

Alberta Fish and Game Association Focus Priorities Programs Committee Report to AFGA Community May 2021

Ensuring the Alberta Fish and Game Association Remains Relevant and Valued by its Members, Now and Tomorrow

The Alberta Fish and Game Association Focus Priorities Programs Committee (FPPC) was struck by the Alberta Fish and Game Association Provincial Executive in December of 2020. This was a commitment to members and clubs due to the financial situation faced by the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) which surfaced in 2020. The committee held its first meeting on January 13, 2021 and has met seven times to date. This included a joint meeting with the Membership Committee (MEM) which was struck concurrently.

The mandate of FPPC is to review and provide recommendations to the AFGA Executive and larger AFGA community on potential changes to the focus, priorities, and programs of the organization to ensure its ongoing viability and long-term success. Such a review is essential as there are significant societal and demographic changes that may impact the relevance, financial stability, and effectiveness of the organization. The review considered the following areas:

- i. Goals, Mission, Vision, and Objects
- ii. Organizational Focus
- iii. Organizational Priorities
- iv. Programs
- v. Organizational relevance, value, and effectiveness

The committee represent a diverse cross section of the membership including those that hold direct, life, and club affiliations. They come from clubs that have solely a conservation perspective to those that have extensive programs including firearm and archery ranges. The members are as follows:

- Ryan Armstrong, Lloydminster and District Fish and Game Association
- Jim Clarke, Sarcee Fish and Game Association
- James Donnelly, Red Deer Fish and Game Association
- Dona Murphy, Onoway Fish and Game Association
- Grant Pryznyk, Okotoks Fish and Game Association
- Darryl Smith, AFGA Executive Fishing Chairperson, Life Member
- Matt Taylor, Direct Member
- Ross Towers, Red Deer Fish and Game Association

Building on our legacy, evolving to meet the challenges of today and the future

Background

The Alberta Fish and Game Association is the oldest conservation organization in Alberta. Its origins date back to 1908. *Conservation Pride and Passion, The Alberta Fish and Game Association 1908-2008* provides insights into how the organization has continually evolved. The book written by Don Meredith and Duane Radford chronicles the history and outlines the contributions that AFGA has made over this hundred-year period that have shaped wildlife conservation in Alberta.

The origin of AFGA began in 1908 when the Calgary Fish and Game Protective League was formed. Following that, similar clubs sprung up in other centers around the province. The first province-wide organizational meeting of the AFGA was held in Calgary on July 11, 1928. The AFGA was incorporated as a society in 1946. The current Bylaws and Objects of the AFGA largely date from March 1970.

The highest membership for the association based on class sales was 24,501 in 1976 when the population of Alberta was 1.9 million. Today using a similar comparison, the membership over the last few years has hovered around 13,000 with the population of the province reaching 4.4 million. Putting it differently, the “family” class was added in 1995 and “youth” class in 1998. If we use these metrics, AFGA membership would have approached 50K in 1976 compared to the 25K today despite the population more than doubling over this period.

Between 1960 and today there has been a proliferation and emergence of other conservation, environmental, habitat, outdoor, and firearm organizations in the province. Despite this competition, AFGA continues to exist, moving ahead with a mandate that is multi-focused reaching out to the broad outdoor community. While hunting and fishing are at our roots, it is a passion for the outdoors and wildlife conservation that drives the organization.

To be successful in this competitive organizational landscape means AFGA must evaluate the past, consider the realities of today, and look to the future to ensure AFGA remains relevant and respected within society. There has been a societal shift in attitude as younger generations consider involvement and support of an organization. Today people don't join for what you do; they join for why you do it.

FPPC members are unanimous in their viewpoint that the organization needs to evolve, building on its legacy yet meeting the challenges and opportunities of the future. FPPC members believe that there are required changes to our organizational documents to focus and provide clarity so that the development of strategic direction, business plan, governance, and organizational structure align.

Comparisons have been made with our sister organizations: The British Columbia Wildlife Federation (BCWF), Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation (SWF), and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH). While we are all founding members of the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF), this is not an apple-to-apple comparison. These other organizations have more members, multiple revenue streams, and in some cases deliver government programs with long term financial support. The number of staff in these organizations alone creates far greater capacity. OFAH has over 50 staff, the BCWF has close to 20, and at a director level alone, SWF has 6. At best, combining AFGA provincial operations and the Wildlife Trust Fund and including both staff and contractors, AFGA has only 4. This means that AFGA has

a far greater reliance on its volunteer members supported by only a few dedicated staff to do the heavy lifting.

Many of the programs championed by AFGA are today provided through other organizations. Hunter training is a prime example. The AFGA Hunter Training Program was adopted by the Government of Alberta in 1963. While AFGA members have delivered the program continuously since, and are integral to its success, the management moved first to the Government of Alberta and then to Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association. Alberta presents some unique challenges for an organization such as AFGA where despite pioneering many programs, other organizations now have assumed the lead in their delivery.

FPPC believes that there is room in the conservation and outdoor community for a middle of the road, outdoor activity-oriented organization in Alberta. Ironically, this arena has largely been vacated due to the movement to single or narrow focused interest groups. FPPC is of the opinion the organization should continue to be multi-focused, setting priorities that include member and club support and services, programs, advocacy, and charitable objectives. However, boundaries need to be defined, as capacity within the organization is limited from a financial, staff, and volunteer standpoint. Expectations of members may not be met unless there is clear communication. Effective positive marketing and branding that creates name recognition and understanding of goals is essential. Working or lending support to other organizations on issues where our collective mindsets align must also be a cornerstone if we are to achieve our objectives. Our future support and members will be due to a wide societal comprehension of **"WHY"** we exist.

This vision contrasts with a single focused organization that can channel all its resources to one cause. Examples abound including dedicated firearm, advocacy, or habitat organizations. On the firearm front alone, there are over 17 organizations active in the province, not counting numerous gun ranges run as businesses or by clubs. FPPC members felt that a movement to become singularly focused which is appealing to some members, would come with it the consequence that much of the legacy and foundation of the organization would be lost. This would also lead to a much smaller potential membership base, albeit many of those individuals are the most dedicated and involved.

FPPC believes building on our roots is the best path forward. *Pride and Passion* provides insight on the starting point of **"WHY"** the organization was formed:

"The fish and game clubs in the province addressed many issues related to conservation, including enforcement of closed seasons, a desire for to permit Sunday hunting, propagation and introduction of exotic game birds, protection of songbirds, concerns related to poor fishing in lakes and streams, use of distinct hunting garments for safety, and a bounty on crows and magpies because of their predation on game bird nest and nestlings."

The context behind many of these issues still resonate today. Thus, the need for an organization such as the Alberta Fish and Game Association today and in the future.

Discussion

For the organization to evolve and embrace change, the memberships will need to endorse formally, many items through extraordinary or special resolutions at an Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting which comes with high threshold of support requirements. Gauging support at a formative stage for change is critical before moving down the wrong rabbit hole and investing both time and volunteer resources further. The option of maintaining the status quo with only minor tweaks has been discussed. FPPC does not believe this is the path to follow. It however ultimately will be up to the membership to decide on any future path for AFGA.

The following discussion topics have been developed by FPPC to entertain feedback, debate, and questions so that FPPC can further refine a direction for the AFGA for consideration by the AFGA community and executive. Understanding what direction AFGA should take is critical to other committees' work as they review the communication structure, finances, and governance structure of the organization. The result will be both strategic direction and a business plan to guide the association through the near and longer term.

Starting Point

The starting point was to propose a blueprint for what the focus of AFGA should be in a "go forward model". A high-level summary is provided in the following chart. While this may appear similar to what currently exists, there currently is no strategic direction, business plan, or governance structure tied to such priorities. How to achieve, timing horizons, or measurement of success must be part of the discussion as implementation is tied to these elements.

Part of the exercise that FPPC has undertaken was to initially define focus elements and set boundaries within which AFGA should operate in a "go forward model". There is only limited capacity within AFGA currently. It would be unreasonable to expect that it can fully implement all components of any plan at this time. Instead, there will need to be priority setting within each element and communication to the AFGA community as to what is doable and when.

There are changes that FPPC believes are critical. Member and Club Support and Services must become identified priorities. Providing support to clubs with programs and facilities such as firearm ranges is essential. Boundaries have been set related to advocacy. Focus would shift to habitat, not the much larger "environment portfolio" of the past. There is a recognition that while hunting and fishing are at our roots, the overall outdoor experience, whether that involves activities such as boating, camping, or shooting sports, are integral components. Our members want us to be involved in this area. Maintaining charitable status is viewed as positive from a legal and financial standpoint, but also tied to public perception. Charitable status does put constraints or conditions on the organization in terms of areas such as membership benefits or advocacy programs, but also needed if we want to expand and maintain habitat initiatives including the purchase of vital habitat.

How these focus elements align with the current foundational documents related to mission, vision, and objects forms the backdrop for the discussion topics for this webinar. More detailed information can be found in the appendix related to these focus elements.

Summary of Proposed Focus of AFGA Provincially in “Go Forward Model”					
Member	Club	Habitat Programs	Programs	Advocacy	Charitable Objectives
Member Support, Services, and Benefits	Club Support and Services	Wildlife Trust Fund and others	Support collective goals or needs of members, clubs, and zones	Hunting	Habitat
				Fishing	Wildlife Conservation
				Habitat	Outdoor Education, Stewardship, and Ethics
				Outdoor Recreation, Stewardship, and Ethics	Citizen Science

When FPPC reviewed our current documents related to Mission, Vision, and Goals it discovered the organization does not have a formal vision statement. This may be the result that when the overlying documents were developed, which date to the 1960s, such statements may not have been common at this time. FPPC believes that a formal VISION needs to be developed as it is a critical communication, marketing, and branding element. Vision statements should be contemporary. As such their language and content needs to be motivating and current. It must look to the future. FPPC is of the opinion the future of the organization is tied to embracing an outdoor lifestyle that includes traditional activities such as hunting and fishing.

Over 80 percent of Albertans today live-in urban settings. We are the third most urban society in Canada and only statistically slightly behind Ontario and British Columbia. The future of AFGA membership and support is tied to appealing to urban Albertans who have increasingly diverse demographics. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that there is a resurgence of interest in outdoor pursuits including hunting, fishing, and shooting sports across all demographics.

Vision

FPPC has developed draft vision statements for consideration. Further refinement and editing will be required. FPPC would appreciate the membership to submit draft vision statements as well. Ultimately a final version for consideration will likely be a composite developed from all input.

A chart outlining potential draft vision statements follows.

Vision Statement
Current (The following are listed as “GOALS” in our current Operations Manual and might represent a Vision.)
Healthy fish and wildlife populations
Clean Air, Clean Water, Unspoiled Land
Draft for consideration (abridged list)
Our vision is that the vital and essential contribution by anglers and hunters to wildlife conservation, habitat stewardship, and outdoor ethics, is embraced by Alberta society.
Our vision is to empower Albertans to participate in an outdoor lifestyle recognizing the essential contributions of the hunting and fishing community to wildlife conservation, habitat stewardship, and outdoor ethics.

FPPC would like to entertain feedback through the following questions.

“The future of the organization is as an outdoor lifestyle organization”

- 1. Do you agree with this statement?**
- 2. Should our vision focus only on the wildlife resource and habitat? (no reference to activities such as hunting and fishing)**
- 3. Can you propose another vision statement to add to the list?**

Mission

AFGA does have a mission statement. There are other components such as motto that could be also construed as mission within our operations manual. Whether individually or collectively they are broad enough or reflect on the focus of the organization, should be up for discussion. FPPC is proposing several draft mission statements for consideration as well asking several questions.

Mission Statement
Current (includes motto and other statements)
To promote, through education and programs, the conservation and utilization of fish and wildlife and to protect and enhance the habitat they depend upon. (current mission statement)
Defending All Outdoors
Voice of Alberta Anglers and Hunters
Our Passion is to promote through education, advocacy and programs, the conservation and utilization of fish and wildlife and to protect and enhance the habitat they depend upon.
Draft for consideration (abridged list)
AFGA's mission is to be the united voice of Alberta's hunters and anglers, advocating for the sustainable management of our wildlife and its habitat, supported by programs that embrace stewardship, outdoor ethics, and education that benefit all in society.
Our mission is on behalf of Albertans, to advocate for sustainable fish and wildlife populations, protecting, restoring, and enhancing habitat by striving for no net loss, for present and future generations.
AFGA's mission is to bring the angling, hunting, and shooting community together for the purpose of wildlife conservation, sustainable harvest, habitat stewardship, and outdoor ethics for the betterment of Alberta society.
AFGA's mission is through education, stewardship, ethics, advocacy, and programs, led by the angling, hunting, and shooting community which enhances the outdoor experience for all Albertans.
On behalf of all Albertans, advocating for the conservation of Alberta's wildlife and their habitat, promoting sustainable harvest, providing programs, and educating future generations so that hunting, fishing, and the responsible use of firearms will remain accessible pastimes to all Albertans in perpetuity.

The future of the organization is as a middle of the road, outdoor activity focused organization with broad mandate and appeal.

(Opposite would be single or narrow focus such as hunting and habitat only)

- 1. Do you agree with this statement?**
- 2. Should our mission include “us” or only be about the resource?**
- 3. Does sustainable management imply harvest opportunities may be possible?**
- 4. Can you propose another mission statement to add to the list?**

Objects

Objects of the association are a foundational and legal requirement under the Alberta Societies Act. They are also integral to maintaining charitable status under the Income Tax Act as administered by the Canada Revenue Agency. They must be filed and registered. Objects set the boundaries within which a society can operate. They are the basic goals of an organization. Objects include the reasons the organization has been formed. Objects need to be linked to our mission and vision. One major challenge will be how to incorporate the issues related to firearms into the objects without impacting charitable status. Our current objects date back to the 1960s and earlier.

FPPC has drafted several new objects for consideration that will require further refinement. Some of the current objects can be retained but they need different wording to conform to the expectations of corporate registries or charitable status. We are also seeking input through several questions related to object development. The North American Model of Wildlife Management is an attached resource as the FPPC believes it is integral to capture concepts included in this document within updated objects.

Objects (Goals)
Current (a number can be retained but need to be refined to provide focus and meet current standards)
To promote conservation of our natural resources.
To foster and promote the non-commercial harvest of fish and game as a legitimate part of an overall wildlife management program.
To develop and promote educational and recreational programs and activities.
To promote and assist in the sound, long term management of Alberta's fish and wildlife in the best interest of all Albertans including future generations.
To insist on continued public ownership of all public lands and wildlife.
To obtain and maintain access to public lands.
To publicize the importance of fish and wildlife and proper resource management.
To work with government, industry and other organizations in local programs, supporting the enhancement, development and maintenance of habitat for all species of fish and wildlife in Alberta.
To lobby government and private agencies as necessary to safeguard the interests of fish, wildlife and other natural resources.
To promote outdoor ethics and safety.
To make Albertans aware of the dangers of all forms of pollution, to prevent pollution, and to co-operate with all groups with similar objectives.
Draft for consideration (abridged version)
To promote conservation and wise utilization of Alberta's outdoor renewable resources through ecosystem management.
To promote sustainable harvest of fish and wildlife as an integral component of management.
To promote stewardship, respect, and ethical use of the outdoors and our wildlife resource by Albertans.
To advocate for continued public ownership of all crown lands and waters in Alberta including access to them for outdoor recreational activities.
To implement programs through partnership with individuals, members, clubs, governments, industry, and non-government organizations to maintain, protect, restore, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
To promote membership and volunteer involvement within the organization and provide programs and support to zones and clubs to develop a strong cohesive province-wide organization now and for the future.
Through programs, education, and training, the future generation of Alberta anglers, hunters, and those participating in related activities are versed in the ethical, safety, and environmental expectations of today.

Objects Continued

Work to achieve a no net loss of habitat in the Province of Alberta.
Work to ensure that democracy of hunting and fishing is a cornerstone in wildlife and fisheries management in Alberta.
Work to ensure that access to gear such as firearms is not impaired in unreasonable ways that would lead to loss of opportunity for Albertans to participate in hunting, fishing, shooting sports, and other outdoor recreational activities.
Work with landowners and other stakeholders to ensure that issues of access and wildlife conservation are addressed on private lands in Alberta.
Provide essential services, supports, and programs to enable hunters, anglers, shooters, and outdoor recreationists to ethically and lawfully pursue their pastimes.
Promote innovation and decision making, guided by consultation and application of consensus-based science in the management of Alberta’s wildlife and their habitat.
Promote working cooperatively with other stakeholders and our First Nation, Métis, and Indigenous communities to achieve common goals related to wildlife management and their habitat.
Develop and provide programs including mentorship with focus on youth, women, families, and new Canadians to introduce them to the outdoors.
Advocating on behalf of the outdoor community for the sustainable management of wildlife and their habitat through involvement with other stakeholders and government.
Supporting the application of consensus-based science as the basis for sustainable wildlife management.
Purchasing and obtaining lands with vital habitat for the benefit of all Albertans and our wildlife resource.

“The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is an integral component of the objects of the organization”

Do you agree with this statement?

Can you propose additional objects to add to the list?

Name

FPPC believes a name change of the organization should be considered. There is lack of name recognition outside of the AFGA community. Conservation organizations generally have very low name recognition by the Alberta public. There is confusion around who we are including a misconception we are part of government. The name may not evoke a vision of who or what we do. The name uses dated language which may be a detriment to marketing, branding, sponsorship, and long-term support considering the changing demographics in society.

At a provincial level there should be little impact on clubs as they already use a variety of names such as Fish and Game, Rod and Gun, Trout, Trophy, or Conservation club or association. There are numerous unaffiliated clubs who also use the Fish and Game moniker. Regardless of the name, going forward marketing, branding, and communications will be critical to maintain or gain recognition. The *Outdoor Recreational Activity Public Survey Results -2022* prepared by the Alberta Conservation Association is attached as an appendix to provide additional context.

Current
Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA)
Draft for consideration (abridged list)
Alberta Federation of Anglers and Hunters (AFAH)
Alberta Wildlife Federation (AWF)
Alberta Hunters and Anglers Alliance (AHAA)
Alberta Outdoors Federation
Alberta Angler Hunter Outdoor Enthusiast Alliance

The name of the organization needs to be modernized.

- 1. Do you agree with this statement?**
- 2. Can you propose another name to add to the list?**

Conclusion

FPPC wants to make it clear that the viewpoints expressed are those of the committee, not the AFGA Executive or larger AFGA community. The information has been presented in an abridged format to provide the reader with a basic understanding of the discussions that are ongoing within FPPC. By providing this information, the aim is to receive input from the larger AFGA community at an early stage before formal recommendations are developed.

For some, the topics and proposals may seem that FPPC has forgotten the past. When one does a critical review there are no radical changes being entertained. Instead, it is about ensuring the organization evolves with society yet builds on its roots. By broaching the topics now, feedback from the larger AFGA community can be incorporated and weighed. FPPC has provided reports and minutes to the other committees and AFGA Executive, as such they are aware of the direction FPPC has been moving.

The FPPC and MEM committees will be merging following this webinar. The reason is much of the remaining work is common to both committees so that the necessary strategic direction and business plan can be formulated for the organization. Your feedback and comments are critical so that the Membership Focus Priorities Program Committee (MFPP) can ensure the recommendations it has been tasked to develop, are reflective of the needs of the organizations and the larger AFGA community. Please provide your input by sending comments and suggestions to office@afga.org indicating on the Subject line: **MFPP Input - Webinar**.

Associated Resources and Appendix

Appendix to Report to AFGA Community: Alberta Fish and Game Association Focus Priorities Programs Committee - May 2021

Outdoor Recreational Activity Public Survey Results – 2020, Alberta Conservation Association, April 2021

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation: Technical Review 12-04, December 2012