

Alberta Conservation Association 2011/12 Project Summary Report

Project Name: *Corporate Partners Program*

Land Management Program Manager: Darren Dorge

Project Leader: Jennifer Straub

Primary ACA staff on project:

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Partnerships

Alberta Fish and Game Association
Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation
Environment Canada – Ecological Gifts Program
Shell Canada
Suncor Energy Foundation

Key Findings

- Increased the number of acres conserved as offsets in the Boreal Natural Region since 2003 to approximately 8,141.2 acres.
- Secured four new Conservation Sites (six quarter sections) totaling 956.4 acres through our Suncor partnership in the Deadwood, Athabasca River, Rochester/Newbrook/Tawatinaw and Therien Lake focus areas.
- Secured two new Conservation Sites (15 quarter sections) totaling 2,100.8 acres through our Shell partnership in the West Dunvegan and Athabasca River focus areas.
- In 2011/12, acquired six new Conservation Sites (21 quarter sections) with our corporate partners that conserved 3,057.2 acres with an estimated land value of over \$1,900,000.

Introduction

Throughout northern Alberta, the cumulative effects of habitat loss and fragmentation related 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. Our work is supported by Suncor Energy Foundation and Shell Canada, who sought an offset program in partnership with a non-profit, non-government conservation organization. We began the Corporate Partners Program (CPP) as a pilot project around Winagami Lake in 2003, in partnership with Suncor Energy Foundation, as an initiative to balance conservation with responsible development and to help offset some of the habitat affected by Suncor's operations in Alberta. In 2008, Shell Canada began fulfilling its commitment to the Oil Sands Environmental Coalition (OSEC) by initiating an industrial offset program with Alberta Conservation Association (ACA).

Suncor Energy Foundation and Shell Canada partnerships outline land acquisition criteria, focus areas (Table 1) and processes endorsed by ACA and the respective corporate partner for securement opportunities.

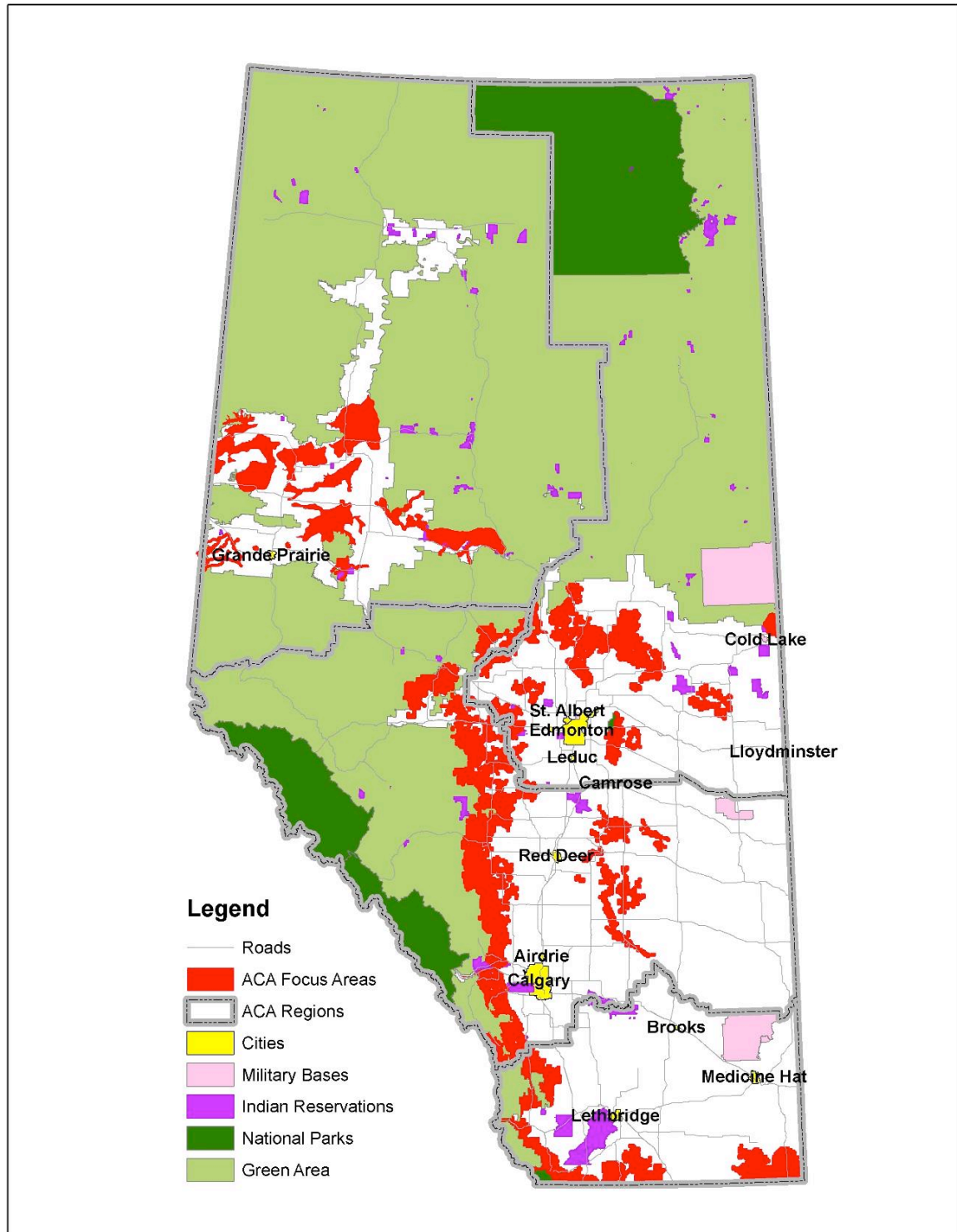


Figure 1. Map showing Alberta Conservation Association's 27 focus areas across Alberta.

Table 1. Alberta Conservation Association focus areas with corporate partners.

ACA Region	Focus Area Name	Corporate Partner(s)
Central	Battle River Bow Valley/Highwood River Drainage Buffalo Lake Moraine Foothills Corridor McLeod River Pine Lake Moraine Red Deer River Rumsey Moraine North Saskatchewan/Pembina River	
Northeast	Beaverhills Lac La Nonne Lesser Slave Lowlands Tawatinaw Therien	Suncor/Shell/Total Suncor Suncor
Northwest	Beaverlodge/Redwillow Deadwood Fairview Kimiwan/Winagami/Lesser Slave Lake Smoky Smoky/Peace Point Sturgeon Lake West Dunvegan	Suncor Suncor Suncor Shell
South	Crowsnest Pass Front Ranges Milk River Ridge Porcupine Hills Sage Creek	

As important habitats become available within focus areas, ACA and our partners (both corporate sponsors and other conservation groups) collaborate to secure valuable boreal habitat. Acquired lands, which are referred to as Conservation Sites, provide Alberta's outdoor enthusiasts with year-round sustainable recreational opportunities. All ACA Conservation Sites are promoted on ACA's website and in our *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*.

Methods

We secure lands primarily through fee-simple purchases and land donations. Priority habitat on freehold lands may be obtained through any one (or a combination of) these methods. The following steps outline the process ACA Land Management staff use to secure lands through CPP.

Steps for completing a Corporate Partners Program land acquisition:

1. Initial assessment of property.
 - Determine if property is within our conservation priorities for land securement. If property is not of interest to ACA, 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 property and assessment of resources, liabilities, hazardous waste, etc. Take photographs of property. Landowner expresses an interest in selling the property.
 - Complete a Habitat Assessment - Initial Site Inspection Form.
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 (HSF) proposal.
 - Include the following attachments: legal land title, air photo, photographs, Environmental Assessment, Appraisal.
7. Send land acquisition (HSF) proposal to the Land Program Manager for review.
 - Land Program Manager reviews the proposal (regarding Conservation & Recreational Value) and provides comments.
8. Land Program Manager prepares a summary and provides a recommendation to the President & CEO for review and submission to ACA's Board.
9. If the proposal is approved by the Board, an Offer to Purchase will be prepared and reviewed by ACA legal counsel and then presented to the landowner.
10. 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.
11. ACA legal counsel will register all necessary legal documents at the Lands Title Office.
12. Review the Acquisition Checklist file (p: LAND MANGEMENT\Habitat Securement Program\Acquisition Checklist) and confirm that all items have been sent to the ACA corporate office.

13. Update the CPP Securement database to reflect the new project.
14. New Conservation Site is uploaded to ACA website and advertised in next edition of our *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*.

We also collaborate with other conservation groups (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 including three purchases in the Athabasca River focus area (North Fawcett 6, North River and North Vilna), one purchase in the Deadwood focus area (Warrensville Expansion), one purchase in the Therien Lake focus area (Musidora 2) and one purchase in the West Dunvegan focus area (Doe Creek). Through our corporate sponsorship with Suncor Energy Foundation we purchased four properties, and through our corporate sponsorship with Shell Canada we purchased two properties (Table 2). In total our collaborative efforts secured a total of 3,057.2 acres of high-quality habitat with an estimated land value of over \$1,900,000. These lands will be actively managed to benefit a variety of wildlife species and to provide sustainable recreational opportunities.

Table 2. Corporate Partners Program securement transactions in 2011/12.

<i>Region & Project Name</i>	<i>Corporate Partner(s)</i>	<i>Size (ac)</i>	<i>Special Features</i>
<i>Boreal (NW)</i>			
<i>Warrensville Expansion</i> <i>SE22-84-23-W5M</i> <i>SW23-84-23-W5M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	320	This site is located 27 km northwest of Peace River. The majority of land to the south and northeast is a mix of forested and agricultural land. To the northwest, forest dominates. Lac Cardinal, an important waterfowl lake, lies 6.5 km southwest of the site and several other smaller waterbodies are scattered across the surrounding landscape.
<i>Doe Creek</i> <i>SW15-79-8-W6M</i> <i>NE3-79-8-W6M</i> <i>SE15-79-8-W6M</i> <i>SW10-79-8-W6M</i> <i>NW10-79-8-W6M</i>	Shell Canada	1,780.8	This site is located 23 km from Spirit River and is a mixture of hayland, logged areas, mature boreal forest and riparian habitat. Ksituan River meanders

<i>SW14-79-8-W6M</i> <i>NW14-79-8-W6M</i> <i>SE9-79-8-W6M</i> <i>NE9-79-8-W6M</i> <i>NE10-79-8-W6M</i> <i>NW15-79-8-W6M</i> <i>NW3-79-8-W6M</i> <i>NW4-79-8-W6M</i>				through the site.
Boreal (NE)				
North Fawcett 6 <i>SE32-64-1-W5M</i> <i>SW32-64-1-W5M</i>	Shell Canada	320		This site is located 52 km north of Westlock and consists primarily of improved pasture. We are planning a reforestation project on the lands through a three-way partnership with ACA, Trees Canada and Shell Canada. The north side of this site is adjacent to North Fawcett 2 Conservation Site.
North River <i>SE3-56-8-W4M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	155.4		This site is located 29 km southeast of St. Paul and consists of a mosaic of deciduous forests, dominated by trembling aspen and balsam poplar, naturalizing meadows and shrublands. The site is in close proximity to ACA's Stoney Lake Conservation Site and provides important linkages along the river valley corridor of the North Saskatchewan River.
North Vilna <i>NE12-60-13-W4M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	161		This site is located 10 km northeast of Vilna and consists of boreal forest, which is excellent habitat for mule deer, white tail deer, moose, black bear, small fur bearers and waterfowl. The landscape to the northwest of the site is dominated by boreal forest; the landscape to the northeast is agricultural land.
Musidora 2 <i>NW26-53-11-W4M</i>	Suncor Energy Foundation	320		This site is located 35 km northeast of Vegreville and

NE26-53-11-W4M	consists primarily of mixed forest with small ephemeral wetlands and some tame pasture. South Plain Lake and Musidora Conservation Sites are situated in close proximity to each other. The majority of land to the northwest and south is intact boreal forest. Agricultural land used for grain and cattle farming occurs east and north of the site.
TOTAL	3,057.2

Conclusions

Collaboration with corporate partners is key to the success of the Corporate Partners Program. We developed strong working relationships, a shared vision, and complementary expertise to ensure large energy companies and a non-profit conservation group are able to collaborate to make a lasting contribution on Alberta's landscape. In 2011/12, we secured six properties totaling 3,057.2 acres in five focus areas. These acquisitions increase the number of acres conserved as offsets in the Boreal Natural Region since 2003 to approximately 8,141.2 acres.

Communications

- Delivered two presentations to local communities (Grande Prairie and Flatbush, Alberta) regarding ACA and our commitment to conserve, protect and enhance wildlife and fish habitat.
- Published one article in ACA's *Conservation Magazine* highlighting our Corporate Partners Program and promoting a Conservation Site acquired in partnership with Suncor Energy Foundation.

Literature Cited

N/A



Example of understory vegetation present at Musidora 2 Conservation Site. (Photo: Juanna Thompson)



Typical variation in topography at North River Conservation Site. (Photo: Juanna Thompson)



Lush riparian habitat found at North Vilna Conservation Site. (Photo: Jenny Straub)



Mixed forest habitat found at Doe Creek Conservation Site. (Photo: Jenny Straub)



A relic fence line and pine-dominated mixedwood forest at North Fawcett 6 Conservation Site. (Photo: Jenny Straub)



Deciduous species dominate the canopy at Warrensville Expansion Conservation Site. (Photo: Jenny Straub)