

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

Project Name: Recreational Opportunity Enhancement

Land Management Program Manager: Robert Anderson

Project Leader: Jeff Forsyth

Primary ACA Staff on Project: Stefanie Fenson, Marco Fontana, Jeff Forsyth, Stephen Nadworny, and Mike Uchikura

Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association

Government of Alberta

Landowners

Lethbridge Fish & Game Association

Key Findings

- Provided 15 participating landowners with recreational user sign-in access services for existing properties, totalling approximately 217,900 acres (88,185 ha) of access.
- Investigated 20 access points on four key waterbodies (Beaverhill, Big Hay, Bittern, and Manawan lakes) for potential access points for recreational users. Three of these access points will be investigated further.

Details

Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) established the Recreational Opportunity Enhancement (ROE) Project to improve opportunities for fishing and hunting, as well as other non-consumptive activities such as hiking, canoeing, or photography. The major focus of this project is to improve upland and big game hunter access to private lands and improve waterfowl hunter access to Crown waterbodies.

Expanding access sign-in process

Working with individual landowners has allowed us to improve hunter access to approximately 217,900.8 acres (88,184.5 ha) of private land across southern Alberta through a sign-in access system. We continue to collaborate with landowners and other partners to add to the list of properties that use this process. Landowners willing to participate are provided with tools, such as custom signage, maps, sign-in cards, and a sign-in box, to help facilitate access. As part of the program, we will acknowledge our participants with a ROE participant project sign and provide *Use Respect – Ask First* signs to be displayed on perimeter fencing of their properties. Increasing access opportunities for hunters may provide the Government of Alberta additional options to use hunters as a management tool when managing game species. Not only will increased opportunities encourage hunter and angler recruitment, but it will also help maintain quality outdoor experiences by distributing hunters and anglers across the landscape.

Use of permanent and/or seasonal lease agreements to provide access to Crown waterbodies

The Government of Alberta owns the bed and shore of most large ponds, lakes, rivers, and streams in Alberta. As such, these waterbodies have the potential to provide recreational opportunities to all Albertans; however, gaining access to the bed and shore of these waterbodies can be difficult because private lands often surround them. In 2023, a preliminary assessment of potential access improvements to four key waterbodies in the Edmonton region was contracted out to determine the feasibility of future access improvements at these locations. Of the 20 locations investigated in 2023, only three locations warranted further investigations due to factors such as prohibitive costs, water level fluctuations, and access constraints. These locations, and potential funding sources for their development, will receive further evaluation in 2024/25.

Photos



Photo 1. Upland habitat on a participating landowner's property near the Milk River Ridge.
Photo: Jeff Forsyth



Photo 2. Native prairie habitat on a participating landowner's property near the Milk River Ridge. Photo: Jeff Forsyth



Photo 3. Upland habitat on a participating landowner's property near the Milk River Ridge.
Photo: Jeff Forsyth



Photo 4 Native prairie habitat on a participating landowner's property near the Milk River Ridge. Photo: Jeff Forsyth