

Alberta Conservation Association
2024/25 Project Summary Report

Project Name: MULTISAR – South Saskatchewan

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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 three new ranching partners, as well as undertook reassessments on four existing ranch-partner lands to facilitate stewardship actions moving forward.
- We partnered with seventeen producers on 32 enhancements including portable watering units to reduce pressure on natural wetlands, Milk River and North Milk River, 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 five new ranching operations (~12,400 acres) for rollout in 2025/26, along with reassessments scheduled to evaluate progress on three long-term existing partner's lands (~41,464 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 five existing ranch-partner lands. We identified 154 wildlife species among nine properties, including six identified as federally *Endangered*, ten as *Threatened*, and nine listed as *Special Concern*. In all, we had 3,546 wildlife observations. On these same nine properties, we conducted more than 62 detailed range transects, 148 range health assessments, 22 modified or tame pasture assessments, 71 visual assessments, and 29 riparian assessments. We compiled this information and developed detailed long-term collaborative strategies for each ranch (HCSs and reassessments).

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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 in the South Saskatchewan project area. 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. Lethbridge Polytechnic students are toured around a MULTISAR participant property to look at enhancements and discuss landowner liaison. Photo: Julie Landry-DeBoer