

Alberta Conservation Association
2024/25 Project Summary Report

Project Name: MULTISAR – West

Wildlife Program Manager: Doug Manzer

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Partnerships

Alberta Beef Producers

Canadian Cattle Association

Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef

Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk

Government of Alberta

Landholders in southwestern Alberta

Minister’s Special Licence Resident Draw Grants

Municipal District of Ranchland No. 66

Prairie Conservation Forum

Key Findings

- We completed a long-term conservation plan with a new ranching partner (3,693 acres) and worked together to install a portable fencing unit to redistribute cattle away from 0.5 km of sensitive riparian habitat along Deep Creek, a tributary to the Highwood River.
- We enhanced wildlife habitat, improved water quality, and reduced cattle disturbance in sensitive riparian areas by partnering with six cattle producers to implement seven habitat enhancements including three natural spring developments, two portable watering units, one solar water pump system, and one portable fencer.

Details

The Foothills, Parkland, and Rocky Mountain natural regions of southwestern Alberta boast some of the province's most ecologically diverse landscapes and provide habitat for many species at risk including little brown bat, bull trout, Clark's nutcracker, golden eagle, grizzly bear, limber pine, western wood-pewee, and westslope cutthroat trout. Producers with effective grassland management across this zone have enabled many of these fish and wildlife species to persist, but there are also many opportunities to further enhance habitat quality while mutually benefiting agricultural operations.

In 2024, we collaborated with a ranch partner in southwest Alberta and completed range and riparian health assessments on over 3,600 acres. We identified 93 different wildlife species on this ranch, including 13 that are considered *Endangered*, *Threatened*, or *Species of Special Concern*. In total, we had 548 observations of wildlife species and conducted 68 range and nine riparian health transects. We then worked with this operation to improve water quality by implementing a portable fencing unit to redistribute cattle away from 0.5 km of sensitive riparian habitat along Deep Creek, a tributary to the Highwood River that supports *Threatened* bull trout and *Threatened* westslope cutthroat trout.

We also worked with five existing partner operations to implement six habitat enhancements that all improved water quality by reducing cattle disturbance in sensitive riparian habitat. These included implementing a portable watering unit near Todd Creek, a second portable watering unit near Meinsinger Lake, a solar water pump system to reduce cattle disturbance along Yarrow Creek, and three natural springs developed into upland watering sites along Ings Creek, Grave Brook, and an unnamed tributary to Todd Creek.

To date, we have developed long-term working partnerships with nine ranches that have a combined footprint of more than 50,000 acres. Moving forward, we will add additional landowners annually to expand this area of influence, including a landholder adjacent to Todd Creek (~966 acres) and the Bob Creek portion of the Waldron Ranch (8,626 acres) in 2025.

Photos



Photo 1. Native rough fescue grasslands and low-lying wetlands provide valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife on a property west of Longview, Alberta. Photo: Mike Verhage



Photo 2. An acoustic monitoring device records bat echolocations that are used to identify bat species occurring on a property in southwest Alberta. Photo: Mike Verhage