

Habitat Program Agreement

Between:

Alberta Environment and Parks
(AEP)

-and-

Alberta Conservation Association
(ACA)

This agreement is made pursuant to the *Wildlife Regulation*, AR 143/97 and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between AEP and ACA dated Dec 9, 2021.

Program Description

The Ministry of Environment and Parks (AEP) 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, AEP requires both internal and external resources to support management decisions and programs. 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 AEP High Priority Conservation Outcomes (HPCOs) 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.

AEP 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 auspices of the AEP/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

Yearly outcomes will be determined based the specific activities developed between AEP and ACA (through the JPC process) that are derived from HPCOs. However, the following outcomes form the overarching expectations 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 AEP and ACA are effective in ensuring habitat related HPCOs are discussed and clearly understood and appropriate approaches to address the HPCOs are developed.
- Habitat risks are identified, assessed and reported to AEP.
- Priority fish and wildlife habitat is identified, assessed, secured and enhanced as agreed to through approaches supporting HPCOs.
- 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.
- Minor maintenance activities are performed on water control structures as per agreed to management plans developed by AEP or ACA.
- On a yearly basis appropriate approaches supporting HPCOs are addressed within the program.

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 will occur through a collaborative process through the JPC, defined in the MoU between the parties. AEP 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** (AEP 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.)

AEP

- provides HPCOs related to fish and wildlife habitat 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 AEP to undertake agreed to work, are processed in a timely manner.

ACA

- leads development and delivery of agreed to approaches that support HPCOs;
- 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 crown lands where ACA has habitat management responsibility, are contained in site-specific Habitat Management Plans, developed by ACA and approved by AEP.)

AEP

- 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;
- Coordinates with Lands Division on development of dispositions supporting the intent of this program agreement;
- through the JPC, ensures that all AEP Divisions of AEP are aware and supportive of ACA habitat management activities;
- Through the JPC, ensures all permits, licenses or approvals required by ACA from AEP 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. AEP 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 (AEP 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.)

AEP

- provides HPCOs related to fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, management and 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 that address agreed to approaches supporting HPCOs;
- 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 as an approach to support HPCOs; 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.)

AEP

- Provides HPCOs related to recreational access sites to the JPC;
- Facilitates securement of Crown-owned land through internal GOA coordination, permitting process or other required government functions;
- Maintains list of long-term (3-5 year) priorities for habitat enhancement on recreational access sites to JPC;
- Through the JPC, works to amend the Municipal Government Act to reduce the tax burden related to conservation lands titled or leased to ACA; and
- Through the JPC, ensures all permits, license and approvals required from AEP are processed in a timely manner.

ACA

- Develops list of sites for access development for submission to JPC, based on agreed to approaches supporting HPCOs
- Secures, enhances, maintains and manages sites, as agreed through to address agreed to approaches supporting HPCOs; and
- Through the JPC, works to amend the Municipal Government Act to reduce the tax burden related to conservation lands titled or leased to ACA.

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.)

AEP will:

- Coordinates with Lands Division on development of dispositions supporting the intent of this program agreement; 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

- work with AEP to identify priority dispositions that support HPCOs, for endorsement at JPC prior to application.

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.)

AEP will

- Ensure that all referrals provided to AEP with respect to lands managed by AEP 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.)

AEP

- maintains a current and accurate record of these lands, and actively manages any approved reassignment of title and/or water licences;
- AEP will provide written notice to ACA (notice to addressed to Manager Lands Program) of the desire to alter the status of crown land assignment or have ACA divest of management responsibilities of crown-owned lands. Notice will be provided a minimum 6 month prior to the date on which reassignment or divestment will occur.

ACA

- provides AEP an updated list of crown-owned lands for which ACA has a habitat management responsibility;
- ACA will provide written notice to AEP (notice to be addressed to Executive Director Fish and Wildlife Stewardship) of the desire to divest of management responsibilities of crown-owned lands. Notice will be provided a minimum 6 month prior to the date on which divestment will occur.

Habitat Program Performance Measures

AEP 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 JPC 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;
- all agreed to management plans for the each year have been completed and approved;
- annual updated tracking list of lands ACA manages has been provided;
- all crown lands secured and/or managed with the use of levy funds have appropriate signage acknowledging AEP contribution, and be contained in the ACA public guide of Conservation Sites;
- publicly accessible summary reports are available on-line within 30 days of fiscal year-end, including reports related to ongoing projects; and
- Over a 5 year period the majority of related HPCOs have been addressed.

Program Term

This Agreement shall commence upon the date of signature and remain in effect until Dec 9, 2024.

This Agreement is subject to annual review and may be amended from time to time as outlined in the MOU signed Dec 9, 2021 between ACA and AEP.