



## **COMMUNITY TOURISM PLAN 2012**

**TOWN OF WATROUS**

**RESORT VILLAGE OF MANITOU BEACH**

**R.M. OF MORRIS #312**

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## INTRODUCTION

“A Community Tourism Plan is a written document produced on behalf of a community by a group of people representing a broad cross-section of interests within that community. The Plan provides a framework for business, local government, cultural, and other organizations to analyze tourism resources and concerns, and to encourage tourism development and promotion.” (Tourism Saskatchewan – 2012)

In the fall of 2011, a group of volunteers, spearheaded by the Watrous Manitou Marketing Group (WMMG), decided to re-visit and update the Town of Watrous and Resort Village of Manitou Beach Community Tourism Plans that were both produced in 1989. The two urban communities along with the RM of Morris #312, being in close geographic proximity, and having a successful and collaborative past of working together and promoting tourism, decided to develop one Plan for the area.

The Watrous / Manitou Beach Community Tourism Plan 2012 includes the tourism assets, concerns, and opportunities in the area. The process serves to provide the framework for the communities to analyze their tourism resources and concerns and to encourage development and promotion in the area. The Plan was developed using the Community Tourism Planning Guide provided by Tourism Saskatchewan. The communities of Watrous and Manitou Beach invited the Industry Development Department from Tourism Saskatchewan to serve in the facilitation of the planning process.

A broad cross-section of representatives from the three municipalities served as the Working Committee and met regularly from November 2011 to April 2012.

## WORKING COMMITTEE

- **Arnold Streuby**  
Owner/Operator of Danceland
- **Brendan Manz**  
Community Development Officer – WMMG
- **Dwight Hayter**  
CEO of Manitou Springs, WMMG Board Vice-Chair
- **Eric Upshall**  
GM of Manitou Springs, Mayor of Manitou Beach, WMMG Board Member
- **Gary Bergen**  
Bergen Computer Systems, WMMG Board Member
- **Jackie Gross**  
Communities in Bloom, WMMG Board Member
- **Jason Johns**  
Councillor for RM of Morris, Past REDA Chair, WMMG Board Member
- **John Gunderson**  
Watrous Town Councillor, WMMG Board Chair
- **Michael Gaudet**  
Artist, Owner of GG's Gallery & Gifts
- **Nancy Dezotell**  
Manager of Manitou & District Regional Park
- **Ray Hall**  
Watrous Furniture, Past Chamber President, WMMG Board Member
- **Denise Stroeder**  
Tourism Saskatchewan, Industry Development Department







The tourism industry brings dollars into the community, thereby maintaining jobs and helping to make local businesses and attractions more successful. Travel and tourism generates approximately \$1.67 billion in total traveller expenditures annually to the provincial economy. In August 2011, more than 58,000 people were employed in tourism-related industries within the province of Saskatchewan. In 2012, Tourism Saskatchewan's database showed there were 54 tourism businesses and 15 events in the Arm River-Watrous Constituency. Tourism businesses include accommodations, attractions, entertainment facilities, fishing and hunting outfitters, food and beverage operations, golf courses, meeting and convention facilities, outdoor adventure operations, parks, campgrounds and RV parks, shopping establishments, spas, transportation services and winter recreation experiences.

The Plan considers tourism markets, assets, and concerns; and proposes goals, objectives, and action steps that will provide a clear direction to move forward. It involves coordinating the residents and community groups to establish stronger, market-ready attractions, events and businesses. The Committee will be responsible for initiating actions that have been stated in the Plan, and would appreciate the support and assistance of local individuals, businesses, community groups, and Tourism Saskatchewan to further tourism development.

The 2012 Plan will raise awareness of the economic and social benefits of tourism, and assist with the development of the tourism industry within Watrous, Manitou Beach, and the RM. It will complement the overall economic development strategy for the communities and the region.

### THE WATROUS / MANITOU ADVANTAGE

Marketing the mineral content and the healing capacity of the water will separate Watrous and Manitou Beach from other areas in the province that are already offering spa, golf and camping services. Focusing on this one-of-a-kind product will give them "The Watrous Manitou Advantage". The central location of the communities within the Province provide convenient access from the cities of Regina and Saskatoon where over half of the provincial population is concentrated. Continuing to provide excellent cellular phone and emergency services will also attract visitors who like to stay connected and feel safe while away from home.

### TOURISM POLICY

The Tourism Policies taken from the 1989 Plans were reviewed and revised by the Working Committee and the following will be the 2012 Tourism Policy:

"Tourism will be experienced both within our communities and within the surrounding area in such ways as to attract more tourists, increase their length of stay, increase the amount of money they spend, and ensure that increased tourism creates positive social, economic, and environmental benefits."



## COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

The Town of Watrous and the Resort Village of Manitou Beach are progressive communities ideally located near the centre of the populated area of the province. They are 110 km southeast of Saskatoon and 165 km northwest of Regina.

Watrous and Manitou Beach are at the center of the Canadian grain belt. The area is well-known for the healing waters of Lake Manitou, CBK Radio, and Camp Easter Seal. It is also known as a center for agricultural implements and automotive dealerships. Not only has the area become an ideal place for retirement with the soothing waters of the Manitou Springs Mineral Spa, it is also a thriving economic center based upon agriculture, tourism, mining, and industry. For years people realized the medicinal properties of Little Manitou Lake, and today thousands of people visit Watrous and Manitou Beach to test the therapeutic waters of Little Manitou.

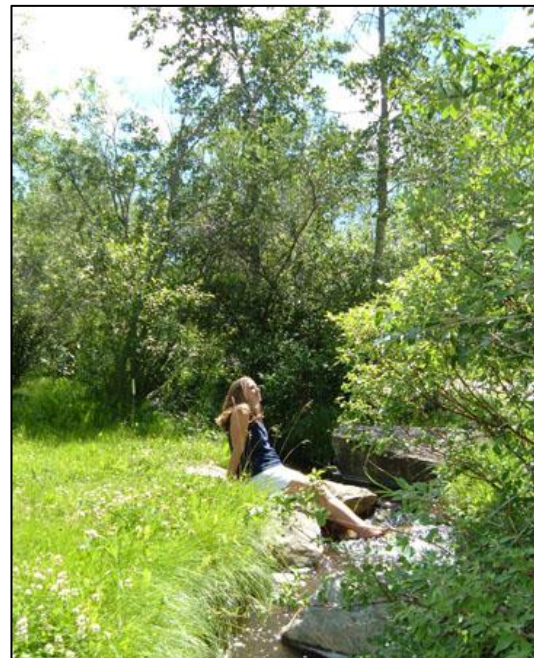
The area thrives with approximately 150,000 visitors annually. With close to 200 businesses between the two communities, all of the amenities that a traveller needs are close at hand. The Town of Watrous and the Resort Village of Manitou Beach have a combined population of 2,114 and an additional 316 residents reside within the RM of Morris. During the busy summer months these numbers climb significantly due to the attractions and events in the area. The region is an administrative center for a number of government departments. The three potash mines in the area are also major employers.

## MARKET PROFILES

Successful tourism development and promotion depends on a community's understanding of their market and visitors. Understanding *who* is coming,

*what* they are coming for, *when* they are coming, *where* they will spend their time and money, *why* they have decided to travel to Watrous / Manitou and *how* they will arrive, are all important factors when examining the local visitor market.

In order to make informed decisions regarding the future direction of tourism in Watrous and Manitou Beach, the Committee compiled reliable tourism statistics and indicators in order to gain insight into their current market. These statistics also provide insight into targeting potential markets that these communities may not currently target or attract.



## TOURISM MARKETS

Based on the statistical and market research that has been compiled, the Committee listed the types of visitors that generate the most activity in Watrous / Manitou. This process took into account not only the sheer volume of visitors but also factored in markets where the Committee felt Watrous / Manitou had the right mix of product to influence more travel and / or to increase expenditures.





### WHO IS TRAVELING TO THE AREA?

The Watrous Manitou Marketing Group gathered visitor statistics from three of their most popular tourist spots: the Watrous Visitor Centre, the Manitou and District Regional Park and the Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa. These key locations for gathering visitor statistics are a good start for tracking their guests. More work needs to be done to standardize the type of information that is being collected and expand the collection area to additional attractions and businesses. These will provide a more detailed and accurate picture of who their target market is and what their interests and spending behaviors are when they arrive in the area. Once standardized data is being collected from within the community, it would be useful to share this information with businesses that could benefit and utilize it such as the car and implement dealerships who could do some specific target marketing using the results of the data collected.

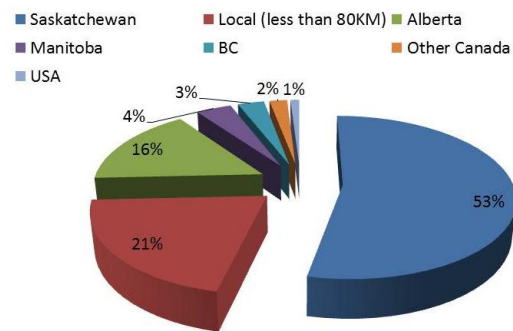


### Manitou & District Regional Park

The Manitou and District Regional Park is one of Saskatchewan's largest and most popular Regional Parks with over 200 sites from full-service to non-serviced. Total visitation to the Regional Park rose 29% in 2011 over 2010. The overall number and percentage of first-time visitors is also increasing

from year to year with 1,333 first-time visitors (45% of total visitors) in 2010 to 1,801 first-time visitors (47% of total visitors) in 2011. In 2011, the occupancy rate for the park during the entire season was 44%, which leaves room to grow and attract new visitors and welcome back familiar faces. The average length of stay for guests was four nights.

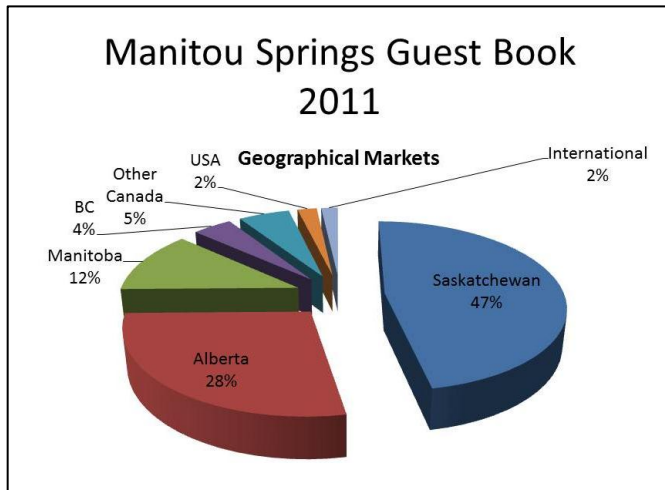
### Manitou & District Regional Park



### Manitou Springs Resort & Mineral Spa

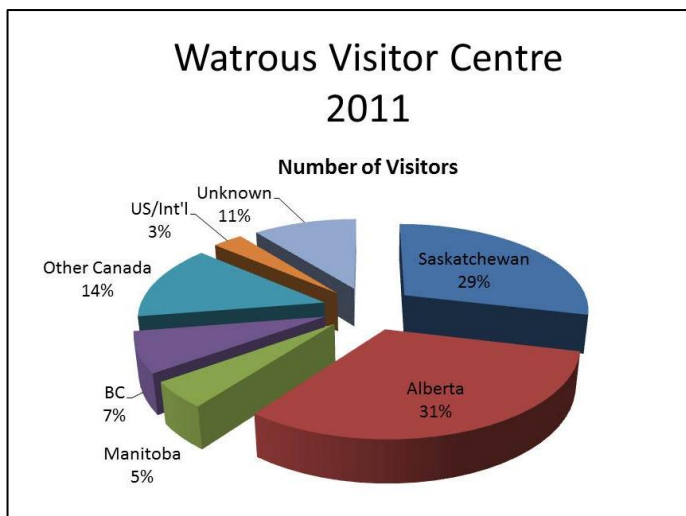
The 47% of the visitors that make up the Saskatchewan portion of the chart are evenly split between Saskatoon, Regina and Rural. The majority of the Alberta travellers were from Edmonton or communities within 150km of Edmonton; visitors from Calgary were also noted. Guests from Winnipeg make up the majority of the Manitoba travellers. Guests from Thunder Bay in Northern Ontario were seen as the most frequent visitors from the "Other Canada" portion. American visitors were mainly from the Eastern Seaboard or Southwestern US with little to no visitors from the Northern Tier States.





### Watrous Visitor Centre

The geo-demographic of the guests that were tracked at the Watrous Visitor Centre through 2010 to 2011 has remained fairly constant, with small increases from Alberta, British Columbia, other parts of Canada and the International markets from 2010 to 2011.



### Watrous / Manitou Visitors

1. Spa Visitors
2. Reunions / Weddings
3. Campers / RV'ers
4. Businesses Travellers / Conventions / Meetings
5. Work Crews / Trades / Contractors / Rail Workers
6. Recreation / Sports / Events – Attendees
7. Visiting Friends and Relatives
8. Cottage Owners
9. Retail
10. Health Seekers
11. Bus Tours
12. Hunters
13. To receive Government or Professional Services

### WHY ARE THEY TRAVELING TO THE AREA?

Visitors to the Watrous / Manitou area come for a wide variety of reasons and are of all ages. The flagship attractions within the two communities are Little Manitou Lake, the Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa, Danceland and the Manitou and District Regional Park. Attracting visitors of all ages, these attractions draw people to the area, but the secondary attractions are what make the communities so special. Manitou Beach was one of the most popular summer destinations back in the early part of the 1900's, with people arriving by the thousands via train to take over the area, the beach and the water! The area continued as a popular vacation destination and getaway for the older demographic of tourist, as they would come to the area for the healing powers of the water and to enjoy the unique attraction of Danceland.





### WHAT ARE THEY DOING IN THE AREA?

As the years have gone by, improved and updated marketing and advertising techniques, as well as offering activities that attract young families has transformed the area and it is now seen as a popular family vacation destination to camp, golf, swim, hike and relax. The central location of Watrous and Manitou Beach has made the area a popular spot for weddings and reunions, often attracting first-time visitors who return the following year and create very positive and effective word-of-mouth advertising for the area.



Annual Events such as the Watrous Fun Run Show n' Shine Car Show, the Spirit of Manitou Studio Trail, dinner theatres and regular dances at the iconic Danceland provide the activity and the excitement that guests are looking for on vacation.

### WHERE ARE THEY STAYING?

Considering the size of the communities, the variety and options for available accommodations in the area is extensive. Hotels and motels, bed and breakfasts, the spa, cabin rentals, campgrounds and private billets welcome their guests with open arms throughout all four seasons.



## WATROUS / MANITOU TOURISM ASSETS

Tourism assets are positive features the area has to attract and serve tourists. They are listed in the following categories: Tourism Attractions / Events, Tourism Businesses, Tourism Hospitality, Tourism Infrastructure and Tourism Promotion.

### TOURISM ATTRACTIONS / EVENTS

Tourism attractions in Saskatchewan include our parks, which provide outdoor recreational experiences, as well as museums, galleries, powwows, a variety of heritage festivals, agricultural exhibitions, craft fairs, fowl suppers, and events reflecting our way of life. Other attractions provide paleontological, mineral spa and casino gaming experiences. Some of our golf courses are known internationally. Events in nature, such as shorebird and waterfowl migrations, and the northern lights, also act as attractions.

Primary assets are those that have the ability to act as a draw to entice visitors to travel to Watrous and Manitou Beach and surrounding area. Secondary assets are those that play a supporting role once the visitors arrive and provide them with experiences to enrich and extend their stay and increase their overall expenditures.

### Watrous / Manitou Assets - Primary

1. Little Manitou Lake
2. Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa
3. Danceland
4. Manitou and District Regional Park
5. Central Location - proximity to Regina and Saskatoon
6. Beach
7. Meeting and Convention Facilities
8. Manitou Beach Golf Club
9. Car Dealerships / Equipment Dealers
10. Annual Car Show

### Watrous / Manitou Assets - Secondary

11. Camp Easter Seal
12. Jubilee Drive-in Theatre
13. Sports Facilities
14. Arts Community
15. Anglican Church Window
16. Last Mountain Lake Bird Sanctuary
17. Wellington Park
18. Manitou Mini Golf
19. Murray Disc Golf
20. CBC History
21. Historic Sites
22. Geocaching Club
23. Music & Dance Festivals
24. Twister Combine



### TOURISM BUSINESSES

Tourism businesses in Saskatchewan include hotels, motels, campgrounds, vacation farms, bed and breakfasts, guest ranches, outfitting camps, service stations, golf courses, tour boat, motor coach, car rental, airline and charter services, restaurants, and other retail businesses that can take care of visitors' needs.



### Watrous / Manitou Business Assets

1. Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa
2. Manitou and District Regional Park
3. Danceland
4. Variety of Accommodation Options
5. Manitou Beach Golf Club
6. Variety of Restaurants Options
7. Car Dealerships
8. Service Stations
9. Shopping Venues
10. Naturopathic Community
11. Flea Market
12. Farmer's Market
13. Via Rail and STC Stop
14. Post-Secondary Education
15. A & S Bus Charter



### TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

Tourism infrastructure in Saskatchewan includes roads, bridges and ferries, airports and landing strips, parking areas, wastewater and garbage disposal facilities, water and power services, boat launches and docking facilities, access to telephones and cellular service, availability of fuels such as diesel, natural gas, and propane, as well as gasoline, location and distance signage, and police and emergency services. The route people take to an area and the basic services available to them along the way and when they arrive all affect the ability to attract visitors.

### TOURISM HOSPITALITY

Tourism hospitality in Saskatchewan involves how tourists are welcomed and entertained during their stay. It determines whether visitors have a pleasant and enjoyable experience, and therefore is critical to the success of tourism attractions and businesses. Visitors to tourism operations have high expectations regarding quality of personal service they receive. Courtesy, service, and genuine thoughtfulness are noticed and appreciated by visitors.

### Watrous / Manitou Hospitality Assets

1. Customer Service (gas stations, restaurants, accommodations, etc.)
2. Receiving recent positive feedback for the Manitou Spring Resort and Mineral Spa, Manitou and District Regional Park and Danceland
3. Website
4. Visitor Centres





### Watrous / Manitou Infrastructure Assets

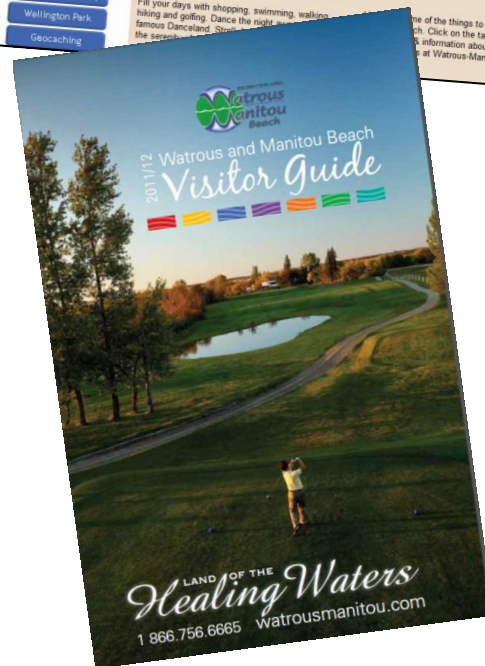
1. Central Location
2. Good Provincial Highways and Directional Signs
3. Cell Service
4. Emergency Services
5. Reverse Osmosis Water System at Manitou Beach
6. Several Gas and Service Stations
7. Newly Constructed berm at Manitou Beach
8. Cross-Country, Walking and Biking Trails
9. New Lagoon System

### TOURISM PROMOTION

Tourism promotion in Saskatchewan involves activities which individuals and groups undertake to attract potential tourists. Co-operative advertising, attendance at travel and trade shows, magazine articles, brochures, maps, commercial and promotional signs, travel guides, newspaper, radio, television, Internet web sites, and tourism information centers are all examples of promotional activities.

### Watrous / Manitou Tourism Promotion Assets

1. Watrous Manitou Marketing Group (WMMG)
2. Annual Visitor Guide
3. Websites
4. Placement Ads
5. Car Dealerships Promoting the Area
6. Packaging
7. Billboards
8. Trade Shows
9. Visitor Centre(s)
10. Local Newspaper



## REPORTING AND RENEWAL

### SCHEDULE FOR APPROVAL, PERIODIC REVIEW, AND ANNUAL RENEWAL

This Plan will be submitted to the Town of Watrous Council, the Resort Village of Manitou Beach Council and the RM of Morris Council for their review and subsequent endorsement. It will then be made available to the media and public.

The Plan will be reviewed throughout the year, as appropriate, in order to monitor and update progress on the Action Steps outlined in the following section of this document.

The Plan will be renewed and updated on an annual basis by the Working Committee.



## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND AFFILIATION

This Community Tourism Plan has been prepared by a Working Committee and continues to develop with representation as follows:

- Arnold Streuby – Owner/Operator of Danceland
- Brendan Manz – Community Development Officer – WMMG
- Dwight Hayter – CEO of Manitou Springs, WMMG Board Vice-Chair
- Eric Upshall – GM of Manitou Springs, Mayor of Manitou Beach, WMMG Board Member
- Gary Bergen – Bergen Computer Systems, WMMG Board Member
- Jackie Gross – Communities in Bloom, WMMG Board Member
- Jason Johns – Councillor for RM of Morris, Past REDA Chair, WMMG Board Member
- John Gunderson – Watrous Town Councillor, WMMG Board Chair
- Michael Gaudet – Artist, Owner of GG's Gallery & Gifts
- Nancy Dezotell – Manager of Manitou & District Regional Park
- Ray Hall – Watrous Furniture, Past Chamber President, WMMG Board Member

Assistance was provided by:  
Denise Stroeder, Industry Development Branch,  
Tourism Saskatchewan, Regina Office



## 2012 WORKPLAN

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A review of the visitor profiles, tourism assets and concerns led to the development of Goals and Objectives. These have been developed to build upon strengths and address concerns.

For this 2012 Plan, the Committee has focused on 64 key action steps related to 13 goals, which reflect the research, markets, assets and concerns that the Working Committee has established. These embody an aggressive work plan for the Watrous Manitou Marketing Group as well as partner organizations and Committees to undertake in the next year. As these action steps are completed the Committee will begin to focus on the remaining objectives. The steps may change as appropriate.

### CONCERNS

Tourism concerns in Saskatchewan include conditions and circumstances which make it more difficult to attract and hold visitors. The Committee considered the various tourist markets and examined areas that could be improved in order to attract more visitors or get them to extend their stay.

### BACKGROUND

The background statement that corresponds to each Objective allows a description of why the objective is being proposed and will help Municipal Councils and others better understand why the particular objective has been brought forward.

## GOALS

### TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

1. Succession Planning
2. Business Operating Hours
3. Camp Easter Seal

### TOURISM BUSINESSES

4. Enhanced Business Partnerships

### TOURISM HOSPITALITY

5. Building Exceptional Visitor Experiences

### TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

6. Gateway and Directional Signs
7. Interpretive Panels
8. General Infrastructure Concerns

### TOURISM PROMOTION

9. Watrous Manitou Marketing Group
10. Marketing and Promotions
11. Meeting and Convention Plan
12. Planning Successful Events
13. Raise Awareness About the Unique Properties of the Water





## TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

### 1. SUCCESSION PLANNING

**Goal:** To improve TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

**Objective:** To encourage business owners and operators as well as interested new parties to become involved in any Succession Planning Workshops or Courses that may be offered in the area.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** A number of the key businesses and attractions within the area are operated by an ageing workforce that will need to be properly and adequately replaced in the coming years to ensure successful future operation.

**Background:** In order for businesses to continue operating after the owners retire or the establishment changes hands, the interested buyer(s) need to have an adequate understanding of the business, the work involved, the operating budget, their target markets, etc. Business owners are often unaware of where they can access information that will help them sell their business. Workshops and courses need to be investigated and offered in the Watrous / Manitou area to provide the information and action steps to businesses for successful succession planning.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	Identify any print material that provides useful information and distribute to businesses who may be interested.
2.	Organize informational sessions and advertise these to local businesses, encourage them and neighboring communities to participate.
3.	Partner with real estate companies and immigration programs to attract new buyers to the area.



## 2. BUSINESS OPERATING HOURS

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM ATTRACTIONS**

**Objective:** To encourage better communication throughout the community and to inform visiting guests about current business hours of operation.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** There are inconsistent and non-advertised hours for businesses and attractions in the Watrous / Manitou area.

**Background:** Some key attractions and businesses within the Watrous / Manitou area have inconsistent and unadvertised hours of operation which make promoting them to the visiting public difficult and unprofessional.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	The WMMG needs to contact all of the tourism-related businesses in both communities prior to their operating season and explain the benefits of having consistent operating hours or being able to post or advertise when they will be open to the public.
2.	Determining hours for businesses and raise awareness of these benefits and create "Hours of Operation" signs to be posted at each business that does not currently have them posted or advertised. Hours should also be posted in the Visitor Guide and on the website for easy and convenient access.
3.	Have the Manitou and District Regional Park provide weekly hand-outs that advertise the operating hours of the Manitou Mini-Golf Course for the upcoming week.



### 3. CAMP EASTER SEAL

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM ATTRACTIONS**

**Objective:** To improve coordination and communication with Camp Easter Seal.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** Camp Easter Seal is a beautiful property located on Little Manitou Lake that could be used by tourists or groups in the shoulder seasons when their camp participants are not using the facility.

**Background:** Camp Easter Seal has the potential to cater to tourists during the shoulder seasons when the Camp is not occupied by the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, who operate the facility as a summer camp for children and adults with disabilities. While some private bookings take place during the shoulder seasons, more could be done to utilize this facility especially when major events are taking place in the Watrous / Manitou area and additional accommodations and facilities are needed.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	The WMMG should contact the management of Camp Easter Seal to see if they are interested in renting out their facilities on a more frequent basis. They will then need to establish some kind of communication contact for when booking inquiries are received.
2.	Determine the capacity of Camp Easter Seal and advertise the available accommodations and dates available on websites and promotional material.





**TOURISM BUSINESSES**

**4. ENHANCED BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS**

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM BUSINESSES**

**Objective:** To encourage local businesses to become more involved with the local tourism industry and to foster new public and private investment back into the communities.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** The businesses in the Watrous / Manitou area are not fully capitalizing on, or catering to, their visitors.

**Background:** New and creative partnerships as well as small adjustments to existing businesses in the area would create additional capacity and generate business activity.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	The WMMG needs to visit and encourage all businesses, especially the accommodation properties, to actively promote their services to the market.
2.	Partner with Carlton Trail Regional College to help retain the facility and the services that they offer.
3.	Once the 2012 Watrous / Manitou Community Tourism Plan is finalized and available to the public, the Working Committee should organize a luncheon event and invite all businesses to participate and learn about the highlights of the Plan and how it will affect the continued growth and promotion of the area.
4.	Partner with the local car dealerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Place a Visitor Guide in every vehicle that drives off the lot.</li> <li>● Advertise that visitors wanting to have their own personal form of transportation in the area can rent cars.</li> </ul>
5.	Coordinate stories and advertising with the local newspaper to keep residents informed of what is going on in their own community. ie. Events, training opportunities, visiting groups, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Train the seasonal Visitor Centre staff to update social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter with current information.</li> </ul>
6.	The WMMG needs to connect with local groups such as the Arts Community and the Geo-Caching Club to improve co-operation and increase awareness of each other.
7.	Attract additional vendors to the Flea Market.
8.	Encourage restaurants to offer and actively advertise healthier menu options and use local produce when available.



Watrous / Manitou Community Tourism Plan 2012

**TOURISM HOSPITALITY**

**5. BUILDING AN EXCEPTIONAL VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM HOSPITALITY**

**Objective:** To encourage community businesses and attractions to build upon and enhance the products they offer to their visitors and have them leave with an exceptional and memorable experience.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** Hospitality and Familiarization (FAM) training for front-line service staff is essential to ensuring visitor satisfaction.

**Background:** Staff should be enthusiastic, understanding and knowledgeable about all of the attractions, activities, and services that the communities have to offer. New visitors who are unfamiliar to the area rely on front-line staff to provide them with the essential information that they need to navigate within the area and a good first impression is always well-received and remembered. The hard work and effort of some of the flagship businesses in the Watrous / Manitou area over the past three years has produced very positive results and feedback from visitors. The Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa, along with the WMMG, hosted the staff of Tourism Saskatchewan in the spring of 2012 to showcase their attractions to the provincial organization.

ACTION STEPS
1. Create and provide FAM tours for the staff of local businesses and attractions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliment the FAM tours with a “fun” quiz for participants to engage them while learning about their communities.</li> </ul>
2. The WMMG needs to work with the management of businesses at the beginning of every tourism season to make them aware of the useful and convenient information contained in the Visitor Guide that their staff can rely on when they are asked questions by tourists.
3. Display racks for the Visitor Guide, tear-away map sheets of the communities, and a looping digital-slide show should be set up and available at all gas stations and restaurants to assist the staff when inquiries are made by their patrons.
4. Establish a “Customer Service Recognition” award for local staff. Publicly recognize businesses that are providing excellent customer service. Work with the local newspaper to promote and raise awareness of this program.
5. Partner with Carlton Trail Regional College to deliver hospitality training programs.
6. An organized tour of the communities and perhaps one that takes place right on the water should be set up for visitors who are interested in taking a guided tour. An interested resident or retired teacher would be an ideal tour guide for this type of program.



Watrous / Manitou Community Tourism Plan 2012

**TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE**

**6. GATEWAY & DIRECTIONAL SIGNS**

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Objective:** To encourage additional, improved and complimentary signage leading into the Watrous and Manitou Beach communities.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** The poor quality and lack of properly placed gateway and directional signs have a detrimental impact on the access, awareness and promotion of the tourism attractions within the area, especially along the highway to Manitou Beach.

**Background:** Tourism signage infrastructure continues to be a challenge within rural Saskatchewan. Rules, regulations, policies, funding and cooperation are all factors when considering signs to direct, inform, or attract the visitor. Proper gateway and directional signage is critical to the tourism businesses and attractions operating within that community. A traveller unfamiliar with the area relies on these signs to direct them to their destination. Recent provincial highway construction and poor signage placement has resulted in fewer tourists coming to the area, with some not returning due to unnecessary confusion.

ACTION STEPS
1. Lobby the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure to “reword” or remove the current Detour signs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Dwight ordered new signs on April 9, 2012</li> </ul>
2. Investigate the “Tourism Attractions” signs program to see if this could be an option for advertising the flagship attractions and events in the communities.
3. Place new signs before Manitou and District Regional Park listing how far the Manitou attractions are from that point onwards and continue these signs in varying increments along the way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signs purchased and placed on private land may bridge the gap until the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure is able to visit this issue.</li> <li>• Individual businesses are looking into purchasing their own signs to fill the interim.</li> </ul>
4. There are Visitor Centres located in both of the communities, however the signs directing traffic to each location are not sufficient and need to be updated, as both locations are hard to navigate for a person who is unfamiliar with the area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Dwight ordered new signs on April 9, 2012</li> </ul>
5. Directional signs leading to the Trail System within Manitou Beach and the Manitou and District Regional Park and the Last Mountain Lake Bird Sanctuary need to be established. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Updated signs within the Manitou and District Regional Park are being developed to help promote the area and the attractions within.</li> </ul>





## 7. INTERPRETIVE PANELS

**Goal:** To improve TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

**Objective:** To encourage additional, improved and complimentary signage for specific tourism attractions.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** The absence of interpretive signs or panels to a site or attraction prevents the visitor from experiencing what makes that place special or significant and why it was developed or promoted for the visitor.

**Background:** Increasing the amount of informational and interpretive signs within an area, or at certain attractions, will heighten the knowledge of the visitor about the specific area and will provide for a more informative and memorable tourism experience for the guest.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	Develop Interpretive Panels at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main Beach at Manitou – indicating mineral content of the water</li> <li>• Trail System</li> <li>• Anglican Church Window</li> <li>• Twister Combine</li> </ul>
2.	Courtesy Signs – welcoming specific groups of guests to communities. ie. Good SAM's Club RV'ers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An email distribution list needs to be created that can be sent out to all members of the group to make them aware of any special groups that will be arriving in town. This will allow groups and businesses to make any special preparations for the visitors prior to them arriving.</li> </ul>
3.	Manitou and District Regional Park - the number signs for each campsite need to be larger & more visible for guests to find their site.
4.	Highway #2 turn-out sign – could be refurbished and restored considering the infrastructure is in place and the turn-out has already been constructed.



## 8. GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE CONCERNS

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Objective:** To encourage regular maintenance on some of the major tourism attractions in the area.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** Having an annual maintenance plan for various types of infrastructure throughout the two communities is essential to maintaining the esthetic quality of the communities and leaving a positive first impression with guests.

**Background:** Some maintenance work is already underway to upgrade and update the playground equipment at Manitou Beach. Plans and committees are also in place to examine the formation of a new integrated Visitor Centre and museum near the Town of Watrous.

Concern has been expressed about the fluctuating levels of Little Manitou Lake. If beaches and the boat launch become submerged in the rising water, fewer people will visit the area and their stays will not last as long with the absence or inaccessibility of these amenities. Since 90% of the water that enters the lake does so by underground sources, it is increasingly hard to control the levels. The best approach to handle this unpredictable occurrence is to keep visitors aware of the levels and how it will affect their stay. This kind of information could be posted on the website and kept up-to-date. Information regarding blue/green algae and shore weeds would also be appreciated by guests who are not familiar with these occurrences.

ACTION STEPS
1. Work with the proper groups or organizations to improve the concession area at the main beach at Manitou Beach.
2. Encourage the formation of a local volunteer group to groom and maintain the trail system that runs through the Manitou and District Regional Park and Manitou Beach. These trails are used extensively by visitors and locals alike. (An action step is also outlined in this Plan to place interpretive signage throughout the trail system for added interest.)
3. Improve the arrival site for customers who arrive on the VIA Rail train. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the possibility of using the Visitor Centre as a four-season waiting area for travellers.</li> <li>• Contact CN to see if they would be interested in building a new platform at the arrival/departure area for their passengers.</li> <li>• Enhance the existing area with a small temporary shelter, flower pots, etc.</li> </ul>
4. Set up an online web page to provide visitors with information about fluctuating lake levels.



**TOURISM PROMOTION**

**9. WATROUS MANITOU MARKETING GROUP**

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM PROMOTION**

**Objective:** To encourage the communities and businesses to continue to support the WMMG as a vehicle to promote and develop their local tourism industry.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** As available funding continues to be hard to come by in rural Saskatchewan, the WMMG needs to actively engage their members and partners to ensure the longevity of the organization.

**Background:** The Watrous Manitou Marketing Group was established in 2010. The WMMG is operating on successful partnerships with the Town of Watrous, the Resort Village of Manitou Beach and the RM of Morris. The organization promotes and markets the tourism attractions and amenities within the Watrous / Manitou area.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	Maintain current partners and actively seek out new partnership opportunities, both traditional and non-traditional.
2.	The WMMG shall approach the Provincial Chamber of Commerce organization to see if they would provide a speaker to an organized luncheon in the community. This will start the conversation about resurrecting the Chamber within Watrous / Manitou. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could the WMMG act as the local Chamber of Commerce to gain their members access to the Provincial benefits?</li> </ul>
3.	Chamber of Commerce – renew and revisit old programs to generate interest. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memberships</li> <li>• Business Luncheons</li> <li>• Public Meetings</li> <li>• Group Insurance Plan for Members</li> </ul>
4.	Examine the longevity of the WMMG and establish fundraising activities that will allow for consistent operating, marketing budgets, and staff retention. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure the Annual Visitors Guide to generate a profit.</li> </ul>
5.	Engage the attractions and businesses in the area to participate in a more in-depth tracking procedure to generate more specific target markets for promotional material and activities.
6.	Investigate establishing a Destination Marketing Fund (DMF) structure for the communities to produce a marketing pool for additional capacity.



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**10. MARKETING & PROMOTIONS**

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM PROMOTION**

**Objective:** To encourage the continued marketing efforts that are underway and foster new initiatives to further promote the area.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** To attract visitors to the area through existing and new marketing campaigns.

**Background:** The communities of Watrous and Manitou Beach have done an exceptional job marketing and promoting themselves to the visiting public in the past. These efforts need to continue and be expanded upon in the future to ensure the viability of the tourism industry in this area; this can be done strategically through various types of media efforts. In the past the communities have been identified as a place for seniors to visit (ie. Healing powers of the lake, Danceland, etc.), however updated media and a stronger web presence to a 'younger' traveller has resulted in these attractions becoming a destination for all ages.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	Create additional packages using a variety of the attractions / businesses for visitors to purchase. A designated page on the <a href="http://www.watrousmanitou.com">www.watrousmanitou.com</a> website needs to be created to house these new packages.
2.	Work with the Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa to increase the awareness and information available about the mineral content of the water, the color, the healing properties, etc.
3.	Continue to produce and expand on the Annual Visitors Guide; explore new advertising ideas and promotions.
4.	Promote the Manitou and District Regional Park (one of Saskatchewan's largest and most popular Regional Parks) and Manitou Beach Golf Club to encourage and work towards full capacity for the entire season.
5.	Explore current marketing initiatives such as billboards and the community calendar to ensure that they are targeting the right audience and are being utilized to their full potential.
6.	Increase awareness and promote rental accommodations and private property that is available for guests.
7.	Work in conjunction with the Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa to promote and advertise the new Saskatchewan Transit Company (STC) bus rate of \$40 round-trip from anywhere in the province to the Spa.



## 11. MEETING & CONVENTIONS PLAN

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM PROMOTION**

**Objective:** To attract more meetings and conventions to the Watrous / Manitou area.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** The facilities exist to host medium-sized conventions with the available amenities in the area; however a plan needs to be put in place that outlines the capacity and availability within the communities to help attract these groups.

**Background:** The Watrous / Manitou area has become a very popular destination for conventions, meetings, wedding, reunions and retreats because of its central location within Saskatchewan. A Meeting and Convention Plan will easily pull together all of the information that a group would need to finalize their location for their event when weighing the options between several communities. This Plan would also allow for easier decision-making and a better co-ordinated effort on behalf of the businesses and facilities within the Watrous / Manitou area by providing an attractive, easily accessible guide for the visiting group. The variety and selection of accommodation options available is quite extensive considering the size of both communities. Many of the accommodation properties have made significant investments and upgrades to their property in the last five years. When large events coincide with a busy summer season, the advertised and available accommodations often have no vacancy, which in turn makes it difficult for a place like Danceland to host and promote an event if their patrons have no accommodation available; a list of homes that are willing to billet guests would be welcomed in this situation.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	Identify the accommodation capacity of both Watrous and Manitou Beach.
2.	Work with neighboring communities to determine their accommodation capacity and educate them on the goals of Watrous / Manitou for hosting larger gatherings.
3.	Assess and inventory ALL available types of accommodations for rent in the Watrous / Manitou area. ie. Hotel, Motel, Bed and Breakfast, Cabin Rentals, Private Home Rentals, Billeting, etc.
4.	Create a partnership with A & S Charter Services to access their services when guests need to be transported to out-of-town accommodations.
5.	Establish a co-ordinated billeting program in the community to access additional accommodation options for larger events.



**12. PLANNING SUCCESSFUL EVENTS**

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM PROMOTION**

**Objective:** To work together with all event partners to further promote the events that take place in the area.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** Events are planned and organized by different community groups and often do not involve each other, however with improved communication, the event could be promoted more successfully if everyone in the communities are aware of what is happening.

**Background:** It is not uncommon for several events to be taking place at the same time in Watrous / Manitou and not have any co-ordinated marketing efforts or communication between the event organizers. Events that take place in Watrous / Manitou are often organized and put together by various community groups, which results in fragmented communication between the event and the community. With a bit of coordination and organization, groups could work together to enhance and further promote their event to draw an even larger audience.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	The WMMG needs to work more closely with the local Rec Director and help promote all of the events that are planned in the area.
2.	The WMMG should contact all community groups and explain how they can help with promoting the events and providing in-kind contributions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Work with High School Tournament organizers to promote the area when new people are in town for the event, using the electronic sign by the Town Office for promotion, advertising on the Watrous / Manitou websites and on Facebook pages.</li> </ul>
3.	Co-ordinate the various events using Social Media such as a Facebook pages to bring everyone to the same spot for the event information.
4.	Work with organizers for specific events, such as the Watrous Fun Run Show n' Shine Annual Car Show or the existing horseshoe tournaments, and complement them with other activities to draw more people to the area.
5.	Danceland and the WMMG need to work together to attract a younger clientele for their business and do away with the old "stigma" of it being a place for seniors to dance. This venue provides an opportunity for the community to host larger events of up to 500 people. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the pros and cons of selling tickets from a third-party agent to help increase numbers.</li> </ul>





**13. RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE UNIQUE PROPERTIES OF THE WATER**

**Goal:** To improve **TOURISM PROMOTION**

**Objective:** To increase the general public’s knowledge about the unique properties of the water at Little Manitou Lake and the water at the Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa.

**Concern(s) Addressed:** The natural brown color of the water is often unexpected by a tourist who is not familiar with the area or who has never visited Manitou Beach before.

**Background:** Concerns have been raised by both visitors and the local businesses that many first-time visitors to Manitou Beach and the Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa are often surprised by the brown color of the water. Expectations are that the water will appear clear blue and when they arrive to find it brown, it leaves the wrong impression with the visitor. This problem can be addressed by providing more information to the visitor prior to their arrival at Manitou so they know what to expect when they arrive.

ACTION STEPS	
1.	Convenient and cost-effective pop-up banners that show the properties of the water as well as attractive images of people in the water should be created and on display at the Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa, Visitor Centres, etc.
2.	Information about the water properties could be available in a hand-out brochure, in the Annual Visitor Guide, and on appropriate websites for anyone interested.
3.	The Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa should contact the Arthritis and Cancer Societies and invite them to partner with the Spa for healing retreats for their patients and members.
4.	Investigate the opportunities of promoting the Watrous / Manitou area to naturopathic organizations and look at targeting the niche of Health Tourism travellers.
5.	Work with the Manitou Springs Resort and Mineral Spa to upgrade media images to properly depict the natural color of the water while maintaining an attractive marketing campaign to increase overall visitation numbers.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Watrous Manitou Marketing Group  
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2. Tourism Saskatchewan  
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Pg 2: Kevin Hogarth Photography

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Pg 6: Rhonda Cooper

Pg 6: Kevin Hogarth Photography

Pg 7: Gary Bergen

Pg 8: Jogio El Zein

Pg 8: Kevin Hogarth Photography

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