

**Alberta Conservation Association
2008/09 Project Summary Report**

Project name: *Buck for Wildlife Streambank Fence Renegotiation Strategy*

Land Management Program Manager:

Darren Dorge

Project leader:

Jay Wieliczko

Primary ACA staff on this project (including seasonals):

Marco Fontana, Kevin Gardiner, Thomas Winter

Partnerships

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD)

Key findings

- A strategy is being developed to reduce the funding required to perform annual maintenance on inherited Buck for Wildlife streambank fence projects, which will allow Alberta Conservation Association to redirect conservation efforts more efficiently on priority streams.
- The North Raven River and Clear Creek are first and second priorities respectively, for the renegotiation of Buck for Wildlife streambank fence agreements on private land.
- The majority of project objectives, activities and deadlines were deferred due to the project lead resigning from Alberta Conservation Association.

Abstract

The Alberta government's Buck for Wildlife (BFW) Streambank Fencing Program, which has been maintained by Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) since 1997, was developed to improve riparian conditions on a number of sport fish bearing streams. Honoring maintenance commitments of inherited BFW private landowner agreements has become a financial burden for ACA. In 2008, we initiated the development of the BFW Streambank Fence Renegotiation Strategy to identify a process which will reduce annual maintenance costs, as well as continuing to protect riparian habitat and provide angler access at priority streams. Scoping meetings were held and project objectives, activities and timelines were developed. Most of the project objectives were not completed due to the resignation of the project lead from ACA. The project will resume in 2009 with the intent of developing a strategy that identifies the best options to continue protecting riparian habitat and reduce overall maintenance commitments.

Introduction

In the 1970s, the Alberta government invested a considerable amount of funds from the Buck for Wildlife (BFW) Trust Fund to launch the province's first Streambank Fencing Program on the North Raven River, and later included other water bodies such as Prairie Creek, Clear Creek and the Raven River. Livestock exclusion fences and watering/crossing sites were constructed to protect riparian areas and provide anglers access to trout streams. Habitat enhancement agreements were signed between the government and landowners. To encourage landowners to participate in the program, the government made major concessions including agreeing to conduct annual fence and infrastructure maintenance and replacement at project sites. In some cases, these agreements were in perpetuity. In 1997, maintenance responsibility was transferred to Alberta Conservation Association (ACA). Maintaining these agreements has become a significant financial burden and subsequently it became apparent that ACA needed to find options to reduce costs associated with this program.

In 2006, a new Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the government and ACA. ACA negotiated for the *Reassignment and divestiture of properties and agreements* within the Land Management Program Agreement, which enables ACA to determine which private landowner agreements should be divested. ACA's goal is to reduce annual maintenance costs while still continuing to protect riparian habitat and provide angler access at priority streams. The BFW Streambank Fence Renegotiation Strategy is intended to provide options and guidelines to meet these goals.

Methods

To provide direction and identify activities, timelines and expected results, the Land Management Program Manager, Regional Manager, Regional Lead and Project Lead participated in a scoping meeting in the spring of 2008. Agreed upon activities included producing an outline for the strategy document, which would include pros and cons of potential renegotiation options to be submitted for review by the beginning of June 2008. Site visits were planned throughout priority drainages and meeting with 3-5 landowners to learn concerns and challenges that needed to be addressed by the end of June 2008. A PowerPoint presentation was to be developed detailing timing, effort required and cost to deliver selected strategy options, as well as, hosting a meeting to discuss and finalize the preferred option(s) for the strategy by the end of January 2009. The final strategy document, which would identify next steps and any planning or negotiations that had been conducted to date, was to be developed by February 2009. ACA staff, reviewed private landowner agreements on the North Raven River, Clear Creek, and the Raven River and participated in community watershed group meetings to lead discussions regarding the pros and cons of the current private landowner agreements.

Results

At the initial planning meeting it was agreed that, based on past large financial investments and higher profiles, the first and second priority streams for renegotiation efforts were the North Raven River and Clear Creek respectively. We decided that in the interim, we would continue to do maintenance on projects located on Prairie Creek and the Raven River after those habitat agreements expired, until the strategy document is developed and evaluated. The original project description's objectives were re-written to reflect a greater focus on the North Raven River and Clear Creek systems.

ACA staff participated in the Rocky Riparian Group meetings and corresponded with six landowners to present ACA's future intentions. Landowner concerns and challenges to incorporate into the strategy were documented.

Deliverables, including the strategy document were not completed due to the project lead's resignation. We decided to defer the project to 2009, when another ACA staff will complete the strategy.

Conclusions

In 2008, the project lead responsible for developing the strategy resigned from ACA. We did not replace his position or reallocate other staff and therefore the project was deferred. Development of the Streambank Fence Strategy will continue in 2009 with a slightly re-focused set of objectives to reflect the time available for allocation. The project lead will develop a strategy that identifies the best options to protect riparian health on priority water bodies while reducing maintenance costs incurred by ACA.

Communications

We met with ASRD regional fisheries staff and the regional manager to outline our plans for the strategy and gain their support.

ACA staff presented plans to develop the Streambank Fence Strategy at Rocky Riparian Group meetings.

Literature cited

N/A



Aerial photo illustrating riparian habitat conserved on the North Raven River through the Streambank Fencing Program. (Photo: ACA Regional file)



Photo showing BFW streambank fencing and watering site maintained by ACA. (Photo: Thomas Winter)