

Alberta Conservation Association 2007/08 Project Summary Report

Project name: Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program

Project leader: Velma Hudson

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Partnerships:

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Environment Canada

Key findings

- 10 feeding stations and one lure crop provided an estimated 1,338,183 duck days of feeding.
- 46 scare cannon distribution centers distributed 192 scare cannons to 84 landowners.
- 38% of landowners who borrowed scare cannons indicated they would be willing to allow their contact information to be provided to waterfowl hunters.

Introduction

The Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program (WCDPP) provides assistance to agricultural producers throughout the province in preventing depredation losses caused by waterfowl to unharvested crops. Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), Environment Canada and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) collaboratively plan the WCDPP, ACA delivers the program and program funding is cost shared between ACA and Environment Canada.

During the harvest season (August – October), the ACA provides advice on preventing waterfowl crop damage, distributes waterfowl scaring equipment to producers, encourages producers to use waterfowl hunting as part of their damage prevention and control strategy, and provides alternative feeding areas for waterfowl through feeding stations and lure crops.

Objectives for the 2007/2008 WCDPP were to:

1. Provide scaring equipment to farmers with waterfowl crop damage through scare cannon distribution centers;
2. Operate waterfowl feed stations at select waterfowl staging areas;
3. Maintain waterfowl recreation website in the fall;
4. Maintain and update the WCDPP database; and
5. Continue program evaluation begun in 2006/2007 of feed station operations.

Methods

Four regional coordinators (Northwest, Northeast, Parkland, and Prairie regions) deliver the WCDPP under the direction of a provincial coordinator. In the Prairie region, waterfowl damage prevention activities consist of provision of alternate food for waterfowl. In the Northwest, Northeast, and Parkland regions, WCDPP activities include operation of feeding stations and scare cannon distribution centers (Figure 1).

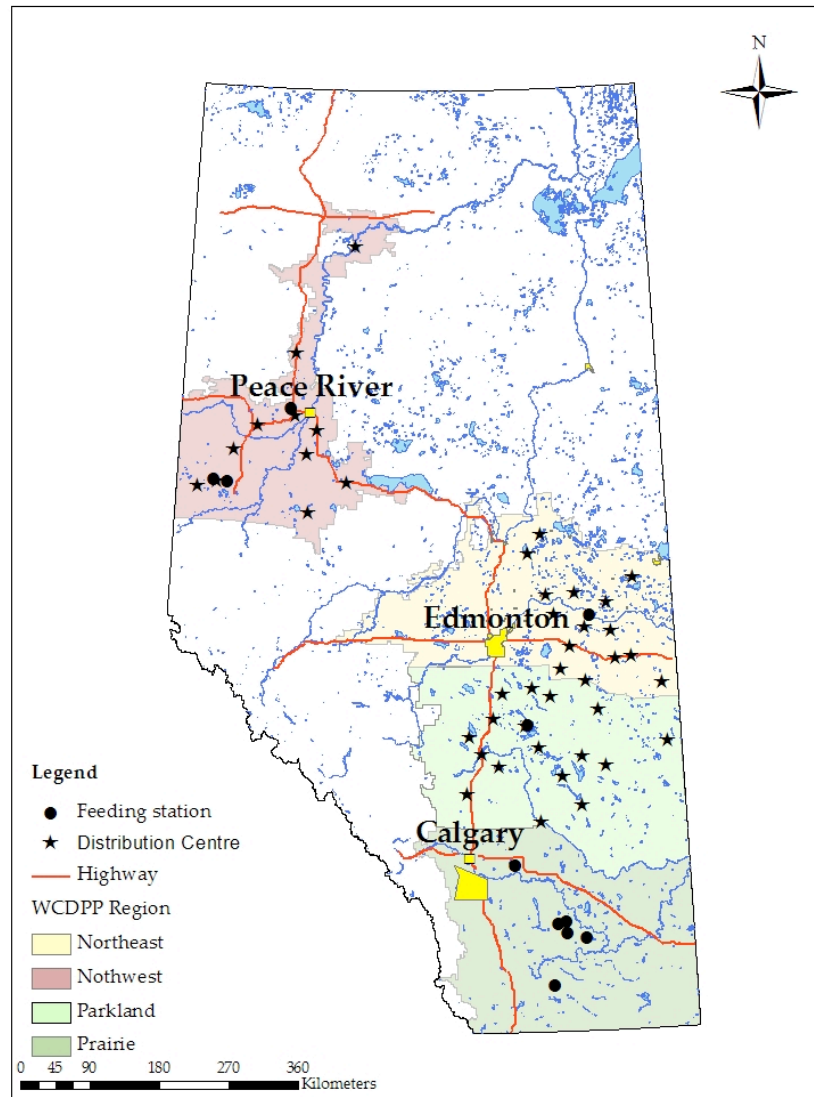


Figure 1. Map of Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program operational areas showing feeding stations and distribution centers.

Provision of alternate feed for waterfowl consists of either a feeding station where shelled barley is spread along a portion of lakeshore, or a lure crop where a mature barley crop is swathed and left in the field for waterfowl to feed on. Hunting within 400 m of feeding areas is prohibited in

order to avoid disturbing birds that have adjusted to the area. Feeding activities are terminated when 70% of the barley, wheat and field pea crops within 16 km of the feeding station are harvested.

Scare cannon distribution centers are located in contracted local businesses, ACA offices and ASRD district offices. Cannons may be borrowed, free of charge, by producers with waterfowl damage problems. For each borrowed cannon, the distribution centre collects a damage deposit (which is returned to the borrower when the cannon is returned in good condition) and information on crop damage land location, crop type, wildlife species causing the damage, and whether or not the borrower will permit their contact information to be provided to waterfowl hunters.

Regional coordinators collect weekly summaries from distribution centers and information is used to update the WCDPP web page from 15 August to 31 October. The web page contains a downloadable fact sheet on waterfowl crop damage prevention strategies, and a link to a provincial map that displays the number of requests for waterfowl crop damage prevention assistance. The number of requests for assistance can indicate areas of waterfowl concentration and hunters wishing to contact receptive producers in areas of crop damage can do so through regional coordinators.

Results

- We operated 46 scare cannon distribution centers; 35 contracted businesses, nine ASRD offices and two ACA offices for an average of 83 days. Eighty-four landowners borrowed 192 scare cannons for use on at least 157 different quarter sections of cropland. Thirty-eight percent of the landowners indicated they would allow their contact information to be provided to waterfowl hunters, 56% indicated they would not, and 6% of landowners did not indicate a preference.
- We provided 11,936 bushels of barley at 10 feeding stations and one lure crop for an estimated 1,338,183 days of duck feeding.
- The Waterfowl Recreation website was updated with information from distribution centers weekly from 15 August to 31 October.
- Information on wildlife crop damage compensation was obtained from Agriculture Financial Services Corporation for the 2006 crop year and was loaded into the WCDPP database and shared with ASRD.
- Evaluation of feeding stations was suspended in 2007/2008 because of uncertainty over the future of the WCDPP. ACA delivered the 2007/2008 field component of the program although an agreement to cost-share the program with Environment Canada was not signed until 19 December 2007 (Table 1). Evaluation of feeding stations is deemed to be a component of the program that will be deferred until secure long-term funding is in place.

Table 1. Alberta Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program expenditures for 2007/2008.

Accounting of Expenditures	Proposed Budget	Program Expenditures
<i>Feeding Operations</i>		
Feeding station monitoring contract	\$9,000.00	\$2,500.00
Feed station site rental	\$2,000.00	\$0.00
Feed station feeding contracts	\$30,800.00	\$23,647.33
Feed station grain	\$68,000.00	\$44,826.20
Lure crop	\$4,000.00	\$0.00
Field supplies/equipment	\$2,000.00	\$3,149.57
Feed station evaluation	\$12,000.00	\$0.00
Subtotal	\$127,800.00	\$74,123.10
<i>Scare Cannon Distribution</i>		
Advertising	\$4,000.00	\$221.56
Distribution centre contracts	\$20,500.00	\$12,494.80
Cannon shipping	\$3,000.00	\$1,395.19
Equipment Purchase	\$27,000.00	\$0.00
Field supplies/equipment repair	\$7,000.00	\$1,833.49
Subtotal	\$61,500.00	\$15,945.04
<i>Administration</i>		
Regional Programming		
Coordinator Salaries/benefits	\$100,340.00	\$87,343.10
Advertising		\$920.60
Vehicle Operation	\$20,000.00	\$20,573.08
Phone (cell and long distance)	\$2,000.00	\$823.26
Office/Field Supplies	\$3,000.00	\$554.17
Travel expenses	\$3,000.00	\$669.38
Subtotal	\$128,340.00	\$110,883.59
<i>Provincial Coordination</i>		
Salaries/benefit	\$20,400.00	\$22,361.01
Vehicle operation	\$3,225.00	\$3,370.93
Phone (cell and long distance)	\$150.00	\$156.45
Web-site development	\$5,000.00	\$0.00
Office/Field Supplies	\$1,085.00	\$664.12
Travel expenses	\$1,500.00	\$418.32
Subtotal	\$31,360.00	\$26,970.83
Total	\$350,000.00	\$227,922.56

Conclusion

Delivery of the WCDPP is a responsibility delegated to ACA by ASRD. The 2007 WCDPP was delivered in accordance with the program plan and within the budget constraints imposed by Environment Canada.

Communications

- Waterfowl web page and WCDPP fact sheet were made available on the ACA website.
- Provincial Summary Report was distributed to funding agencies, colleagues and other interested parties, and was posted on the ACA website.
- Advertisements of scare cannons distribution centers were put in local newspapers.



Geese feeding on swathed crop. (Photo: Velma Hudson)