

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

**Project Name:** Riparian Conservation Program

**Land Management Program Manager:** Robert Anderson

**Project Leader:** Jeff Forsyth

**Primary ACA Staff on Project:** Mandy Couve, Taylor Dickson, Lance Engley, Stefanie Fenson, Marco Fontana, Jeff Forsyth, Ed Kolodychuk, Garret McKen, Stephen Nadworny, Clayton Temple, Mike Uchikura, and Erin VanderMarel

**Partnerships**

Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension  
Society

Alberta Fish & Game Association

Cenovus Energy Inc.

County of Grande Prairie

Cows and Fish – Alberta Riparian Habitat  
Management Society

Critical Mass

Environment and Climate Change Canada

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Foothills Forage and Grazing Association

Give Back Contracting Ltd.

Government of Alberta

Grey Wooded Forage Association

HUVAN Construction

Landowners

Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance

Milk River Watershed Council Canada

Mountain View County

Northern Sunrise County

Oldman Watershed Council

Ovintiv Inc.

Red Deer River Watershed Alliance

Sinopec Canada

Syncrude Canada Ltd.

TC Energy Corporation

Tree Time Services Inc.

Trout Unlimited Canada

West County Watershed Society

Wood PLC

## **Key Findings**

- Delivered 16 riparian enhancement projects: four fencing projects, six landowner agreements, four off-site livestock watering initiatives, and two bioengineering projects.
- Conserved 218.9 acres (88.6 ha) of riparian habitat through new riparian habitat lease agreements and installed 13.5 km of new wildlife friendly fencing.
- Monitored 52 existing agreements that conserve 8,988.4 acres (3,637.6 ha) of riparian and adjacent upland habitat lands throughout the province.
- Liaised with Tree Canada and ALUS (Northern Sunrise County) with respect to planting 50,000 white spruce seedlings as part of a partner project. Bioengineering was undertaken at an existing Riparian Conservation Program agreement on the Redwillow River, led by AWES, to bioengineer one hectare of eroded river bank.
- Collaborated with 28 groups and organizations to enhance and facilitate the maintenance of healthy riparian habitat across the province.

## **Details**

The ecological integrity and health of Alberta's rivers, streams, and surrounding landscapes are often negatively affected by ongoing human development. Riparian areas are complex ecosystems that provide important ecological functions and are critical to maintaining watershed health. Proper management of this sensitive habitat is essential to maintain water quality and habitat integrity. The primary goal of Alberta Conservation Association's Riparian Conservation Program is to protect and restore riparian habitat in priority watersheds through on-the-ground habitat restoration projects by engaging landowners, the public, and other stakeholders through community outreach and education activities. Our collaborative partnerships with landowners, industry, government, watershed groups, and other stakeholders are an integral component of project delivery. In 2023/24, we focused conservation efforts in the following priority watersheds: Beaverlodge, Heart, Raven, Owl, North Raven, Redwillow, and St. Mary rivers; and Beaver, Clear, Dogpound, Todd, Sharples, and Five Mile creeks (including their associated tributaries). We delivered 16 enhancement projects using a variety of management tools, including implementing agreements to conserve 218.9 acres (88.6 ha) of riparian and associated upland habitat: four off-site watering systems; six landowner agreements; two bioengineering

projects; and installing 13.5 km of wildlife friendly fencing to protect important riparian habitat as part of new and existing agreements. We also monitored water quality and riparian health on two systems to help evaluate the effectiveness of riparian enhancements, supported landowners with riparian enhancement activities, and communicated our Riparian Conservation Program to various communities.

Our efforts have contributed to enhanced awareness and improvements in riparian habitat health and have positively influenced the stewardship approach of many landowners and leaseholders. We will continue to monitor water quality and riparian health to help us assess the effectiveness of our conservation efforts, in addition to the outreach we participate in within the community and with partners. We recognize the importance of collaborating with landowners on riparian conservation efforts and we will continue to communicate the success of our riparian projects to local communities and our stakeholders.

## Photos



Photo 1. Habitat lands on riparian habitat enhancement agreement (RHEA) on Owl River.

Photo: Garret Mcken



Photo 2. Fence install along the habitat lands on the Owl River for a new RHEA.

Photo: Garret Mcken





Photo 3. Landowner sign on RHEA located on Dogpound Creek.  
Photo: Erin VanderMarel



Photo 4. Habitat lands on RHEA located on Raven River.  
Photo: Erin VanderMarel





Photo 5. Livestock watering at solar off-site watering system on existing RHEA on the Raven River.

Photo: Erin VanderMarel



Photo 6. Habitat lands looking upstream on RHEA located on Sharples Creek.

Photo: Jeff Forsyth



Photo 7. Habitat lands looking downstream on RHEA located on Sharples Creek.  
Photo: Jeff Forsyth