

**Alberta Conservation Association**  
**2023/24 Project Summary Report**

**Project Name:** MULTISAR – South Saskatchewan

**Wildlife Program Manager:** Doug Manzer

**Project Leader:** Brad Downey

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**Partnerships**

Alberta Beef Producers

Canadian Cattle Association

Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef

Cows and Fish – Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society

Environment and Climate Change Canada

EQUUS

Government of Alberta

Landholders

Prairie Conservation Forum

**Key Findings**

- We collaborated with four new ranching partners, as well as undertook reassessments on two existing ranch-partner lands to facilitate stewardship actions moving forward.
- We partnered with 12 producers on 17 enhancements including portable watering units to improve riparian habitat along Ross Creek and Box Elder Creek, upland watering sites to improve riparian habitat along Milk River and Cross Creek, and fencing projects to improve permeability of fencelines for pronghorn movement and protection of riparian habitat.

- Looking forward, we have signed up four new ranching operations (~23,000 acres) for rollout in 2024/25, along with reassessments scheduled to evaluate progress on four long-term existing partner's lands (~10,000 acres).

## **Details**

There are numerous species at risk in southern Alberta, often overlapping with agricultural landscapes. Existing management practices on these lands are what have allowed these species to persist, but there are also many opportunities to further enhance habitat quality for wildlife, while also benefiting agricultural operations. We work collaboratively with ranching partners to maintain, increase, and improve habitat for species at risk within the Grassland Natural Region of Alberta. This involves habitat assessments, developing voluntary habitat conservation strategies (HCS), and the implementation and monitoring of on-the-ground enhancements. A HCS is a five-year extendable voluntary plan that identifies beneficial management practices and habitat improvement recommendations to encourage sustainable ranching operations. A key part of the HCS process is completing in-depth range and riparian health assessments, along with wildlife and habitat surveys.

In the past year, we collaborated with four new ranching partners as well as undertook reassessments on two existing ranch-partner lands. We identified 153 wildlife species among six properties, including six identified as federally *Endangered*, five as *Threatened*, and six listed as *Special Concern*. In all, we had 2,139 wildlife observations. On these same six properties, we conducted 93 detailed range transects, 129 range health assessments, 34 tame pasture assessments, 74 visual assessments, and 23 riparian assessments. We compiled this information and developed detailed long-term collaborative strategies for each ranch (HCSs).

We also worked with 12 existing ranch partners to assist with 17 enhancements including portable watering units to improve riparian habitat along Ross Creek and Box Elder Creek, upland watering sites to improve riparian habitat along Milk River and Cross Creek, as well as fence upgrades to improve their permeability for pronghorn and to protect delicate riparian zones.

We aim to foster long-term relationships built on mutual respect and trust between conservation groups and landowners. These relationships allow us to collaborate with producers and

implement enhancements throughout the project area that today has more than 350,000 acres enrolled. Our interaction with the ranching community continues to grow, and we anticipate partnering with three to four additional landowners each year moving forward.

## Photos



Photo 1. ACA staff conducting range assessments. Photo: Jill Makins



Photo 2. Upland watering system. Photo: Brad Downey