

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

**Project name:** *Conservation Site Management*

**Land Management Program Manager:** Darren Dorge

**Project leader:** Ed Kolodychuk (Boreal NW), Brad Taylor (Prairie SO), Roy Schmelzeisen (Boreal NE), Diana Rung (Parkland SO), Marco Fontana (East Slopes ES)

**Primary ACA staff on this project (including seasonals):**

Boreal (NE): Velma Hudson, Roy Schmelzeisen, Dan Sturgess, Stefanie Van Huystee,  
Boreal (NW): John Hallett, Ed Kolodychuk, Jennifer Straub, Oksana Izio  
East Slopes (ES): Marco Fontana, Thomas Winter, Nevada Collins-Lee, Reese Harrison  
Parkland (SO): Andy Murphy, Jim Potter, Diana Rung,  
Prairie (SO): Mike Uchikura, Randy Lee, Brad Taylor. Mike Grue

**Partnerships:**

Alberta Fish & Game Association  
Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation  
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development  
- Fish & Wildlife Division  
- Public Lands Division  
Clearwater County  
County of Barrhead  
County of Lamont  
County of Lethbridge  
County of Newell  
County of Two Hills  
County of Warner  
Ducks Unlimited Canada  
Eastern Irrigation District  
Nature Conservancy of Canada  
North Raven River Working Group  
Pheasants Forever  
Private Landowners  
Shell Albian Sands  
Shell Canada  
Suncor  
The Rocky Riparian Group  
Total E&P Canada  
Tree Canada

### **Key findings**

- Over 17,000 acres of wildlife and fisheries habitat were inspected and maintained through a variety of Habitat Stewardship Initiatives.
- Compliance field inspections and scheduled payments were completed on 153 Habitat Stewardship Initiatives sites, as described within the respective agreements.
- Annual inspections and maintenance were completed on 115 Conservation Sites (86 Crown and 29 Titled)
- Recommendations were provided on 75 land use referrals associated with ACA lands and investments.

### **Abstract**

Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) Land Management Program (LMP) encompasses activities intended to conserve, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and to increase sustainable recreational opportunities including angling and hunting. One of the core activities of the LMP is the management of Conservation Sites. The Conservation Site Management Program is managed on a provincial scale to promote consistency and efficiency, but is delivered on a regional scale to maximize local knowledge and partnership opportunities. Conservation Site management involves active maintenance and management of conservation assets that have been accumulated through historic projects and new conservation initiatives. We completed inspections on 268 conservation sites, maintenance on approximately 165 sites, and enhancements on five sites. Overall acres managed by this program decreased by approximately 6,500 acres due to the expiration of past project agreements (e.g. Landowner Habitat Program, Streambank Fencing); however, increases in the securement of new lands (~3,500 acres) and enrollment in new programs (e.g. Landowner Habitat and Access Program, Boreal Conservation) help to offset these losses. The Conservation Site Management Program still manages over 208,000 acres of conservation sites and over 17,000 acres of habitat from past project agreements.

### **Introduction**

Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) Land Management Program (LMP) encompasses activities intended to conserve, protect and enhance wildlife and fisheries habitat and to increase consumptive and non-consumptive recreational opportunities including angling and hunting. Programs and activities within the Conservation Site Management Program fall into one of the

following categories: Habitat Stewardship Initiatives, ACA Conservation Sites (Titled) and ACA Conservation Sites (Crown).

*Habitat Stewardship Initiatives* are past ACA or ASRD projects that provided financial and technical support to landowners to enhance wildlife and fisheries habitat or increase recreational opportunities. These projects involved a written agreement or verbal commitment between ACA or ASRD and landowners. The Land Management Program is responsible for the delivery of the obligations identified within these past agreements. The number of acres in this category is expected to decline over time as agreements expire. Some of the past projects that fall under this category include the Abandoned Farm Homestead Program, Landowner Habitat Program (LHP), Riparian Conservation Program and the Streambank Fencing (SBF) Program.

*ACA Conservation Sites (Titled)* encompass freehold lands acquired by ACA solely or where ACA has contributed funds through a financial partnership resulting in joint title or title being held by our conservation partner. Land donations and conservation easements held by ACA are also included in this category. ACA Conservation Sites (Titled) provide long-term protection for wildlife and fisheries habitat and increased recreational opportunities.

*ACA Conservation Sites (Crown)* encompass Crown lands that were historically known as Buck for Wildlife (BFW) properties held under a BFW protective notation. A variety of habitat enhancement and securement activities are associated with these lands. Mechanical clearings, prescribed burns, riparian and upland habitat, farm development and grazing lease relinquishments are a few examples of these activities.

The main purpose of the Conservation Site Management Program is the annual maintenance and management of these conservation assets. Specific objectives for this program include:

- Project is delivered in an efficient and timely manner throughout the 2008-2009 fiscal year.
- Inspections and necessary maintenance are completed on 60% of all conservation sites by March 31, 2009
- Establish and maintain successful partnerships with industry, government, municipalities and other organizations to discuss Conservation Site management issues and habitat enhancement opportunities.

## **Methods**

The Conservation Site Management Program is a provincial program that is delivered through regional projects to ensure provincial standards are adhered to by LMP staff. The Land Management Program Manager and LMP Regional Leads are responsible for the provincial coordination of this program, while project staff are responsible for the delivery of each region's annual maintenance component.

Annual maintenance activities include: financial administration of the projects (e.g. increase partner contributions), completion of agreement obligations (e.g. annual payments and

maintenance described in agreements), conservation of existing assets (e.g. maintain existing vegetation communities and site infrastructure), enhancement of existing assets (e.g. implement management plan recommendations), and collaboration with conservation partners (e.g. develop new partnerships). Project activities focus on maintaining habitat project investments (ACA and BFW) that support high value fisheries and wildlife habitat and sustainable recreational opportunities.

Management of ACA Conservation Sites on Crown and privately-owned land is completed in compliance with location-specific management plans and habitat or stewardship agreements that were developed by ACA or in collaboration with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) and other conservation partners.

**Results**

We maintained over 17,000 acres of wildlife and fisheries habitat through a variety of Habitat Stewardship Initiatives (Figure 1). We also maintained over 11,000 acres of titled land (Figure 2) and over 200,000 acres of Crown land (Figure 3) for wildlife and fisheries habitat and recreational opportunities.

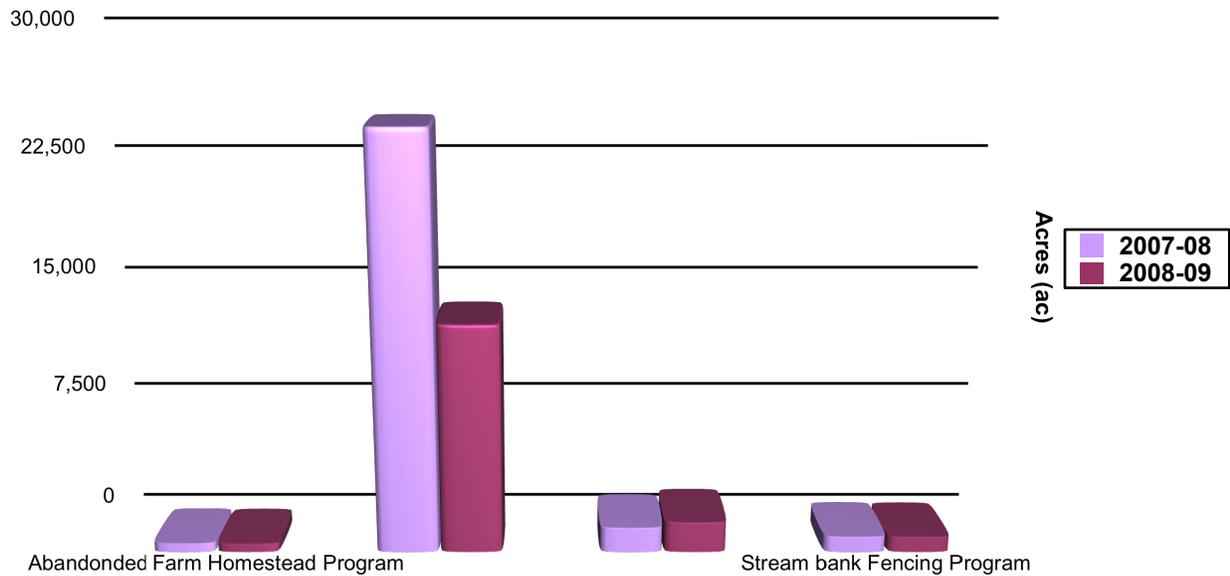


Figure 1. Habitat Stewardship Initiatives that ACA manages and maintains.

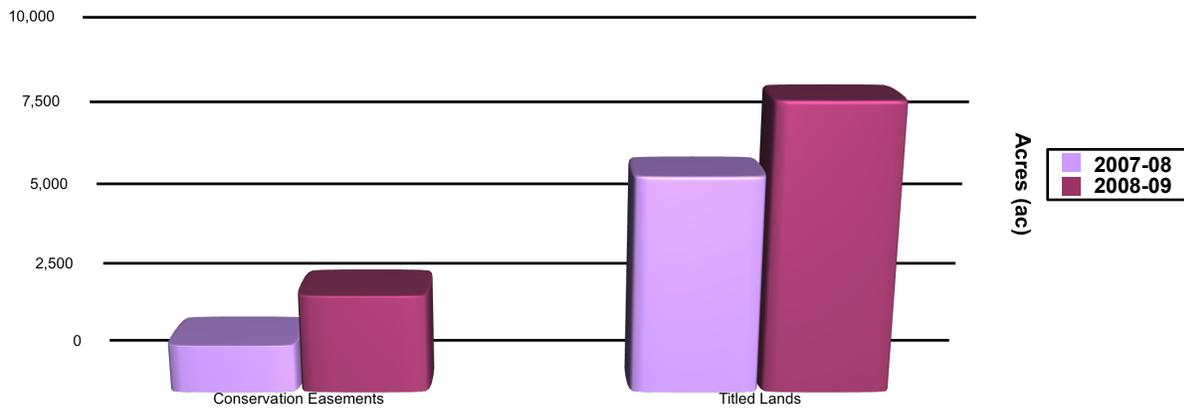


Figure 2. Composition of Conservation Sites (Titled) that ACA manages and maintains.

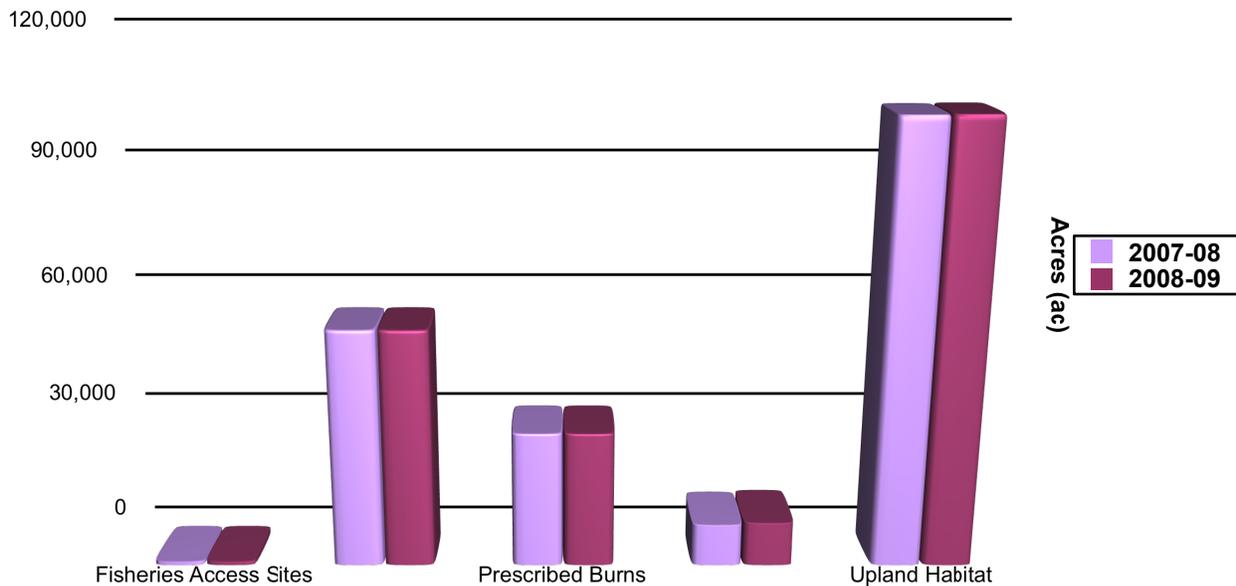


Figure 3. Composition of Conservation Sites (Crown) that ACA manages and maintains.

### *Habitat Stewardship Initiatives*

We completed 153 field and compliance inspections for Habitat Stewardship Initiatives. This included three Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) properties as part of a collaborative effort, 84 Landowner Habitat Program agreements, 16 Riparian Conservation Program agreements, and 50 Streambank Fencing (SBF) Agreements. Landowner participants within the programs were generally operating in compliance with their respective agreements; however, one SBF agreement was terminated due to lack of compliance. Six SBF agreements and 26 LHP agreements will expire by March 31, 2009.

We provided annual payments to landowners with LHP agreements as part of the obligation of ACA. We completed maintenance of 1,850 m of fenceline on 30 SBF sites, repairs to 20

watering/crossing sites, and repairs to one vandalized sign. We also hired contractors to assist in our obligations to manage beaver along SBF sites. The contractors removed 22 dams and 52 beavers from Dogpound Creek, North Raven River, and Fox Creek. ACA also assisted in the rejuvenation and restoration of 5.5 acres of decadent grassland as part of an enhancement of upland gamebird reproductive cover along Pothole Creek.

We provided recommendations on 43 referrals on Habitat Stewardship Initiatives. The referrals involved proposals for industrial development and access.

#### *ACA Conservation Sites (Titled)*

We performed 29 inspections on ACA Titled Conservation Sites and installed boundary signs at four of these sites. We completed the installation of project signage at four sites. The remaining sites are scheduled for signage in 2009. We completed routine maintenance on several properties (e.g. mechanical and chemical vegetation control, fence repairs), as required. We also attended several Conservation Site management team meetings with partners regarding management of properties with joint title. We also managed public access on the Sandstone Ranch through a reservation system and provided recommendations on six referrals on ACA Conservation Sites (Titled)

#### *ACA Conservation Sites (Crown)*

We completed inspections on 86 ACA Crown Conservation Sites including 11 properties with hay lands that are tendered to the public annually. We received hay tenders for nine of these properties.

We installed boundary signs at 18 sites and the project signs are scheduled for installation in 2009. We completed routine maintenance on numerous sites (e.g. fence maintenance, shelterbelt maintenance, mechanical and chemical vegetation control). We completed the rejuvenation of two conservation sites (Lac Cardinal Point Uplands and Whitemud River Flats) by direct seeding yellow blossom alfalfa. Restoration activities were also completed at Hebert Lake with Shell Canada and Tree Canada assisting in the planting of 70,000 trees. We removed buildings at two sites as part of a major site clean up. A Range Health Assessment was completed on one site to assist with future management of the property.

We provided recommendations on 26 referrals on ACA Conservation Sites (Crown). We responded to each of the referrals in a timely manner.

### **Conclusions**

We successfully met all objectives for this year. Over 60% of Conservation Sites were inspected. Additional maintenance and repairs were completed on 86 Conservation Sites, including weed control, re-seeding, fence repair or upgrades, livestock crossing/watering site repair, shelterbelt maintenance, signage, parking, and site clean up. All obligations to past agreements were completed. Most importantly, we have increased the amount of sustainable recreational opportunities available and maintained the conservation of over 200,000 acres of important fish and wildlife habitats.

## **Communications**

- Recommendation provided on 2 agricultural, 4 municipal and 69 industrial referrals associated with ACA conservation sites.
- ACA staff attended quarterly meetings of the Rocky Riparian Group.
- ACA staff attended regular Conservation Site management meetings and working group meetings with other conservation partners.
- Locations and descriptions of ACA Conservation Sites were published and highlighted in the Conservation Site Guide and made available on the ACA website.
- A landowner appreciation event was held at Pine Lake in June in collaboration with ACA, DUC, NCC, and Cows and Fish.
- Completed one interview with Michael Short on the Sandstone Ranch Conservation Site and its collaborative partnership.
- Two sites highlighted in ACA's Conservation Magazine.

**Appendix A**  
**Conservation Site Maintenance Photos 2008 / 09**



**Slack Slough Conservation Site**  
**Photo Credit Diana Rung**



**Faust Conservation Site (Dave Jackson and John Hallet)**  
**Photo Credit Jennifer Straub**



**Rudakevich 1 Conservation Site**  
**Photo Credit Ed Kolodychuk**



**Mckinnon Flats Conservation Site**  
**Photo Credit Brad Taylor**



**Sandstone Ranch Conservation Site**  
**Photo Credit Mike Uchikura**