

Habitat Program Agreement

Between:

Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
(ESRD)

-and-

Alberta Conservation Association
(ACA)

This agreement is made pursuant to the *Wildlife Regulation*, AR 143/97 and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ESRD and ACA dated May 20, 2014.

Program Description

The department of Environment and Sustainable Resources Development (ESRD) has the responsibility to manage all aspects of Alberta's fish and wildlife resources on behalf of the Government of Alberta. In carrying out this responsibility, ESRD requires both internal and external resources to support management decisions. The Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), as a delegated administrative organization (DAO) established under the Alberta *Wildlife Act* and *Wildlife Regulation*, undertakes projects and programs to address ESRD priorities with respect to fish and wildlife resources.

This Habitat Program Agreement defines the scope of services delegated to the ACA, the roles and responsibilities of the parties, the expected outcomes from this effort and other obligations related to operational conditions and performance measures.

The delegated Habitat Program comprises a suite of activities that serve to secure maintain and enhance fish and wildlife habitat on both crown-owned and private lands. Additional habitat activities are designed to enhance recreational hunting and angling opportunities, including the provision of public access sites.

ESRD values an adaptive process in managing Alberta's fish and wildlife resources. To ensure the delegated habitat program continues to provide mutually beneficial outcomes to both parties, this Program Agreement will be managed under the ESRD/ACA Joint Programs Committee (JPC). Through this committee, ongoing evaluation and adaptation will occur through a collaborative planning process, as defined in the MOU between the parties.

Outcomes

The following outcomes are expected by ESRD through the implementation of the delegated Habitat Program. These outcomes play a vital role in supporting adaptive management of Alberta's fish and wildlife resource and offer metrics to help ensure ongoing program success.

- Communications between ESRD and ACA are effective in ensuring priority habitat management projects are implemented by ACA.
- Habitat risks are identified, assessed and reported to ESRD.
- Priority fish and wildlife habitat is identified, assessed, secured and enhanced that meet agreed upon priorities and expectations of ESRD and ACA.
- A current list is maintained of crown owned lands where ACA has been delegated the habitat management responsibility.
- Habitat management plans are developed and successfully implemented for specified lands where ACA has habitat management responsibility.
- Fish and wildlife based recreational access opportunities are developed, enhanced and maintained.
- Water control structures are appropriately maintained and operated according to management plans developed by ESRD or ACA.

Specific Program Activities

The following defines the specific roles and responsibilities of each party in carrying out activities under this delegated Program Agreement. Strategic planning of activities will occur through a collaborative process under the Joint Program Committee (JPC), defined in the Memorandum of Understanding. ESRD protocols and standards, required to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of some activities, will also be provided to the ACA through the JPC. Activities may occur on both crown-owned and private lands.

- 1. Inventory, Assessment and Monitoring of Fish and Wildlife habitat** (ESRD requires the identification, assessment and ongoing monitoring of priority habitats to help inform program delivery. An inventory of habitats and potential enhancement opportunities is important to ensure functional landscapes are maintained for self-sustaining populations of fish and wildlife.)

ESRD

- provides prioritized list of fish and wildlife habitat-related concerns to the JPC;

- provides advice and support to development of assessment and monitoring tools as requested by ACA through the JPC; and
- through the JPC, ensures all permits, licenses or approvals required by ACA from ESRD to undertake agreed to work, are processed in a timely manner.

ACA

- leads development and delivery of specified habitat inventory, assessment and monitoring programs;
- identifies potential habitat for securement, enhancement and/or management; and
- ensures stakeholders are aware of habitat-related projects.

2. Development and Implementation of Habitat Management Plans (Habitat management objectives, for specified lands where ACA has habitat management responsibility, are contained in site-specific Habitat Management Plans, developed by ACA using a standardized template and approved by ESRD.)

ESRD

- provides Habitat Management Plan template for ACA use within 90 days of signing this document;
- through the JPC, provides priorities for Habitat Management Plan development;
- manages land-use activities through the referral process and administration of the *Public Lands Act* and the *Water Act*;
- supports ACA in managing access to delegated management lands;
- ensures agreed to dispositions (as per Appendix 1) show significant progress within one year of the signing of this document;
- ensures all outstanding issues related to disposition identified in Appendix 1 show significant progress towards resolution within 1 year of the signing of this document;
- through the JPC, ensures that all Divisions of ESRD are supportive of ACA habitat management activities
- Through the JPC, ensures all permits, licenses or approvals required by ACA from ESRD to undertake agreed to work are processed in a timely manner;
- through the JPC, provides advice and support to plan refinement;
- agrees to review and provide feedback to ACA in regard to habitat management plans within 30 days of receipt of the plan. ESRD will seek to approve mutually acceptable plans; and
- records habitat management plans into GLIMPS system.

ACA

- develops Habitat Management Plan using the template;
- implements agreed to habitat management activities on Crown land;

- informs on progress of implementation, identifies opportunities to refine and leads plan refinement process; and
- ensures stakeholders are aware of the Habitat Management Plans.

3. Securement, Enhancement and Management of Fish and Wildlife Habitat
(ESRD desires the ongoing securement, enhancement and/or management of important habitats to maintain sustainable populations of fish and wildlife in Alberta and that the use of levy funds for these purposes is not in conflict with land use framework regional plans.)

ESRD

- provides list of fish and wildlife habitat priorities, concerns and/or recommendations for securement to the JPC;
- facilitates securement of crown-owned land through internal Government of Alberta coordination, permitting or other government-related process;
- provides advice and support to development and assessment of habitat securement, enhancement and monitoring tools as requested by ACA; and
- supports ACA in the process of securing habitat lands (through purchase or lease).

ACA

- identifies potential habitat for securement, enhancement and/or management;
- secures, enhances, develops and manages habitat;
- provides advice and support to standards development (e.g. tools for habitat enhancement, conservation easements, habitat guidelines);
- leads development and delivery of habitat inventory and assessment programs;
- undertakes habitat extension and stewardship initiatives with landowners to encourage retention and restoration of habitat; and
- ensures stakeholders are aware of securement, enhancement and habitat management activities.

4. Securement, Enhancement and Management of Recreational Access Sites
(Increasing and maintaining access for recreational opportunities (e.g. Hunter and Angler Access Sites) ensures that all Albertans have the opportunity to enjoy fish and wildlife resources.)

ESRD

- Facilitates securement of Crown-owned land through internal GOA coordination, permitting process or other required government functions.
- Develops list of sites for access development in collaboration with ACA
- Maintains list of long-term (3-5 year) priorities for habitat enhancement to JPC

- Through the JPC, ensures all permits, license and approvals required from ESRD are processed in a timely manner

ACA

- Develops list of sites for access development for submission to JPC
- Secures, enhances, maintains and manages sites, as agreed through the JPC

Process for Habitat Management Activities on Public Lands where ACA has been Delegated Habitat Management Activities (Dispositions, Referrals and Divestments)

Dispositions (This confers a legal right to a specified parcel of public land.)

ESRD will

- ensure significant progress is made on agreed to dispositions (as per Appendix 1) within one year of the signing of this document;
- ensure significant progress is made on outstanding issues related to disposition identified in Attachment 1;
- attach the appropriate notation to secure the specified parcel of land;
- support ACA in acquiring leases on crown properties that are identified as important habitat, but are not listed in Attachment 1; and
- exercise the right to waive fees associated with the disposition of lands to the ACA.

ACA will

- apply for desired disposition through the JPC.

Referrals (To ensure ACA is aware of potential activity that may affect habitat objectives where ACA has an interest, ACA will be included in the referral process.)

ESRD will

- Ensure that all referrals provided to ESRD with respect to lands managed by ESRD will be shared with ACA for information purposes.

Divestments/Reassignment (Where either party wishes for the divestment or reassignment of crown-owned lands from ACA habitat management interest.)

ACA

- provides ESRD an updated list of crown-owned lands for which ACA has a habitat management responsibility (update of Attachment 1).

ESRD

- maintains a current and accurate record of these lands, and actively manages any approved reassignment of title and/or water licences.

Performance Measures

ESRD requires a progress report from the ACA at the conclusion of each fiscal year. This report will be in the form of the ACA Annual Report, and will contain a synopsis of

the habitat program implementation, including recommendations for improvement. This report will be reviewed by the Joint Programs Committee for to help guide program refinement for the following years.

The following metrics will be used to track the success of this program:

- accounting of levy fund allocation by program area;
- the percentage of annual tasks/objectives, agreed to through the JPC process are successfully completed;
- all agreed to management plans for the each year have been completed and approved;
- all disposition issues related to Appendix 1 agreed to be completed through the JPC on an annual basis are resolved;
- provides annual updated tracking list of lands ACA manages;
- all crown lands secured and/or managed with the use of levy funds will have appropriate signage acknowledging ESRD contribution, and be contained in the ACA public guide of Conservation Sites; and
- publicly accessible summary reports are available on-line within 30 days of fiscal year-end, including reports related to ongoing projects.

Program Term

This Agreement shall commence upon the date of signature and remain in effect until May 20, 2016.

This Agreement is subject to annual review and may be amended from time to time as outlined in the MOU signed May 20, 2014 between ACA and ESRD.