

Alberta Conservation Association
2018/19 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Conservation Site Management

Land Management Program Manager: Darren Dorge

Project Leader: Mandy Couve

Project Coordinators: Mandy Couve, Tyler Johns, Dan Sturgess, and Jon Van Dijk

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Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Parks
Alberta Fish & Game Association
Alberta Trail Riding Association
Bow River Irrigation District
ConocoPhillips
County of Lethbridge
County of Newell
County of Warner
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Eastern Irrigation District
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Landowners

MD of Greenview
Medicine River Wildlife Centre
MULTISAR
Myrnam River Ridge Riders Snowmobile Club
Nature Conservancy of Canada
Pheasants Forever – Calgary and Chinook chapters
Shell Canada Energy
Strathcona County
The Carbon Farmer Inc.
Trout Unlimited Canada
Volunteer stewards
Westlock Whitetails Junior Forest Warden Club

Key Findings

- Completed annual inspections on 192 conservation sites and routine maintenance on 86 conservation sites. This work included managing invasive species and maintaining waterfowl nest boxes and tunnels, fences, and signs.
- Installed new project signs on 13 conservation sites and replaced project signs on nine conservation sites.
- Conducted habitat enhancements on 63 conservation sites, including planting over 8,650 trees and shrubs, seeding 304 acres to native grass or tame forage, and planting a four-acre sorghum food plot for upland game birds.
- Improved facilities for public to access on 14 conservation sites, including parking areas and foot-access gates and trails.
- Completed six baseline inventories.

Introduction

The focus of ACA's 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 (CSM) Project, which involves the management and maintenance of over 210,000 acres of habitat in collaboration with Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) and other conservation partners.

The purpose of the CSM Project is annual maintenance and management of our conservation sites according to site specific management plans. Objectives are to deliver the project in an efficient and timely manner, conduct inspections, and complete the necessary maintenance on conservation sites. We also focus on enhancement and restoration of habitat as well as providing recreational opportunities, specifically for anglers, hunters, hikers, and other sustainable uses.

Methods

The CSM Project is led provincially by the LMP Manager and CSM Project Lead and delivered through regions by CSM Project Coordinators. The LMP Manager and CSM Project Lead are responsible for the provincial organization and direction of this project, while CSM Project Coordinators 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 managed conservation sites on Crown and ACA and partner-owned lands in compliance with location-specific management plans developed by ACA or in collaboration with AEP and other conservation partners. Activities included:

- routine maintenance to maintain the desired ecological condition and to support recreational use (e.g., invasive vegetation control, fence and sign repairs).
- replacement of infrastructure, where routine maintenance could no longer sustain viability (e.g., fence and sign replacement).

- enhancement of habitat quality (e.g., wetland restoration, reseeding cropland to permanent cover, tree and shrub planting).
- enhancement of recreational access (e.g., parking areas and pedestrian v-gates).

Other project activities included financial administration, fundraising, completing agreement obligations, and collaborating with conservation partners. We focused project activities on maintaining project investments that support high-value wildlife or fish habitat and sustainable recreational opportunities.

Results

In 2018/19, we inspected 192 conservation sites and maintained 86 sites through the CSM Project. We replaced conservation site project signs on nine sites and boundary/Foot Access Only signs on 11 sites. We installed new project signs on 13 sites, and new boundary/Foot Access Only/informational signs on ten sites. CSM staff provided recommendations on 25 industrial land-use referrals and addressed 78 public inquiries. Table 1 summarizes the inspection and maintenance activities, and Table 2 summarizes the habitat and recreational enhancement activities, completed by the CSM Project in 2018/19.

Table 1. Summary of inspections and maintenance activities completed as part of our Conservation Site Management Project in 2018/19.

Activity	Number of Conservation Sites			Total
	Crown	Titled	Conservation Easement	
Completed inspections	65	115	12	192
Conducted routine maintenance	21	65	0	86
Replaced project signs	5	4	0	9
Replaced boundary and FAO ¹ signs	6	5	0	11

¹FAO = foot access only.

Table 2. Summary of habitat and recreational enhancement activities completed as part of our Conservation Site Management Project in 2018/19.

Activity	Number of Conservation Sites			
	Crown	Titled	Conservation Easement	Total
Completed habitat enhancements	15	48	0	63
Completed recreational access enhancements	4	10	0	14
Installed new project signs	2	11	0	13
Installed new boundary/FAO ¹ signs and other informational signs ²	1	9	0	10

¹FAO = foot access only.

² Special access, private property, bow hunting only, and memorial signs.

We completed habitat enhancement activities on 63 conservation sites and recreational enhancements on 14 conservation sites. These included planting over 8,650 trees and shrubs, re-seeding 304 acres of land to native grass species or tame forage (alfalfa mix), removing or altering fences to make fencing “wildlife friendly,” completing wildlife surveys, a redd monitoring survey and baseline inventories, removing human infrastructure, improving recreational access, and managing agricultural licence agreements (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Details of habitat enhancement and monitoring activities completed on conservation sites in 2018/19.

Habitat Enhancement and Monitoring Activities		
Description	Details	Sites
Tree planting	Planted 5,050 seedlings (2,680 white spruce, 1,080 aspen, 660 jack pine, 360 white birch, and 270 black spruce)	Junction Lake

	Planted 50 balsam poplar live stakes and 50 willow live stakes into an old hayland	Schroeder
Shrub planting	Planted 3,500 shelterbelt shrubs	East Hays
	Planted ~200 silver sage plugs and ~2,000 needle and thread plugs in partnership with MULTISAR	Silver Sage
Other plantings	Planted four-acre sorghum food plot for upland game birds	East Hays
	Reseeded 250 acres of native grass in partnership with MULTISAR	Silver Sage
	Reseeded 27 acres of former cropland with native grass reclamation mix as part of ongoing restoration initiative	Flatbush 5
	Reseeded 27 acres of cropland to tame forage (permanent cover)	Scheerschmidt
Wildlife movement	Removed barbed wire fencing	East Oakley Lake, Flatbush 2, North Fawcett, North Fawcett 2, North Fawcett 6, South Plain Lake, Wintergreen, Silver Sage
	Wildlife-friendly modifications completed on existing fences.	Golden Ranches, Sylvan Glen

	Installed 7 km of smooth wire on fence in partnership with Alberta Fish & Game Association (pronghorn fencing project)	Silver Sage
	Installed 1.2 km new fence	Scheerschmidt
Agricultural Licences	Haying	Camp Creek, East Oakley Lake, Golden Ranches, Boulder Creek Uplands, Birch Hills Uplands, East Deadwood, Lac Cardinal Point Uplands, Little Burnt River Uplands, Montagneuse Uplands, Northstar, Thomas Wetland, Whitemud River Flats, South Peavine, Joussard, Rudakevich II, Reiner Homestead, Shell True North Forest, Legacy, Silver Sage, Millicent, Keho Lake
	Cropping	Camp Creek, Flatbush 5, Golden Ranches, Pomrenk Homestead, Wintergreen, Scheerschmidt
	Grazing	Musidora 2, Golden Ranches Home Half, South Plain Lake, Silver Sage, Escape Coulee, Ross Creek, Bull Trail, Wild Rose, Tyrrell Lake, Fincastle, Buffalo Lake

		Moraine Conservation Area, Stonhouse, Shell True North Forest
	Apiaries	Flatbush, Flatbush 5, Flatbush 6, Golden Ranches, North Fawcett 4, North Fawcett 5, North Fawcett 6, North Fawcett 7, Legacy
Other Activities	Piping plover habitat enhancement for nesting and feeding	Junction Lake
	Beaver Pond leveller installation	Porter
	Baseline inventories (contracted)	North Fawcett 4, Tiger Lily, Porter, Parkland, Edson Creek, Little Burnt River
	Range Health Assessment and Wildlife Surveys (MULTISAR)	Ross Creek
	Trail cameras to monitor wildlife usage/presence and recreational use.	Northstar, North Rabbit Lake, East Deadwood, Schroeder, Raven Ridge, Drake, Porter, Scheerschmidt
	Wildlife surveys	Scheerschmidt, Schroeder, Raven Ridge, Ross Creek
	Redd monitoring survey (condition of purchase)	Porter
	Removed garbage and other debris (e.g., barbed wire rolls, old farming equipment)	Cameron Development, Daysland, Flatbush 4, Geneva Lake, Lunnford, North River,

		Pomrenk Homestead, South Plain Lake, Wintergreen, Scheerschmidt, Raven Ridge
	Removed yard site (house, outbuildings, corrals), other buildings and structures	Chinook, Pomrenk Homestead, Edson Creek

Table 4. Details of recreational enhancement activities completed on conservation sites in 2018/19.

Recreational Enhancement Activities		
Description	Details	Sites
Recreational enhancement	Constructed and maintained permanent and temporary parking areas	Daysland, South Plain Lake (pheasant release sites), Porter, Scheerschmidt, and Drake
	Improved hatchery truck access	Lac Delorme
	Installed New Project Signs	Birch Coulee, Camp Creek, Musidora 4, Tiger Lily, Wintergreen, Gouin, Chinook, Hays Drain C3, Edson Creek, Porter, Scheerschmidt, Raven Ridge, Little Burnt River
	Installed New Boundary/FAO ¹ and other informational signs	Cameron Development, Lac Emelien, Tiger Lily, Wintergreen, Gouin, Chinook, Edson Creek, Porter, Raven Ridge, Little Burnt River
	Constructed a footbridge	Drake
	Maintained foot-access trails	Buffalo Lake Moraine Conservation Area (Potter's Seep Interpretive Trail), Raven Ridge (x-country ski trails)
	Cleared willow from fence line to improve angler access	North Raven River
	Installed walk-through gates/openings in fences for foot access	Musidora 2, North Fawcett 4, Chinook, Raven Ridge, Faust, Reiner Homestead

¹foot access only

Conclusions

We successfully met our program and site-specific objectives for 2018/19. We completed inspections of 192 conservation sites and completed maintenance and repairs on 86 conservation sites. This work included controlling weeds, repairing and upgrading fences to wildlife-friendly standards, and cleaning up sites. In addition, we completed habitat enhancements on 63 conservation sites and recreational enhancements on 14 conservation sites. Most importantly, we continued to conserve and manage over 210,000 acres of important wildlife and fish habitat, and to provide additional areas for outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy.

Communications

- Received 103 land-use referrals and inquiries, and provided recommendations and information on the following:
 - 25 industrial referrals regarding pipeline installation, temporary water lines, brush clearing along utility lines, ROW registration, and sub-division permits.
 - 78 public inquiries, including recreational access (hunting, trapping, angling, horseback riding, birding), agricultural leases (haying and grazing), group access (ABMI staff training, college field trips, willow live-stake harvesting, dog trials) and complaints (dumping, beaver dams).
- Attended meetings with partners to discuss conservation site management.
- Northeast Region hosted 2018 ACA Board of Directors tour.
- Central Region hosted the Porter Celebration event.
- Promoted 355 ACA conservation sites (CSM & FAS) in ACA's 2018 *Alberta Discover Guide* and App.
- Published article featuring Gouin Conservation Site in the Fall/Winter 2018 issue of *Conservation Magazine*.
- Published article featuring Chinook Conservation Site in the Fall/Winter 2018 issue of *Conservation Magazine*
- Article on *Edmonton Sun* website (November 8, 2018) featured the Daysland Conservation Site.

- Article in *Stettler Independent* (September 7, 2018) featuring the Scheerschmidt Conservation Site.
- Continued negotiations with AEP to determine long-term roles and responsibilities at conservation sites across the province.
- Finalized three CSM Guideline documents and reviewed drafts for ten Guideline documents.

Photos



ACA staff member, Mike Ranger removing old fencing material from North Fawcett 6 Conservation Site. Photo: Hillary Keyes



Tree planting preparation at Junction Lake Conservation Site. Photo: Dan Sturgess



New project sign at Little Burnt River Conservation Site. Photo: Garret McKen



White spruce planted in a reverting hayland at Rudakevich 1 Conservation Site. Photo: Garret McKen



ACA staff planting shrubs at East Hays Conservation Site. Photo: Tyler Johns



ACA staff wrapping trees at Chinook Conservation Site to prevent beaver damage. Photo: Tyler Johns.



Memorial sign at Raven Ridge Conservation Site. Photo: Colin Kure



Beaver pond leveler installation at Porter Conservation Site. Photo: Mandy Couve



Project sign and v-gate access at Scheersmidt Conservation Site. Photo: Mandy Couve