

Alberta Conservation Association 2016/17 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Corporate Partners Program

Land Management Program Manager: Darren Dorge

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Primary ACA staff on project:

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Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program – Prevention Stream – Prairie Region
Shell Canada Energy
Suncor Energy Foundation

Key Findings

- We completed four acquisitions in 2016/17 that conserved 760 acres (307.6 ha).
- Three of the four acquisitions are new Conservation Sites, and the fourth is an expansion of an existing Conservation Site.
- Our collaborative effort conserved habitat with an estimated land value of \$560,000.
- We completed our 10-year agreement with Shell Canada Energy, conserving 1,882 acres (761.7 ha) with an estimated land value of \$1,772,000.

Introduction

Throughout northern Alberta, the cumulative effect of habitat loss and fragmentation from human disturbance of natural ecosystems is a major concern. As industrial activity continues to expand, greater emphasis is being placed on loss and alteration of habitat. Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) collaborates with two key corporate partners, Suncor Energy Foundation (Suncor) and Shell Canada Energy (Shell), who formed a conservation partnership program to voluntarily offset their negative impacts in Alberta's oil sands within the boreal forest.

Two documents, Suncor's *Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative* and Shell's *10-year Memorandum of Understanding*, guide the administration of funds, define operational guidelines and direct securement activities. These documents outline specific focus areas where we direct our securement efforts (Table 1).

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

ACA Region	Focus Area Name	Corporate Partner
Northwest	Beaverlodge/Redwillow	Suncor
	Deadwood	Suncor
	Kimiwan/Winagami/Lesser Slave Lake	Suncor
	West Dunvegan	Shell
Northeast	Athabasca/Hubert Lake	Shell/Suncor
	Lesser Slave Lowlands	Suncor
	Tawatinaw	Suncor
	Therein	Suncor

As lands with important habitat value become available for purchase, we and our partners collaborate to secure these valuable habitats. Acquired lands, referred to as Conservation Sites, provide essential habitat for wildlife and fish species and provide Alberta's outdoor enthusiasts with year-round sustainable recreational opportunities. Recreational opportunities are communicated to our stakeholders on our website and in our *Alberta Discover Guide*.

Methods

We secure lands primarily through fee-simple purchases (for private land) and grazing lease relinquishments in exchange for a protective notation reflecting ACA's interest (for Crown land). The following steps outline the process ACA Land Management Program staff use to secure lands with corporate partner funds:

- Initial assessment of property and meeting with landowner.
 - Determine if property is within our conservation priorities for land securement.
 - Discuss landowner's intent for property and interest in selling.
 - Inspect property and assess resources, liabilities, etc. Take photographs of property.
 - Complete a Habitat Assessment - Initial Site Inspection Form.
- Obtain the legal land title of the property.
 - Confirm ownership and identify encumbrances or other interests registered against title (e.g., mortgages, liens, rights-of-way, zoning).
- Complete an environmental assessment.
- Contract an appraisal.
- Complete and submit Land Acquisition Proposal to Land Management Program manager.
 - Include the following attachments: legal land title, air photo, photographs, environmental assessment and appraisal.

- Land Management Program manager prepares summary and provides a recommendation to the President & CEO for review and submission to ACA's Board and appropriate corporate partner.
- If the proposal is approved by the Board and corporate partner, an Offer to Purchase will be prepared and reviewed by ACA's legal counsel and then presented to the landowner.
- If the offer to purchase is accepted, the necessary legal documents for transfer of land to ACA is prepared by ACA's legal counsel and registered at the Land Titles Office.
- New Conservation Site is uploaded to ACA's website and advertised in the next edition of our *Alberta Discover Guide*.

We collaborate with other conservation groups, where possible, 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

In 2016/17, we purchased four parcels of land, resulting in the creation of three new Conservation Sites and the expansion of one Conservation Site (Table 2). Partnerships with Suncor, Shell, Alberta Fish & Game Association (AFGA), Alberta Justice and Solicitor, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and Government of Canada were fundamental to our success. Collaborative partnerships allow us to actively pursue additional securement opportunities that may not otherwise be possible.

In total, we conserved 760 acres (307.6 ha) of habitat across the Boreal Forest Natural Region with an estimated land value of about \$560,000. The habitat will be managed to benefit a variety of wildlife and will provide sustainable recreational opportunities to Albertans.

Table 2. Corporate Partners Program securement transactions in 2016/17.

ACA Region and Project Name	Corporate Partner(s)	Size (acres)	Special Features
Northwest			
Beaton Wetland (NE-32-087-24-W5M) (SW-33-087-24-W5M)	Suncor, AFGA, Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program	320	This site is located 13 km northwest of Dixonville. Habitat consists of mixedwood forest and a large wetland complex. Wildlife in this area include moose, elk, deer, black bears, beavers, muskrats, mink, wolves and various migratory bird species.
East Deadwood (Expansion) (NW-08-089-21-W5M)	Suncor	120	This site is located 40 km southeast of Manning. Habitat includes mixedwood forest, riparian habitat and agricultural land. A 35-acre wetland is located directly west of this site and provides habitat for a variety of waterfowl species. Wildlife in the area include moose, elk, deer, black bears, upland game birds and waterfowl.
Northeast			
Tiger Lily (SW-28-060-05-W5M)	Shell	160	This site is located 8 km northeast of the community of Tiger Lily. Habitat is primarily dry mixedwood forest, grassy meadows and a 17-acre wetland. Wildlife in the area include moose, deer, black bear, upland game birds and waterfowl.
Musidora 4 (NE-20-053-11-W4M)	Suncor, AFGA, DUC	160	This site is located about 16 km southeast of Two Hills. Habitat is primarily deciduous forest, shrubs and open grass areas. Several small wetlands are scattered throughout this site. Wildlife in the area include moose, deer, small furbearers and upland game birds.
TOTAL		760	

Conclusions

In 2016/17, we completed four acquisitions totaling 760 acres (307.6 ha) of wildlife habitat in Alberta's Boreal Forest Natural Region. Our collaborative efforts with industry, private landowners and other conservation organizations allowed us to secure these important habitat lands.

Our goal is to continue collaborating with our key corporate partners to ensure a strong working relationship. We concluded our 10-year partnership with Shell Canada Energy; during this term, we collaboratively conserved 1,882 acres (761.7 ha) with an estimated land value of \$1,772,000, and we are hopeful our partnership will continue in 2017/18. With a shared vision and complementary expertise, this relationship shows that large energy companies and a non-profit conservation organization are able to partner on initiatives that create a lasting legacy on Alberta's landscape.

Communications

- We added the new Conservation Sites secured in 2016/17 to our provincial database for advertisement on our website and inclusion in our *Alberta Discover Guide*.
- An article about South Plain Lake Conservation Site in our Northeast Region was featured in our Fall/Winter 2016 issue of *Conservation Magazine*. This site was purchased in 2007 with the help of Suncor and DUC.

Literature Cited

None

Photos



Staff from Alberta Conservation Association and Alberta Environment and Parks identify waterfowl and shorebirds at Beaton Wetland Conservation Site in our Northwest Region. Photo: Lenore Seward



A coyote crossing the frozen wetland complex at Beaton Wetland Conservation Site (Northwest Region). Photo: Garret Mcken



Otter tracks leading to a beaver lodge at Beaton Wetland Conservation Site (Northwest Region).
Photo: Garret Mcken



Black spruce bog at East Deadwood (Expansion) Conservation Site in our Northwest Region.
Photo: Garret Mcken



Large wetland and waterfowl staging area on Crown land adjacent to East Deadwood (Expansion) Conservation Site (Northwest Region). Photo: Garret Mcken



Game trail leading into a grass sedge area at East Deadwood (Expansion) Conservation Site (Northwest Region). Photo: Garret Mcken



Alberta Conservation Association staff completing a field inspection at Tiger Lily Conservation Site in our Northeast Region. Photo: Roy Schmelzeisen



Seismic line re-naturalizing at Tiger Lily Conservation Site (Northeast Region). Photo: Roy Schmelzeisen



Wetland at Tiger Lily Conservation Site (Northeast Region). Photo: Roy Schmelzeisen



Mixture of habitat types, open grassy meadows and aspen at Musidora 4 Conservation Site in our Northeast Region. Photo: Stephanie Fenson