

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

Project name: *Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program (WCDPP)*

Project leader: Velma Hudson

Primary ACA staff on this project (including seasonals):

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Partnerships:

Environment Canada

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Key findings

- Forty-six scare cannon distribution centers distributed 144 scare cannons to 75 landowners.
- Thirty-five percent of landowners who borrowed scare cannons allowed their contact information to be provided to waterfowl hunters.
- Our waterfowl web page recorded 269 visits between 15 August and 31 October 2008.

Abstract

The Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program assists agricultural producers in reducing damage to crops caused by waterfowl during fall migration, and is delivered by Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) in collaboration with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Environment Canada. ACA and Environment Canada have traditionally cost-shared the program, although in 2008 Environment Canada could not commit to program cost-sharing by the time delivery was initiated, and therefore we were not able to operate waterfowl feeding stations. Waterfowl scaring equipment and advice is provided free of charge to producers. We also maintain a web page that provides scaring advice and displays areas of potential waterfowl concentrations that hunters may use to plan their activities. We provided 75 landowners with 144 scare cannons in 2008. Thirty-five percent of these landowners enabled us to share their contact information with hunters seeking places to hunt. We updated our website weekly with areas of scare cannon use through the fall. We had six inquiries from producers expressing concern about the lack of feeding station operations in Fall 2008. We provided information to concerned producers to keep them apprised of the reasons why feeding stations were not employed.

Introduction

The Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program (WCDPP) assists agricultural producers in reducing damage to crops caused by waterfowl during fall migration. Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), Environment Canada and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) collaboratively plan the program; ACA delivers the program while program funding has been traditionally cost shared between ACA and Environment Canada.

In 2008-09, Environment Canada was unable to commit to cost-sharing the program prior to implementation of activities. Consequently, we delivered a modified program that focused on the

distribution of self-operated scare cannons, but did not operate any waterfowl feeding stations. This allowed us to deliver the modified program within the budget allocated by ACA alone. In addition, we updated our web page weekly with locations of waterfowl control activity through the harvest period.

Approach

We operate the program in much of the white zone of Alberta and distribute scare cannons through local distribution centers. These distribution centers receive compensation for storing and distributing the scare cannons, and are commonly store front business operations in the local community (Figure 1).

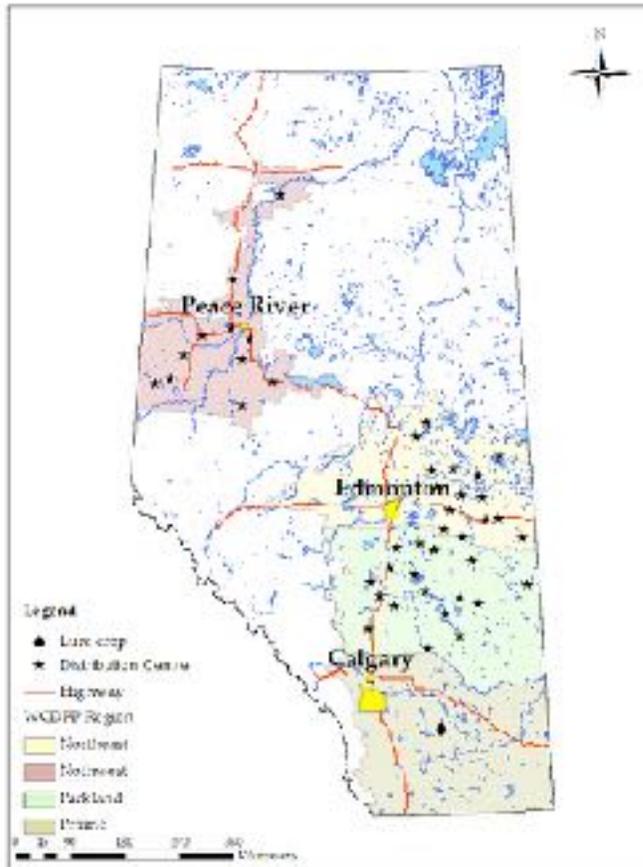


Figure 1. Map of WCDPP operational areas showing lure crop and distribution centres.

Scare cannons may be borrowed free of charge by producers. For each cannon, the distribution centre collects a damage deposit, information on the type of damage, and whether or not the borrower will permit their contact information to be provided to waterfowl hunters. We collect this information weekly during the fall to update our waterfowl web page. The web page contains a downloadable fact sheet on waterfowl crop damage prevention strategies, and a link to a provincial map that displays the number of requests for scare cannons. The number of requests for cannons may be used by hunters to identify waterfowl concentrations. We also provide contact information to hunters where we have gained the necessary permission.

Results

We engaged 46 distribution centers to distribute cannons. Seventy-five landowners borrowed 144 scare cannons for use on at least 128 different quarter sections of cropland. Thirty-five percent of these landowners indicated they would allow their contact information to be provided to waterfowl hunters.

There was a lure crop planted in April 2008, prior to program modification and was therefore swathed and used as a lure crop. We estimate that 350 bushels of barley were consumed by opportunistic ducks, providing 33,600 days of duck feeding.

We responded to six enquiries from the public regarding not operating feeding stations. We assisted the Bow River Irrigation District (BRID) in developing a newsletter informing their clients about the change in operations. We also developed a Question and Answer sheet for ASRD District offices to respond to any inquiries about feeding stations.

We updated the waterfowl recreation web page weekly from 15 August to 31 October. The website recorded 269 visits during that time. We also compiled information on wildlife crop damage compensation from Agriculture Financial Services Corporation for the 2007 crop year, and loaded it into the program database.

Summary information

We received far fewer complaints from producers regarding not operating feeding stations than was anticipated. Several factors may have contributed to this lack of concern including relatively mild, dry weather during September and October which allowed producers to harvest their crops quickly, making them less vulnerable to waterfowl depredation. Negotiations to cost-share future program activities are ongoing with Environment Canada.

Communications

- Informed ASRD, Ducks Unlimited Canada, BRID and Raymond Irrigation District of 2008-09 program activity changes.
- Question & Answer sheet provided to ASRD for use in responding to public inquiries.
- Waterfowl web page and WCDPP fact sheet available on line at www.ab-conservation.com.

Literature cited:



Scare cannon in swathed field. (Photo: Margo Supplies Ltd.)