

**Alberta Conservation Association
2024/25 Project Summary Report**

Project Name: Landowner Habitat Project

Land Management Program Manager: Robert Anderson

Project Leader: Marco Fontana

Primary ACA Staff on Project: Marco Fontana, Jeff Forsyth, John Hallett, Stephen Nadworny, Roy Schmelzeisen, Dan Sturgess, and Clayton Temple

Partnerships

Bow River Irrigation District

Government of Alberta

Parkland County

Participating Private Landowners

Key Findings

- Currently managing 30 Habitat Retention Agreements in partnership with landholders, conserving 6,884 acres (2,786 ha) of wildlife and fish habitat.
- Eight agreements were allowed to expire in 2024/25 without renewal as they were deemed to provide insufficient habitat value and/or benefit to Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) stakeholders.
- One new agreement was signed in the Northwest Region protecting 240 acres (97 ha) of habitat.

Details

Private lands that have not been cleared or excessively altered by development or agricultural practices play a significant role in sustaining healthy wildlife and fish populations by providing a variety of natural habitats. Protecting these diverse habitats, including forest, wetlands, and native grasslands, helps maintain threatened ecosystems, supports wildlife populations, and provides outdoor recreational opportunities. The Landowner Habitat Project (LHP) was initiated

to help conserve key habitats and reduce habitat loss and fragmentation on privately owned land. By entering into legally binding Habitat Retention Agreements (HRA) to retain idled land for a term of five to 20 years, landowners are eligible to receive a financial incentive of up to \$10/acre for the habitat area kept from being developed, cleared, or otherwise utilized by agricultural production. To increase the project's direct benefit to ACA's hunting and angling stakeholders, a condition of the agreement is for landowners to provide reasonable public foot access upon request. Participants in the project are acknowledged with a landowner recognition sign and are provided with *Use Respect – Ask First* signage identifying their contact information. Displaying these signs at major access points and along the perimeter of their property is intended to reduce the likelihood of trespassing issues by providing a way for hunters to request and gain permission for access.

We currently manage 30 HRAs across the province, which conserves approximately 6,884 acres (2,786 ha) of important wildlife and fish habitat. This includes five agreements in ACA's Central Region, nine agreements in the Northeast Region, 11 agreements in the Northwest Region, and five agreements in the South Region. In 2024/25, eight HRAs expired in the South Region, and we determined they were not conserving enough quality habitat and/or providing sufficient benefit to ACA's stakeholders to warrant the cost of renewing them. We did sign a new ten-year term agreement protecting an additional 240 acres of huntable wildlife habitat in the Northwest Region. Participating landowners currently enrolled in the LHP play an important part in helping protect some excellent wildlife habitat and providing access to recreational opportunities throughout Alberta. We continue to look for new landowners who are interested in developing this type of conservation project on private lands.

Photos



Photo 1. Wetland habitat on a new LHP participant's property (Northwest Region). Photo: Clayton Temple



Photo 2. Frozen bear tracks found on an LHP participant's property (Northwest Region). Photo: Clayton Temple



Photo 3. *Use Respect – Ask First* sign on an LHP participant’s property (Central Region).
Photo: John Hallett



Photo 4. Fern understory habitat on an LHP participant’s property (Central Region). Photo:
Marco Fontana



Photo 5. Project sign on the boundary of an LHP participant's property (Northeast Region).
Photo: Stephen Nadworny



Photo 6. *Use Respect – Ask First* sign on an LHP participant's property (Northeast Region).
Photo: Stephen Nadworny



Photo 7. Creek and riparian habitat on an LHP participant's property (Southern Region).
Photo: Jeff Forsyth



Photo 8. Project sign on an LHP participant's property (Southern Region). Photo: Tyler Johns