



NEWS FROM ALBERTA

President's Report

By Victor Benz

President

What a year 2021 has been! We began with many challenges that were made significantly more difficult due to the pandemic. Two Special Resolutions passed the previous fall, gave us hope the AFGA could survive and would even prosper. This allowed us to stand down and dissolve the Financial Planning Advisory Committee that had steered us to that point. The AGM Committee stayed in place until the AGM was delivered in April 2021.

We began the new year by striking four new committees, a Finance-Audit-Risk Assessment (FAR) Committee, a Membership (MEM) Committee, a Focus-Priorities-Programs (FPP) Committee, and a Governance (GOV) Committee, to begin the work of re-defining and revitalizing the AFGA. Eventually, MEM and FPP were merged to form the Membership- Focus-Priorities-Programs (MFPP) Committee, and we struck a Communications (COM) Committee as well.

Everyone involved, AFGA Staff, AFGA Executive and volunteer Committee Members from across the AFGA, has all put in countless hours



to advance the cause. We have accomplished a great deal.

In early April, we held our first, limited virtual Annual General Meeting, culminating in the election of a new slate of AFGA Executive. We set to work immediately, holding monthly Executive and Senior Executive meetings via ZOOM.

In April, a detailed review of the AFGA office workload led to the necessary decisions to place the organization of the 2021 Wildlife Awards Program & Banquet and the organization of the 2022 in-person Annual Conference in the hands of any Zone and/or club willing to undertake the tasks. To date, no one has stepped forward, so ▶

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these events have been deferred.

By the end of April, an in-depth review of our existing governance documentation led to six documents defining the current AFGA, all approved by the AFGA Executive.

- Membership in the AFGA,
 - Fiduciary Duty,
 - Governance,
 - AFGA Governance Model,
 - AFGA Executive - Executive Director Relationship, and
 - AFGA Senior Executive Powers.
- In May, Andy von Busse joined the Executive team as Finance Chair. By June, we had three Board standard policies approved by the AFGA Executive.
- AFGA Code of Conduct Policy,
 - AFGA Confidentiality Policy, and
 - AFGA Conflict of Interest Policy.
- All the AFGA Executive and AFGA

Staff have signed off on all three policies.

In early June, the MFPP Committee held a webinar sharing their work to date in the following areas:

1. Goals, Mission, Vision, and Objects,
2. Organizational Focus,
3. Organizational Priorities,
4. Programs, and
5. Organizational relevance, value, and effectiveness

By the end of July, we had successfully addressed an ongoing concern with a number of Wildlife Trust Fund properties solely held by the AFGA by partnering with the Alberta Conservation Association.

In August, we rolled out an AFGA Board Leadership Program specifically developed for the AFGA by the Canadian Nonprofit Academy. It has been endorsed by the Executive.

We finished our fiscal year at the end of September somewhat better than budget. A key component was better-than-expected Affiliated Club membership numbers which reflected in better-than-budget Affiliation Dues collected. The Executive approval of the 2021-2022 Budget allowed us to:

- Approve an Operating Reserve Fund Policy and establish it with an initial deposit,
- Move to a new accounting software system to replace the old, outdated one, and
- Hire a Senior Accountant/Financial Analyst with responsibility for Affiliated Club membership management.

In November, we released a concept discussion document on the topic of the future of Membership in the AFGA and followed it up with an online Question and Answer Session for feedback and further comments. A SurveyMonkey poll distributed to all the AFGA family further clarified the desired direction for AFGA membership bylaws.

Our target for release of an initial set of revised AFGA Bylaws for input and review before the end of the year is still in reach.

Throughout this calendar year we also continued the type of affirmative action the AFGA is known for, as you can see from my fellow Executive reports. Important areas of focus were:

- The Recreation Advisory Group for Castle-Livingstone-Porcupine Hills,
- Third Party Technology solutions to Recreational Access on Grazing Dispositions, and
- Opposition to Cervid Harvesting Preserves

As I said, a very busy year!

From our family to yours, Happy Holidays, and all the very best in the New Year! 🐦

Executive Director's Report

Delinda Ryerson

Executive Director

Please join me in welcoming, Michael, the newest member of our small but mighty AFGA staff team!

Michael joined the AFGA in October 2021 as our Senior Accountant/Financial Analyst. He attended the University of Alberta's School of Business where his team was runner-up in the annual Dean's Business Plan Competition in 2012, and earned a Bachelor's degree with a major in Accounting and minor in Finance in 2015. As a Chartered Professional Accountant with extensive experience auditing other not-for-profit organizations, he aims to provide valuable support to the Association's finances.

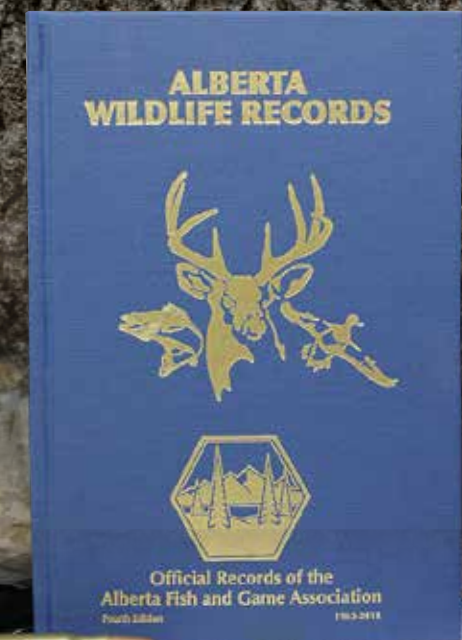
As an individual who finds meaning and satisfaction in helping others and the environment, he is driven to further the Association's mission to conserve fish and wildlife in Alberta through his role. Michael was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta and enjoys spending his free time with friends and family, reading, working out, and playing outdoor tennis.

Welcome to the team Michael!
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year Everyone! 🐦



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As previously announced, the Alberta Fish and Game Association's Annual General Meeting will be held virtually, on February 26, 2022.



The Alberta Fish and Game Association
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Photo credit: J. Knapp

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- Knowledge that you are supporting the largest conservation organization in Alberta
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- Participation in our annual Wildlife Awards competition
- Opportunity to participate in youth and women camps in Alberta
- Opportunity to participate on numerous conservation projects such as Volunteer Land Stewardship or Pronghorn Corridor Enhancement
- Accidental Death and Dismemberment benefit while participating in hunting, fishing, trapping or authorized AFGA club activities, including Accidental Dental Expense, Rehabilitation Benefit, Accident Reimbursement Expense, Travel Medical Expense, and others
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1st Vice-President's Report

By **Faran Schaber**

1st Vice-President

It is the first weekend in November as I write this. I finished combining before Thanksgiving and have half of this year's commodity sold. Being semi-retired, I thought I would be able to spend a lot of time out hunting. Apparently, life gets in the way as I have only made it out for three trips. All I have for all of my time in the bush so far, is three ruffies and a spruce grouse.

I am just back from hunting as I write this. I am thankful for the foresight of our ancestors to start the AFGA to protect our fish and game, and the habitat on which they depend. Without the work that was done by these individuals, we may not have been able to take the harvest that we have.

These individuals had a plan and a

vision. We continue to work on this plan and vision. They were not in the digital age however, and things tend to happen a lot faster now than they did in the past.

Now member clubs and their affiliated members ask. What does the AFGA do for us?

One only has to look at the Provincial Committee list to see all of the outside committees that are represented by AFGA members. There are dedicated volunteers that have served on some of these committees for many years. There are media briefs that come out from the office as important issues arise. In the media portion of our website, there are "Lets Go Outdoors" videos that highlight many projects. There are new committees being

formed to get to the root of developing issues and carry us into the future.

We continue to cultivate relationships with Government and like-minded organizations. So, I submit to you. What can you yourselves do? How can you help the AFGA move forward? With the help of many, we can move our organization forward. We can create an organization that hunters, anglers, outdoor enthusiasts, and conservationists will be proud to belong to. An idea such as this takes dedication of all; not just a select few who are willing to wear the AFGA on their sleeves. Let's all work together to get there.

Hope everyone had a productive hunting season, and good luck in the hard water season. 🐾



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2nd Vice-President's Report

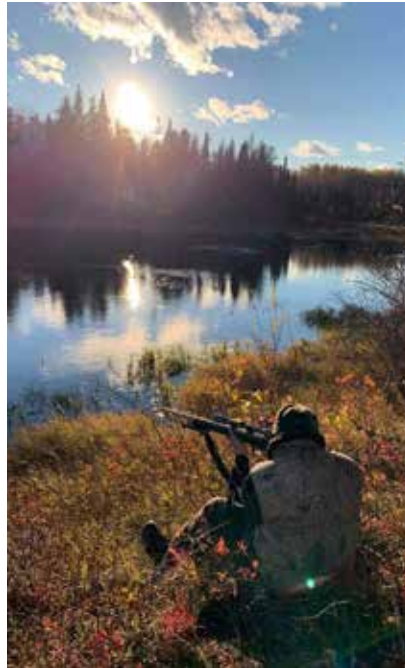
By Dave Doonanco

2nd Vice-president

In 1949 my dad was asked to leave his life on the trapline to work for the Alberta government. After training in Hinton, he started off as an Assistant Forest Ranger and Game Officer and moved along through the ranks, finally retiring in 1984 as a Superintendent of Enforcement/Field Services. At his retirement, a thirty-five-year-old promise of "try this out and if you don't like it, we will hold your trapline" was kept. He was gifted his old trapline as a junior partner. It was up at that trapline that I got my first taste of trapping.

Having a piece of land around home, I decided I wanted to also have my own line, so I got my resident trapper's licence then got permission to trap on some of the local neighbouring lands and on my in-laws' land as well. I managed to line up nine quarters of land to trap weasel, mink, muskrat, beavers, and coyotes. I went to the local Marshal Wells store and purchased some #4 double spring coyote traps, a few #0 and #00, then hit the pawn shops and auction sales to secure some inexpensive 330s for beaver.

Oh, the exuberance of youth, with the catlike reflexes and the mentality that one was invincible and knew everything. With no prior skills, I proceeded to rely on my inherent lack of knowledge and catlike reflexes to get the dog and pan connected on those #4s. That only goes so far until a mistake is made, and the force of the spring causes the trap jaw to close rapidly. Just about getting most of your fingers out of the way is kind of a victory. It was at this point I was somewhat thankful for the new humane trapping rules of having a space between the jaws, more of a humane on



the trapper thing for me.

When my trapping sage saw my blackened thumb nail, he asked what had happened. Somewhat embarrassed, I explained how I had caught it in a coyote trap while setting it. He grinned as he asked how I managed to do that. After hearing the explanation, he went and retrieved a trap and proceeded to show me how to flip the jaw over and set the trap without ever endangering your fingers. Now the 330 Conibear across the hand was purely an accident and a result of my catlike reflexes, although I did learn after that they do make a safety for those as well. Learning is a wonderful thing.

Learning the hard way or through trial and error, as in the case above, was a lot more common back before Google search and YouTube. The only way you would see someone with their thumb

in a trap on the internet nowadays was if you were watching an old episode of Jackass or its newer version, TikTok. I always say you can learn something from everyone.... sometimes it's what not to do.

It's through educating our members and the general public that we will get them to embrace our way of life and the activities that hold value within us. At the very least it will provide them with an understanding as to why we do what we do. Whether it's casting a fly into the back eddy of a mountain stream, fashioning a moose call out of a piece of birch bark, building birdhouses for bluebirds, or busting clays on the range. Through education we can help people understand and appreciate what we do as members of the outdoor community.

We need to incorporate more educational platforms into our organization. I realize that most of the required educational requirements that were once the wheelhouse of the AFGA now belong to the Alberta Hunters Education Instructors' Association (AHEIA), namely the Hunter Education Program. That doesn't mean we don't embrace that program and continue to work with AHEIA and develop future hunters. That doesn't mean that there aren't an abundance of other topics and skills that we can develop into programs to educate our members, the outdoor community and the general public.

Amongst our membership we have a large group of people who have a wealth of knowledge when it comes to outdoor skills and activities. It's a matter of gathering and organizing that information and then presenting it in a fashion that is easy to access, easy to understand and is relevant to the end

user. As well, we need to use those educational opportunities to acquaint the uninformed members of society, the importance of what we do as outdoors people.

I often hear that as an organization we need to attract more youth. Youth is our future, and we need to embrace the fact that they don't learn in the same way we used to learn. Chalkboards and stone tablets are a thing of the past and although the use of personal outdoor experience as a teaching moment is a very effective learning tool, maybe we just use a different form of delivery, one that the youth of today accept and make use of. Don't get me wrong, actual participation and hands-on learning of outdoor activities is by far the best way to learn, but we need to first attract that audience through social media platforms.

Sometimes education needs to take place within our own association and with our members. We need to understand that we can't just keep doing the same things over and over and expect different results. Change is not a bad thing if done for the right reason. In light of the ongoing situation, we may need to see some changes to our conference, possibly a hybrid style that would allow for member participation and not require everyone to be in person. As someone who spent thirty years attending teacher conventions, I realize the importance of the in-person part of a convention; that many policies, resolutions and programs have been planned out in the hallway or hotel room over heated debate and a cool beverage. Not everyone sees things that way and with a reduction in available time and the expenses associated with travel and accommodations, maybe it's time to try something different.

Online fundraising can be tied in with hybrid conferences as well as throughout the year. Out of necessity, some of the clubs have already begun to do those things. We can certainly use some of the knowledge gained from those ex-



periences in order to help us advance that idea of online fundraising.

One of the other changes I would like to see developed is that of more involvement with the firearms community. I understand that the conservation aspect of the AFGA must be front and center as per the rules of incorporation with CRA and the Societies Act, but that doesn't mean we can't promote the safe use of firearms and impart firearms knowledge onto the outdoor community and more importantly make it available to the general, uneducated public. It is one of the reasons that I have put forward a resolution asking for the implementation of a Firearms Chair at the provincial level and encourage the Zones to do the same. I believe we can encompass firearms as part of game management, which is part and parcel with conservation.

Now before everyone gets their Helly Hansens twisted in a knot, I have heard the opposition to this, that some members do not want to become just a shooting club. I appreciate that feedback, but we have to understand a couple of things in all this, first off as per the rules of incorporation for not-for-profit organizations we cannot simply change over our objects of incorporation. We need to and should maintain our main focus and that of conservation. Even if, as a member, you are not a hunter or angler, I think we all appreciate the wonders that nature provides and that the maintenance and protection of hab-

itat is important to all of us.

The second important realization is that gun ranges and the members who make use of them make up a large portion of our membership and we need to support, educate and promote all of our members' needs and interests. Yes, there are restrictions on lobbying, but as they say there is more than one way to skin a cat, still not sure why you would skin a cat, but apparently there's more than one way to do it.

The AFGA has a long and rich history of conservation, through habitat retention, programs and policies to protect and manage wildlife and the habitats that they reside in, as well as a plethora of activities that served to educate and inform the members of the outdoor community. As important as that has been and continues to be, we need to educate and inform our membership as to what we have accomplished, what we are presently working on and what the future holds for the AFGA, its members and the outdoor community at large. In today's "what have you done for me lately" world, we need to bring this organization up to date and lay out a plan of what can be expected in the near and distant future.

I have my personal thoughts and ideas on what I would like to see, but as a representative of the AFGA I need to remember that it's what the members want that is important. The members of the AFGA are the AFGA, so as your representatives we really appreciate your opinion as to what your vision of the AFGA should be. Along with your opinions we need your assistance in implementing the changes and improvements that need to take place. Some of the improvements have started to take place, some are being worked on, while others are still in the planning stages. To properly implement all the necessary changes and improvements it takes time, so we ask for your understanding and continued support while we work through all of the improvements to your organization. 🐦



Hunting Chair Report

By Brian Rudyk

Hunting Chair



As I write this, the white-tail rut is starting to heat up. The deer population around here seems to be quite healthy and reasonably abundant. I haven't heard of any crankers being taken yet but I'm sure that the stories will soon start to emerge. Hopefully, I'll be able to get out for an opportunity at one for myself. For those of you reading this, likely in the new year, I hope that your hunting season has been enjoyable, successful, and provided an opportunity for you to spend time in the outdoors with those most important to you. This social aspect of hunting has always been a highly valued part of my experience that solidifies relationships and provides special memories

whether the hunt is "successful" or not.

With the hunting season, I have had several concerns brought to my attention regarding access to leased Crown land. Common complaints include, no contact information posted, out of service phone numbers, calls not returned, access provided to a select few and even allegations of paid access. It seems that access to Crown land leases is an issue across the province as I have received concerns from southern Alberta. Many have attempted to resolve the situation with the lease holder but when that was not successful, they found the systems in place to oversee concerns was not effective either. Lease access has been on the AFGA radar for some time and

while there have been meetings regarding selecting software to communicate lease holder information, there have not been meaningful discussions regarding issues that users are having in accessing these properties. At this time, we are making arrangements to meet with Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) staff and this item will definitely be a part of the discussion.

Also on the agenda will be the ongoing concerns with outfitter allocations and the lack of input into the review of them. With COVID, and concern for lost business revenue as the reason, it seems many decisions are being made without any input from resident hunters or other stakeholder groups. Some of these tags already take resident hunters extensive wait times to

be drawn and there is good possibility that period may increase. I also believe that, with changes that have been made, there is the opportunity for some Albertans who have connections or can afford it, to hunt yearly what fellow residents take many years to be drawn for. I look forward to hearing whether these changes are temporary measures or will become standard practice.

Another concern brought to my attention by someone very familiar with the Caw Ridge, mountain goat herd is regarding the declining population of that herd. He feels that predation by grizzlies and cougars is a major part of the problem and has personally witnessed five bears corralling a group of goats. He also feels that a management plan needs to be established that addresses predator control and transplanting some young billies to improve herd dynamics. I will report on any information AEP can provide on this.

Cervid Harvesting Preserves (CHPs) will be on the agenda as well. There seems to be some political consideration for this but there has been significant opposition voiced against it as well. With Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) now being found in Manitoba and growing national pressure to end cervid farming and hunt farms you would think that the idea of CHPs would not gain traction in Alberta but yet here it is. Along with voicing our opposition at provincial and municipal levels, AFGA has also put together a committee of like-minded organizations to present a united front on this matter. The committee will meet mid-November so look forward to following the efforts of this dedicated group. The more individuals that contact local and provincial politicians with concerns about this the better so please take the time to do so.

On a more positive note, the Alberta Conservation Association is now progressing on wild turkey management in Alberta. The results of the recent survey on wild turkeys should be available soon and studies of the current Alberta population of wild turkeys have been initiated. They are considering release sites for the possible introduction of Eastern wild turkey subspecies into Alberta and are receiving strong support for this initiative from the Minister. If all goes well, they are hoping to release 50 birds to start in 2022. The plan is to use GPS locating devices to monitor the turkeys in follow-up studies to determine the success of their introduction. Funding is being secured for the initial release and there is an opportunity for clubs to be involved in future releases or studies. Thanks to Jim Clarke for his ongoing work on this project and keeping us updated.

My crew and I have just finished processing an opening morning of rifle season moose, and now it is time to start making sausage, jerky, pepperoni,

and other great meals with this delicious, healthy meat we are so thankful for. Hopefully, we will be able to add a deer or two to the freezers to get our families through until next hunting season. It has been a beautiful fall, but Alberta winter is showing signs that it is on its way. Time to get geared up for some hard water fishing and shed hunting. Good luck to all those with late season draws.

Don't forget to get your trophies officially scored once they have met the 60-day drying period requirement, and pick up a copy of the Alberta Wildlife Records book from the AFGA or your local club to see where yours fits in. I'm looking forward to running tape on a bunch of trophies this year, big and small. It's really good to hear the success stories especially from our young and new hunters.

Looks like we are facing another virtual AGM this year, but I have my fingers crossed that we will be able to have some fashion of in-person awards ceremony. I, like many of you I'm sure, have had enough of COVID! 🐦



Fishing Chair Report

By Darryl Smith

Fishing Chair

Year End Wrap Up Challenges



In trying to put this column together, struggled to find a topic that would resonate. From a fisheries management perspective the year could be summed up as quiet, but much did happen that will impact our fisheries in the future.

The most dramatic event was our exceptionally hot and dry spring and summer. Low water levels across the province as we enter winter are a concern. The potential negative impact on overwintering habitat whether in streams, reservoir, or lakes is hard to predict but major winterkill is a possibility. We need a heavy snowpack supported by the necessary environmental conditions this coming spring to create a major runoff event. There has already been impacts on infrastructure anglers require such as boat launch and docks.

The low water levels have resulted in difficulties to launch trailered boats and even in some cases closures of launches. The major fish kill that happened in June and July in the Pembina, McCleod, Athabasca, and Smoky River basins is a harbinger of the impact climate change will play on our fisheries resource in the future. Fundamental is managing cumulative effects on the landscapes so fragile fisheries habitat is resilient in the face of such stressors.

There was a good news story and that was the resumption of stocking of Wall-eye in the province. The primary focus was southern Alberta reservoirs in 2021. If successful, anglers should see these fish reaching harvestable size in four or five years due to the faster growth rates in these environments.

Continued silence from Alberta fish-

eries managers was broken slightly in October when they hosted three webinars that were billed as “educational sessions”. They focused on the Bow River, Pembina River and Lesser Slave Lake. These sessions could better be described as setting the foundation for the implementation of more restrictive regulations to be introduced on these waterbodies in 2022 and 2023. If you have not already done so, would urge everyone to view the sessions and resources which are available on MY WILD ALBERTA: <https://mywildalberta.ca/fishing/fisheries-management/default.aspx>.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans is reviewing input from Wave 1 consultations related to the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program (FFHPP) development. Wave 2 engagement, by the time you read this should be underway. The new Wave 2 engagement topics include:

- Death of Fish Position Statement
- Existing Facilities and Structures Position Statement
- Ecologically Significant Areas
- In addition, during Wave 2, further engagement will continue on four areas included in Wave 1:
- Guidance on the Consideration of Cumulative Effects on Fish and Fish Habitat
- Prescribed Works and Water Regulation
- Offsetting and Habitat Banking Policy
- Codes of Practice – Interim and New

Through the Canadian Wildlife Federation, the Alberta Fish and Game Association has been following development and inputting into the evolution of the amended Fisheries Act for a number of years. The habitat issue is the critical element. To become involved with the engagement process, go to <https://talk-fishhabitat.ca/index.php>.

The American Fisheries Society held it annual conference in November. A full day of plenary sessions was devoted to “citizen science”. Find it ironic that this

has become a hot button topic today. In the decades prior to 2000, AFGA was already involved in numerous science, management, and habitat fisheries-based projects around Alberta. Then something changed. Anglers’ involvement appeared to not be wanted or its value discounted. One of the talks which highlight this “renewed enlightenment of fisheries managers” was titled – How do you engage your anglers? Every way you can!

During the educational sessions mentioned earlier, Alberta Environment and Parks fisheries managers brought up the topic of citizen science which is encouraging. The starting point must be meaningful dialogue with the angling community’s knowledge being used, rather than just lip service given.

AFGA is fortunate in having volunteers such as Ray Makowecki or Heinz Plontke who have a long involvement in many aspects of “citizen science”. The current generation of fisheries managers fail to recognize the many elements that are involved in science. Science starts with observation. and identification of issues that need to be addressed.

Ray beside his advocacy work with the Next Step Team and Volunteer Biologist Group continues to spearhead oxygen monitoring in northeast Alberta lakes using volunteers. This is just one example how AFGA members and clubs can be involved in what should be a team approach to manage our fisheries resource.

In closing, hope everyone was able to be out on the water this year. With the ice fishing season now here, this leads to a great winter outing, fresh air, and is assessable for most. My year was filled with many great fishing and hunting adventures. Whether with my grandkids or with our new Labrador Retriever Benni who demonstrated what a teenager can be all about, made for many memories. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. 🐾

Environment Chair Report

By Glenn Heather

Environment Chair

What Is The Definition Of Habitat?

Habitat refers to the place or the location where an organism (or a biological population) lives, resides or exists.

Related to the AFGA, basically our habitat is Alberta. Our lands, waters, prairie, forest, foothills; we all need a place to live and thrive, more so critical for our fish and wildlife. An example of a success story is the relocation of Bison back into Banff, returning to their once roamed habitat.

There was a lot of skepticism, here is the status of this project:

- 4.5 years have passed since 16 bison were relocated into the backcountry of Banff National Park.
- After three years of roaming free in the 1200km² target reintroduction zone, the herd has grown to 65 animals (average growth rate of 30%/year); this growth rate is expected to decrease as the young herd ages and the initially high female-to-male ratio of the founder herd equalizes.
- All but six animals have survived so far: 4 calves died shortly after being born over the past couple of years (likely due to predators) and two bulls were put down when they left the target reintroduction zone and the Park (the latest one this past August). Two other wayward bulls were recaptured in 2018 and 2019 and are now members of captive herds elsewhere.
- All other animals are healthy and remain within the target reintroduction zone inside Banff National Park. They have thrived on natural forage only.
- The 65 animals mostly exist as a single herd, but they periodically splinter

into smaller cow-calf groups before coming together again. As is normal for bison, a few of the more mature bulls are on their own or in small bachelor groups for much of the year.

- The herd continues to use meadows, grassy mountain slopes, and previously burned forests in the Panther, Red Deer and upper Cascade drainages of Banff National Park. Summers are spent high in the alpine; fall/winters are spent moving between meadow systems in the valley bottoms.
- The animals continue to bond to the target reintroduction zone; exploratory movements have decreased significantly over the last 3.5 years. However, the animals continue to periodically interact with two wildlife-friendly drift fences on the eastern periphery of the reintroduction zone, and have drifted north a few times, requiring us to gently herd them back.
- No bison-related closures or restrictions have been in place over the last 2.5 years, and none are expected in the future.
- The five-year pilot project ends this winter. Within the next 6 months it will be determined if any further bison restoration in the area is feasible. Issues, which will be communicated in the future will be a Feral Horse update, Alberta’s Coal Policy Advisory Committee, and hopefully updates on the North Raven River.
- Until next issue, stay safe, enjoy the outdoors and take the time to notice habitat and how habitat is the most important element to sustain all forms of wildlife. 🐾



ZONE REPORTS

ZONE 1 REPORT

By Greg Bird, Zone 1 Director



HELLO ALL FELLOW conservationists. As I write this note we are well into the hunting season for 2021 and hopefully everyone is able to get out and enjoy the experience. The lakes are also still open, so I hope some of the fishing opportunities taken are proving fruitful. At the time of publication, I suspect many will be watching ice thickness and so forth to begin the season of ice fishing!

Although we have not been able to resume face to face meetings, I am really hoping we will be able to in the near future. That said, I am continually impressed how clubs are still managing to accomplish some of their agendas in a modified form. Thank you to all that have persevered and worked to this end.

For Zone 1 we are in the process of booking and conducting our casino allotment, it will run during the Christmas break; thank you to all that were able to help as at the time of publication we will have completed the casino. Clubs generally have been quite quiet with their activities, largely due to COVID, but also because of the end of summer/early fall season as well.

Provincially, we are in process of setting up the Annual General Meeting which will be held virtually, and by now no doubt you would have heard the call for nominations for our various positions. Please consider stepping forward and offering your expertise to strengthen our organization.

Thank you to all that continue to help, if there is anything noteworthy that you or your club are doing, please reach out. I would really like to start including a section on club specific items/accomplishments in these updates.

All the best, keep conservation front and center, and hopefully before long we will be sharing experiences in person again....

ZONE 2 REPORT

By Joe Baranyay, Zone 2 Director



I TRUST THAT everyone had a great fall, a joyous Christmas season, a happy new year, and that 2022 will be a safe and prosperous year for all our members and readers in this ever-changing world we live in.

On October 24th, Zone 2 had a virtual meeting, and I would like to thank all the participants that attended. We had great dialogue and a lot of information was shared by AFGA President, Victor Benz and first V.P. Faran Schaber. The feedback from participants was that they appreciated the transparency and

the involvement of the Executive. The communication between AFGA and the clubs has improved vastly, and club concerns are listened to and acted upon. A credit to the work that is done by our AFGA Executive and committee members to ensure that AFGA remains a strong organization in the pursuit of our mission statement and that we are recognized by Albertans as a major stakeholder at the meetings on important environmental and conservation issues with the Alberta government.

This fall hunting season was a very memorable one for my family and I, and we had opportunity to partake in a number of great field trips where we met a lot of awesome landowners and were able to access private properties in our pursuit of fine Alberta natural wild protein. I know that I get a lot of feedback from club members where they are extremely frustrated with getting recreational access to grazing leases and this is getting to be a greater issue as more hunters are on the landscape trying to fill government issued tags during COVID times. I must admit that I have been very fortunate to have access to private land over the last 40 years. I have dedicated a lot of time and effort to building relationships with landowners and have spent considerable time in summer months being a generous listener to some of their problems with recreational users. It always seems that a few "bush pigs" ruin it for a lot of respectful and ethical hunters. The damage they do takes a long time for us to rebuild the trust we have worked so hard for. A lot of times the landowners or lease holders are inundated by hunters on opening day or sometimes they find unethical people on their properties without permission. Being a landowner, I can put myself in their boots when approached by people to access my land

and what a difference it makes when people approach me ahead of time and they actually have a plan. I myself will go out in the summer months to introduce myself to landowners when they have some down time rather than when they are working 24/7 trying to harvest their crops. I also have no problem telling them that I am an ethical hunter that belongs to the oldest conservation group in Alberta and as a member of AFGA have a 5-million-dollar third party liability insurance policy in case something should happen while accessing their property. Over the past few years, I have had some great responses from landowners and have only been turned down by two. That's not too bad compared to 30 yeses. Hunting on private land is a privilege that my family and I cherish and over the years have met some great people that have turned into life-long friends.

You hear many stories first-hand and one landowner that I approached asked me if I was an outfitter. It seems that they were checking their property and were approached by an individual that was in the process of guiding bow hunters and asked them what they were doing. The landowner informed the fellow that he was checking his property and that the fellow was trespassing without permission. He was very fortunate that the landowner just asked him to leave and did not press charges. This gives ethical hunters a bad name but then some outfitters only care about the money, it seems. Here today, gone tomorrow, whereas ethical hunters are here today, and here tomorrow.

Alberta is home to one hundred million acres of Crown land which provides unique opportunities for hunting and recreational activities. Remember not all Crown land is managed in the same way so it is up to the hunters to know what the regulations are. Access to agricultural lease land has always been a contentious issue and there again some lease holders are great people to deal with and yet others seem to believe that they own the land and can do as they

please. The Alberta government issues and sells hunters' licenses and tags to help manage wildlife populations but then have to get permission from lease holders to access Crown lands. In the Recreational Access Regulations put out by the Alberta government it states: "as an agricultural lease holder, you lease Crown land from the Alberta government for agricultural purposes and are a steward of the land, helping to manage Alberta's land resources in a way that benefits us ALL." It seems that in some instances the lease holder believes that he can control Crown land for his own private hunting preserve. I have had numerous reports from members and have experienced myself where we respectfully call lease holders and get a flat "No" or the phone is hung up in our ear. Yes, the Recreational Access Regulations have specific rules and regulations that the lease holders are supposed to follow and also rules and regulations that hunters are governed by. But it seems to be a double-edged sword. I have made a phone call to an agrologist and have not had my call returned or have sent emails and no replies. Some lease settlement officers have been called in and since they are part of the community seem to be biased in favour of the lease holder because "it has been in the family for 40 years". I had a conversation with a Zone 2 member that had finally got a long-awaited bull elk draw. They had spent 12 days hunting in the southern part of the province, access to lease land was restricted to foot only. Gates were locked and they covered a lot of ground, only to find hunters within the lease land with trucks parked within and camps set up. Yet if they would have gotten something they would have had to pack it out five to ten km. It seems that the rules are not the same for everyone. I know that there are some good stories out there as well, where lease settlement officers are very helpful and that good experiences are had. But when we only have a certain amount of time to pursue our hunting heritage that runs deep in Alberta and

is a tradition that family and friends have taken part in for years, roadblocks are not what we need but rather cooperation and collaboration between all parties. The Eastern Irrigation District (EID) is a prime example of how it can work in favour of all parties. They outline their rules and conditions which gives hunters and recreational users access to designated trails and routes. As they say in their ad, "access to these private lands is a privilege not a right. Please use respect and hunt with care."

Respectful hunters are stewards of our environment, and it is too bad that a few bad apples can ruin it for us all. Going forward, the landscape will always be the same. It does not grow or expand as human populations do. So, there will always be an increased demand on our resources, and we have to find a way to accommodate a lot of change in Alberta. Change is not always welcome, but it is the only solution if we are to be a democratic society that wants to maintain our freedoms and practice our culture and heritage.

As always yours in conservation.

ZONE 3 REPORT

By Harold Drok, Zone 3 Director



I'M WRITING THIS on November 7, 2021, and the weather this fall has been unbelievable. In the past three weeks I fished the Grand Forks on the South Saskatchewan River and on October 31st fished the North Saskatchewan River near the Genesee Bridge west of Edmonton. Both rivers were higher than I anticipated but I won't be taking my boat on the Red Deer River this late in the season. I've never seen so many visible rocks on the Red Deer as I have this year.

A number of the Zone 3 clubs have been very active putting on events for the local youth. The Innisfail and Lacombe Fish and Game Clubs both put on very successful “Kids Can Catch” Programs. Each year, multiple Kids Can Catch events are held across the province. Volunteers are on hand to help teach new anglers the proper ways to bait a hook, where to drop a line, and what to do once a fish has been caught. Kids Can Catch is a program sponsored by the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA). The events are meant to promote proper care of fish, as well as family fun. The ACA has a Tackle Box of tools and resources to help you plan and promote your event. If your club is interested in organizing a Kids Can Catch, please contact Ken Kranrod at 780-410-1989 or ken.kranrod@ab-conservation.com for details.

The Red Deer Fish and Game Association organized the Alberta Youth Pheasant Program in September and October 2021. The program introduces Alberta youth to gun handling and game bird hunting in a safe and controlled environment. At least 100 Alberta youth participate in our program annually, from different areas of the province. All youth in Alberta can participate from 12 years to 19 years of age.

Each student learns shotgun patterns, clay pigeon shooting, safe gun control, and game cleaning. While hunting the released pheasants, each young hunter is accompanied by a mentor to ensure proper gun control and safety. Dog handlers, with well trained dogs, are also in the field to flush the birds for the participants. The young hunters gain firsthand knowledge of bird hunting with dogs and a respect for wildlife and habitat conservation.

As you are reading the AFGA and Zone Reports, don't forget to enter any trophies you may have caught or harvested this year with the Alberta Fish and Game Association Wildlife Awards. The Annual Alberta Wildlife Awards are

open to “all” individuals legally taking a fish, bird, or big game species in the Province of Alberta. The annual competition runs from January 1st to December 31st in any given year. The deadline for receiving entries is February 28th of the following year. For more information, please go to the AFGA web site; <https://www.afga.org/wildlife-awards/>.

ZONE 5 REPORT

By Cynthia Pawliuk, Zone 5 Director



GOOD DAY TO ALL.

I have been a member of the Alberta Fish and Game Association for over 20 years now. I've held positions with my own club – Beaver River Fish and Game, Zone 5, and Narrow Lake Conservation Centre. This new position as Zone 5 Director will be my next adventure!

On October 30th we held our Zone 5 meeting via Zoom which went well, and we now have a new Executive in place:

- Director – Cynthia Pawliuk
- Vice Director – Andrew Doonanco
- Secretary – Darlene Smereka
- Treasurer – Frank Lee
- Hunting Chair – Gord Smereka
- Fishing Chair – Gaetan Richard
- Environment Chair – Steve Witiuk
- Political Action Chair – Vacant
- Programs Chair – Vacant

If anyone is interested in filling any of the vacant positions, please don't hesi-

tate to contact me.

It is nice to see that the Clubs in Zone 5 are keeping busy. There's lots of work going on outdoors, working at ponds, ranges, and cleaning up Crown land from garbage dumpers. With the little bumps and hurdles that we all have to contend with, we do find a way to get things done.

Clubs are working hard to try to fundraise, but with COVID, a lot of banquets and horn measuring events are being put on the back burner which makes it even more difficult. Social media is your friend, so if you can email news of your programs or raffles out to other clubs for them to share, please do so or contact me and I will make sure that all the clubs get your information.


Narrow Lake Conservation Centre (NLCC) has three new cabins that have been built and put into place. I would like to thank the Fish and Game clubs of Athabasca, Barrhead, Beaver River, Lloydminster, Morinville, St. Paul, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and Whitecourt for their gracious donations towards construction of the cabins; we could have not done it without your support.

Our fund-raising raffle for NLCC was a great success! Three lucky winners are all in possession of new rifles. Thanks to all who purchased tickets and clubs for helping sell them.

This winter, there will once again be volunteers monitoring the oxygen levels in lakes of Northeast Alberta, affected by the decline in water levels. There are nine or ten lakes involved in this program.

I would also like to give a big Thank You to Robyn Butler for all of her hard work, countless hours, and dedication she has put into Zone 5, B.O.W program, Narrow Lake, and the AFGA Conference. I will have some big shoes to fill.

Let's all get involved, have a voice, become a member!

I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Year. 

Wildlife Trust Fund Program

FEATURE PROPERTY

KNEEHILL CREEK PROPERTY

By Natalie Horne

We would like to again thank all of our Alberta Fish and Game members for their continued support in creating a legacy of conservation by being a part of our Wildlife Trust Fund Program. If you missed our last article featuring the Caroline – Shell property, you can check it out and download it from our website. Just go to afga.org and click on 'Menu' at the top right of any page, select the 'Membership' drop down, then choose 'Outdoor Canada West.' On this page you will see an archive of previous AFGA member sections of the Outdoor Canada West magazine, and the 'November-December 2021' issue featuring our Caroline - Shell property.

For those unfamiliar with our Wildlife Trust Fund properties and the legacy you, as an AFGA member, are

a part of, the Wildlife Trust Fund is Alberta's oldest and most well-respected land trust. It includes over 100 properties that encompass nearly 50,000 acres of important fish and wildlife habitat, stretching from the extreme south of our province, all the way north to Manning. These properties are conserving wildlife habitat, while providing amazing recreational opportunities for all outdoor enthusiasts.

With winter now upon us, what better time to get out the snowshoes or cross-country skis and check out some of these beautiful properties!

In this issue of Outdoor Canada West, we will be featuring our Kneehill Creek (Alberta Discover Guide E3-82) property. This site is day use only, no open fires and foot access only. Partnering with the Alberta Fish and Game Association in the management of this property are the Alberta Conservation Association and Sarcee Fish and Game.

The Kneehill Creek property is 160 acres located on quarter section SE-35-034-27-W4M in the Wildlife Man-

agement Unit 220. It is approximately 20 kilometres southeast of Innisfail, and the Kneehill Creek runs north to south through the entire length of the site {Photos 1 to 3}. Access to the property is strictly from the northeast corner; there is no access to the property from the west side. To access the property from Township Road 350, turn south on an undeveloped road allowance (Range Road 27-1), and proceed half a mile to the northeast corner of the site. In wet summer conditions, the undeveloped road allowance is not passable by vehicles and access is by foot only. Always check the ground conditions before proceeding by vehicle.

The forested areas of the property are dominated by aspen and balsam poplar with some spruce, birch, pine, and willow also present. Wildlife in the area includes white-tailed and mule deer, moose, grouse, and water-





fowl. Our volunteers have also recently seen signs of wolf and coyote (Photos 4 to 6).

Over the years, there have been many volunteer land stewards visiting this property. John Komonski with the Sarcee Fish and Game Association became a volunteer land steward in 2009, when the program was in its infancy, and has volunteered many hours over many years before retiring in 2012. John maintained a great relationship with landowners for the surrounding properties and regularly reported on fence conditions to ensure they were well maintained. We thank John for his detailed reports and hours spent on this property (Photo 7). Shawn Blakey was also one of the first to enter our land steward program, and his reports on beaver activity and the wildlife and vegetation on the property have been invaluable for our records.

More recently Erik Jackaman, with the Calgary Fish and Game Association has taken on the volunteer land steward tasks for Kneehill Creek. The photos appearing in this article are all courtesy of Erik, and his recent experiences include that “we bumped a young bull moose from his bed in the NW corner of the property” (Photos 8). While Erik has yet to be successful in harvesting an animal on the property, he regularly enjoys snowshoeing and hiking there. If you head out to Kneehill Creek, be on the lookout for our



volunteers and say hello!

We would like to again extend our thanks to all our fantastic volunteer land stewards who are essential to the successful management of these properties. They conduct biannual inspections and assist the AFGA in conserving these special places. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer land steward for a property in your area or have stories of your own experiences as a volunteer, email us at communications@afga.org, we'd love to hear from you!

Our thanks also go out to the members, clubs, and zones of the AFGA for making the Wildlife Trust Fund land acquisitions and subsequent land management possible.



We encourage all of our members to visit this, and other Wildlife Trust Fund properties and contact us via email at communications@afga.org with your experiences.

These properties belong to you, and as an affiliated AFGA club member, we encourage you to be proud of this amazing legacy.

To see a detailed description of AFGA Wildlife Trust Fund Properties, based on area, please visit our website: <https://www.afga.org/wildlife-trust-fund-properties>. These, and our partners' conservation sites, can also be found in the Alberta Discover Guide, available at <https://www.albertadiscoverguide.com>. 