

**Alberta Conservation Association
2018/19 Project Summary Report**

Project Name: Corporate Partners Program

Land Program Manager: Darren Dorge

Project Leader: Lenore Seward

Primary ACA staff on project: Ed Kolodychuk, Garret McKen, Roy Schmelzeisen, Lenore Seward, and Dan Sturgess

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks
Alberta Fish & Game Association
Suncor Energy Foundation

Key Findings

- We completed one acquisition in 2018/19 that conserved 309 acres (125 ha).
- The new conservation site is adjacent to an existing conservation site.
- Our collaborative effort conserving habitat resulted in an estimated land value of \$438,000.

Introduction

Throughout 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. ACA collaborates with a key

corporate partner, Suncor Energy Foundation who formed a conservation partnership program to voluntarily offset their negative impacts in Alberta’s oil sands within the boreal forest.

The document, Suncor’s *Boreal Habitat Conservation*, guides the administration of funds, defines operational guidelines, and directs securement activities. This document outlines specific focus areas where we direct our securement efforts (Table 1).

Table 1. ACA and Suncor focus areas.

ACA Region	Focus Area Names
Northwest	Beaverlodge/Redwillow, Deadwood, Kimiwan/Winagami/Lesser Slave Lake
Northeast	Athabasca/Hubert Lake, Lesser Slave Lowlands, Tawatinaw, Therien

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 and 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 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 legal counsel and registered at the Land Titles Office.
- New conservation site is uploaded to ACA website and advertised in 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 2018/19, we purchased one parcel of land, which resulted in the creation of a new conservation site (Table 2). Partnerships with Suncor and Alberta Fish & Game Association (AFGA), were fundamental to our success. Collaborative partnerships allow ACA to actively pursue additional securement opportunities that may not otherwise be possible.

In total, we conserved 309 acres (125 ha) of habitat across the Boreal Forest Natural Region with an estimated land value of approximately \$438,000. The habitat will be managed to benefit a variety of wildlife species and will provide sustainable recreational opportunities to Albertans.

Table 2. Corporate Partners Program securement transactions in 2018/19.

ACA Region and Project Name	Corporate Partner	Size (acres)	Special Features
Northeast			
MacConnachie (NE-35-054-11-W4M, SE-35-054-11-W4M)	Suncor	309	This site is located 120 km northeast of the city of Edmonton. Habitat is primarily dry mixedwood forest, with small wetlands scattered throughout. Wildlife in the area include elk, moose, deer, black bear, and upland game birds.
TOTAL		309	

Conclusions

In 2018/19, we completed one acquisition totaling 309 acres (125 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 this important habitat.

Our goal is to continue collaborating with our corporate partners to ensure a strong working relationship. With a shared vision and complementary expertise, this relationship reveals that large energy companies and a non-profit conservation group can partner on initiatives that create a legacy on Alberta’s landscape.

Communications

- New conservation sites secured in 2018/19 are added to our provincial database for advertisement on our website and inclusion in our *Alberta Discover Guide*.

Literature Cited

N/A

Photos



Gateway to the MacConnachie Conservation Site (Northeast Region). Photo: Roy Schmelzeisen



Trail meandering through the boreal forest on the MacConnachie Conservation Site. Photo: Roy Schmelzeisen



Wildlife tracks along trail on the MacConnachie Conservation Site. Photo: Roy Schmelzeisen



ACA and AFGA staff on a site tour of the MacConnachie Conservation Site. Photo: Roy Schmelzeisen