

**Alberta Conservation Association
2009/10 Project Summary Report**

Project Name: *Boreal Habitat Conservation Program*

Land Management Program Manager: Darren Dorge

Project Leader: Jennifer Straub

Primary ACA staff on project:

Boreal (NW): Paul Hvenegaard and Ed Kolodychuk; Boreal (NE): Roy Schmelzeisen

Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association
Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Shell Canada Energy
Suncor Energy Foundation

Key Findings

- Secured six new Conservation Sites with a combined area of 1,101 acres in the Lesser Slave Lake and Kimiwan/Winagami/South Heart focus areas through our Suncor partnership.
- Secured two new Conservation Sites with a combined area of 307 acres in the Athabasca Lake/Hubert Lake and Rochester/Newbrook/Tawatinaw focus areas through our Shell partnership.
- Overall in 2009/10, acquired eight new Conservation Sites totaling 1,408 acres with an estimated land value of over \$525,000.

Introduction

Throughout northern Alberta, the cumulative affects of loss and fragmentation of habitat due to human disturbance of natural areas and alteration of natural ecosystems is a major concern. As industrial activity continues to have a major impact on habitat, greater emphasis is being placed on accountability for the loss and alteration of habitat. Suncor Energy Foundation was instrumental in implementing an offset program in partnership with Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), which began as a pilot project around Winagami Lake in 2003. In 2008, Shell began fulfilling its commitment to the Oil Sands Environmental Coalition (OSEC) to commence an industrial offset program.

Agreements are developed by ACA and our corporate partners to guide fund administration and securement activities. These agreements outline activities, guidelines, focus areas (Table 1) and processes endorsed by ACA and our corporate partners for securement opportunities.

Table 1. ACA focus areas with corporate partners.

ACA Region	Focus Area Name	Corporate Partner
Boreal (NW)	Beaverlodge / Redwillow	Suncor
	Kimiwan / Winagami / South Heart River	Suncor
	Lesser Slave Lake	Suncor
Boreal (NE)	Athabasca / Hubert Lake	Shell
	Coyote Lake	Suncor
	Miquelon / Ministic	Suncor
	Rochester / Newbrook / Tawatinaw	Suncor
	Therien Plain	Suncor

As important habitats become available within focus areas, we and our partners (both corporate sponsors and other conservation agencies) are collaborating to secure these important habitats. Acquired lands, which are referred to as Conservation Sites, provide Alberta’s outdoor enthusiasts with year-round sustainable recreational opportunities. We categorize Conservation Sites according to recreational opportunities and management plan objectives. Recreational opportunities are communicated to our stakeholders on our website and in our *Discover Alberta’s Wild Side – Guide to Outdoor Adventure*.

Methods

We secure lands through fee-simple purchases. Priority wildlife habitat on freehold and Crown lands may be obtained through this method. Our Land Management staff use the following process to secure lands with corporate partner funds.

1. Initial assessment of property – Determine if property is within our corporate partner focus area for land securement. If the property does not fit, advise the landowner and refer the landowner to other possible conservation organizations.
2. Initial meeting with landowner – Preliminary discussion of landowner's desire for property. Preliminary walk of the property and assessment of resources, liabilities, hazardous waste, etc. Photograph the property. Landowner expresses an interest in selling the property.

3. Obtain the legal land title of the property – Confirm ownership and identify encumbrances or other interests registered against title (mortgages, liens, rights-of-way, zoning, etc.).
4. Complete the Environmental Assessment (include both an environmental enforcement search from the Environmental Law Centre and a historical title search from Land Titles).
5. Contract an Appraisal.
6. Complete land acquisition proposal – Include the following attachments: legal land title, air photo, photographs, Environmental Assessment, Appraisal.
7. Send, land acquisition proposal to the Land Program Manager (LPM) for review – LPM provides comments and/or approval to proceed with proposal. LPM forwards favoured proposals to the President & CEO for ACA Board updates and communications.
8. If the proposal is approved by the LPM, an Offer to Purchase will be prepared and reviewed by ACA legal counsel, and then presented to the landowner.
9. If the Offer to Purchase is accepted, the necessary legal documents (Dower Affidavit, Affidavit of Execution, etc.) for transfer of land to ACA is prepared by ACA legal counsel and forwarded to the landowner or his/her representative for execution.
10. ACA legal counsel will register all necessary legal documents at the Lands Title Office.
11. Corporate partner administration and communications are followed as per their specific agreements.
12. Review the Acquisition Checklist and confirm that all items have been sent to Head Office.
13. Update the Land Securement database to reflect the new project.

Our employees also collaborate with conservation agencies (Alberta Fish and Game Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Pheasants Forever, Trout Unlimited Canada, etc.) as part of the above process to secure partnership funding and additional benefits including cost-shared management and maintenance of the Conservation Sites acquired.

Results

We acquired a total of six new Conservation Sites through our corporate sponsorship with Suncor and two with Shell (Table 2). In total, we secured 1,408 acres of exceptional habitat that will be managed to benefit wildlife populations and to provide sustainable recreational opportunities.

We completed a wetland restoration project, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada, and tree planting events on several past corporate partner acquisitions (North Fawcett and North Fawcett 2). Wetland restoration is scheduled for the South Peavine Conservation Site for spring 2010.

Table 2. Corporate partner securement transactions in 2009/10.

Region & Project Name	Corporate Partner(s)	Size (ac)	CPP Focus Area
<i>Boreal (NW)</i>			
<i>Wolters</i> <i>NE15-73-12-W5M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	160	Lesser Slave Lake
<i>South Peavine</i> <i>N4-78-16-W5M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	230	Kimiwan / Winagami / South Heart
<i>East South Heart</i> <i>SE6-77-17-W5M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	88	Kimiwan / Winagami / South Heart
<i>Winagami Southwest 2</i> <i>SE29-75-19-W5M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	160	Kimiwan / Winagami / South Heart
<i>Boreal (NE)</i>			
<i>East Oakley Lake</i> <i>NW7-67-18-W4M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	143	Rochester / Newbrook / Tawatinaw
<i>East Oakley Lake (BFW)</i> <i>NW6, SW7-67-18-W4M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	320	Rochester / Newbrook / Tawatinaw
<i>North Fawcett 4</i> <i>NW6, SW7-67-18-W4M</i>	Shell Canada Energy	147	Athabasca / Hubert Lake
<i>Flatbush 4</i> <i>NE10-66-1-W5M</i>	Shell Canada Energy	160	Athabasca / Hubert Lake
<i>TOTAL</i>		1,408	

Conclusions

Collaboration has been key to the success of the Boreal Habitat Conservation Program. Strong working relationships, a shared vision, and complementary expertise have ensured large energy companies and a non-profit environmental group are able work together to make a lasting contribution to Alberta's environment. In 2009/10, we secured eight properties totaling 1,408 acres in four focus areas. This increases the number of acres conserved as offsets in the Boreal Natural Region since 2003 to approximately 3,500 acres. It is expected that, within the next year, this initiative will become a province-wide program with corporate partners in the Prairie region.

Communications

- Completed three presentations to local schools regarding ACA and our commitment to conserve, protect and enhance wildlife and fisheries habitat.

Literature Cited

N/A



An ephemeral wetland on East South Heart Conservation Site. (Photo: Jenny Straub)



Oakley Lake which lies adjacent to East Oakley Lake Conservation Site. (Photo: Jenny Straub)



Small wetland with pine in the background on North Fawcett 4 Conservation Site. (Photo: Jenny Straub)



Alberta Conservation Association staff conducting an Environmental Site Assessment on a potential Conservation Site acquisition. (Photo: Jenny Straub)



A deciduous forest on a potential Conservation Site acquisition on the Redwillow River. (Photo: Jenny Straub)



Winagami Lake, one of the major waterbodies in the Kimiwan/Winagami/South Heart focus area. (Photo: Jenny Straub)