



NEWS FROM ALBERTA

President's Report

Brian Dingreville

President

It's with some sadness that I prepare this report for the next issue of Outdoor Canada West! Usually, I would be writing about all the fun and exciting events that took place at our annual conference which as we all know, had to be cancelled, as did many other club activities throughout the province. Each year, Andrea and I attend numerous club functions throughout the south! Seeing many of you has always been something we both very much enjoy! Hopefully next year we will be back to normal!

Over the past several weeks I, along with most of the Executive, have been very much involved with Zoom virtual meetings with the committees which were developed when I was involved with the



AFGA Financial Planning Committee (FPC). Those who have been chairing each of those committees have done exceptional work! I would like to

thank Deb, Wayne, Darryl, Victor and Glen for all you have done over the past several weeks! As well, all of those who have been involved with those committees. Thank you for your input!

Moving forward, it's been exciting to see that those clubs, who have gone to an online membership to renew or join, have done very well with their memberships! As I write this, the Lethbridge Fish and Game club just reached 1,700 members! It has been a difficult year for many clubs without the ability to hold monthly meetings, banquets, sports and gun shows, or other avenues where they are able to sign or attract new memberships! Again hopefully things will improve

going forward!

Thank you to everyone for your support this past year, please support your local club in any way you can. 🐦

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



Not just another birdhouse!

Delinda Ryerson

Executive Director



Tree Swallows prefer some space from their neighbors. As you sight down the fenceline in this photo, you can see the to-be-installed bird houses sitting atop their fenceposts with the required ~25m spacing.

Sherwood Park Fish and Game recently shared an update to their original, fall 2020 newsletter about the work they've done with nest boxes for their Ketchamoot Creek, Tree Swallow population. Roland Coppens, Communications Director of Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association, took it upon himself to begin the project by not only researching the natural history of the Tree Swallows but also the most appropriate nest box for them. The club's plan is to further turn this project into an orientation exercise, collect biological data, and finish off with a co-authored, scientific paper with the Beaverhill Bird Observatory. This is citizen science at its best; all while engaging and involving local youth!

We look forward to this summer's webcam streaming of one special nest box, to observe a Tree Swallow's brood, as they hatch and grow.

This project is a great example of what our AFGA clubs can accomplish with a community project, and we hope it inspires you to develop your own!

A BIG DEAL ABOUT BIRDHOUSES

By Roland Coppens

A conservation activity the Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association has maintained over the years is providing birdhouses for tree swallows to nest in and raise their young. We have many of these at our facility, some well on in age. This story is about our recent project to update and GPS map this inventory, while engaging youth in a grassroots citizen science project.

TREE SWALLOWS

Tree swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) are a migratory member of the family Hirundinidae, 12 to 14 cm in length and 17 to 25 g in weight. ▶





Ontario. This study demonstrated that nestlings raised in Golondrinas houses were healthier, which was attributed to the cooler interiors and venting inherent to the design.

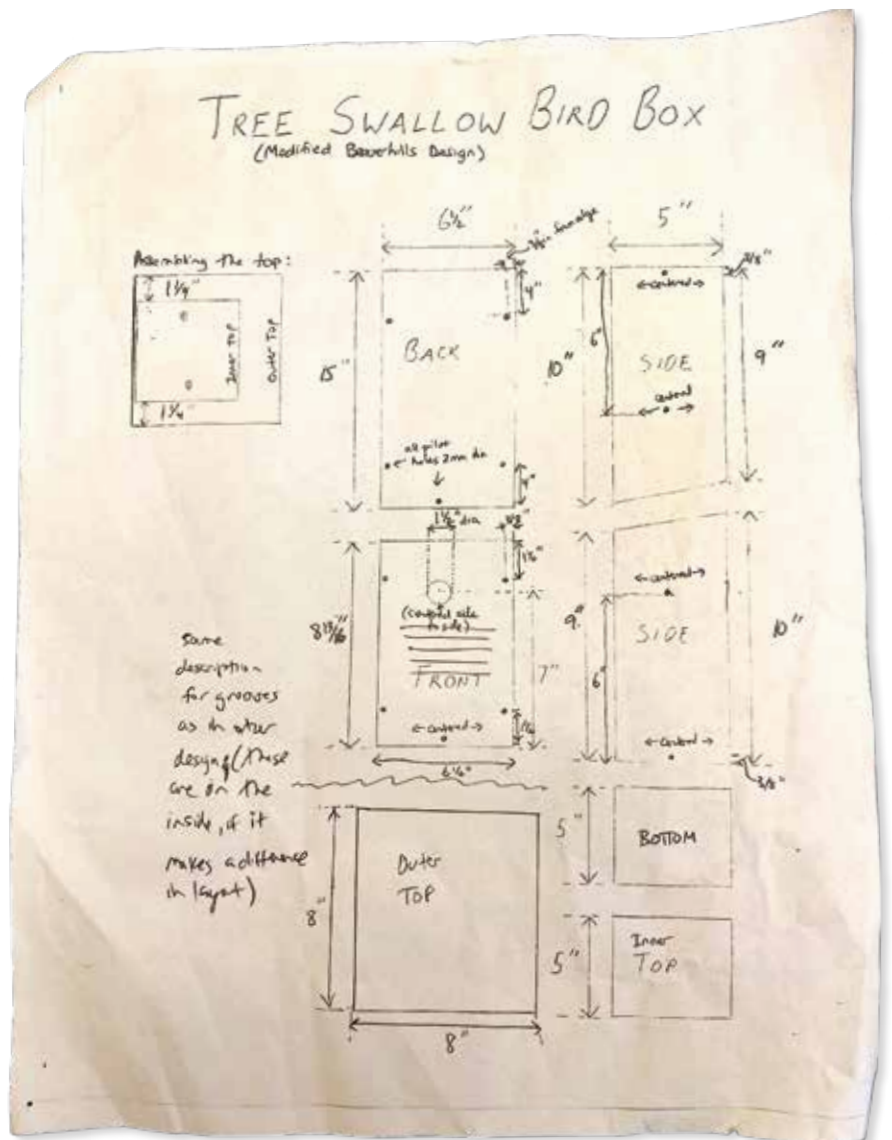
Following that, I contacted the Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) and discussed the project with their ornithologists. They offered plans for their group's preferred design, as their internal data suggested its superiority.

The BBO ornithologists proposed that the SPFGA and the BBO conduct a project to compare the two designs head-to-head to determine whether one design could be shown to be superior for tree swallows nesting in the Beaverhills Biosphere.

As the intent was for the involvement of youth, I made several adjustments to each house's design to optimize for small hands, simple tools, and limited experience.

Because the plan was to construct a lot of houses, I sought the assistance of a local cabinet-making shop with a computer numerical control (CNC) mill to cut out the 1,135 required components.

With the involvement of our Program Director and Youth Director, a basic plan emerged. Uniquely numbered kits of each design were distributed to youth groups to be built. Com-




pleted birdhouses were installed and their GPS coordinates recorded. This phase of the project was completed in the fall of 2020 with the involvement of the 203 Sherwood Park Scout Group and the Tofield Junior Forest Wardens. A total of 160 birdhouses, 80 of each design, were completed and installed. (This is a lot of birdhouses!)

NEXT STEPS

Beginning mid-summer 2021, as part of an orienteering exercise, youth will locate the birdhouse they built using its GPS coordinates and, with

adult assistance, collect occupancy and nestling count data. These data will be pooled with the BBO's to determine whether there is a superior design, supporting the co-authoring of a paper for publication in a wildlife biology journal. These youth will be listed as co-investigators in what truly is a grassroots citizen science project.

One birdhouse has been reserved for mounting near a building on our facility. A wireless webcam will be installed, with stills and video going out onto our web page so we can all watch the hatching and growth of a tree swallow brood over the summer! 



1st Vice-President's Report

Ian Stuart

1st Vice-President



always have a bit of difficulty keeping these reports relevant, as they are written two months prior to publication and a lot can change in the interim. This is particularly so as your AFGA moves forward with necessary improvements to increase AFGA's relevance and garner the support of the next generations of hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts in the province, thus maintaining the AFGA profile as their broad-based voice. The Finance Audit Risk Management Committee, Governance Committee, Membership Committee, Focus Priorities Programs Committee, and Annual General Meeting Consultation Committee, have all started providing recommendations to your

elected Executive. The latter, if accepted and enacted, will have resulted in a virtual AGM by the time this is in your hands, and there will be some changes to the makeup of your elected Executive. This is an opportunity for needed revitalization and some corrections to discrepancies, ambiguous interpretation and other shortcomings that have crept into our governance documentation and practices over the years. No doubt well intended, but lack of focus on the development of fact-based Policies and Positions, with input from our membership in support of the Objects of our Association, has also crept in.

Participation on the five committees, from within our member clubs, has revealed a depth of knowledge, commit-

ment, and new ideas that has heretofore been largely untapped, which is very encouraging. We need to keep that involvement going as we move into the future, and if I am involved with the Executive after the election, that will certainly be one of my objectives. There is endless need and opportunity for members to become more involved in committee work in all of the diverse areas AFGA encompasses, from Fisheries and Wildlife Management plan updates, input into regulations, fundraising, oversight of the organization, habitat, and everything in between. Your Executive simply cannot take on every opportunity and issue, without members willing to step up and share the load.

In my last report I mentioned the value of a having a significantly large and respected organization such as AFGA, consistently advocating for fish and wildlife and the habitat they depend on, affirmed by a significant amount of improved opportunity in both fisheries and wildlife regulations last year, and investments in fish hatcheries. The very recently released Environment and Parks Business Plan shows increased spending for fish and wildlife over last year in both expense and capital. Given the financial situation the government is faced with, I think we have to count that as a "win" for fish and wildlife, and I believe AFGA can take at least some of the credit for the priority that has been placed on fish and wildlife.

Unfortunately, the pandemic is still with us, and it appears that it will be for some time to come. But the AFGA and clubs are adapting and doing what we can with the restrictions that are in place. The attached image is of some duck nest tunnels that were recently completed following outdoor work guidelines. Following social distancing restrictions while installing them will be easy and will provide an opportunity to get out and participate in a habitat improvement project that we know has a positive impact! 🐾



2nd Vice-President's Report

Matt Zazula

2nd Vice-president

This is probably my favourite time of year. Winter is behind us, the colours of spring are starting to fill out, camping season, and open water fishing seasons are right around the corner.

Your AFGA Executive has been incredibly busy these past months. Supported by the people participating in the committees, a lot of good work is being done. We still struggled with the restrictions brought on by the global pandemic, but we worked through it. Most pressing was the need for an annual general meeting. The Annual General Meeting Consultation Committee, headed up by Zone 2 Chair Deb Clarke, worked hard to make the 2021 AGM possible. It wasn't the type of annual conference we've been used to, but it met the requirements of the Societies Act and our Bylaws.

Plans are in the works for the information sessions we usually see at conference to be delivered in another way. The other committees are also well underway. We have some very important work to do in terms of looking at the focus and priorities of the AFGA in a changing environment. Are our programs meeting the needs of our current and future members? Our policies need to be updated to make them current and to address any changes in program direction. The Governance Committee is delving deeply into all of that. Maintain-



ing and growing our membership is key to our future successes, with the Membership Committee looking at all aspects. And, of course the Financial and Risk Management Committee is central in ensuring our long-term viability. I want to thank the many people who have stepped forward to help out. I also want to encourage our members to keep providing their input if they have ideas or suggestions.

It's also important to recognize that many of the people involved in the committee work also have their own responsibilities they are tending to. Work continues behind the scenes by our Hunting, Fishing and Environment Chairs. As you'll see in their re-

spective reports, they are staying very active representing the interests of our members. The dedication of these people is outstanding, and they should be commended for it.

A lot has been said about what the future priorities of the AFGA should be. We do have some interesting challenges to consider. Our strength is in our membership. With a broad membership base, comes the challenge of trying to adequately represent everyone. We have hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, off-roaders, conservationists... some of those interests overlap, while others don't. We have to be sure to adequately represent everyone, while at the same time remaining non-political and staying within the legal constraints of things like our charitable status. I

know that sometimes we might feel our own specific interests aren't being represented strongly enough. I can tell you that from my perspective we do make every effort to represent all of us. Our clubs were built on the hard work of fish and gamers decades ago who had a vision for the future. They had shared interests. They liked to swap stories. They developed strong relationships with governments. They built and supported local firearm and archery ranges. They held wild game dinners. They met regularly to discuss and pursue ideas that benefited everyone. They worked hard to set aside valuable habitat land that could be enjoyed by future generations ▶

in the same manner they themselves enjoyed it. Oh, there were discussions about new archery innovations versus traditional bows, and discussions about rifles built on new platforms versus the older versions. Those discussions focused on finding middle ground and consensus. Today's fish and game clubs are built on and follow many of the same programs as our founders. And, of course we're still having discussions about crossbows versus vertical bows and discussions about brown rifles versus black rifles. In reality, things haven't changed that much. My point here is that as we look to our current and future priorities, please don't forget our history and how we got here. We must respect the dreams and goals of our founders


while at the same time respecting the dreams and goals of our newest and future members.

On a personal note, I really love just how big our AFGA family is. My dad passed away this past February. He and mom lived at the Beaverhill Lodge in Lamont. It's a relatively small facility, but the AFGA family is a big part. I used to enjoy going to visit my parents there and getting a wave and cheery "Hello" from long time member Ed Drolet. He always has a smile and a story. Another friendly face is that of Dominique Pichota. Very active in the Lamont club, I've seen her and her husband Vincent many times over the years at conference. Domi works at the Lodge, and my parents really spoke highly of the great relationship they

have with her. It goes to show that you never know how the AFGA will come into your life in so many unexpected positive ways.

At the time of writing this, our AGM plans have been laid out and it should have taken place. I want to wish the newly elected AFGA Executive all the best. There is a lot of work being done and a lot more to do. I know you'll play a huge part in the continued success of our AFGA. Thank you for stepping forward.

I love seeing young people enjoying the outdoors and all it has to offer. I've attached a picture of my niece and a nice Lac La Biche pike taken in February.

Finally, as always, remember to give back to the resource whenever you can. 



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Environment Chair Report

Victor Benz

Environment Chair

In past issues, you have seen my reports on our progress with the North Raven River saga. Recently, I have received the letter below from a concerned landowner trying to deal with many of the same issues. It clearly shows that citizen access to impact municipal and provincial government rulings on environmental matters, is a province-wide problem that requires all of us to be actively involved in getting the result we need and want.

In recent weeks there has been a lot of discussion in the news and by government in respect to coal mining in the Alberta Mountains. This discussion has included the public outcry about allowing coal mining in environmentally sensitive areas and the potential impacts to our precious water sources. There is another story that has been going on for the past 20+ years that I believe is being missed, warrants further investigation and that the public needs to know about.

The public puts a great deal of trust in our governments. We trust that laws and legislation will be put in place that protects us, our children and the lands we call home. We trust that the procedures and systems for decision making will be conducted in a manner that is transparent, equitable and free of bias. We trust that there will be accountability. We are at a time in history when the public is calling on our governments for inclusion and to act in ways that do not marginalize our citizens. We now recognize that industry and economics have to be balanced with the needs of our environment to ensure the longevity of our resources and protect our diminishing

natural environments for us now and in the future.

Our part in this story is very recent and only a small piece but I am hoping it can be a catalyst for public awareness and the development of some true meaningful changes. This story is about gravel. Alberta is the 2nd top producer of gravel in Canada. Many of Alberta's gravel pits are on private lands. I will be the first to say we need gravel but it needs to be resourced in a responsible manner that is not a free-for-all which results in the stripping of existing environmentally protected lands, the destruction of wetlands and aquatic ecosystems, the contaminating and loss of public utilized water sources and does not completely disregard the rights of the existing adjacent impacted landowners.

No one wants a gravel pit out their front door but of greater concern has been the discoveries we have made along the way as we have tried to navigate this process; including our county not following their own municipal development plan, the lack of procedural fairness, the policies previously put in place that strip the common citizens ability to appeal, the misinformation/lack of information put before the decision makers; the appearance of bias, the marginalization and disenfranchising of rural residents, ability of gravel companies to repeatedly apply if initially denied and continued expense and stress to impacted adjacent landowners, the lack of meaningful proper assessments being obtained before allowing gravel operations to proceed, the discovery that the existing operations in our area and other areas have not abided by their municipal permits

or Alberta Environment & Parks (AEP) approvals, the lack of progressive reclamation and the complete apparent lack of monitoring and consequence for compliance contraventions.

We have learned our story is not a new one. It appears that the most severe issues are in the rural areas where residents lack the numbers and fiscal resources to demand full, qualified, unbiased assessment of the social, economic and environmental impacts in addition to responsible planning before approval of mining applications.

This story is not a new one and what is concerning is the fact that government agencies, community groups and private citizens have identified and brought forward concerns and issues and it appears that today these same issues are still not being properly addressed and the mistakes and failures of the past are continually getting repeated.

In 2011, the Surface Water Aggregate Policy was put in place without public input or legislative review resulting in weakened environmental protections and represents our government's failure to represent public interest.

In 2016, the Alberta Wilderness Association spoke to the fact that Alberta's gravel mining policy erodes environmental protection by allowing gravel mining to occur in the 1:100-year floodplain of rivers and that gravel mining is putting our water at risk. Gravel approvals in the floodplains are still being approved.

Stakeholders provided feedback in 2017. We understand that this process was heavily influenced by industry representatives and it calls into question if true meaningful public consultation >

was actually obtained and considered.

In September 2019, in the *Koebisch v Rocky View (County) Alberta Court of Queen's Bench* Decision it spoke to how there is a greater responsibility on Municipal Governments and how the cumulative aspects should be properly addressed at the re-designation stage and not put over to administrators during the development stage. This is still occurring. In our own recent matter, the municipal representatives were aware of the *Koebisch v Rocky View (County)* decision but still failed to properly address and bring forward the cumulative impacts' information at the redesignation stage and completely disregarded this court ruling.

In November 2019, The Report to the Auditor General of Alberta in reference to the Management of Sand and Gravel Pits spoke to how the AEP is responsible for regulating the sand and gravel industry to ensure mining and reclamation comply with laws and requirements. It spoke to how 10 years after the original audit, AEP's processes for reclamation monitoring and enforcement are still inadequate and how AEP does not do enough to protect Albertans from unnecessary environmental and safety risks such as destroyed ecosystems and habitats, water pollution and riverbank erosion. AEP is aware that since the current large gravel operator took over operations in our area, they have expanded their pit excavations without the proper prior approvals and have completed zero reclamation. Now AEP is looking to allow them to further expand with no reclamation and no prior assessment of the water table which the operator has stated they will not excavate into.

I have learned that many others have been impacted and are willing to come forward and speak. Some of them have spoken out before on their own matters and we are now trying to collectively come together as this story is bigger than us all.

In summary, the story begins with the following identified issues:


- Lack of responsible regulation or oversight from any level of government;
- Failure of the Provincial Government to provide guidance and accountability which is supposed to be provided by Alberta Municipal Affairs and the Municipal Government Act;
- Provincial and Municipal Governments who themselves are in the businesses of gravel production failing to lead by example and they themselves examples of irresponsible mining and lack of reclamation;
- Local Municipal decision makers unqualified to exercise the authority they are given;
- Continuing and accelerating degradation and destruction of aquatic ecosystems across Alberta;
- Misconduct by government agencies;
- Failure to properly notify public;
- Providing misinformation to public;
- Failure to follow their own municipal development planning (Statutory plans);
- Failure to heed and follow direction given by the Court of Queen's bench on previous land use decisions;
- Repeating actions or failing to act when issues identified to them;
- Failure of government representatives to have knowledge of their own policies and procedures and then to making decisions when not fully informed;
- Failure to provide factual reporting on gravel activities;
- Failure of Provincial Government to oversee actions/policies being put into place by Municipal Governments which are impacting citizens' rights and putting our environment in jeopardy;
- Use of taxpayer's money to assist the gravel companies in making applications at both the municipal and provincial levels while no resources are used to assist those that are impacted by these gravel applications

and developments.

- Introduction of policies and procedures which:
- Allow gravel development on lands designated as environmental significant;
- Allow gravel developments that contaminate and destroy water sources;
- Have taken away the rights of impacted adjacent land owners;
- Processes have not been fair, lacked transparency and appeared biased;
- No right to appeal land use decision;
- Loss of our rights to the use and enjoyment of our own properties;
- Placed fiscal expenses onto the impacted public;
- When gravel companies appeal decisions not in their favor it has fallen on the impacted land owners to pay lawyers to fight the appeal;
- Obtaining proper scientific assessments;
- No compensation to citizens for property value losses and impacts to daily lives/health.

Decisions and processes that have:

- Been Inequitable;
- Marginalized rural residents;
- Lacked transparency;
- Appeared biased;
- Lacked procedural fairness;
- Failure of government to ensure compliance with permits and approvals issued;
- Failure of government to oversee and enforce contraventions;
- Failure of government to ensure progressive reclamation before allowing expansion.

There seems to be a lot of money and power behind the gravel industry, little support or options available to those impacted and little done to protect the interests of the existing lands and landowners. Gravel just seems to be allowed to continue to expand without proper oversight, accountability, or consequence. 



Fishing Chair Report

Darryl Smith

Fishing Chair

Barbed or Barbless?

The 2021 Alberta Sportfishing Regulations online consultations this January, put on by Alberta Environment and Parks, brought the debate around barbed versus barbless hooks to the surface again. This wrangling continued after the consultations in emails, blogs, forums, and social media. There are two camps out there related to this issue. Those opposed and those who support barbless only hook regulations. In the science community there are also arguments around the merits of such gear restrictions.

The theme this year in the Alberta Sportfishing Regulations is the “keep them wet” principle. Essentially the longer a fish is out of water, the greater the chance it will die following release. This is not rocket science and I would expect the angling community recognizes this reality.

I would urge everyone to go to <https://www.keepfishwet.org/> as they provide science-based background around the issue of indirect mortality associated with catch and release angling. The reality is that as anglers, we all practice catch and release whether through personal choice or due to sportfishing regulations. KEEP FISH WET has developed the following three principles:

PRINCIPLE 1: MINIMIZE AIR EXPOSURE

PRINCIPLE 2: ELIMINATE CONTACT WITH DRY SURFACES

PRINCIPLE 3: REDUCE HANDLING TIME

The website is filled with information including scientific research, best practices, and tips. One of the papers is by Dr. Robert Arlinghaus which is a meta-analysis that looks at hooks and specifically hooking mortality. The following are the findings and takeaways from the author:

“Across all studies and species:

- Mean hooking mortality was 15.9%, with a range of 0 to 88.5%.
- Half of the studies reported hooking mortality of less than 10%. Only a few studies reported mortality levels over 50%.
- Factors that are important for hooking mortality:

Water temperature (higher water temperatures lead to higher mortality rates).

Bait type (average mortality for artificial baits was 11.4%, average mortality for natural bait was 25%)

Existence of a barb (average mortality for barbless hook was 8.2%, average mortality for barbed hooks was 14.6%).

FOR SALMONIDS:

- Results for trout and salmon species was similar to the overall results.
- Factors that were important for hooking mortality:

Water temperature (higher water temperatures lead to higher mortality rates).

Bait type (average mortality for artificial baits was 11.6%, average mortality for natural bait was 27%)

Existence of a barb (average mortal-

ity for barbless hook was 8.6%, average mortality for barbed hooks was 15.1%).

TAKEAWAYS:

- The good news is that most of the reported hooking mortality rates were very low (less than 10%).
- High mortality was most often due to deep hooking or when fish were caught at high water temps.
- There are several reasons why barbed hooks could lead to higher mortality rates than barbless hooks: barbed hooks have been known to cause more injury and bleeding, they also take longer to remove which often increases handling time and air exposure (both things known to lead to worse outcomes for fish), and either or both of these could increase stress levels in fish which also leads to poorer outcomes for fish after release.
- Despite the fact that in this study hook type (single vs. treble hooks) did not turn out to be significant, the authors think that hook type is a species specific issue and likely dependent on hook size as well as the mouth morphology of the fish, and the type of fishing. All these factors could not be teased out in the present study, but are likely important on a species by species basis.”

So why is this important from an Alberta angling perspective? Meta-analysis removes the clutter as they do not cherry pick research. Opposition to barbless hook only regu- ▶

lations is probably based on past traditions and conflicting science. Personally, I remember the outcry when “nontoxic shot” was mandated across Canada in 1999 for the hunting of migratory waterfowl. In the beginning there were issues with the quality of the ammunitions as well as adjustments that hunters needed to make to use it effectively. That however is past us now. The reason for the change to nontoxic shot were both environmental and ethical.

Fast forward to today and the issue of regulated gear restrictions when angling such as barbless hooks produces similar concerns. The question that needs to be asked, do gear restrictions reduce opportunity? For me, a related question is since most fish will have to be released anyway, why is it necessary that we have to actually land them? Surveys consistently show that the number one reason for sportfishing is about the experience and spending more time outdoors.

There have been many changes to how fisheries are managed today than in the past. While habitat remains the most critical element, allocation of the fisheries resource remains paramount. For sportfishing to occur, a percentage of the catch needs to be allocated for this use. Allocation used to be based on maximum sustainable yield calculation. This has shifted to a determination based on optimum sustainable yield. Without getting into a debate around the biology and politics related to this shift, lets just recognize that optimum sustained yield calculations will generally be lower, come with less risk, both to target species and the overall ecosystem dynamics.

What does that mean? In the simplest terms, only a limited number of fish in each waterbody thus can be allocated for use without threatening the population. In Alberta use can

be summed up as First Nations and Indigenous harvest, sportfishing harvest, indirect mortality due to catch and release, and poaching. Within the optimal sustainable harvest window, all these uses need to be accounted.

Treaty obligations take precedent once conservation objectives are met. Some waterbodies have significant harvest from this user group. We know poaching happens but to what degree is difficult to determine. Fisheries managers often allocate five percent to this illegal use. What remains can be allocated to sportfishing. This sportfishing allocation must account for indirect mortality related to the regulated or voluntary need to release fish, actual harvest, and recreational fisheries management objectives. If we want a fishery to produce large fish, we may have to reduce our harvest and/or indirect mortality to achieve such an objective.


The equation is tied to angling pressure, which is a problem from an Alberta perspective, where many waterbodies have high pressure. As angling pressure increases, while the chance of each released fish surviving may not change, the number of fish caught increases and thus the number that die. The result is that at some point, there are no fish available to harvest. Many possible management options have been entertained including limited entry fisheries to closures to deal with this scenario. Such actions would come with a loss of opportunity.

What as anglers can we do to avoid such an outcome? The more fish that survive release, the greater the harvest opportunity or meeting a recreational fisheries management objective. Education in how to release fish is step one, the adoption of high ethical standards including best practices such as those shown on KEEP FISH WET is step two, reporting of all illegal activity (poaching and environmental) is step

3, step 4 would be the consideration of mandatory gear restrictions and educational requirements. While I would like to think that mandatory restriction is not necessary, long held beliefs and traditions are hard to break.

A phased approach to such actions, focused on our native and naturalized trout, arctic grayling, and mountain whitefish could be a starting point. This would be consistent with Redefining Fisheries Management in Alberta “Call for change from the Alberta Fish and Game Association” that was presented at our 2018 Annual Conference and The Road to Change – Fisheries Management in Alberta that was presented at our 2020 Annual Conference.

One final comment, Dr Stephen Cooke is a board member with KEEP FISH WET. He was of course, on the panel that participated in the Third Party Scientific Review of Alberta Environment and Parks North Central Native Trout Recovery Program. I know those of us who participated in this process respected the work of Dr. Cooke and his team. Perhaps it is time we heed the advice and science presented by KEEP FISH WET as well.

On a final note, as I write this column, I have not decided whether to let my name stand for election as AFGA Fishing Committee Chairperson at the virtual AFGA AGM in April. I believe it is time to consider stepping aside so that the next generation of anglers can shape the direction that AFGA should follow. Regardless of my decision, I want to thank everyone that has provided advice and support over so many years. It has been an honour to serve AFGA and its members. We cannot rest on our legacy but instead must look to the future to ensure hunting and fishing remain an integral component of Alberta society. 



Z O N E R E P O R T S

ZONE 1 REPORT

By Glenn Heather

HOW TIME FLIES; it is 2021 Hunting Draw time! Time to put in your draws and plan for the fall.

Zone 1 report, who is Zone 1 ?

Zone 1 consists of 18 affiliated clubs. These are clubs that step up to the plate every year in their community to make a difference for their membership, adding value for outdoor enthusiasts of all interests.

Volunteers, the people who take time out of their lives to help others, are making it a priority to embrace outdoor activities and advertise the benefits of working together for a greater good.

Zone 1 Fish and Game Clubs are:

Bow Island, Brooks and District, Cardston and District, Claresholm, Foremost, Fort Macleod, Hillcrest, Lethbridge, Magrath Rod and Gun, Medicine Hat, Picture Butte, Porcupine Hills Wildlife Association, Southern Alberta Firearms Education Society, Southern Alberta Outdoorsmen, Taber, Vauxhall Rod and Gun, Vulcan and District Gun Club, and Willow Valley Trophy Club.

Each and every club is working to gain memberships in these very challenging times. Electronic membership submissions, calling, emailing, are all necessary in these unusual COVID times. However, memberships are remaining strong and more and more are seeing the value of local clubs and organizations; keep up the outstanding efforts! I hope those reading this will recognize, that with you and your dedication, the outdoor world as we know

it, can prosper, and exist for generations to come.

As you all may be aware, AFGA has created five committees (Annual General Meeting Consultations, Governance, Finance Audit Risk Management, Focus Priorities Programs, and Membership Committees.) All of the five committees have numerous volunteers from a wide range of affiliated clubs. These committee members are spending countless hours of their time, in effort to both evaluate what AFGA has done but more so, what AFGA needs to do for the future membership of Albertans. Without each of the local affiliated AFGA clubs, there is no AFGA. These committee members may be reaching out to many of you for your thoughts and opinions. We need and value your guidance in identifying the needs of the local clubs.

I am hoping that this summer, we can again have face to face meetings of some type, and COVID restrictions are on the way out. If there can be, there will be a Zone 1 meeting as soon as possible.



ZONE 2 REPORT

By Deb Clarke

WHEN I FIRST agreed to take on the position of Zone 2 Director in 2012, my thought was that it would only be for a

few years. Time sure flies when you're having fun.

My working with the clubs and volunteers within Zone 2 and to represent them at both the regional level and on the AFGA Executive has been a privilege and a pleasure. I would like to thank my family, Jim and Miyah, and everyone else for all the support I have received over the past eight years. This will be my last report as Director.

The clubs within Zone 2 are made of up dedicated and lifelong volunteers with a lot of heart. Those individuals are now working hard to keep their clubs alive and active since the pandemic began over a year ago. Not all has been lost though and clubs have discovered that social media and virtual meetings help with bringing continuity to the business at hand, keeping in touch with membership, and providing updates. Some are even arranging for virtual informational webinars for their membership and other fish and gamers to attend. Who knows... virtual meetings could continue into the future and perhaps strengthen membership participation?

Over the years I have always tried to promote that clubs and volunteers should work together and share ideas. In this everchanging world there is no point in reinventing the wheel when other clubs have already figured out what works and what doesn't. We can all learn together through better cooperation and support. This is one thing I feel strongly about and hope it will continue on a broader scope.

Work is still underway through regular meetings within the five AFGA committees that are exploring options to rejuvenate the organization ▶



operationally, financially, and structurally. Be assured that members are important to the organization, and ideas, suggestions and concerns will be addressed. Ideally, we all need to work together to fundamentally keep our organization strong and remain the voice for conservation.

The AFGA relies heavily on the affiliation dues from clubs to keep operations running smoothly. Please stay up-to-date and forward membership rosters to the AFGA as quickly as possible. On the flip side... promote purchasing club annual memberships early so individuals do not miss out on receiving the Outdoor Canada West magazine, third-party liability, and search/rescue insurance coverage, and being a part of a great organization. The insurance package alone is worth hundreds of dollars if someone were to purchase it personally.

The Pronghorn Fencing projects may be a go again with reduced numbers and it's a great opportunity to give back to wildlife, enjoy some fresh air and meet new friends. Contact TJ Schwanky if you are interested in participating on one or more of the projects.

Whether individuals are hunters, anglers, outdoor recreationists, or some-

one who enjoys archery and shooting sports we all have a common ground and can work together for conservation. The AFGA Wildlife Trust Fund has been in existence since 1983 and is one of oldest and most respected land trusts. Support our AFGA Wildlife Trust Fund and be a part of saving critical wildlife habitat in Alberta! Donations can be made at any time.

If you haven't done so already, send an email to office@afga.org and request to be on the email distribution list for the latest news. Join the Zone 2 Facebook page too at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AFGAZone2>.

There is no better time for members to carry on with tradition, and pass along some fish and game passion. Mentor youth and others on the importance of volunteering, participating in outdoor activities and conservation.

Be INSPIRED, get ACTIVE and BECOME a FISH and GAME VOLUNTEER! You will never regret it.



Did U Know: Alberta's next fun family fishing weekend is July 3 & 4, 2021. On those days Albertans and visitors are encouraged to try fishing on waterbodies with open fishing seasons. A sportfishing licence is not required. Fishing regulations still apply though. If using a Special Harvest Licence (walleye tag) a licence is needed. For more details see <https://mywildalberta.ca/fishing/family-fishing-weekends/default.aspx>

ZONE 3 REPORT

By Arnold Winkler

MOTHER NATURE had a strong hand, and we were dealt ten brutal days of extreme cold. We survived and will see it again in future winters. Many fishing enthusiasts were still out trying their skills at catching some fish in a slow bite season. Minus 40 and a windchill was hard to enjoy and many upgraded their equipment and accessories. The long range forecast looks favourable and we may have an early melt with more people out on already crowded lakes. Nice to see a lot more youngsters enjoying themselves with a rod in their hands or hoisting their first fish. Tight lines to all of you. Next will be boats getting checked out with more accessories being purchased; stores love the sports people.

With the COVID restrictions being relaxed cautiously, many AFGA clubs are doing their best to engage in all meetings via virtual media platforms.

The five AFGA Committees that were established, are working on progressive reforms for the betterment of the Alberta Fish and Game Association and we need to support their efforts by becoming a member either directly or through the many local affiliated AFGA clubs. Information and a list of benefits of enrollment in on our website at www.afga.org; check it out.

Last year, when the annual Alberta Sportfishing Regulations came out, there were some favourable changes for anglers to enjoy; let's hope we see more. Many of the fish hatcheries have been upgraded to increase stocking efforts, and we should be thankful for the Alberta Government's efforts. When purchasing your sportfishing licence, make sure you understand the regulations that relate to the body of water that you are going to enjoy; certain sections or rules do change. Also remember to take out what you brought in and hopefully you're rewarded with your limit.

The Zone 3 Central Alberta Fish and Game Association (CAFGA) spring annual meeting and election of Zone Executive Officers will have been held as you read this issue. We welcome all those who were nominated or stepped forward for a position in this trying time. With the pandemic restrictions, the interactions and programs in clubs have been on a very limited basis. Hopefully things will return to some normalcy soon and we all can reignite various activities with more participation and membership growth so that we can hopefully enjoy this summer.

ZONE 4 REPORT

By Faran Schaber

CORONA VIRUS, COVID-19, global pandemic, new normal; these are terms that I am getting tired of hearing and I am sure that you all are as well. As it is, there is a lot of business being accomplished with Zoom meetings.

That being said, the Annual General Meeting Consultation Committee is making good progress in the planning of a virtual meeting. By the time you read this, it will be a thing of the past and it will be yet another milestone for our organization.

Harvesting of my cow elk did not work out. On the upside, seeing some was very productive; they were just on the run through the trees.

I hope that you all have had some luck with the hard water fishing. I have had some productive days. By the time you read this, ice fishing will be on its way out for the year and boats will be coming out of hibernation with the anticipation of those summer fishing days. Might as well be self-isolating in the boat!

Teck Coal finished mining operations last June, with the last of the coal being processed in the end of June. They are now in the process of mine shutdown, submitting closure applications, and planning reclamation

activities. They have said that they will consult with AFGA, as well as other interested parties. The AFGA's goal is to have the area eventually open to all Albertans for all activities.



ZONE 5 REPORT

By Robyn Butler

ZONE 5 now has no meeting or other contact of any sort for well over a year now. We surely hope sometime this year we will be able to hold some sort of meeting to get caught up. I haven't heard of many events from the clubs in our Zone and assume most are as dormant as my local club. We did continue with our trophy entries within AHS guidelines, and at this point are identifying winners and will decide how to award the winners shortly. One of our Zone 5 clubs did come up with a great idea and I'll include a write-up on that here, along with a couple of photos. If anyone has any great ideas or events planned, please let me know.

The Lloydminster and District Fish and Game Association held its first "Drive Thru Banquet and Supper" on Sunday, February 28, 2021. Although the "Drive Thru Supper" is not a new idea for our city, we decided to host with the format of reaching out to the membership and public, in keeping with having a unique supper, with the banquet mentality. We served a wild boar / turkey supper with all the trimmings and desert. It was our

way in keeping our "shingle" out there and have a bit of a fundraiser for our organization. This gave us the ability to have a brief conversation with the members and public when they were picking up their meals. We did all this in conjunction with the Lloydminster Agricultural & Exhibition Association. The Lloyd Ex. Assoc. provided the kitchen services, and we provided the volunteers to manage the parking lot attendants, packaging, and meal runners. The meal went over very well, and 264 meals were served in the span of 2 1/2 hours. We started getting "thank you, great meal" texts and emails even before the last meal was delivered. Overall, it was a great success, and we were able to interact with our membership in a unique way and provide a great meal also. COVID has affected us all, but if you put your mind to it, you can make some light of the pandemic we are in.

We also had our wildlife awards and gave trophies out, but the winners picked the trophies up at Wildside Outdoors store. We then asked the winners to take their own pictures with their trophy and email us the picture. That has been going quite well; anything to keep us all as engaged as possible.

A hats off to the Lloydminster club for keeping active and engaging their members. If any other clubs want information on doing this type of event, call me and I'll supply all the details. 🐦



MINISTER'S SPECIAL LICENCE RAFFLE

draw date: July 28, 2021



Antlered Elk

3000 tickets printed
\$10 each
licence #570799



Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep

7,500 tickets printed
\$20 each
licence #570800



Antlered Mule Deer

2500 tickets printed
\$10 each
licence #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

