

**Alberta Conservation Association  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
March 21, 2024 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
Four Points by Sheraton Sherwood Park  
1005 Provincial Ave, Sherwood Park, AB**



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<b>In Attendance:</b>	Bill Abercrombie (Chairman)	Alberta Trappers Association
	Robert Gruszecki (Vice Chairman)	Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Assoc.
	Sandra Mellon (Treasurer)	Business Representative
	Chuck Priestley (Secretary)	Public at Large Northeast Region
	Vince Aiello (Director)	Public at Large Central Region
	Lisa Holdaway (Director)	Public at Large South Region
	Robin Barnes (Director)	Public at Large Northwest Region
	Fred Calverley (Director)	Trout Unlimited Canada
	Ken Bailey (Director)	Pheasants Forever, Alberta Council
	Lu Carbyn (Director)	Nature Alberta
	Neil Keown (Director)	Alberta Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
	Randy Collins (Director)	Northern Board Liaison
	Rick Blakeley (Director)	Alberta Wildlife Federation Representative
	Todd Zimmerling	President and CEO, ACA
	Lori-Jeanne Edwards	Chief Finance and Information Officer, ACA
	Marlene Montgomery	Recording Secretary, ACA
<b>Regrets:</b>	Brent Watson (Director)	Alberta Bowhunters Association
	Mark Boyce (Director)	ACA/UofA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife
	Gordon Burton (Director)	Alberta Professional Outfitters Society
	Sue Cotterill	Minister's Representative - FP, EPA
	Vacant	Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta
	Vacant	ACA Academic Representative
	Vacant	Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta
	Vacant	Indigenous Board Liaison

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**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Bill Abercrombie called the March 21, 2024 meeting to order 9:04 AM.

2. **Welcome and Introductions**

Chairman Bill Abercrombie welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. **Approval of the Agenda and Meeting Time Limit**

Additions

- Tom Bateman Conservation Site
- Meeting Structure

**MOTION # 05/24**

**Moved by: Robert Gruszecki  
Seconded by: Neil Keown**

Move that the Agenda and Meeting Time Limit be accepted as amended.

**MOTION CARRIED**

4. **Acceptance of the Minutes/Electronic Voting**

Electronic Motions: 01/24EV and 02/24EV

**MOTION # 06/24**

**Moved by: Rick Blakeley  
Seconded by: Sandra Mellon**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors agree that this is an accurate reflection of the votes placed and therefore ratify Electronic Motion #01/24 stating: "Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve the December 14, 2023 Board of Directors meeting minutes as presented" and ratify motion #02/24EV stating: "Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve the wire transfer of \$532,350.00 (Five Hundred Thirty-Two Thousand Three Hundred and Fifty Dollars) to purchase the Wabamun/Whitewood Conservation Site 21-53-4-W5M (199 Acres) ECCC, NSCSF. Closing Date: March 18, 2024."

**MOTION CARRIED**

5. **Review of Action Items**

Action Items were reviewed, and updates were provided.

6. **Committee Reports**

a. **Chairman / Executive Committee**

Bill Abercrombie reported that:

- President and CEO Todd Zimmerling's compensation was reviewed and an agreement was made. Consensus is that Todd continues to be a strong and confident President and CEO.
- Attended as many banquets and fundraisers as possible and is impressed by the level of

representation by all member groups. Even pulled a 9-hour shift at the Edmonton Sportsman's Show – impressed with the number of young people in attendance.

**b. President and CEO**

The President and CEO report was reviewed, highlights were discussed and noted:

- Delayed start on aeration due to weather. There are many concerns heading into spring - we need more moisture, fears of fires.
- Wabamun/Whitewood (TransAlta) 1<sup>st</sup> donation/purchase has been completed.
- Pekowki Ranch deal fell apart, landowner changed his mind.
- Met with and/or talked to:
  - Shane Schreiber acting ADM.
  - GoA regarding sniffing dogs, one dog is retiring. This could provide a good public relations opportunity to have member groups involved in training a new sniffing dog.
  - Minister Loewen – discussed changes to wildlife regulations (making them easier to understand), ACA Predator Compensation and bear hunting to name a few.
  - AG Canada regarding FWW project.
  - Deputy Minister Marchand who asked about communication within GoA staff/departments and is aware of issues.
  - Miistakis Institute regarding their extensive database.
- Vacationed for a good part of February.
- Attended the:
  - MSL, CCEG and Biodiversity adjudication sessions
  - Wild Sheep event where \$370,000.00 was raised
  - ACA Management Team Retreat.
- More businesses wanting to partner with ACA (Corporate Partners in Conservation - CPIC)
- Multisar Program could expand significantly with more funding. Meeting with Minister Rebecca Schulz in early April regarding other effective conservation measures.
- Insurance premiums have increased significantly.
- Minister Loewen has given the go ahead to start working on Catfish.
- There was a significant breach on social media that was dealt with promptly.
- Continue to prevent and educate regarding increasing hacking attempts.

**c. Finance and Audit Committee**

- Reviewed the Financials to January 31, 2024.
- Recommend approving the 2024/25 Annual Operating Plan.

**d. Communications Committee**

Randy Collins, Committee Chair gave an update on the Communications Committee meeting where ACA Communications Manager Tara Holmwood was a guest. Randy enjoys dealings with ACA staff.

**e. The ACA Grants Program Committee**

i) Minister's Special Licence Grants recommendations

**MOTION # 07/24**

**Moved by: Neil Keown  
Seconded by: Sandra Mellon**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve the Grants Program Committee recommendations regarding the Ministers Special Licence Grants.

**MOTION CARRIED**

The Grants Program adjudicators found the MSL process challenging.

ii) Conservation, Community and Education Grants recommendations

**MOTION # 08/24**

**Moved by: Randy Collins  
Seconded by: Lu Carbyn**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve the Grants Program Committee recommendations regarding the Conservation, Community and Education Grants.

**MOTION CARRIED**

Currently Federal and Provincial Government agencies are not eligible to apply for any ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants. The Grants Program Committee recommend that the Board approve establishing a subcommittee that will discuss which, if any, other levels of government e.g., municipalities are appropriate applicants and make recommendations to the Board.

**MOTION # 09/24**

**Moved by: Sandra Mellon  
Seconded by: Rick Blakeley**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve the Grants Program Committee recommendations to create a subcommittee to discuss allowing other levels of government to be eligible recipients of the ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants.

**MOTION CARRIED**

iii) Research Grants recommendations

**MOTION # 10/24**

**Moved by: Neil Keown  
Seconded by: Fred Calverley**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve the Grants Program Committee recommendations regarding the Research Education Grants.

**MOTION CARRIED**

iv) Grants in Biodiversity recommendations

**MOTION # 11/24**

**Moved by: Neil Keown  
Seconded by: Ken Bailey**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve the Grants Program Committee recommendations regarding the Grants in Biodiversity.

**MOTION CARRIED**

Todd received several emails complimenting and giving praise to all involved, especially Chairman, Chuck Priestley and Grants Coordinator, Amy MacKinven, for how well the granting process went.

**f. Operation Standards Review Committee**

Did not meet.

**g. Recruitment Committee**

The Recruitment Committee recommends that Colleen St. Clair be offered the Academic position.

**MOTION # 12/24**

**Moved by: Lu Carbyn  
Seconded by: Ken Bailey**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve Colleen St. Clair as Academic Representative.

**MOTION CARRIED**

Kudos to Neil for making the entire recruitment process so seamless.

**h. Governance Committee**

Reviewed and discussed revisions made to the bylaws.

**MOTION # 13/24**

**Moved by: Randy Collins  
Seconded by: Rick Blakeley**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve the request by the Governance Committee to hold a special meeting at the conclusion of this regular Board of Directors meeting to vote on the revisions made to the bylaws.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**i. Public At Large Member Committee**

PAL reports were presented to the Board. Committee Chair, Vince Aiello, commented that the PAL

Member Quarterly reporting was created as a tool to demonstrate to new PAL members how existing PAL members reach out within their communities. This quarter in particular demonstrates how the PAL

members incorporate ACA into their daily lives. The reports also show how diverse the members are, their commitment and their passion. Thanked everyone for their reports.

**j. Organizational Risk Report**

Some near misses and one vehicle damage.

Some concerns were raised regarding reputational risk. ACA will explore reputational risk strategies.

**k. Northern Board Liaison Report**

Report submitted by Randy Collins.

**l. Director Emeritus Report**

Pat Long had nothing to report.

**m. Minister's Representative Report**

Sue Cotterill could not attend due to conflicting schedules. Report provided (*Refer to attachment*).

**7. Reports**

a. 2024-2025 Draft Annual Operating Plan – (*Uploaded to BOD Website*)

**MOTION # 14/24**

**Moved by: Sandra Mellon  
Seconded by: Chuck Priestley**

Move that the Annual Operating Plan for 2024/25 be accepted as presented.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**8. Old Business**

a. Draft letter to Government of Alberta re: starting up AGPAC again

- Brent Watson provided a Draft letter to the Board.
- Bill Abercrombie commented “wondering why the Alberta Trappers Association isn’t on there”. Allocated number for black bears alone is 10,000. Nobody spends more time on the landscape than trappers.
- It’s up to the groups to get together and decide how this should move forward. The hope is to get our stakeholders concerns voiced.

**9. New Business**

a. Fish Fur and Feathers book from Nature Alberta available for purchase.

b. Employee survey results – employee satisfaction is trending downward slightly. ACA set an overall satisfaction at 85%, we now sit at 81%. Perhaps a focus on mental health or team building events

would help. The reality is the cost of living and inflation is a worldwide issue right now and ACA has not had a levy increase in 9 years.

c. Tom Bateman Conservation Site

**MOTION # 15/24**

**Moved by: Robert Gruszecki**

**Seconded by: Rick Blakeley**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors approve a search for an appropriate conservation site to name after Tom Bateman in his legacy and his honour.

**MOTION CARRIED**

The Land Program staff will be instructed to be on the lookout for an appropriate piece of land, or possibly consider renaming an existing site.

d. Meeting structure

Since Todd's arrival the structure has changed dramatically which raised the question: do we require two days for meetings?

Some points were brought forth:

- Reducing it by one day would result in a substantial cost savings.
- Committee meetings could be held prior to the Board meeting via Teams.
- Keep in mind that the business of the board must be dealt with.
- Board members would have to be prepared to put in one long day.
- Would alleviate a lot of redundancy.
- Possibly have Board votes within the discussions of the committees.

**MOTION # 16/24**

**Moved by: Sandra Mellon**

**Seconded by: Chuck Priestley**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors add Meeting Structure to the strategic planning agenda for June and commit to having one trial meeting in August based on the new efficiencies established at the June meeting .

**MOTION CARRIED**

10. Closed Session

**MOTION # 17/24**

**Moved by: Rick Blakeley**

**Seconded by: Neil Keown**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors move to Closed Session at 12:13 PM.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**MOTION # 18/24**

**Moved by: Rick Blakeley  
Seconded by: Chuck Priestley**

Move that the ACA Board of Directors revert back to the regular meeting at 12:20 PM.

**MOTION CARRIED**

Discussed taking on the Minister's Special Licence for 2024.

**MOTION # 19/24**

**Moved by: Robert Gruszecki  
Seconded by: Brent Watson**

Move that ACA negotiates with the Government of Alberta to take on the Minister's Special Licence under the same AGLC agreement as we had in 2024.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**11. Dates and locations of the next meeting**

- June 6, 2024 – Whitewood/Wabamun site visit
- June 7 and 8 – To be determined

**12. Adjournment**

**MOTION # 20/24**

**Moved by: Randy Collins  
Seconded by: Sandra Mellon**

Move that the March 21, 2024 meeting of the ACA Board of Directors adjourn at 12:37 PM.

**MOTION CARRIED**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairman)

  
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(Secretary)



## Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Branch - Environment and Protected Areas Updates

For ACA Board Meeting – March 21 2024

### Environmental Flows Program

- **South Saskatchewan River Basin** – participating in multi-stakeholder water management modelling process to increase water availability in the basin. Provided environmental flow input and aquatic habitat metrics for modelling performance of the different options.
- **Surface Water Quantity Management Framework (SWQuanMF)** – working on studies to address the remaining ecological knowledge gaps (fish habitat and connectivity) remaining from the development of the SWQuanMF limits for oils sands industry water use in the lower Athabasca River. Alberta had made a commitment to proceed with the Management Framework with the understanding that uncertainties would later be addressed.
- **Wood Buffalo National Park Action Plan** – part of the Environmental Flows and Hydrology Steering Committee and technical task team as Alberta's representation with respect to environmental flows, potential water management actions, scientific monitoring liaison. Ensuring Alberta policy and outcomes in the Peace Athabasca Delta are aligned.

### Aquatic Health

#### Zebra and Quagga Mussels

- For the 2024 season, additional resources are being directed to the watercraft inspection and decontamination program. The number of stations will increase from 5 to 7, and a roving crew will be added.
- K9 Diesel is retiring from his service with Environment and Protected Areas and will enjoy his first summer off in 8 years!
- A revitalization, involving expansion of capacity and scope of work, of the Conservation K9 Program, is being pursued for 2024. The Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Branch (FWSB) looks forward to sharing more about this in the months to come.

### Fish Disease

- Schematic designs have been completed for the new Fish Disease Laboratory space. The space is located within the Biotechnology Business Development Centre in south Edmonton. Design development (65%) is ongoing. Completion of renovations and move in are estimated to be in the 2024/25 fiscal year.
- Through the Vegreville Laboratory and contracted services from University of Prince Edward Island, the department continues to provide disease testing and diagnostic services to multiple projects including investigation of abnormalities, fisheries recovery and stocking efforts.

### Wildlife Disease Unit

#### Bighorn Sheep (BHS) Health

- Following the successful effort to contain an outbreak of *M. ovi* (*Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*), a highly infectious bacterial pneumonia with a high mortality rate, in a group of bighorn sheep in the Sheep River area last March, the FWSB is continuing work to mitigate risk of future outbreaks.
- Follow up actions include a close working relationship with Agriculture and Irrigation (AGI) to develop and deliver preventive messaging encouraging domestic sheep and goat producers to have their animals tested for *M. ovi* and to reduce potential contact between domestic and wild sheep and goats.

- The various elements of a *M. ovi* mitigation program have been identified and the focus now is to implement the work in a focused and integrated manner, supported by partnerships with stakeholder groups, such as the Wild Sheep Foundation, other Ministries, academia and other jurisdictions in Western North America.

### **Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)**

- EPA and Agriculture and Irrigation (AGI) successfully delivered the 2023 hunter component of the CWD surveillance program. The overall deer harvest and number of ungulate heads and samples submitted for testing was lower than anticipated; however, hunters received test results quickly.
- For the first time, a partnership with the Metis Settlements General Council was established, which resulted in training of designated volunteer sample collection coordinators, freezers being placed at settlement offices and coordinated transport of samples to the provincial lab.

### **Wood Bison Disease Surveillance**

- As part of our ongoing surveillance of bovine brucellosis in the Hay Zama Wood Bison recovery herd, samples were collected from Indigenous and Recreational hunters in 2023/2024. All 47 samples were negative. Additional samples are being collected in the Wabasca area in association with the GPS collaring of wood bison.

### **Species at Risk and Stewardship**

#### **Wood Bison Recovery Plan**

- Wood bison are Threatened under Alberta's *Wildlife Act* in specific Wildlife Management Units (WMUs).
- FWSB has initiated Indigenous engagement in support of the development of a provincial wood bison recovery plan, and reached out to various stakeholders to commence broader engagement efforts.

#### **Native Trout Recovery**

- Successful completion of multi-stakeholder workshops to enhance coordination of native trout recovery actions in the Bow, Oldman and Athabasca River basins.

### **Regional Program Delivery**

#### **Hay-Zama Bison Harvest 2023-24**

- To date, Hay Zama bison has yielded successful harvests for Indigenous and resident hunters who were drawn for the special hunt. A total of 49 male and 19 female bison have been harvested.
- The non-Aboriginal season with 40 tags available closed February 29<sup>th</sup> and a total of 30 bison were harvested.
- The Aboriginal season with 80 tags available will close March 31<sup>st</sup> with a harvest to March 12 of 38 bison.

#### **Caribou relocation from Grimshaw domestic bison farm**

- On March 5<sup>th</sup>, FWSB was contacted by Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Services (FWES) with information that a bison producer, located 1 mile northeast of Grimshaw, AB, believed there was a woodland caribou in with his bison herd.
- On March 6<sup>th</sup>, FWSB confirmed the presence of a young caribou on the producer's land, with the domestic bison demonstrating protective behaviour around the caribou.

- Regional staff worked with the provincial wildlife disease unit and veterinarian to assess risk of disease both from the caribou to the domestic bison stock and vice versa. The provincial wildlife disease unit also worked quickly with Alberta Agriculture to obtain any information related to previous issues of disease with this producer's domestic herd. It was determined that there was no risk of disease transmission.
- In cooperation with the producer, the response team assessed that the probability of the caribou vacating the facility on its own was extremely low/unlikely.
- On March 7<sup>th</sup>, the response team and producer, were successful in chemically immobilizing the caribou, and safely retrieving the caribou from within the domestic bison herd without harm to the caribou, staff, producer, or infrastructure, and without undue stress to the producer's bison.
- The calf, under sedation, was transported and successfully released on vacant crown land, approximately 30 kms northwest of Grimshaw near the Chinchaga-Deadwood caribou range.

### **Fisheries Reports**

- Last month regional fisheries team released reports on the population density of walleye and pike in area waterbodies (available at <https://www.alberta.ca/fall-index-netting-summaries>)
- These population estimates were calculated from index netting surveys completed last fall. During these surveys, biologists caught fish in gill nets over a 3-4 day period, measured each fish, and extracted bony structures to estimate the age of each walleye.
- Regular monitoring and assessment of the status of our fisheries is an important input to stewardship planning and annual angling regulations.

### **Aerial Ungulate Surveys**

- Aerial ungulate surveys have been completed in WMUs 158, 624, 116, 312, 357 and 344.
- A number of surveys throughout the province were not completed this winter due to pervasive low or no snow conditions throughout the province and poor weather conditions.

### **Woodland Caribou DNA Population Estimate**

- The northeast wildlife team initiated a survey of the woodland caribou in the Cold Lake range this winter.
- The survey involves searching for signs of caribou from the air, and landing to collect caribou pellets or scat.
- The DNA from these pellets is used to identify the number of unique caribou in the populations, and enable FWSB to estimate population size change for this population since the last survey was conducted a decade ago.

### **Greater Sage Grouse Translocation**

- The Montana/Alberta Greater Sage-Grouse Translocation is a critical intervention to support the recovery of the greater sage-grouse in Alberta.
- The translocation requires a cooperative field program between the Government of Alberta and the State of Montana.
- FWSB staff will support the capture of 40 greater sage-grouse hens in Montana (Glasgow), and then transport the hens across the international boarder at Sweetgrass/Coutts for release near Manyberries, Alberta.
- Travel is planned for April 4 – 13, 2024.
- Translocation efforts were postponed in 2023 due to unfavorable weather conditions.