

Alberta Conservation Association 2007/08 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative

Project Leader: Darren Dorge

Primary ACA staff on this project: Darren Dorge, Paul Hvenegaard, Ed Kolodychuk and Jennifer Straub

Partnerships:

2005 – 2006 Suncor Energy Foundation

2006 - 2007 Suncor Energy Foundation

Ducks Unlimited Canada

Alberta Fish & Game Association

Alberta Sports, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation

Roland Michener School

TD Friends of the Environment

Sawridge Inn and Conference Centre

2007 - 2008 Suncor Energy Foundation

Ducks Unlimited Canada

Alberta Fish & Game Association

Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation

Key Findings:

Introduction

Throughout northern Alberta the cumulative effects of loss and fragmentation of habitat due to human disturbance of natural areas, alteration of natural ecosystem processes, and unsustainable use of fish and game species is a major concern. As industrial activity continues to have a major impact on our natural world, greater emphasis is being placed on accountability for those impacts. Suncor Energy Foundation was revolutionary in implementing an offset program in partnership with the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), which began as a pilot project around Winagami Lake in 2003 (Chittenden and Straub 2007; Chittenden and Kolodychuk 2004). Known for its wildlife and recreational value, Winagami Lake was once grazed to the shoreline. As a result of the efforts of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) and ACA, in cooperation with partners such as Suncor, the shoreline is now 90% protected. The

success of the Winagami Lake pilot project inspired Suncor Energy Foundation to commit to a proposal submitted by ACA in 2004 that resulted in an additional three year partnership (2005 - 2008).

As the use of environmental offset programs as a stewardship tool continues to increase, more industrial partners are looking to join or develop offset programs. With a strong history of habitat conservation, ACA is able to work cooperatively with industry to insure a win-win situation will occur that benefits the plants, animals and citizens of Alberta.

Results

In the spring of 2006 we purchased the Faust Conservation Property, comprising 14.5 acres of boreal habitat located within the hamlet of Faust, Alberta (Table 1). This property contains a blue heron rookery, one of the last in the area. Partners include Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA), Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation (ASRPWF), Roland Michener School, TD Friends of the Environment and The Sawridge Inn and Conference Centre.

We purchased the North Fawcett Conservation Property (Table 1). A heterogeneous landscape of mature boreal forest and reverting improved pasture, this property is equally important for its wildlife and recreational value. Partners include AFGA and ASRPWF.

In March 2007, we purchased the West Neerlandia Conservation Property that consists of 160 acres of forested landscape with a mixture of lowlands, uplands and wetlands (Table 1). Partners on this property include AFGA and ASRPWF.

In April 2007, we secured a 320 acre property located in the newly developed Therein Plain focus area (Table 1). Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) installed 10 ditch plugs on this property in an attempt to restore wetlands that formerly existed. In addition to their financial contribution, DUC contributed all costs associated with the wetland restoration.

On 31 August 2007, we acquired 307 acres of mixed-wood forest located northeast of Flatbush, Alberta (Table 1). The topographic diversity that occurs at this location supports an abundance of wildlife species.

The Joussard Conservation Property conserved 152 acres of forest that would have otherwise been lost to other forms of land use (Table 1). Under intense pressure from residential development, this quarter protects land within 0.8 km of the Salve Lake shoreline, one of Alberta's major recreational fisheries.

In January 2008, we secured a 160 acre property (Karvonen) within boreal forest that has been conserved and utilized by conservation enthusiasts for the past 15 years (Table 1). Containing a 20 acre lake, this property is an important tributary to Amisk Lake and is within the Amisk Valley Environmentally Significant Area. Our partner on this property is ASRPWF.

We pursued several other properties in the Boreal Forest Natural Region, although negotiations were promising, no purchases resulted.

Table 1. Property secured through the Suncor Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative.

Property Name	Year Secured	Acres Secured	Focus Area
O'Mahony	2003	30	Kimiwan/Winagami/South Heart
Axen/Turner	2003	126.7	Kimiwan/Winagami/South Heart
Bisson	2003	82 + 128.3 (GRL buy out) 119.7 (Titled)	Kimiwan/Winagami/South Heart
Faust	2006	14.5	Slave Lake
North Fawcett	2007	150	Athabasca River/Hubert Lake
West Neerlandia	2007	159	Athabasca River/Hubert Lake
South Plain Lake	2007	320	Athabasca River/Hubert Lake
Flatbush	2007	307	Athabasca River/Hubert Lake
Jousard	2007	152.5	Slave Lake
Karvonen	2008	160	Rochester / Newbrook / Tawatinaw

Conclusion

- Two new focus areas were created (in addition to the four in existence) and all quarters within each focus area were evaluated for their value as offset locations.
- 1,750 acres of boreal forest habitat were secured through the Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative.
- Management plans were completed for each property acquired.
- \$102,700 worth of partnership dollars and \$27,000 worth of donations and reclamation work were leveraged (another \$40,000 is still pending).
- In cooperation with Suncor Energy Foundation, a proposal was developed and submitted to continue this initiative for another three to five years.

Communications

- A media event was held at the Royal Alberta Museum in 2005 to highlight the acquisition of the [Winagami Lake Property](#) acquired during the pilot project in 2003 and to celebrate the continued partnership between ACA and the Suncor Energy Foundation.
- A two part article highlighting the [Suncor Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative](#) was [written](#) for ACA's *Conservation Magazine* in 2005/2006

- Five newspaper articles were submitted in local news papers. Each article highlighted a property acquisition that occurred in the area, describing the Suncor Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative, and explained what impact this initiative is having at the local level.
- A poster display featuring the Suncor Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative was presented at the Valuing Nature Conference in 2006
- A presentation at the Alberta Society of Professional Biologist Conference in 2007, which focused on the Suncor Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative and ACA's role regarding environmental offsets.
- An Emerald Award Finalist in 2007, based on recognition of the successful partnership between a conservation organization and large industrial company.
- An Imagine Canada winner, February 2008, which acknowledged a successful partnership between a large industrial organization and a non profit, non government conservation organization.
- A Lunch and Learn given for Suncor employees in Calgary, February 2008, highlighting the importance of the boreal natural region and how the Suncor Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative is contributing to maintaining ecological integrity in various locations across Alberta.
- We will be installing signs at all of these new conservations sites in the summer of 2008 where the project, and all partners involved with the securment of the property, will be highlighted.
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Literature Cited

- Chittenden, C., and E. Kolodychuk. 2004. The Suncor-Winagami Lake Conservation Project (2003-2004). Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta.
- Chittenden, C., and J. Straub. Revised 2007. The Suncor Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative (2005-2008 Boreal Habitat Strategy). Alberta Conservation Association, Peace River, Alberta.



ACA employees collaborating with community members to construct a gate at our Faust Conservation Property. (Photo: courtesy of Jennifer Straub for all photos)



Boreal habitat on our West Neerlandia Conservation Property. (Photo:)



Boreal habitat on our North Fawcett Conservation Property. (Photo:)