



Annual Report 2007/2008

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For copies of this document, contact:

Alberta Conservation Association

101 – 9 Chippewa Road

Tel: (780) 410-1999

Fax: (780) 464-0990

Email: info@ab-conservation.com

Website: www.ab-conservation.com

Our Mission

ACA conserves, protects and enhances fish, wildlife and habitat for all Albertans to enjoy, value and use.

Our Vision

An Alberta with an abundance and diversity of fish, wildlife and their habitat; where future generations continue to use, enjoy and value our rich outdoor heritage.



Alberta Conservation
Association

Conserving Alberta's Wild Side



Cover Photo: Gordon Court

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2007/2008 Financial Facts

- 70% of all revenue goes directly into the Wildlife, Fisheries and Land Management Programs;
- 24% of funds come from sources outside of levy revenues;
- \$8,412,010 in levy revenue was collected in 2007/2008; \$8,316,801 went directly to running the Wildlife, Fisheries and Land Management Programs;
- 96% of the levy value is directed into the resource by leveraging levy funds with partner dollars.

ACA Member Groups

Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA)

Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association (AHEIA)

Alberta Professional Outfitters Society (APOS)

Alberta Trappers' Association (ATA)

Federation of Alberta Naturalists (FAN)

Pheasants Forever Alberta Council (PF)

Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC)

About Us

Formed in 1997, Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) is a not-for-profit, registered charity largely funded by Alberta's hunters and anglers through licence levies, and a growing number of corporate partners. We are governed by a multi-stakeholder Board of Directors represented by hunting, fishing, trapping and naturalist groups; government, First Nations, Public at Large, industry and academic representatives.

Annually, we direct more than \$10 million towards conservation efforts, delivering a wide variety of projects, programs and services across the province. Key conservation programs that we deliver include **Wildlife, Fisheries, Land Management and Communications**.

Delegated Roles and Responsibilities

ACA holds special status as a delegated administrative organization (DAO), which means that we deliver responsibilities as outlined in the Wildlife Act and defined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD).

In our role as a DAO, we work in partnership with ASRD, particularly the Fish and Wildlife Division, in developing program priorities that support the enhancement and management of Alberta's wildlife and fish resources. We also deliver as part of our DAO responsibilities, the Report A Poacher (RAP) Program and Compensation Programs, which is comprised of the Wildlife Predator Compensation and Shot Livestock Compensation Programs.

Memorandum of Understanding

The MOU outlines the roles and responsibilities for ACA and ASRD in relation to a number of common activities and includes a process for the development of specific program agreements.

These program agreements were renegotiated in 2006 and are revisited yearly. They further define our role and specify each organization's roles and responsibilities with respect to program planning, implementation and reporting. The agreements are as follows:

- Wildlife Program;
- Fisheries Program;
- Land Management Program;
- Human Interaction Program (Report A Poacher and Compensation Programs);
- Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program;
- Public Information, Education and Communications Operational;
- Shared Services Operational.

Board of Directors

Executive

Brian Bildson, Chairman – Alberta Trappers' Association

Patrick Long, Vice Chairman – Foundation for North American Wild Sheep

Calvin Rakach, Secretary – Public At Large, East Slopes Region

Tom Bateman, Treasurer – Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association

Don Pike, Past Chair – Trout Unlimited Canada

Directors

Mark Boyce – ACA University of Alberta Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife

Bob Byers – Alberta Professional Outfitters Society

Lee Foote – Public At Large, Academic Representative

J.R. Giroux – Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta

Colin Gosselin – Public At Large, Northeast Region

Ward McLean – Pheasants Forever Alberta Council

Brad Pickering – Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Minister's Representative

Dave Powell – Alberta Fish and Game Association

Sandra Foss – Federation of Alberta Naturalists

Jeff Smith – Public At Large, Southern Region

Roger Smith – Public At Large, Industry Representative

Board of Directors

Public At Large Position

Candidates were sought to fill the position of Public At Large, Northwest region on our Board of Directors. The position was filled, July 2008.

New Member Group

Alberta Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) became our ninth member group, bringing a diversified background that contributes to and enhances the research carried out by our organization.

The mission of the Alberta Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep is to promote and enhance increasing populations of indigenous wild sheep in Alberta through the funding of programs that support responsible wildlife management, conservation education, youth involvement and the preservation of our hunting heritage.



Chairman's Report

It's with great pride that I take a step back and look at Alberta Conservation Association today. After 10 years as an organization, ACA has evolved and grown into an effective conservation group that delivers real, on-the-ground results. In this our tenth year, we have achieved several significant milestones worth talking about.

We started out the year with a roundtable meeting between our member group executives and our Board. We were able to fine tune our shared vision of what we are and perhaps more importantly what we can be. We now have a much clearer picture of our member group expectations and how best to deliver them. I also believe the member groups now have a better idea of the challenges and limitations we face.

This was also Year One of working with our partners in ASRD under the new five-year program agreements. These contracts for service between ACA and ASRD have streamlined program deliveries and eliminated duplication between our organizations. There is an obvious spirit of co-operation between the two agencies and conservation in Alberta is the big winner.

Our new CEO and President, Todd Zimmerling also completed his first year with ACA. His energy and knowledge have strengthened the organization immensely. Todd has been instrumental in securing new working partnerships with both conservation groups and industry and once again, conservation in Alberta is the better for it. Of course, no one can do it alone—neither the Board nor our management team could do it without our dedicated staff. Time and time again, I've seen examples of where our staff has gone above and beyond the call of duty; I thank them for that.

On behalf of ACA, I'd like to thank you for your support and encourage you to enjoy Alberta's Wild Side!

Brian Bildson

President and CEO's Message

My first year with ACA has been a rewarding and exciting one. Immediately upon joining ACA, I was thoroughly impressed with the dedication and commitment of ACA staff towards conservation in this province. I believe the expertise and skill sets we have within the organization are second to none, and we have begun to put structure in place to ensure that this expertise is used in the most efficient and effective manner as possible.

This past year marked the start of our move away from regionally based programs to a broader-based provincial programming model. While this shift resulted in a few bumps along the way, ACA staff has been up to the challenge; heading into 2008/2009, we were able to design and implement projects that dealt effectively with provincial conservation priorities.

This has also been a year for refocusing. Leadership from our Board of Directors helped our management and staff to clearly identify our primary stakeholders and set goals required to move forward. As a result, there is greater job satisfaction as our staff has a clear understanding of our direction and the steps required to get us there. This refocusing has also improved relations with our member groups. This growth can only prove to be beneficial to ACA and to all conservation efforts in the province as we continue to increase co-operation between conservation organizations.

April 2008 marked the end of my first year with ACA and I am very happy with what we have accomplished. I look forward to many more productive years as I believe there is immense untapped potential that allows us to accomplish goals that we have only dreamed about in the past.

Todd Zimmerling





Communications

Awards

2007 Emerald Award Finalist

In April 2007, we were nominated along with our partner, Suncor Energy as a 2007 Emerald Award finalist in the Business: Large category for the Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative.

Imagine Canada Business and Community Partnership Awards

Unique partnership wins national award: A first for Alberta in terrestrial conservation offsets.

On February 7, 2008 we were recognized along with Suncor Energy Foundation by Imagine Canada for our conservation offset initiative in the Boreal forest. The award was presented at the Business and Community Partnership Awards in Calgary on February 7, recognizing innovative collaborations between leading businesses and their non-profit partners.

The Alberta Fish and Game Association:
Neville Lindsay Memorial Award

This award is given to the club or individual with the best fisheries project in Alberta.

In February 2007, AFGA executive nominated the partnership between our organization, Beaver River Fish & Game and Lakeland Fisheries Advisory Committee for bringing a message of awareness, responsibility and sustainability to the Cold Lake trout fishery.



CONSERVATION SITE



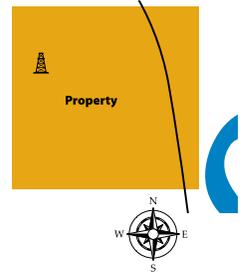
North Fawcett 3

This site has been conserved with contributions from Albian Sands Energy Inc. and is owned by Alberta Conservation Association.

Contact: No contact is required to access this property.

Restrictions: Day use only. No open fires. Foot access only.

Disclaimer: Conservation sites are available for recreational access at your own risk. By accessing these properties, you agree that ACA and its contributing partners are not liable for any injury or damage whatsoever caused to yourself or others irrespective of the cause of the injury or damage. Be aware of the potential for livestock grazing or other users. Please report any abuse or misuse of these lands, wildlife or fish by calling Report A Poacher at 1-800-642-3800. Please use respect and act responsibly.



Contributing Partners



www.ab-conservation.com • toll free: 1-877-969-9091

Corporate Partners in Conservation Program

In 2007, the Corporate Partners in Conservation Program (CPIC Program) initiative was established to provide corporate donors with the opportunity to play a vital role in protecting Alberta's natural heritage.

There are two funds within the program, which corporations can select from to best meet their business and environmental objectives. This program also goes beyond conventional partnerships by offering employees an opportunity to be directly involved in conservation by getting out of the office and into the field—whether it's planting trees, installing or removing fencing or conducting wildlife surveys, it is coupled with the feeling that they are actually making a difference.

Partnerships Benefit Albertans

One program, two funding opportunities:

- 1) The Habitat Securement, Enhancement and Management Fund provides corporations with an opportunity to purchase and manage lands for conservation. These land purchases can be used as terrestrial conservation offsets, which can compensate for impacts related to a wide range of industrial developments.
- 2) The Special Project Support Fund allows corporate donors to fund a specific conservation project. Examples might include funding a lake aeration program to improve fish survival over the winter or a species-at-risk program.



Marketing

Online Guide to Outdoor Adventure

In September 2007, we launched an online searchable database of 277 conservation sites, making 200,000 acres available to the public for hunting, angling, hiking, bird watching and other outdoor adventures.

This unique database allows visitors to discover Alberta's wild side by searching the outdoor adventure(s) they are looking for, locating it using Google Maps and then, downloading driving directions to and from the selected destination. The sites are either private lands that are owned by us or our conservation partners, or public lands that we manage on behalf of the Crown; all are available for public use.

A month after the launch date, we registered 110,213 conservation site web hits for an average of 1,344 a day.

Rebranding

Our rebranding initiative continued with the complete integration of our new tagline *Conserving Alberta's Wild Side* alongside key design elements and colours on all internal and external materials.

Main components produced this year were a new trade show display, which was created for open houses, and trade shows; branding our first vehicle as well as the largest endeavour—creating a sign template for all of our conservation sites across Alberta.

Outreach

Robert Bateman Get to Know Program Interactive CD Launch

2007 saw the launch of the Robert Bateman *Get to Know* Interactive CD, a fresh approach to reaching youth and inspiring them to become familiar with and develop an appreciation for Canada's incredible wildlife heritage.

We played a critical role in championing the Alberta component by helping launch the initiative to create and distribute the interactive CD. Through the Alberta Community Initiatives Program, we applied for the funding necessary for distribution of the *Get to Know* Interactive CD in Alberta. Additional funds for CD production were raised through Robert Bateman special edition prints, which were distributed through a partnership between us and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation. After the CD was produced, we also helped supply expertise and staff member time for marketing the CD, in addition to managing logistics and coordinating launch events to promote the completion and distribution of the CD to schools in Edmonton, Calgary and across Canada.

Several years in the making, the *Get to Know* CD contains hundreds of videos, virtual hikes, field guides, PowerPoint presentations, links and reference materials for both teachers and students. Both Calgary and Edmonton are featured, with interactive hikes that contain a wealth of information about local flora and fauna. These "virtual hikes" are set in local Albertan green spaces like Edwards Park, Fish Creek Provincial Park, Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, John Janzen Nature Centre and Weaselhead Natural Area.



Public Meetings - Levy Change

Public meetings were held at various locations throughout the province from October 2007 through January 2008 to gain input from stakeholders and determine the relative level of acceptance of a levy change.

With this increase in levy revenue, we can more effectively focus on key program areas that benefit fish and wildlife and their habitats. These programs include projects such as aerial ungulate surveys, fish stock assessment and monitoring, lake aeration for enhanced fishing opportunities, and habitat securement. In addition, well-known programs such as Report A Poacher and predator compensation will be continued.

In addition, revenue is applied to necessary support areas such as health and safety training for our staff who are involved in field work; improved information technology for geographic information systems (GIS) in the field; and communications, which is used to promote the conservation ethic in the

The CD has been made available free of charge to public school districts in Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Toronto with plans to expand the distribution to more areas in Alberta.

Public meeting locations:

Drayton Valley, Grande Prairie, Peace River, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Lloydminster, Sherwood Park, St. Paul, Rocky Mountain House, Red Deer and Fort McMurray.



general public, as well as the retention and recruitment of hunters and anglers. In 2008-09, we plan to allocate 90 per cent of the levy value collected on fish, wildlife and land programs.

Although attendance at the public meetings was low, they provided an opportunity to obtain input from concerned stakeholders. The general consensus appears to be that most hunters/anglers accept an adjustment to the current levy; however, they also believe other groups should contribute towards conservation efforts.

We will continue to improve our communication with stakeholders and attempt to act on as many suggestions as possible to improve our programs, so that hunters and anglers can continue to feel that our organization represents their interests when it comes to the conservation of wildlife, fish and habitat in Alberta.

Trade Shows

Trade shows provide the opportunity to connect with our stakeholders and increase public awareness of our conservation programs. In 2007/2008 we participated in the following trade shows: Pincher Creek, Medicine Hat, Calgary Boat & Sportsman Show, AFGA Annual General Meeting & Trade Show, Edmonton Boat & Sportsman Show, Sherwood Park and District Chamber of Commerce Trade Show and the Alberta Environment Conference.

Publications

Conservation Magazine

This year we examined avenues that would allow us to increase the distribution of our complimentary bi-annual publication, *Conservation Magazine*. As a result our distribution increased by 4,200 copies. A majority of these copies go to Visitor Information Centres (VICs), Municipal Districts, outdoor outfitters/retailers and the nine Alberta school divisions that requested our magazine for more than 200 of their school libraries.

Our People Our Culture



Human Resources

Alberta Conservation Association considers its employees to be the most important resource in a successful operation. To effectively deliver programs, we currently employ approximately 72 full-time and 20 seasonal staff in regional offices located throughout the province. This dedicated team is responsible for making significant conservation achievements since our organization's inception in 1997.

In 2007/2008, numerous changes and initiatives were implemented to enhance and strengthen human resources, improve efficiencies and ensure success for both the company and the employees. Highlights include:

The organization of our management was modified with the creation of provincially based program managers that work collaboratively with regional managers and corporate management. Reorganization included some new staff and revised roles and responsibilities. This significant change has allowed our managers to focus on specific goals and objectives, which has resulted in the coordination the wildlife, fisheries and land management programs across the province, while ensuring the regional implementation and delivery of those programs was maintained.

High satisfaction ratings on employee surveys and ongoing tracking by management indicate that numerous long-term initiatives from previous years are viewed favourably by staff. These initiatives include the Annual Comprehensive Benefit and Salary Review, the Health and Wellness Program, the web-based Competency Mapping Program, the Health and Safety Program and allowances for professional development.

New initiatives and improvements continue in the coming year. In particular, all of the existing policies related to human resources are reviewed and revised to be presented in a single document that ensures all staff has easy access to our policies and programs. Continually building and improving upon past successes ensures that our working environment is a healthy, safe, professional and supportive place to work.

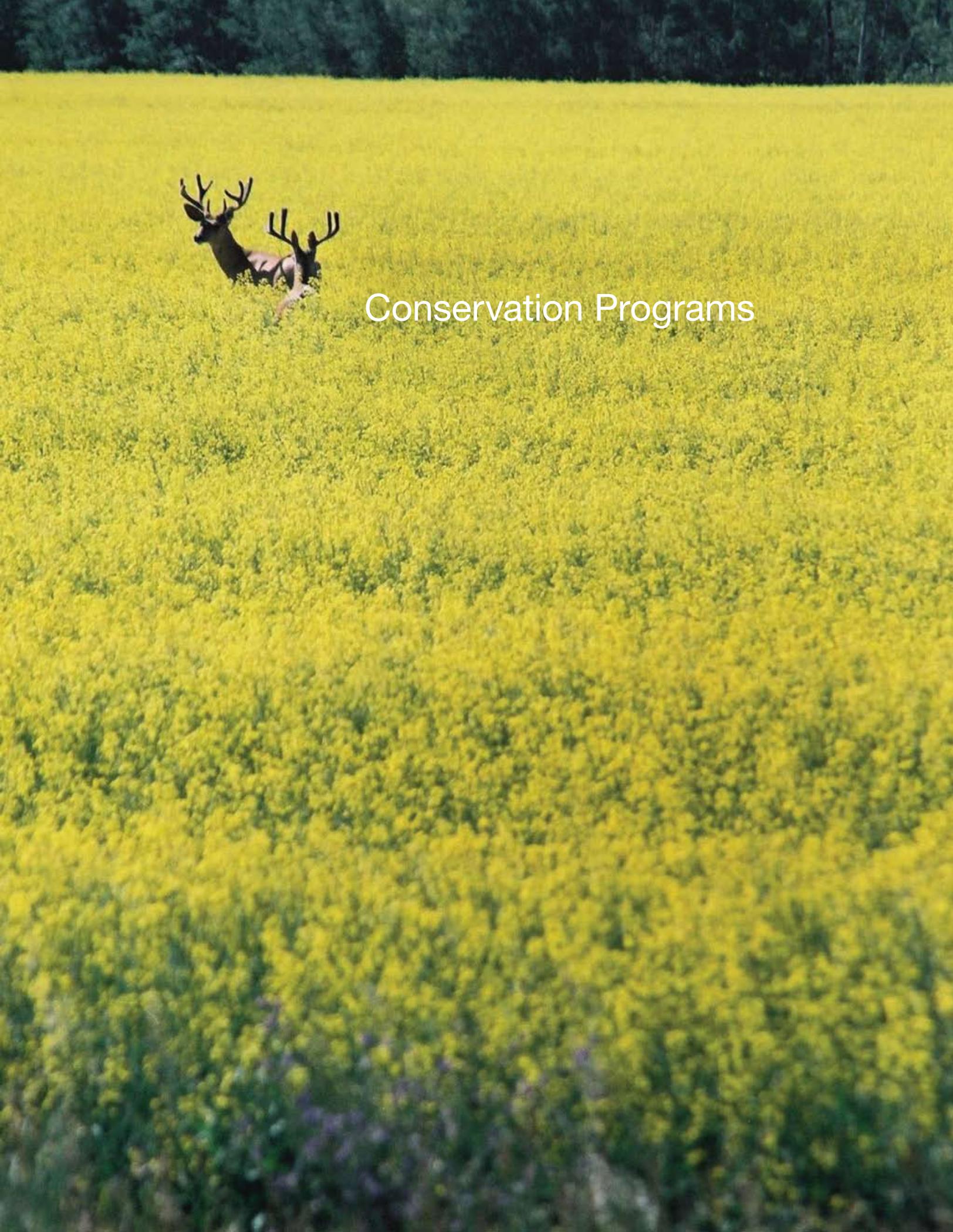
Health and Safety

For Alberta Conservation Association, health and safety isn't just a program or policy; it is part of our culture and integrated into all aspects of the work environment. Given its paramount importance, everyone on an ACA work site must adhere to the applicable health and safety practices and take personal responsibility for the health and safety of themselves and others. These principles apply for everyone whether an employee, a contractor, a volunteer, a visitor or the President and CEO.

We have developed a successful Health and Safety Program based on several core elements. Hazard assessment is critical for the identification and control of workplace hazards and we have established a detailed and effective process for staff to use. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) is a key requirement on all work sites and we have implemented both specific and general PPE to ensure employee safety at all times. Ongoing inspections and maintenance ensure that all our vehicles and equipment are kept in safe operating condition. Safety training and meetings are an important component of a safe workplace and are mandatory for all employees. Incident reporting and investigation are necessary components of all modern work sites, and we have developed a rigorous approach whereby all incidents resulting in personal injury or property damage are intensively addressed. In addition, serious near misses are also reported and investigated to address potentially unsafe conditions and minimize future reoccurrences.

To facilitate a successful program, our *Health and Safety Manual* was recently reviewed and significantly revised and updated to provide a comprehensive, yet easy-to-use document. Revisions included the addition of several new policies, practices and procedures, which reflect a varied and changing workplace and provide a complete reference document for staff, particularly in emergency situations.

We recognize that while conservation work is diverse and rewarding, it is also challenging and often occurs in difficult and sometimes potentially hazardous environments. Our Health and Safety Program is intended to provide a comprehensive and useful document that supports our business activities and evolves as our business changes.



Conservation Programs

The following are Wildlife Program activities conducted in 2007/2008:

Aerial ungulate survey
Petro-Canada sustainable grasslands program;
Ungulate winter range restoration;
Elk habitat planning tool development;
Habitat selection of moose in northeast Alberta;
Sharp-tailed grouse habitat inventory;
Piping plover recovery program;
Northern leopard frog recovery program;
Alberta wildlife status reports;
Waterfowl density and monitoring: Hay-Zama;
Impacts of human use in Wildland Parks;
Habitat selection of pronghorn antelope;
Demography of bighorn sheep in Yarrow-Castle range;
Provincial waterfowl crop damage prevention program;
Mallard nest tunnel enhancement;
Cavity nest waterfowl enhancement;
MULTISAR (Species at risk);
Upland habitat enhancement: Pothole Creek.

Wildlife Program

The Wildlife Program supports and enhances conservation activities that retain the diversity and abundance of populations and communities of wildlife in Alberta. It focuses on harvested species, but also includes species at risk. The program includes components related to wildlife populations, their habitats and the ecosystems that support them.

We strive to enhance the sustainability of wildlife species through science-based conservation. The program has four thematic areas:

- Ungulates;
- Upland game birds;
- Waterfowl;
- Species at risk.

Program objectives are prioritized at the provincial scale through strategic and operational planning. Insight gained through ongoing discussion with ASRD and external experts is a key element of this planning process.

This program supports the inventory and monitoring of priority species and their habitats, the enhancement of key habitats and the restoration and reintroduction of priority populations. The program also informs and supports ASRD in the determination of species status; the development and the implementation of species recovery or management plans. We investigate questions about wildlife populations that lead toward applied management and conservation.

Sample Wildlife Program
projects from 2007/2008:

Aerial Ungulate Surveys

Project leader:

Robert Anderson

Primary staff on this project:

Robert Anderson, Nathan Carruthers, Marco Fontana, Mike Grue, John Hallett, Ryan Hermanutz, Kelly Hooley, Velma Hudson, Dave Jackson, Michael Jokinen, Chad Judd, Doug Manzer, Andy Murphy, Len Peleshok, Jim Potter, Corey Rasmussen, Robb Stavne, Dan Sturgess, Roy Schmelzeisen, Shevenell Webb, Jay Wieliczko and Thomas Winter.

Introduction

AUS provide information on population size and trend, population demographics and reproductive output (Lancia et al. 2005). ASRD relies on survey information for population management and the allocation of ungulate game species. As a result, AUS are consistently identified as a top ASRD priority delegated to us. We work in partnership with ASRD to conduct aerial surveys, and this program is a core multi-year function of our Wildlife Program.

Methods

We have funded aerial ungulate survey flights in Alberta since our inception in 1997. This program has historically been led by ASRD biologists, with relatively low involvement from our staff across the province. The low practical involvement from our staff does not fall under the standard DAO relationship, as described by Acton Consulting (2005). A solution to this situation was sought during negotiation of the 2006-2011 Wildlife Program Agreement. The Deputy Minister of ASRD provided direction by clarifying his desire for our organization to take a much more substantive role in the delivery of these surveys in line with the expectations for a DAO. During 2007, ACA and ASRD developed a Delegated Aerial Ungulate Survey Delivery ACA/ASRD Partnership Terms of Reference, which provides guidance for how we work cooperatively with ASRD to deliver aerial ungulate surveys delegated to us.

Partnerships

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD)

Key Findings

- 28 Aerial Ungulate Surveys (AUS) were delegated to ACA in 2007/2008.
- Delivered surveys for deer, elk, bighorn sheep, bison, mountain goats, pronghorn antelope and moose.
- Results from these surveys are released on our web page once these data are analyzed.

Moose are one of the target species for aerial ungulate surveys conducted by ACA.

Photo: Jim Potter



Currently, the level of survey experience varies widely among our staff. Some staff have expertise in all aspects of survey planning, observation and reporting, while others have less background. To enhance our capacity to deliver this program over time, in 2007 we initiated a series of workshops and on-the-job training and mentoring opportunities for staff which we expect to continue over the next four years.

The surveys (species/location) to be conducted each year are determined by the Wildlife Management Branch of ASRD. For data collection in 2007/2008, we used survey methods used previously for each Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) by ASRD staff. Surveys led by experienced ACA or ASRD staff were to be carried out with the expectation that survey leads would mentor our staff on survey planning, sampling and reporting. Random stratified block designs were used for moose and deer surveys. Elk, bighorn sheep, mountain goat and pronghorn surveys were conducted as a total count of previously identified ranges or management areas.

Results

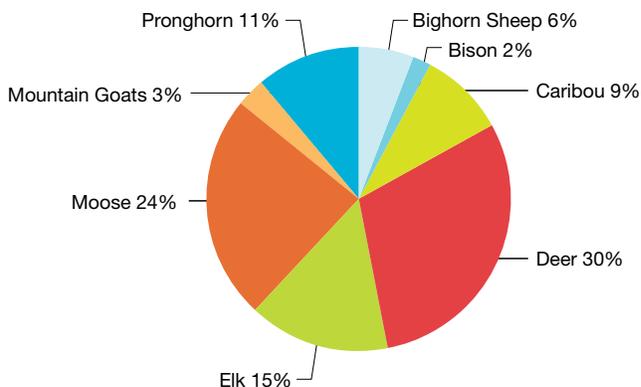
During 2007/2008, we provided population information for 54 management areas through 28 surveys (Table 1, Figure 1). Our staff participated in data collection for 27 of the 28 delegated surveys, as well as assisting ASRD with non-delegated surveys. Our staff also participated in two random stratified block training surveys, which provided learning opportunities for four new navigators, seven new observers and one new survey leader.

Our biologists led 12 of the 28 delegated surveys, plus the two training surveys. We provided key planning and reporting assistance on at least two other delegated surveys.

Table 1. Data collection summary for aerial ungulate surveys conducted in 2007/2008.

Species	Survey Type	Surveys	Total Management Units/Areas
Bighorn Sheep	Total count	2	12
Bison	Total count	1	2
Caribou	Cow: calf ratios	1	1
Deer (mule and/or white-tailed)	Random stratified block	5	5
Elk	Total count	6	20
Moose	Random stratified block	4	5
Mountain Goat	Total count	1	1
Pronghorn	Transect survey	8	8

Figure 1.
The breakdown of survey effort for each species is determined by ASRD, in relation to their management needs.



Conclusions

In our first year of full participation in delivery of the delegated aerial ungulate surveys, our staff played key roles in the planning, sampling and reporting phases of 14 of the 28 surveys delegated to us. We did not participate on the caribou survey conducted in Winter 2008. With the experience gained this year and the prospect of acquiring key staff at the beginning of fiscal year 2008, we look toward playing a more substantive role in the delivery of delegated aerial ungulate surveys in coming years.

Communications

- A summary of results from the 2007/2008 surveys are posted on our website prior to the 2008 hunting season.

Literature cited

- Acton Consulting Ltd. 2005. Joint review of the Alberta Conservation Association and Sustainable Resource Development. Unpublished report prepared for Alberta Conservation Association and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Edmonton, Alberta.
- Lancia, R.A., W.L. Kendall, K.H. Pollock, and J.D. Nichols. 2005. Estimating the number of animals in wildlife populations. Pages 106 – 153. *In*: C.E. Braun, editor. Techniques for wildlife investigations and management. Sixth edition. The Wildlife Society, Bethesda, Maryland, USA.



Survey leader Shevenell Webb references a guide for classifying tick-induced hair loss on moose during aerial surveys.

Photo: Jim Potter

Survey crews generally consist of a navigator/data recorder, such as Andy Murphy, two observers and a pilot.

Photo: Shevenell Webb





Elk Habitat Planning Tool

Project leaders:

**Robert Anderson and
Shevenell Webb**

Primary staff on this project:

**Robert Anderson, Kelly Hooey,
Shevenell Webb and
Thomas Winter.**

Introduction

We have been working with the Central East Slopes Elk Study (CESES) to produce habitat models that jointly account for the positive and negative responses of elk (*Cervus elaphus*) to land-use changes (Frair et al. 2007). In 2006 and 2007, a geographic information system (GIS) interface was produced in collaboration with Foothills Model Forest (FMF) that allows the user to input proposed disturbances into the models, enabling the user to assess potential outcomes of either habitat restoration treatments or industrial development scenarios (Figures 1 and 2).

The primary objectives for this past year were to: 1) test the GIS tool interface and use the tool in conjunction with our Ungulate Winter Range Restoration Program to assess multiple prescribed burning scenarios, 2) test the use of remote cameras as a means to validate model predictions and 3) determine the feasibility of expanding the elk planning tool outside the original study area.

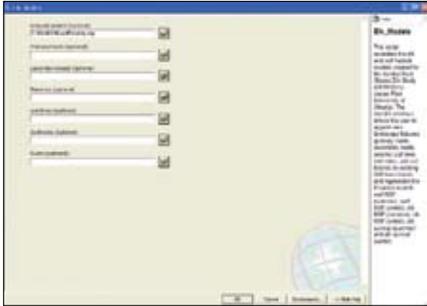
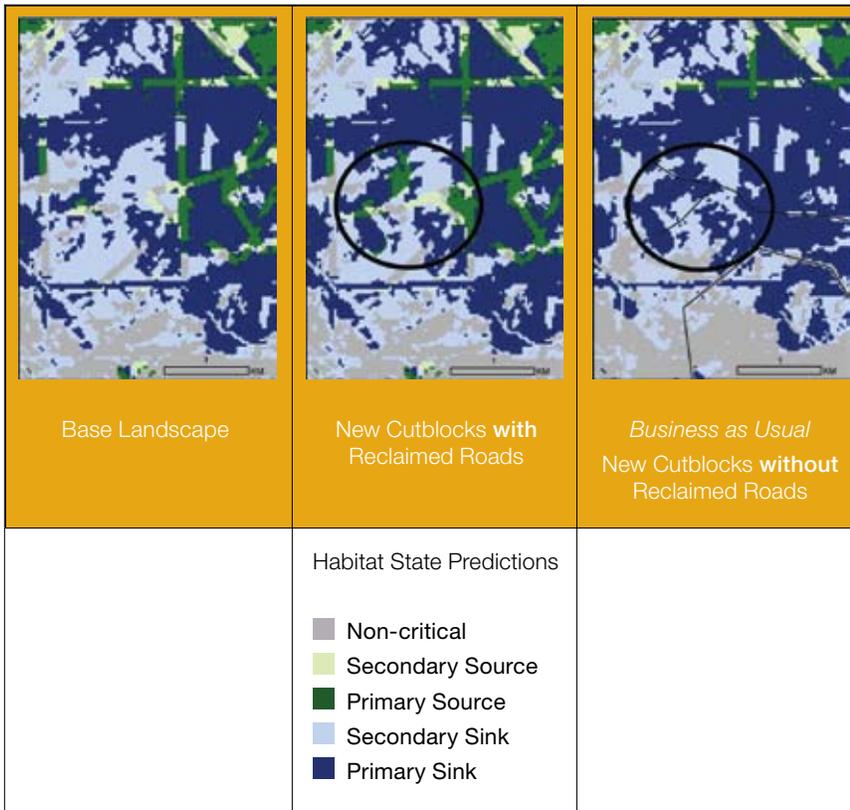


Figure 1. Elk habitat planning tool GIS interface that allows a user to define the study area and land-use and burn scenarios.

Figure 2. An example of the elk tool habitat predictions with cutblock/road scenarios. The cutblocks created more attractive habitat, but without the reclamation of roads, the focal area becomes sink (risky) habitat because of the elevated mortality risk associated with roads.



Partnerships

- Alberta Outfitters Association
- Alberta Professional Outfitters Society
- Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
- Foothills Model Forest
- Grizzly Bear Project
- National Science Foundation (USA)
- National Science and Engineering Research Council (Canada)
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Canada
- Shell Canada Limited
- Sundre Forest Products
- Talisman Energy
- University of Alberta (Central East Slopes Elk Study)
- Weyerhaeuser Company

Key Findings

- The elk habitat planning tool is a useful resource in predicting the effects of landscape change and habitat restoration on the suitability of habitat for elk in the Central East Slopes.
- Burn scenarios increased source habitat for elk by an additional 26 km² (winter) and 48 km² (summer).
- Remote cameras were found to be a poor detection method for elk, but did photograph white-tailed and mule deer, moose, coyote and red fox.
- The elk tool, in its current state, is not suitable for use outside of Central East Slopes.



Methods

To test the tool, we assessed 10 years worth of proposed prescribed burns in the R11 Forest Management Area for their potential impact on elk habitat. These burns were arranged in different patterns, based on varying the importance of addressing issues related to forest health, wildfire threat and natural disturbance emulation. We compared the amount of predicted source habitat created by the different burn pattern scenarios and assessed the potential implications of these results for elk in the study area.

We tested the use of Reconyx Silent Image remote cameras in quantifying elk occurrence in the Central East Slopes. We put the cameras at “elk height” on trees facing obvious game trails in a variety of predicted elk habitat types and counted the number of positive identifications after various time frames.

We also assessed the feasibility of expanding the elk planning tool outside of the original study area. The Foothills Model Forest Grizzly Bear Project has developed extensive landcover layers that overlap the proposed expanded area and we hoped to use this information source to apply the model throughout the

Foothills Natural Region. To validate this, we compared landcover differences and elk tool predictions between FMF and CESES layers in the original study area extent.

Results

Burn scenarios increased source habitat for elk by an additional 26 km² (winter) and 48 km² (summer). These add up to increases of 1 to 5 per cent of the source area available for elk within the project’s range depending on season. There was little variation between the different burn pattern strategies on predicted habitats, but burns positively affected habitat potential for elk, because burns create meadow-like conditions with high-quality forage. We would expect greater benefits if more area was burned; burns were strategically planned on the landscape in areas of secondary source habitats, and roads were removed near the burns to reduce mortality risk.

We deployed remote cameras between October 23, 2007 and March 3, 2008 at 16 different sites across a variety of habitat states predicted by the elk tool. On average, cameras were out for 29.94 ± 0.96 nights and collected a total of 1,501 photos. The proportions of photos taken

of various species were: deer = 0.91, humans = 0.04, coyote = 0.02, red fox = 0.01, moose = 0.004 and elk = 0. Less than 5% of the photos were from an unknown trigger. Four sites had elk tracks present at the time the cameras were set, but no elk were photographed.

We generated 1,000 random points in the original study area extent and intersected the point layer with the FMF and CESES landcover. We found that some layers (e.g., cutblock, closed conifer, burn and wet herbaceous) had high agreement (> 60%), while most layers had low agreement when comparing landcover categories. We also determined that the elk tool habitat state predictions differed for winter and summer seasons. A kappa statistic computes the degree of agreement between categories and ranges between 0 - 1 (1 = perfect agreement); in summer kappa = 0.66, SE = 0.02 and in winter kappa = 0.67, SE = 0.02.

Conclusions

The elk habitat planning tool is a valuable resource that allows users to evaluate alternative land use and restoration scenarios on elk habitat states and is being used in our Ungulate Winter Range Restoration Program to plan prescribed burns in the Central East Slopes.

Remote cameras were not effective at detecting elk because of variability in elk movements and restricted placement of cameras due to false triggers caused by movement of vegetation and human-related theft. Increasing the number of cameras, sites and camera-nights, and using bait would likely improve the detection of elk, but probably would not be cost-effective.

We conclude that the FMF and CESES landcover layers are statistically different and do not recommend expanding the elk tool to areas outside of the original study area at this time.

Communications

- Results of the work completed by our project partners at the University of Alberta were summarized in a report to us in fiscal year 2007.
- We produced a draft scientific manuscript from this work in 2007 and plan to submit it to the Journal of Wildlife Management for review in fiscal year 2008.

Literature cited

Frair, J., E.H. Merrill, and M.S. Boyce. 2007. Modeling the cumulative effects of wolves and industrial activities on habitat effectiveness for elk in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta, Canada. Final report submitted to the Alberta Conservation Association. 29 pp.

Examples of pictures taken by Reconyx Silent Image digital cameras.

Photo: Alberta Conservation Association





Petro-Canada Sustainable Grasslands Program

Project leader:

Paul Jones

Primary staff on this project:

**Maria Didkowsky, Lance Engley,
Paul Jones and Doug Manzer**

Introduction

As Alberta's economy and human population continue to grow, grassland landscapes are experiencing substantial surface disturbance from a variety of land-use pressures, particularly from the development of hydrocarbon reserves, expansion of transportation infrastructure, cultivation, rural residential development and urban sprawl. Balancing demands for such a wide variety of land uses is an enormous challenge. Current land management systems are under stress from unprecedented levels of activity, yet the knowledge and tools necessary for effectively dealing with such a complex issue are poorly understood and implemented. There is a recognized need for increasing the multidisciplinary knowledge base and developing the interdisciplinary skills, tools and practices required to resolve current competition for land, while conserving biodiversity and natural capital.

Grassland conservation and sustaining the ecosystems and economies that depend on them is of common interest to wildlife and land management organizations. Petro-Canada indicated an interest in supporting and working with us and University of Calgary in the development of a conservation program focusing on innovations in sustainable land use management in Alberta's Grassland Natural Region. This program is based on the concepts of ecosystem restoration and management, including biodiversity conservation, social and economic missions, and associated innovations in mitigation and post-operational reclamation practices.

Methods

Through a consultative approach between our representatives and those of Petro-Canada and the University of Calgary, we developed a Terms of Reference to guide the scope, direction and accountability for the Petro-Canada Sustainable Grasslands Program. Together we identified two eco-regions to focus our efforts: 1) foothills fescue and 2) dry mixed grass. Project concepts are vetted by ACA, Petro Canada and University of Calgary (where it is the lead delivery agent).

Results

We developed a Terms of Reference and assigned specific principle investigators for four initial projects to be delivered under the Petro-Canada Sustainable Grasslands Program. The initial four projects under this initiative include:

1. Conservation design for energy development and sage grouse recovery in southeastern Alberta – University of Calgary.
2. Silver sagebrush reclamation and best management practices for southeastern Alberta – University of Calgary.
3. Pronghorn antelope as an indicator for conservation design in the Northern Great Plains – University of Calgary.
4. Tree encroachment on grasslands in southwestern Alberta (preliminary) – Alberta Conservation Association.

Proposals, including budgets, were developed by graduate students at the University of Calgary under the supervision of Dr. Cormack Gates for the first two projects listed above. Detailed project proposals and funding agreements are now complete for these two projects between us. For the pronghorn antelope project, an advertisement has been posted to recruit a PhD student to deliver this project. We anticipate that the recruitment process is finalized by the summer of 2008. We initiate the project concept for the tree encroachment proposal and submit this proposal to the steering committee in May 2008.

Partnerships

Petro-Canada

University of Calgary

Key Findings

- Completed Terms of Reference for this initiative to formalize partnership with ACA and Petro-Canada.
- Initiated four projects that seek applied answers for grassland conservation including:
 1. Conservation design for energy development and sage grouse recovery in southeastern Alberta (University of Calgary).
 2. Silver sagebrush reclamation and best management practices for southeastern Alberta (University of Calgary).
 3. Pronghorn antelope as an indicator for conservation design in the Northern Great Plains (University of Calgary).
 4. Tree encroachment on grasslands in southwestern Alberta (ACA).



Conclusions

Petro-Canada has taken a proactive approach to the conservation of grasslands and initiated a program with ACA and University of Calgary. Petro-Canada has committed to a three-year program to initiate projects under the Petro-Canada Sustainable Grasslands Program. Four projects are to be delivered under this initial three year agreement, with the potential to develop a long-term partnership based on the results of this pilot program.

Communications

- An overview of the purpose of this new program and its general direction was provided in the Petro-Canada Medicine Hat Area Shallow Gas Development Plan Newsletter
- An overview of the purpose of this new program and its general direction was provided in the Petro-Canada Sullivan Area Sour Gas Development Plan Newsletter – February 2008

Fisheries Program

The Fisheries Program supports and enhances conservation activities that retain the diversity and abundance of fish populations and communities, and the biological processes and habitats that support them. The program informs and supports ASRD in the development and implementation of management plans for priority species and the management of consumptive and non-consumptive uses. The Fisheries Program is thus designed to support fishing as a recreational use by Alberta anglers while enhancing the sustainability of Alberta fish populations through effective and credible science-based conservation.

Current program activities are organized into five thematic areas including:

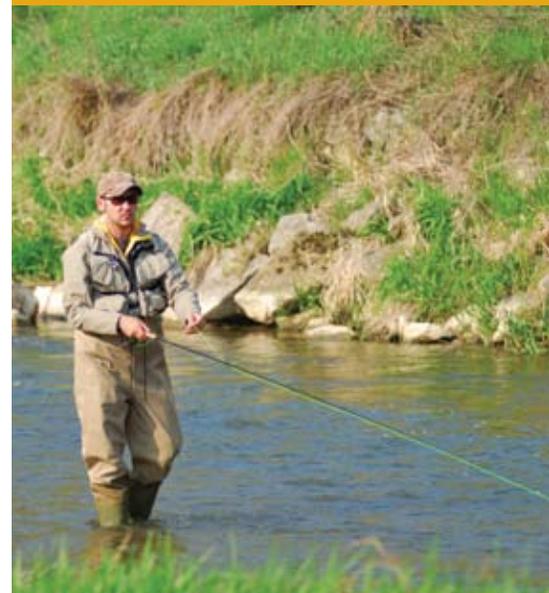
- Aeration;
- Enhanced Fish Stocking (EFS);
- Riparian Conservation;
- Lentic (standing water bodies e.g., lakes);
- Lotic (running water bodies e.g., rivers and streams) inventory and monitoring.

Activities under the lentic and lotic themes are complementary. They include inventory and monitoring of priority fish species and associated sport fisheries to provide information on population structure, abundance, angler use and harvest and associated demographics in priority waters.

Riparian conservation activities are designed to enhance, maintain and protect priority riparian habitat through collaboration with private landowners, government, industry and other stakeholders.

Aeration projects are designed to help develop and maintain lake habitats that promote year-round survival of sport fish, thereby creating or enhancing recreational angling opportunities. Similarly, the EFS Program stocks 20-cm rainbow trout into put-and-take lakes to provide angling opportunities in areas of the province where such fishing opportunities would not have existed otherwise.

The Fisheries Program also manages and delivers the rivers and lakes sampling sub-program under the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Inventory (ABMI) aquatic program.



The following are Fisheries Program activities conducted in 2007/2008:

Angler surveys on three lakes (Sturgeon, Pigeon and Wolf Lakes).

Walleye population assessments in four lakes (Sturgeon, Gregoire, Hilda, and Ethel Lakes).

Winagami Lake walleye spawning inventory.

Bow River sport fish population monitoring.

North Saskatchewan and Ram Rivers fish inventories.

Battle River index of biological integrity.

Status of bull trout in the Kakwa River.

Little Smoky Arctic grayling assessment.

Lotic survey protocol development.

Upper Oldman River bull trout status assessment.

Cutthroat trout assessment in the Upper Oldman River drainage.

Abundance and distribution of bull, cutthroat and brook trout in the Waiparous Creek drainage.

Winter instream flow needs in the Bow River drainage.

Enhanced fish stocking program: 64 water bodies stocked with 131,100 twenty-cm rainbow trout by ACA.

Lake aeration program: 16 lakes and ponds stocked with trout by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

Bearberry Creek riparian conservation.

Red Deer River riparian conservation.

Todd Creek riparian conservation.

Beaverlodge River drainage riparian conservation.

South Heart River and Lesser Slave Lake riparian conservation.

Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute river and lake data collection program.



Sample Fisheries Program
projects from 2007/2008:



Bearberry Creek Riparian Conservation

Project Leader:

Marco Fontana

Primary staff in project:

Marco Fontana and Chad Judd

Introduction

Bearberry Creek is a tributary to the Red Deer River west of Sundre, Alberta that historically supported sport fish including bull trout and was once a popular location for anglers (Miller and Paetz 1953). Sport fish populations have since declined drastically, along with changes in habitat within the drainage (Fitzsimmons 2005). Land-use practices, such as intensive livestock grazing have degraded riparian and aquatic habitat (Rees 1988) and the construction of a weir in the town of Sundre led to the loss of spawning migrations from the Red Deer River. Stream banks that were once densely covered by willows (Miller and Paetz 1953) are now sparsely vegetated, dominated by tame grasses, or completely bare (Rees 1988), and current fish populations consist mainly of non-game fish species throughout the drainage (Fitzsimmons 2005). Recently, Bearberry Creek was reconnected to the Red Deer River through the construction of a fish bypass channel around the weir. However, the re-establishment of sport fish populations may be limited by the current degraded state of riparian and aquatic habitats. The long-term goal of this conservation project is to improve watershed health and to assist with the re-establishment of a recreational fishery in Bearberry Creek.

Partnerships

Alberta Sustainable
Resource Development

Cows and Fish

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Mountain View County

Prairie Farm Rehabilitation
Administration

Red Deer River
Watershed Alliance

Trout Unlimited

Key Findings

- The Bearberry Creek Conservation Working Group, a multi-agency project steering committee, was formed and a draft of the group's Terms of Reference (ToR) was developed.
- The East Slopes Riparian Conservation Guidelines were created.
- Three riparian protection and enhancement demonstration sites were developed, including a riparian pasture; a solar-powered, off-channel watering system; and a bank stabilization project using bioengineering treatments.

Our specific objectives for the 2007/2008 fiscal year were to: 1) form a multi-agency steering committee, 2) create guidelines for the implementation of riparian protection/enhancement tools and 3) develop riparian conservation demonstration-sites.

Methods

To form the Bearberry Creek Conservation Working Group, we invited representatives from Mountain View County, Trout Unlimited, Cows and Fish, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Red Deer River Watershed Alliance, and Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration to a meeting we hosted in June. To stimulate interest in the project we presented the group with project goals, objectives and information on our past activities, which included baseline fisheries inventories and an aerial videographic survey. We participated in a round table discussion and received feedback on future direction and next steps.

To create guidelines for the consistent and defensible implementation of riparian protection and enhancement tools, we conducted a literature review of the best available science on riparian buffer widths and other beneficial management practices (see Fontana and Judd 2007). Our draft document included proposed guidelines for implementing tools to meet conservation goals, an incentive-based formula for funding cost-shared projects and standard contract terms and conditions to protect project investments.

We established three demonstration projects including 1) riparian pasture, 2) off-site watering and 3) bank stabilization using bioengineering that showcased different riparian conservation tools to participating landowners and interest groups. We worked with Mountain View County's Sustainable Agriculture Specialist (MVCSAS) to coordinate landowners interested in demonstration sites and partnered with Cows and Fish to design projects. We derived specific riparian pasture recommendations by consulting with Cows and Fish and the MVCSAS. For the off-site watering project, ACA's portable, solar-powered, off-channel watering system was demonstrated by a landowner who applied to us for funding to purchase a similar system. With the assistance of many representatives from the working group and other interested parties, we constructed a bank stabilization project using bioengineering techniques. This approach used live plant materials, such as willow cuttings, to perform an engineering function and mimic natural vegetative succession (Polster 2002). We chose a site in a high profile location, which was thought to have a good potential for planting success.



ACA's portable, solar-powered off-channel watering system in use on Bearberry Creek.

Photo: Chad Judd



Representatives from the Bearberry Creek Conservation Working Group constructing a bank stabilization project, using bioengineering techniques.

Photo: Chad Judd

Results

During discussions at the initial working group meeting, consensus indicated landowner cooperation would be better achieved through tours of demonstration-sites rather than other outreach events such as town hall meetings. The production of a terms of reference document to formalize the working group and outline agency roles and responsibilities is in progress. In January, we completed a draft of the East Slopes Riparian Conservation Program Guidelines for review by our Fisheries Program.

Throughout the summer we negotiated the design and management recommendations of a riparian pasture enclosing approximately 35 acres. Based on the plant community and state of the riparian area, we proposed three years of complete rest from grazing followed by late season fall grazing at an ecologically sustainable stocking rate of 0.4 AUMS. The landowner was amenable to these terms and is expected to sign a funding contract for the next fiscal year. We also drafted a funding agreement for the purchase of a portable, solar-powered, off-channel watering system to be used in conjunction with rotational grazing where cattle are excluded from the riparian

area by streambank fencing. We fund 50 per cent of the purchase price of the system, to a maximum of \$5,000, once invoiced and the system is inspected.

We constructed approximately 50 m of wattle fencing, 35 modified brush layers and live staking to stabilize a highly erosion-prone streambank on Bearberry Creek (Figure 2). In addition, we installed approximately 45 m of streambank fencing to protect the bioengineering structures from being trampled by cattle and installed a V-gate to facilitate future demonstration tours.

Conclusions

In 2007, we built on project work initiated in 2005 and 2006. We continued to engage stakeholder agencies, whose capacities make this project a long-term success. We developed project guidelines to enable the effective delivery of project tools. We also generated landowner stewardship interest by developing demonstration sites. We were encouraged by the high priority local landowners put on the importance of riparian habitat of Bearberry Creek (Parkland Community Planning Services and BPS Consulting Ltd. 2007).

Communications

- Hosted a meeting with stakeholder agencies to discuss the project.
- Provided project information and photos for the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance newsletter.
- Set up an information booth at the Ranching Opportunities Conference at Olds College.
- Delivered a presentation detailing project information at a Trout Unlimited Edmonton Chapter meeting.
- Applied to the Fisheries and Oceans Canada Stewardship-in-Action grant for 2008/2009 funding.
- Met with Trout Unlimited (head office in Calgary) to discuss funding opportunities and a potential partnership arrangement.

Literature Cited

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- Rees, K. 1988. A phase 2 survey of the Bearberry Creek watershed (5-3-33-5-W5). Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Division, Calgary Alberta.



Enhanced Fish Stocking Program

Project leader:

Trevor Council

Primary staff on this project:

Trevor Council and Milan Gillespie

Introduction

The EFSP was initiated in 1994 by Alberta Environmental Protection primarily to supplement the existing government stocking program. In 1998, we assumed responsibility for the program. The primary objective of the EFSP is to provide Alberta anglers with increased opportunity to catch and, wherever possible, harvest more fish while maintaining the integrity of Alberta's natural waters and fish populations.

The focus of the EFSP was to provide large trout (minimum 20 cm) to put-and-take ponds, thereby producing better returns for anglers. In addition, the EFSP provides opportunity for anglers to catch 20-cm rainbow trout in areas of Alberta where such fishing opportunities would not have existed otherwise; all stocked water bodies in the program frequently winterkill. The majority of stockings occur in the southern and northeastern regions of the province, east of Highway 2. To prevent interaction with native stocks, all water bodies are outside the green zone and require less than 6,000 rainbow trout.

Partnerships

Alberta Sustainable
Resource Development

Key Findings

- In 2007, a total of 64 water bodies were stocked with 131,100 twenty-cm rainbow trout during 87 stocking events. Five private growers, operating under a total of ten contracts, supplied the 20-cm rainbow trout.
- We have stocked an average of 131,800 rainbow trout (20 cm) annually since assuming responsibility for the Enhanced Fish Stocking Program (EFSP).

Methods

All stockings were delivered through contracts with private rainbow trout growers. We sent out contracts for tender one and a half years prior to the stocking date to give the private grower ample opportunity to grow the rainbow trout to the 20-cm minimum size limit. The majority of the rainbow trout stocking occurred prior to the May long weekend. We monitored contracts closely to ensure that the appropriate number and size fish were stocked in the designated water bodies within a set time frame. Once growers were ready to ship the fish, a stocking date was arranged with the load-out monitor and the lake contact. The load-out monitor traveled to the grower's operation to inventory fish being shipped, as well as measure a random subsample (20 to 100 fish) to ensure that fish were of adequate size. A penalty system is in place and enforced to deter growers from stocking under-sized rainbow trout; growers would not be paid full contract price if the average rainbow trout was less than 20 cm. For example, if the average size of the rainbow trout in a load-out was 18.2 cm, then the grower may only receive 60 per cent of the total contract price. The load-out monitor also assessed the condition of the fish by checking condition factor (plumpness) and obvious signs of disease and deformity. Once the correct number of fish was loaded into transport containers, the load-out monitor and grower signed a form indicating the number and size of fish that were shipped. When fish arrived at the receiving water body, a lake contact monitored the stocking process to determine if there was transport or stocking-related mortalities.

Results

In 2007, a total of 64 water bodies were stocked with 131,100 rainbow trout (20 cm) during 87 stocking events. Five private growers, operating under a total of ten contracts, supplied the fish. Seventy-three per cent of stockings were completed as part of the first stocking events prior to the May long weekend; the remainder were completed as part of the June and September stockings.

A total of 867 rainbow trout stockings have occurred within the EFSP since 1998 when we assumed responsibility of the program (Table 1). Approximately 1.3 million rainbow trout were stocked during this 10-year period.

Table 1. Summary of rainbow trout stocking within ACA's Enhanced Fish Stocking Program from 1998 to 2007.

Year	Number of Water Bodies	Number of Stockings	Number of Rainbow Trout
1998	81	100	144,000
1999	74	93	132,650
2000	68	86	131,300
2001	71	85	131,300
2002	67	84	132,100
2003	68	84	131,300
2004	67	84	131,300
2005	66	8	122,100
2006	64	85	131,100
2007	64	87	131,100
TOTAL	690	867	1,318,250
AVERAGE	69	86.7	131,825

Conclusions

The EFSP continues to provide anglers with increased opportunity to catch and harvest fish. Private rainbow trout growers, administered through 10 contracts, raise and deliver the rainbow trout to designated water bodies. In 2007, a total of 64 water bodies were stocked with 131,100 twenty-cm rainbow trout during 87 stocking events.

Communications

- A complete list of rainbow trout stockings and respective numbers are located on our website and are updated annually.
- Articles were published in local newspapers to promote the program and inform the public of the angling opportunities.



Typical size of rainbow trout stocked in ACA's Enhanced Fish Stocking Program.

Photo: Trevor Council



Land Management Program

The Land Management Program (LMP) encompasses activities intended to conserve, protect and enhance wildlife and fisheries habitat, and increase recreational opportunities.

The major activities of this program include:

- Habitat securement
- ACA conservation site maintenance and management;
- Recreational opportunity initiatives.

Habitat securement is used to secure important wildlife and fish habitat within focal areas across the province. Benefits of the program include increased or enhanced recreational opportunities and long-term protection of key habitats. Securement occurs primarily through direct purchase, land donations and donated conservation easements.

ACA conservation site maintenance and management includes a number of investments made by us on crown and privately owned lands. Many of these investments are completed in collaboration with ASRD and other conservation partners. Conservation sites include: fisheries access sites, former Buck for Wildlife properties, ACA titled lands, lands with conservation easements, riparian streambank fencing projects and abandoned farmstead programs.

Recreational opportunity initiatives on private land focus on communication tools and activities required to promote and increase public access to wildlife and fisheries habitat resources where stewardship of conservation-rich habitat is recognized. This includes the revitalization of the 'Use Respect Program' aimed at increasing access on privately owned lands. Other activities managed under this program include our conservation site database promoting ACA and partner properties where hunting and angling is permitted.



Sample Land Management
Program projects from
2007/2008:

Habitat Securement

Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative

Project Leader:

Darren Dorge

Primary staff on this project:

**Darren Dorge, Paul Hvenegaard,
Ed Kolodychuk and Jennifer Straub**

Introduction

Throughout northern Alberta, the cumulative effects of loss and fragmentation of habitat due to human disturbance of natural areas, alteration of natural ecosystem processes, and unsustainable use of fish and game species is a major concern. As industrial activity continues to have a major impact on our natural world, greater emphasis is being placed on accountability for those impacts. Suncor Energy Foundation was revolutionary in implementing an offset program in partnership with us, which began as a pilot project around Winagami Lake in 2003 (Chittenden and Straub 2007; Chittenden and Kolodychuk 2004). Known for its wildlife and recreational value, Winagami Lake was once grazed to the shoreline. As a result of our efforts with ASRD, and in co-operation with partners such as Suncor, the shoreline is now 90 per cent protected. The success of the Winagami Lake pilot project inspired Suncor Energy Foundation to commit to a proposal we submitted in 2004 that resulted in an additional three-year partnership (2005 – 2008).

Partnerships

2005 – 2006

Suncor Energy Foundation

2006 – 2007

Suncor Energy Foundation

Ducks Unlimited Canada

Alberta Fish & Game
Association

Alberta Sports, Recreation,
Parks and Wildlife Foundation

Roland Michener School

TD Friends of the Environment

Sawridge Inn and
Conference Centre

2007 – 2008

Suncor Energy Foundation

Ducks Unlimited Canada

Alberta Fish & Game
Association

Alberta Sport, Recreation,
Parks and Wildlife Foundation

Boreal habitat on our North
Fawcett Conservation Site.

Photo: Jennifer Straub

As the use of environmental offset programs as a stewardship tool continues to increase, more industrial partners are looking to join or develop offset programs. With a strong history of habitat conservation, we are able to work cooperatively with industry to insure a win-win situation occurs that benefits the plants, animals and citizens of Alberta.

Results

In the spring of 2006, we purchased the Faust Conservation Site, comprising 14.5 acres of boreal habitat located within the hamlet of Faust, Alberta (Table 1). This property contains a blue heron rookery, one of the last in the area. Partners include Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA), Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation (ASRPWF), Roland Michener School, TD Friends of the Environment, and Sawridge Inn and Conference Centre.

In 2007, we purchased the North Fawcett Conservation Site (Table 1). A heterogeneous landscape of mature boreal forest and reverting improved pasture, this property is equally important for its wildlife and recreational value. Partners include AFGA and ASRPWF.

In March 2007, we purchased the West Neerlandia Conservation Site that consists of 160 acres of forested landscape with a mixture of lowlands, uplands and wetlands (Table 1). Partners include AFGA and ASRPWF.

In April 2007, we secured a 320 acre property located in the newly developed Therien Plain focus area (Table 1). Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) installed 10 ditch plugs on this property in an attempt to restore wetlands that formerly existed. In addition to their financial contribution, DUC contributed all costs associated with the wetland restoration.

On August 31, 2007, we acquired 307 acres of mixed-wood forest located northeast of Flatbush, Alberta (Table 1). The topographic diversity that occurs at this location supports an abundance of wildlife species.

In 2007, the Jousard Conservation Site was purchased, which resulted in the conservation of 152 acres of forest that would have otherwise been lost to other forms of land use (Table 1). Under intense pressure from residential development, this quarter protects land within 0.8 km of the Slave Lake shoreline, one of Alberta's major recreational fisheries.

In January 2008, we secured a 160-acre property (Karvonen) within the boreal forest that has been conserved and utilized by conservation enthusiasts for the past 15 years (Table 1). Containing a 20-acre lake, this property is an important tributary to Amisk Lake and is within the Amisk Valley Environmentally Significant Area. Our partner on this property is ASRPWF.

We pursued several other properties in the Boreal Forest Natural Region, although negotiations were promising, no purchases resulted.



Table 1. Property secured through the Suncor Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative.

Property Name	Year Secured	Acres Secured	Focus Area
O'Mahoney	2003	30	Kimiwan/Winagami/South Heart
Axsen/Turner	2003	126.7	Kimiwan/Winagami/South Heart
Bisson	2003	82 + 128.3 (GRL buy out) 119.7 (Titled)	Kimiwan/Winagami/South Heart
Faust	2006	14.5	Slave Lake
North Fawcett	2007	150	Athabasca River/Hubert Lake
West Neerlandia	2007	159	Athabasca River/Hubert Lake
South Plain Lake	2007	320	Athabasca River/Hubert Lake
Flatbush	2007	307	Athabasca River/Hubert Lake
Joussard	2007	152.5	Slave Lake
Karvonen	2008	160	Rochester/Newbrook/Tawatinaw

Communications

- Presented at the Alberta Society of Professional Biologist Conference in 2007. The focus, the Suncor Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative and our role in conservation offsets.
- Recognized as an Emerald Award Finalist in 2007, based on recognition of our successful partnership with Suncor for the Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative.
- Received the Imagine Canada Business and Community Partnership award in February 2008. This award acknowledged our successful partnership with Suncor for the Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative.
- A Lunch and Learn session was given to Suncor employees in Calgary, February 2008. The session highlighted the importance of the boreal natural region and how Suncor's Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative contributes to maintaining ecological integrity in various locations across Alberta.
- Sign installations begin in the summer of 2008 at all of new conservations sites. This project highlights all partners involved with the securement of the property.

Literature Cited

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Key Findings

- Two new focus areas were created (in addition to the four in existence) and all quarters within each focus area were evaluated for their value as offset locations.
- 1,750 acres of boreal forest habitat were secured through the Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative.
- Management plans were completed for each property acquired.
- \$102,700 worth of partnership dollars and \$27,000 worth of donations and reclamation work were leveraged (another \$40,000 is still pending).
- In co-operation with Suncor Energy Foundation, a proposal was developed and submitted to continue this initiative for another three to five years.

Boreal habitat on our West Neerlandia Conservation Property.

Photo: Jennifer Straub





Conservation Site Management and Maintenance

Project Leader:

Darren Dorge

Primary staff on this project:

Northeast (Boreal):

Velma Hudson, Roy Schmelzeisen,
Dan Sturgess, Stefanie Van Huystee;

Northwest (Boreal):

John Hallett, Ed Kolodychuk,
Jennifer Straub;

East Slopes:

Marco Fontana, Thomas Winter;

South (Parkland):

Andy Murphy, Jim Potter,
Diana Rung;

South (Prairie):

Darren Dorge, Mike Grue,
Randy Lee, Brad Taylor.

Introduction

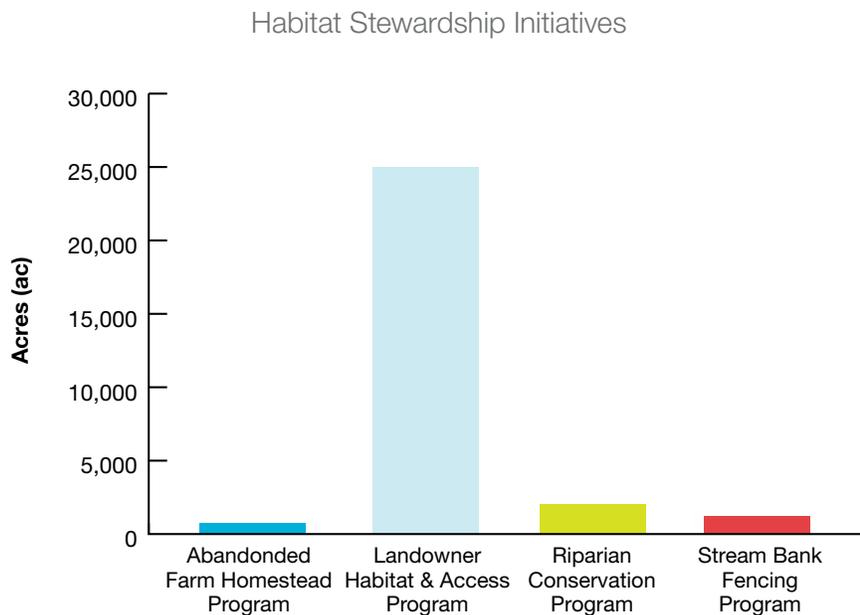
The Land Management Program (LMP) encompasses activities intended to conserve, protect and enhance wildlife and fisheries habitat, and to increase recreational opportunities including angling and hunting. Programs and activities within the LMP fall into one of the three following areas: Landowner Habitat Stewardship Initiatives and Access, ACA Conservation Sites (Titled) and ACA Conservation Sites (Crown).

- Habitat Stewardship Initiatives and Access includes programs designed to provide financial and technical support to landowners to enhance wildlife and fisheries habitat, implement better farm management practices (BMP) and increase recreational opportunities (Figure 1). This work involves an agreement or verbal commitment between us and landowners to conserve wildlife and fisheries habitat. Some of the programs that fall under this area include the Abandoned Farm Homestead Program, Landowner Habitat Program, Riparian Conservation Program and the Streambank Fencing Program.

- ACA Conservation Sites (Titled) encompass freehold lands acquired by us solely or where we have contributed funds through a financial partnership resulting in joint title or title being held by our conservation partner. Additionally, land donations and conservation easements held by us are included in this category. ACA conservation sites (titled) provide long-term protection for wildlife and fisheries habitat and increased recreational opportunities (Figure 2).
- ACA Conservation Sites (Crown) captures crown lands that were historically known as Buck for Wildlife (BFW) properties held under a BFW protective notation. A variety of habitat enhancement and securement activities are associated with these lands (Figure 3). Fisheries access sites, mechanical clearings, prescribed burns, riparian and upland habitat, farm development and grazing lease relinquishments are a few examples of these activities.

The main responsibility of the LMP is annual maintenance and management of our conservation sites, and landowner habitat and access agreements on crown and private lands. Annual maintenance includes preserving priority habitat program investments, administrative and maintenance commitments delegated to us and other non-project specific activities. Project activities focus on maintaining habitat project investments (ACA and BFW) that support high value wildlife and fisheries habitat and recreational opportunities. Management of our conservation sites on crown and privately-owned land is completed in compliance with location-specific management plans and habitat (type) or stewardship agreements that we developed or in collaboration with ASRD and other conservation partners.

Figure 1. Illustration of lands (acres) maintained within several Habitat Stewardship Initiatives.



Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Fish & Wildlife Division and Public Lands Division

Clearwater County

County of Lethbridge

County of Newell

County of Warner

Ducks Unlimited Canada

Eastern Irrigation District

Junior Forest Wardens

Pheasants Forever

Private Landowners

The Rocky Riparian Group

Trout Unlimited Canada, Central Chapter

Photo illustrating the type of habitat conserved through the Abandoned Farm Homestead Program in the South Prairie Region.

Photo: Randy Lee



Key Findings

- More than 27,000 acres of wildlife and fisheries habitat were maintained through a variety of habitat stewardship initiatives (Figure 1).
- Access was secured to over 7,500 acres of titled land (Figure 2) and 200,000 acres of crown land (Figure 3) for recreational opportunities including angling and hunting.
- Compliance field inspections and scheduled payments were completed on 196 habitat stewardship initiative sites, as described within the respective agreements.
- 20 field inspections on ACA conservation sites (titled) were completed.
- 106 field inspections on ACA conservation sites (crown) were completed.
- Annual maintenance and repairs were completed on 86 conservation sites, including weed control, reseeding, fence repair or upgrades, livestock crossing/watering site repair, shelterbelt maintenance, signage, parking and site clean up.
- Sport fish spawning migration and fence protection were enhanced through controlled beaver management along five streams.
- Responses were made to four agricultural, five municipal and 39 industrial referrals associated with ACA lands and investments.

Figure 2. Illustration of lands (acres) maintained within ACA conservation sites (titled)

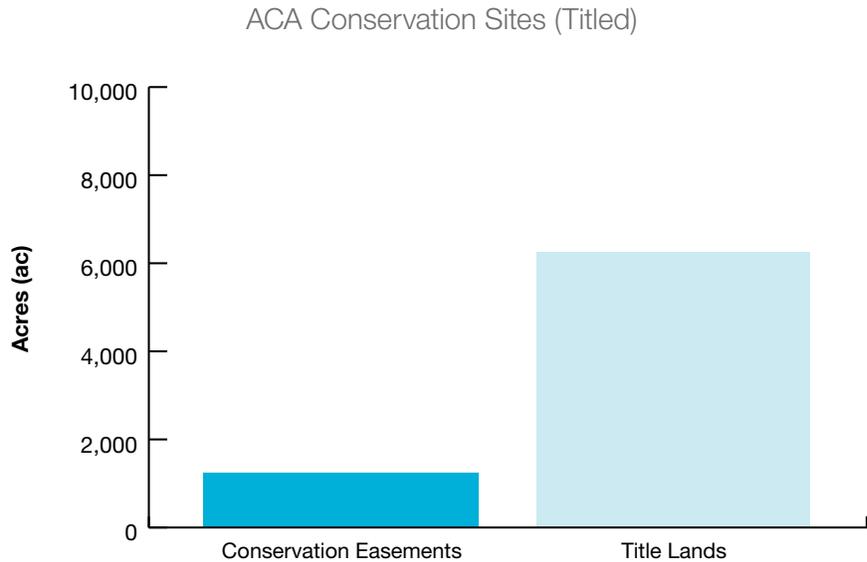
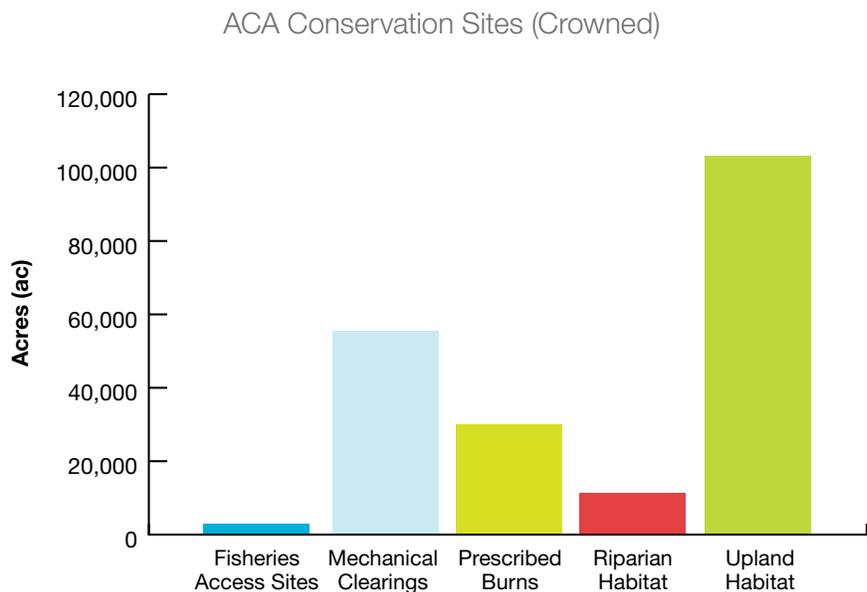


Figure 3. Illustration of lands (acres) maintained through several habitat enhancement initiatives within ACA conservation sites (crown).



Hunters enjoying the lush habitat conserved through the Landowner Habitat Program located in the South Prairie Region.



Photo: Randy Lee

Results

Habitat Stewardship Initiatives

Northeast (Boreal)

We completed 46 field inspections associated with the Landowner Habitat Program (LHP) as part of our management obligations. We provided scheduled payments as described within the agreements; five LHP agreements expired in 2007 and four agreements received final payments as the agreements expire in 2008. We responded to two industrial development referrals on LHP properties. The referrals included an industrial pipeline and coalbed methane development.

Northwest (Boreal)

We completed 24 field and compliance inspections for Habitat Stewardship Initiatives. This included three AFGA properties that we inspected as part of a collaborative effort, eight Private Landowner Habitat Agreements and 13 Riparian Conservation Agreements located on Lesser Slave Lake, Beaverlodge River and South Heart River. We provided annual payments to landowners with LHP agreements as part of our obligation. Landowner participants within the programs were operating in compliance with their respective agreements. We observed minimal maintenance requirements with the exception of installing new signage in 2008. We forwarded field inspection reports and photos to AFGA as per the stewardship agreements and informed them of a potential weed problem on the Roy Ozanne Conservation Site.

Photo illustrating wetland habitat in the Northwest Boreal Region conserved through the Landowner Habitat Program.

Photo: Ed Kolodychuk



East Slopes

We performed fence inspections on 55 streambank fencing sites on the Raven River, North Raven River, Prairie Creek, Clear Creek, Ware Creek, Threepoint Creek, and Dogpound Creek. We used field inspection information to prioritize and plan major fence maintenance and livestock crossing repairs. We completed fence maintenance at 38 of the 55 sites involving 2,800 m of fence line and repairs to 15 livestock crossings/watering sites. Further details on the maintenance completed at specific project sites can be found in the *Streambank Fencing Summary 2007* data file located in Rocky Mountain House.

We enhanced sport fish spawning migration and fence protection along three streams including Dogpound Creek, the North Raven River, and Fox Creek through the contracted services of trappers. Beaver dams were removed manually with the exception of Fox Creek where a certified explosives contractor was hired. Contractors removed 22 dams and 40 beavers from Dogpound Creek, North Raven River and Fox Creek.

South (Parkland)

We completed 21 field inspections involving Landowner Habitat and Access Agreements. Seven landowner agreements were amended as they were transferred within the family. Family members wished to continue honoring the agreements. Seven LHP agreements expired in 2007. Several of the expired agreements may be renewed after the Land Management Team reviews the existing Landowner Habitat and Access agreements.

South (Prairie)

We completed general field inspections on more than 50 Habitat Stewardship Initiatives involving 40 abandoned farmsteads and 10 LHP sites. We completed maintenance and repairs (fencing, weed control, signage, mowing), as required and directed by agreements. We responded to two industrial development referrals on LHP properties. Both of the referrals involved gas exploration applications.



Aerial photo illustrating riparian habitat conserved on the North Raven River through the Streambank Fencing Program.

Photo: ACA Regional file

ACA Conservation Sites (Titled)

Northeast (Boreal)

We completed one inspection involving the Therien Conservation Site and identified a maintenance issue involving excessive all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use resulting in the installation of an ATV barrier fence to lessen this type of activity from occurring. We plan to monitor the success of the ATV barrier fence over the next three years.

In 2008, we acquire four additional conservation sites purchased through the Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative. We plan to complete inspections for all sites and to conduct more detailed site enhancement activities with particular emphasis on weed control and sign installation.

Northwest (Boreal)

We performed nine inspections on ACA conservation sites (titled). On two sites, herbicide contracts were tendered to control Canada thistle (O'Mahoney and Axsen/Turner). A new site (Bisson) was identified, but the contractor could not spray in time to be effective. Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) agreed to cost share spraying this property (scheduled for 2008). With the help of volunteers from the community, we constructed a wooden barrier on the Faust Conservation Site at one end of a walking trail to restrict motorized access. We completed routine maintenance on several properties, as required. We responded to two referrals on ACA conservation sites (titled). The referrals involved proposed municipal developments on adjacent lands, both referrals are still under review and require minimal input from us.

East Slopes

We managed and maintained two ACA conservation sites (titled) along the North Raven River. These properties were Leavitt Springs and Stainbrook Springs, which were jointly purchased with AFGA and Trout Unlimited. We completed fence inspections and minor fence repairs at these properties. Grazing rights were awarded to a local landowner with the lease agreement allowing the lessee to graze from June 20 to August 5, 2007. We also maintained a solar-powered, off-channel watering system at this site for the duration of the grazing allotment.

South (Parkland)

We completed inspections and maintenance on eight ACA conservation sites (titled). Three of the conservation sites Buffalo Lake Moraine Conservation Area (BLMCA), Stonhouse and Wood's Lake) required weed control treatments. Grazing management was used to enhance habitat diversity and for palatability at the BLMCA and Stonhouse projects. Fence upgrades were completed at each of these conservation sites to facilitate this type of management strategy. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of volunteers from AFGA who provided support for the fence upgrades.

South (Prairie)

We inspected lands associated with the Linder Property, which is part of the Ducks Unlimited Jefferson Community Pasture Initiative. There were no other planned or scheduled activities for ACA conservation sites (titled) in 2007.



ACA staff and volunteers constructing a gate along the trail to the blue heron rookery at the Faust Conservation Site.

Photo: John Hallett



Fall scene at the Lunnford Conservation Site near Barrhead located in the Northeast Boreal Region.

ACA Conservation Sites (Crown)

Northeast (Boreal)

We completed 28 inspections on ACA conservation sites (crown). We identified several maintenance issues involving weed problems, fence removal and repair, signage, excessive ATV use and wild pig activity. A dangerous condition was identified on the Lunnford Conservation Site which had severe erosion in the bank next to a vehicle trail.

We completed maintenance activities on three conservation sites (Kachuk, Lunnford and Lac Delorme). On the Kachuk Property, we cleared an area invaded by Tansy. On the Lunnford Property, we installed “Beware of Road Erosion” signs. On the Lac Delorme Property, we conducted fence repairs and installed “No Vehicle” signs.

We responded to four referrals on ACA conservation sites (crown). The referrals involved a variety of requests, including two industrial and two municipal applications. Industrial referrals were for 3-D seismic exploration and proposed pipeline relocation. The municipal applications involved an ATV trail request and widening of a road allowance (still in discussions).

Northwest (Boreal)

We completed inspections on 15 ACA conservation sites (crown) including 12 properties with hay lands that are tendered to the public annually. We received hay tenders for seven of these properties. We observed an illegal dugout constructed along the edge of a hay land property which was referred to Alberta Public Lands to address and resolve. We completed a spraying contract on Little Smoky Uplands and spot-sprayed persistent weeds in areas the contractor missed. We observed late-season Canada thistle on two new properties; these areas are scheduled for treatment in 2008.

We responded to 12 referrals on ACA conservation sites (crown). The referrals involved a variety of requests, including seismic exploration, well-site reclamation, proposed well-site and pipelines, gate inspections and removals, weeds resulting from a pipeline, landowner wanting to purchase a BFW property, and a proposed municipal development. We successfully achieved our management objectives with the exception of one referral where discussions continue with all concerned parties.

East Slopes

We responded to four referrals on ACA conservation sites (crown), including two requests for seismic exploration, one proposed deep oil well tie-in, and one above-ground power service installation. With support from the North Raven River Working Group, we respectfully declined access to BFW properties for seismic exploration. We outlined concerns, proposed mitigation and requested continued consultation during the deep oil well tie-in project. We inspected the site and found the project proponent had abided by all conditions we had stipulated. We responded to the above-ground power service installation referral and discovered the project had been completed prior to ACA being contacted for input.

South (Parkland)

We completed inspections on 22 ACA conservation sites (crown), which were managed in compliance with location-specific management plans. We also co-managed (with Alberta Public Lands) 30 sites (42 quarters) with BFW protective notations. We performed a variety of maintenance activities including weed control, fence repair, shelterbelt maintenance, signage replacement and installation and parking lot maintenance.

We maintained two walleye spawning enhancement sites including Tide Creek that flows into Pigeon Lake and Battle Creek that flows into Battle Lake. We responded to 20 industrial development referrals involving seismic operations, well sites, pipeline construction and associated access development. Some referrals are currently in discussions with the respective applicants.

South (Prairie)

We completed site inspections and maintenance (fencing, weed control, signage, mowing) on 14 ACA conservation sites (crown). We developed the Millicent Property Management Team (ACA, Pheasants Forever, Alberta Public Lands, Eastern Irrigation District, and County of Newell) to provide habitat enhancement recommendations for the 800-acre property; the miscellaneous lease has expired and 300 acres of the property has been reseeded to permanent cover. Additional enhancements are to be initiated in 2008.

We reviewed DUC grazing management plans on Kenex property; a new conservation grazing scheme is to be initiated in 2008. We provided assistance to the Partners in Habitat Development Program for the planting and maintenance of shelterbelts on our conservation sites. We completed the Fincastle property grazing management plan for the native grass area, and the tame grass areas were hayed to reduce litter build-up. We developed a new parking area at Inter-Lake to restrict vehicle use on the property. We responded to two industrial referrals involving seismic operations.

Communications

- Information was provided on the ESBU streambank fencing projects for a feature article in our Conservation Magazine highlighting riparian conservation.
- Assistance was provided with our conservation site database that promotes our conservation sites and the recreational opportunities they provide.
- Conservation sites were highlighted on Michael Short's "Lets Go Outdoors" radio broadcast.
- A streambank fencing/riparian conservation poster was displayed at the Olds College Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Fair.
- The AFGA properties were added to our conservation site database.
- Conservation site signage template(s) finalized; sign installation proceeds in 2008.
- Assistance was provided with drafting of the Conservation Site Guide in collaboration with Communications Team for publication in 2008/2009.



Report Series

The following reports were completed and published in the 2007-08 fiscal year.

- Blackburn, M. 2004. Assessment of the summer sport fishery for walleye and northern pike at Smoke Lake, Alberta, 2003. Data Report, D-2004-025, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edson, Alberta, Canada. 27 pp. + App.
- Blackburn, M. 2004. Assessment of the summer sport fishery for walleye and northern pike at Iosegun Lake, Alberta, 2003. Data Report, D-2004-024, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edson, Alberta, Canada. 28 pp. + App.
- Blackburn, M. 2004. Status of the summer sport fishery for walleye and northern pike at Shiningbank Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-033, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edson, Alberta, Canada. 29 pp. + App.
- Blackburn, M., and C.F. Johnson. 2005. Status of the summer sport fishery for walleye and northern pike at Fickle Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-032, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edson, Alberta, Canada. 31 pp. + App.
- Council, T., and T.D. Ripley. 2006. Bow River sport fish population monitoring, 2003 and 2005. Data Report, D-2007-006, produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada and Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. 34 pp. + App.
- Fontana, M., K. Gardiner, and M. Rodtka. 2006. Upper North Saskatchewan River and Abraham Lake Bull Trout Study, 2002-2003. Technical Report, T-2005-004, produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, Cochrane, Alberta, Canada. 32 pp. + App.
- Fortier G., T. Johns, and N. Carruthers. 2005. Status of sport fish in Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta, 2005. Data Report, D-2006-009, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 27 pp. + App.

- Fortier, G., and J.P. Tchir. 2005. Status of walleye and northern pike sport fisheries at Gods Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data report, D-2005-031, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 19 pp + App.
- Fortier, G., and J.P. Tchir. 2005. Status of walleye and northern pike sport fisheries at Graham Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-027, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 19 pp + App.
- Fortier, G., and J.P. Tchir. 2005. Status of walleye and northern pike sport fisheries at Long Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-025, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 16 pp + App.
- Fortier G., and J.P. Tchir. 2005. Status of walleye and northern pike sport fisheries at Vandersteene Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-028, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 17 pp. + App.
- Fortier G., and J.P. Tchir. 2005. Status of walleye and northern pike sport fisheries at Round Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-023, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 17 pp. + App.
- Fortier, G., J. Tchir, and L. Sawdon. 2004. Angler survey and walleye abundance in Fawcett Lake, Alberta, 2003. Data Report, D-2004-022, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 15 pp + App.
- Fortier G., and Tchir J.P. 2004. Lake Monitoring Program: Sturgeon Lake Stock Assessment, 2003. Data Report, D-2004-023, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 29 pp + App.
- Ganton, B.P., and B. Patterson. 2007. Status of walleye populations at Bourque, Goodfish, and Seibert Lakes, Alberta, 2006. Data Report, D-2007-009, produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 23 pp + App.
- Hudson, Velma. 2007. Alberta Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program, 2006. Data Report, D-2007-007, produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, St. Paul, Alberta, Canada. 16 pp + App.
- Johns, T., G. Fortier, and J. Tchir. 2004. Status of major sport fish in Fawcett Lake, Alberta, 2003. Data Report, D-2004-023, produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 14 pp + App.
- Johns, T.W.P., and J. Tchir. 2005. Sport fish abundance and distribution in the Simonette River, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-034, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 19 pp.
- Kendell, K., and D. Prescott. 2007. Northern leopard frog reintroduction strategy for Alberta. Technical Report, T-2007-002, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 31 pp + App.
- Kendell, K., Stevens, S., and D. Prescott. 2007. Alberta northern leopard frog survey, 2005. Technical Report, T-2007-001, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 17 pp + App.
- Park, D. and B. Patterson. 2006. Assessment of winter sport fishery for lake whitefish and northern pike at Wabamun Lake, Alberta, 2004 - 2005. Data Report, D 2005 009, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 28 pp. + App.
- Patterson, B. 2006. Summer sport fishery for lake trout, walleye and northern pike at Cold Lake, Alberta, 2005. Data Report, D-2006-005, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 24 pp. +App.
- Patterson, B. and M. Blackburn. 2004. Status of walleye and northern pike sport fisheries at Marie Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-009, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 22 pp + App.
- Patterson, B. and S. R. Grossman. 2005. Status of walleye fishery (*Sander vitreus*) in Orloff Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-006, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 30 pp.
- Patterson, B. and S.R. Grossman. 2005. Status of walleye fishery at Buck Lake, Alberta, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-007, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 12 pp. + App.



Ripley, T.D., and T. Council. 2006. Bow River Sport Fish Angler Survey, 2006. Data Report, D-2007-003, produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada and Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. 28 pp + App.

Watkins, O.B., and B. Patterson. 2006. Assessment of the summer sport fishery for walleye and northern pike at Beaver Lake, Alberta, 2005. Data report, D-2006-006, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 24 pp + App.

Watkins, O.B., and B. Patterson. 2006. Assessment of the summer sport fishery for walleye and northern pike at Wolf Lake, Alberta, 2005. Data Report, D-2006-008, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 22 pp + App.

Watkins, O.B., and B. Patterson. 2006. Assessment of the summer sport fishery for walleye and northern pike at Smoke Lake, Alberta, 2005. Data Report, D-2006-004, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 21 pp + App.

Watkins, O.B., and B. Patterson. 2006. Assessment of the summer sport fishery for walleye and northern pike at Iosegun Lake, Alberta, 2005. Data Report, D-2006-003, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 18 pp + App.

Watkins, O.B., and B. Patterson. 2006. Assessment of the summer sport fishery for walleye and northern pike at Buck Lake, Alberta, 2005. Data Report, D-2006-007, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 24 pp + App.

Wright K.D. 2005. Hay-Zama lakes waterfowl staging and bald eagle nesting monitoring program, 2004. Data Report, D-2005-030, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 21 pp. + App.

Wright K.D., and C.A. Jones. 2006. Distribution of the long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum*) in northwestern Alberta. Data Report, D-2006-009, produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 11 pp. + App.

Report A Poacher and Compensation Programs

The Report A Poacher (RAP) Program and Compensation Programs are delivered in partnership with ASRD.

Report A Poacher

Created in 1990 as a community-based program, the Report A Poacher (RAP) Program provides Albertans with an opportunity to help protect Alberta's wildlife, fisheries and the habitat in which they live by providing a toll-free phone number (1-800-642-3800) in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week to report suspected illegal activity.

In addition, RAP promotes both the value and importance of conserving Alberta's wildlife and fisheries and a positive image of resource users.

Results

RAP calls that resulted in a reward	\$ 27,236
Illegal Activity Occurrences (total number)	3,624
Illegal Activity Prosecutions (total number)	1,242
Warnings (total number)	471

Results

Wildlife Predator	\$ 129,264
Shot Livestock Compensation	\$ 8,575

Compensation Programs

Compensation Programs are comprised of the Wildlife Predator Compensation and Shot Livestock Compensation Programs.

These initiatives provide compensation to producers for livestock lost to predators, and livestock shot during a hunting season.

We provide support for programs aimed at the prevention of damage to agricultural crops caused by waterfowl during migration and for compensation to individual producers whose livestock may have been killed or damaged as a result of predator or hunter activities.

A photograph of a moose standing in a snowy field. The moose is dark brown and is looking towards the right. The ground is covered in a thick layer of snow. In the background, there is a dense forest of evergreen trees. The sky is overcast and grey.

Our Granting Programs

We are proud to enter into our eleventh year of conservation funding. Conservation efforts of others have been supported through three distinctive funding programs: the Grant Eligible Conservation Fund; the Habitat Securement Fund; and ACA Grants in Biodiversity. The goal of these funds is to enable and support work that conserves and enhances our wildlife and fisheries, as well as their habitats.

Grant Eligible Conservation Fund

The Grant Eligible Conservation Fund formally began in 2002, making 2007/2008 the sixth funding cycle. Since inception, more than \$6.2 million have been provided to 343 conservation projects implemented by the conservation community, leveraging an estimated \$40 million for conservation work across Alberta.

Our Board of Directors appointed a Granting Committee comprised of three board members and ten citizens of Alberta, who refereed and assessed the grant applications based on the established funding criteria.

Funding Criteria

The funding priorities for 2007/2008 were based on our Mission and Strategic Business Plan to increase the impact and synergy of Grant Eligible Conservation Fund projects with our Wildlife, Fisheries and Land Management Programs. The recruitment and retention of hunters, anglers and trappers has been added to wildlife, fisheries and land management as a new funding priority area.

Several GECF projects focused on recreational opportunities on public and private land; for example the Alberta Junior Pheasant Project of the Sarcee Fish and Game Association, recipient of a small grant, enabled 80 youth and first time hunters to learn firearms safety, hunter training, hunting ethics, along with shotgun handling and shooting. Another project entitled Bird Science Events, Educational Opportunities for Albertans of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory was granted funding to support two successful public events: the 'Big Birding Breakfast' a spring songbird migration event (end of May) and 'Steaks and Saw-whets' a fall owl and waterfowl migration event (late September).

Fisheries-related projects improved riparian habitats for important sport fish species, such as the Millennium Creek Project of Bow Valley Habitat Development. This project has been working to restore and enhance the fish habitat of a small spring creek that has suffered the negative impacts of years of roadside silt loading from transportation and urban development. The efforts have been successful as various trout species are now found in the restored ponds of the creek. A University of Alberta project led by Dr. Bill Tonn is looking at the effects of stocking non-native trout species on boreal foothill lakes. Working in collaboration with our Lake Aeration and Fish Stocking Program, the University of Alberta team is answering important questions regarding the impact of stocking with non-native trout on the ecosystems and the effects of over-winter aeration, as there is a need to scientifically examine how these management actions impact the lakes' native communities.

Many GECF projects align with the Wildlife Program. The Alberta Research Council received a grant for their 'Wolverine abundance and habitat use in the Rocky Mountain Parks of Central Alberta' project. The wolverine is a reclusive

In 2007/2008, up to \$1,925,000 was made available for conservation efforts in Alberta:

Grant Eligible
Conservation Fund
\$1,200,000

Habitat Securement Fund
\$577,250

ACA Grants in Biodiversity
\$225,000

2007/2008 Funding Cycle Dates

Guidelines and application forms are posted on ACA's website
December 15, 2006

Window to receive completed applications
January 1-31, 2007

Review Committee adjudication meeting
February 28, 2007

Applicant Notification
March, 2007

Funded project work occurred
April 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008

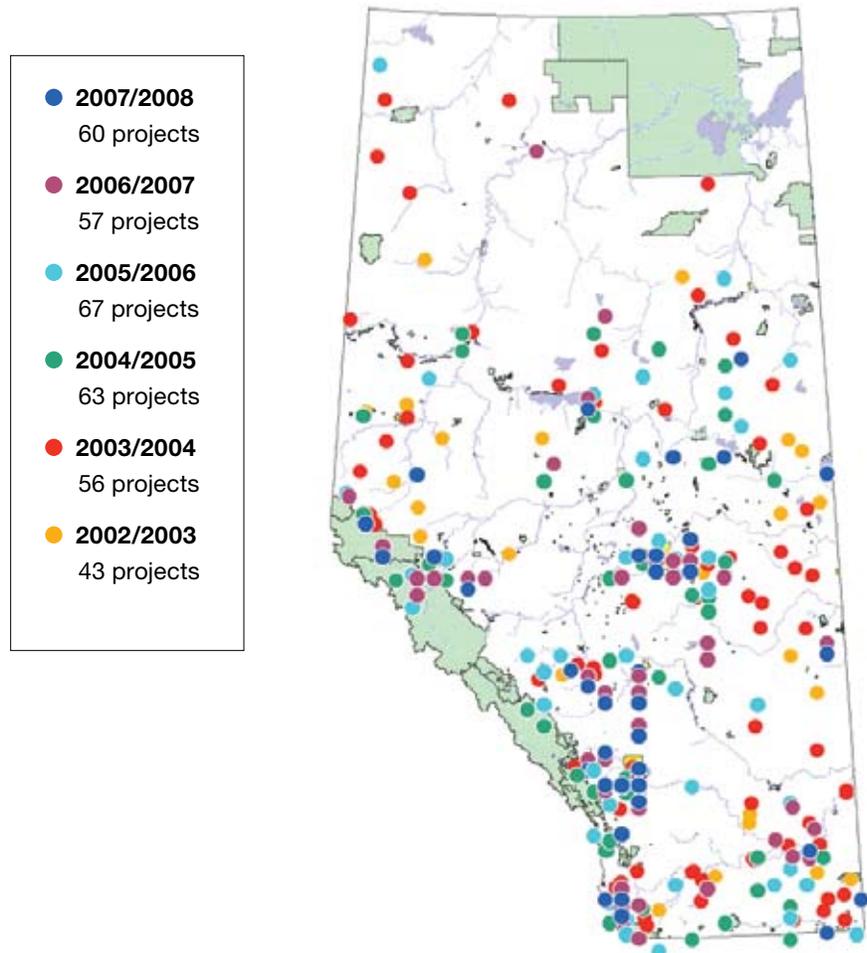
Key Highlights

- 102 funding requests were received requesting a total dollar value of approximately \$2.26 million.
- A total of **\$868,155.00** was granted to **60** projects.
- Project budgets ranged from \$500.00 to \$50,869.00.

and wide-ranging scavenging carnivore that has experienced considerable range reduction over the last two centuries, with habitat loss as the main factor affecting wolverine survivorship in Alberta. Data collected is used to determine the wolverine population in the Willmore Wilderness Park and assesses if the Park can support a viable population of wolverines. Another increasingly threatened species is the pronghorn antelope; Michael Suitor of the University of Calgary was supported for his project 'Pronghorn antelope migration ecology and connectivity in the Northern Great Plains' Knowledge of how and why pronghorn migrate is essential for designing landscape-specific strategies to retain this increasingly rare component of biodiversity and to maintain pronghorn resilience. This study contributes valuable field information on the biological needs of this migratory species for regional conservation planning and landscape management.

Grant Eligible Conservation Fund Project Locations

Our GECF projects cover a wide range of the province. Many of the projects have a provincial/regional scope and therefore are not geographically represented on the map.





Habitat Securement Fund

Our Board of Directors established the Habitat Securement Fund in 2002 to increase our ability to influence on habitat related activities in Alberta and to conserve critical habitats.

Our staff developed the Habitat Securement Fund Terms of Reference in 2005 to guide our securement activities and fund administration. A preliminary Habitat Securement Strategy that guides all aspects related to the acquisition or securement of critical habitats was approved as part of the 2006-2007 Strategic Business Plan.

Habitat acquisition proposals are submitted to our Board of Directors for review and consideration. The preliminary Habitat Securement Strategy guides the allocation of funds to acquire parcels of land for conservation purposes.

In 2007/2008, seven properties were acquired through the Habitat Securement Fund.

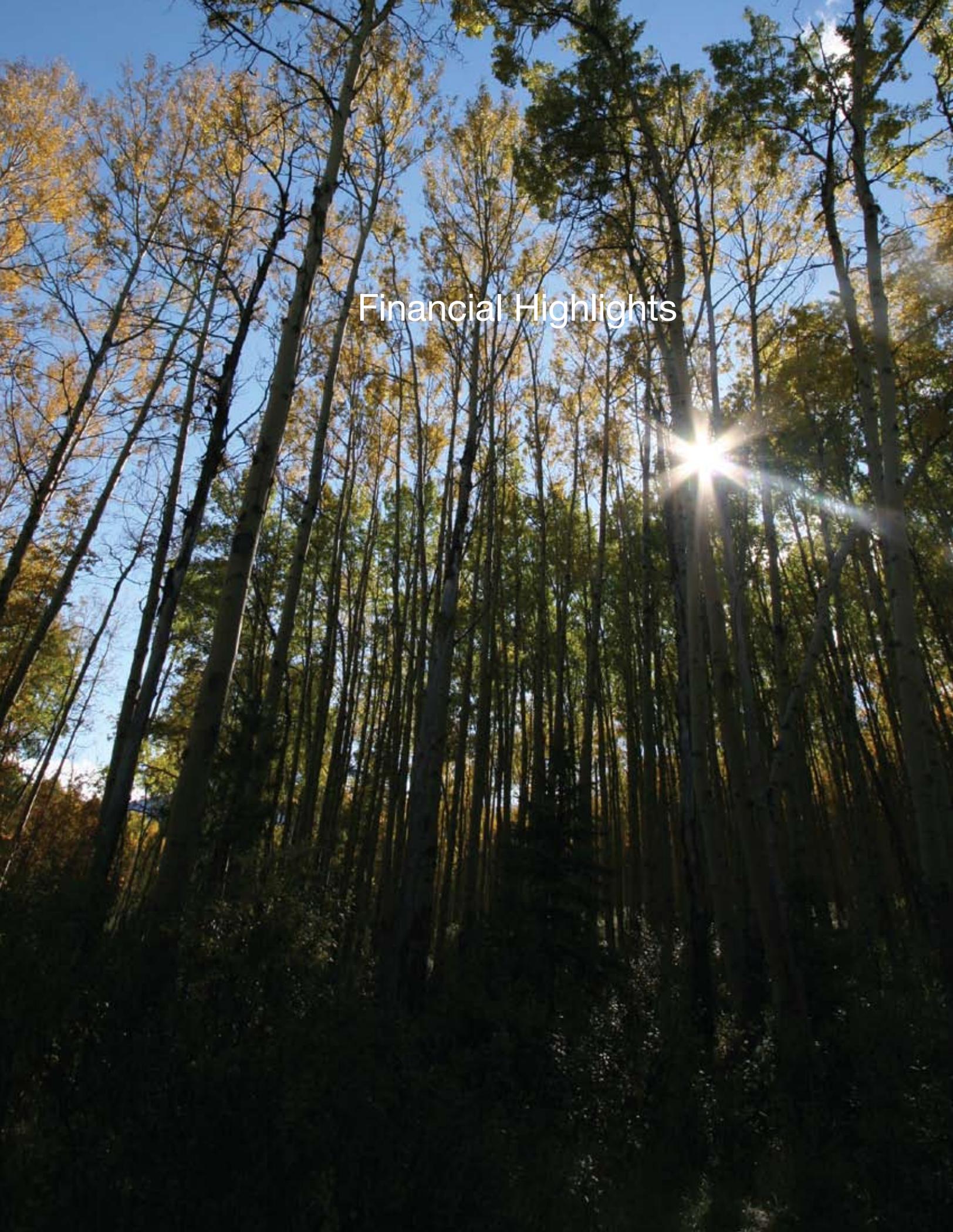
ACA Grants in Biodiversity

ACA Grants in Biodiversity Program provides research funds to outstanding graduate students and postdoctoral fellows doing Alberta-based research. The mandate of the program is to increase knowledge of the flora and fauna of Alberta, covering broadly the fields of biodiversity, conservation biology and ecology.

ACA's Grants in Biodiversity Program is run in collaboration with the Alberta Co-operative Conservation Unit, which represents a consortium of Alberta universities including: University of Alberta, University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge. ACA's annual financial contribution to the fund is \$225,000.

Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows are invited to submit applications. Successful applicants receive grants of up to \$20,000 in support of field and research expenses. Grant applications are adjudicated once each year with results released in March. This year, 20 projects were supported.

For more information on current projects visit ACA Grants in Biodiversity Program website at: <http://www.biology.ualberta.ca/biodiversity/>

A low-angle photograph of a forest. The trees are tall and thin, with their trunks reaching towards the top of the frame. The leaves are a mix of green and yellow, suggesting autumn. The sun is shining from the upper right, creating a bright starburst effect and casting long shadows on the forest floor. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

Financial Highlights

Auditor's Report

To the members of Alberta Conservation Association:

The accompanying summarized statements of financial position and results from operations are derived from the complete financial statements of Alberta Conservation Association as at March 31, 2008 and for the year then ended. In our auditors' report on the complete financial statements dated May 19, 2008, we expressed a qualified opinion because we were unable to satisfy ourselves concerning the completeness of donations and partner contribution revenue. The fair summarization of the complete financial statements is the responsibility of management. Our responsibility, in accordance with the applicable Assurance Guideline of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, is to report on the summarized financial statements.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements fairly summarize, in all material respects, the related complete financial statements in accordance with the criteria described in the Guideline referred to above.

These summarized financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. Readers are cautioned that these statements may not be appropriate for their purposes. For more information on the Association's financial position and results of operations, reference should be made to the complete financial statements.

Kingston Ross Pasnak LLP

Chartered Accountants



Summarized Financial Statements

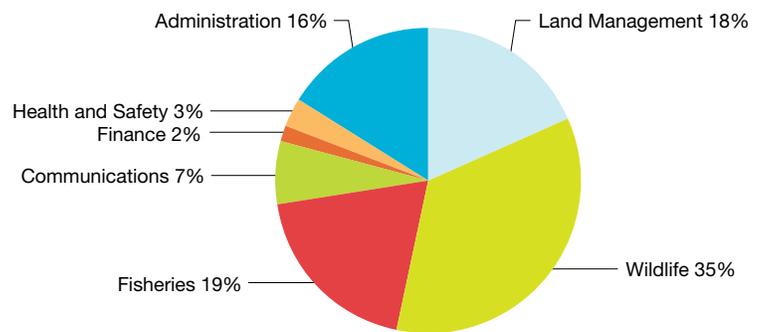
Alberta Conservation Association

Year ended March 31, 2008

RESULTS FROM OPERATIONS	2008	2007
REVENUES		
Fees and assessments	8,412,010	8,204,672
Partner contributions	1,769,275	2,943,142
Other	944,416	669,586
	11,125,701	11,817,400
EXPENDITURES		
Salaries and benefits	4,786,692	4,255,804
Contracted services	1,450,311	1,583,491
Grants	1,251,472	2,097,862
Office and sundry	824,800	521,268
Rentals	707,441	941,470
Travel	618,077	590,127
Amortization	494,324	314,697
Advertising	248,904	383,248
Materials and supplies	223,339	309,903
Landowner agreements	97,709	116,592
	10,703,069	11,114,462
OTHER REVENUES		
Unrealized (loss) gain on investments	(538,465)	148,720
Loss on disposal of property, plant and equipment	(20,140)	-
Gain on disposal of long-term investments	769	2,710
(DEFICIENCY) EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES	\$ (135,204)	\$ 854,368
FINANCIAL POSITION		
ASSETS		
Current assets	\$ 527,966	\$ 554,287
Long-term investments	8,853,940	9,082,034
Property, plant and equipment (net of accumulated amortization)	6,087,603	2,912,574
	\$ 15,469,509	\$ 12,548,895
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities	\$ 5,079,310	\$ 2,441,679
NET ASSETS		
Invested in property, plant and equipment	6,087,602	2,912,574
Internally restricted	836,902	944,438
Unrestricted	3,465,695	6,250,204
	10,390,199	10,107,216
	\$ 15,469,509	\$ 12,548,895

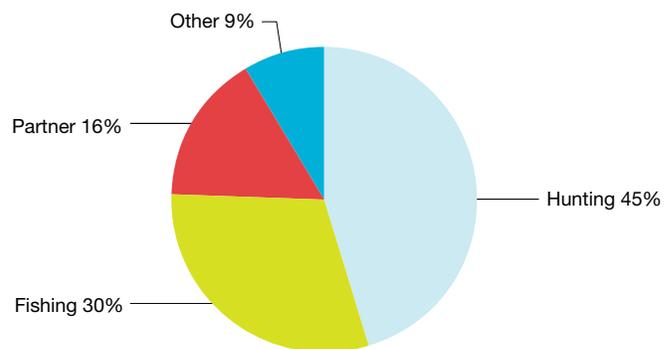
Total Expenditures

Land Management	1,981,751
Wildlife	3,732,851
Fisheries	2,053,317
Communications	725,147
Finance	174,478
Health and Safety	333,029
Administration	1,702,495
TOTAL	10,703,068



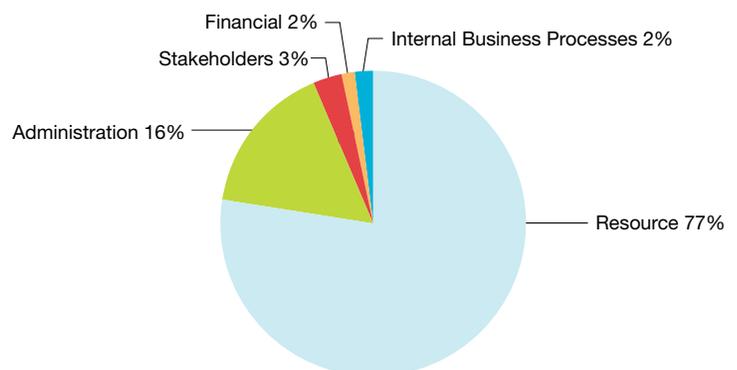
Revenue By Source

Hunting	5,050,905
Fishing	3,361,104
Partner	1,769,275
Other	944,416
TOTAL	11,125,700



Expenditures By Category

Resource	8,316,801
Administration	1,702,495
Stakeholders	328,722
Financial	174,478
Internal Business Processes	180,572
TOTAL	10,703,068





101 – 9 Chippewa Road
Sherwood Park, AB T8A 6J7

Tel: 780-410-1999

Fax: 780-464-0990

Toll Free: 1-877-969-9091

www.ab-conservation.com

www.reportapoacher.com