



Alberta Conservation
Association

Annual Report 2014/15

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Annual Report 2014/15



Conserving Alberta's Wild Side

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

ACA conserves, protects and enhances fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for Albertans to enjoy, value and use.

Abbreviations Index

ac	acre
cm	centimetre
C	degrees Celsius
fish/h	fish caught per hour
fish/km	fish caught per kilometre
h	hour
ha	hectare
h/ha	hours per hectare
km	kilometre
lbs	pounds
m	metre
mg/L	milligrams per litre
mm	millimetre

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Conserving Alberta's Wild Side

Member Groups

Alberta Fish & Game Association
Alberta Hunter Education
Instructors' Association
Alberta Professional Outfitters
Society
Alberta Trappers' Association
Nature Alberta
Pheasants Forever, Alberta Council
Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta
Trout Unlimited Canada
Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta

Board of Directors

Executive

Pat Long, Chairman: Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta
Ken Ambrock, Vice Chairman – Public At Large, Northern Alberta Board Liaison
Brian Bildson, Secretary – Public At Large, Business Representative
Adam Norris, Treasurer – Public At Large, Northwest Region
Tom Bateman, Past Chair – Public At Large, Southern Alberta Board Liaison

Directors

Bill Abercrombie – Alberta Trappers' Association
Vince Aiello – Pheasants Forever, Alberta Council
Ken Bailey – Alberta Professional Outfitters Society
Dr. Mark Boyce – ACA/University of Alberta Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife
Fred Calverley – Trout Unlimited Canada
Randy Collins – Alberta Fish & Game Association
Lee Foote – Public At Large, Academic Representative
Sandra Foss – Nature Alberta
Chris Fowler – Public At Large, Northeast Region
Robert Gruszecki – Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association
John Pattison – Public At Large, Central Region
Travis Ripley – Minister's Representative, Alberta Environment and Parks
Jaarno Van der Wielen – Public At Large, Southern Region
Vacant – Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta

About ACA

Since 1997, Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) has directed hundreds of millions of dollars towards thousands of conservation efforts across Alberta. 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.

Our work is about Alberta's fish and wildlife and the ecosystems they need to thrive. Our work is also about creating sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities for all Albertans. Every levy dollar from fishing and hunting licences and every partnership contributes to conserving Alberta's natural heritage and future. We fund research through grants, we complete in-house studies on wide-ranging topics, we conserve important land, we listen to the concerns of Albertans, and we strive to be as transparent and responsive as possible.



Project: Distribution of Sport Fish in the Waterton River Tailwater, 2014

Partners: Alberta Environment and Parks

Photo: ACA, Jason Blackburn

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 Environment and Parks (AEP).

In our role as a DAO, results from our population studies, surveys and assessments feed directly into AEP management plans and form the basis for fishing and hunting regulation changes and evaluations of new management strategies.



Message from the Chairman



I am always filled with pride when I read through Alberta Conservation Association's (ACA) Annual Report and see the wide range of projects completed and the extensive partnerships that have been established. Once again this year, ACA staff, volunteers, member groups, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP), and corporate partners have joined together to complete conservation activities worth more than \$15 million. Many of the projects have a direct and immediate impact on fish and wildlife populations, but the true value of these conservation efforts likely won't be seen until well into the future, when my grandchildren and great-grandchildren realize the natural heritage they are enjoying is a result of work done long before.

To me, this is the biggest reason why every Albertan should be interested in conservation. Yes, the economy is slower right now, and as a result the rate of habitat change is slower too, but I think we all realize it is only a matter of time before things begin to boom again. Our conservation activities today will ensure that future generations can enjoy the great outdoor experiences Alberta offers.

I want to thank ACA staff, volunteers, member groups, AEP, and corporate partners for their support, and I want to assure our stakeholders that ACA will continue working with our various partners wherever possible to produce the best conservation results. It is true that we will continue having immense development pressures in Alberta. However, with the combined efforts of ACA and our partners, I believe our fish, wildlife and habitat resources have a bright future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pat Long, Chairman of the Board



President and CEO's Message

The 2014/15 year was a very successful one for ACA and our member groups. From a funding perspective, we saw an increase of almost \$700,000 in total levy revenues compared to last year, and an increase in non-levy funding of almost \$2 million. Clearly, the conservation work we do with our partners is strongly supported by many groups in Alberta.

A huge array of projects were completed this year. Kids Can Catch events introduced over 2,500 people to fishing in Alberta (including almost 650 who attended an ice fishing event on Valentine's Day on Wabamun Lake). We worked with ranchers to develop habitat management plans on 87,000 acres of land. We planted over 4,000 silver sage, golden bean and wild vetch plugs to restore native grasslands in greater sage grouse range. We started a demonstration farm project to examine techniques for improving wildlife habitat with no detriment to farming practices. We stocked 115,000 rainbow trout and aerated 15 waterbodies across the province. We launched a 4-H pheasant raise and release program that saw 20 young people and their families raising hen pheasants. We undertook bull trout and cutthroat trout population assessments. We planted over 85,000 trees and shrubs. We hosted (with our partners) 700 hunters at the Taber Pheasant Festival. We surveyed endangered species such as piping plovers. We kept the peregrine falcon cameras rolling. We permanently conserved almost 3,000 acres of habitat. And these are only a few of our projects!

I recognize that, for most people, an Annual Report is not high on their priority list of exciting things to read; however, I do hope that our stakeholders will take the time to read through this report for more detail on our projects. If you are a hunter or an angler, this is the report that tells you what ACA has done with the levy funds you provided. If you are not a hunter or angler, but simply interested in conservation, you should definitely learn more about how funds provided by hunters and anglers are benefitting all Albertans. If you work for a corporation, have a read and see how your company could contribute to tangible, on-the-ground conservation work, as many other companies are already doing. Our ACA staff, volunteers, member groups and corporate partners have worked hard to provide conservation benefits to all Albertans, and we want to ensure Albertans know about and understand the work being done.

2014/15 was a great year for conservation, and I am expecting even better things in 2015/16. If you have any question regarding this Annual Report or how you can directly contribute to a conservation project, my door is always open.

Sincerely,



Todd Zimmerling

President and CEO
Alberta Conservation Association

Kids Can Catch, Wabamun 2015
Photo: ACA, Colin Eyo

Our People. Our Commitment.



Health and Safety

ACA continues to be committed to safety through a comprehensive Health and Safety program as an essential part of ACA operations. All ACA workers (employees, contractors, volunteers, visitors, etc.) are required to comply with ACA's Health and Safety program for the protection of themselves and others, resulting in a safer and healthier work environment.

2014/15 Overview

- Over the past few years, the ACA Health and Safety program has undergone substantial improvements and updates to make it as comprehensive as possible, while at the same time allowing it to be easy to understand and follow. This past year, ACA workers continued to embrace the ACA Health and Safety program and integrate these changes and updates to ensure maximum worker safety.
- Improved safety is illustrated by the general trend in the overall number of workplace incidents which continued to decline: 34 incidents occurred in 2014/15, compared to 40 incidents reported in 2013/14 and 46 in 2012/13. This reduction can be attributed to increased awareness, and also to the identification of potential hazards requiring proactive or preventative actions before a near miss or incident happens.
- In addition, ACA continues to conduct work according to the requirements established by the Certificate of Recognition (COR) program. Last year ACA completed the 2014 External COR Audit, and achieved an overall grade of 97%. We scored 100% in 11 of the 13 mandatory elements

Project: Amphibian Monitoring Using Environmental DNA

Partnerships: Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada – Industrial Postgraduate Scholarships Program, Shell Canada Energy, University of Alberta – Brandon Booker (M.Sc. candidate), David Coltman, Corey Davis and Cynthia Paszkowski

Photo: ACA, Brian Eaton

Human Resources

ACA completes a lot of work over considerable territory each year, thanks in large part to our 74 permanent staff, and numerous seasonal staff. Human Resources not only ensures the best people are recruited for the job, but we are also integral to keeping our most valuable resource—our staff—trained, safe, educated and satisfied with the organization.

Year after year, it is our hardworking, dedicated staff, both in the office and in the field, who truly make it possible to “Conserve Alberta’s Wild Side.” Congratulations and thanks are extended to the following individuals who achieved significant Years of Service milestones this year:

15 Years of Service

Lance Engley, Kris Kendell,
Doug Manzer, Andy Murphy

10 Years of Service

Robert Anderson, Jason Blackburn

5 Years of Service

Stefanie Fenson, Mike Ranger,
Ariana Tourneur, Erin Vandermaerl,
Jonathan Van Dijk

2014/15 Overview

Employee Survey

- 100% of employees agree they are satisfied with ACA as a place to work—a tremendous accomplishment.
- 95% of employees are satisfied with having a good work-life balance, a 9% increase from last year.
- 89.4% are satisfied with ACA’s benefit plan, which is a 7% increase from last year.
- 84.2% are satisfied with the whole compensation package available to them

Employee Retention

- Staff turnover increased a percent to 6.76%. We continue to evaluate and implement ways to increase job satisfaction at ACA by focusing on professional development, mentoring opportunities and work-life balance. We invest in our own by promoting talent from within the organization whenever

possible, which increases opportunities for growth and retention.

Career Fairs

- Attended three career fairs at the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge College and University of Alberta. These fairs provided excellent opportunities to introduce ourselves and inform new graduates about career options available at ACA.

Recruitment

- Filled 9 permanent, 1 temporary and 10 seasonal positions. This was a successful year for recruitment of staff. Twelve of these positions were filled with past and current seasonal staff. ACA has a strong recruitment and retention program that has allowed us to continually hire back staff who have worked with us in the past.

Environmental Committee

- This was the last year for the environmental targets originally set out by the environmental committee. We managed to reach some of them:
 - Reduced water consumption by 20%
 - Reduced production of waste
 - Reduced paper use by 25%
 - Reduced km’s for vehicle use – overall vehicle kms reduced by 9% and emissions by km reduced by 3.2%
- We are currently working on new targets and incentives for the next 5-year plan.

Information Technology

As our organization continues to grow, the management and ease of access to systems and databases becomes increasingly important. Information Technology (IT) is committed to finding solutions, increasing operational efficiencies, and saving resources in support of this growth.

With changes in the workforce and in digital technology, it is essential for staff to access files from just about anywhere and to work on projects in conjunction with other researchers at almost any location in the province. The IT team is committed to finding solutions by

consulting with staff, talking with partners, and meeting with experts in the field to develop a system that ensures staff are working as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Taking advantage of changes in technology (for example, exploring the use of drone equipment), our biologists are increasingly using digital photographs and video to collect data. While these new techniques assist with wildlife and fish management, they create significant issues with respect to storing and analyzing such large databases. IT has been working closely with our field staff to determine potential future data collection activities and to develop a realistic and cost effective plan for storage expansion, which potentially will reach several terabytes in size.

2014/15 Overview

- Continued improving staff access to documents by moving to a blend between remote access and cloud-based structure, allowing staff to work across the province and collaborate with external resources as required.
- Restructured IT area to allow for better skill use and efficient project management. Expanding access to expertise by using targeted consultants will increase the timing and effectiveness of IT solutions company-wide. IT staff are actively involved in planning and delivering the systems they oversee and maintain, which creates an environment of accountability and strong customer support.
- Gave IT support to a member group by providing an accounting system for Alberta Fish & Game Association.
- Continued updating and improving financial systems to provide better online access for staff in reporting, time entry and budgeting. Our goal is to streamline system entry to make an efficient and user-friendly environment for staff, whether they are entering data or retrieving information for monitoring the progress of their projects.
- Provided staff with new drone technology for testing in project delivery.



Waterfowl Warmup Event 2014
Photo: ACA, Don Myhre

Business Development

Partnerships with the Alberta business community are vital to achieving our annual operating goals and help leverage funding for significant milestones in conservation work and habitat securement. We're pleased to work with many Alberta corporations that sponsor, donate and otherwise support our conservation work and values.

ACA's Corporate Partners in Conservation (CPIC) Program goes beyond offset programs by providing unique opportunities for businesses to be part of conserving Alberta's natural heritage. Our CPIC participants enjoy the ability to promote their affiliation with us through their own communications, and benefit from ACA's promotion of these partnerships through our existing communications initiatives.

Business Development is also responsible for generating revenue through advertising sales to offset costs associated with Communications activities on television, radio and our in-house publications, *Conservation Magazine* and the *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*.

2014/15 Overview

- Two companies were recognized as new Corporate Partners in Conservation:
 - Matrix Solutions:
Golden Ranches Conservation Site
 - Wheaton Toyota On The Trail:
Toyota Tacoma truck sponsorship,
WIN Card Benefits
- Two existing partners increased funding to ACA projects and/or new initiatives:
 - Syncrude Canada Ltd.:
Grants In Biodiversity
 - Shell Canada Limited:
Amphibian eDNA Project
- Over \$100,000 in advertising sales for the 2014 issues of *Conservation Magazine* and the 2014/15 edition of *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*



Wheaton Toyota On The Trail
Toyota Tacoma truck sponsorship
Photo: ACA, Juanna Thompson



A close-up photograph of a person's arm holding a large, spotted trout in clear, shallow water. The person's arm is on the left side of the frame, wearing a black wristwatch. The trout is held horizontally, with its head to the right. The water is crystal clear, revealing a bed of smooth, dark and light-colored stones. The lighting is bright, creating reflections on the water's surface.

Our Conservation Programs

Photo: ACA, Mike Jokinen

Information, Education and Communications

Our Information, Education and Communications program provides a wide scope of services and materials to engage our audiences, build brand recognition, and strengthen ACA's many partnerships.

Multitask Media

Communicating the impact of ACA's work is key to our ongoing success. Our web and social media platforms inform and engage the public—from events to programs, projects and more. In 2014/15, our online presence helped to grow event attendance as well as recognition of ACA's work in fisheries, wildlife and land management. Print media is also a major contributor. *Conservation Magazine*, *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*, and other publications are valuable resources—not only for hunters and anglers, but for anyone interested in conservation or Alberta's outdoors in general. Whenever ACA has the opportunity, we recognize the positive relationships between education, research and conservation. This is what shapes the future for us, and isn't possible without the support we get from hunting, angling and trapping.

2014/15 Overview

- Printed 40,000 total copies of *Conservation Magazine* in 2014. Mailed out over 11,600 per issue. Stories highlighted landowners we have worked with, Conservation Sites, aquatic invasive species, Grant Eligible Conservation Fund projects, Alberta's endangered trees, behind-the-scenes looks at ACA biologists' work, a moose-tracking app, recipes for wild foods like white-tailed deer, wild berries and mushrooms, ACA projects on harvesting and replanting silver sagebrush seeds, the wolverine project, and some of the creatures that call Alberta home like lynx, chickadees, fishers and tiger salamanders.
- Printed 80,000 copies of the 2014/15 *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*; the issue met great success though all time high advertising sales and complete print run distribution. It included 746 Conservation Sites anyone can access for outdoor recreational activities like hunting, fishing, hiking, foraging, photography, etc.
- For those preferring the *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide* online or on their mobile devices, we made sure www.albertadiscoverguide.com and the free iPhone app (*Alberta Outdoor Adventure Guide*) is updated and working well. Total number of app users increased by 17%.
- Assisted AEP in publicizing annual special hunting and family fishing days as well as their "Clean. Drain. Dry." campaign to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in Alberta.
- Over 2,500 adults and children came out to fish at eight Kids Can Catch events, involving nearly 40 community and corporate partners. Over 900 youth and adults, including many new Canadians, came to our flagship Fort Saskatchewan Kids Can Catch summer event in June 2014. Our flagship ice fishing event at Wabamun Lake grew from 200 participants in 2014 to 647 participants in 2015.
- Over 330 youth and adults tried out archery at three Archery Days events (in Lamont, Sherwood Park and Galahad), supported by 10 community and corporate partners.
- The peregrine cameras remain hugely popular, and views of the pages on our website accounted for half of the web traffic to www.ab-conservation.com in 2014/15.
- Social media continued growing rapidly in 2014/2015. Our four primary social media mediums are Facebook, Twitter, our e-newsletter, YouTube, and we added reddit and Instagram accounts as well.
- Continuously evaluated the latest in website trends and updates to make sure we present information about ACA in the most user-friendly way possible; that includes maintaining five separate external websites, with several website aliases used for specific projects or events.
- Provided core business documents, including the Annual Operating Plan, Annual Report, and Strategic Business Plan Update, to our Board of Directors on time for their approval.
- Distributed 1,857 information packages to youth who completed the hunter education course. A total of 1,126 youth returned the reimbursement form and asked to be included on ACA's mailing list to receive ongoing information from ACA regarding hunting, fishing, trapping and other conservation activities.

Alberta Outdoor Adventure Guide iPhone app

The Alberta Outdoor Adventure Guide app is an alternative way of providing the information contained in the print and web versions of the *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*. It makes planning and finding Conservation Sites where people can hunt, fish, forage and explore easier. In-app notifications help us communicate relevant information about the recreational opportunities ACA creates, like stocked and aerated fishing ponds, new Conservation Sites, kid-friendly events and more. We implemented one update to the app in June, 2014. During 2014/15, the total number of users increased by 17%.

Alberta Special Hunting Days

To help engage youth and foster interest and involvement in hunting, ACA helps AEP promote special hunting initiatives in Alberta each September. As described by AEP, "These special days allow youth to experience additional hunting opportunities and learn proper hunting, including ethics and responsible hunting practices from experienced hunters. They also provide an opportunity for seasoned hunters to share their love of the outdoors. These initiatives help ensure that Alberta continues the strong tradition of hunting, which provides outdoorsmen and women the opportunity to experience conservation and a connection to the land." These initiatives include Waterfowler Heritage Days (first Saturday and Sunday in September), Provincial Hunting Day (fourth Saturday in September), and Youth Hunting Initiative (also the fourth Saturday in September). For 2014/15, ACA provided online promotion of these initiatives (through our website, e-newsletter, Facebook and Twitter) to foster awareness and involvement by the general public.

Partnerships:

Alberta Environment and Parks

Annual Operating Plan

The Annual Operating Plan (AOP) informs Albertans, our stakeholders and partners about the projects we are undertaking during the fiscal year and how we are directing revenue to our various program areas. The publication is designed and produced each year in both print and electronic format with linked navigation. Data accuracy is of prime concern prior to release. The Communications team's role is to coordinate content from the various other program areas and make sure it is provided in time so that ACA can meet its deadlines. We edit, design, proof, print copies as required and post the AOP on our website at the start of the new fiscal year once the ACA Board of Directors has approved it. The 2014/15 AOP was provided to the Board in a timely fashion for approval, and posted at the beginning of the new fiscal year.

Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide

Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide is a free annual publication. We print 80,000 copies and distribute them by the May long weekend by mailing out to subscribers. Guides are also distributed at trade shows, and by hunting and fishing licence retailers across Alberta. The 2014/15 Guide featured 746 Conservation Sites anyone can access for outdoor recreational activities like hunting, fishing, hiking, foraging, photography, etc. The Guide is also available online through its own website, where users can easily search for fishing and hunting opportunities within the sites as well as access a map and Google directions to each site. It promotes the value of habitat conservation and the benefits of securing habitat for wildlife. It is also one of the ways we work towards increasing ACA's profile in Alberta, which is one of the long-term goals in ACA's 10-year Strategic Business Plan. Other program areas (Fisheries, Wildlife,

Land, Business Development) use the Guide as a tool when reaching out to potential donors and/or partners. The 2014/15 issue met great success though all time high advertising sales and complete print run distribution. An additional 40,000 copies of the 2015 issue was printed and is being distributed to the end of the calendar year. The publication date for the Guide has been changed from May to January. The publication will follow the calendar year affording a full year of media for advertisers, increased trade show distribution and better publication workflow within communications.

Partnerships:

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada

Annual Report

The Annual Report is a valuable tool for ACA and our stakeholders. It is one of the ways we make sure our yearly projects are on-time, on-budget, done to the highest quality, and done safely, which is a long-term goal set out in our Strategic Business Plan. The Annual Report is also important for stakeholders and the public because it provides them with information about our work and how we are spending the money we receive each year from levies, partnerships, and donations, as well as providing them with audited financial statements. It is one of the business reports that demonstrates that ACA is accountable and transparent. The Communications team coordinates content from the various other program areas and make sure it is provided in time so that ACA can meet its deadlines. We edit, design, proof, print copies as required and post the Annual Report on our website in September each year once the ACA Board of Directors has approved it. We also coordinate the editing of 45 resource program (Wildlife, Fisheries, Land) annual summaries to show how each project has done. They are posted online by April each year. The 2013/14 Annual Report was provided

to the Board in a timely fashion for approval, and posted by September 2014. The annual summaries were successfully coordinated and posted online by April 30, 2015.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) is an important issue with serious financial, social and ecological impacts for Alberta. Effective communication is critical to helping educate the general public, especially boat owners, about key facts and important actions needed to address the situation. ACA is helping Alberta Environment and Parks with an awareness campaign about AIS. In particular, we are promoting their “Clean Drain Dry” campaign, targeted at informing the general public on how to identify and prevent the spread of AIS, especially zebra and quagga mussels. In 2014/15 we promoted the campaign through multiple channels including *Conservation Magazine*, *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*, Facebook, and our e-newsletter.

Partnerships:

Alberta Environment and Parks

Archery Days

In the 2014/15 fiscal year, 335 youth and adults tried out archery at three Archery Days events (in Lamont, Sherwood Park and Galahad), supported by 10 community and corporate partners. Each event was hosted by a local organization, while ACA managed online registration and promotional material. Participants were introduced to archery by trained instructors and volunteers, and learned about archery equipment, technique and safety. Public turnout for the events demonstrated that Albertans are interested in trying archery. The goal of each event was to foster an interest in archery as a gateway to hunting.

Partnerships:

Access Pipeline, Alberta Bowhunters Association, Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Aux Sable, Cabela's, Galahad

Archery Club, Lamont Fish & Game Club, Sasol Canada, Sherwood Park Archery Club, TransCanada

Conservation Magazine

Conservation Magazine is a free bi-annual publication from ACA. It is published in May for Spring/Summer and in October for Fall/Winter. 15,000 to 20,000 copies are printed and distributed by mailing them to subscribers and through various other distribution methods including trade shows. The magazine is also available online. *Conservation Magazine* provides ACA an opportunity to highlight the projects and work we and our member groups are doing in Alberta to positively impact the conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitats. It is one of the ways we work towards increasing ACA's profile in Alberta, which is a long-term goal in ACA's 10-year Strategic Business Plan. Other long-term strategic goals partly guiding magazine content include increasing the acceptance of hunting, fishing and trapping within the general public, as well as highlighting the positive role hunters, anglers and trappers play in the conservation of wildlife, fish and habitat in Alberta. The magazine is also a tool for the other program areas (Fisheries, Wildlife, Land, Business Development) to use when reaching out to potential donors and/or partners. For the 2014 issues, we printed 20,000 copies each and mailed out over 11,600 per issue. Stories highlighted landowners we have worked with, Conservation Sites, aquatic invasive species, Grant Fund projects, Alberta's endangered trees, behind-the-scenes looks at ACA biologists' work, a moose-tracking app, recipes for wild foods like white-tailed deer, wild berries and mushrooms, ACA projects on harvesting and replanting silver sagebrush seeds, the wolverine project, and some of the creatures that call Alberta home like lynx, chickadees, fishers and tiger salamanders.

Conservation Site Signs

Each Conservation Site has branded signage. It is a way for us to recognize our partners, provide wayfinding for users and awareness of any restrictions on the site. We work with ACA's Land, Fisheries and Wildlife teams to produce these signs for Conservation Sites and their boundaries, fisheries access sites, pheasant release sites, thin ice warnings and interpretive trails. In 2014/15, we produced 5 Conservation Site signs, interpretative trail signs for Potter's Seep, and pheasant release site signs. Large format signs have been redesigned for better legibility and sponsor recognition.

Family Fishing Weekends

To engage youth and foster interest and involvement in fishing, ACA helps AEP promote special fishing initiatives in Alberta each year. As described by AEP, “Fishing is an easy and enjoyable way for family and friends to connect with some of Alberta's greatest natural resources – our lakes, rivers, streams and the fish that live in them. Family Fishing Weekends, no licence required, occurs twice a year.” In 2014/15, ACA provided online promotion of these initiatives to help increase awareness and involvement by the general public. Family Fishing Weekends were held February 15-17, 2014 and July 12-13, 2014. We promoted them on ACA's website, through ACA's social media, and in ACA's e-newsletter in the hope that our efforts help foster an interest in outdoor activities related to fishing.

Partnerships:

Alberta Environment and Parks

General Advertising

Advertising works towards a number of long-term goals within the Strategic Business Plan. These include increasing public recognition of the ACA brand; creating positive profiles of hunting, fishing and trapping; and assisting in corporate partner development. In addition to these primary goals,

ongoing ACA program support (such as Enhanced Fish Stocking, Report-A-Poacher and event promotions) provide recognition of the work we do, leading to increased ACA public brand recognition and corporate support. We create consistent and contemporary visual communications through print, web and social media platforms. ACA programs, projects and events supported are Report-A-Poacher, Discover Guide, Enhanced Fish Stocking, Crop Tender, Lake Aeration Thin Ice Warnings, Taber Pheasant Festival, Peregrine Cameras, Corporate Partners in Conservation, ACA Donations and Support.

Grant Fund Annual Report

The Grant Fund Annual Report provides stakeholders with information about the ACA Grant Fund projects awarded, allocations, and activities. Each year, ACA funnels over \$1 million through grants into conservation work in Alberta. Since starting our grant programs in 2002/03, we have awarded almost \$14.5 million, excluding the \$4.3 million awarded through the Grants in Biodiversity program over the past 20 years. Projects that have benefitted from long-term funding cover everything from avian monitoring and education programs to research on mountain goats, big horn sheep and elk. Other recipients include the Edmonton Nature Club's popular Snow Goose Chase, the Camrose Purple Martin Festival, and Trout Unlimited Canada's stewardship licence project. The Conservation, Community and Education grants also fund angling and hunting events and youth camps, where youths and families can get connected to nature. This is but a small sampling of the 702 projects funded so far. The Grant Fund Annual Report was ready by October 2014 for the grant eligible committee meeting in December 2014. We updated the grants section on ACA's website as needed, and promoted grants and deadlines as they occurred.

Internal Communications Needs

Internal Communications Needs provides support to the President & CEO, Human Resources, and Business Development, as well as the Wildlife, Fisheries and Land Management resource programs. We work with program managers, regional managers and project leads to ensure our programs and projects are well represented in publications, on the web, and through social media. Some of this work includes providing technical support for preparation of reports and other print media, developing key communications materials to ensure appropriate branding and messaging (e.g., media releases, presentations, poster templates etc.), sign development and production, as well as coordinating the design and placement of advertising messages and materials. This work is accomplished through a combination of internal staff and out-sourced services.

Kids Can Catch Program

Kids Can Catch is a province-wide program in which ACA teams up with community and corporate partners to create free, family fishing events at stocked lakes and ponds. Kids Can Catch is the outreach program of the Enhanced Sport Fisheries Program, in which ACA works with its member groups and provincial, municipal and corporate partners to stock nearly 120,000 catchable-sized rainbow trout in 60 waterbodies across Alberta. We developed Kids Can Catch as a way to invite Albertans to fish at stocked ponds and hook new and young anglers on fishing, fish conservation and responsible angling. In 2014/15, over 2,500 adults and children came out to fish at eight Kids Can Catch events, involving nearly 40 community and corporate partners. Fort Saskatchewan Kids Can Catch is the program's flagship summer event. On June 14, 2014, over 900 youth and adults, including many new Canadians, came out to fish at

Fort Lions Community Fish Pond. The bite was on, as ACA stocked the pond in the spring with about 1,000 rainbow trout. To expand Kids Can Catch into the winter, ACA hosted Wabamun Lake Kids Can Catch as the program's flagship ice fishing event. The event grew from 200 participants in 2014 to 647 participants in 2015. This year's success demonstrated that Kids Can Catch is a successful model in which ACA can: (1) engage with local organizations and businesses interested in fishing and conservation; and (2) invite families, youth and new Canadians to fish at stocked ponds and learn about fishing, conservation and responsible angling. The program continues to generate interest from new communities and new corporate partners, and we anticipate the program will expand further in 2015/16.

Partnerships:

Program sponsor: Dow Canada.
Event partners: Access Pipeline, Agrium, Atco Electric, Slave Lake, Aux Sable, Bow Habitat Station, Brand Alliance, Cabela's, CBI, City of Fort Saskatchewan, Fort Saskatchewan Fish and Game Association, Fort Saskatchewan Lions Club, Gateway Press, Gibsons, Harold Walters and Associates, Lacombe Co-op, Lacombe Fish and Game Association, Lacombe Fountain Tire, Lamont Fish and Game Association, Len Thompson Lures, Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service, Magrath Rod and Gun Club, Moonlite Scaffolding, Slave Lake, NALCO Champion, Northern Light Fly Tyers, River Valley Alliance, Sasol, Slave Lake Canadian Tire, Slave Lake Rod and Gun Club, Smoky Trout Farm, The Rental Store, Slave Lake, Town of Stettler, Trans Canada, TransAlta, Village of Wabamun, Wabamun and District Chamber of Commerce, Wabamun Citizens on Patrol, Walleye Master, 92.7 Lake FM

My Meat's Legal

My Meat's Legal was a campaign to promote Report A Poacher and was intended to give ethical outdoor recreationists (hunters and non-hunters alike) a way to take a stand against poaching. The slogan was developed to try something new and possibly reach non-traditional hunting demographics. T-shirts and hoodies with the campaign slogan were sold through the Report A Poacher website with sales raising money for a new Report A Poacher educational trailer. The My Meat's Legal campaign closed at the end of the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Other Print Needs

Sometimes unforeseen print needs arise, as well as more specific print needs for donors and conservation

partners and program use. We provide continued collaborative production of print material on an as-needed basis. In the 2014/15 fiscal year, unforeseen print needs included Christmas cards, plover donation certificates, donation thank you cards, herbicide treatment area warnings, Conservation Site sponsor recognition decals (various), Bow River Irrigation District signage, fish rulers, and pheasant hunting survey cards.

Peregrine Cameras

The peregrine cameras provide a birds' eye view into the daily lives of peregrines as they fight for mates and territory, catch food, and raise their young. The cameras are set up three locations in Edmonton: the Bell Tower, the University of Alberta, and the Weber Centre. In the past year,

we upgraded all cameras to HD night vision for 24 hour viewing. We also added an additional camera at the Weber Centre, and upgraded remote access to computers, which allows us to respond faster when any of the nest sites experience streaming issues. The intent is to make the viewer experience even better. The cameras are hugely popular, and views of the pages on our website accounted for half of all our web traffic in 2014/15. These visits are important as they provide a connection between people and the natural world as well as introducing visitors to ACA and our stakeholders. This year's cameras were very successful, and we look forward to repeating the experience for viewers in the coming year.

Partnerships:

Aspen Properties, TeraGo, University of Alberta, WiBand



Social media

One of ACA's key goals in the 10-year *Strategic Business Plan* is to raise awareness about us and the work we do. Social media is a way for ACA to connect with, inform, and grow our audience. By having a medium where we can share our work and interests with people on a daily basis, we can generate interest and conversation that would otherwise not exist. In 2014/2015, we did this through our four primary social media mediums: Facebook, Twitter, our e-newsletter, and YouTube. Two new social media platforms added consist of a reddit account and an Instagram account, which are both still in their infancy in terms of audience and methods. Ultimately, the goal of our social media efforts is fostering an interested and compassionate audience so that we are connected with a larger scope of people when the time comes for an important message or request regarding conservation in Alberta. The gradual change in our social media approach over the past year has seen us making strides in the right direction and reaching more people. Between all social media activity this past fiscal year, nearly \$10,000 was raised for the piping plover project, volunteers were found, many were informed of and attended ACA's events, and tens of thousands have seen the wide variety of our projects.

Website Maintenance and Development

ACA currently maintains a suite of five separate external websites, with several website aliases used for specific projects or events. ACA's websites provide an accessible gateway to information about our work using current technology to engage users. It is one of the ways we work towards increasing ACA's profile in Alberta, which is one of the long-term goals of ACA's 10-year *Strategic Business Plan*. Highlights for 2014/15 include: 1) moving all external ACA websites (www.ab-conservation.com, www.magazine.

ab-conservation.com, www.reportapoacher.com, www.albertadiscoverguide.com, www.deer-elk-bear.com) to a new web server hosting company to address concerns regarding reliability and server maintenance, 2) Upgrading our website software platform to newer versions on all ACA websites and making all previous code compatible with the upgrade, 3) Creating the Deer-Elk-Bear website for the 11th Biennial Western States Deer and Elk Workshop and 12th Western Black Bear Workshop, 4) Upgrading the coding for the Taber Pheasant Festival online registration system, and also updating the online festival raffle purchase system to make it easier to use, 5) Creating the ACA internal auction website, and 6) Creating online interfaces to make updating the websites more efficient. Overall, the websites are working well as a gateway to information about ACA. We are constantly evaluating and discussing updates, both minor and more extensive, and making sure the websites present information in the most user-friendly way possible.

Website Updates

ACA's main websites (www.ab-conservation.com, www.magazine.ab-conservation.com, www.albertadiscoverguide.com, www.reportapoacher.com) provide accessible gateways to information about our work that engages users and profiles our conservation research, member groups, corporate and conservation partners, events, and publications. The websites are tools we use to increase ACA's profile, one of the long-term goals of ACA's 10-year *Strategic Business Plan*. All are updated regularly (almost daily in the case of www.ab-conservation.com) with new information that highlights our work in a timely manner. We are constantly evaluating and discussing updates, both minor and more extensive, as well as making sure all of the websites present information in the most user-

friendly way possible. We monitor and track Google Analytics and provide monthly updates to the ACA Management Team. Overall, the websites are working well as gateways to information about ACA, and website traffic is increasing at impressive rates.

WIN Card Reimbursement

Working in partnership with Hunting For Tomorrow and Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, the WIN card reimbursement program supports the recruitment of young people into hunting. The project gives ACA and its member groups a way to connect with new hunters when they purchase their first WIN card. Although the cost of reimbursing each youth for their first WIN card is relatively small, the impact of this project has been significant. ACA has been able to enhance young hunters' experience by introducing and connecting them to programs, information, and member group organizations. It is our hope that making these connections at a young age will result in long-term relationships being formed between these young stakeholders and the larger conservation community. In 2014/15, 1,857 information packages were distributed by Hunting For Tomorrow to youth who had completed the hunter education course. A total of 1,126 youth returned the reimbursement form and asked to be included on ACA's mailing list to receive on-going information from ACA regarding hunting, fishing, trapping and other conservation activities.

Partnerships:

Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Hunting For Tomorrow



Wildlife Program

Alberta trappers make a difference for wolverine conservation

People make conservation work, so finding common ground is a vital step in everything we do. Take a look at our reports on wolverine conservation to see this truth in action, and to learn about our efforts to understand the needs of this cryptic nomad. Citizen science is fundamental to this work—trappers from Alberta Trappers' Association are involved in multiple phases including planning, data collection and communication. One of our goals is to better understand where wolverines occur in the province and what key habitat features are associated with their distribution. We're also collaborating with the University of Alberta and Alberta Trappers' Association to understand more about the impact of industrial activity on wolverines.

Building the future for upland hunting

Pheasants were first introduced into Alberta in 1908 by a group of recreational enthusiasts who wanted to enhance upland hunting opportunities. More than 100 years later, the tradition continues as we partner with many stakeholders to improve upland hunting opportunities in Alberta. We initiated a new partnership with 4-H Alberta as part of our efforts

Project: Demonstration Farm Project – Enchant Farm Upland Restoration

Partnerships: Scott Ward and Cole Haggins, Stamp Select Seeds

Photo: ACA, Kris Kendell

to put pheasants back on Alberta's landscape. Participating kids have the opportunity to raise pheasants from day-old chicks and release them into suitable habitat as the birds mature.

We've also established a partnership with a working farm to evaluate approaches for re-establishing vibrant upland bird densities while maintaining a profitable farming operation. With more than 24 million acres now under cultivation, hunting opportunity for upland game birds has diminished substantially; wildlife that once thrived with earlier farming practices have increasingly struggled. Working closely with the landowner, we will trial habitat enhancements and progressive game management practices to increase the breeding density and reproductive output of game birds.

In 2014, we took over the role of delivering the provincial pheasant release program that first gained a foothold in 1932. Release sites from previous years were used in 2014 along with a new site closer to Edmonton. The 49 sites were roughly grouped into 6 geographic areas including Medicine Hat (18 sites), Brooks (8 sites), Lethbridge (17 sites), Strathmore (2 sites), Stettler (3 sites), and Camrose (1 site). Our report contains a breakdown of the two types of sites that vary by frequency and number of birds released each week.

The week-long Taber Pheasant Festival continues growing each year. Roughly 700 hunters, including 70 novice hunters, participated in the event in October, 2014. The goal is to draw hunters into the area annually, improving the rural economy and creating value for upland habitat and upland birds within the community.

Partnerships are very important to us, and are a fundamental component of our Habitat Legacy Partnership project. To improve habitat connectivity and hunting access we collaborated with multiple partners to initiate The Milk River

Ridge Reservoir Water Quality Stewardship Initiative project. Through the initiative, we fenced and reclaimed 150 acres (60 hectares) of riparian habitat bordering Ridge Reservoir and the main canal. We also seeded 90 acres (36 hectares) to permanent habitat, all with the intention of improving wildlife habitat, water quality, and hunter access. Other components of our upland work include collaborating with grazing reserves and landowners in northwest Alberta in a stewardship initiative to improve sharp-tailed grouse habitat.

Broad time horizons for conservation

Landowners in the Milk River drainage of southern Alberta take a long-term perspective when it comes to grass management. They need to be thinking at least five and 10 years out to manage their grass through possible drought periods. The MULTISAR program is a highly collaborative partnership with landowners (together, the landowners we partner with hold more than 316,000 acres [127,880 hectares]) that helps guide their ranches to be compatible for cattle and wildlife over the long term. The program is a testament to landowners leading by example. It continues gaining positive recognition across Canada.

It wasn't too long after cattle moved into southern Alberta in the 1880s that fencing became a feature on the landscape. For species like pronghorn, fences pose a serious barrier. We're evaluating methods to improve movement within the existing layout of fences by creating modifications at key points. We also collaborate with Alberta Fish and Game clubs to modify fences and turn them into wildlife-friendly ones.

Our species-at-risk projects focus on enhancing habitat that support vulnerable species. Not surprisingly, conservation efforts for species at risk almost always functions over long time horizons to build support and partnerships with the many stakeholders needed to make

recovery a success. Our piping plover and MULTISAR projects are good examples of long-term conservation efforts that are successful because of the collaboration among many stakeholders.

Keeping track

Grizzly bears are an iconic symbol of Alberta's wilderness and historically an important part of Alberta's hunting heritage. In 2006, with information largely based on low population estimates from the best survey techniques available at the time, the Alberta government suspended the grizzly bear hunt. Recent advances in sampling approaches have shown a sharp difference in grizzly bear estimates in Alberta's southernmost Bear Management Area (BMA). Early results from a University of Alberta study suggest there are roughly three times more grizzly bears in that area compared to the 51 bears estimated using previous methods. This recent count is based on individuals identified via DNA in hair samples collected from naturally existing rub trees. As there are more bears in this area than detected using previous techniques, it suggests that estimates in other bear management areas may also be understated. We have focused our efforts on identifying rub objects in Bear Management Area 5 for a survey scheduled to occur in 2016.

Most people know that you can get DNA from hair or tissue samples, but we're taking it to the next level by trialing an approach for obtaining a DNA signature from pond water. We've partnered with University of Alberta to develop a new way of surveying amphibians using environmental DNA.

2014/15 Overview

- Wolverines visited 22 of the 47 sites trappers monitored in the winter of 2013/14.
- We identified 30 individual wolverines from their unique chest patterns using camera images from winter 2013/14.
- Using non-lethal methods, we collected DNA from 14 marten, 177 fisher, 23 fox, 66 lynx, 1 squirrel, 4 weasel, and 110 wolverine hair samples during the winter of 2013/14.
- Over the winter, 22 trappers from the boreal area of the province operated 45 run poles to passively collect wolverine photos and DNA samples. ACA staff operated another 14 run poles.
- Male wolverines were found to use home ranges of up to 1,200 km².
- In addition to feeding on carrion of large ungulates like caribou and moose, wolverines were found to also hunt snowshoe hares and beavers.
- Roughly 700 hunters, including 70 novice hunters, came to the MD of Taber to participate in the week-long Taber Pheasant Festival in October 2014. We released 4,000 male ring-necked pheasants during this hunting event.
- The Taber Pheasant Festival celebration dinner and auction was attended by more than 340 people.
- Sponsorship for the Taber Pheasant Festival improved again this year with 42 sponsors overall, including 9 in our gold category (\$2,500+).
- We identified and surveyed 48 backcountry routes to locate natural bear rub trees for a future hair DNA survey. We covered more than 580 km of these trails on foot and with ATV.
- We divided these rub tree routes among 14 staff and located 415 rub objects used by grizzly and black bears.
- Public hunting sites from Camrose to Cardston were used in the provincial pheasant release program to improve hunting opportunity over a broad geographic area. The location of the 49 sites were displayed on a map on our website to make planning a trip easier.
- Twenty kids participated in our partnership with 4-H to launch the 4-H Raise and Release program. The kids raised 1,525 female pheasants from day-old chicks and released them when near 14 weeks old into suitable habitat.
- We held a workshop with the 4-H kids discussing how to raise pheasants and the needs pheasants have once they're released into the wild.
- We've established a partnership with a working farm to evaluate approaches for establishing vibrant upland bird densities while maintaining a profitable farming operation.
- We confirmed Alberta's first yellow-bellied racer hibernaculum!
- We collaborated with ranchers to complete habitat plans and assessments on roughly 87,000 acres (35,207 hectares).
- We collaborated with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association at the Calgary Stampede, where over 100,000 people went through our display.
- We planted 4,000 silver sagebrush, golden bean, and wild vetch plugs on native grass restoration sites within the greater sage grouse range.
- We've published 85 status reports, including 15 updates, on species in Alberta since 1997.
- We published three species status reports in 2014/15 including trumpeter swan, Canada warbler, and brassy minnow.

ACA/4-H Pheasant Raise and Release Program

Pheasants were first introduced into Alberta in 1908 by a group of recreational enthusiasts who wanted enhanced upland hunting opportunities. More than 100 years later, the tradition continues as we partner with stakeholders to improve upland hunting opportunities in Alberta. Changes in agricultural practices and the conversion of prairie into cropland have dramatically modified the landscape—native gamebirds are nearly eliminated from areas dedicated to cropland. Provided that a suite of specific habitat features is present, pheasants can adapt to these areas. In 2014, we initiated a partnership with 4 H Alberta to offer kids the opportunity to learn about pheasants and raise them from day-old chicks into near adult hens. In this first year, we limited participation to twenty 4-H kids, who raised 1,525 hen pheasants and released them into suitable upland habitat. We held a workshop for the kids to provide guidance on pheasant husbandry and to discuss the vital habitat features pheasants need to survive in the wild. We also visited many of the kids at their farms to discuss pen design and the condition of their pheasants. The initial year of the program was such a huge success that we are expanding the program to accommodate up to 100 kids in 2015!

Partnerships

4-H, ATB Financial, Lethbridge Fish & Game Association, Pheasants Forever – Lethbridge Chapter, Red Deer Fish & Game Association, Vulcan and District Fish & Game Association

Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program

Volunteers have been playing a crucial role in wildlife conservation efforts for many years. Vast datasets collected through programs like the nearly 50-year-old North American Breeding Bird Survey,

or more recent programs such as eBird, would not exist without their efforts. Individuals who volunteer with ACA can develop skills and gain knowledge related to conservation and, at the same time, increase our capacity to deliver conservation initiatives. In 2014/15, 30 participants from the Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program submitted 60 amphibian and 37 reptile observations, including locations of 8 snake hibernacula (dens). These data represented 80% of the amphibian and 56% of the reptile species native to the province. Data collected by volunteers provide a better understanding of the distribution and status of Alberta's amphibians and reptiles, and provide valuable information for land-use planning efforts. These partnerships and volunteer relationships are examples of how ACA can work with a network of enthusiastic volunteers to positively impact conservation.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society, City of Edmonton's Master Naturalist Program

Alberta Wildlife Status Reports

ACA and Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) produce Alberta Wildlife Status Reports for wild species that are believed to be declining in Alberta. These reports are the essential first step for a species to have its status assessed, and they play a key role in identifying *Endangered* and *Threatened* species that need legal protection and recovery actions to keep them from becoming extinct in Alberta. Each status report summarizes the information needed for assessing a species' status—where it lives, the specific habitat it requires, its population size and whether it is stable/increasing/declining, factors preventing the species from thriving in Alberta, and what work has been done or is ongoing to manage the species in

Alberta. A committee of Alberta-based scientists compares the information in each status report to internationally set thresholds (for population size, for example) and recommends a status for the species. Using international criteria and thresholds ensures the status assessment process is as unbiased as possible. The status recommended by the scientists is subsequently scrutinized by an Alberta-based multi-stakeholder committee (the Endangered Species Conservation Committee). Composed of land managers, academic institutions, conservation groups and industry, the committee provides its recommendation on a species' status to the Minister of AEP. The ultimate decision on status designation (e.g., *Endangered*, *Threatened*) is made by the Minister. In 2014/15, we published three status reports (trumpeter swan update 2013, Canada warbler, brassy minnow), submitted one report (chestnut-collared longspur) for review to the status assessment committees, and edited drafts of two update reports (Arctic grayling update 2014, bison update 2014). ACA plays a key role in assessing the status of Alberta's species at risk through our involvement with the Alberta Wildlife Status Report series.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks

Amphibian Monitoring Using Environmental DNA

We are partnering with the University of Alberta (U of A) to develop a new approach for surveying amphibians using environmental DNA (eDNA). Environmental DNA refers to the DNA that organisms leave behind or shed as they pass through the environment. Most people are aware that this is possible with tissue such as hair, but the next step is collecting a DNA signature from material such as mucus, feces, urine or sloughed skin that is naturally suspended in water. This would allow us to detect amphibian presence by simply

taking a water sample and having it analyzed in a genetics laboratory. One of our first steps was to test our lab techniques to identify the genetic signature for all 10 amphibian species that occur in Alberta. We then tested water samples collected from natural ponds for the eDNA of target amphibian species. We started the lab work in 2013 with a graduate student at the U of A. We have been able to successfully amplify and sequence eDNA for wood frog. It has been less consistent for other target amphibian species. Although there are some details to be resolved, our initial findings support the theory that amphibian DNA in the environment can be used as a proxy for directly observing a target species once robust sample collection and assay protocols are established.

Partnerships

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada – Industrial Postgraduate Scholarships Program, Shell Canada Energy, University of Alberta – Brandon Booker (M.Sc. candidate), David Coltman, Corey Davis and Cynthia Paszkowski

Demonstration Farm Project – Enchant Farm Upland Restoration

Farming has become far more intensive since the post-war recovery following the Second World War. Wildlife that once thrived with earlier farming practices have increasingly struggled, and with more than 24 million acres in Alberta now under cultivation, hunting opportunity for upland gamebirds has diminished substantially. We established a partnership with a working farm to evaluate approaches for re-establishing vibrant upland bird densities while maintaining a profitable farming operation. Working closely with the landowner, we intend to trial habitat enhancements and progressive game management practices to increase breeding density and reproductive output of existing gamebirds (grey

partridge), as well as re-establish the pheasant population. We will focus enhancements on habitat features important to upland birds for nesting, brood rearing and winter survival. We will also monitor a range of non-target species to assess effects on amphibians, invertebrates and songbirds. In 2014/15, the first year of the project, we focused primarily on collecting baseline data. The project is anticipated to continue for 10 years after our enhancements are initiated. The 1,340 ac property (5.42 km²) has 893 ac under cultivation, and already has shrub enhancements around some of the field edges surrounding the six fields under irrigation. During baseline surveys in early spring 2014, approximately 55 grey partridge pairs were counted, which is a density of 10.1 pair/km². No hen pheasants were detected. Finding approaches that increase gamebird densities within a profitable farming operation is an important part of convincing landowners that both goals are attainable on the same farm.

Partnerships

Scott Ward and Cole Haggins, Stamp Select Seeds

Effect of Industrial Disturbance on Wolverine and Lynx

We are partnering with the Alberta Trappers' Association to identify where wolverines occur in the province and to determine the major factors associated with their distribution using data collected with remote cameras. To complement this work, we initiated a partnership with the University of Alberta to investigate wolverine ecology at a finer scale. Ph.D. student, Matthew Scrafford, is researching the effects of industrial activity on wolverine ecology in the boreal forest of northern Alberta. As part of our commitment to the project, we have been assisting with radio collaring wolverines and investigating their movements, feeding patterns and den site

selection. Twenty-nine wolverines have been captured over the past two winters. These animals are helping us understand factors that are important for long-term sustainable populations, and are shedding additional light on results from our coarser-scale research with the Alberta Trappers' Association.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Trappers' Association, Animal Damage Control – A Division of Bushman Inc., ATB Financial, Bildson Realty Ltd., Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd., Hinton Trappers Association, Richard D. McCabe Professional Corporation, Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society, Stojan's Motor Sports, Trapper Gord Homestead & Survival, University of Alberta, Various individual donors: P. Bumstead, L. Elias, L. Hommy, R. Kantor, G. Kruger, G. Macmillan, L. Marciak, D. Middleton, S. Otto, A. Pollock, D. Pilon, R. Reed, B. Smith, J. Sorenson, W. Sullivan, N. Tait, D. Ukeniek, S. Wilson and M. Zapach

Habitat Legacy Partnership

Upland gamebirds are valued for their showy colours, breeding displays and long history in Alberta's hunting tradition. A mix of habitat features that provides conditions suitable for nesting, brood rearing, winter protection and travel is crucial to their success. We initiated the Habitat Legacy Partnership to work collaboratively with conservation groups, private landowners, irrigation districts and municipal districts to facilitate enhancements that target these habitat features. In 2014/15, we planted 3,700 shrubs on private land (open to hunting) to create escape cover and winter habitat for upland gamebirds and other wildlife. We also maintained and monitored more than 17 km of shrub rows planted over the past four years. These shelterbelts provide numerous benefits to a variety of species and provide an opportunity

to actively engage landowners and other stakeholders in habitat enhancements. To improve habitat connectivity, water quality and hunting access, we collaborated with partners to initiate the Milk River Ridge Reservoir Water Quality Stewardship Initiative project. Through this initiative, we fenced and reclaimed 150 acres (60 hectares) of riparian habitat bordering the reservoir and main canal, and we seeded 90 acres (36 hectares) to permanent habitat. A network of key habitat features connected through the southern Alberta landscape is vital to sustain and improve upland bird numbers over the long term. Public engagement is instrumental to the success of the Habitat Legacy Partnership project, and we continue actively working with new and existing partners to support habitat enhancement projects in southern Alberta.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Landowners, Lethbridge Fish & Game Association, Magrath Rod and Gun Club, Municipal District of Warner, Pheasants Forever – Calgary and Lethbridge Chapters

MULTISAR

Southeastern Alberta is home to the highest density of *At Risk* wildlife in Alberta. MULTISAR is a multi-species stewardship program for species at risk focusing on the Milk River watershed and portions of the South Saskatchewan drainage. The program is a collaborative effort between landowners, ACA, Alberta Environment and Parks, and Prairie Conservation Forum. In 2014/15, we completed wildlife and range surveys on ~87,000 acres (35207 hectares) of land and completed five habitat plans for landowners to help them incorporate wildlife habitat needs into their ranching practices.

Endangered greater short-horned lizards and greater sage grouse, as well as *Threatened* ferruginous hawks, chestnut-collared longspurs, yellow-bellied racers, and Sprague's

pipits, are just a few of the species identified on these lands. We implemented enhancements on six properties, including the ongoing restoration of 1,300 acres (526 hectares) back to native grass through broadleaf spraying for Canada thistle; planting 4,000 silver sagebrush, golden bean and wild vetch plugs; and seeding two fields back to wheat to help control weeds and prepare the sites for seeding in the spring. We developed one upland watering site to attract cattle away from riparian areas and two dugouts in a tamed pasture to keep cattle on the uplands and allow the riparian system to recover. Landowners installed 9 km of wildlife-friendly fencing to increase permeability of fence lines for pronghorn movement. Through open communication, we continue to build long-term relationships with landholders and increase awareness of species at risk. These relationships have helped us implement stewardship activities on ~310,000 ac of land that enhance wildlife habitat and complement the business strategies of individual landholders.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Government of Canada, Landholders, Prairie Conservation Forum

Pheasant Hunting Release Program

A Provincial Pheasant Release Program for put-and-take hunting was initiated in 1932. In 2014, ACA took over the role of funding and administering the program. Release sites from previous years were used in 2014, and a new site was initiated near Edmonton (Camrose area). The 49 release sites are roughly grouped into six geographic areas: Medicine Hat (18 sites), Brooks (8 sites), Lethbridge (17 sites), Strathmore (2 sites), Stettler (3 sites) and Camrose (1 site). We released at two types of sites varying by frequency and number of birds released each week: 1) 14 sites have multiple releases

each week with approximately 100 to 400 birds released depending on the specific site, and 2) 35 sites have only one release each week with approximately 25 birds per site per week.

In 2014/15, roughly 75% of birds were released on 30% of the sites, with the remaining 25% of birds distributed between the other 35 sites. In the past, the location of release sites has been influenced by the location of the Brooks Pheasant Hatchery as well as the distribution of wild pheasants. With closure of the hatchery, we brought in all birds from MacFarlane Pheasants in Wisconsin. We distributed 17,080 male pheasants in fall 2014 for put-and-take hunting. To improve awareness of the program and involvement by hunters, we created a map of the release sites and posted it on our website, along with detailed directions to the sites. Seven Alberta Fish & Game Association clubs provided volunteers to help release birds at select sites, and ACA staff and contractors completed releases when volunteers were not available. We increased the number of pheasants released for put-and-take hunting by 7% from 2013. Feedback from hunters has been very positive and encouraging.

Partnerships

Bob Byers, Bob Williams, Camrose Fish & Game Association, Cardston Fish & Game Association, Coulee Game Birds (Harold Fukuda), Dirt Willy Game Bird Farm and Hatchery (Rick Wood-Samman), Ed and Angela Look, Fort Macleod Fish & Game Association, Lethbridge Fish & Game Association, Medicine Hat Fish & Game Association, Picture Butte Fish & Game Association, Steve Potter, Strathmore Fish & Game Association

Piping Plover Recovery Program

Piping plovers are small, stubby-billed, Endangered shorebirds that nest and feed along gravel beaches. They face a number of threats including high rates of predation and damage to their nesting and feeding habitat. We work with landowners across east-central and southern Alberta to improve habitat and promote awareness of the plight of the piping plover. Each year, we also conduct piping plover counts on key breeding lakes that allow us to monitor population numbers and distribution, and help us guide habitat improvement activities. We surveyed 25 waterbodies and found 135 adults on 16 lakes, with 10 or more adults on 6 of these lakes. We improved over 6 km of shoreline habitat by working with landowners to install one temporary fence and using seasonal grazing on one lake to reduce vegetation. We also worked with land management staff to reduce vegetation encroachment on existing piping plover breeding habitat on one waterbody, and we spread gravel along the shoreline of a second waterbody to create breeding habitat for plovers. Since large-scale recovery efforts began in 2002, we have improved over 57 km of shoreline habitat, with the majority of critical piping plover habitat being protected or improved through fencing.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Landowners, Department of National Defence, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Government of Canada, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

Pronghorn Resource Enhancement and Monitoring

Having evolved on the prairies of North America, pronghorn did not develop an instinct to jump vertical obstacles. The proliferation of fencing that followed cattle ranching into Alberta poses a serious barrier to pronghorn movement. Pronghorn may cross under fence lines in some locations, but it slows down their movement, making them susceptible to predators and, in some cases, strips hair off their back, causing lacerations and making them vulnerable to infection and frostbite. In winter 2013/14, we used clips (quick-links or carabiners) to raise the bottom wire on some fence lines by clipping it to the wire above it. We used 46 trail cameras to record attempted crossings by pronghorn before and after treatment to determine whether this enhancement improved the permeability of fence lines for pronghorn. Our work in 2014/15 focused on processing the preceding winter's trail camera images. Based on our preliminary analysis, evidence of preferential crossings by pronghorn at treatment locations is weak thus far, but the acceptance of modified crossing locations may be a learned behaviour that develops over time with visual cues. In 2014/15, we also started trials to assess whether fences modified with double-stranded smooth wire facilitates pronghorn movement. As results become available, we will disseminate information to stakeholders, wildlife managers and conservation groups to enhance efforts to restore movement patterns relied on by pronghorn for thousands of years

Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Bushnell, Cabela's Canada, Canadian Forces Base Suffield, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Onefour Research Station, Safari Club International – Northern Alberta Chapter (Hunting Heritage Fund), TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, The

Nature Conservancy, University of Montana, World Wildlife Fund

Restoring Natural Habitat for Wildlife

Wildfire control began in Alberta's national parks in the 1930s and on provincial forested land in the 1950s. Fire suppression in Alberta forests has reduced the loss of merchantable timber and risks to human settlements. However, fire suppression has had negative consequences as well. Lack of a natural fire regime has changed vegetation succession, diversity and structure, which provide habitat diversity important for the survival of many wildlife species. The primary focus of the Restoring Natural Habitat for Wildlife project is to restore natural ecosystem patterns and wildlife habitat values within landscape units and focal areas that have aged beyond the natural range of variability. In 2014/15, we used mapping exercises and helicopter surveys to identify key areas in need of prescribed burning that support mountain sheep and other ungulates. Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) values ACA's support in identifying and planning habitat enhancements (primarily prescribed burns) on Alberta public lands not influenced by other disturbances (e.g., commercial logging) to restore a more natural state of habitat diversity. Our work with AEP is helping to increase government support for further habitat enhancements. In addition to this work, we are also planning disturbance regimes on ACA managed lands to help improve habitat diversity, structure and successional stages.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Fish & Game Association, Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta

Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Inventory and Stewardship

The parkland of northwestern Alberta historically supported a vibrant population of sharp-tailed grouse in a mosaic of grassland patches throughout an aspen-dominated landscape. Agricultural use over the past 60 years has seen many of these grassland patches converted to cropland, and fire suppression has limited the development of new open patches. Habitat stewardship of grassland patches is critical for keeping sharp-tailed grouse on this landscape. In 2014/15, we encouraged stewardship activities with private landowners, grazing reserve managers and members of the public to highlight the habitat needs of sharp-tailed grouse and other wildlife. This work included discussions about their changing habitat needs through the seasons.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, County of Grande Prairie, Dunvegan Fish & Game Association, Wanham Grazing Reserve

Taber Pheasant Festival

The Taber Pheasant Festival is a week-long event, with the fourth annual event held in October 2014. This family event is multifaceted, kicking off with a novice hunting weekend, followed by six days of hunts at 30 locations in the Municipal District of Taber. Through the week, a variety of events were held including guest speakers, demonstrations and interactive social activities. The festival is gaining momentum each year with increased recognition throughout the province by hunters and non-hunters alike, not only for the hunting opportunities, but also for the positive economic and cultural benefits it has fostered in the Taber area. Roughly 700 hunters, including 70 novice hunters, participated in this event, and we released 4,000 male ring necked pheasants over the course of seven days. Hunters were

able to pre-register well in advance for the available slots. The online registration filled up very quickly again this year, taking less than 10 minutes to fully book. Ninety percent of hunters were residents of Alberta, while ten percent travelled from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba or the United States. Organization of the 2014 event saw more input and facilitation from local participants, making the event more community driven with local ownership. Other new aspects adopted this year included a logo specific to the festival, sales of festival hats and gloves, and more events held throughout the festival, including Rick Smith's dog-training seminar,

an air rifle target shooting and card game night, and a scotch-tasting evening. Due to the popularity of the festival, we anticipate increasing hunting opportunities by 25% in October 2015. Sponsorship and support for this festival has increased dramatically over the past four years.

Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Cabela's Canada, Cycle Works, Heritage Inn Taber, Landowners, Municipal District of Taber, Pheasants Forever, Taber & District Chamber of Commerce, Town of Taber, Town of Vauxhall, Vortex



Taber Pheasant Festival 2014

Photo: Dan McDougall

Upland Gamebird Studies

ACA is striving to improve habitat that benefits upland gamebirds. We are engaged in several programs aimed at improving habitat (Habitat Legacy Partnership, Demonstration Farm) as well as re-establishing gamebird numbers (4-H Raise and Release, Pheasant Release Program) to improve hunting opportunities in the future. To better understand habitat features and treatments that provide viable recruitment and survival, we monitor upland bird trends in select locations. We also monitor the dispersal and survival of hen pheasants to understand and improve the efficiency of pen-reared releases. In late summer 2014, we surveyed 30 km of high-quality habitat and flushed 73 pheasants and 397 partridge. Encounter rates for partridge coveys were higher than the two previous years, with >3.5 coveys per hour. Only 6 of 50 pen-reared, radio collared hen pheasants were alive after 20 weeks, with 29 confirmed mortalities and 15 of unknown fate. A surprising outcome was the rapid dispersal of released hens from areas with good concealment cover and high food availability. Some hens travelled at least 17 linear kilometres from the release area, with most surviving hens associated with cattail complexes. Population trends of upland gamebirds vary with habitat conditions from year to year. Understanding the patterns of recruitment and survival with respect to habitat will help direct our projects that seek to re-establish gamebirds over time.

Partnerships

Landowners, Pheasants Forever – Calgary Chapter, Volunteers

Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program

The intention of the Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program is to help agricultural producers reduce damage to crops caused by waterfowl during fall migration. To improve effectiveness and efficiency, we

approached counties and municipal districts in 2012/13 in areas where we previously operated scare cannon distribution centres. We offered scare cannons free of charge for them to incorporate into their existing equipment rental programs. In 2014/15, we continued to work with producers as well as counties and municipal districts to ensure that scare cannons were available where needed for waterfowl crop damage prevention. We provided locations where scare cannons were available for loan and also crop damage prevention strategies on our website.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks

Waterfowl Nesting Habitat Enhancement

Loss of secure nesting habitat is a primary limiting factor for mallard, goldeneye and bufflehead populations in areas of Alberta where annual crop production is the predominant land use. Providing nest tunnels in these areas improves nesting success for mallards, and installing nest boxes for goldeneye and bufflehead increases potential nesting sites. Our project encourages landowners and interested conservation groups to install and maintain these nest structures and to monitor annual use by waterfowl. We also provide information on waterfowl and their habitat to interested individuals and groups through field trips, presentations, and print and electronic media. This year marked the end of our Waterfowl Nesting Habitat Enhancement project. In 2011/12, we encouraged landowners with nest boxes on their properties to assume maintenance responsibility, and this year, we negotiated transfer of responsibility for nest tunnel maintenance and volunteers to Delta Waterfowl. We informed all volunteers of this change in reporting. In 2014/15, we also provided three replacement nest tunnels to one volunteer and eight new tunnels to three volunteers.

Volunteers and ACA staff monitored 38 nest tunnels and found three tunnels unavailable for use due to low water levels. Of the 35 tunnels available for nesting, 21 were used and 19 appeared to have housed successfully hatched ducklings. We also provided eight nest boxes for use on ACA Conservation Sites, and provided four other boxes to volunteer groups. Monitoring reports on 28 nest boxes indicated that 18 were used by target waterfowl, 7 were used by other species, and only 3 were not used. To provide information on waterfowl habitat needs, we hosted a field trip and delivered a presentation on waterfowl nesting habitat, which a total of 44 people attended. While ACA will not be taking an active role in these waterfowl habitat enhancements in the future, we will provide direction to the public wishing to become involved with artificial nest structures. People specifically interested in nest tunnels will be encouraged to contact Delta Waterfowl to participate in its Hen House program.

Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Delta Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Syncrude Canada Ltd., Wildlife Habitat Canada, Windsor Plywood

Wildlife Habitat Initiative in Low Disturbance Zones – Grizzly Bear Monitoring Project

Grizzly bears are an iconic symbol of our wilderness and historically an important part of Alberta's hunting heritage. In 2006, the Alberta government suspended the grizzly bear hunt, largely based on low population estimates gained from the best survey techniques available then. Recent advances in sampling approaches have shown a marked difference in grizzly bear estimates in the southernmost bear management area in Alberta. Early results from a University of Alberta study, based on individuals identified

from DNA in hair samples collected from naturally existing rub trees, suggest roughly 3 times more grizzly bears occur in that area than the 51 bears estimated using previous methods. This result suggests that estimates in other bear management areas might also be understated. In 2014, we searched more than 580 km of trails and located 415 rub trees in the bear management area between Crowsnest Pass and Kananaskis. We initially divided the mountainous terrain into 65 survey routes where teams of two hiked and travelled by all-terrain vehicle to locate trees and other structures previously rubbed by bears. We attached short strands of barbed wire to each rub object to assist us in future with collecting hair for DNA analysis. Ongoing concern exists over the frequent conflict between humans and bears in southwestern Alberta. An accurate population estimate is a key part of the decision process for understanding human-bear conflicts and for proactive land use planning designed to reduce these conflicts.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Innovates – Technology Futures, Alberta Parks, Landowners in southwestern Alberta, Parks Canada

Wildlife Habitat Initiative in Low Disturbance Zones – Habitat Resources and Movement Corridors in Southwest Alberta

Understanding important habitat resources for wildlife is an important step toward ensuring Alberta's wild spaces and species are identified and conserved. Between 2010 and 2013, we used trail cameras to monitor a set of naturally existing mineral licks in southwest Alberta to determine the seasonal variation of use by key ungulates. In 2013, we collected soil samples from mineral licks and analyzed these for specific minerals thought to be attractants to wildlife. We also continued monitoring a subset of high-altitude lick sites to

gather more information on bighorn sheep and mountain goats. From our monitoring, we identified elk, moose, mule deer, white-tailed deer and mountain goats using forested mineral licks, and determined that the peak period of use generally occurred in late July. As predicted, moose, deer and elk used forested mineral licks significantly less during the daytime compared to the morning or evening. Alpine mineral licks were most frequently visited by mountain goats and bighorn sheep. The peak activity at alpine licks occurred in July and August, where goats are typically present at all hours of the day while sheep tend to avoid the night period. In 2014, we summarized data from trail camera images of bighorn sheep and mountain goat visitations at a subset of mineral licks in southwest Alberta. Summary statistics and results from these findings were presented at the Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council Conference in Fort Collins, Colorado, in June 2014.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Anatum Ecological Consulting, Devon Canada Corporation, Parks Canada

Working with Alberta's Trappers to Map Wolverine Distribution and Identify Conservation Risks

We are partnering with the Alberta Trappers' Association to identify where wolverines occur in the province and to determine the major factors associated with their distribution. To do this, bait stations with remote cameras are set up within the Registered Fur Management Areas of volunteer trappers. Trappers check and maintain these sites throughout the winter and then provide the photographs to biologists, who analyze them to determine what site characteristics are associated with a higher probability of finding wolverines and other species. Sampling focused on Boreal regions

of the province during 2013/14 and 2014/15. The study area roughly stretched from Cold Lake to Grande Prairie and north to the Northwest Territories border. Wolverines were detected at 22 of the 47 sites in 2013/14; unique markings identified at least 30 different wolverines. Occupancy analysis indicated that the closer a site was to an area of either Lower or Upper Boreal Highlands natural subregions, the more likely it was to have wolverines present. Wolverines were less likely to occur as the road density within the surrounding township increased or the closer a site was located to a human population centre. We created a GIS layer that approximated the relationship between elevation and latitude that influences ambient temperature—the cooler the relative theoretical temperature within the township, the more likely wolverines were to occupy a given area. Contrary to our predictions, we did not see a positive relationship between wolverines and areas of persistent spring snow into late April to mid-May. We also did not find a positive relationship between wolverines and parks or protected areas, or a negative relationship with seismic line density. We anticipate gaining more clarity on the habitat and environmental features important to wolverines as we work with trappers over the coming winters.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Trappers' Association, Animal Damage Control – A Division of Bushman Inc., Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd., Environment Canada, Harvest Operations Corp., Shell FuellingChange, Trapper Gord Homestead & Survival, University of Alberta



Fisheries Program

Happy angler, hooked on conservation

Enhanced Sports Fisheries (Enhanced Fish Stocking and Lake Aeration) provide Albertans with recreational angling in areas of the province where such fishing opportunities don't otherwise exist. The result is reduced pressure on limited native fish stocks and increased angling opportunities.

In 2014/15, we stocked some 115,150 catchable-size (i.e., 20 cm) rainbow trout in 61 ponds through Enhanced Fish Stocking (EFS), creating “put-and-take” trout fisheries where anglers are allowed to harvest up to five fish per day. Since 1998, when ACA assumed responsibility for EFS, we have stocked over two million rainbow trout. To prevent interaction with native fish species, trout stocking occurs in “white zones”, which are only stocked with sterile fish and in waterbodies that are isolated from natural waterways. These sites are located close to urban centres, making them very popular family destinations all summer long. We also installed signage at 10 waterbodies to increase public awareness of EFS. Data collected on water quality, physical characteristics, and angler effort at EFS ponds will help improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of our fish stocking project.

Kids Can Catch Event, Wabamun 2015

Partners: Dow, Cabelas, TransAlta, Wabamun & District Chamber of Commerce, Village of Wabamun, Walleye Master

Photo: ACA, Colin Eyo

A primary concern for fisheries managers in Alberta is the growing trend of decreasing numbers of people participating in recreational fishing. The issue is particularly pronounced among urban dwellers who are lured to other recreational activities that require less time and travel. A key strategy to reverse this trend is providing angling opportunities close to where people live. Indeed, among the anglers we surveyed at EFS ponds, most frequented these sites because they were close to home, and were very satisfied with their fishing experience. In addition to facilitating the recruitment of anglers, the increased participation in outdoor activities also help reconnect people to nature and increase overall environmental awareness and support for conservation activities. Seeing the wide-eyed expression on a novice fisherman's face when they catch the “big one” confirms that fish isn't the only thing hooked that day!

Breath of life

An impressive 16 lakes across the province benefited from lake aeration last year, creating great angling opportunities for residents of neighbouring communities. Aerated lakes are typically shallow, productive, experience prolonged ice-cover, and are prone to both summer and winter fish kills due to low dissolved oxygen. Through aeration, we maintain dissolved oxygen at levels that promote year-round survival of stocked trout. The older, larger fish found in aerated lakes can provide a welcome challenge even for the experienced angler who appreciates trying to outsmart a seasoned opponent. Except for one lake that experienced a late winter fish kill due to an atypically long winter period, all other lakes successfully overwintered fish and avoided summerkills. We expanded the aeration activities by adding one waterbody (Radway Pond) where we installed a subsurface diffuser aeration system for test run and full deployment in 2015/16. As well, we

continued assessing the suitability of other sites for aeration, including West Dollar and Winchell lakes.

New partnership improves bottomline

An important element of ACA programming is to deliver projects as cost-effectively as possible to provide the utmost benefit for Albertans. In previous years, private growers supplied all the fish stocked in EFS ponds. However, the unit cost of fish from these growers has increased sharply in recent years. In 2013/14 we developed a partnership with the Government of Alberta (GOA) fish hatcheries. For the first time, in 2014/15, the GOA fish hatcheries supplied and stocked over 14,000 fish into six ponds, at a much lower cost than would private growers. This marks the dawn of a cost-saving and long-term relationship with the GOA fish hatcheries, and we will increase the number of fish and ponds stocked by the GOA hatchery in coming years.

The more, the merrier

Alberta has a long history of fish culture and stocking. Brook trout were introduced to the Bow River system as early as 1910, and the first hatchery was constructed in Banff National Park in 1913. Today, fish stocking remains an important component of Alberta's recreational angling experience. Our role as a delegated administrative organization, and our extensive experience delivering EFS, means ACA is well-positioned to expand the scope of fish stocking activities provincially to help meet growing demands for increased angling opportunities. Fish stocking programs often have ecological, social and political underpinnings that complicate their delivery. The fish stocking expansion project evaluated these elements and identified a variety of potential opportunities that resulted in two new projects for 2015/16.

Sport fishery evaluations

We monitor sport fisheries for angler use, harvest and associated demographics. Results from these surveys feed directly into AEP fisheries management plans and form the basis for fishing regulation changes. They also help determine the effectiveness of new management strategies, such as the special walleye fishing licence. For 2014/15, we conducted angler surveys at 12 ACA-stocked ponds.

The stocked trout survival project helped identify factors contributing to low fish survival in EFS ponds. Despite their popularity, recent evidence suggests some of our EFS ponds may not be capable of supporting trout survival beyond mid-summer. Results from a recent study of seven stocked waterbodies (including four EFS ponds) indicated that only 4% of trout mortality was attributable to angler catches and that over 90% of stocked trout died of natural or unknown causes over the fishing season. Estimates of trout survival and angler effort varied considerably across our 12 study ponds in 2014/15.

In some ponds, avian predation and poor mid-summer water quality, particularly high temperatures and low oxygen concentrations, appear to be responsible for low fish survival. In contrast, and on the bright side, other instances of low survival to the end of summer was attributed to high angler harvest, illustrating a direct benefit to anglers.

Species recovery and management plans

We conduct numerous inventory and evaluation projects to provide information on the population structure, abundance, distribution and life history of priority fish species. In 2014/15, we conducted projects at seven rivers. Focal sport fish species include walleye, northern pike, bull trout, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, mountain whitefish, and sauger. Our studies generate

critical information required for the development of key provincial conservation initiatives and resource management policies, including the Alberta Fish Sustainability Index, Alberta Wildlife Status Reports, Alberta Landuse Framework, and State of the Watershed reports under the Alberta Water for Life Strategy.

Bull trout studies in the east slopes drainages have identified key spawning tributaries, overwintering habitats and subpopulations, as well as inter-basin migrations that were previously unknown. In the Castle River drainage, we identified new spawning tributaries in the Mill Creek, South Castle River, and the Carbondale River system, as well as inter-basin migrations among the Castle, Crowsnest, and Old Man river basins. In the Waterton River system, cold water released from beneath the dam moderates water temperature increases in reservoir tailwaters, particularly during mid-summer, creating a stable coldwater refuge that supports a vibrant brown trout, mountain whitefish, rainbow trout, and lake whitefish sport fishery.

The walleye study on the Owl River not only re-affirmed the river as a key spawning system for walleye from Lac La Biche, but it also helped document the potential success of the AEP Lac La Biche walleye stocking program. Nearly 200 million walleye fry and fingerlings were stocked in the lake between 2006 and 2010. Many of these stocked fish reached sexual maturity between 2011 and 2013. The large walleye spawning migrations from the lake into the river should hopefully translate into natural recruitment and a self-sustaining lake walleye population. In addition, this project generated valuable information on water quality and aquatic habitat that will aid in evaluation of the complementary long-term riparian conservation project (see Land Management section). Similarly, the Milk River project generates complementary data to those collected in a larger study by researchers from the University of Alberta on the status of fish community in the Milk River, including two species, the Rocky

Mountain sculpin and western silvery minnow, listed as *Threatened* under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*.

By incorporating advances in analytical techniques (such as occupancy modelling) and non-invasive fish sampling technology (such as PIT tag scanner array), we lead the development of population status assessment tools for bull trout in the province. To crown it all, and as testament to the scientific rigour of our studies, results from our bull trout studies in the Clearwater River were published in the *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences*, a prestigious, peer-reviewed scientific journal.

2014/15 Overview

- 115,150 twenty-cm long rainbow trout stocked into 61 waterbodies.
- Established partnership with Government of Alberta fish hatcheries to supply and stock fish in ACA trout ponds at lower cost than private growers.
- 15 aerated waterbodies successfully overwintered fish and prevented summerkills; one experienced late winter fish kill.
- Installed additional aerator on Fiesta Lake to increase capacity and prevent future winterkills.
- Expanded aeration activities by adding one waterbody (Radway Pond) where we installed a subsurface diffuser aeration system for test-run and full deployment in 2015/16.
- Assessed the suitability of additional waterbodies for aeration, including West Dollar and Winchell lakes.
- Surveyed 19 waterbodies, and generated information on population status, recreational harvest, distribution, migration and spawning habitat of sport fish.
- Sport fish surveyed: walleye, northern pike, bull trout, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, mountain whitefish and sauger.
- Trout survival to end of summer in EFS ponds is influenced by poor mid-summer water quality, avian predation, and (on the plus side) high angler harvest.
- Bull trout studies in the east slopes

drainages identified key spawning tributaries, overwintering habitats and inter-basin movements previously unknown.

- Cold water released from beneath the Waterton River dam moderates water temperature increases in tailwaters, creating a stable coldwater refuge that supports a vibrant sport fishery.
- Owl River is a key spawning system for walleye from Lac La Biche.
- Large spawning run of walleye between Lac La Biche and the Owl River indicates potential success of the AEP Lac La Biche walleye stocking program.
- 94 anglers interviewed during creel surveys.
- 197 redds counted over 63 river kilometers.
- 325 river kilometers surveyed with electrofishing, gillnets, or angling.
- Used PIT-tag scanner array, a non-invasive fish sampling technology, to monitor trap avoidance by fish.
- Published result from ACA bull trout studies in prestigious, peer-reviewed scientific journal.

Overall, the success of our Fisheries program activities in 2014/15 involved the support of over 28 partners consisting of provincial and federal governments, industry, watershed groups, non-governmental organizations, counties/ municipalities, and other interested groups.

Clearwater River Core Area Bull Trout Status

ACA has a long history of documenting sport fish distributions at a watershed scale to support species status assessments. When describing species distribution based on presence-absence surveys, identification of presence based on species detection is straightforward, but it becomes much more difficult to assert absence based on a failure to detect the species at a site. In these cases, the question remains: Is the species truly absent from the site or did we just fail to detect it? Bull trout, a *Threatened* species in Alberta, may be particularly hard to detect because it is secretive, patchily distributed across watersheds, and often occurs in low numbers. During the Clearwater River study, we assessed our ability to detect bull trout and the stream habitat factors that impact detection. We found the current sampling standard under typical environmental conditions gave us a very high probability (>90%) of detecting bull trout and that, depending on the goals of the study, sampling effort could be reduced substantially (by at least 30%) without jeopardizing our results. These findings have important implications for the efficient design and delivery of future watershed-scale fish distribution assessments. We chose to publish the Clearwater River Core Area Bull Trout Status study results in a scientific journal because peer review and communication of study results are crucial components of the scientific process. Our paper, "Estimating occupancy and detection probability of juvenile bull trout using backpack electrofishing gear in a west central Alberta watershed," was published in the *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* in spring 2015.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks

Distribution and Abundance of the Migratory Bull Trout Population in the Castle River Drainage (Year 4 of 4)

Alberta's bull trout populations have declined over the last century due to anthropogenic disturbances, including habitat fragmentation and degradation, migration barriers, introduction of non-native fish species, and overharvest. In southwestern Alberta, bull trout distribution has been reduced to approximately 31% of its historical range. Current populations, all of which are *At Risk* of extirpation, exist only in headwater streams. The abundance and distribution of these remnant populations are unclear. ACA has completed abundance and spawning habitat assessments in the Castle River drainage to update the status of these remnant populations. During fall 2014, we installed fish traps in South Castle River, Carbondale River and Mill Creek to capture bull trout migrating downstream. We marked all adult bull trout (≥ 300 mm fork length) with an internal transponder tag to track individuals during recapture events. We captured a total of 191 adult migratory bull trout in three major spawning streams: 73 fish in South Castle River, 89 in Carbondale River, and 29 in Mill Creek. We conducted redd (fish nest) counts in spawning streams and observed 211 redds in a total of 68 stream kilometres: 48 in South Castle River, 14 in West Castle River, 72 in Mill Creek, and 77 in the Carbondale River drainage. The 2014 field season marks the final year of the study. Since 2011, we have captured and marked 493 adult bull trout and documented spawning habitat use throughout the major streams of the Castle River drainage.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Devon Canada Corporation, Shell Canada Energy

Distribution of Sport Fish in the Waterton River Tailwater, 2014

Brown trout and rainbow trout are popular recreational species in waterbodies across Alberta. Both species grow best when average daily stream temperatures remain at or below 20°C during summer months. Temperatures exceeding 24°C are considered lethal. In southern Alberta, trout streams often exceed lethal tolerances, approaching 27°C in some tributaries. Tailwaters of some dams can serve as cold-water refuges in reaches that ordinarily would offer marginal angling potential. When a reservoir is deep enough, heavier, colder water settling at the reservoir bottom is released through the dam's outflow, providing a constant discharge of cold water that is suitable for tailwater trout populations. The Waterton River downstream of

Waterton dam supports introduced brown trout and rainbow trout populations. Daily temperature of the Waterton River upstream of the reservoir approaches 24°C during the hottest summer weather. Downstream of the reservoir, cold water discharged from below the dam cools the tailwater; however, it is unknown how far downstream the cooling, or the trout fishery, extends. From July 17 to 25, 2014, we used a raft electrofisher to sample the 60 km tailwater reach of the Waterton River from the dam to the river mouth and installed data loggers to monitor instream temperature. We captured 832 sport fish, including mountain whitefish (78%), brown trout (14%), rainbow trout (3%), lake whitefish (2%), burbot (1%), lake trout (1%), and northern pike and mooneye (1% combined). Mountain whitefish and brown trout occurred throughout the study area, from the dam to the confluence with the

Belly River. In contrast, rainbow trout and lake whitefish, both cold-water species, were generally concentrated toward upper reaches of the tailwater, where a cold-water refuge persists. Average daily stream temperature at the outlet remained below 10°C throughout the summer. From the reservoir outlet to the river mouth, average daily stream temperatures remained at or below 20°C, suggesting conditions were favourable throughout the tailwater during peak summer temperatures at 2014 flows. Our results identify the composition and extent of the Waterton River tailwater trout fishery, which provide crucial information for the responsible management of this valuable angling resource.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks

Photo: ACA, Jason Blackburn



Effect of Size-selectiveness of Sport Fishery Harvest on Walleye

In 2012/13 and 2013/14, we conducted angler surveys on Iosegun and Smoke lakes as part of a larger, collaborative study with Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) to evaluate the effectiveness of the Special Walleye Licence in reversing the effects of size-selective harvest on walleye. For both years, we produced independent project reports on our component of the project. Our goal in 2014/15 was to integrate these reports with the AEP component into a manuscript targeted for publication in a peer reviewed journal. This project was suspended due to the project leader's resignation.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks

Enhanced Fish Stocking Project

The Enhanced Fish Stocking project provides anglers with increased opportunities to catch and harvest 20-cm rainbow trout in parts of Alberta where angling opportunities are limited or do not exist. Recipient waterbodies are prone to winterkill and require annual stocking of rainbow trout to maintain angling opportunities. In 2014/15, rainbow trout stockings were completed through 10 contracts: nine with private growers and one with the Government of Alberta. We stocked a total of 61 waterbodies with 115,150 rainbow trout in 2014. Approximately 60% of the stockings were completed before the May long weekend. Due to low water level and to allow for trout stocking, we filled one waterbody (Mirror Reservoir) to full supply level by pumping water from a nearby creek. We also installed project signs at 10 waterbodies. Since 1998, when ACA assumed responsibility for the Enhanced Fish Stocking project, we have stocked over two million rainbow trout in 1,455 stocking events.

Partnerships

Access Pipeline, Agrium Redwater, Aquality Environmental, Aux Sable, City of Fort Saskatchewan, Complete Crossings, DOW Agro Sciences, Lacombe County

Fish Stocking Expansion

Alberta has a long history of fish culture and stocking. Through its role as a delegated administrative organization with extensive experience delivering the Enhanced Fish Stocking project, ACA is well-positioned to expand the scope of its provincial fish stocking activities and help meet growing demand for angling opportunities. We completed a detailed review of the policy and position statements of ACA member groups and provincial angler survey data, supplemented with a survey of ACA fisheries staff, to develop a prioritized list of potential fish stocking expansion opportunities. Results of this process were used to identify and develop ACA project proposals for 2015/16. Based on this review, two projects (Fish Stocking Expansion–New Lakes and Fish Stocking Expansion–New Species/Strains) were developed and are planned for 2015/16. Several other new projects have also benefited indirectly. These proposals support the broadening of ACA's fish stocking activities across the province, creating more angling opportunities for Albertans.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks

Lake Aeration

We use aeration as a fisheries management technique to provide Albertans with recreational angling opportunities in areas of the province where such opportunities are otherwise limited. Aerated waterbodies are typically shallow, eutrophic, experience prolonged ice cover, and are prone to summer and winter fish kills. We use aeration to maintain dissolved oxygen levels above 3 mg/L to promote year-round survival of stocked trout. In 2014/15, we aerated 16 waterbodies across

Alberta, all of which successfully overwintered trout through most of the winter. However, Fiesta Lake experienced a winterkill in early spring 2014. We identified and continued to develop potential aeration opportunities, including installing aeration equipment on an additional waterbody (Radway Pond). Further, we established and maintained financial and in-kind partnerships for existing and new aeration projects.

Partnerships

Access Pipelines, Alberta Culture and Tourism, Alberta Environment and Parks, Clear Hills County, County of Parkland, Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd., Edson Forest Products, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Fisheries Enhancement Society of Alberta, Municipal District of Greenview No. 16, Northern Sunrise County, Peace Country Fly Fishers, Spring Lake Campground, Trout Unlimited Canada – Yellowhead Chapter, Village of Spring Lake

Milk River Sauger Abundance and Fish Community Structure

Fish populations in the Milk River in southern Alberta are influenced by international transboundary flow agreements between Alberta and Montana. Discussions are underway regarding the timing and quantity of water diverted into the North Milk River and subsequently conveyed into the Alberta portion of the river. The goal of our project was to generate data on fish distribution and abundance that can be used to review the status of fish species. Sauger is the primary sport fish of interest to anglers in the Milk River. ACA focused on determining sauger distribution and abundance and overall fish community composition in the middle reaches, while researchers from the University of Alberta conducted surveys on sculpin and western silvery minnow in the upper and lower reaches.

In 2014, the second and final year

of the study, we used electrofishing to capture fish at 11 sites along the Milk River. We captured 12 species of fish representing seven families. Species composition varied between sites. Longnose sucker was the most abundant species, followed by flathead chub, sauger and white sucker. Sauger constituted 18% of the catch and was captured at all sites. Longnose sucker, flathead chub and white sucker were also captured at all sites. Longnose dace occurred at all reaches but not all sites within a reach. Northern pike, mountain sucker and Rocky Mountain sculpin occurred at two reaches, and lake chub and western silvery minnow occurred at one reach. Catch-per-unit-effort for sauger ranged from 0.5 to 2.1 fish/km. Sauger ranged from 215 to 599 mm in fork length, with a mean length (\pm standard deviation) of 387 ± 60 mm. The most abundant sizes occurred within the 360, 380 and 440 mm ranges, which made up 29% of the population ($n = 41$). We were unable to estimate abundance for sauger using mark-recapture techniques due to the low recapture rate.

Partnerships

Alberta Culture and Tourism, Alberta Environment and Parks, Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk

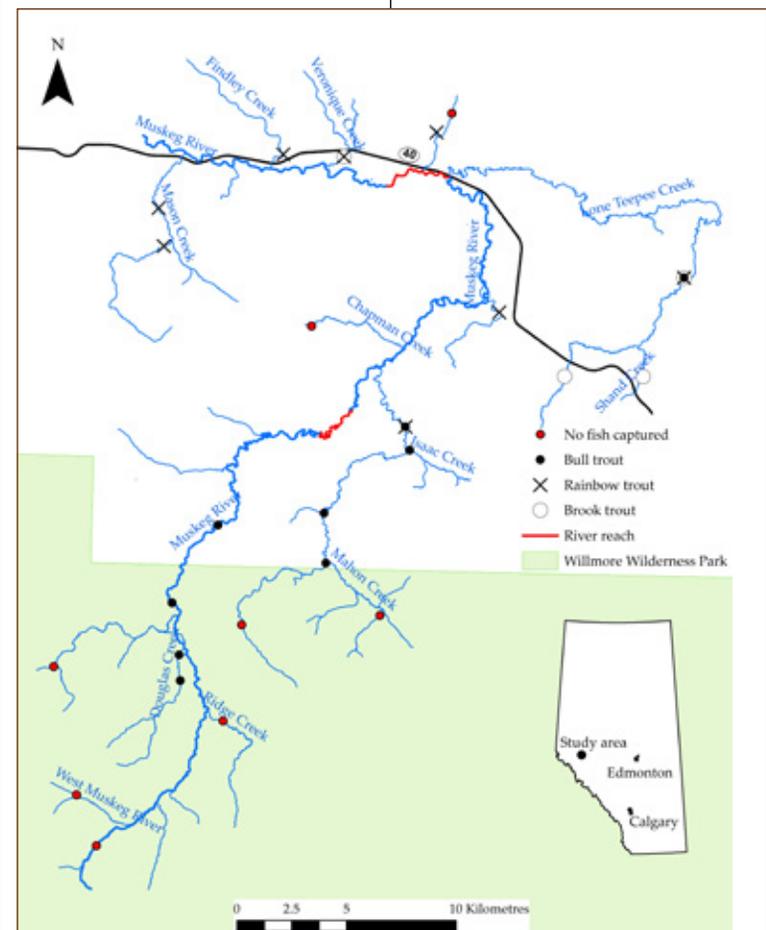
Muskeg River Core Area Bull Trout Status

Bull trout is a sport fish native to the eastern slopes of Alberta. In response to alarming declines in abundance and distribution, the provincial government imposed a zero bag limit for the species in 1995. Despite this and other conservation measures, most bull trout populations remaining in the province are currently considered to be *At Risk* of extirpation, and several populations, including the Muskeg River population, are considered at *High Risk*. In the final year of this two-year project, we sampled 25 sites in the Muskeg River core area to assess sport fish distribution. We captured 89 bull trout, 231 brook trout and 159 rainbow trout using backpack electrofishing. Juvenile bull trout were detected at six of the 25 sites. We used angling and raft electrofishing gear to capture

bull trout in two reaches of the Muskeg River that have been assessed periodically since the 1990s. Each bull trout captured was implanted with a tag to allow us to identify individuals. We estimated the abundance of bull trout in the first two km of the upper reach to be 50 (95% confidence interval = 41 – 76). We only captured 15 bull trout in 4.5 km of the lower reach. Our poor catch precluded us from estimating bull trout abundance in this reach. Our study results provide managers with quantitative, up-to-date information on the abundance and distribution of adult and juvenile bull trout in the Muskeg River core area.

Partnerships

Alberta Culture and Tourism, Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Stream Watch Conservation Coalition, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



Owl River Walleye and Aquatic Habitat Assessment

The Owl River is considered a primary spawning system for Lac La Biche walleye. In 2011/12, we began a long-term project to protect and restore riparian habitat along the Owl River to aid walleye population restoration. We collected baseline data on the distribution of walleye spawning habitat, the abundance of spawning walleye, water quality, and aquatic habitat and riparian health. In 2014, we reassessed these characteristics as part of a three-year interval monitoring protocol; results from the riparian component of the study are presented in the Land Management section. In spring 2014, we conducted a mark-recapture survey using two pound nets to determine the magnitude of the walleye spawning run from the lake into the Owl River. Eighty eight percent of the 998 walleye captured migrating from the lake into the Owl River were in a spawning stage, confirming use of the Owl River as a walleye spawning system. Males (65%) were more abundant in the catch than females (22%). Walleye in the spawning run ranged in size from 435 to 677 mm total length. Due to zero recaptures, we were unable to derive reliable abundance estimates of the walleye spawning run. Dissolved oxygen was high (6.8 to 10.1 mg/L) throughout the system from May to August. Total phosphorus concentrations were high (summer average: 84 to 290 µg/L) throughout the system, with higher concentrations at downstream sites than at upstream sites. Total coliform counts exceeded the established limit for agricultural use (>1,000 mpn/100 mL) at all sites. Substrate in the upper sites was dominated by boulder, cobble and gravel suitable for walleye spawning, whereas sites in the lower section consisted mainly of fines and sands unsuitable for walleye spawning.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Syncrude Canada Ltd.

Stocked Trout Survival

Stocking trout to create put-and-take fisheries is a popular management tool for providing recreational fisheries. Initial results suggest that put-and-take sport fisheries are composed of populations of many fewer fish than previously believed, but their location near municipalities makes them popular family destinations. Despite the cost and importance of stocking programs, little information exists on the fish after their stocking. To assess stocking success, we collected data to estimate survival of fish in two-week intervals at 12 ACA-stocked waterbodies. We also collected data at each waterbody to estimate angler effort and catch. Angler effort during the survey period ranged from 7 h/ha at Mirror Reservoir to 5,268 h/ha at Cipperley's Reservoir, and harvest of stocked trout ranged from 3.3% at Mound Red Reservoir to 72.7% at Cipperley's Reservoir. Fish survival ranged from 7.5% at Beaumont Pond to 99.7% at Nuggett Pond. Beaumont Pond and Mound Red Reservoir had similar low survival rates, but angler harvest at Beaumont Pond was 9.6 times higher than at Mound Red Reservoir indicating that a considerable portion of the fish at the reservoir are unaccounted for. Survival estimates were not completed at Lamont, Mirror and Parlby reservoirs, where fish captures were too low to estimate survival, but survival is suspected to be very low. At Mirror Reservoir, direct evidence of significant avian predation was observed, suggesting this is a large source of fish mortality at this reservoir.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks

Swan River Arctic Grayling Stock and Watershed Connectivity Assessment

Arctic grayling populations in Alberta have been severely declining since the 1950s, due primarily to habitat fragmentation resulting from improperly installed road crossings. In the Swan River watershed (Athabasca drainage), Arctic grayling are of concern because of increasing industrial development, access, and angling pressure. Our goal in 2014/15 was to assess the distribution, relative abundance and population structure of Arctic grayling and determine the level of fragmentation due to stream crossings in the Swan River watershed. Provincial managers will use the data to support regulatory actions that minimize the effects of industrial and recreational activities on Arctic grayling stocks in the watershed. Implementation of this project was deferred until 2015/16.

Partnerships

N/A



Escape Coulee Conservation Site

Partnerships: Alberta Fish & Game Association,
Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship
Program for Species at Risk, Pheasants Forever -
Chinook Chapter, TransCanada Pipeline Ltd and
Wild Elk Federation

Photo: ACA, Julie Landry-Deboer

Land Management

Conservation impact

The primary goal of our Land Management program is the conservation of important wildlife and fish habitat across Alberta. This habitat, known as Conservation Sites (published in *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*), spans hundreds of thousands of acres across Alberta. Each site has its own unique characteristics and provides an array of opportunities to hunt, fish, forage or view wildlife. Conserving habitat in perpetuity while providing sustainable recreational opportunities, and working with landowners and member groups to achieve these goals, is what ACA's Land Management program is all about.

Each year we acquire new Conservation Sites by securing habitat through purchase and land donations from private landowners across Alberta. This is achieved through a collaborative effort between ACA, private donors, our corporate partners and other conservation organizations. Notably, Suncor Energy Foundation, Shell Canada Energy, Environment Canada – Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk and many other partners were instrumental in their continued support in the retention of key habitats within the boreal and grassland regions of Alberta. This collaborative effort resulted in 13 new Conservation Sites, including two ecogift land donations, resulting in nearly 3,000 more acres (1,214 hectares) being conserved, valued at over \$2.7 million.

Landowners also play a key role in our conservation efforts and successes. Our Landowner Habitat

Program (LHP) is designed to conserve key wildlife and fish habitat and enhance recreational access on deeded lands using term agreements. One new agreement was added to the program in 2014/15, we currently manage 46 LHP agreements conserving over 8,000 acres (3,237 hectares) of important habitat.

Habitat management and recreational benefits

Land management is considered a bit of an art, which requires a lot of heart and creativity. Habitat is the essential element in maintaining wildlife and fish populations. Recognizing this, our goal is to maximize the habitat potential on our Conservation Sites and privately owned lands by implementing various management and enhancement techniques to make habitat attractive for an array of wildlife and fish species.

Our Conservation Site Management program involves actively managing and maintaining Conservation Sites we own or manage (Crown land). To guide our management efforts, we develop detailed plans that provide short and long-term objectives on how the site is to be managed. These plans are a collaborative effort between ACA and other conservation partners who jointly manage specific Conservation Sites. Management is an ongoing task that involves completing activities such as fencing, fence repairs, installing signage, controlling invasive species, repairing infrastructure, completing baseline inventories, monitoring, mitigating access issues, managing contracts, addressing land use referrals, and planning and implementing a variety of habitat enhancement and restoration projects on over 200,000 acres (80,937 hectares) of land. In 2014/15, ACA staff and seasonal employees spent over 13,000 hours completing inspections and maintenance on over 131 Conservation Sites across Alberta, covering over 100,000 acres (40,469 hectares) of habitat. This is not accomplished alone, however.

Volunteers, member groups and partners are extremely valuable and assisted us immensely in completing our work.

As part of Land Management we also manage 27 fisheries access sites that provide opportunities for angling at key streams, stocked ponds and other lakes. These sites provide angler access to three rivers and 24 lakes across Alberta, thereby increasing angler opportunities for the public. Managing these sites is achieved through a variety of partnerships, both in-kind and financial, with volunteer stewards, industry, government, municipalities, various corporate partners and other organizations across the province.

Conserving riparian habitat

Riparian habitat is an important ecosystem and vital to a staggering range of living organisms. Riparian areas are zones that are considered rich in biodiversity. These moisture rich areas support a diversity of plants, creating ideal foraging areas for many wildlife species. These areas are also favoured by insects and provide an essential food source for fish, birds and amphibians to thrive on.

We work with landowners and lessees to conserve riparian habitat on priority creeks and rivers. We are currently working on the Edson River, Owl River, North Raven and Raven Rivers, Beaverlodge River and various creeks in the Oldman watershed basin. Working with landowners, we use management tools such as streambank fencing, habitat lease agreements, bank stabilization, off-channel watering for livestock, and education and outreach to enhance, maintain and conserve riparian habitats and overall ecosystem health.

In total, we delivered 12 on-the-ground riparian enhancements, including planting over 5,000 trees and shrubs, completing livestock exclusion fencing, signing habitat lease agreements to idle riparian habitat, off-channel watering

systems, and spring developments. Together, our projects protected approximately 3.9 km of streambank and conserved over 34 acres (14 ha) of riparian habitat.

We also conducted several community outreach activities including demonstration tours, and working with watershed groups, landowners and lessees to highlight riparian projects and increase public awareness of the importance of healthy riparian areas. Over 200 volunteers and 40 high school students participated in a variety of events.

We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and support of our many partners and private landowners; without their support and involvement, these accomplishments could not have been achieved.

The great outdoors: yours to discover

The *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide* profiles 746 Conservation Sites covering over 294,215 acres (119,064 ha) across Alberta. Secured by ACA and our partners, these sites offer a variety of sustainable recreational opportunities including hunting, angling, foraging and wildlife viewing. This equates to 631 sites where you can hunt and 148 sites where you can fish. The popularity and reach of the Guide continues to increase year after year: we distributed 80,000 copies in 2014/15. The inclusion of Alberta Fish & Game Association, its affiliated clubs, and Ducks Unlimited Canada Conservation Sites makes this one of the most extensive outdoor guides available.

2014/15 Overview

- 13 new Conservation Sites secured (acquisition/land donation), totaling 2,992 acres (1,210 hectares).
- \$2,700,000+ in lands secured (approximate value).
- Currently manage 46 Landowner Habitat Program Agreements protecting 7,982 acres (3,230 hectares) of wildlife and fish habitat.
- 212 acres (86 hectares) of habitat protected by executing one new landowner habitat retention agreements.
- Collaborated with AEP on management of Crown Conservation Sites (disposition process identified; anticipate more efficient management of Crown Conservation Sites).
- 131 Conservation Sites inspected, with maintenance and repairs completed on 60 sites.
- 34 Conservation Sites underwent habitat enhancements.
- 85,360 trees and shrubs planted on our Conservation Sites.
- 13,000+ hours spent on Conservation Site management and maintenance.
- 27 fisheries access sites maintained, of which two received upgrades and enhancements.
- 15 Conservation Site signs installed, including boundary and "Foot Access Only" signs on 25 sites.
- 59 Conservation Sites required recommendations on land use referrals.
- 27 management plans reviewed and updated; 12 new management plans completed.
- 12 on-the-ground riparian enhancements protecting over 3.9 km of riparian habitat and conserved over 34 acres (14 ha) of riparian habitat.
- We collaborated with over 17 watershed groups and other organizations across Alberta.

The success of our Land Management program activities is a testament to the support and effort of over 80 partnerships, including government, industry, non-governmental organizations, counties/municipalities, leaseholders, private landowners, corporate partners and other interested groups. These vital partnerships result in an overall reduction in the amount of levy dollars required to conserve and manage over 200,000 acres (80,937 ha) of habitat.

Conservation Site Management

ACA currently manages and maintains 195 Conservation Sites, which include over 200,000 acres (80,937 ha) of titled and Crown land in Alberta. Our Conservation Site Management program is responsible for stewardship of these sites according to site management plans. In 2014/15, we inspected and maintained 191 Conservation Sites for wildlife and fish habitat and recreational opportunities. Our team also completed enhancement projects on 34 Conservation Sites, including planting over 85,000 trees and shrubs. Tree and shrub planting and other vegetation enhancements will benefit a variety of ungulates, upland gamebirds and waterfowl. Recreational enhancements at five of the sites, such as access gates and vehicle controls, will benefit outdoor enthusiasts. We installed

15 Conservation Site signs and provided recommendations on 59 land-use referrals. We also managed public access on two sites through a reservation system. Further, we continued discussions with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development to determine long-term partnership roles and responsibilities at Crown-owned Conservation Sites. Our success in managing and enhancing Conservation Sites is achieved using a collaborative approach with a growing number of partners and volunteers across Alberta.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Fish & Game Association, Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, Alberta Trail Riding Association, Bow River Irrigation District, Buffalo Lake Naturalists, Calfrac, Canon Evergreen, ConocoPhillips,

County of Lethbridge, County of Newell, County of Stettler, County of Warner, Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd., DOW AgroSciences, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Eastern Irrigation District, Edmonton and Area Land Trust, Landowners, MULTISAR, Myrnam River Ridge Riders Snowmobile Club, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Pheasants Forever – Calgary and Chinook Chapters, Shell Canada Energy, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, The Carbon Farmer Inc., Tree Canada, Volunteer stewards, Westlock

Whitetails Junior Forest Warden Club, Wildlife Habitat Canada

Corporate Partners Program

Our Corporate Partners Program was initiated in 2002/03 with a goal to work with industry and other organizations to conserve important wildlife and fish habitat. The program is guided by focus areas developed by ACA and ranking criteria developed collaboratively with our partners. Focus areas and ranking criteria help prioritize securement efforts and potential opportunities for

securement. Corporate partnerships and collaboration with other conservation organizations allow us to maximize our conservation impact and the overall effectiveness of our securement efforts. Partnerships may consist of short-term or long-term agreements. In 2014/15, we acquired eight parcels of land, resulting in six new Conservation Sites and the expansion of two existing sites. These acquisitions represent 1,250 acres (505 hectares) of high-quality habitat with an estimated land value of approximately \$981,900.

Corporate Partners Program Securement Transactions in 2014/15

Project Name	Corporate Partner	Size (ac)	Special Features
Lac Cardinal West (Expansion) LSD 04-36-084-25-W5M LSD 13-36-084-25-W5M	Suncor Energy Foundation Alberta Fish and Game Association	39.7	This site is located 20 km west of Grimshaw on the shores of Lac Cardinal Lake. Habitat at the site is a mixture of riparian vegetation along the lake and creeks, as well as stands of aspen/willow. Wildlife found here includes moose, elk, deer and small furbearers. During spring and fall migration, a variety of waterfowl and swans stage at the lake.
North Kamisak Lake (Expansion) NE-33-071-12-W6M	Suncor Energy Foundation	133.5	This site is located 21 km west of Beaverlodge. Habitat is a mixture of aspen/willow-dominated forest and tame pasture. Wildlife found here includes elk, deer, moose, black bear, and coyote.
Salt Creek SE-20-079-14-W5M	Suncor Energy Foundation	154.6	This site is located 40 km northeast from High Prairie. Habitat includes aspen dominated forest, hay land, riparian habitat and a number of small wetlands. Wildlife in the area includes moose, white-tailed deer, black bear, coyotes, and furbearers such as beavers and muskrats.
Sundew SW-09-077-19-W5M	Suncor Energy Foundation Alberta Fish and Game Association	160	This site is located 7 km south of the town of McLennan. Habitat includes mostly spruce-dominated forest along with some mixed-wood forest. Wildlife includes deer, moose, and small furbearers.
Whispering Timber NE-33-086-21-W5M SE-33-086-21-W5M	Suncor Energy Foundation Alberta Fish and Game Association Wild Elk Federation	301.7	This site is 36 km north of Peace River. Habitat on the site is mixed-wood forest. Wildlife include white-tailed deer, moose, elk, black bear, wolf, and ruffed grouse.
Albright 2 NE-10-072-11-W6M	Suncor Energy Foundation Alberta Fish and Game Association	149.9	This site is 12 km northwest from Beaverlodge. Habitat includes aspen forest, black spruce bog, and wetland. Wildlife includes white-tailed deer, moose, black bear, and small furbearers.
South Pine Creek NE-23-062-22-W4M	Suncor Energy Foundation Alberta Fish and Game Association	150	This site is approximately 37 km south of Athabasca. The property consists of undisturbed boreal forest and a variety of wildlife including mule deer, moose, black bear, upland game birds as well as a small furbearers and songbirds
Sylvan Glenn NE-07-064-26-W4M	Shell Canada Energy	161	This site is 40 km north of Westlock. Habitat consists of deciduous forest and tame pasture (which will be reforested). Wildlife includes white-tailed deer and moose.
TOTAL		1,250.4	

Our goal is to continue conserving key habitats using a collaborative approach and work towards expanding these opportunities by developing additional corporate partnerships.

Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Shell Canada Energy, Suncor Energy Foundation, Wild Elk Federation

Fisheries Access Site Management

ACA's Land Management Program focuses on activities intended to conserve, protect and enhance wildlife and fish habitat, and also activities that will increase sustainable recreational opportunities like angling and hunting. Our Fisheries Access Site Management program enhances access to key streams, rivers and lakes throughout the province. We inspected and maintained 27 fisheries access sites in 2014/15. We upgraded two sites with improvements to parking facilities and shoreline access. We also installed new infrastructure including vehicle barriers, a

wheelchair-friendly trail and outhouse, a floating casting platform, and other site amenities like garbage and recycling bins. In 2014/15, eighteen partners made generous financial or in-kind contributions. We continued discussions with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development to determine long-term partnership roles and responsibilities at Crown-owned fisheries access sites.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Fish & Game Association, Alberta Lottery Fund – Community Facility Enhancement Program, Clearwater County, County of Newell, County of Warner, Devon Canada Corporation, EZ Dock, Municipal District of Greenview, Municipal District of Northern Lights, Municipal District of Rocky View, North Raven River Working Group, Peace County Fly Fishers, Shell Canada Energy, Trout Unlimited Canada – Central and Yellowhead Chapters, Wetaskiwin County

Landowner Habitat Program

Alberta's population has been steadily increasing, reaching over four million in 2013. In less than 10 years (2005 to 2014), the population grew by 800,000. A national study by Global Forest Watch suggests that approximately 410,000 km² of land has been altered in Alberta—more natural landscape than in any other province. Almost two thirds of the province (62%) has been altered by industrial or agricultural development. Urban and rural development and expansion have also contributed to habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation. The Landowner Habitat Program (LHP) was initiated to help conserve key habitat and reduce habitat loss on privately owned land. The program compensates landowners who are willing to sign a legally binding agreement to retain habitat for a term of 5 to twenty years and provide reasonable public foot access to recreational users. Participants in this program are acknowledged with a project sign and provided with "Use Respect – Ask First" signs to display along their property



Photo: ACA, Ed Kolodychuk

perimeters. We currently manage 46 LHP agreements across the province, which protect approximately 7,982 ac of wildlife and fish habitat

Partnerships

Landowners

Management Plan Development

ACA currently manages and maintains 195 Conservation Sites, which we have secured as a collaborative effort with a variety of partners. For each of these sites, we work with our partners to develop management plans with five-year terms to outline roles and responsibilities. Plans emphasize developing detailed habitat management objectives and implementing activities that maintain the ecological integrity of the Conservation Site and provide complementary recreational opportunities. Management plans are reviewed and updated by ACA and our partners, as required or on a term basis (every five years), to ensure we deliver on the goals and activities identified in the plans. In 2014/15, we developed 12 new management plans for sites secured since 2013 and reviewed and updated 27 management plans.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Fish & Game Association, ConocoPhillips, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Pheasants Forever – Calgary and Chinook Chapters, Shell Canada Energy, Western Sky Land Trust Society, Wild Elk Federation

Provincial Habitat Securement Program

Alberta's population reached four million in 2013, the largest census gain on record, and continued to increase in 2014. Alberta's natural land base is under intense pressure from a variety of sources related to its population growth, including agricultural, municipal and industrial development. This trend is expected to continue as

the population grows and demand for land continues. Our Provincial Habitat Securement Program conserves important wildlife and fish habitat through land purchases, land donations, and protective notations on Crown land. Securing habitat ensures these lands will be conserved in perpetuity to benefit our valued wildlife and fish resources, and to provide Alberta's outdoor enthusiasts with year-round, sustainable recreational opportunities.

Twenty-seven priority focus areas help guide securement efforts and opportunities. Collaborative partnerships with conservation groups, industry, various companies and private individuals allow us to maximize our conservation impact and the efficiency of our securement efforts. Together in 2014/15, we conserved 1,742 ac across six sites, including two ecogift land donations and four land acquisitions. These lands have an estimated value of approximately \$1,703,000.

Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Aux Sable, Bernard Letourneau, Canadian Western Bank, ConocoPhillips, Donald Hayden, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, MULTISAR, Plover Lover Campaign, Pheasants Forever – Calgary and Chinook Chapters, TransCanada Pipeline Ltd., Wild Elk Federation

Riparian Conservation

Riparian areas provide important ecological services and functions and are critical to maintaining watershed health. However, riparian habitat throughout Alberta has been degraded by a variety of intensive land-use practices, such as livestock grazing. Riparian areas are complex ecosystems; proper management of this sensitive habitat is essential to maintain water quality and habitat integrity for the wildlife and fish species that depend on it. The primary goal of ACA's Riparian Conservation program is to protect

and restore riparian areas in priority watersheds through on-the-ground restoration projects and outreach and education initiatives. Our working partnerships with landowners, industry, government, watershed groups and other stakeholders are integral to project delivery. In 2014/15, we focused conservation efforts in the following priority watersheds: Beaverlodge, Edson, Owl, Raven, North Raven and Oldman rivers; and Clear, Todd, Beaver, Drywood, Yarrow, Lyndon, Pincher and Indianfarm creeks and their associated tributaries. We delivered 12 enhancement projects using a variety of management tools, including negotiating landowner habitat lease agreements to conserve 34 ac of riparian habitat, planting 5,000 trees, and installing 3.9 km of wildlife friendly fencing. We also monitored water quality and riparian health to help evaluate impacts of our conservation efforts, supported landowners with riparian enhancement activities, and communicated our program initiatives to the community. Our efforts have contributed to incremental improvements in riparian habitat health and have positively influenced the stewardship approach of landowners and leaseholders.

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society (Cows and Fish), ConocoPhillips, County of Grande Prairie, County of Lethbridge, Enerplus, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Government of Canada EcoAction Community Funding Program, Landowners, MULTISAR, Municipal District of Foothills, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Oldman Watershed Council, Pincher Creek Watershed Group, Syncrude Canada Ltd., Trout Unlimited Canada, West County Watershed Society

Habitat Securement Program Transactions in 2014/15

Project Name	Securement Tool & Partners	Size (ac)	Special Features
Junction Lake NE-32-051-12-W4M SE-32-051-12-W4M Pt. NW-32-051-12-W4M	A collaborative acquisition between ACA, AFGA, Aux Sable, Canadian Western Bank, ConocoPhillips, DUC, Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, Plover Lover Campaign and Multisar.	289	This parcel of land is located 20 km southeast of Vegreville. This site has a high density of wetlands intertwined with rolling grassy hills and aspen forest bluffs in the central parkland. The habitat on this unique site supports a variety of wildlife including deer, moose, black bear, ruffed grouse, waterfowl and shorebirds.
Letourneau Pt. SW-01-052-01-W5M	A private land donation to ACA and Alberta Fish & Game Association	79	This parcel of land is 79 acres of forested land in the central parkland 5 km south of Stony Plain. This site is adjacent to a large wetland with an unnamed creek meandering through the property. This site provides excellent habitat for wildlife including deer, moose, coyote, beaver and a variety of waterfowl.
North Pine Creek NW-01-063-22-W4M Pt. NE-02-063-22-W4M	A private land donation to ACA and Alberta Fish & Game Association	260	This parcel of land is 35 km southeast of Athabasca and secured in conjunction with South Pine Creek in ACA's Corporate Partners Program. This site is predominately covered with a mixture of tamarack, white and black spruce, and aspen. There is a large wetland that borders the west side of this site. A variety of wildlife may be observed including deer, moose, black bear and waterfowl.
Reinwood NW-07-088-21-W5M	A acquisition using creative sentencing funds from the Government of Alberta.n.	158	This parcel of land is located 58 km north of Peace River. A unnamed creek flows through regenerating dry mixedwood boreal habitat which is evident on this site. Extensive beaver activity on the creek has created several temporary wetlands for waterfowl. Wild strawberry and raspberry are abundant for berry picking. A variety of wildlife can be observed at this site including mule deer, moose, black bear, wolf, beaver and ruffed-grouse.
Escape Coulee NW-19-002-06-W4M SW-19-002-06-W4M NE-19-002-06-W4M SE-19-002-06-W4M NW-20-002-06-W4M	A collaborative acquisition between ACA, Alberta Fish & Game Association, Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, Pheasants Forever - Chinook Chapter, TransCanada Pipeline Ltd and Wild Elk Federation	800	This parcel of land is located approximately 25 km south of Manyberries directly adjacent to the Pinhorn Grazing Reserve. A large coulee starts on the property and leads to Crown land along the Milk River. The habitat on the site is diverse with a variety of wildlife being found in the immediate area including pronghorn, sharp-tailed grouse, and sensitive species such as ferruginous hawk, Sprague's pipit, and greater sage grouse.
Silver Sage (Expansion) SE-05-004-05-W4M	A collaborative acquisition between ACA, Alberta Fish & Game Association, and Pheasants Forever - Calgary and Chinook Chapters	156	This parcel of land is located along secondary highway 501 approximately 15 km south of Manyberries. It expands the Silver Sage Conservation Site to 2,051 acres in size and creates greater connectivity across the landscape. Native grassland restoration activities are planned to improve the habitat diversity for wildlife. Wildlife found here and in the immediate area include pronghorn, sharp-tailed grouse, and sensitive species such as ferruginous hawk, Sprague's pipit, and greater sage grouse.
TOTAL		1742	

ACA Conservation Reports

All reports and articles were completed by Alberta Conservation Association and published in the 2014/15 fiscal year.

Fisheries

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Peters, W, M. Hebblewhite, K. G. Smith, S. M. Webb, N. Webb, M. Russell, C. Stambaugh, and R. B. Anderson. 2014. Contrasting aerial moose population estimation methods and evaluating sightability in west-central Alberta, Canada. Wildlife Society Bulletin 38(3):639-649.

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Forde, T., J. De Buck, M. Jokinen, S. Kutz, K. Ruckstuhl and K. Orsel. 2014. No evidence of *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies paratuberculosis transmission between cattle and bighorn sheep in southwestern Alberta. Journal of Wildlife Disease (submitted January 2015)

Report A Poacher and Compensation Programs

Report A Poacher

Report A Poacher (RAP) encourages all Albertans—not just hunters and anglers—to protect our wildlife, fish and natural habitats. In addition to providing education about poaching, perhaps the most important RAP program tool is the toll-free phone number: 1-800-642-3800. It allows people to report suspected illegal activities 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Alberta Fish and Wildlife enforcement officers often rely on information from these calls; individuals and communities are RAP’s eyes and ears, and the important information they provide regularly lead to investigations and convictions.

RAP is delivered jointly by ACA and Alberta Justice and Solicitor General. ACA is responsible for program promotion and education activities to enhance public awareness and understanding of poaching, and also for the administration of program funds. Alberta Justice and Solicitor General retains sole responsibility for liaising with informants, investigating reports and enforcing laws.

2014/15 Overview

- 10,375 total calls from the public to the RAP toll-free hotline.
- 2,034 calls about suspected illegal activity.
- 333 charges laid.
- \$47,600 in rewards paid to individuals whose call and information led to charges.
- Promoted RAP at numerous trade shows and events throughout Alberta, and distributed branded promotional items to educate and raise awareness about poaching and ethical hunting and fishing practices.
- Increased RAP promotion through social media, television, radio and print .

Compensation Programs

ACA takes pride in fostering good working relationships with landowners. For producers whose livestock may have been killed or damaged as a result of predators (eagles, cougars, bears and wolves) or hunter activities, relief is provided through the Wildlife Predator Compensation and Shot Livestock Compensation programs. Like Report A Poacher, we are responsible for program promotion and compensation fund management, while Alberta Justice and Solicitor General is responsible for incident investigations and determining payouts.

Wildlife Predator	Claims	Compensation
Eagle	0	\$ 0.00
Cougar	11	12,145.58
Black Bear	10	12,457.20
Grizzly Bear	49	74,553.61
Wolf	149	245,138.58
Unknown Predator	5	2,739.37
TOTAL	224	\$347,034.34

Shot Livestock	1	\$1,282.50
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Granting Programs

Alberta's hunters and anglers contribute directly to conservation through levies on their hunting and fishing licences. A portion comes to ACA, and one of the many things we do is support community and research efforts via our granting programs. The programs changed in 2014-15. The Grant Eligible Conservation Fund (GECF) Part A: Conservation Support and Enhancement grants were combined with the Hunter, Trapper and Angler Retention, Recruitment and Education grants to make the ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants. The GECF Part B: Research grants became known as the ACA Research Grants.

ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants

These grants support conservation activities that contribute to fish and wildlife population health and the health of their environments, and to the understanding, appreciation and use of those environments. Projects that increase participation in and awareness of outdoor opportunities, while developing knowledge and respect for conservation, are also funded through this grant.

2014/15 Overview

- Received 110 applications requesting over \$1.5 million.
- Funded 77 projects for a total of \$790,576.

ACA Research Grants

These grants fund high-quality research projects on wildlife, fish and habitat which inform the effective management of wildlife, fish populations, and habitat in Alberta.

2014/15 Overview

- Received 36 applications requesting just over \$930,000.
- Funded 19 research projects for a total of \$330,000.

Grants in Biodiversity

The research supported by this program aims to conserve, protect and enhance Alberta's wildlife, fish and natural habitats. Counting this year's grants, the 20-year-old ACA Grants in Biodiversity has now awarded over \$4.3 million dollars to 423 researchers.

The 2014 grants were distributed to 9 PhD and 12 M.Sc. candidates. While the field of study must be in Alberta, the students are based in universities across Canada and the United States.

The ACA Grants in Biodiversity program is funded by ACA and operated through the Alberta Cooperative Conservation Research Unit—a partnership between the University of Alberta, University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge. Syncrude Canada Ltd. has also committed \$250,000 over five years (2014 - 2018) to support the ACA Grants in Biodiversity.

For more information, visit www.acabiodiversity.ca.

2014/15 Overview

- Supported 21 graduate student projects for a total of \$224,122.

ACA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife at the University of Alberta

The ACA Chair was established through an endowment to the University of Alberta, providing educational initiatives to wildlife professionals. By addressing issues and problems relevant to Alberta's biological resources, the Chair, Dr. Mark Boyce, supports ACA's goals for long-term, sustainable wildlife and fish resources. A contribution to teaching is also an essential duty of the position. The ACA Chair is expected to contribute to the activities of the Department of Biological Sciences and to the university as a whole.

Dr. Boyce's expertise is internationally recognized, and he has significantly enhanced ACA's efforts to conserve Alberta's wildlife and fish resources. For more information and for a list of publications, visit www.biology.ualberta.ca/faculty/mark_boyce.

2014/15 Overview

- Endowed with \$20,500 as part of ACA's commitment to science, research and education.

ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants

Small Grants (\$3,000 and under)

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, 4-H Program Coordination, \$3,000.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, Conservation Education for the Army Cadet League of Canada, AB, \$3,000.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, Outdoor Youth Seminar, \$3,000.00

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society (Cows and Fish), Grazing school for women: promoting habitat and improved grazing stewardship to livestock producers in south and central Alberta, \$3,000.00

Brooks and District Fish & Game Association, Hunter Education Field Day, \$400.00

Camrose Wildlife and Stewardship Society, Camrose Purple Martin Festival, \$2,500.00

Edmonton Nature Club, 2014 Snow Goose Chase, \$2,000.00

Ellis Bird Farm Ltd, Living with Beavers Part II, \$3,000.00

Foremost Fish & Game Association, 2014 FFGA Youth Pheasant Hunt, \$3,000.00

Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society, Community Watershed Stewardship 2014: Water Quality Baseline, habitat restoration and public awareness, \$3,000.00

George Pegg Botanic Garden, Wetland environmental education field school, \$2,122.00

Hardisty Lake United Church Camp, Riparian assessment and education, \$3,000.00

Helen Schuler Nature Centre, Extreme by Nature: Environmental Education for 11-15 Year Olds, \$3,000.00

Lethbridge Fish & Game Association, Fishing fun, awareness & education day, \$3,200.00

Linden Citizen Advisory Group Society, Linden Fishing Derby, \$3,000.00

Lone Pine Farming Inc., Habitat enhancement project #1 (nest boxes), \$1,560.00

Magrath Rod and Gun Club, Continuing club activities in Magrath and surrounding area, \$2,000.00

Owl River Metis Local #1949, Owl River Metis Local #1949 - Canadian Firearm Safety Course, \$1,500.00

Red Deer River Watershed Alliance Society, Establishing a vital connection: Communicating the integrated watershed management plan to the young adult demographic, \$3,000.00

Rocky View Schools, Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park Inquiry Day (GRID), \$3,000.00

Southern Alberta Bible Camp, Walleye - Pike fishing, \$2,540.00

Southern Alberta Bible Camp, Archery curriculum, \$3,000.00

Trout Unlimited Canada, Stewardship License Pilot Project, \$2,200.00

Trout Unlimited Canada, Bill Griffiths Creek Enhancement Project, \$2,500.00

Trout Unlimited Canada, Policeman Creek Habitat Enhancement, \$3,000.00

Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society, Weaselhead Invasive Plant Program, \$3,000.00

Large Grants (over \$3,000)

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Pronghorn antelope migration corridor enhancement, \$25,000.00

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Can ranching help achieve sustainability of Prairie wildlife? Addressing local & landscape scale requirements using monitoring, adaptive management and cumulative effects modelling, \$39,500.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, Urban Fishing Initiatives, \$3,500.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, 11th Annual OWL Day "Outdoor Wildlife Learning", \$5,000.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, Mobile Shotgun safety training trailer, \$7,000.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, Outdoor Bound Mentorship Program, \$7,500.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, Youth Fishing Initiatives, \$7,850.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, Youth Hunter Education Camp (Week 1, 2, 3), \$15,000.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, Provincial Hunting Day Initiatives, \$16,000.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, 21st Annual Outdoor Women's Program, \$20,000.00

Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association, Mobile Applications - "Essentials Series" Online Education Program, \$40,000.00

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society (Cows and Fish), Developing Western cutthroat trout riparian habitat improvement action plans and implementing habitat management improvements, \$21,600.00

Alberta Trappers Association - Peace River Local 1195, Trapper education and training, \$4,460.00

Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area, Protect Your Watershed: Riparian Area Protection Project, \$17,199.00

Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Stewardship, habitat enhancement, and monitoring of wildlife at Beaverhill Lake, \$19,450.00

Calgary Bird Banding Society, Cypress Hills landbird monitoring station, \$25,400.00

Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition, Castle restoration, inventory mapping and outreach, \$15,000.00

Cochrane High School Outdoor Education, Equipment proposal for Cochrane High School Outdoor Education Program, \$5,000.00

County of Vermilion River, Stretton Creek Watershed Education Program, \$12,000.00

Edmonton and Area Land Trust, Wind up the wire for wildlife habitat enhancement, \$2,650.00

H A Kostash School, H A Kostash Youth Fishing Mentorship Program, \$5,250.00

Highway 2 Conservation, Riparian improvement, \$10,000.00

Hunting for Tomorrow, HFT teacher's workshop, \$5,000.00

Inside Education, Teacher Professional Development Programming, \$1,500.00

Lacombe Fish & Game Association, Len Thompson Aeration Project, \$5,550.00

Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory, Monitoring migratory and breeding birds at Lesser Slave Lake, \$25,750.00

Lethbridge Fish & Game Association, LGFA - Conservation Community and Education Program, \$10,000.00

MD of Taber, MD of Taber Oldman River Boat Launch, \$15,000.00

Mountain View County, Riparian area management improvements fund, \$20,000.00

Mountain View County, Hiller's Dam floating island project, \$24,000.00

NAIT, Fisheries habitat improvements in the Sturgeon River Watershed, \$26,070.00

Nature Alberta, Assessing the State of Bird Conservation in Alberta, \$8,000.00

Nature Alberta, Expanding the Young Naturalist Club Program in Alberta, \$25,000.00

Nature Alberta, Living By Water Project Program 2014, \$27,288.00

Northern Lights Fly Tyers/Trout Unlimited Canada Edmonton Chapter, Conserving and restoring Arctic Graying in the Upper Pembina River watershed - habitat restoration planning, \$11,500.00

Oldman Watershed Council, Classifying linear features in the Oldman Watershed headwaters to protect water quality and wildlife habitat, \$14,240.00

Parkland School Division #70, ACA Parkland youth multimedia project, \$13,000.00

Partners in Habitat Development c/o Eastern Irrigation District, Partners in Habitat Development, \$15,000.00

Pincher Creek Stock Association, Castle River grazing allotment Riparian Health Inventory, \$8,377.46

Pine Lake Restoration Society, Education/ Postings on aquatic invasive species (quagga/ zebra), \$4,500.00

Red Deer County, Conservation Partners 2014, \$30,000.00

Red Deer Fish & Game Association, Alberta Youth Pheasant Program, \$8,000.00

Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society, Trail and campground cleaning trip from Porky Pine Lick to Rocky Pass, \$7,000.00

Smoky Applied Research and Demonstration Association (SARDA), Riparian area protection and enhancement project, \$7,000.00

Taber Shooting Foundation, Taber Shooting Foundation - Shooting Facility, \$37,000.00

The King's University College, Faith-based organizations and conservation: engaging volunteers in recovery plans of endangered pines, \$7,670.00

Trout Unlimited Canada, Understanding Fish, Water and Conservation, \$12,000.00

Trout Unlimited Canada, Yellow Fish Road, \$15,000.00

West-Central Forage Association, Lobstick River (East of Chip Lake) Assessment Project - Phase 1, \$15,250.00

ACA Research Grants

Foothills Research Institute (Larsen), Using scat DNA and citizen science to determine grizzly bear distribution, abundance, and trend in the Yellowstone population unit, \$17,000.00

Laval University (Côté), Population dynamics, reproduction and stress in mountain goats of Alberta, \$10,000.00

Thompson Rivers University (Larsen), Ecology of the Plains hognose snake (*Heterodon nasicus nasicus*) in the Canadian Forces Base Suffield National Wildlife Area, \$9,000.00*

Université de Sherbrooke (Festa-Bianchet), Experimental management of bighorn sheep, \$8,000.00

University of Alberta (Bayne), Evaluating the current and future value of climate refugia for boreal wildlife, \$20,000.00

University of Alberta (Boyce), Human access management in west-central Alberta: Influence of recreational use on the movement and behaviour of grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*), \$30,000.00

University of Alberta (Boyce), Effects of industry on wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) ecology in the boreal forest of northern Alberta, \$75,000.00

University of Alberta (Cahill), Expansion into native grasslands and consequences for biodiversity of smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) invasion across Alberta, \$8,000.00

University of Alberta (Coltman), Genetic analysis of bighorn sheep population structure from winter faecal samples, \$9,000.00

University of Alberta (Merrill), Persistence of the Ya Ha Tinda elk population: the role of calf survival, \$23,000.00

University of Alberta (Merrill), Experimental harvest for CWD control in wild cervids in Alberta, \$40,000.00

University of Alberta (Paszowski), Developing environmental DNA as a tool for detecting cryptic freshwater species, \$9,000.00

University of Alberta (Poesch), Reconstruction of stocking histories of non-native salmonids and hybridization with native species in Albertan mountain lakes using a novel paleo-eDNA approach, \$5,000.00

University of Calgary (Hugenholtz), A first step towards wildlife monitoring with drones: quantifying sound disturbance for ungulates, \$8,000.00

University of Calgary (Smits), Small mammals as sentinels for metal pollution from the oil sands region: Metal residues in target tissues, oxidative stress biomarkers, and non-invasive methods to detect exposure and effects., \$13,000.00

University of Saskatchewan (Lane), Bioenergetic consequences of climate change to native Albertan mammals, \$9,000.00

University of Saskatchewan (Soos), Infectious pathogens and migration in blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*): Transport routes and impacts on infection, \$10,000.00

Wildlife Conservation Society Canada (Lausen), Ecology of bats overwintering in the Canadian Prairies, \$15,000.00

Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Clevenger), Understanding landscape and anthropogenic effects on wolverine distribution and regional connectivity in southwest Alberta, \$12,000.00

*grant not accepted

2014 ACA Grants in Biodiversity Recipients

Syncrude Canada Ltd. has committed \$250,000 over five years (2014 - 2018) to support the ACA Grants in Biodiversity.

Recipient	Supervisor(s)	Institution	Project Title
Brandon Allen (MSc)	Sean Rogers	University of Calgary	Integration of genetics into adaptive management strategies: Genetic population responses to size-selective harvest pressures in Alberta walleye (<i>Sander vitreus</i>)
Natasha Annich (MSc)	Cynthia Paszkowski	University of Alberta	Utility of Ducks Unlimited's Wetland Classification for predicting amphibian distribution and abundance with an emphasis on Canadian toads
Vincent Del Bel Belluz (MSc)	John Spence	University of Alberta	Effects of disturbance and recovery of lodgepole pine forest on carabid and staphylinid assemblages (Coleoptera: Carabidae, Staphylinidae)
Mallory Hazell (MSc)	John Gamon	University of Alberta	Detecting functional plant biodiversity via airborne imaging spectrometry
Cheryl Hojnowski (PhD)	Justin Brashares	University of California, Berkeley	Assessing recreation impacts on large mammal ecology in Kananaskis Country, Alberta
Gregory Holmes (MSc)	Robert Laird	University of Lethbridge	Interactions of the leaf galling wasp <i>Aulacidea pilosellae</i> , rust fungus <i>Puccinia hieracii</i> and their invasive hawkweed host, <i>Pilosella caespitosa</i> , and their impact on plant growth and reproduction
Mark Hornsby (PhD)	Andrew Hurly	University of Lethbridge	Spatial orientation and navigation in fathead minnows: Impacts from ecological conditions and naturally- and anthropogenically-induced perturbations
Joseph Kermish-Wells (MSc)	Marco Musiani	University of Calgary	Human and natural factors influencing foraging patterns and kill rate of grizzly bears
Jamie Lantz (MSc)	Shelley Alexander	University of Calgary	Interactions amongst humans, domestic dogs (<i>Canis familiaris</i>), livestock and coyotes (<i>Canis latrans</i>) on Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park, Alberta
Preston Lennox (PhD)	Joseph Rasmussen	University of Lethbridge	Establishing the link between fish biodiversity and biomass production in freshwater ecosystems
Yan Liu (PhD)	Jana Vamosi	University of Calgary	Genetic diversity of <i>Mimulus guttatus</i> from putative Pleistocene refugia in Alberta
Brian Meagher (MSc)	Sean Rogers	University of Calgary	Collaborative phased fish restoration project in the Hidden Lake and Corral Creek drainage of Banff National Park
Ahmed Najar (PhD)	Nadir Erbilgin	University of Alberta	Alberta's Achilles heel: An investigation of the features of susceptibility of Albertan balsam poplar to <i>Septoria musiva</i>
Eric Neilson (PhD)	Stan Boutin	University of Alberta	Wolf-mediated effects of oil sands development on moose survival and abundance
Jennine Pedersen (MSc)	Scott Nielsen and Ellen MacDonald	University of Alberta	Use of assisted migration to mitigate the effects of climate change on rare plants in Alberta
Gabriel Pigeon (PhD)	Fanie Pelletier	Université de Sherbrooke	Constraints to the recovery of a population of bighorn sheep
Heather Polan (MSc)	Rebecca Rooney	University of Waterloo	Biodiversity and abundance of waterbirds and aquatic invertebrates for the assessment and conservation of non-permanent marshes in the Northern Prairie and Parkland Region of Alberta
Julia Shonfield (PhD)	Erin Bayne	University of Alberta	Effects of industrial noise on owls in northeastern Alberta
Jarvis Singer (MSc)	Leland Jackson	University of Calgary	Role of nitrogen and phosphorus in photosynthesis-respiration in the Bow River, Alberta
Linhao Wu (PhD)	John Spence	University of Alberta	Influences of habitat heterogeneity and disturbance on temporal variability of ground beetle assemblages in the mixedwood boreal forest
Daniel Yip (MSc)	Erin Bayne	University of Alberta	Understanding detection distances of rare nocturnal and diurnal animals using automated recording units

Auditor's Report



Project: Restoring Natural Habitat for Wildlife

Partnerships: Alberta Environment and Parks,
Alberta Fish & Game Association,
Wild Sheep Foundation of Alberta

Photo: ACA, Corey Rasmussen



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July 2, 2015

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Edmonton, Alberta

To the Members of Alberta Conservation Association

We have audited the accompanying consolidated financial statements of Alberta Conservation Association, which comprise the consolidated statement of financial position as at March 31, 2015 and the consolidated statements of operations, changes in net assets and cash flow for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Management's Responsibility for the Consolidated Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these consolidated financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of consolidated financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these consolidated financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the consolidated financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the consolidated financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our qualified audit opinion.

Basis for Qualified Opinion

In common with many not-for-profit organizations, Alberta Conservation Association derives some of its revenue from partner contributions and donations, the completeness of which is not susceptible to satisfactory audit verification. Accordingly, our verification of these revenues was limited to the amount recorded in the records of the Association and we were not able to determine whether any adjustments might be necessary to partner contributions, excess of revenue over expenses, current assets, deferred contributions and net assets.

Qualified Opinion

In our opinion, except for the possible effects of the matter described in the Basis for Qualified Opinion paragraph, the consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Alberta Conservation Association as at March 31, 2015 and the results of its operations and its cash flow for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Kingston Ross Pasmak LLP
Chartered Accountants

ALBERTA CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
Consolidated Statement of Operations
Year Ended March 31, 2015

	2015	2014
REVENUE		
Levy, fees and assessments	\$ 12,000,276	\$ 11,305,999
Partner contributions	1,228,626	1,286,619
Investment income	660,937	183,146
Miscellaneous	110,179	264,251
Donations	105,056	80,725
Film sales	-	230
	14,105,074	13,120,970
EXPENDITURES		
Salaries and benefits	6,275,491	6,102,533
Grants	1,545,874	1,607,186
Contracted services	1,523,775	1,319,487
Materials and supplies	858,368	424,906
Rentals	370,716	414,464
Amortization	323,048	399,541
Travel	317,991	338,931
Advertising	242,213	433,336
Office	208,617	190,945
Fuel and lubricants	185,131	194,140
Repairs and maintenance	179,780	244,281
Landowner agreements	161,738	134,114
Insurance	135,851	132,909
Telephone and communications	123,921	157,930
Interest on loans	108,042	89,378
Freight and postage	68,405	67,116
Utilities	56,533	61,730
Training and membership	42,840	45,743
Bank charges and interest	42,718	70,198
Fees, licenses and permits	35,430	26,487
Hosting and conferences	14,130	10,748
Bad debts	252	244
	12,820,864	12,466,347
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES FROM OPERATIONS	1,284,210	654,623
OTHER REVENUES (EXPENDITURES)		
Gain on disposal of property and equipment	40,171	10,167
Unrealized (loss) gain on investments	(29,512)	357,480
(Loss) gain on sale of investments	(107,563)	81,910
	(96,904)	449,557
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES	\$ 1,187,306	\$ 1,104,180

ALBERTA CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
March 31, 2015

	2015	2014
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	\$ 602,143	\$ 772,215
Short term investments (Note 3)	156,069	1,058,199
Accounts receivable	350,363	831,074
Inventory	10,584	12,292
Goods and Services Tax recoverable	67,539	53,578
Prepaid expenses	76,488	505,911
	1,263,186	3,233,269
LONG TERM INVESTMENTS (Note 3)	6,107,697	3,856,892
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (Note 4)	23,350,398	20,885,127
FILM COLLECTION (Note 5)	3,023,870	3,023,870
	\$ 33,745,151	\$ 30,999,158
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Bank indebtedness (Note 6)	\$ 325,000	\$ 2,239,995
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,678,350	1,512,991
Deferred contributions (Note 7)	2,183,592	2,662,305
Deposits	28,791	19,621
Term loans (Note 8)	2,735,097	-
Demand non-revolving loan	-	1,301,744
	6,950,830	7,736,656
PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS (Note 9)	1,474,293	1,474,293
	8,425,123	9,210,949
COMMITMENTS (Note 10)		
NET ASSETS		
Invested in property and equipment	24,899,975	22,434,704
Internally restricted (Note 11)	147,333	7,343
Unrestricted	272,720	(653,838)
	25,320,028	21,788,209
	\$ 33,745,151	\$ 30,999,158

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD



 DIRECTOR



 DIRECTOR

Financial Highlights

Summarized Financial Statements

In 2014/15, ACA received \$12,000,276 in levy revenue from hunting and angling licences, a \$694,254 increase from the previous year. This continual upward trend in levy revenue demonstrates strong interest in hunting and angling in Alberta.

Together, our Wildlife, Fisheries, Land Management, Communications and Granting programs had expenditures totalling \$9,015,719, plus an additional \$2,329,775 in land purchases and donations (for accounting purposes, these funds are recorded as assets, not direct operational expenditures). These numbers mean approximately 95% of the levy value collected went back into conserving Alberta's resources (expenses plus increase in habitat assets).

ACA received approximately \$4.4 million in non-levy revenue (including \$2,329,775 in land donations and funds for land purchase). These funds came from a variety of donors, including individuals, corporations, granting foundations, the federal government and other conservation organizations.

Administrative costs were held to 13.9% of total operating revenue (including funds for land purchase and donations).

Expenditures by Program

Often stakeholders want to determine what funds are being directed towards their particular passion. When examining the Expenditures by Program, please keep in mind that the numbers shown are somewhat arbitrary and do not necessarily represent all projects that may relate to a particular program area. For instance, fisheries access sites, which are directly related to increasing angling opportunities, are administered and budgeted for under our Land Management program instead of the Fisheries program. The same is true of habitat purchases or leases related to riparian conservation. Although riparian areas clearly provide benefits to fisheries (and fishing opportunities), these projects are captured under our Land Management program.

The Report a Poacher and Compensation program expenditures are included within Wildlife, Fisheries, and Land Management programs, based on the specific expenditure. Granting is shown separately even though it relates to all three resource areas. Administration costs continue to be well below the federal guideline for charitable organizations and includes areas such as Human Resources and regional and corporate administration.

Revenue by Source

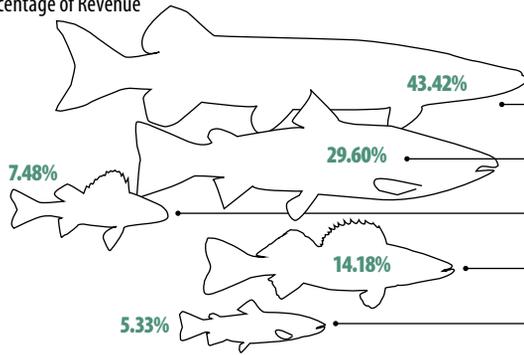
Approximately 27% of ACA's total operating budget was generated from non-levy sources (\$4,434,573). This 5% increase from the previous year was largely attributable to increased corporate donations and purchases in 2014/15 conserved approximately 3,000 acres (1,200 hectares) or \$2,328,775 in land value, for future generations.

2014/15 Overview

- \$12 million received from levies on hunting and fishing licences.
- \$4.4 million received in non-levy revenue.
- 95% of levy value directly applied towards the conservation of Alberta's wildlife, fish and habitats.
- Administration costs kept to 13.9% of revenue.
- Current year surplus is \$1.2 million (8.76% of budgeted revenue), of which \$564,000 is revenue generated within our long-term investment accounts (not in management control).

The following charts summarize the total operating budget breakdown according to each program and revenue area. We encourage you to review the entire annual report for a greater understanding of the conservation projects undertaken within each program and how they may relate to your particular interests. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our President and CEO, Todd Zimmerling.

Percentage of Revenue

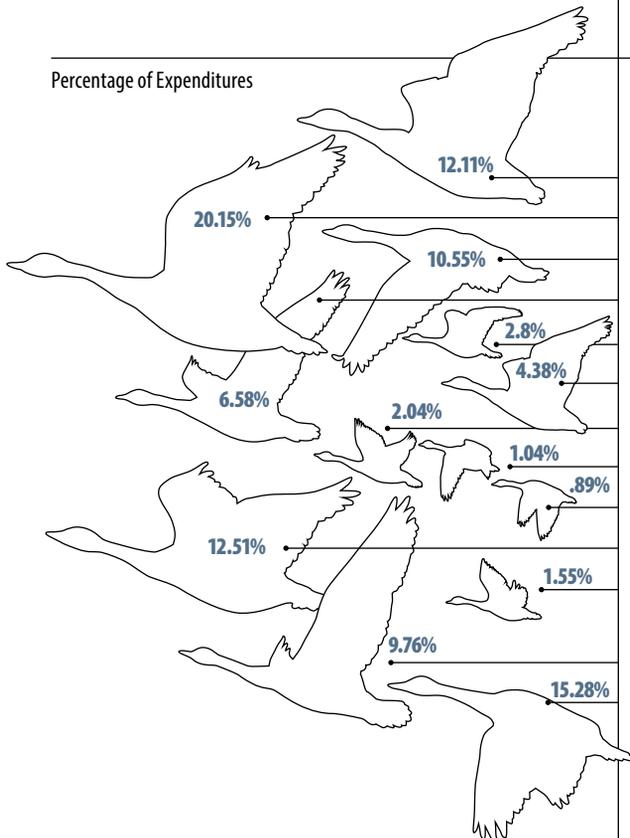


Revenue by Source

	Total Dollars
Hunting	7,136,240
Fishing	4,864,036
Partner	1,228,626
Land Purchases/Donations	2,329,775
Other	876,172
TOTAL	16,434,849

*Not including unrealized gains on investments, but including \$564,000 in investment income (outside of Management's control).

Percentage of Expenditures



Expenditures by Program

	Levy	Partner	Total Dollars
Land Program	769,500	1,075,927	1,845,427
Wildlife Program	2,168,223	902,955	3,071,178
Fisheries Program	1,516,702	92,109	1,608,811
Communications	967,867	35,419	1,003,286
Business Development	411,210	16,312	427,522
Finance	642,561	24,596	667,157
Information Technology	311,041		311,041
Human Resources	213,187		213,187
Health and Safety	135,043		135,043
Administration	1,907,532		1,907,532
Report A Poacher and Compensation	235,388	905	236,293
Granting Programs	1,487,017		1,487,017
Land Purchases/Donations	60,010	2,269,765	2,329,775
TOTAL	10,825,281	4,417,988	15,243,269



Alberta Conservation Association wishes to thank our Corporate Partners in Conservation who have provided multi-year financial contributions in support our conservation programs and projects. Together we are conserving Alberta's natural heritage for generations to come.

Access Pipeline
Agrium
Aquality Environmental
Aux Sable
Bone Brewing Company
Bow Valley Power
Cabela's Canada
Canadian Natural Resources Ltd.
Canadian National Sportsmen's Shows
Canadian Western Bank
Capital Power
City of Fort Saskatchewan
CCI Inc.
Cycle Works Motorsports
Daishowa Marubeni International
Devon Canada Corporation
DOW AgroSciences
DOW Chemical Canada
Edmonton Trout Fishing Club
GreenVOLT Smart Start Batteries
Jobsite Workwear
Let's Go Outdoors
Matrix Solutions Inc.
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