

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PEACE RIVER MAP SHEET AREA, 84C

The area covered by the Peace River map sheet is approximately 250 miles northwest of Edmonton and is part of the Interior Plains physiographic region. It has parkland vegetation in the south and vegetation of the Boreal Forest Region in the northwest. The generally level terrain is broken by two features: the deeply incised valleys of the Peace and Smoky rivers, and the eastern extremity of the Whitemud Hills. The Peace River flows northwards through the center of the area, and is the dominant physical feature. The slumping and the variety of vegetation along its banks provide a varied landscape.

The part of the area east of the Peace River is level to undulating, with occasional gently rolling ridges. The land is poorly drained and there are many swamps, lakes, and streams. The main streams, the Cadotte, Little Cadotte, North Heart, and Otter rivers, and Ochre, Jackpine, and Benjamin creeks, are part of the Peace River drainage system. The dominantly aspen cover is broken by sites of spruce and jack pine with little underbrush. From Marten River southeast to Lubicon Lake are expanses of open grassland dotted with groves of trembling aspen.

The part of the area west of the Peace River is mainly aspen parkland, much of which has been modified by agriculture. Moss bogs are common in the west-central part, and a mixed aspen-spruce forest covers the Whitemud Hills. Lakes are shallow and there are many ponds. The Whitemud and Notikewin rivers and Buchanan Creek, the main streams, are also part of the Peace River drainage system.

### CLIMATE

The climate is characterized by long, cold winters and short, warm summers. The mean temperature for January is  $-7.9^{\circ}$  F and for July  $60.6^{\circ}$  F. The annual precipitation averages 17 inches, including an annual snowfall of approximately 72 inches.

### SETTLEMENT AND LAND USE

The first Europeans to enter the area were fur traders, who used the Peace River as a main transportation route. One of the early fur traders in the area, Henry Fuller Davis, became well known throughout the Peace River country as Twelve-Foot Davis. Today, a monument marks the location of his grave.

Agricultural settlement began in the 1880s at Shaftesbury Settlement near the present town of Peace River. Agriculture is the dominant land use, especially in the western half of the area. In the eastern half, there are several Indian and Metis communities, such as those at Simon Lakes, Haig Lake, Marten River, and L'Hirondelle. The Mackenzie Highway and the Great Slave Lake Railway traverse the western part.

### RECREATION CAPABILITY

Because the lakes in the area are generally shallow and have extensive weed patches, soft bottoms, and poorly drained featureless backshores, they have no potential for intensive recreational activities. On the other hand, the Peace and Smoky rivers and a few of the lakes have good potential for less intensive water-oriented activities, such as viewing, boating, and fishing. Camping, picnicking, and hiking are enhanced by the numbers of game animals, waterfowl, and fish. In some water bodies perch, pickerel, pike, and grayling are plentiful. Haig Lake has a large whitefish population. Moose are prevalent in the northeast; deer, black bear, lynx, and smaller upland species are common throughout. Upland bird and waterfowl hunting is good, especially in the agricultural regions.

Haig Lake has the best recreational potential in the area. It has clean water, excellent fishing, and well-treed, well-drained backshores. Boat launching can be accommodated almost everywhere, and at some places along the shore there are beaches for swimming and bathing. The lake straddling Tps. 83, 84-R. 15, 16-W. 5th also has clean water and some sand beaches. In a few places along the shores of Cadotte Lake, boat launching and picnicking are possible; however, weeds and a soft bottom hamper the use of most of the shoreline. Cardinal Lake, though large, is shallow and has a fluctuating shoreline. An improved beach at the Provincial Park on the eastern shore provides for boat access, swimming, picnicking, and camping.

The Peace and Smoky rivers have excellent potential for many forms of recreation, such as hunting, hiking, viewing, camping, and collecting. There are frequent sites for family boat launching, and swimming is possible in some of the backwaters along the islands. Around the town of Peace River are several excellent viewpoints from which the confluence of the Smoky and Peace rivers may be seen. The most famous of these is the grave site of Twelve-Foot Davis. Many of the smaller streams, especially those with fishing potential, can accommodate picnicking, camping, and associated activities.

Although many parts of the area are covered by extensive bogs that hinder access, there are frequent patches of parklike coniferous cover that are excellent for camping, hiking, and collecting. The Whitemud Hills in the western part and the glacial ridges north of Marten River add topographical variety to the landscape. Associated mixed tree cover and streams combine with this increased local relief to raise these parts one class above the surrounding land.

The recreation capability of the Peace River area is low and is confined to a few good lakes and streams and the Peace and Smoky river valleys. Although there is no potential for intensive recreational activities, that for less intensive activities is good.

Capability classification by C. J. Tracie and K. A. Novakowski.