



# NEWS FROM ALBERTA

## Be an Ambassador of the Outdoors Like John Hamdan!

By **Delinda Ryerson**

*Executive Director*

**N**o matter how introverted you think you are, as human beings, we are all social creatures. As you are likely all too aware, current research is showing that living through the COVID-19 pandemic is having negative impacts on people's mental health and well-being. Research is demonstrating that social isolation can lead to all kinds of increased health risks; and its detrimental effects are right up there with those associated with smoking, obesity, and lack of physical activity. There is also a large body of literature demonstrating that people that spend time in natural environments are happier, kinder, more creative, better at managing stress, and coping with life's challenges.

What can we do to keep ourselves happy and healthy during this fraught time? My suggestion, pandemic, or no pandemic is to get outside, perhaps even at a Wildlife Trust Fund property near you to reconnect with nature, as well as family and friends, by doing the



outdoor activities you love to do!

Over the past two years, I found myself working too much, and really starting to miss the endorphin boost I got from simple things like visiting with people in person, laughing with friends and colleagues, or even just smiling at people I walked past. There is no doubt that we are missing out on seeing one another at events, dinners, conferences, and other social gatherings that we all enjoy so much, but there are still tons of opportunities for us to foster existing relationships, make new acquaintances and even friendships, by ensuring we take those much-needed breaks, and by doing the activities we enjoy in the outdoors.

My family and I really like fishing, so after the heat wave temperatures subsided last summer, we went fishing near and far, every weekend until mid-October. It was such a wonderful way to bond as a family, and enjoy each other's company, while surrounded by nature. ▶

### MOVING?

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

Ph: (780) 437-2342 Email: [membership@afga.org](mailto:membership@afga.org) Website: [afga.org](http://afga.org)

\*Please note that \$6.30 of your annual membership dues are allocated to Outdoor Canada West Magazine





Thanks to Brian Hamilton, Trent had bragging rights for catching a lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*) several years ago, that I did not. We decided to head up to Cold Lake, way too early for my liking, one Saturday morning to fish for lake trout. I was excited to learn more about the natural history of this lake inhabiting char species, and hoping to be lucky enough to catch one, so I could strike this activity off my bucket list, and Trent would no longer have exclusive bragging rights.

Generally, people tend to keep their best fishing spots a secret, especially to total strangers, but not John Hamdan. John, his son, Adam, and his son's friend, Henry arrived at the boat launch minutes after us, and I remember thinking how great it was to meet such friendly and outgoing people, especially now a days. John not only told us exactly where to fish, which was literally less than 20 feet from his boat, he also showed us what lures to use,

and how to best to jig for lake trout.

I know a lot of exceptionally good anglers, but I can honestly say that I have never seen anyone catch so many fish as John did that day. We did not catch anywhere close to as many fish as John, but by the end of the day, our arms and shoulders were so sore, they ached, and felt like they were going to lock up because of all the fish we caught. It was such a fantastic day because not only could I take catching a lake trout off my bucket list, but I also got my long-awaited endorphin rush, as we laughed swapping fishing tales, and other hilarious stories with John and his family.

There is no doubt in my mind that days like this really help to put our lives into perspective and buffer the negative effects stress and anxiety have on us. So, get outside and be the friendly, helpful, kind-hearted ambassadors of the outdoor lifestyle, that I know all of you to be! 🐦



## 1st Vice-President's Report

By **Faran Schaber**

*1st Vice-President*

It is the start of a new year and I hope you all had a successful harvest and have a bounty to enjoy until next season. For those of you that enjoy it, the hard water season had a great start, with safe ice conditions after our December/January cold snap.

Plans are under way for our annual AGM. Our AGM will be divided into two parts this year. We will have our AGM on February 26, 2022. In mid-April, we will have our second online event to deal with AFGA Resolutions. We have moved to having the second event to allow the clubs to have a discussion on the Resolutions at a club level. The second reason is that we are trying to have an interactive platform that will allow Club Delegates to have a discussion on a virtual platform and give the Delegates an experience with Resolutions similar to that for the in-person AGM of previous years. The only limiting factor, that everyone needs to be aware of, is that if Delegates have limited bandwidth, we will have people freezing up on the screen. We will try to accommodate all the Delegates and allow everyone the amount of discussion time that the Resolutions deserve. There will be more information coming from the AFGA in the near future.

The Executive and the various Committees continue to meet, have discussions, and move our organization forward. There are opportunities for those that are willing to sit on a committee. Please contact the AFGA office and put your name forward. We all have to remember; MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK.

I wish you all a happy, healthy, and prosperous year ahead. 🐦



The Alberta Fish and Game Association  
...your voice in conservation since 1908



Photo credit: J. Knapp

**Become a member, add your voice, and enjoy the following benefits:**

- Knowledge that you are supporting the largest conservation organization in Alberta
- Being part of the acquisition and protection of over 50,000 acres of our Wildlife Trust Fund properties; available for hunting, angling and outdoor pursuits
- 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
- \$25,000 search and rescue expense (Canada only)
- \$5,000,000 personal excess liability insurance
- Discounts on the purchase of personal insurance through BrokerLink (1-888-826-9427)
- Yearly subscription to Outdoor Canada West magazine (regular newsstand price \$7.99 per issue, six issues per year)
- 10% discount on Mark's merchandise

<https://www.afga.org/join-afga> • 780-437-2342 • [office@afga.org](mailto:office@afga.org)  
13045 - 156 St. NW, Edmonton, AB T5V 0A2





## 2nd Vice-President's Report

By **Dave Doonanco**

*2nd Vice-president*

**A**s I sit writing this article the Christmas season is upon us and we are watching 2021 come to a close. For the last twenty-nine years the Christmas season has meant a chance to spend a few extra days on the trapline. As part of my planning ahead for my trapline adventures I keep a close eye on the weather and it appears that 2021 will end with a week of straight minus thirty weather as a daytime high. Sort of fitting for how the world has gone this past year. But in the words of Monty Python's comedic crew.... always look on the bright side of life.

It's not always that easy to look at things that way when in the span of three days you drop your quad through the ice on a creek, have to put down a family pet and create a viewing window into the side of your Case 970 engine block, but a lot of mud got washed off my quad, we now have a new puppy and someone is getting some new snow clearing equipment. As well, when asked that common and fundamental Canadian question "How'd you like this weather?" my response is either no mosquitoes or not many hurricanes in minus thirty. With the glass half full attitude I want to start off with some personal positives from 2021:

Our family was fortunate to add another meat eater to our fraternity and we received some bonus news that we will be doubling up our grandchild numbers in 2022 with a set of twins, thanks to my youngest son and newest daughter-in-law. My original daughter-in-law received her restricted and



non-restricted firearms licenses and was also one of the reasons for the new meat eater as mentioned earlier. We managed a few hunting milestones with my daughter's first ever moose harvest and oldest son's first ever elk harvest. Our youngest son arrowed a nice black bear and harvested a nice whitetail, as well as his completion of the trapper's course and subsequent official licensing on my trapline.

Our Fish and Game family has also had some highlights throughout the past year. The provincial association has stabilized financially this past year and that is due to the continued support from the clubs; we know we are not out of the woods just yet and are working on a long-term plan to stabilize our finances. Although some clubs have suffered from the COVID restrictions placed on their fundraising and other activities, there have

been some clubs who have increased their membership, it's great to see that continued support. It is also awesome to hear about all the innovative ideas that clubs and their members are coming up with to circumvent the situation that they have been placed in so that they can continue to provide services to their members and the outdoor community as a whole.

Some of the other achievements in 2021 was the successful drafting of re-organized bylaws and they have been sent out to the membership so that we can get some feedback on them. As well the Governance Committee produced a draft plan of a membership model, which as well was sent out to the membership for feedback. By the time this article is published I will imagine that we will be a great deal closer to finalizing those two items.

The Membership, Focus, Priorities and Programs (MFPP) Committee has also been very busy in the past year and they have developed a draft plan for moving forward with the association. Once again by the time this article comes out, we will have had a chance to take a closer, in-depth look at the recommendations. Once we can come to an agreement on the recommendations, we will be looking at implementing a plan to carry them out. At first glance, one of the areas that many of us have mentioned is that we need to have a relevance within the outdoor community, which will be a big part of what we do as we move forward in 2022 and beyond.

One of the other topics touched on by the MFPP Committee is the importance of communication. Com-

munication I think we can all agree is very important for many reasons and on many fronts. How we communicate and how much we communicate is different for each member and we all realize that. As the current chair of the Communications Committee I can assure you that we are fully aware of varied opinions on communication and are trying to balance all of those communication concerns.

Our Communications Committee, although far from finished, has moved in a positive direction with the continued development of the Hook and Bullet-in newsletter, and a bigger presence on the social media platforms of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We will continue to work on improving our interaction with our clubs and Zones. We have begun to have some conversations with Alberta Environment and Parks and in doing so have brought forward the concerns that you as club members have expressed through contact with your Zone Directors and through the resolution process.

With the guidance of Michael Short and his Let's Go Outdoors videos, we began to highlight some of the programs and policies that we are working on with the AFGA Executive. Plans are in the works to see about continuing this aspect of our communication program so we can continue to highlight activities that the clubs are working on. I will also serve as a means to keep our membership informed as to where we are at with our revitalization goals.

The Executive is also aware that there has been criticism that we are wasting our time on bylaws and not doing enough hands-on activities. One needs to remember that in order to restructure an organization we need to have a sound foundation. A sound foundation enables us to develop a realistic and updated plan for the direction that the AFGA needs to go,

so that we can remain relevant within the outdoor community and meet the needs of those members.

The past year was not just about bylaws and objects of the association, we faced a renewed push to implement Cervid Harvesting Preserves, or hunt farms in the province, and through some hard work and communication we managed to end this push to start canned hunts. The AFGA will continue to be vigilant on this front. We had several other issues that were dealt with as well, in the name of brevity I will hold off on all of those issues.

The province is a big place with many important issues related to the outdoor community and its members. The provincial Executive of the AFGA relies on all the clubs and their members to make us aware of issues that develop in your areas of interest. When we are aware of developments that are happening, we can then make the greater public and outdoor community aware and coordinate a collaborative response. That is one of the benefits to strength in numbers and why together the clubs have a stronger voice.

I wanted to take the time to highlight a few of the past years' activities, because as they say, "What have you done for me lately?"

As you read this article our second virtual AGM will be recently completed and we will be making plans to move forward and continue our revitalization of the Alberta Fish and Game Association. It is a huge task and I look forward to the challenge with this team of the Executive and with the entire AFGA membership.

One of the other items we will be working towards in 2022 is a scaled back online conference. We are looking at coinciding the online conference with the scheduled resolutions meeting that will take place on April 16th. We want to limit our online conference to just the hunting chair, fish-

ing chair and environment chair at this time, a baby-steps approach to help make it successful. The plan is to have the various chairs pick a topic of interest that fits within their portfolio and with that put on a webinar in the evenings leading up to April 16th.

The AFGA Wildlife Awards Banquet is also being organized by a group out of Zone Three and we look forward to starting to get these types of activities back on track in 2022. I am fortunate to be able to attend several Zone meetings and get to hear about activities that clubs are partaking in. It seems we are adapting to the restrictions and continuing with some of the club activities, like gun shows, fundraising suppers and raffles. As well, a host of habitat projects are underway across the province with many clubs. Make sure to let us know if you have a project that you are working on or an activity that you are planning. As mentioned earlier there is strength in numbers and if we can help coordinate or find funding for your events, activities and projects we are more than happy to help out.

One of my goals for 2022 is to continue to improve the communication within the AFGA. That doesn't just mean from the AFGA Executive down, rather as an Executive we need to coordinate the communication between clubs and Zones. As well, we need to make sure that it's not just clubs who are aware of each other's work on projects, with events and on various activities, we need the rest of the outdoor community to be informed of the importance and relevance of the AFGA.

The clubs and their individual members within the clubs are the AFGA and together we are a stronger voice for all that is important to us as members of the outdoor community. I look forward to your continued support and assistance in making this a strong and vibrant organization. 🐦





# Wildlife Trust Fund Program

## FEATURE PROPERTY PARKLAND PROPERTY

By Natalie Horne

**T**oday in the continuation of our feature series on the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) Wildlife Trust Fund properties, we are highlighting the Parkland Conservation Site. This 160-acre property is located on quarter section SW-13-053-06-W5M, approximately 48km west of Stony Plain, 1.6km south of Highway 16, just west



of Wabamun Lake. This property, like most protected through the Wildlife Trust Fund program, is day use only, foot access only, with no open fires and no target practice or sighting-in of firearms. Outdoor recreational opportunities include hiking, bird watching, foraging and hunting. Trapping is also permitted, with prior permission from AFGA and partner Alberta Conservation Association (ACA). The Parkland property falls under Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 336.

As a part of the AFGA Wildlife Trust Fund program, Parkland is one of over 100 properties making up nearly 50,000 acres of conserved land throughout Alberta, all placed into land trust for future generations. Through conservation-minded landowners, and in collaboration with the ACA, Parkland, and many other Wildlife Trust Fund sites, are a mecca of flora and fauna just waiting to be utilized by AFGA members, and members of the public alike.

The Parkland Conservation Site was donated to the AFGA, and partner ACA, by Parkland County in 2013, with a long-term goal of maintaining and enhancing the natural wildlife habitat, and minimizing the negative impacts seen by unauthorized OHV access to the area.



The property is a combined forested and wetland site, with the upland areas consisting mainly of mature aspen, with an understory of wild rose, some saskatoon and chokecherry. The wet-

land areas include a small unnamed lake (not stocked or suitable for fishing), dense black spruce and tamarack



bogs. An abundance of wildlife can be found in this area, and the property's proximity to the Jack Pine Grazing Reserve and Wabamun Lake make the parcel an important travel corridor and wintering area for many ungulates. Our long-standing volunteer land steward has made regular sightings of bear, moose, white-tailed deer, coyote, grouse and waterfowl, along with the occasional sighting of wolf, fisher and mule deer.

At the heart of the AFGA's success in keeping our Wildlife Trust Fund Properties as a legacy for all Albertans, is our dedicated volunteer

land stewards. Through their biannual inspections and reporting, their contributions keep our properties as valuable habitat in perpetuity. Our volunteer steward program depends heavily on AFGA members, or any members of the public, who are interested in assisting in conserving these publicly accessible lands. Anyone interested in volunteering please contact us via email to [communications@afga.org](mailto:communications@afga.org).

One such volunteer is Michael Greaney, who with the support of his wife Loraine, has been visiting, inspecting, and protecting the Parkland Conservation Site for over 20 years. As their



personal property shares a boundary with the Parkland property, Michael is very invested in ensuring the ongoing protection of the site and he is regularly found bird watching, meeting people for tours of the property, or out hiking in the area.

Michael and Loraine are avid bird watchers who regularly meet with the Edmonton Nature Club who host bird watching field activities on the Parkland property, spotting a variety of birds over the years including cape



may warblers, pine grosbeak barred owl, numerous woodpeckers, and most recently a turkey vulture!

As outstanding and long serving volunteer land stewards, the AFGA is proud to recognize both Michael and Loraine for their unwavering commitment to conservation in Alberta via the many hours spent on the Parkland property. Their dedication to the conservation of this site, is a great example of how working with conserva-



tion-minded landowners can make a real and lasting difference to habitat protection in Alberta.


Michael has reported changes to wildlife and visitors to Parkland over time, but one constant has remained, both Michael and Loraine's ongoing passion for all wildlife utilizing the Parkland site. They are always happy when wildlife meanders across the shared borders between their properties, often catching their journey on their trail cams.



Our heartfelt and sincerest thanks go out to Michael, Loraine and all of the dedicated AFGA volunteer land stewards, who continue to be instrumental in growing our Wildlife Trust Fund portfolio. We also strongly encourage anyone interested in volunteering as stewards for these properties, or those recreating on them, to contact us via email to [communications@afga.org](mailto:communications@afga.org), we'd love to hear from you! Our Wildlife Trust Fund >



**As previously announced,**



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



properties are an invaluable resource and a great way to spend time outdoors, any time of the year.

With an abundance of wildlife and protected habitat available at the Parkland site, exciting research opportunities are also made possible. The ACA working with Zoltan Domahidi and the Boreal Avian Research & Conservation Association (BARCA), has recently started a study to determine the 'Breeding ecology and reproductive success of cavity nesting raptors on managed Boreal landscapes'. In 2020 Zoltan and Michael Greaney toured the property discussing the details and viewing the habitat, a team of volunteers then set up nesting boxes throughout. If you're visiting the site, be sure to keep your eyes peeled for these nesting boxes and we look forward to seeing what the study results are in the long-term.

The AFGA will continue to secure critical habitat for all Albertans with the Wildlife Trust Fund as a flagship program of the Association, that the membership takes tremendous pride in. As the only form of funding for the Wildlife Trust Fund is donations from clubs, zones, private individuals and raffles, these properties are truly an ongoing labour of love throughout our membership, and we thank each and every AFGA member who has or continues to contribute.

If you are looking to donate to this program, please visit our website [afga.org](http://afga.org) and click the 'Donate' button appearing at the top right-hand corner of each page; be sure to nominate our Wildlife Trust Fund program in your donation comment. Looking for more details on our Wildlife Trust Fund properties? Visit: <https://www.afga.org/wildlife-trust-fund-properties>.

Thank you to the Alberta Conservation Association and Michael and Lorraine Greaney for photos supplied for this article.



## Environment Chair Report

By Glenn Heather

Environment Chair

### Feral Horses & Habitat: Where Do Feral Horses "Fit" In Alberta's Foothills?

The feral horses in the foothills especially around the Sundre area have long been a discussion topic, "for or against". In fact this topic is a sensitive subject, one that triggers great debate and differences of opinions. Horses are a part of Alberta's history, and horse owners are widespread throughout Alberta, so considering them to be an invasive species, is hard to believe. Yet they are, and "wild horses" by definition, are not the horses we have in the foothills. Yes, they are wild, but these horses we have, were introduced by letting domesticated horses free, or by horses getting loose from their owners. They have thrived and we now have significant numbers, 1,400+ being conservative.

I thought, hey I'll just research the internet, there must be scientific research, stating what is best. Should we sustain feral horses in our ecosystems or should we work to remove their influence in Alberta's foothills. Well I was astonished by the information related to feral horses. In fact I did not find one "solution" or direction Alberta should take or what your AFGA's overall stance should be.

The Feral Horse Committee that your AFGA is a significant contributor, consists of Ian Stuart and Conrad Fennema. Throughout the years, there has been other AFGA members which have contributed. Our voice is being



heard, as we the AFGA are the largest Alberta based organization. The latest meetings and data can be found on the Alberta Government website: Feral Horse Minimum Count — Open Government ([alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca)). The feral horse population has increased over the years, more importantly is the 750+ feral horses within the Sundre population survey area. As example, feral horses were removed from CFB Suffield due to their negative impact to the Natural Wildlife Area, an environmentally sensitive area within the base. The numbers of elk throughout the years lately, have not had the impact of these roughly 1,200 feral horses.

Are feral horses good or bad for habitat? Studies show no defined YES or NO. However, what is definite, is that overpopulation will significantly have everlasting impact for that ecological area. Horses when eating, as they have upper and lower teeth, will rip the forage by grabbing it close to the

roots. This can cause significant damage to the grass or forage. Horses as well are selective, they will target the preferred food and move on, thus leaving the remaining grasses to take over. This can upset the grass balance in areas, which can reduce the high nutrient feed for other area inhabitants such as, elk, moose and deer. Additionally, horses are very territorial, they tend to push other wildlife away from their area.

In the USA and Australia, feral horses were not controlled, resulting in overpopulation and habitat destruction. Alberta needs to learn the lessons of others. Overpopulation of any species results in long-term impact to the limited habitat we have. AFGA supports Management! We are for balance. Our habitat is not getting any bigger, in fact look around, there is continual development everywhere in Alberta. There is only "x" amount of habitat, in which our wildlife, birds and fish can survive. As this habitat is lost, there is no more. The Alberta Feral Horse Advisory Committee is in the midst of recommending a program to manage this feral horse issue. Once the final proposal is submitted to the Alberta government, hopefully a long-term management system, will be created. We, your AFGA, will communicate this information to our members, once submitted.

Take care, stay safe and preserve our habitat.




**Exclusive insurance discounts for AFGA members**

Call for a free, no-obligation insurance quote today.

**1.833.998.3798**

[albertagroups@brokerlink.ca](mailto:albertagroups@brokerlink.ca)

[BrokerLink.ca/AFGA](http://BrokerLink.ca/AFGA)



\*No purchase necessary. For full contest rules, visit [www.brokerlink.ca/contest-rules/afga-atv](http://www.brokerlink.ca/contest-rules/afga-atv). Conditions and restrictions apply to all offers. Offer ends at 11:59PM MST on June 15, 2022. Draw date is June 30, 2022. Offers may change without notice. ATV prize valued at \$11,000.

©2022 BrokerLink Inc. BrokerLink & Design is a trademark of BrokerLink Inc. All rights reserved.

**GET A QUOTE AND ENTER TO WIN A HONDA ATV**







## Fishing Chair Report

By Darryl Smith

*Fishing Chair*

### The Need For Meaningful Engagement

**A**s I sit here on New Year's Day, it's hard to believe that entering year three of the COVID-19 pandemic. Compounding this reality was the extreme cold weather over the last month that put a damper on the pursuit of outdoor pastimes. The upside was a chance to reflect, review, and consider the path forward whether personally or from an organizational standpoint.

On a personal note, a love of the outdoors, family, friends, wild spaces, wildlife, and working together (can't forget a young Labrador named Benji) has allowed me to weather the challenges facing us all. From an organizational standpoint progress has been made to ensure that the legacy of the Alberta Fish and Game Association continues with needed changes that will take time, commitment, and funding to implement. As AFGA's Provincial Fish Chair for the last decade, trying to balance the viewpoints of our many members requires communication, openness, research, and discussion. The policies and positions of AFGA are consensus driven where the focus is on sustainability of our fish and wildlife resources.

Sustainability is a holistic concept where the three pillars, environment, economy, and society must be considered together. As such, sustainability goals are not met by setting a finite point on a graph decided by a single discipline. Instead, it involves a multi disciplinary/ stakeholder approach that weighs trade-



offs, benefits, and costs to set the appropriate target. To this day the Brundtland Commission definition of sustainable development (use) stands:

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

As sustainability is a generational paradigm it will not be achieved with the simple changing of recreational sportfishing or hunting regulations. Ensuring sustainability requires an adaptive management approach that involves multiple actions and diverse partners. Using all the tools, whether regulatory, enforcement, education, research, or stewardship where the focus shifts from the species to that of ecosystem and habitat health is essential. Responsibilities and decision making do not rest with a single professional discipline or one stakeholder group.

Aldo Leopold identified five essential tools of wildlife and habitat

management expounded in his 1933 work Game Management. The focus was on restoring the health and vitality to land that had been "depleted by overgrazing, overlogging, overfarming, and underappreciation". His five principles, "Ax, Plow, Cow, Fire, Gun" resonate today. For wildlife and fisheries management to be successful involves working on many fronts. What Aldo Leopold was talking about was sustainability, which is seldom about eliminating a use from the landscape, rather ensuring the necessary harmony when multiple or competing values exist.

The Wildlife Society in February 2020 published an article by Angela Fuller, Daniel Decker, Micheal Schiavone, and Ann Forstchen titled Ratcheting up Rigor in Wildlife Management Decision Making. I believe it should be required reading for wildlife managers, bureaucrats, politicians, and stakeholders. The article describes the challenges and outlines ways forward. Throughout the report issues of transparency, trust, inclusivity, engagement, collaboration, and buy-in are embedded. Consider the following quotes:

"Furthermore, a deliberative, transparent, and consistent (i.e., repeatable) process requires an appropriate level of inclusive stakeholder input and engagement."

"There are many objectives related to the process of decision making that agencies may wish to achieve while making management decisions, including transparency, public buy-in, inclusivity, partner par-

icipation, replicability, and defensibility of the decision process."

"We want to emphasize that stakeholder engagement is an essential element that should not be seen as independent of the decision-making process, but rather embraced as important for informing the process about pertinent values (i.e., objectives), stakeholder preferences for alternative management actions, or factors to consider when making predictions about the effect of management on stakeholder values (e.g., recreation, opportunity to see and shoot harvestable species, hunter crowding)."

Moving back to the starting point of my column which was about reflection, review, and the path forward, after more than 30 years of involvement as a volunteer representing stakeholders in the fisheries management arena, I have come to the following conclusion: there has been a gradual but accelerating loss of public trust in government institutions.

Fish and wildlife management by its nature is a partnership where buy-in and involvement of stakeholders and society are integral if objectives are to be achieved. The current engagement process, while internally is viewed as meeting standards, falls short of expectations. Increasingly it is one sided, lacks transparency, excessively technocratic, and caters to the elite. The broader angling and hunting community do not feel they are part of the consultation process and see their voices as no longer mattering.

The ongoing loss of trust and support for the fish and wildlife department must be acknowledged and dealt with. AFGA is prepared to do its part. The starting point should be related to fisheries management in the province to address the roadblocks that exist that prevent a shared direction and vision. The following need to occur concomitantly:

Development of meaningful transparent consultation platforms at a lo-

cal, regional, and provincial level that incorporates a stakeholder driven consensus-based recommendation, benchmark and target setting process.

Immediate sharing of the science and data that was used to determine the benchmarks related to the Fish Sustainability Index and Fall Index Netting.

Systematic, transparent, and independent multi-party review of the benchmarks and options used within the Walleye Recreational Fisheries Management Framework and the Northern Pike Recreational Fisheries Management Framework.

Getting everyone onto the same page is critical. Anglers recognize that fisheries management due to a wide range of anthropogenic and/or natural issues is challenging. The direction fisheries managers are moving appears to be single focused and increasingly specialized, likely due to the inability to address cumulative effects where responsibilities lie with other departments or agencies. Once public trust is restored, the path forward is one of collaboration, partnership, and shared vision among stakeholders and across government.

By the time you read this column it should be around the time of our Annual General Meeting. While winter will not be over, Albertans know how to embrace all seasons. The longer days and the returning heat from the sun makes the last days of winter ice fishing memorable. I always look forward to the emails and calls from AFGA members across the province. The use of virtual technology (Zoom) has meant that we were finally able to get an AFGA Fisheries Caucus up and running where connection with Zone Fish Chairs, Club Fish Chairs, and other dedicated members occur bimonthly. It's great to see everyone's face and know we share a common perspective on so many issues impacting Alberta's fisheries resource. 🐟

# How does YOUR hunt stack up against the ALBERTA WILDLIFE RECORDS?

For current reference,  
inspiration and great stories,  
purchase your copy of the  
4th Edition today!



# \$40

Plus GST and shipping

Order online at  
[www.afga.org](http://www.afga.org)





# Hunting Chair Report

By Brian Rudyk

*Hunting Chair*

I am writing this on a cold New Year's Day. My preference for today is to be on a remote, backcountry lake honouring my hunting and fishing partner, my Dad, who moved on to new adventures this day eleven years ago, but my aging bones protest this extended cold streak more now than when I was younger. The first months of a new year is an excellent time for reflection and planning. Reflection on the year past, accomplishments and challenges still to be addressed; planning as to the way forward and how best to prepare, to accomplish what needs to be done.

I found the year past a frustrating one at times, primarily working in a virtual environment. I feel much more comfortable face to face rather than dealing with a video world and emails. I find it more difficult, even impossible, to form necessary relationships and connections enabling success while in the on-line world. Maybe it is just all the white in my hair.

COVID has been a main factor in this and even worse, has been a major reason given in the cancellation or postponement of important meetings normally held with AEP and stakeholder groups. Lack of these meetings creates a breakdown in communication.

In mid-December AFGA Executive, AEP staff and Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) Tom Davis were able to meet through Zoom to discuss a number of topics for updates and feedback. Many of the hunting issues



that we have been dealing with during the year were brought before the group including concerns with outfitter allocations, cervid harvesting preserves and recreational access to grazing leases. Although these were recognized as ongoing, overdue matters, there was no set timeline for their resolution. Once again, we were informed that there would be changes coming that would affect the Alberta Game Policy Advisory Council (AG-PAC) and other past practices once

the information from the Wildlife Management Survey was processed, but no indication as to when this would happen. In the meantime, important interactions like the AGPAC Meeting and long overdue 5 Year Outfitter Allocation Review remain on hold. On a very positive note, ADM Davis said he is very eager to work with AFGA and its members and urged us to contact him with concerns.

Look for the Wild Turkey Management Plan to be released shortly. AEP discussed this and the work being done with the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) for the expansion of wild turkey numbers, species types and locations in Alberta. There is a lot of support for this with the public and the government. Hopefully, this undertaking will be successful and lead to additional hunting opportunities down the road. A meeting of the Mule Deer Management Committee is scheduled for early January. I'm looking forward to some progress on the Mule Deer Management Plan and maybe

this is an indication of other important committee work getting back on track.

The new year is also a time for resolutions. Not just the resolutions we will consider putting forward to AEP after our Virtual AGM on February 26th, 2022, but also personal goals and objectives that are important to us. I realize that by time of publication most personal resolutions will have been made and may or may not still be in effect. When something is important to us though, such as pre-

serving our outdoor lifestyle, it doesn't really matter what time of year we resolve to accomplish something, but more importantly to dedicate ourselves to making it happen. With that in mind, I would like to provide some possible resolutions for your consideration. Feel free to adapt, modify or improve one or more of these resolutions to your situation, or perhaps maybe one of them will trigger a cause that is important to you.

**Resolution 1.** Introduce someone to hunting and/or fishing. There are many people

who have never had an opportunity to participate in these outdoor pursuits including those who are new to our country or province. For someone new to these activities meeting the requirements in order to partake may be a daunting task on its own. Finding and completing required courses, acquiring proper licences, understanding regulations, purchasing appropriate gear, developing techniques and learning where to go are roadblocks that may deter the most determined person without some support. If we wish to preserve our lifestyle, we need to increase the number of participants or at least make more people aware and accepting of it.

**Resolution 2.** Take a youth hunting and/or fishing. Challenges here are similar to Resolution 1 but in this case, you also will need to work with the family to accomplish your goal. Often youth, though they may have an interest, have no one in their family circle with the experience necessary to get them started. There are also existing programs where you can get involved in working with youth such as an Alberta Fish and Game Youth Camp, Red Deer Fish and Game Youth Pheasant Program, ACA Kids Can Catch Program or Alberta Hunter Ed-



ucation Instructors' Association Mentor Hunts to name a few.

**Resolution 3.** Get involved with the AFGA Executive. Whether at the provincial, zone or club level there are hundreds if not thousands of volunteers in leadership roles involved in promoting and preserving our outdoor lifestyle throughout the province. At every level there is always a need for fresh ideas from dedicated individuals in moving forward the work of the association. It is rewarding work for a great cause ensuring our outdoor opportunities for generations to come.

**Resolution 4.** Commit to attending club and zone meetings and activities. Even if an executive position is not



right for you now, your input and participation is valuable. The more people involved the better the work of these organizations reflect the preference of its membership. It also allows for more initiatives and activities to be taken on, for as the saying goes, "Many hands make light work." The project you organize or volunteer for, can make a huge difference in the lives of others.

**Resolution 5.** Write a letter about a concern you have and send it to your municipal and provincial political representa-

tive. While the AFGA represents tens of thousands of Alberta sportsmen and women, nothing gets attention like a grass roots movement. The more individuals that take the time to write and send a letter regarding an issue, the more likely there will be a response.

Hopefully, these suggestions will provide motivation if you are not already involved in some fashion. Growing our membership is always an important goal of the AFGA, and in the hunting and fishing community in general. Increasing interest in the outdoors amongst women is strengthening our numbers but is still an area where more work can be done. AFGA's Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program is one way to get involved. Although not a hunter, my Mom was an avid angler, involved with our local Fish and Game Club and if anyone said they didn't care for eating wild game they had obviously never dined at our table. Women play a huge role in promotion and preservation of the outdoor way of life.

Good luck with the upcoming Spring Snow Goose and Bear seasons and keep an eye open for the fishing and hunting draw application deadlines. 2022 could just be a great year. We certainly are due. 🐾





# ZONE REPORTS

## ZONE 2 REPORT

By Joe Baranyay, Zone 2 Director

**WITH THE COLD** winter and the fourth wave of COVID, we hope that the clubs in Zone 2 haven't gone into hibernation. One club that had information to share was the Okotoks and District Fish and Game Association (ODFGA). Here is their report.

*The Okotoks club is trying to build on its growth from last year. Membership renewal notices were sent to all members, with good early responses. As with everyone, all activities will depend on whatever restrictions might be in place for public gatherings. One of the more ambitious projects is the club's first major wild game dinner, being planned for April or May. As spring hits and outdoor activities resume, things like club fishing outings will be planned. We wrapped up last year with a Christmas social including a presentation on Hunting Optics, which was quite well attended. ODFGA hopes to continue to offer the programs the members really want, in order to keep everyone active and engaged.*

Thank you, Matt Zazula.

In December, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) had two virtual seminars with a question-and-answer forum. Anyone that participated could enter questions which were answered by the panel. You can find the postings on [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca) social media directory, page down to YouTube and click on Environment and Parks to bring up the seminars. There were a lot of good questions and the biologists seem to have some answers but there were a lot of grey areas. What seemed odd was that when lease access issues were brought up, they were deflected

to the department of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development. AEP biologists, provincial big game specialists, and licencing managers are in charge of big game management and licence allocations but access is under another department. This makes it difficult and frustrating for hunters, as they have to deal with different departments. You would think that they should be able to go through one window rather than multiple ones. The two, key government documents that are at the heart of the issue are the Grazing Lease Stewardship Code of Practice and the Recreation Access Regulations. After examination of these documents it is clear that there is considerable misalignment between them. This includes the areas of responsibility between the agricultural disposition holder, public lands agrologist, fish & wildlife biologists, and recreational users, in particular the recreational and commercial hunter. Both of these government documents need to be modernized and made current. The regulation which has been amended on a regular basis is due to expire March 31, 2022.



The Code of Practice has a clause which provides for review every five years. To date we are not aware of any updates that have occurred since 2007. It seems we have a lot of work to do to resolve some of our members' issues.

The fall of 2021 seem to have been a good year for many hunters from young to old. Some fine trophies were taken and horn scoring events should produce some good Alberta records.

One of our Zone 2 members showed that even grandmothers south of 70 can harvest nice trophy bucks. Congratulations Gail on your first whitetail buck!

With the cold weather, ice thicknesses should be safe and I hope you are all enjoying some winter ice fishing.

## ZONE 3 REPORT

By Harold Drok, Zone 3 Director

**I'M WRITING THIS** on January 8, 2022 and we have had an incredible amount of cold weather since the middle of December; it appears the local ice fishers haven't been in a hurry to go fishing. A group of friends and I had planned to side x side into Gap Lake, 55 kilometres north on the North Fork Prairie Creek Road, southwest of Rocky Mountain House, sometime during the Christmas break and we chose January 2nd for the trip. Luck was on our side as Sunday, January 2nd was the warmest day of the previous three weeks. The fishing was excellent but the catching was weak, but there's always next time.

On November 28, 2021, the Directors of Zone 3 got together at the Ponoka Fish and Game Association Camp Pofianga. We had a good turnout even though it was the last Sunday of hunt-

ing season. AFGA 2nd Vice President Dave Doonanco attended the meeting and gave the AFGA report. Zone 3 passed motions to appoint Kelsey Kure as the Hunting Chairperson and Dale Reid as the Resolutions Chairperson. Many of the clubs continue to struggle with the impact of the pandemic and the reduced funds that most of the Zone 3 clubs have to operate with.

Zone 3 decided to form a committee to host the Alberta Fish and Game Association Wildlife Awards sometime in the spring of 2022. We will be giving the AFGA awards for 2020 and 2021. Zone 3 received word from Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC) that we will have the opportunity to host a casino sometime in the second quarter of 2022. The casino will provide funding for some of the Zone 3 club projects.

The Zone 3 Spring Meeting will be held April 10, 2022 at Camp Pofianga and we plan to finalize the Zone 3 By-law Revisions. The Cenalta Kids Camp is scheduled for July 9 -15, 2022 at Chain Lakes, east of Morningside.



## ZONE 4 REPORT

By Chelsea Jaeger, Zone 4 Director

**AS WE WORK OUR** way through another year, I wanted to start something different with my reports. I will be highlighting a club or two each article because I think that groups don't get a chance to see what others are doing. I will be reaching out to all the clubs in Zone 4 for information. This time around it will be Barrhead Fish and Game Club. Joe Prociuk (club president) has provided the following.

A hearty welcome and hello from the Barrhead Fish and Game Club. We have a small, core group of dedicated executive and volunteers that work together to keep the club alive and to have fun doing it. Our main project is the Barrhead Gun Range which is situated by Thunder Lake. The range has a long gun area alongside the handgun and the shot gun area. We also have an archery range and are building a 3D archery trail. A number of targets are set out and more are on order. That's where the fun comes in.

The trap shotgun crowd and the handgun group are active for most of the summer with members coming in on the activities from as far as Edmonton. Watching the trap people compete on a very windy evening is quite entertaining. I never heard so many, "I should have got that" excuses.

A great way to spend a Saturday

morning in the summer is with the handgun group. It's fun and competitive with the shooting scores tallied after every round. Some of the ladies are very competitive and are very skilled at the sport. Trust me, shooting a handgun and actually hitting what you're aiming at, is a lot harder than it looks. We also put up a small rim fire range to accommodate the parents who want to have some safe shooting fun with their kids.

The long gun range is well used by the hunting crowd and just people having fun. I spoke to a senior gent at the range who said the sport was getting expensive as he got his wife hooked on shooting a long gun. She came out with him as he was sighting in his .270. He got her to try it and she was hooked, her new .270 is nicer than his. He now has a new hobby loading shells. Last year, a member just put a new scope on his rifle. He was looking through the scope at the 200-yard target getting ready to set it up and a bull moose walked out in his line of fire, two weeks before hunting season. Well, we are next to a provincial park!

The COVID pandemic has taken away our wild game supper, which was a fun evening for all involved. We are hoping to do the trophy scoring course again, which for the moment is in limbo. So much has changed and is changing, that we try to keep all informed by the old faithful computer. Just google the homepage for the Barrhead Fish and Game Association. Tight lines, straight shooting and keep healthy.





## ZONE 5 REPORT

By Cynthia Pawliuk, Zone 5 Director

**I WOULD LIKE** to start by saying I hope everyone had a successful harvest in 2021. I myself got to sit in my blind for a few days, track down a few cutlines in the beautiful outdoors, watched the deer, moose, grouse and those noisy squirrels.

This is one of the best parts of life you can give yourself and share with your children; the love of the outdoors regardless of what your hobbies might be. With all that is going on in this craziness, a little time outdoors does not hurt and it will help more than you think. It is also fun to learn new and exciting facts about how the animals move, and how they can tell the weather patterns.

I have heard from lots of clubs trying to do their meetings, horn measuring, raffles for fundraising, and lots of outdoor stuff as that is what keeps a club active. I would like to hear what all the clubs in Zone 5 are up to, so Zone 5 has set up a Facebook page. Search it out, like, share, add yourself, friends, and your club. Let's be loud and proud as AFGA, the voice of conservation and education. Let other clubs know if you are having Hunter Education courses, a PAL course, raffle, awards banquet or just some general ideas of things that you can pass on to others out there.

It's also important for our clubs and their members to support the greater outdoors community. Today, Beaver River Fish and Game member Dale Pawliuk, headed out with two other members of the Muriel Lake Society, Don Midgley and Richard Bourgois, to do water testing on the lake as part of their restoration project. It was a great day to be outside!

As Zone 5 Director, I have attended our AFGA Executive meetings via Zoom, and they are going very well: lots of new ideas and great discussions on many topics. All Zones have differ-



ent things they are involved with and it's great to hear what is going on all over the province. It's important to share our information, as many of our hunters and anglers travel the province and are then kept informed of changes in different areas.

As Spring is just around the corner, fishing season is coming to this season's end so now it's time to plan your spring bear hunts and turkey hunts. For some clubs and zones, spring meetings will also be happening, The Zone 5 meeting will be held in St Paul. Narrow Lake Conservation Centre meeting will be at the Camp near Athabasca, I will get all the informa-

tion to all of you in my next letter to the clubs.

Membership is one of the most important things any club could have, whether you have 20 or 1000+ members, every voice counts. We are the voice of every Albertan and it makes a difference when we need to see things change and improve; we need to work for the next generation.

I know that some clubs are finding it hard and challenging to get new members. I am not sure what the answer is, but with clubs helping clubs, we can try make a difference.

Let's all get involved; become an active member of your local club. 🐦