

**Alberta Conservation Association
2007/08 Project Summary Report**

Project Name: *Beaverlodge River Drainage Conservation*

Project Leader: Tyler Johns

Primary ACA staff on this project: John Hallett and Tyler Johns

Partnerships:

Grande Prairie Riparian Action Team consisting of Alberta Environment, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, County of Grande Prairie, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO); Beaverlodge Tree Nursery; Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA); Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC); and EnCana (West County Watershed Group).

Key Findings

- Riparian restoration (or remediation) projects including stream bank fencing, off-site water development, and tree planting, were conducted at three sites.
- One new property was inspected and scheduled for stream bank fencing in 2008. Inclusion of this property in the riparian conservation program is significant as the owner was initially skeptical of the program and rejected previous invitations to participate.
- New partnerships were established with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC).
- The demonstration tour was effective in communicating the riparian problems and solutions to participants.

Introduction

In a 2002 survey, severe riparian habitat degradation was documented for the Beaverlodge River and two of its tributaries, Beavertail and Steeprock Creeks (Hallett 2003). Human-related activities such as bank-side livestock feeding and watering, vehicle fording, and in-stream alterations, such as channel straightening and dugout construction, have degraded riparian zones of these watercourses. A once thriving Arctic grayling fishery has disappeared (Lucko 1995, 1993; Schroeder 1992). Since 2004, the Beaverlodge Drainage Riparian Program (BDRP), in partnerships with landowners, provincial and municipal government, and other conservation organizations have embarked on riparian restoration and conservation projects along these water courses. To date, several projects, including stream-bank fencing, alternative livestock watering

systems, and tree planting have been completed; several new projects are in negotiations with landowners.

Methods

In the spring of 2007 we placed advertisements in local newspapers (in Beaverlodge and Hythe) to highlight the BDRP, as well as provide contact information for readers who were interested in conducting riparian conservation projects on their property. As a result, we negotiated the establishment of riparian projects with two private landowners. In partnership with DUC, NCC, County of Grande Prairie, and EnCana we completed a 3.2 km streamside fencing and off-site watering (a solar-powered pump brings water to a corral) projects on one of these properties on the Beavertail creek to keep cattle out of the reek and a large wetland created by DUC. For the second property, we delivered posts (donated by DFO) for riparian fencing along the Beaverlodge River. We also visited the farm sites of two additional private landowners to discuss riparian issues on their properties. Riparian health assessments (Cows and Fish methodology) were conducted on past and new projects to document future changes in riparian health.

ACA staff and volunteers from the County of Grande Prairie and EnCana planted willows and spruce trees (bioengineering) to re-vegetate and stabilize the riparian zone one property that was severely degraded from unrestricted cattle activity. Willows cuttings were collected locally and spruce trees were donated by the Beaverlodge Tree Nursery or the PFRA tree farm in Saskatchewan. Another new property was inspected and scheduled for stream bank fencing in 2008.

To increase awareness of riparian health and the program, a public presentation outlining the BDRP was given at the Saskatoon Island Hall in July. In addition, we conducted public tours on selected projects (demonstration sites) during the fall. These tours were advertised in local newspapers and participants were driven by bus to different project sites where the landowners led tours and responded to questions.

Results

We conducted three riparian site conservation projects in the summer of 2007, two on the main stem of the Beaverlodge River, and one on a tributary to the Beavertail creek. Addition of the private property scheduled for fencing in 2008 is significant as the owner was previously skeptical of the program and rejected previous invitations to participate. Ten members of the public attended the demonstration tour, several of whom expressed interest in participating in the BDRP. The demonstration tour as a whole, was effective in communicating the riparian problems and solutions to participants.

Conclusion

The main objective of completing or initiating 2-4 riparian project sites on the Beaverlodge Drainage was achieved. Word-of-mouth from within the local communities has been instrumental in educating and attracting new landowners into the program. The demonstration tour as a whole was effective in communicating the riparian problems and solutions to participants.

Communications

- A public presentation was given at the Saskatoon Island Community Hall, July 2007, that highlighted the history of the riparian conservation program and examples of the completed projects to the general public.
- Advertisements soliciting landowners to participate in the program were put in the local newspapers of Beaverlodge and Hythe in the spring of 2007.

Literature cited

- Hallett, J. 2003. Summary of the 2002 - 2003 Beaverlodge land use riparian assessment. Activity report produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta, Canada.
- Lucko, B. 1993. Assessment of the Beaverlodge and Redwillow rivers spawning run April – May, 1993. Fisheries management report 1283F, produced by Alberta Environmental Protection, Fish and Wildlife Services, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 22 pp.
- Lucko, B. 1995. Assessment of the Beaverlodge and Redwillow rivers spawning run spring, 1994. Fisheries management report 118, produced by Alberta Environmental Protection, Fish and Wildlife Services, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 32 pp.
- Schroeder, D. 1992. A summary of the fish captured at the Beaverlodge River weir during the spring of 1992. Fisheries Management Report 116 produced by Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Division, Peace River, Alberta, Canada. 8 pp.



Plates 1 and 2. Public tour and demonstration of the Dautel riparian project. (Photo: John Hallett)



Plates 3 and 4. Locals and volunteers planting willow cuttings on the Smith property. (Photo: Jill Henry)



Typical degraded riparian area on the Beaverlodge River. (Photo: John Hallett)