## **Alberta Conservation Association (ACA)**

**Date:** 2014-2015

**Project Name:** Corporate Partners Program

Land Program Manager: Darren Dorge

Project Leader: Ed Kolodychuk

### **Primary ACA staff on project:**

Paul Hvenegaard, Ed Kolodychuk, Ken Kranrod, Garret Mcken, Roy Schmelzeisen, Scott Seward, Lenore Stone, Juanna Thompson and Todd Zimmerling

## **Partnerships**

- Alberta Fish & Game Association
- Shell Canada Energy
- Suncor Energy Foundation
- Wild Elk Federation

## **Key Findings**

- We completed eight acquisitions in 2014/15 that conserved 1,250 acres.
- Six of the eight acquisitions are new Conservation Sites.
- Two of the eight acquisitions are expansions of existing Conservation Sites.
- Our collaborative effort secured land with an estimated land value of \$981,900.

#### Introduction

Throughout northern Alberta, the cumulative effect of habitat loss and fragmentation from human disturbance of natural ecosystems is a major concern. As industrial activity continues to expand, greater emphasis is being placed on loss and alteration of habitat. Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) collaborates with two key corporate partners, Suncor Energy Foundation (Suncor) and Shell Canada Energy (Shell), who formed a conservation partnership program to voluntarily offset their negative impacts in Alberta's oil sands within the boreal forest.

Two documents, Suncor's *Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative* and Shell Canada Energy's *10-year Memorandum of Understanding*, guide the administration of funds, define operational guidelines and direct securement activities. These documents outline specific focus areas where we direct our securement efforts (Table 1).

Table 1. ACA focus areas with corporate partners.

ACA Region	Focus Area Name	Corporate Partner
Northwest	Beaverlodge/Redwillow	Suncor
	Deadwood	Suncor
	Kimiwan/Winagami/Lesser Slave Lake	Suncor
	West Dunvegan	Shell
Northeast	Athabasca/Hubert Lake	Shell/Suncor
	Lesser Slave Lowlands	Suncor
	Tawatinaw	Suncor
	Therein	Suncor

As lands with important habitat value become available for purchase, we and our partners collaborate to secure these valuable habitats. Acquired lands, referred to as Conservation Sites, provide essential habitat for wildlife and fish species and provide Alberta's outdoor enthusiasts with year-round sustainable recreational opportunities. Recreational opportunities are communicated to our stakeholders on our website and in our *Discover Alberta's Wild Side:*Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide.

#### Methods

We secure lands primarily through fee-simple purchases (for private land) and grazing lease relinquishments in exchange for a protective notation reflecting ACA's interest (for Crown land). The following steps outline the process ACA Land Management Program staff use to secure lands with corporate partner funds:

- Initial assessment of property and meeting with landowner.
  - o Determine if property is within our conservation priorities for land securement.
  - o Discuss landowner's intent for property and interest in selling.
  - o Inspect property and assess resources, liabilities, etc. Take photographs of property.
  - Complete a Habitat Assessment Initial Site Inspection Form.
- Obtain the legal land title of the property.
  - Confirm ownership and identify encumbrances or other interests registered against title (e.g., mortgages, liens, rights-of-way, zoning).
- Complete an Environmental Assessment.
- Contract an Appraisal.
- Complete and submit Land Acquisition Proposal to Land Management program manager.
  - o Include the following attachments: legal land title, air photo, photographs, Environmental

Assessment and Appraisal.

- Land Management program manager prepares summary and provides a recommendation to the President and CEO for review and submission to ACA's Board and appropriate corporate partner.
- If the proposal is approved by the Board and corporate partner, an Offer to Purchase will be prepared and reviewed by ACA legal counsel and then presented to the landowner.
- If the Offer to Purchase is accepted, the necessary legal documents for transfer of land to ACA is prepared by ACA legal counsel and registered at the Land Titles Office.
- New Conservation Site is uploaded to ACA website and advertised in next edition of our *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide.*

We collaborate with other conservation groups, where possible, as part of the above process to secure partnership funding and additional benefits, including cost-shared management and maintenance of the Conservation Sites acquired.

#### Results

In 2014/15, we purchased eight parcels of land, which resulted in the creation of six new Conservation Sites and the expansion of two Conservation Sites (Table 2). Partnerships with Suncor, Shell, Alberta Fish & Game Association (AFGA) and Wild Elk Federation (WEF) were fundamental to our success. Collaborative partnerships allow ACA to actively pursue additional securement opportunities that may not otherwise be possible.

In total, we secured a total of 1,250 acres of habitat across the Boreal Forest Natural Region with an appraised land value of approximately \$981,900. The habitat will be managed to benefit a variety of wildlife and fish species and will provide additional sustainable recreational opportunities to Albertans.

Table 2. Corporate Partners Program securement transactions in 2014/15.

Region and Project Name	Corporate Partner(s)	Size (acres)	Special Features	
Northwest				
Lac Cardinal West (Expansion) LSD 04-36-083-25-W5M LSD 13-36-083-25-W5M	Suncor and AFGA	39.7	This site is located 20 km west of Grimshaw on the shores of Lac Cardinal Lake. Habitat at the site is a mix of riparian vegetation along the lake and creeks, as well as stands of aspen/willow. Wildlife found here include moose, elk, deer	

			and small furbearers. During spring and fall migration, a variety of waterfowl and swans stage at the lake.
North Kamisak Lake (Expansion) NE-33-071-12-W6M	Suncor	133.5	This site is located 21 km west of Beaverlodge. Habitat is a mixture of aspen/willow-dominated forest and tame pasture. Wildlife found here include elk, deer, moose, black bears and coyotes.
Salt Creek SE-20-076-14-W5M	Suncor	154.6	This site is located 40 km northeast of High Prairie. Habitat includes aspen-dominated forest, hay land, riparian habitat and several small wetlands. Wildlife in the area include moose, white-tailed deer, black bears, coyotes, and furbearers such as beavers and muskrats.
Sundew SW-09-077-19-W5M	Suncor and AFGA	160	This site is located 7 km south of McLennan. Habitat includes mostly spruce-dominated forest along with some mixedwood forest. Wildlife in the area include deer, moose, and small furbearers.
Whispering Timber NE-33-086-21-W5M SE-33-086-21-W5M	Suncor, AFGA and WEF	301.7	This site is located 36 km north of Peace River. Habitat at the site is mixedwood forest. Wildlife in the area include white-tailed deer, moose, elk, black bears, wolves and ruffed grouse.
Albright 2 NE-10-072-11-W6M	Suncor and AFGA	149.9	This site is located 12 km northwest of Beaverlodge. Habitat includes aspen forest, black spruce bog and wetland. Wildlife in the area include white-tailed deer, moose,

			black bears and small furbearers.		
Northeast	Northeast				
South Pine Creek NE-23-062-22-W4M	Suncor and AFGA	150	This site is located approximately 37 km south of Athabasca and consists of undisturbed boreal forest. A variety of wildlife are found here, including mule deer, moose, black bears, upland gamebirds, small furbearers and songbirds.		
Sylvan Glen NE-07-064-26-W4M	Shell	161	This site is located 40 km north of Westlock. Habitat consists of deciduous forest and tame pasture (which will be reforested). Wildlife in the area include white-tailed deer and moose.		
TOTAL		1,250.4			

#### **Conclusions**

In 2014/15, we completed eight acquisitions totaling 1,250 acres of high-quality wildlife habitat in Alberta's Boreal Forest Natural Region. Our collaborative efforts with industry, private landowners and other conservation organizations allowed us to secure these important habitat lands.

Our goal is to continue collaborating with our key corporate partners to ensure a strong working relationship. With a shared vision and complementary expertise, this relationship reveals that large energy companies and a non-profit conservation group are able to work together to create a lasting legacy on Alberta's landscape.

#### **Communications**

- Delivered an annual presentation to Suncor summarizing project results from the past year.
- Delivered a presentation to Shell regarding the current Corporate Partners Program as well as the future of conservation offsets in Alberta.
- Delivered a presentation to the Alberta Society of Professional Biologists regarding ACA's commitment to protect and enhance wildlife and fish habitat through the Corporate Partners Program and boreal offsets.
- New Conservation Sites secured in 2014/15 were added to our provincial database for advertisement on our website and inclusion in our *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*.

## **Literature Cited**

N/A

# **Photos**



Riparian habitat found along an unnamed creek at Lac Cardinal West Conservation Site (Northwest Region). Photo: Garret Mcken



American widgeon swimming on an oxbow lake at Salt Creek Conservation Site (Northwest Region). Photo: Scott Seward



Labrador tea and black spruce in the foreground with deciduous forest in background at Albright 2 Conservation Site (Northwest Region). Photo: Lenore Stone



Boreal mixedwood forest at South Pine Creek Conservation Site (Northeast Region). Photo: Juanna Thompson



Hayfield at Sylvan Glen Conservation Site (Northeast Region). Photo: Juanna Thompson