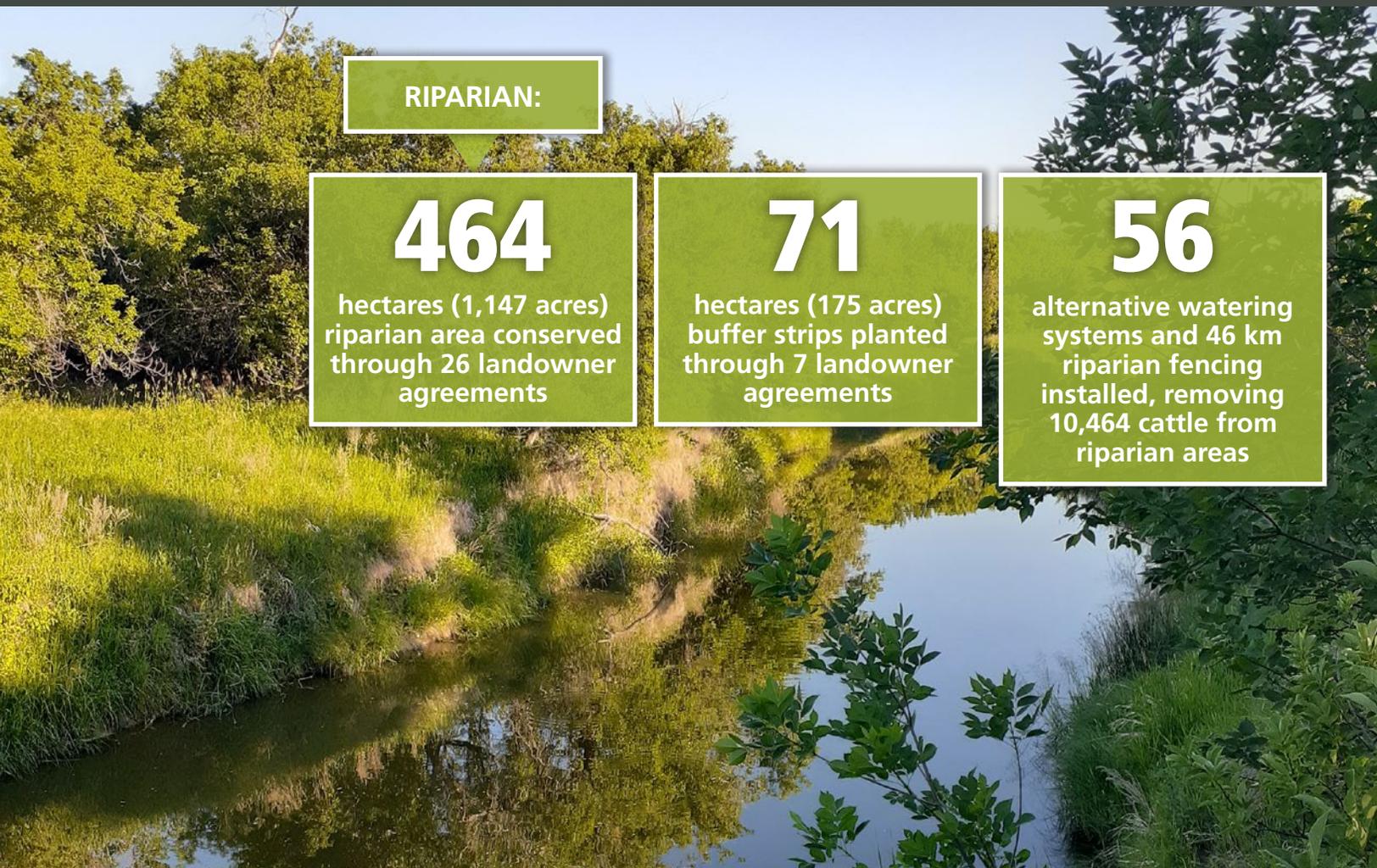
## WETLANDS:

**1,252**

hectares (3,094 acres) Class 1 and 2 wetlands conserved through 134 landowner agreements

**39**

hectares (96 acres) wetlands enhanced



**RIPARIAN:**

**464**  
hectares (1,147 acres)  
riparian area conserved  
through 26 landowner  
agreements

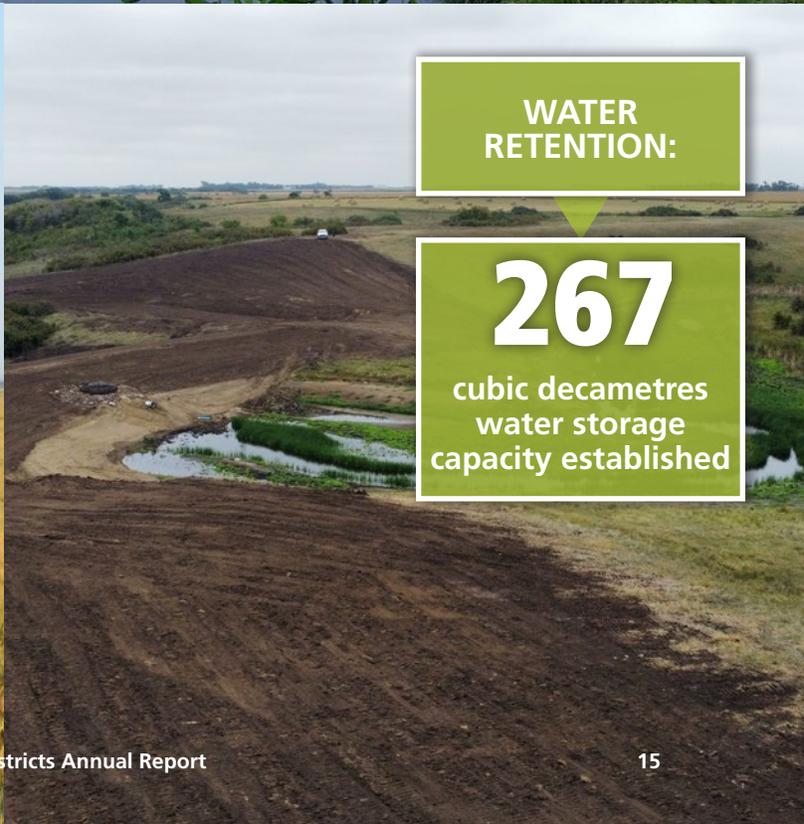
**71**  
hectares (175 acres)  
buffer strips planted  
through 7 landowner  
agreements

**56**  
alternative watering  
systems and 46 km  
riparian fencing  
installed, removing  
10,464 cattle from  
riparian areas



**BUFFERS:**

**44**  
km shelterbelts  
established



**WATER  
RETENTION:**

**267**  
cubic decametres  
water storage  
capacity established

# 2023-24 PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

	Projects	Metric 1	Metric 2
<b>SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT</b>			
Water retention - small dams	34	604 dam <sup>3</sup>	
Water retention - large dams	1	61 dam <sup>3</sup>	
Water retention - maintenance		22 sites	
Water retention - gated culverts		25	
Erosion control in-channel	12		
Assessment - infrastructure inventory	3	57 sites	
Assessment - flow and retention	13		
Surface water flow and retention assessment	16		
Management - urban rain gardens	19		
Water control works applications reviewed	40		
Water control works applications submitted	42		
Infrastructure WD - Drain maintenance		99 sites	271 km
Infrastructure WD - Drain reconstruction		1 site	5 km
Infrastructure WD - Crossing maintenance		188 sites	
Infrastructure WD - Crossing replacement		26 sites	
Infrastructure WD - Brushing and mowing		283 sites	1,410 km
Management - beaver impacts	214	120 sites	1,687 km

<b>NUTRIENT REDUCTION AND WATER QUALITY PROTECTION</b>			
Riparian enhancement - grassed waterway	11	306 ha	
Riparian enhancement - gully stablization	6	26 ha	
Riparian enhancement - buffer strips	14	139 ha	
Riparian enhancement - streambank stabilization	18	30 ha	
Riparian area conservation	36	464 ha	
Livestock - alternative watering systems	104	11,320 cattle*	
Livestock - pasture pipeline	14	14 km	1,787 cattle*
Livestock - riparian area fencing	37	57 km	4,197 cattle*
Livestock - rotational grazing	76	5,843 ha	6,890 cattle*
Livestock - crossings	22	1,136 cattle*	
Soil health - forage establishment	187	5,425 ha	
Soil health - cover crops, polycrops	263	7,154 ha	922 cattle*
Soil health - salinity control	22	232 ha	
Soil health - soil quality indicator testing		206 ha	

\*Cattle excluded from riparian areas and waterways

<b>DRINKING WATER PROTECTION</b>			
Abandoned well sealing		156	
Drinking water testing		877	
Well establishment		8	
Well head remediation		6	
Well shock chlorination		22	

	Projects	Metric 1	Metric 2
<b>NATURAL AREA PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT</b>			
Wetlands - conserved (class 1 and 2)	135 agreements	1,302 ha	12,472 basins
Wetlands - enhanced		5 basins	39 ha
Wetlands - restored		1 basin	2 ha
Wetlands - constructed		2 basins	2 ha
Habitat - duck nesting structures		2 basins	
Habitat - lake aeration	3		
Habitat - fish stocking or rearing	9		
Habitat - riparian and aquatic assessments	1		
Upland area conservation	55	806 ha	
Trees - field shelterbelts	120	173 km	72,881 trees
Trees - tree planting	18	1,155 trees	
Trees - community tree nursery	501	4,329 trees	
Trees - seedlings provided	490	57,260 trees	
Maintenance - conservation corridors	452		
Maintenance - trails	15	29 km	

<b>WATERSHED EDUCATION AND AWARENESS</b>			
Aerial surveys	382		
Best management practice research	3		
Events - banquets	21	898 people	
Education - tours and demonstrations	68	1,039 people	
Education - water festivals	6	1,550 people	
Education - youth	33	2,914 people	
Information - brochures, signs	20	16,222	
Information - online, digital	38		
Monitoring - surface water quality	31		
Monitoring - groundwater	5		
Geographic Information System (GIS) products	893		
Composters	8		
Rain barrels	272		
IWMP Planning	7		
Environmental Farm Plan Workshops	22		
Environmental Farm Plans held by partnering producers		115 people	

# 2023-24 MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

116 MUNICIPALITIES ARE PARTNERS  
IN THE WATERSHED DISTRICTS PROGRAM

## VILLAGES

Dunnottar  
St. Pierre-Jolys

## TOWNS

Altona  
Arborg  
Carberry  
Carman  
Melita  
Minnedosa  
Neepawa  
Niverville  
Ste. Anne  
Stonewall  
Swan River  
Teulon  
Virden  
Winnipeg Beach

## CITIES

Brandon  
Dauphin  
Morden  
Selkirk  
Steinbach  
Winkler

## MUNICIPALITIES

Alonsa  
Argyle  
Armstrong  
Bifrost-Riverton  
Boissevain-Morton  
Brenda-Waskada  
Brokenhead  
Cartier  
Cartwright-Roblin  
Clanwilliam-Erickson  
Coldwell  
Cornwallis  
Dauphin  
Deloraine-Winchester  
De Salaberry  
Dufferin  
Ellice-Archie  
Elton  
Emerson-Franklin  
Ethelbert  
Fisher  
Gilbert Plains  
Gimli  
Glenboro-South Cypress  
Glenella-Lansdowne  
Grahamdale  
Grandview  
Grassland  
Grey  
Hamiota  
Hanover

Harrison Park  
Headingley  
Kelsey  
Killarney-Turtle Mountain  
La Broquerie  
Lac du Bonnet  
Lakeshore  
Lorne  
Louise  
Macdonald  
McCreary  
Minitonas-Bowsman  
Minto-Odanah  
Montcalm  
Morris  
Mossey River  
Mountain  
Norfolk Treherne  
North Cypress-Langford  
North Norfolk  
Oakland-Wawanesa  
Oakview  
Pembina  
Piney  
Pipestone  
Portage la Prairie  
Prairie Lakes  
Prairie View  
Reynolds  
Riding Mountain West  
Rhineland  
Ritchot

Riverdale  
Roblin  
Rockwood  
Roland  
Rosedale  
Rossburn  
Rosser  
Russell-Binscarth  
Sifton  
Souris-Glenwood  
Springfield  
St. Andrews  
St. Clements  
St. François Xavier  
St. Laurent  
Stanley  
Ste. Anne  
Ste. Rose  
Stuartburn  
Swan Valley West  
Taché  
Thompson  
Two Borders  
Victoria  
Wallace-Woodworth  
West Interlake  
West St. Paul  
Westlake-Gladstone  
Whitehead  
Woodlands  
Yellowhead



