



NEWS FROM ALBERTA

President's Report

By Victor Benz

President

With this report, I begin the next chapter in my life as your newly elected Alberta Fish and Game Association President.

The past 14 months have begun the transformation of the AFGA, as it has been addressing the impact of the pandemic on our association. We have streamlined our operation, improved the income structure and with the help of our volunteer Special Committees, we are creating and implementing plans for a successful, sustainable organization. Everyone seems to be asking what is the plan, and how are we performing against it.

This table shows you a snapshot of our ongoing projects and approximate timelines in regards to our restructuring efforts.

Throughout this entire process we must ensure the AFGA remains a financially solvent organization.

This is a very aggressive plan, and we need the support and the volunteer contribution from across the entire AFGA to succeed.

I am personally committed to steering the organization to the finish line.

Thank you for your continued support in these endeavors. 🐾

ITEM	PLANNED COMPLETION	EXPECTED COMPLETION
Using our governance documentation, clearly define what the AFGA is today.	Q1 2021	May 2021
At the same time, using the Special Committees, develop a proposed future vision of the AFGA.	Q1 2021	May 2021
Test and refine the future vision through direct consultation with all of the AFGA.	Q3 2021	on track
Prepare a complete initial draft of new sets of Objects and of Bylaws to match the future vision for review by all the AFGA.	Q4 2021	on track
Approve new sets of Objects and of Bylaws. Immediately submit the approved Objects and Bylaws to Alberta Corporate Registrar.	Q1 2022	on track
Prepare a new AFGA Operations Manual to match the approved sets of Objects and of Bylaws and the future vision.	Q3 2022	on track
Approve a new AFGA Operations Manual.	Q4 2022	on track
The approved Objects and Bylaws are accepted by the Alberta Corporate Registrar and formally registered. Submit the registered Objects and Bylaws to Revenue Canada. All new governance documents can now be used by the AFGA.	Q4 2022	on track

MOVING?

Please send your change of address to : 13045 156 Street, Edmonton, AB, T5V 0A2

Ph: (780) 437-2342 Email: membership@afga.org

*Please note that \$15 of your annual membership dues are allocated to Outdoor Canada West Magazine



Past President's Report

Brian Dingreville

AFGA Past President

First, I would like to congratulate your new Executive starting with Victor Benz, AFGA President, our new 1st Vice President, Faran Schaber and 2nd Vice President, Dave Doonanco. Also, our new Hunting Chair Brian Rudyk, and Environment Chair Glenn Heather. Thank you, Darryl Smith, for continuing on as our provincial Fish Chair for another term!

Also, I want to congratulate Dave Powell for being elected as the Life Member representative.

I look forward to working with each of you in the coming months!



They say change is a good thing, but it is still hard to not think of those who will not be part of the AFGA executive:

Doug Butler, your passion for AFGA will always be remembered by myself and many others in the years to come. You have always fought hard for the betterment of the association; you will be very much missed! Ian Stewart, you have always been there for me when I was in a place of doubt. Your calmness approach provided me with guidance and will always be remembered. Matt Zazula, you provided so much for the entire executive in many ways, and I hope in years to come you will consider once again to be part of the AFGA Executive.

Wayne Lowry, words cannot describe how much I depended on you over the past several years! You have provided so much for AFGA, me, and many others. Jim Clarke, you will always be thought about on how hard you pushed to develop the turkey management plan. Carole Romaniuk, I will truly miss you, your wisdom led me forward to become AFGA President, and your watchful eye over everything that took place was always appreciated. Last, but not least, Robyn Butler, you were always the person I could depend on to step up and take control. I will miss your jovial ways whenever it was needed.

I thank each and every one of you for all you have done for the Alberta Fish and Game Association and myself. You will truly be missed! 🐦

Brian Dingreville

AFGA Past President

**AFGA Youth Activities
Coming This Summer!**

The AFGA is planning pandemic friendly youth activities. Watch club mailouts and AFGA social media for upcoming information.

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association



The Minister's Special Licence Program

Delinda Ryerson

Executive Director



Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) and the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) share in the dedication of conserving and enhancing fish and wildlife populations and the habitats upon which they depend, for future generations to enjoy as part of our natural heritage. The Minister of Environment and Parks (AEP), makes the Minister's Special Licence (MSL) program possible by donating two Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, two antlered elk and two antlered mule deer tags that are auctioned and raffled off to raise funds. The MSL program has been an excellent initiative to raise, and subsequently grant out funds to projects that benefit fish and wildlife.

While 2020 was a challenging year for a number of our grant recipients, it was great to see worthy projects going ahead, including the Pathfinder/Trailblazer South Camps and North Camps, who joined together to take their Junior Forest Warden event virtual this year! By working with Wild Life (jointhewildlife.ca) the Alberta Junior Forest Warden Association (AJFWA) sent boxes, with an outdoor theme, to junior forest wardens who participated from their homes. AJFWA Provincial Treasurer, Meredith Brotherston, let us know that "COVID has been so hard on everyone, we wanted to boost the spirits of our wardens" and after receiving their boxes they had "many happy campers com-

pleting their activities and growing their outdoor education and skills". Meredith went on to say that "without the funding from the MSL grant our Junior Forest Warden events would not be the successful events they have been, we are very grateful for the support of the AFGA for our AJFWA youth programs!".



Another example of a where funds raised by our MSL program are being granted can be found in the project 'Contact Rates for Modeling Transmission of Chronic Wasting Disease', a study by Dr. Evelyn Merrill, from the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Alberta and a member of the Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association for 15 years. Dr. Merrill is

the project lead and informed us that the MSL program was critical in the longevity of this study, particularly in capturing and placing proximity collars on mule deer, determining if captured mule deer were CWD positive, and monitoring mule deer post capture.

MSL program funds were also granted out to 'MULTISAR-West for Habitat Protection and Conservation of Multiple Species'. For those unfamiliar with this project, Mike Verhage, Project Lead and Senior Biologist with Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) outlines that the MULTISAR program is made up of several partnering organizations that include: ACA, AEP, Prairie Conservation Forum and Cows and Fish. They also work closely with several cattle groups including: Alberta Beef Producers, Canadian Cattleman's Association and Canadian Round Table for Sustainable Beef.

When discussing the importance of this project, Mike indicated that "in collaboration with cattle producers, the MULTISAR-West Project implements a variety of on-the-ground habitat enhancements on both private land and public lease land that benefit multiple fish and wildlife species in southwest Alberta, including two of the specific target species (i.e. elk and mule deer) of the MSL Program. These habitat restoration projects are mutually beneficial to the ranching operation and have a direct impact on improving and maintaining grassland and riparian >

health, providing important resources for a variety of fish and wildlife species including winter range for ungulates. Some examples of habitat enhancements include native grassland restoration, planting riparian shrubs and trees, temporary and/or permanently fenced off riparian areas and implementing off-site watering units. We also assist cattle producers to implement best management practices such as deferred rotational grazing systems that reduce overgrazing and allow for longer rest periods which, in turn, preserve native grasses and improve range health. These management systems maintain plant vigour of the most productive species that would otherwise decrease under grazing pressure

by cattle in areas that encompasses some of the most prominent wintering areas for elk and other ungulates.”

In 2020, Mike indicated that the MSL funds “were used to plant 2,040 riparian shrubs along a stretch of Cabin Creek (a tributary to the Oldman River). This habitat restoration project was implemented on private land in the southwest Porcupine Hills and will enhance habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife including moose, deer, elk, upland game birds, bull trout and west-slope cutthroat trout.

Have you ever wondered how density of species are calculated in our province? MSc. student at the University of Alberta, Jenny Foca is working on an MSL funded project ‘Evaluating den-

sity and spatiotemporal changes of five sympatric ungulates using trail cameras’. This study, under Dr. Mark Boyce, Professor of Ecology, and ACA Chair in Fisheries & Wildlife, Department of Biological Sciences, with the University of Alberta, and AFGA member of 21 years, is focused on ungulates (hoofed mammals) in Elk Island National Park (EINP) and Cooking Lake -Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area (BPRA). Jenny has been using trail cameras and aerial census data to study bison, elk, moose, mule deer, and white-tailed deer.

Jenny advised that “MSL funds have been essential for completing field work for this project, the grant has covered several costs associated with field work such as technician wages, truck rental and gas, field supplies, and camera trap repairs. With this financial support, we have now completed all field work for this project.”

Projects such as this are real examples of how important funding can be for research and conservation in Alberta, Jenny went on to say “We really appreciate AFGA’s support and commitment to conserving Alberta’s natural resources. Thank you so much for supporting this project!”

Another great example MSL funded program is ‘Bull elk recruitment, survival and harvest in a partially migratory elk herd in the Ya Ha Tinda.’ under Hans Martin, Evelyn Merrill and Mark Boyce.

When speaking to us about this project, Hans advised that “The MSL Grant Program helped to fund one of very few bull elk research studies looking at bull elk survival, antler growth, and habitat selection. The Ya Ha Tinda elk population has declined significantly in the past 30 years and during this time we observed drastic changes in migratory behavior of females with more and more females not migrating. Our previous work found that resident females have higher survival than migrants because migrants overlap with grizzly bears and wolves

MINISTER'S SPECIAL LICENCE RAFFLE

draw date: **July 28, 2021**

Species	Tickets Printed	Price per Ticket	Licence Number
Antlered Elk	3000	\$10 each	#570799
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	7,500	\$20 each	#570800
Antlered Mule Deer	2500	\$10 each	#570798

All proceeds directly benefit these three species, as well as other conservation projects!

To purchase tickets, visit www.AFGA.org or call 780-437-2342

alberta fish & game association

during migration. However, we knew nothing about bulls despite this population being one of Alberta's premier bull elk hunting destinations."

Hans confirmed that all findings from this MSL program funded project are shared with AEP Biologists to help inform future management decisions. When discussing the importance of funding, Hans went on to say, "I would like to thank the MSL Program and AFGA for funding research that is vital to maintaining and managing wildlife populations in Alberta. I would also like to thank all of the hunters that allowed us to collect data on bull elk they harvested during this project and for returning collars to us. Their contribution to this project was vital to its success and will help successfully manage this elk population which is valued by many Albertans."

The above-described projects are only



Ya Ha Tinda Elk Project



Fitting a GPS Collar

a few examples of the important conservation work that your MSL ticket purchases go towards. We would like to extend our sincerest thank you to all hunters and supporters of the MSL Program, without you, these crucial conservation projects would not be possible!

We will be featuring more MSL pro-

gram grant recipients on our social media and newsletter. We also encourage all of our members to get their raffle tickets and know that you are having a significant and lasting impact on conservation in Alberta, so get buying!

Visit <https://afgaraffle.ca/msl-affle> and get your tickets today! 🐦



Alberta Fish and Game Association

Annual Parade of Donations

We are pleased to continue with our annual tradition of the Parade of Donations and gratefully recognize the following Clubs, Zones and individuals who have donated a total of \$49,600 to assist with the Wildlife Trust Fund program and the continued legacy of the Alberta Fish and Game Association.

- Camrose Fish & Game
- Dickson Fish & Game
- Dunvegan Fish & Game
- Drumheller & District Fish and Game
- Edmonton Old Timers Fishing Club
- Edmonton Fish & Game
- Lacombe Fish and Game
- Lethbridge Fish & Game
- Lloydminster & District Fish & Game
- Zone 1 - Southern Alberta Fish & Game Society
- Okotoks & District Fish & Game
- Picture Butte Fish & Game
- Sarcee Fish & Game
- Sherwood Park Fish & Game
- Spruce Grove Fish & Game
- St. Paul Fish & Game
- Whitcourt Fish & Game

Thank you

- Jim & Deb Clarke
- Colin Jackson
- Dan, and sons Dexter and Scott Johnson
- Richard & Joyce Logan
- Ken Piecharka
- Faran Schaber
- Fred Watmough
- Matt Zazula



1st Vice-President's Report

By **Faran Schaber**

1st Vice-President

I am still in the process of getting my feet wet. It is overwhelming to be appointed to the position of 1st Vice President. As a past president of the Devon Fish and Game, Zone 4 Director, Narrow Lake Board member, AFGA AGM Parliamentarian for the past few years however I am

ready for the responsibilities that face our association and up to the challenge.

The Executive is currently going through the Provincial Committee list to make sure it is current.

There will be some AFGA Committees being dissolved and some new ones starting. If you have time to sit

on an AFGA Committee, please let the office know.

There is no new information from Teck Coal. Our Trails Committee meeting is usually the end of June.

I hope that everyone has remembered to put in their hunting and fishing draws.

'Til next time. 🐦

2nd Vice-President's Report

By **Dave Doonanco**

2nd Vice-president

Why do we do what we do?

From a very early age I had the outdoor bug, as a result of a father and mentor who had me engaging in the outdoors early on in life. Sometimes acting as the lab and slogging through the grass along a pond looking for a downed mallard, other times I was the captain of the aluminum

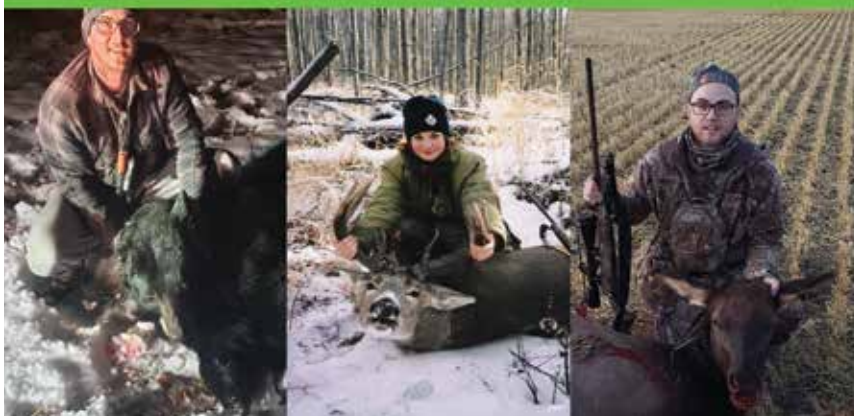
fishing vessel steering my way through the 'uncharted' waters of Wolf Lake.

The summer excursions into the regions north of Lac La Biche started when I was eight years old. Taking the train from 'La Biche', we rode into the wilderness and into an area that used to be my dad's trapline and his classroom. One stop in Conklin and then off to Mile Ninety-Nine, which was a train trestle crossing over the Christina River. Camp

was set up, a lean-to shelter was erected and the infamous "grub box" that held all the required staples for the next four days was placed nearby. Then began the lessons on how to move through the bush with the speed and agility of a wolf, while maneuvering a nine-foot fly rod through the willows along the river. Something my mentor was far more skilled at than myself, as I left a plethora of flies stranded in the branches along the way. On the bright side I became very skilled at re-tying flies back onto my leader. I had the opportunity to land many sixteen to nineteen inch grayling, something unheard of in the province today, especially with the zero limits. Back then the limit was five and that was an easy task.

Dad's extensive time spent in those regions, first as a trapper and later as a fisheries officer resulted in many opportunities to fish some relatively remote and dynamic fishing habitats. Growing up, the smell of the ice house at Dick and Doris York's Grist Haven Lodge was my Chanel No.5 Eau de Perfume. That smell meant you had a successful

My Mentorship Students



trip out on the lake and that the evening meal would be complemented with a delicious lake trout or pike, while you sat and listened to the stories of times gone by or were entertained by Mr. York's musical talents on his homemade banjo.

With dad's position of Regional Director of Fish and Wildlife many of the excursions included fellow workers and the other leaders of the organization. From a float plane journey into Winefred Lake with the Director of Fish and Wildlife at the time, Gordon Kerr, to fly fishing the Jackfish River with Director of Fisheries, Martin Paetz, evenings around the campfire or in the lodge were spent talking shop and discussing the problems of the day and their possible solutions. These listening sessions and seeing firsthand the importance of the fish and fauna as well as the habitat that they reside in helped shape my future.


The outdoor classroom lessons continued as I began to be included in the hunting expeditions, whether it was on the back roads along the Beaver River scanning for grouse or hiking the game trails neighboring the Sand River and chortling for moose. There was constant questioning as to where the camp was located and lessons on how to read directions without a compass...something that did come in handy later down the road when two outdoor education instructors failed to follow their own rules of planning a trip. Teaching me on knowing that animals were present even if you didn't see them was indoctrinated into the program through constant questions and lectures as we glided along the game trails. Learning not only the species that tracks belong to, but also within the Alces Alces species which tracks belong to which gender. How to tell male from female by looking at their droppings is a lesson that I still use today and have passed on to others.

All of us as users of the resource come to be a part of this outdoor community for a host of reasons and from many

diverse backgrounds. We bring with us a wealth of personal experiences, differences in opinion on similar topics, and a diversity of solutions to problems within the outdoor community that we share. What we all have in common is the desire to continue to use these same outdoor resources that our mentors have so graciously shared with us and taught us to enjoy and respect. It is for this reason that we need to continue to work together to ensure our mentorships give similar opportunities to future generations.

Over the years I have been fortunate to experience many outdoor encounters as so many of you have. I have also seen the hard work and dedication that members of the Alberta Fish and Game Association have put into this outdoor community in hopes that we may continue those same experiences. Attending government public meetings, hours spent sitting on committees, protecting

the rights of firearms owners and bow hunters, guiding policy papers on topics of concern, habitat conservation through the Wildlife Trust Fund and other habitats programs, fundraising activities and events to support not just projects of interest to us as outdoors people but for all members of the communities that we live in. These are just some of the tasks that the Alberta Fish and Game Association partakes in through the clubs, zones and the provincial association.

In order for this legacy to continue for the generations of the future we need all members of the outdoor community to join us and support us. Becoming a member of an AFGA club or a direct member of the organization lends that support. We need to put aside differences and look at the big picture. We are in this together and through unity we bring a strong voice to this cause that we all hold dear to us. 



Alberta Fish and Game Association Annual Parade of Donations

This year's Parade of Donations was especially beneficial for the Narrow Lake Conservation Centre which received a total of \$55,000 from these generous clubs. Funds will go a long way to improve the facilities and provide Narrow Lake Conservation Centre with a new armoury, a first-aid cabin, and a barrier-free cabin!

- Athabasca Fish & Game
- Barrhead Fish & Game
- Edmonton Fish & Game
- Stony Plain Fish & Game
- St. Paul Fish & Game

Thank you

*Photo credit: S. Wulff



Environment Chair Report

Victor Benz

Environment Chair

It is with a sense of sadness that I begin to write my last bimonthly report as AFGA's Environment Chair. I have accepted a new challenge as President of the AFGA. Your new Environment Chair is Glenn Heather of Medicine Hat, and he will effectively carry on this role.

This change almost seems appropriate since we have also just closed the first chapter of our fight to provide long-term protection for the North Raven River. On April 27, Clearwater County Council voted unanimously to reject our protection-focused land use bylaw amendment proposal at first reading. The original focus group will re-convene and consider next steps.

Let me review what has transpired.

In November 2019, Border Paving held an Open House, declaring their intention to apply for below-water-table gravel extraction on their Keim-McQuiston properties. These adjacent properties are immediately south of the Leavitt conservation property and a 1/2 mile west of the Stainbrook Springs conservation property, which were purchased to protect the 4 headwater springs of the North Raven River. We co-own both these properties with our partners, Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC) and the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA).

A small focus group met shortly after the open house to plan our protection strategy. Initially only an attempt to put our case before Clearwater County Council, it grew into a land use bylaw amendment proposal to protect the area immediately around the vulnerable headwater springs.

Almost immediately, we had to deal with a willful, consistent campaign of misinformation from the Clearwater County bureaucracy, directed both at us and at Clearwater County Council itself.



Specifics are listed later, but there are some clear learnings.

- Always do your own research to determine your rights before the County.
- Never assume county bureaucrats will help you find your way through the maze of regulations and bylaws.
- Never assume county bureaucrats know their own bylaws.
- Always challenge statements made by any county bureaucrat that does not match your understanding of the situation. Challenge often, and challenge publicly.
- Document every discussion with county bureaucrats yourself, whether formal or informal, recorded or not recorded.
- Be prepared to spend money to support your position.
- Remember that each time the issue arises, the battle must be fought again. Records from earlier battles (reports, submissions, letters of support, e-mails, etc.) must all be formally re-presented again.

- Finally, always pay attention to all By-law changes a municipality is proposing. Clearwater County is currently proposing a Direct Control District in the Municipal Development Plan that would apply to all aggregate resource extraction and processing permit applications. County Council would be the decision maker for all applications under the Direct Control District. This would eliminate appeals of decisions to grant development permits at the County level.

OUR SAGA

On January 21, 2020, just 6 days before we were expecting to put the presentation before Council that focused only on what the North Raven River meant to the County and the associated extensive rehabilitation history, we were told by the county's Chief Administrative Officer that our proposal had been reviewed and rejected because "Public Presentations at Council Meetings" option was not the proper forum for addressing our concerns, in addition to potentially unfairly biasing Council against below-water-table gravel extraction. We were obviously unaware that a public Presentation at a Council Meeting could not represent the position of the presenter.

We re-grouped, and in reviewing Clearwater County's Land Use Bylaw, determined that we could put a protection-focused land use bylaw amendment proposal before the County. On September 23, 2020 we submitted a comprehensive, 163-page land use bylaw amendment proposal to Clearwater County's Director of Planning & Development and Senior Planner. Appended to the proposal was almost 1,000 pages of supporting documentation, consisting of mainly peer-reviewed, primary source

literature used in developing our main, professionally authenticated, report.

Although the Planning & Development department was kept in the loop throughout the intervening time, they did raise many objections to our proposal, right up to the Council vote on April 27th. We always responded.

This is the wrong time to submit such a proposal, since the County is in the midst of a Municipal Development Plan review, and would not consider your proposal until that is completed. AFGA: The Bylaw requires the proposal to "be placed before the Council within 60 days of its receipt by the Development Officer".

Council will reject your proposal because it does not provide for the opportunity to hear the other side of the argument. AFGA: That requirement is not mentioned anywhere in the Bylaw.

The opportunity for submitting a land use bylaw amendment proposal is only intended for situations where the landowner owns all of the land under consideration. AFGA: Bylaw clause 12.1(1)(d) specifically considers a situation where "the applicant is not an owner of land affected by the application".

The proposal should be rejected on the basis that not all of the affected landowners have not signed off on the proposal. AFGA: This requirement does not appear anywhere in the Bylaw. Please point us to the correct clause or formally approved department procedure that requires this (it was never provided).

We cannot legally change the right of a landowner to develop his land as he sees fit without his permission. AFGA: In that case, when you do reject it, we expect to see a specific legal reference to this topic (none was ever provided).

The applicant's work does not contain any site-specific reports justifying the 1.8 km buffer zone, we will reject it (this claim was made by the Planning & Development Department at every Council meeting). AFGA: The justification is based on 6 peer-reviewed, primary source reports, three of which are specific to the aquifer supplying the

North Raven River. In fact, one such environmental study was commissioned by Clearwater County and delivered in 2004 (what type of site-specific report was expected by Planning & Development was never provided).

On October 5th, the Senior Planner stated our application was incomplete, because "a legal interest of the applicant on the subject properties must be submitted". AFGA: Bylaw clause 12.1(1)(d) does not contain the word "legal", and please explain how an applicant can have a legal interest in land they do not own (one was never provided).

You are required to pay a small application fee to submit this proposal (stated on September 23rd). AFGA: We are prepared to do so. The fee was finally determined to be \$4,000 on November 3rd after many weeks of discussion and paid fully on November 6th.


The applicant has not presented proof of consent from all property owners (this claim was made in multiple meetings). AFGA: Through the landowner consultation process, we believe we have over 70% landowner, renter, and leasee support as long as their concerns were addressed. That is all contained in our original proposal. When we broached the topic of some form of formal signoff, many of our supporters were uncomfortable with that option, raising concerns of affecting relationships with neighbours that do not share their perspective through to potential misuse of that data when it is made public. We chose to respect their concerns.

On November 25th, we were informed that Council would be reviewing our application on December 8th. When we announced our intention to attend the virtual meeting, the Senior Planner stated that "this is not a public hearing so it is up to Council to let you talk". AFGA: Land Use Bylaw article 12.1(4) says "upon receipt of an application for amendment, the Development Officer shall determine when the application will be placed before Council and shall issue not less than 10 days' notice to

the applicant advising that he may appear before the Council at that time and speak to the application".

Based on the information submitted by the applicant, planning staff is unable/was able to properly evaluate this application (both statements were made in multiple meetings). AFGA: Without the input and assistance of a registered, competent hydrogeologist, a proper peer review evaluation of our submission is not possible. The involvement of such a professional is the responsibility of the county. Dr. Jon Fennell and I are members of professions regulated in Alberta that require those who practice these professions be registered with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA). Conducting a peer review of another's work requires that the reviewer also be a registered professional. Our position was supported by a recommendation to the Planning & Development Department from the AEP Designated Director under EPEA and the Water Act.

The proposal, if approved, would sterilize a large area of the county for gravel extraction (this claim was repeatedly stated by the Planning & Development department). AFGA: First, the submission does not affect current or future above-water-table aggregate extraction within the Area of Concern. Secondly, our analysis of the Alberta Geological Survey assessment of Clearwater County's gravel resource indicates approximately 268 square miles of available gravel area (3.7% of the total area of the county). The Area of Concern, at 33 quarter-sections, is only 3% of the total area of available gravel in the County.

As written, the proposal will restrict farmers from using fertilizer on their property (this claim was made multiple times). AFGA: The proposed new land use district is identical to the current designation of "Agricultural A" and only adds restrictions on Discretionary Use Development below the water table. Farmers using fertilizer is not a discretionary use. 



Hunting Chair Report

By Brian Rudyk

Hunting Chair



As I write this, spring bear and snow goose seasons are well underway in Alberta. Both species' populations are very high so hopefully many of you are taking the time to get into the outdoors for some healthy, fresh air and the opportunity to put some high-quality food on the table. The added benefit is that you will be helping to manage these species through harvest of the surplus population. By the time you read this hopefully you will be enjoying the success of your hunts.

This is my first report as the Alberta Fish and Game Association Hunting Chair so I thought I would introduce myself.

I grew up in an avid hunting and fishing family. Wild game was a cherished part of our table fare and we processed all of our own big game, birds and fish. This included making our own sausage, pepperoni, jerky, smoked and canned products including canned moose meat that we referred to as "Moose Candy" because an opened jar rarely made it back to the refrigerator. My parents believed in sharing their hunting and angling knowledge and introduced many new participants to the outdoor pursuits we so valued. They were also supportive, active members of the Two Hills Fish and Game Association and later were always available to assist me with my involvement with the Narrow Lake Conservation Centre and other endeavours.

My wife and I, our children and grandchildren carry on these family traditions and beliefs. We are all Fish and Game members and I am currently the President of the Athabasca Fish and

Game Association. I have been an instructor for the Alberta Conservation Hunter Education Program for over 35 years, an instructor for the Canadian Firearms Safety Course since its inception, and was part of the development group, as well as one of the first to pilot the Wildlife Curriculum in Alberta High Schools. I am an official measurer for Alberta Fish and Game, Alberta Bowhunters Association, Boone and Crockett, Pope and Young, Safari Club International and Buckmasters. I am a proud promoter and supporter of living an outdoors lifestyle.


It has been a busy start to the Hunting Chair position. Along with organizational Executive meetings, I have attended two Chronic Wasting Disease on-line sessions. Thanks to Lloydminster Fish and Game for the invitation to the first which was an update on the CWD situation in Saskatchewan. The second session was hosted by the Alberta Prion Research Institute with information on CWD strains and transmission, CWD vaccine update and CWD wildlife management strategies. It is clear that Alberta is amongst the world leaders in CWD research thanks to some excellent work by a dedicated group working with limited resources. Although there has been promising headway made in areas like vaccine development, soil and plant treatment and live testing methodology, the percentage of CWD positive cases continues to rise and spread. There are some new research projects getting underway that hopefully will provide possible solutions down the road, but CWD concerns aren't going away any time soon. The results for Alberta Environment and Parks 2020 CWD testing are now available on-line

at <https://www.alberta.ca/chronic-wasting-disease-updates.aspx>.

Also, there is still much work to be done in the development of species management plans such as the mule deer plan. Ongoing concerns with caribou and boreal forest moose populations along with high predator numbers continue to require scrutiny, planning and action. The news of the positive increase in the grizzly bear population is sure to be a matter of discussion that will hopefully lead to the possibility of future opportunities.

COVID is still having its effect on us and our operations, preventing our traditional conference, awards banquet, fundraisers and face to face meetings and celebrations. Keeping these activities going as best as possible is important and by the time of publication of this article, our 2020 award winners will be recognized. Congratulations to the winners and to all those who entered on their successful seasons. Hopefully, everyone has gotten their hunting draws entered on time and I wish you good luck with your selections.

In closing, I believe in a team approach to tackle the challenges of the Hunting Chair position. In a province like Alberta, with so many eco-regions and such diverse wildlife populations, it is impossible for one person to be on top of all the conditions, issues and concerns with each region. I look forward to working with the Zone Hunting Chairs and hearing thoughts and feedback from all those wishing to contribute. I hope you all have a great summer, get some fishing in and hopefully, we see things returning to normal for the fall.

See you in the great outdoors! 



Fishing Chair Report

By Darryl Smith

Fishing Chair

Coal Mining or No Coal Mining?

With the government's change of face on coal mining and the recent suspension of coal exploration permits in Category 2 lands, where this file is headed is very much in the air. The very short consultation period from March 29 to April 19, 2021 is now being reviewed. According to the website there will be further consultations on issue related to a new 'Coal Mining Policy'. <https://www.alberta.ca/coal-policy-engagement.aspx>.

Preliminary analysis of the initial survey results showed the following:

The majority of Albertans feel the management of the province's coal resources affect them.

"Environmental impacts of coal development" and "if and where coal development takes place" were ranked by respondents as the most important issues when discussing Alberta's coal policy.

The majority of respondents feel there are areas of the province that are not appropriate for coal development, while almost one-third of respondents say that there are areas of the province where development could be appropriate.

Albertans would like to participate in additional online surveys and virtual meetings, as well as provide input directly to the committee.

Respondents want to learn more about the approval processes for exploration and development, as well as the coal categories, which dictate where and how coal leasing, exploration and development can occur.



The majority of respondents expressed concerns about coal exploration.

When one views a map of the province and notes that eighty percent of Albertans can either see or are less than a two-hour drive from mountains and foothills, it should not be surprising that this region of the province has taken on a "reverent mantra."

There are issues with all development, and coal mining is no exception. Industry, technology, and science have improved all our lives. Environmental consequences can be reduced from development, but there will always be trade-offs to balance complex social, economic, and environmental realities. As society becomes increasingly polarized in its viewpoints, I believe it will be difficult to find what was formerly considered "middle ground" on many issues.

Even in 1976 parts of the "Coal Policy" were contentious, but the aim then was to find middle ground and bal-

ance. From the Alberta Government website is the following regarding "Reinstatement of the 1976 Coal Policy" in the context of today:

- In response to concerns raised by Albertans about potential coal development on sensitive lands, we have reinstated the 1976 Coal Policy, including the 4 coal categories, as of February 8, 2021. Coal categories dictate where and how coal leasing, exploration and development can occur.
- We are also reinforcing restrictions by providing specific direction to the Alberta Energy Regulator.
- No mountain-top removal will be permitted and all of the restrictions under the 1976 coal categories are to apply, including all restrictions on surface mining in Category 2 lands.
- All future coal exploration approvals on Category 2 lands will be prohibited pending widespread consultations on a new coal policy.
- Coal lease sales on Category 2 lands remain paused. See Information Letter 2021-07 for more information.
- Coal exploration activity on Category 2 lands is paused, effective April 23, 2021.

All existing laws and regulations relating to coal development remain in place and unchanged. All coal development projects will continue to be considered through the existing rigorous Alberta Energy Regulator review process. This review is based on each project's merits, including its economic, social, and environmental impacts. ▶

While we can not predict the outcome of consultations and what a new “Coal Policy” might look like, I do believe that the 1976 policy had many things right. What every AFGA member needs to do is engage in the next round of consultations to ensure your viewpoint is registered.

As anglers should we be concerned about coal mining in the east slopes of Alberta? The answer is “yes”. At the same time, we must look at the issue from a variety of perspectives including science, impacts on the environment, economic implications, and societal pressures. There is never one side of the debate that is right. Each of us has the responsibility to develop an informed perspective based on research, not just emotion or what is trending in the media.

From an angling perspective the issue can be broken down to habitat alteration, both terrestrial and aquatic, loss of access to public lands, potential downstream waters quality issues that could impact aquatic life, and additional negative impacts on species at risk. Additionally, there is the loss of untouched vistas or wilderness that contribute to the angling experience.

Arguments can be made economically about the value of such development. While there is a rapid move to a green economy, this does not mean

we will no longer need metals such as steel, silica, or rare elements. Rare elements are largely produced as a by-product of mining. Whether steel, silica, or a rare element, all are critical and essential building blocks in the “green evolution”.


Much of the debate has focused on selenium which is a rare element essential in production of electronics and glass as well used as a supplement in animal feeds. On the other hand, its toxic effects when concentrations exceed standards can be highlighted just across the border in British Columbia in the Elk River downstream of coal mining. The negative impacts on fish populations such as Westslope Cutthroat Trout extend far downstream of the mines. These are legacy mines and the impact of selenium leeching into the watershed will continue for decades unless technology and science can find a way to reduce the contamination. New mines, whether for coal or other minerals will have to meet ever increasing environmental standards if they are to receive the necessary regulator permits that will allow them to operate.

Another argument that can be made is that the COVID19 pandemic has demonstrated the current supply chain of essential goods can be disrupted for geopolitical, geoeconomics,

or national interests. Whether Canada should be reliant for most of its essential products from other nations will be part of the conversation.

As an AFGA member who lives on the edge of the Peace River Parklands and Boreal Forest in northwest Alberta, it has always struck me how passionate Albertan’s are about the foothill and mountain regions of our province. At the same time, I’m not sure why similar concerns for the other geo-regions and ecosystems in the province do not resonate as loudly. What we need to recognize is that development, whether green or conventional, comes with trade-offs and risks but also benefits.

And as one who lives in a rural environment, I believe that urban residents need to look in their own backyard. We seem to have forgotten about urban sprawl which destroys vital habitat, impacts aquatic ecosystems, changes water yields including superheating events from rapid runoff due to paved parking lots and roads, and the loss forever of productive agricultural lands. More than ever as part of the land use planning process we must move to a situation where the “no net loss of habitat” principle for all development approval is a condition. This could be achieved by implementing “environmental offsets” as a regulatory requirement for all future development.

I know by the time you read this will be well into the open water fishing season. I do want to remind everyone that AHEIA still has available for free, the online Alberta Fishing Education Program which was introduced at the start of the pandemic and the Identification of Alberta’s Fish Quiz which only became available recently. I urge everyone to download and spend an evening taking the course and quiz. None of us are too old to learn and it is our responsibility as we pursue our angling passion to do it ethically and with the greatest respect for the resource and habitat it requires. <https://aheia.com/>. 



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Z O N E R E P O R T S

ZONE 1 REPORT

By Glenn Heather

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES have always been popular, however in our COVID world, these activities have reached a new high. The enjoyment of being out in nature among Alberta's renewable resources is a true pleasure. Yes, renewable. In today's modern world of use and discard, having a resource which can be sustained and enjoyed by all, has never been so valuable. This is why we have clubs, why we have people like you, promoting, enhancing, as well as having vision to have an outdoor experience handed down through the generations. COVID may have hurt the clubs in membership and in the ability to get together for meetings, however it has not hurt the spirit of the clubs.

Zone 1 clubs have tried to have numerous events this year, yet sadly COVID restrictions have shut them down so far. We have not given up though. The moment we can, we will get together and move forward.

There will be a significant number of lakes (reservoirs) in our zone stocked this year, see below:

***NEW* Corner (Lake) Reservoir** – This is a new stocking site south of Lethbridge in Raymond. It will get 5000 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about April 19 and 50 (>26cm) Rainbow Trout in late May. It will also get stocked in September (7000-10000, 20 cm Rainbow Trout) as this pond is expected to overwinter fish well.

Keenex Trout Pond – will get 3500 Rainbow Trout (20 cm) about April 15 and this year we are looking to stock 150 Brook Trout (28cm) by about May 21.

Nicholas Sheran Pond - 2000 Rainbow Trout (20 cm) on about April 15. Then, 2000 Brown Trout (19cm) will come in first week of June. In addition, there will be 290 Brook Trout (>35cm) and an additional 50 Rainbow Trout (>25cm) early in June as well.

Riverstone Pond –There will be 1200 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about April 15. Will look to put another 800 Rainbow Trout (20cm) in around May 24. Will also try to put 100 Rainbow Trout (25cm) in early June then round it out with another 1000 Rainbow Trout (20cm) in September.

Brooks Aqueduct Pond – will get 15000 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about April 14. It will also get a few larger rainbow Trout, about 75 (>26cm) in mid-May. Finally, another 5000 Rainbow Trout (20cm) will be stocked in September.

Michel Reservoir – This reservoir received a lot of fish last year for this small reservoir so we are going to bring number down a bit. It will get 5000 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about May 06. It will also get another 100 (>30cm) Brown Trout in Late May and 1500 more Brown Trout (25cm) in June.

Reeser Lake – this lake has been fishing well with both Rainbows and Tiger Trout being caught. This year it will get 17000 Rainbow Trout around April 29 when ice off is well underway or complete. It will not be stocked with Tiger Trout this year but will be next year.

Spruce Coulee Reservoir – this waterbody will get 9000 Brook Trout during the first week of June.

Spring Coulee Park Pond – 3000 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about April 15.

Pine Coulee Reservoir – this reservoir will get 7500 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about April 14. Given the size of this reservoir and its ability to over winter fish, we will also look to stock 25000 Rainbow Trout (8cm) in September.

Taber Trout Pond – this ACA stocked pond 2250 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about May 21. Another 2150 Rainbow Trout (20cm) in mid to late June.

Gold Springs Park – this ACA stocked pond will get 2363 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about May 21 and then another 2362 in mid to late June.

Magrath Fish Pond – this ACA stocked pond will get 500 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about May 21.

Sterling Fish Pond – this ACA stocked pond will get 1000 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about May 21 then another 1100 of the same in September.

Enchant Park Pond – this ACA stocked pond will get 1000 Rainbow Trout by about May 21, another 1475 of the same in June then another 700 of the same in September.

Bow City East Pond – this ACA stocked pond will get 2000 Rainbow Trout (20cm) by about May 21.

Echo Dale Park – this ACA stocked pond will get 1800 Rainbow Trout (20cm) by May 21.

McVinnie Pond – this ACA stocked pond will get 1155 Rainbow trout (20 cm) and 400 Tiger Trout (NEW). Anticipated stocking date is April 13. It will

also get 2655 Rainbow Trout in mid to late June and another 1000 in mid to late September.

McQuillan Reservoir – this ACA stocked pond will get 1900 Rainbow Trout (20cm) on about April 13. It will get another 2800 Rainbow Trout in mid to late June.

Granum Pond – this ACA stocked pond will get 600 Rainbow Trout (20cm) by about May 21 then another 300 of the same in September.

Foremost Reservoir – this ACA stocked pond will get 1500 Rainbow Trout (20cm) by about May 21.

Fishing activities and licensing has been the highest in years. The fall hunting season and draws will be another activity soon to be planned. If you are an outdoor enthusiast, the restrictions of COVID has in many ways been an inconvenience. You have been able to enjoy the outdoors.

A Zone 1 meeting was held May 29 in Lethbridge. The Zone Executive positions have been filled. In fact Zone 1 Executive may have the highest number of positions filled in years. At the time of this document, I am not aware of all the candidates in all the positions, however I will share the known Executive to date:

Programs Chair - Michelle Kennedy; Casino and Resolution Chair - Ian Gazeley; Angelina MacDonald – Secretary; Madeline Balla- Treasurer; Sheila Ferguson – Vice Director; Greg Bird – Zone 1 Director.

I will be stepping out of the Zone 1 Director role and have taken the role within the AFGA as Environment Chair. It is great to have Greg back in the Zone 1 Director role. Greg, Sheila and team have years of experience and knowledge to share within our Zone 1. I will not be leaving Zone 1 and plan to be part of Zone 1's future. I cherish the people I have met and the dedication within Zone 1. I continue to be amazed of the passion and vision Zone 1 clubs create.

It has been my pleasure being your Zone 1 Director. 🐦



ZONE 2 REPORT

By Joe Baranyay

FIRST AND FOREMOST, I would like to congratulate the new Board of Directors that were voted in at this year's virtual AGM. Thank you for letting your names stand and making the commitment to represent Alberta's foremost conservation-minded clubs. I would also like to thank all the outgoing board members who committed a lot of their time and energy to steering the mother ship through some stormy waters and made some good decisions to ensure that we are on the right path within our organization. Job well done!

By the time this report has gone to print, our Zone will have had its AGM and will have some new directors and some returning ones who have committed to representing our zone, clubs, and membership so their voices can be heard and represented by the AFGA at all the government levels it meets.

At this time, I would also like to thank and acknowledge Deb Clarke and her family for their support for the commitment she has made to Zone 2 over the past eight years and her leadership roles with AFGA. It is people like Deb who have the passion to put in countless hours of volunteer time to fight for the conservation of our heri-

tage and management of our renewable resources so that the generations to come will be able to enjoy what we have had to date. It is a difficult struggle but a fight well worthwhile. She is truly a steward of our environment. Thank you, Deb, for your dedication and for a job well done. Your shoes will be hard to fill, and I know you won't be far away to lend a hand to support our Zone if needed.

Deb did a great job on reporting in the May/June issue on all of the activities in the zone. The clubs are doing an excellent job in these pandemic times to bring virtual programs on stream to keep members informed on what is going on within our zones, AFGA, and government programs. The use of technology has opened up numerous opportunities for us to be able to communicate with each other and accomplish things without putting rubber on the road and spending countless hours driving down the highway. It is a great opportunity to involve our younger generation at the club level because they are more tech savvy and can help us navigate the cyber world faster and better than most of us old timers that are not as tech savvy and are electronically challenged. I know, I am one of them. Saying that I must admit that the challenge is welcomed and the rewards are satisfying as I learn on

my new MacBook Air. I hear from a lot of members that there is a lack of communication and transparency but it is amazing what you find when you turn your laptop on and start reading and acknowledging emails that are sent out to our members.

Our world is definitely changing and the old days of meeting at the coffee shop or picking up the phone are changing to virtual meetings, emails, and texting. As I have always said you are either part of the solution or you are the problem. Don't be afraid to push the buttons. COVID has taken a toll on us old timers in more ways than one!

I would like to thank Hussar and Okotoks clubs for sending in their reports and it is great to see that they are membership-focused and are planning activities with COVID protocols in place. Drumheller has also put out a membership drive challenge to all of the clubs in Zone 2.

Sarcee Fish & Game had a virtual presentation on game management in the Bow Crow district presented by Brett Boukall and an online venison stroganoff cooking class. Calgary Fish & Game had a virtual presentation by T.J. Schwanky on antelope fencing projects and new AFGA President, Victor Benz did an update on the North Raven River project. Thank you to Rod Dyck on his continued work and informative communication on CWD in the province. This seems to be a great concern of many conservationists and hunters. It is great to see clubs taking a leadership role and inviting other smaller clubs in Zone 2 to attend and participate. As I see it, there is still lots to look forward to in Zone 2 and I am sure the other clubs will jump on board and become part of the solution also.

As we used to say in the old days, keep your line tight and your powder dry. Now it seems that it is, keep your eyes on the fish finder and where is my range finder? Enjoy the great outdoors this summer - be active and be technical. 🐦



ZONE 3 REPORT

By Arnold Winkler

HERE WE ARE into the month of May and the COVID-19 (now 20) pandemic is still present with different variants and increased restrictions due to record levels of cases limiting our daily activities that were the norm of years past. With more free time available, many have taken up fishing stocked ponds, hiking various wilderness areas, and even gardening.

The annual hunting draw applications will be out shortly and I'm sure it will have increased volumes over the numbers of last year.

The Alberta Fish and Game Association is again selling the Minister's Special Licence Raffle tickets for the Antlered Elk, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep and Antlered Mule Deer. Tickets can be purchased at www.afga.org or call 780-437-2342.

A while back I was having a lengthy conversation with a couple who were planning on relocating to central Alberta and wanted to know where there were Fish and Game Clubs, as

they were active outdoor enthusiasts. Here is the list of the 18 Clubs in Zone 3, Central Alberta Fish and Game:

Alberta Falconry Association, Battle River, Camrose, Castor, Cenalta Youth Conservation Academy, Dickson, Innisfail, Lacombe, Leduc, Millet, Ponoka, Provost, Red Deer, Rimbey, Rocky Mountain House, Sundre, Thorsby, and Wimborne

The Lacombe and Camrose clubs are in the process of constructing ponds and providing much safer accessibility for the increased user demands. Our Innisfail club has a Kids can Catch event planned for later in the summer. Our Leduc club has been busy building over 150 bluebird nesting boxes and numerous bat and duck boxes which have been placed on various local Habitat lands. As is shown in the "Pre-COVID" picture, we had a school class, as part of their Outdoor Education program, involved in building 100 boxes; each were given a box for their much-appreciated participation. More are planned as the last one has been placed by a junior club member.

Get the youth involved, you won't be disappointed! Stay safe while enjoying your great Alberta outdoors! 🐦



Antelope Creek Ranch, Habitat Development Area

By Neal Wilson

ACR Ranch Manager



For those readers that have not heard of the Antelope Creek Habitat Development Area (ACHDA) or the shorter working name Antelope Creek Ranch (ACR) before now, this article will be a bit of background on who and where we are, what we are doing out there, and finally a few of the activities that have occurred or will occur on the ranch this year.

We are located 20km west of Brooks Alberta. ACR was originally set up in 1986 with the goal of showing how agriculture, wildlife and industry could co-exist on the same landscape. The ranch consists of approximately 5500 acres of grassland consisting of native prairie, crested wheat grass fields and irrigated pasture, and is managed cooperatively in partnership with the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA), Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), Alberta Environment and Parks, and Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC). The day to day operation of the ranch is handled by Neal Wilson and Shannon Burnard with the help of their sons Boyd and Reynd.

Having a large intact tract of native prairie is a very good place for research to occur and the ACR has provided numerous opportunities for university students to conduct their research for master and Ph.D. degrees ranging from dragonflies to waterfowl and prairie songbirds, to many grassland

studies on range health. The latest research that we have been doing on the ranch has been ground truthing the provincial Grassland Vegetation Inventory and completing range health assessments on all the range sites on the ranch. We are in the process this spring of completing a wildlife survey of the ranch which can then be correlated to the range health and maybe we can see if there are improvements that we can make to the range management to benefit wildlife and make the sure the ranch is ecologically sustainable.

I would like to give everyone an insight to what life is like on Antelope Creek Ranch as I write these articles for the magazine. Writing this in May, things are busy around here with spring activities in full swing. We just finishing lambing out our few ewes and are waiting for our Dexter cows to start calving towards the latter half of the month. Dexter cows are originally from Ireland and are a smaller, versatile breed of cow used for milk and meat which finishes up at about half the size of regular commercial cattle breeds when full grown. We have used them in the past with some radio collar research to track where they were grazing on the ranch through the season to see what areas were favoured. I had planned on building a new chicken coop this spring but with the price of lumber rising so high I decided to hold off, so we are cleaning it out and patch-

ing it, getting ready for the baby chicks to arrive at the end of the month. The ranch is a habitat development area, so we are interested in keeping the vegetation in good health and one of the tools that we use to do this is cattle. Canadian grasslands developed under grazing and require large herbivores to stay healthy. Each spring we bring in cattle from neighbouring farms and ranches around the middle of May and graze them on the ranch until the latter half of October. Right now, we are busy checking and repairing the fence. On the ranch it is easy to social distance and keep the boys busy. Next week we will be getting ready to irrigate and prepare for the lease cows' arrival.

It is hard to know for sure what will happen out here this fall, it will depend on the restrictions that are in place for COVID. The plan is for the Grassland Restoration Forum to have their regular Range Health Training day out here in September. September will also bring on waterfowl season followed by upland bird and pheasant season. We are a release site for the pheasant program and are open for hunting during the hunting seasons. The ranch is always here for birdwatching and has a large variety of birds to see. This spring we had a pair of white Canada geese; they have a rare condition called "bird leucism" where some of their plumage is white! Unfortunately, it was difficult to get a good picture. 