

Alberta Conservation Association 2013/14 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Conservation Site Management

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Project Leader: Stefanie Fenson, Marco Fontana, Brad Taylor and Jon Van Dijk

Primary ACA staff on project:

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Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Alberta Fish and Game Association
Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation
Alberta Trail Riding Association
Bow River Irrigation District
Buffalo Lake Naturalists
Calfrac
Cameron Development Corporation
Canon Evergreen
County of Lethbridge
County of Newell
County of Warner
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Eastern Irrigation District
Edmonton and Area Land Trust
Grande Prairie District Junior Forest Wardens
Junior Forest Rangers
Landowners
MULTISAR
Municipal District of Smoky River
Nature Conservancy of Canada
Pheasants Forever – Calgary and Chinook Chapters
Prairie Conservation Forum
Robert Bateman
Saddle Hills County
Shell Canada Energy
Strathcona Wilderness Centre

Suncor Energy
The Carbon Farmer Inc.
Thunder Lake Provincial Park Operations
Total E&P Canada
Tree Canada
Volunteer stewards
Westlock Whitetails Junior Forest Warden Club
Wildlife Habitat Canada

Key Findings

- Completed annual inspections on 190 Conservation Sites.
- Conducted routine maintenance on 75 Conservation Sites. This work included garbage removal, invasive species management, waterfowl nest box and tunnel maintenance, fence maintenance, sign maintenance and access maintenance.
- Conducted habitat and recreational access enhancements on 38 Conservation Sites, including planting over 365,000 trees and shrubs.
- Installed project signs on 29 Conservation Sites.
- Installed boundary and “Foot Access Only” signs on 27 Conservation Sites.

Introduction

The focus of Alberta Conservation Association’s (ACA) Land Management Program (LMP) is to conserve, protect and enhance wildlife and fish habitat, as well as increase sustainable recreational opportunities such as angling and hunting. One component of the LMP is the Conservation Site Management Program that manages and maintains over 200,000 acres of habitat in collaboration with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) and other conservation partners.

The purpose of the Conservation Site Management Program is annual maintenance and management of our Conservation Sites according to site management plans. Specific objectives of this program are to deliver the program in an efficient and timely manner, complete inspections and necessary maintenance on Conservation Sites, and enhance or restore habitat on Conservation Sites.

Methods

The Conservation Site Management Program is a provincial program that is delivered through regions to ensure provincial standards are adhered to by LMP staff. The LMP manager and LMP regional leads are responsible for the provincial coordination of this program, while project leads and project staff are responsible for the delivery of each region’s annual management and maintenance component.

We completed field inspections on Conservation Sites throughout the province using a provincially standardized inspection form to assess and identify maintenance issues, repairs needed to infrastructure, habitat condition, contractor compliance, future enhancement

opportunities and other information regarding site use. We completed field inspections as often as indicated in site management plans.

Annual maintenance included financial administration of the projects, completion of agreement obligations, conservation of existing assets, enhancement of existing assets and collaboration with conservation partners. We focused project activities on maintaining habitat project investments that support high-value wildlife or fish habitat and sustainable recreational opportunities.

We managed Conservation Sites on Crown and privately owned land in compliance with location-specific management plans and habitat or stewardship agreements developed by ACA or in collaboration with ESRD and other conservation partners.

Results

In 2013/14, we inspected and maintained 195 Conservation Sites through the Conservation Site Management Program. As part of this work, we installed 29 Conservation Site signs and provided recommendations on 37 land use referrals. Table 1 summarizes activities completed by the Conservation Site Management Program in 2013/14.

Table 1. Inspections and maintenance conducted by the Conservation Site Management Program in 2013/14.

Activity	Number of Conservation Sites				
	Crown	Titled	Conservation Easement	Other ¹	Total
Sites actively managed in 2013/14	96	84	14	1	195
Completed inspections	93	82	14	1	190
Conducted routine maintenance	36	34	4	1	75
Conducted enhancements	12	26	0	0	38
Installed project signs	10	19	0	0	29
Installed boundary and FAO ² signs	7	20	0	0	27

¹Other includes streambank fencing agreements and other ownership options, such as leasing, which may occur on either Crown-owned land or privately owned land.

²FAO = foot access only.

We completed enhancement projects on 38 Conservation Sites. These projects included planting over 365,000 trees and shrubs, installing duck nest boxes, removing or altering fences to reduce wildlife movement barriers, removing human infrastructure, and establishing and improving foot access and trails (Table 2).

Table 2. Enhancement activities completed on Conservation Sites in 2013/14.

Enhancement Activities	Details	Sites
Tree planting	Planted 245,101 white spruce; 20,000 lodgepole pine; 59,765 trembling aspen; 41,450 balsam poplar and 2,750 paper birch	Golden Ranches, North Fawcett 6, Shell True North Forest
Shrub planting	Planted >2,000 shrubs (caragana, silver sagebrush, saskatoon berry and thorny buffaloberry)	East Hays, Leavitt, Link, McVinnie, Schroeder, Silver Sage
Other plantings	Planted wild vetch plugs and purple prairie clover seed on native grass restoration project	Silver Sage
Vegetation enhancements	Planned activities, such as hayland rejuvenation and haying prescriptions, to enhance tame vegetation communities for nesting cover and winter forage	Birch Hills Uplands, Boulder Creek Uplands, Daysland, Flatbush 6, Golden Ranches, Jousard, Little Burnt River Uplands, Montagneuse Uplands, Morrison, Musidora 2, North Fawcett 6, Reiner Homestead, Rudakevich II, Shell True North Forest, South Peavine, Thomas Wetland, Whitemud River Flats, Whitford Lake
Wetland development	Completed wetland restoration feasibility assessment on a 60-acre wetland	Silver Sage
Wildlife movement	Modified or removed fencelines to improve wildlife permeability through wildlife-friendly fencing	Beltz Lake, Buffalo Lake Moraine Conservation Area, Daysland
Recreational	Improved infrastructure: new fences, gates, new and improved trails, concrete barriers and parking areas	Allen, Parkland, Silverberry, Spruce Coulee, Thompson Park, Walters
Other enhancements	Installed six waterfowl nest boxes Removed infrastructure (e.g., powerlines, junk, debris, buildings)	Lac Cardinal Point Uplands Ross Creek

Conclusions

We successfully met our program and site-specific objectives for 2013/14. We completed inspections of 190 Conservation Sites and completed maintenance and repairs on 75 Conservation Sites. This work included weed control, reseeding, fence repair or upgrades, shrub community maintenance, signage installation, parking lot maintenance and site clean-up. In addition, we completed habitat and recreational enhancements on 38 Conservation Sites. Most importantly, we continued to conserve and manage 195 Conservation Sites and over 200,000 acres of important wildlife and fish habitat, and to provide additional areas for outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy.

Communications

- Received 37 land use referrals and provided recommendations and information on
 - 18 industrial referrals regarding 3D seismic work, oil and gas development, powerline and pipeline right-of-way maintenance, pipeline development, wind turbine development, and road/lease agreement renewal.
 - 19 other referrals regarding public inquiries.
- Attended meetings with partners to discuss Conservation Site management.
- Hosted a volunteer event to control weeds at Golden Ranches; ACA staff and Alberta Fish and Game Association volunteers participated.
- Highlighted several Conservation Sites in the “15 Years, 15 Projects” feature of the 2013 – 2014 *Discover Alberta’s Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*, including East Hays, Golden Ranches, Ross Creek, Shell True North Forest, Winagami Lake and Buffalo Lake Moraine Conservation Area.
- Distributed *Discover Alberta’s Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide* to interested landowners.
- Published “Wild Outdoor Getaways” feature on Silverberry, Musidora 3 and North River Conservation Sites in the Fall/Winter 2013 issue of *Conservation Magazine*.
- Highlighted several Conservation Sites and events in ACA’s electronic newsletter and Facebook page, including Golden Ranches “Weed & Feed” volunteer event for weed control and vegetation monitoring conducted at North Fawcett 2 and North Fawcett 3 Conservation Sites.
- Cooperatively with MULTISAR, provided an onsite presentation about the silver sage securement and restoration project to the Northern Sagebrush Steppe Initiative, which included government representatives from Alberta, Montana and Saskatchewan.

Literature Cited

N/A

Photo Captions



Bidirectional mounding was used to prepare the ground for tree planting on the Golden Ranches Conservation Site. Photo: Stephanie Fenson
[filename: Photo1_CSM_2013-14_Stephanie Fenson]



Load of barbwire taken off Shell True North Forest Conservation Site. Photo: Garret Mcken
[filename: Photo2_CSM_2013-14_Garret McKen]



Wetland to the south of South Peavine Conservation Site. Photo: Garrett Mcken
[filename: Photo3_CSM_2013-14_Garret Mcken]



Wetland on Lockerby Conservation Site. Photo: Erin VanderMarel
[filename: Photo4_CSM_2013-14_Erin VanderMarel]



Volunteer from the Buffalo Lake Naturalists planting saskatoon seedlings at Schroeder Conservation Site. Photo: Andy Murphy
[filename: Photo5_CSM_2013-14_Andy Murphy]



Boundary sign at Parkland Conservation Site. Photo: Marco Fontana
[filename: Photo6_CSM_2013-14_Marco Fontana]



Informational sign at Timber Ridge Conservation Site. Photo: Brad Taylor
[filename: Photo7_CSM_2013-14_Brad Taylor]