

## **Alberta Conservation Association 2011/12 Project Summary Report**

**Project Name:** *Southern Riparian Conservation*

**Fisheries Program Manager:** Peter Aku

**Project Leader:** Mike Uchikura

**Primary ACA staff on project:**

Mike Uchikura

### **Partnerships**

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development  
Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society (Cows and Fish)  
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development  
Beaver Creek Watershed Group  
County of Lethbridge  
Drywood/Yarrow Conservation Partnership  
Indianfarm Creek Watershed Group  
LaFarge Canada  
Lyndon Creek Watershed Group  
Oldman Watershed Council  
Penn West Energy  
Pincher Creek Watershed Group  
Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration  
Royal Bank of Canada  
Southwestern Alberta Conservation Partnership  
Trout Unlimited  
Todd Creek Watershed Group  
Waterton Watershed Group

### **Key Findings**

- Completed several projects that enhanced over 6 kilometres and 800 hectares of riparian and upland habitat, including two riparian fencing projects, one shrub planting project (over 500 willow and cottonwood cuttings), three off-site watering projects and 10 cattle watering spring developments.
- Maintained effective partnerships with four watershed groups and four conservation groups.
- Engaged over 100 volunteers and 100 high school students in outreach activities.
- Organized one watershed field tour for ACA staff and partner agencies.

### **Introduction**

In previous years, our riparian conservation projects in southern Alberta involved partnerships with watershed groups in two small sub-watersheds of the Oldman River, the Beaver and Todd creeks. However, new watershed groups have been formed within the Oldman River watershed in recent years, creating more partnership opportunities for Alberta Conservation Association (ACA). These groups include the Drywood/Yarrow Conservation Partnership, Pincher Creek Watershed Group, Lyndon Creek Watershed Group, Indianfarm Creek Watershed Group and Waterton Watershed Group. These groups have excellent pre-existing relationships with many government and non-government agencies (e.g., other conservation organizations), which work together to organize funding, planning, communications and associated events for conservation projects, including riparian restorations. Our primary objectives in 2011/12 were to continue communications with watershed groups within the Oldman River watershed and collaborate with these watershed groups and landowners to implement riparian conservation projects.

## **Methods**

We attended meetings with watershed groups and conservation partners, participated in field days and workshops, and continued to implement and plan riparian projects. Partner watershed groups include: Lyndon Creek Watershed Group (LCWG), Drywood/Yarrow Conservation Partnership (DYCP), Pincher Creek Watershed Group (PCWG), Indianfarm Creek Watershed Group (ICWG), Waterton Watershed Group (WWG), Todd Creek Watershed Group (TCWG), Oldman Watershed Council (OWC) and Beaver Creek Watershed Group (BCWG).

We collaborated with the Southwestern Alberta Conservation Partnership (SACP) to provide funding for one off-site watering unit to a landowner on the Oldman River to help restore an eroding riverbank by eliminating livestock access. Discussions with SACP have also led to three additional projects involving off-site watering and riparian fencing in the Willow Creek drainage. On Todd Creek, we completed two riparian fencing projects. We also completed 10 spring developments on Todd Creek (initiated in 2010/11). Discussions with the BCWG are ongoing, and additional fencing materials will be provided during the 2012/13 fiscal year to expand a riparian fencing project on Five Mile Creek. We also planted over 500 willow and cottonwood cuttings on Five Mile Creek. We completed one riparian fencing project in the Waterton River watershed (initiated in 2010/11). With DYCP, we participated and supplied prizes for a school field day on Drywood Creek, held in collaboration with Cows and Fish, Fish and Wildlife (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development), Parks Canada and Trout Unlimited Canada; over 100 Pincher Creek and Glenwood high school students participated. Similarly, we participated and supplied prizes for the PCWG annual 'Blueweed Blitz'; over 100 volunteers participated. Along with controlling the spread of blueweed along Pincher Creek, this event brings public attention to the various watershed activities and efforts this group has been pursuing. We assisted the OWC in distributing funds to watershed groups and landowners interested in riparian-related projects. We also organized and participated in one watershed tour of Todd and Beaver creeks for ACA and partner groups; two ACA staff and one SACP representative attended. Furthermore, we attended meetings with watershed groups and partner agencies, and discussions for future projects are ongoing.

## **Results**

The projects completed in 2011/12 within four watersheds included three riparian fencing projects that enhanced 3 km and over 190 ha (480 acres) of riparian and upland habitat, one off-site watering unit that enhanced 150 m and 40 ha (100 acres) of riparian and upland habitat, one shrub planting project of approximately 500 willow and cottonwood cuttings along 1 km of stream encompassing 0.8 ha (2 acres), and 10 cattle watering spring developments that enhanced approximately 3 km and 640 ha (1,600 acres). The tours, meetings, weed pull and educational events hosted by watershed groups have all proven beneficial to increasing awareness of potential projects in the south. In total, over 100 volunteers and 100 high school students participated in outreach activities.

## **Conclusions**

Relationships with watershed groups and associated partners have progressed in a positive manner. ACA's financial and technical contributions for riparian projects have become better understood. Active discussions regarding future riparian projects are underway with the Todd Creek and Beaver Creek watershed groups. Two partner organizations—the Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society (Cows and Fish) and the SACP—have been instrumental in making progress with all involved watershed groups.

## **Communications**

- No independent communication activities were initiated by ACA—each individual watershed group managed communications, advertising with local media about upcoming events.

Photos:



Oldman River off-site solar watering unit. Left to right: Phil Waeklin and Mike Uchikura.  
(Photo: Jeff Porter)





The Pincher Creek Watershed Group hosted its annual “Blueweed Blitz” to remove this invasive species along Pincher Creek. Shown: Eric Grier. (Photo: Mike Uchikura)





Todd Creek tour. Left to right: Peter Aku and Rob Nichols. (Photo: Mike Uchikura)