

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

Project Name: *Streambank Fence Renegotiation Strategy*

Land Management Program Manager: Darren Dorge

Project Leader: Kevin Gardiner

Primary ACA staff on project:

Marco Fontana, Kevin Gardiner, Mike Rodtka, Brad Taylor and Erin Vandermarel

Partnerships

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Fish and Wildlife Division
Dickson Fish and Game
Golder Associates
Trout Unlimited Canada, Central Chapter and Edmonton Chapter

Key Findings

- Formed the Streambank Fence Strategy Committee representing key stakeholder groups.
- Proposed a riparian lease agreement structure for the program; this will be implemented as a pilot project in 2010/11.
- Proposed a monthly lease payment rate of \$6.25 per acre to estimate projected annual expenses; however, a final, cost-effective payment rate used to encourage landowner participation requires further review.
- Projected the total annual program cost to be \$59,574.75 using the initial proposed lease payment rate.

Introduction

In the 1970s, habitat enhancement agreements were signed with private landowners and livestock exclusion fences and watering/crossing sites were constructed as part of the Alberta Government's Buck for Wildlife Streambank Fencing Program. These project agreements facilitated the protection of riparian areas and provided anglers access to trout streams. In 1997, Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) assumed maintenance responsibility for these agreements, resulting in a significant financial burden.

The primary goal for the Streambank Fence Renegotiation Strategy is to reduce annual costs while continuing to protect riparian habitat and provide angler access at priority streams. As a result of direction provided by the Streambank Fence Strategy Committee, our 2009/10

objectives were modified for more efficient delivery. Modified objectives included: gaining stakeholder support for a proposed change in project direction, collecting baseline riparian information on priority streams for future comparison, developing new landowner agreement options, assessing the feasibility of habitat lease payments, and estimating projected annual costs.

Methods

To discuss direction and garner support, our CEO and President arranged a meeting with key stakeholder groups in the spring of 2009. Participants included representatives from our Land Management and Fisheries programs, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) Fish and Wildlife Division, Dickson Fish and Game, and Trout Unlimited Canada Central and Edmonton chapters. We delivered a presentation outlining the history of the program and proposed a change in structure toward a riparian habitat leasing agreement. We captured baseline information of current riparian conditions, for future comparison, by performing a low level aerial videography (LLAV) flight on the North Raven River and Clear Creek. Golder Associates also donated LLAV data captured for the Raven River. We determined the feasibility of the proposed leasing structure by researching custom lease payment rates and through discussions with an ASRD Rangeland Agrologist and the Manager of Agricultural Services for Clearwater County. To estimate projected annual costs, we used GIS mapping to apply a proposed lease rate to the area enclosed in a 60 m buffer for priority streams, based on the minimum recommended buffer size to protect functioning riparian areas of foothill streams (Fontana and Judd 2007).

Results

As a result of the stakeholder meeting, we formed the Streambank Fence Strategy Committee, which endorsed the riparian lease payment strategy. We did not analyse LLAV data captured in 2009 or data donated by Golder; therefore, results are not currently available. We proposed that a monthly lease payment rate of \$6.25 per acre could be a cost-effective way to encourage landowner participation; however, further discussion is required to determine the final payment rate for implementation. Table 1 shows the total acres involved and the projected annual costs to protect habitat using the proposed lease payment rate. We will implement a pilot project next year, focusing on a small group of landowners from the North Raven River upstream of Highway 761, to evaluate the proposed lease payment approach. In addition, through discussions with our program managers, we will also determine future linkages to our Riparian Conservation Program.

Table 1. Total acres and projected annual costs to protect habitat on four priority streams using a proposed monthly lease payment rate of \$6.25 per acre.

Stream	Total acres	Annual costs
--------	-------------	--------------

North Raven River	140.00	\$10,500.00
Clear Creek	57.73	\$4,329.75
Raven River	389.01	\$29,175.75
Prairie Creek	207.59	\$15,569.25
Total	794.33	\$59,574.75

Conclusions

In 2009, we changed the focus of the project based on direction provided by the Streambank Fence Strategy Committee. A riparian habitat lease system was proposed and endorsed by key stakeholder groups. We proposed a lease rate on a per acre basis and used the proposed lease payment rate and the minimum recommended buffer size to estimate projected annual costs. We determined that further discussion is required to finalise a payment rate for implementation. The Streambank Fence Strategy will continue in 2010/11 with the intent of implementing a pilot project to evaluate the proposed leasing option.

Communications

- Presentation to the Streambank Fence Strategy Committee.

Literature Cited

Fontana, M., and C. Judd. 2007. East Slopes Riparian Conservation Program guidelines (draft). Alberta Conservation Association, East Slopes Business Unit, Cochrane, Alberta.

Pictures:



Riparian habitat conserved on the North Raven River through the Streambank Fencing Program. (Photo: Darren Dorge)



Past streambank fencing project inherited and now maintained by Alberta Conservation Association. (Photo: Thomas Winter)