

**Alberta Conservation Association  
2023/24 Project Summary Report**

**Project Name:** Landowner Habitat Program

**Land Management Program Manager:** Robert Anderson

**Project Leader:** Marco Fontana

**Primary ACA Staff on Project:** Taylor Dickson, Marco Fontana, Jeff Forsyth, John Hallett, Ed Kolodychuk, Stephen Nadworny, Roy Schmelzeisen, Dan Sturgess, Clayton Temple, and Mike Uchikura

### **Partnerships**

Government of Alberta

Participating Landowners

### **Key Findings**

- Currently managing 37 Landowner Habitat Retention Agreements, conserving 6,979 acres (2,824 ha) of wildlife and fish habitat.
- One agreement in our Central Region was terminated in 2023/24, a year prior to being scheduled for renewal, due to significant habitat removal without authorization.
- One expired agreement was renewed in 2023/24.
- One new agreement was signed in the Northwest Region protecting 471 acres.

### **Details**

Private lands that have not been cleared or excessively altered by development or agricultural practices play a significant role in sustaining healthy wildlife and fish populations by providing a variety of natural habitats. Protecting these diverse habitats, including forest, wetlands, and native grasslands, helps maintain threatened ecosystems, supports wildlife populations, and provides outdoor recreational opportunities. The Landowner Habitat Program (LHP) was initiated to help conserve key habitats and reduce habitat loss and fragmentation on privately

owned land. By entering into legally binding Habitat Retention Agreements to retain idled land for a term of five to 20 years, landowners are eligible to receive a financial incentive of up to \$10/acre for the habitat area kept from being developed, cleared, or otherwise utilized by agricultural production. To increase the project's direct benefit to Alberta Conservation Association's (ACA) hunting and angling stakeholders, a condition of the agreement is for landowners to provide reasonable public foot access upon request. Participants in the program are acknowledged with a landowner recognition sign and are provided with *Use Respect – Ask First* signage identifying their contact information. Displaying these signs at major access points and along the perimeter of their property is intended to reduce the likelihood of trespassing issues by providing a way for hunters to request and gain permission for access.

We currently manage 37 LHP agreements across the province, which conserves approximately 6,979 acres (2,824 ha) of important wildlife and fish habitat. This includes five agreements in ACA's Central Region, nine agreements in the Northeast Region, ten agreements in the Northwest Region, and 13 agreements in the South Region. In 2023/24, one landowner breached the terms of their agreement by clearing a significant portion of the protected habitat area without authorization, resulting in an early termination of their agreement. We were successful in renewing one expired agreement for an additional five-year term and a new five-year term agreement was signed protecting an additional 471 acres of wildlife habitat. Participating landowners currently enrolled in the LHP play an important part in helping protect some excellent wildlife habitat and providing access to recreational opportunities throughout Alberta. We continue to look for new landowners who are interested in developing this type of conservation project on private lands.

## Photos



Photo 1. Aspen forest and wetland habitat on an LHP participant's property (Central Region).  
Photo: John Hallet



Photo 2. Mixedwood forest on an LHP participant's property (Central Region). Photo: Marco Fontana



Photo 3. *Use Respect – Ask First* sign on an LHP participant’s property (Central Region).

Photo: Marco Fontana



Photo 4. Project sign on an LHP participant’s property (Northeast Region). Photo: Stephen

Nadworny



Photo 5. Boreal forest wetland on an LHP participant's property (Northwest Region). Photo: Ed Kolodychuk



Photo 6. Abandoned farmyard on an LHP participant's property (Northwest Region). Photo: Ed Kolodychuk



Photo 7. Shoreline habitat of Scope Reservoir on an LHP participant's property (Southern Region). Photo: Jeff Forsyth



Photo 8. Habitat adjacent to Grantham Lakes at an LHP participant's property (Southern Region). Photo: Jeff Forsyth