

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE WAPAWEKKA MAP SHEET AREA, 731

The area covered by the Wapawekka map sheet comprises about 3.6 million acres in central Saskatchewan between 104° and 106° west longitude and 54° and 55° north latitude. Most of the area is in the Saskatchewan Plains physiographic division of the Great Plains Province of the Interior Plains of North America. A small part along the northern edge of the area is considered part of the Churchill River Plains of the Churchill Province of the Canadian Shield.

The Churchill River Plains physiographic section is a roughly undulating to strongly rolling, ice-scoured bedrock plain. Elevations within this region range from 1200 to 1300 feet above sea level. The drainage is by way of Wapawekka Lake and the Deschambault River into the Saskatchewan River system. Throughout the plain, granitic, gneissic, volcanic, and metamorphic rock outcrops associated with coarse textured glacial till occur as uplands. Lacustrine clay and organic deposits occur in the valleys between these rocky uplands.

Six main physiographic regions of the Saskatchewan Plains occur in the area. The Mossy River Plain on the eastern edge of the area consists of gently undulating glaciolacustrine, alluvial, and till plains. Sedge and moss peats are the dominant soils in this region. Stony, eroded till and glacial Lake Agassiz beach features also occur. The elevation ranges from about 1450 feet above sea level at the upper Lake Agassiz strandline to about 1300 feet at the eastern edge of the area. The area is drained to the Saskatchewan River system by the Bear, Ballantyne, Mossy, and Scarth rivers and McDougal Creek. Big Sandy Lake is the only large lake within the surveyed part of the Mossy River Plain.

The Lac La Ronge Lowland occupies one-third of the area. It is an undulating to gently rolling, ice-scoured glaciolacustrine and till plain generally overlying sandstone of the Lower Cretaceous Swan River formation. Medium to moderately coarse textured eroded till, wind-modified alluvial sands, and shallow to deep moss and sedge peats characterize this lowland. Limited local lacustrine clay deposits also occur. Elevations range from 1200 to 1600 feet above sea level. The Twoforks, Montreal, Bow, Meeyoomoot, and Nipakemew rivers drain the western and central parts of the Lac La Ronge Lowland to the Churchill River drainage system. The Wuchewun River and Yaholnitsky and Hague creeks drain the eastern region by way of Wapawekka Lake to the Saskatchewan River drainage system. Wapawekka Lake and the south bay of Lac La Ronge are the largest water bodies in the Lac La Ronge Lowland.

The Montreal Lake Plain parallels the east and west sides of Montreal Lake and separates the Waskesiu Hills and Wapawekka Hills uplands. The western part of the plain is a gently rolling to undulating till plain that slopes eastward from the Waskesiu Hills Upland to Montreal Lake. Medium to moderately fine textured glacial till, which is occasionally overlain by thin deposits of medium to fine sand, local areas of coarse textured outwash, and shallow to deep Organic soils are the main surficial deposits. The Montreal Lake Plain is drained by the Waskesiu, Crean, MacLennan, and Weyakwin rivers.

The eastern side of the Montreal Lake Plain is a gently undulating till plain, which is frequently overlain by shallow sandy deposits. Local areas of alluvial sands also occur. Much of the plain is covered by shallow to deep organic deposits. Local drainage is to Montreal Lake.

The White Gull Creek Plain extends into the area near Lower Fishing Lake west of the Narrow Hills. This part of the plain is composed predominantly of coarse textured fluvial materials. It is drained to the White Gull Creek by way of Stewart Creek.

There are two main physiographic upland regions in the area, the Wapawekka Hills Upland and the Waskesiu Hills Upland.

The Wapawekka Hills Upland occurs between the Mossy River Plain and the Lac La Ronge Lowland and occupies about one-third of the area. It is a gently to strongly rolling moraine plain with strongly dissected north and east escarpments. This upland is composed predominantly of coarse to moderately fine textured glacial till with some fluvial and organic deposits. Elevations range from 1600 to more than 2600 feet above sea level on the Wapawekka Plateau. The Wuchewun, Oskibekub, Bear, and Mossy rivers and Hague, McDougal, and Beaver creeks and their tributaries drain most of the upland to the Saskatchewan River system. The Bow and Nipakemew rivers drain the northwest to the Churchill River system. East Trout, Nipakemew, Little Bear, and the Whiteswan lakes are the largest lakes in the Wapawekka Hills Upland.

The Waskesiu Hills Upland extends into the west-central part of the area and is bounded to the east by the Lac La Ronge Lowland and the Montreal Lake Plain. It occurs as a rolling moraine composed mainly of glacial till and glaciolacustrine deposits, with local areas of Organic soils. Elevations range from 1700 to 2000 feet above sea level. Local drainage is to Montreal Lake. Weyakwin Lake is the only large lake in the surveyed part of the Waskesiu Hills Upland.

The Mixedwood, Upper Churchill, and Northern Coniferous sections of the Boreal Forest Region occur in the area. Most of the area is in the Mixedwood Section. The well-drained soils in this region support mixed stands of trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), white spruce (*Picea glauca*), and black spruce (*Picea mariana*) in varying proportions. Green alder (*Alnus crispa*), beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*), low bush-craberry (*Vaccinium edule*), wild red raspberry (*Rubus idaeus* var. *strigosus*), prickly rose (*Rosa acicularis*), and twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*) are common shrubs under mixedwood forests. Common herbs and grasses are wild sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*), palmate-leaved colt's-foot (*Petasites palmatus*), fireweed (*Epiptilium angustifolium*), Lindley's aster (*Aster ciliolatus*), showy aster (*Aster conspicuus*), tall lilywort (*Mertensia paniculata*), goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*), hairy wild rye (*Elymus innovatus*), pine grasses (*Calamagrostis spp.*), brome grasses (*Bromus spp.*), northern bedstraw (*Gallium boreale*), wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*), two-leaved Solomon's seal (*Maianthemum canadense*), dewberry (*Rubus pubescens*), and starflower (*Trientalis borealis*). Bryophytes commonly associated with mixedwood stands are *Hylocomium splendens*, *Pleurozium schreberi*, *Ptilium crista-castrans*, and various *Dicranum* species.

Some of the well-drained upland soils in the Mixedwood section, particularly in the Cub Hills, support a black spruce - feathermoss type of vegetation. White spruce and balsam fir dominate the more mature stands on well-drained soils.

Jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) predominates on the rapidly drained soils, with green alder, Canada buffaloberry (*Shepherdia canadensis*), blueberry (*Vaccinium myrtilloides*), bog cranberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea* var. *minus*), bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), and reindeer mosses (*Cladonia spp.*) in varying proportions comprising the lesser vegetation. One significant exception to this occurs in the Narrow Hills where the forest cover on rapidly drained soils is frequently dominated by white birch and stunted trembling aspen with hairy wild rye as a large component of the lesser vegetation.

Imperfectly and poorly drained soils in the Mixedwood Section support white spruce, black spruce, and some balsam poplar. The understory generally contains green alder, speckled alder (*Alnus rugosa*), willows (*Salix spp.*), Labrador-tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), and various feathermosses.

Bogs and fens occupy poorly and very poorly drained sites. Bogs usually support stunted black spruce with lesser amounts of tamarack (*Larix laricina*). Common shrubs are willows, swamp birch (*Betula pumila* var. *glandulifera*), Labrador-tea, leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), and bog cranberry. The ground cover is dominated by sphagnum mosses (*Sphagnum spp.*).

The fens are composed mainly of sedges (*Carex spp.*) and sometimes have a sparse cover of tamarack, swamp birch, or willows.

The Upper Churchill Section occupies the north-central part of the area between the Northern Coniferous Section in the north and the Mixedwood Section in the south. White spruce and trembling aspen are less prevalent than in the Mixedwood Section although both species are well represented where drainage conditions are favorable. Jack pine and black spruce occupy the upland sites. Bogs and fens support vegetation similar to that occurring on Organic soils in the Mixedwood Section.

The Northern Coniferous Section corresponds to the Precambrian Shield region in the area. Black spruce and jack pine are the predominant trees on the thin upland soils. The more favorable soil and climatic conditions occurring in river valleys and around lakes support mixed stands of white spruce, balsam fir, trembling aspen, and balsam poplar. The poorly drained organic soils support bog and fen vegetation similar to that in the Mixedwood Section.

### CLIMATE

The area has a dry, subhumid continental climate, characterized by short warm summers, wide variations between day and night temperature, long cold winters, and moderately low annual precipitation.

The frost-free period ranges from less than 70 days on the Wapawekka Plateau to between 70 and 90 days throughout the rest of the area. The average annual temperature ranges from 29° F to 32° F. There are 1750 to 2000 degree-days above 42° F over most of the area, except for a small region in the southeast where as many as 2250 degree-days may occur, and in the northwest, where there are seldom more than 1750 degree-days above 42° F. January is the coldest month with a mean daily temperature of -4° F in the southwest and -8° F in the northeast. Mean daily temperatures in July, the warmest month, range from 60° F on the Wapawekka Plateau to 62° F at lower altitudes. About 70 percent of the average 16 to 18 inches of annual precipitation falls between May and September.

### SOILS AND AGRICULTURAL CAPABILITY

Most of the mineral soils in the area are developed either from glacial till, glaciolacustrine, or coarse textured alluvial deposits. Local regions of lacustrine clays and silts occur but are not large in areal extent.

Four different glacial tills have been recognized in the area. A coarse textured noncalcareous till of the Jan Complex occurs in association with igneous outcrops of the Precambrian Shield. Brunisolic soils have developed from this till, which is generally shallow (6 to 36 inches) over the bedrock. These sites are excessively stony and are rated Class 6 for agriculture.

The Bow River Association is coarse to moderately coarse textured, weakly calcareous glacial till which occurs in the Lac La Ronge Lowland. The Orthic Gray Luvisolic, Brunisolic Gray Luvisolic, and Brunisolic soils that have developed from this till are rated Class 6 for agriculture because of excessive surface stones and low fertility.

The glacial till soils of the Wapawekka Plateau and escarpment are not suitable for agriculture. Orthic and Brunisolic Gray Luvisolic soils have developed from the moderately coarse textured, weakly calcareous till of the Wapawekka Association. The upper two feet of the soil are generally coarse textured and exceedingly stony. A very strongly developed, tough, impervious illuvial B-horizon underlies the upper till and impedes internal drainage and root development. These soils support poor stands of black spruce and jack pine. The adverse soil and landscape features, as well as the severe climatic limitations, make these Class 6 agricultural soils.

Moderately coarse to moderately fine textured, moderately calcareous glacial till of the Loon River Association occurs on the Cub and Thunder hills and the Whiteswan Upland. The Gray Luvisolic and Brunisolic Gray Luvisolic soils developed from this till are rated Classes 4 and 5 and are limited by low fertility, adverse soil

structure, excess stones, and steep slopes. The Bitter Lake Association consists of a shallow layer, 6 to 24 inches thick, of medium to fine sand overlying moderately fine texture, moderately calcareous glacial till. The Brunisolic Gray Luvisolic soils of the Bitter Lake Association are rated Classes 4 and 5 for agriculture.

Brunisolic and Regosolic soils of the Pine Association occur on sandy glaciolacustrine and glaciolaquicrete deposits. In some regions, these deposits have been modified by wind action. Low moisture-holding capacity and low fertility reduce the capability of these soils to Class 6 for agriculture.

The Keweenock Association includes Brunisolic soils developed from gravel deposits, which are rated Class 6 for agriculture. The shallow gravel deposits over glacial till are referred to as the Piprell Association and are rated Class 5 for agriculture.

The Lake Agassiz beaches in the Mossy River Plain are coarse textured and often exceedingly stony. They are rated Class 6 for agriculture.

Peaty phase Gleysolic soils that occur on poorly drained sites are rated Class 6 and limited by excessive soil moisture.

Organic soils occur throughout the area. About three-quarters of the Mossy River Plain is covered with organic deposits of varying thickness. Large tracts of dominantly Organic soils occur in the Lac La Ronge Lowland. Organic soils also occupy the depressions and poorly drained regions in the uplands. In the area, Organic soils are frozen for a large part of the year and some local sites are permanently frozen. Organic soils are not rated for agriculture and are designated on the map by the letter 'O'.

### SETTLEMENT AND LAND USE

The area lies between the Saskatchewan and Churchill river systems and therefore, was virtually unknown to early explorers and fur traders. The first inhabitants were Cree Indians. Their settlements were concentrated along Montreal Lake and the Montreal River, which were used as a source of fish and as a route to the fur markets on the Churchill River.

Today the area is well serviced by all-weather graveled roads. Highway 2 on the west side of Montreal Lake is the main supply route extending into north-central Saskatchewan. The Hanson Lake Road, Highway 106, was built during the late 1950s and crosses the southeast corner of the area. Highway 165 connects Highway 2 with Highway 106 across the north-central part of the area and was constructed mainly to transport ore to the smelter at Flin Flon, Manitoba. Highway 169 services the settlements of Montreal Lake, Timber Bay, and Molanosa on the east side of Montreal Lake. The establishment of the pulp industry centered in Prince Albert has resulted in the construction of other access roads. Highway 120 enters the area near Nipawin Provincial Park and extends into the eastern part of the Cub Hills. The Summit Lake Road gives access to forestry and recreational developments in the Whiteswan, Piprell, and Summit Lake regions. There are no railroads.

The few settlements within the area are small Indian communities on Montreal Lake. The town of La Ronge, eight miles north of the area on Highway 2, services the northern part of the area.

Residents of the area are employed in the fishing, trapping, tourist, and pulp industries. The many small lakes of high recreational potential and the proximity to the populated region of Saskatchewan have concentrated the tourist industry in the Cub Hills and Whiteswan Upland regions.

Except for local gardening, no agricultural development has taken place in the area. Preliminary studies of the part of the area that occurs within the Churchill River Basin suggested agricultural development might be possible on some small isolated regions in the Montreal Lake Plain east of Montreal Lake. A study of the entire area in 1958 also indicated that the Montreal Lake Plain was the only part of the area with agricultural potential. It was concluded that the area could only supply some local demands, mainly for garden produce. However, when considered on a competitive basis with forestry and fur production, the feasibility of agricultural development was questionable. The current findings of the Canada Land Inventory substantiate the earlier studies. The mineral soils of the area are rated Classes 5 and 6 for agriculture, except for some of the till soils in the Montreal Lake Plain and Whiteswan Uplands, which are rated Class 4. Although these till soils have some limited potential for agriculture, they are among the best forestry soils in the province.

**Capability classification (1972)** by W. K. Head, D. W. Anderson, and H. B. Stonehouse, Saskatchewan Institute of Pedology, based on information in a report on Soils of the Wapawekka Map Area.

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## DESCRIPTION DU TERRITOIRE DE LA FEUILLE DE WAPAWEKKA, 731

Le territoire représenté sur la feuille de Wapawekka occupe environ 3.6 millions d'acres dans le centre de la Saskatchewan, entre 104° et 106° de longitude ouest et 54° et 55° de latitude nord. La majeure partie du territoire appartient à la région structurale des plaines de la Saskatchewan, subdivision de la province des Grandes Plaines des plaines intérieures de l'Amérique du Nord. Le long de la bordure septentrionale du territoire, un petit secteur appartient aux plaines de la rivière Churchill, subdivision de la province de Churchill du Bouclier canadien.

La section structurale des plaines de la rivière Churchill est une plaine rocheuse que la glace a découpé et dont le relief varie de fortement ondulé à très vallonné. Dans cette région, l'altitude passe de 1 200 à 1 300 pi. Les eaux de drainage aboutissent au lac Wapawekka et à la rivière Deschambault qui appartiennent au réseau de la rivière Saskatchewan. La plaine est parsemée de bas-plateaux formés d'affleurements de roches métamorphiques, volcaniques, gneissiques et grénitiques associées à un till glaciaire de texture grossière. De l'argile lacustre et des dépôts organiques apparaissent dans les vallées, entre ces bas-plateaux rocheux.

Le territoire représente six grandes régions structurales des plaines de la Saskatchewan. La plaine déla rivière Mossy, sur la bordure orientale du territoire, est formée de plaines glacio-lacustres, alluviales et de plaines de till au relief légèrement ondulé. Les sols qui dominent dans cette région se composent de tourbes de carex et de tourbes de mousses. On trouve également des dépôts de till pierreux érodés et des dépôts de plâtre qu'abandonne le lac glaciaire Agassiz. L'altitude varie de 1 450 pi environ sur la plus haute ligne de rivage du lac Agassiz à environ 1 300 sur la bordure orientale du territoire. Les rivières Bear, Ballantyne, Mossy et Scarth ainsi que le ruisseau McDougal qui appartiennent au réseau de la rivière Saskatchewan drainent le territoire. Le Big Sandy Lake est le seul grand lac qui apparaît dans la partie de la plaine de la rivière Mossy où les relevés ont été effectués.

La basse terre du lac La Ronge occupe un tiers du territoire. C'est une plaine au relief onduleux ou légèrement vallonné, découpée et formée de till et de matériaux fluvioglaciaires masquant habituellement des grès de la formation de Swan River du cratère inférieur. La présence de till de texture moyenne ou modérément grossière, de sables alluviaux remaniés par le vent et de tourbes de carex et de mousse en couches tantôt minces, tantôt épaisses caractérise cette basse terre. Des dépôts d'argile lacustre d'étendue limitée apparaissent en certains endroits. L'altitude varie de 1 200 à 1 600 pi. Les rivières Twoforks, Montreal, Bow, Meeyoomoot et Nipakemew drainent l'est et le centre de la basse terre du lac La Ronge et alimentent le réseau de la rivière Churchill. La rivière Wuchewun et les ruisseaux Yaholnitsky et Hague drainent la partie orientale et aboutissent au réseau de la rivière Saskatchewan en passant par le lac Wapawekka. Le lac Wapawekka et la baie méridionale du lac La Ronge sont les plus grandes happenes d'eau de la basse terre du lac La Ronge.

La plaine de Montréal est parallèle aux rives orientale et occidentale du lac Montréal et elle sépare les bas-plateaux des collines Waskesiu de celui des collines Wapawekka. La partie occidentale de la plaine est une plaine de till légèrement vallonné ou ondulé qui s'abaisse vers l'est, du bas-plateau des collines Waskesiu jusqu'au lac Montréal. Les principales formations meubles sont un till glaciaire de texture moyenne ou modérément fine, partiels couvert de minces couches de sable de texture moyenne ou fine, quelques dépôts d'épandage de texture grossière et des matériaux organiques tantôt minces, tantôt épais. Les rivières Waskesiu, Crean, MacLennan et Weyakwin drainent la plaine du lac Montréal.

La partie orientale de la plaine du lac Montréal est une plaine de till légèrement ondulé, souvent couverte de minces dépôts sablonneux. Des sables alluviaux apparaissent à certains endroits. Une grande partie de la plaine est couverte de dépôts organiques tantôt minces, tantôt épais. Les eaux de drainage se jettent dans le lac Montréal.

La plaine du ruisseau White Gull pénètre sur le territoire près du lac Lower Fishing, à l'est des collines Narrow. Cette partie de la plaine est surtout composée de matériaux fluviatiles de texture grossière. Le ruisseau Stewart affluent du ruisseau White Gull draine la plaine.

Deux grandes régions de bas-plateaux sont représentées sur le territoire: le bas-plateau des collines Wapawekka et le bas-plateau des collines Waskesiu.

Le bas-plateau des collines Wapawekka entre la plaine de la rivière Mossy et la basse terre du lac La Ronge, occupe environ le tiers du territoire. C'est une plaine morainique à relief légèrement à fortement vallonné et bordée, au nord et à l'est, d'escarpements accidentés. Ce bas-plateau se compose surtout de till glaciaire dont la texture varie de grossière à modérément fine, et qui renferme certains dépôts fluviatiles ou organiques. L'altitude varie de 1 600 pi à plus de 2 600 sur le plateau de Wapawekka. Les rivières Wuchewun, Oskibekub, Bear et Mossy et les ruisseaux Hague, McDougal et Beaver ainsi que leurs affluents drainent la majeure partie du bas-plateau et appartiennent au réseau de la rivière Saskatchewan. Les rivières Bow et Nipakemew drainent le nord-ouest et appartiennent au réseau de la rivière Churchill. Les lacs East Trout, Nipakemew, le Petit lac Bear et les lacs Whiteswan sont les plus grands de la région du bas-plateau des collines Wapawekka.

Le bas-plateau des collines Waskesiu apparaît dans le centre-ouest du territoire; la basse terre du lac La Ronge et la plaine du lac Montréal le limitent à l'est. C'est une moraine vallonnée surtout composée de till