



NEWS FROM ALBERTA

President's Report

By Victor Benz

President



The Membership Focus Priorities Programs Committee (MFPP) accepted the task of defining a Vision for the future of the AFGA. After months of consistent, dedicated effort their report has been completed and presented to the AFGA Executive. It is publicly available on our website under the AFGA Document Download section. It is titled: December 2021 – AFGA Membership Focus Priorities Programs (MFPP) Committee Report and Recommendations. This document is an impressive and insightful assessment of the AFGA today and its potential for the future. I find it a compelling read.

This foundational report leads with one Key Recommendation accompanied by ten specific recommendations.

Key Recommendation: Next steps must be tied to the development of a strategic and supporting business plan for AFGA that will operationalize and set timelines around the concepts

addressed within this report.

The report is a "... compilation and collective vision for the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) based on the consensus opinion within the committee." It emphasizes a desire to meet the needs of "... potential and future members who may have different motivations for belonging than current members. The impact of change ... on today's members was always taken into account during deliberations." All major aspects of the AFGA Revitalization Project were reviewed by the MFPP and its predecessors over the past 14 months.

- Focus
- Charitable Status
- Objects
- Value & Visibility
- Membership Stability
- Strategic Change
- Communications
- Promotion, Marketing and Branding
- Support, Services and Benefits for both Members and Affiliated Clubs

- Policy Development & Issues Management

Each of these topics was subject to a critical analysis of what exists today and might exist in the future. The MFPP then provides an easy-to-follow road map of how they arrived at the decision for each recommendation.

I believe there are four elements that require immediate reading, understanding and support by all members of the AFGA.

FOCUS

The MFPP consensus is that the AFGA should remain "... a broad-based lifestyle organization with defined emphasis that positions itself in the middle of the conservation focused spectrum in Alberta's future." That said, "... there will be needed changes across the organization that may impact governance, issue management, membership, finances, communication, promotion, branding, marketing, fund raising, and operations." The proposed changes are laid out in the balance of the report.

CHARITABLE STATUS

In the near to short term, "MFPP believes that maintaining charitable status is important for the organization both financially and for the public profile it provides." Options do exist for re-thinking the relationships between the AFGA businesses but should not be the focus of immediate action. ▶

MOVING?

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

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

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



PROPOSED DRAFT OBJECTS

- 1 Promote conservation and use of our fish and wildlife resource including the required habitat through application of science and meaningful consultations with Albertans;
- 2 Work to ensure continued public ownership and access to all crown lands, waters, and parks in Alberta for outdoor recreational activities;
- 3 Work with landowners, industry, municipalities, other stakeholders, the Government of Alberta to ensure that issues related to access and wildlife conservation are addressed on private lands in Alberta;
- 4 Develop and support programs that better habitat for fish and wildlife including application of conservation easements, lease, purchase, offsets, and stewardship of lands for the benefit of all Albertans;
- 5 Promote and provide programs related to outdoor education, ethics, safety, law, and stewardship as integral components of fish and wildlife management and outdoor responsibilities;
- 6 Maintain a culture of volunteer involvement and membership by providing programs, supports, services, and benefits to members, clubs, and zones to achieve wildlife conservation and participate in outdoor recreation activities;
- 7 Work with governments, stakeholders, and other authorities to increase public participation in outdoor recreational activities in Alberta by addressing barriers related to access, opportunity, infrastructure, cost, gear limitations, regulation, or policy;
- 8 Foster cooperation and partnership to enhance outdoor recreation and wildlife conservation with governments, industry, stakeholders, NGOs, landowners, public, First Nations, and Métis in Alberta;
- 9 Acknowledge, recognize, and respect the contribution of First Nations and the Métis people to wildlife and fish conservation through application of traditional knowledge and land stewardship practices.

OBJECTS

Nine new Objects are proposed for the AFGA. They have been written with an eye to the fact that these objects must be registered with, and accepted by, the Canada Revenue Agency to maintain our charitable status.

MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE

Today, the "... AFGA provincially is primarily a federation of clubs. Clubs select delegates from their membership to represent them for votes on business presented at Annual or Special General Meetings which determines the direction of the provincial organization." The MFPP recommends this model be continued.

In conclusion, this outstanding report needs to be widely circulated, read, evaluated, and understood by all members of the AFGA so that an appropriate strategic and business plan can be developed to support it. The development of that plan needs to be a priority focus of the AFGA's 2022-23 Executive. 🐦

The Senior Executive made a decision that the AFGA would have a booth at the Edmonton Sportsmen's show in March. I hope a lot of you were able to get out and network with other outdoors enthusiasts.

We have a few new ideas coming forward, and as soon as possible, will present them to our member clubs and their affiliate members. We are trying to keep you all up to date on what is happening, through this magazine, the AFGA website, Hook and Bullet-in electronic newsletter, and the emails that are received by your clubs.

With the cold winter weather well behind us, we have the sportfishing season to look forward to along with the spring bear season. I hope you all get out and enjoy your favourite outdoor pursuits. 🐦

2nd Vice-President's Report

By Dave Doonanco

2nd Vice-president



It was early September and I took the time to clean my Husqvarna 30-06; the cleaning stage that went way beyond what I normally did. After a thorough cleaning I doused the entire bolt and action in the age-old lubricant of the time, three-in-one oil. The Huskie's action was smooth without the oil and was almost like a semi-auto once it was looking like a California beach goer. Well once the beach-going season ended and the depths of the late November hunting season were upon us, a new lesson was learned; that some old school oils and cold weather do not go well together. The sloth-like movement of the firing pin was just fast enough to send a clicking sound through the silence of the forest, right to the waiting ears of the unsuspecting moose, who was quite educated in the natural sounds of the wilderness.

Many years ago prior to the existence of a logging road and required access to gas leases we had, by the forces of nature, been forced to construct a new raft to cross the first river on the way into my trapline. The original popular log and beer keg raft had been relieved of its duty and in its place sat a brand-new pressure treated plywood, two by four, and blue rain barrel untested wonder. The river raged from bank to bank and the decision was made to separate the quad and quad tub and get them across separately on this untried vessel. The quad went across easy and was resting on the west side

waiting for reattachment as we pulled the raft into place for that maneuver. Unfortunately, I must have had the proverbial brain fart and neglected to chock the wheels of the equipment laden quad tub and as I leapt onto shore to tie off the raft the motion sent the cargo off the back and into the river. Fortunately, it missed my eldest son in the process and I managed to spring to action with my cat-like skills and lasso the hitch before it all headed downstream.

In both of these instances the author lacked some vision of the future, of what the consequences of their actions would be. However, we make decisions at the time in what we feel is the best option moving forward. We can't predict the future with any guarantee of accuracy and we can't change the past, but we can learn from it, look to the future, and correct our mistakes.

Was the large increase in membership fees a mistake? I can tell you I was personally against it as a then-president of an AFGA club. I felt there were other alternatives that could have been looked at as well. As you know the motion to increase the affiliation fees was passed by a large majority of the membership. As a believer in democracy I accepted that decision and moved forward. I didn't look at disassociation because I didn't get what I wanted. Instead I stepped up and volunteered my time and energy to try and make the AFGA a stronger and relevant voice within the outdoor

community. Just as many of you have and continue to do so from within your clubs and zones.

I respect the fact that the previous board members had some extremely tough decisions to make and I do not doubt for a moment that they made the decisions they did based on what they felt was in the best interest of the AFGA and its members.

At the time of writing we are once again in one of those 'what's the best decision' situations. The current Executive put forward a Special Resolution that we felt was an option to allow the AFGA to continue operating financially. It did not come easy and did not come without varying views on whether it was the best option, but it was an important enough issue that it needed to have an answer from the members of the association. It's healthy for an organization to have members with different viewpoints on how to deal with issues and how to solve them. It is also important at the end of it all that the survival of the organization is more important than any single decision or any one individual within the organization.

This is too important of an organization not to continue what it does and that is to advocate on behalf of its members and the entire outdoor community, so whatever the decision turned out to be, I respect it as the desire of the majority of the AFGA membership. We, as a board, with your assistance, will produce a plan to make

1st Vice-President's Report

By Faran Schaber

1st Vice-President

We are at the start of a new month as I write this. Where did the time go? It seems like the older we get the faster time flies by.

The AGM is completed for another year. We had a few glitches, but we also found some new features in the Zoom Webinar platform that allowed

delegates more interaction with the panelists, as well as the other delegates. Virtual meetings are still on the learning curve for all of us and will be a useful tool for us in the future.

With what we have learned at the AGM, we put this knowledge forward for the AFGA Resolutions and Recommendations meeting, which allows for some good interaction between delegates and panelists. I hope that it gave the experience of being on the Conference floor, virtually from our own homes. Preliminary emails with revisions to the resolutions are an ideal way to speed up the resolution process, as it takes time to input materials when they are brought forward from the floor. These are all points that will be kept in mind for future events.



sure that we, as the oldest and largest conservation association in Alberta, continue to evolve and represent the interests of the entire outdoor community. I hope the rest of you will continue as well, to not only be a member of this great organization, but also continue to engage with each other and the Executive and share your wisdom and ideas. After all, you are the AFGA and the future of all that we hold dear as members of the outdoor community.

On that note and from my last article, I had mentioned that the Communications Committee was working on something to help improve our communication. So I have proposed to the Zone Directors a plan that would see them provide to each of their clubs a short point form report to be presented by the club president at the club's monthly meetings. This report would highlight what the provincial Executive is working on or dealing with. In turn, I have also asked them to get you as a club, to provide to them a monthly report that highlights the projects and activities that you are working on. Hopefully, with everyone's cooperation we can share ideas and resources when we are striving for similar goals. It is also a way that we can support each other's events and programs.

The Communication Committee is also working on getting pictures and short video clips from clubs on activities that they are involved in. Whether it's an organized event like a fish derby or gun show, or just someone cleaning and organizing their decoys for the spring or fall hunting season, these short clips will be used to create social media posts to help inform and promote all the activities that we enjoy as members of the outdoor community. If you have something, send them off to communications@afga.org.

Lastly, we are working towards developing some online webinar style presentations to educate and inform people on various aspects of the outdoors. It would be great to get some ideas on what you as members would like to see, so drop a line at the email mentioned above and we will do our best to get that organized and initiated.

Thank you to all those clubs who have put forward their 'Club Snapshot' for the Hook and Bullet-in newsletter. It is very much appreciated so keep them coming. As well if you have some outdoor tips to share with everyone, we would also like to hear from you and will add that to our helpful tips section.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and be safe in all your outdoor activities. 🐦

Let Me Introduce Myself!

By **Natalie Horne**

Hi fellow AFGA members, friends and family! My name is Natalie, and I joined the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) as a contractor in 2019, looking after communications and the social media presence of the organization. I was then lucky enough to attend the last 'in-person' AGM and Conference where I got to meet a number of club members before we were all impacted by COVID-19.

Over the last few years, we've tried to keep you entertained, but also informed, while we were all in lockdowns and isolation, and now I'm very excited to see our clubs and members become active in the community again. The volunteer activities, conservation projects and in-person club events are such an amazing part of the AFGA and its history, and I love hearing and sharing these stories with the greater AFGA community. Contact me with any details of your upcoming or past events via email at communications@afga.org.

The Clubs, Members, Life Members and AFGA Executive are the backbone of this organization. With such an impressive, combined wealth of knowledge, and with so many giving back to our community through the time they volunteer, it's an amazing opportunity to communicate information on their ongoing efforts in conserving our province's natural resources.

After some time off in 2021, to welcome my daughter into the world, I became a full time AFGA staff member in February of 2022 and couldn't be more excited! I will not only

be providing communications and social media services but have also taken on the management of the Club Membership Program, and coordination of the Wildlife Trust Fund Volunteer Land Stewardship Program. While these tasks combined may seem daunting to some, I love a good challenge and am excited to work with the AFGA Team to continue the association's success.



Having grown up in Australia I graduated from the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Arts and began my career in the Internet Marketing industry. I have lived and worked in Australia, Spain, London and Ireland before moving to Canada, which I now call my forever home. I have a solid foundation and experience in Communications, Management, Administrative Services, Data Entry and Data Management, and I am extremely enthusiastic to use these skills to tell the ongoing story of the revitalized AFGA, support the management of club memberships and work with the greatly appreciated, volunteer stewards of our Wildlife Trust Fund properties.

When I moved to Canada around 10 years ago, and had friends take me out ice fishing on Lesser Slave Lake, I was enthralled by the natural beauty of



Northern Alberta. With regular trips to the backcountry in and around Lac La Biche, with my now husband, Travis (a farmer, and active hunting and fishing expert, so he tells me!), I became more and more interested in the uniqueness of this fascinating country.

When the opportunity to complete a diploma in Environmental Studies became available, I jumped at the chance, completing a two-year program and several years of summer and contract work for organizations including Athabasca County, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, the Alberta Invasive Species Council, and Owl River Environmental Services.



This time spent learning and understanding the delicate balance that our natural resources rely on, has given me a deep understanding and appreciation for the conservation work the AFGA continues to do, and I hope to help in that mission, well into the future.

The hunting, fishing and outdoor lifestyle is one that my husband and I value as a family. To know where our food is harvested from and processing it ourselves is something that we appreciate, as does our bank balance! We enjoy spending time in our natural environment whether we're on the open or hard water, hunting, hiking one of the AFGA's beautiful Wildlife Trust Fund properties or simply checking the fence line of our own property; it's gorgeous out there! With the arrival of our daughter, who was enrolled as a proud AFGA family member at birth, we are also excited to introduce and instill in her, the respect we have for our natural environment and the legacy we are leaving for all future Albertans.



I look forward to working with many of you in the different roles I've taken on and am always more than happy to hear your stories on your own outdoor adventures or successful harvesting (who doesn't love to brag?!) Contact me via email at communications@afga.org, I look forward to hearing from you! 🐦



Hunting Chair Report

By Brian Rudyk

Hunting Chair

Well, another Virtual AGM has come and gone. Hopefully, that will be the last AGM required to be held on-line. As the Chair positions on the AFGA Executive remain unchanged, you will unfortunately have to put up with my ramblings for at least another year. It would be nice to see more people come forward to take active roles in the provincial Executive but maybe no elections are just an indication of how great a job is being done!

I have a few members who have been very helpful with researching data and pressing the Environment Minister on issues like allocations and grazing lease access and have kept me in the loop as to the responses they receive. This is much appreciated and I welcome more people to share information they have acquired, the actions taken, and the reactions to it.

To me, the AGM indicated that there is still much work to be done. The revitalization and rebranding of AFGA continues to be of high priority. Any division of our numbers weakens our abilities to effectively carry out the objectives of the organization and our capacity to make a difference. It is probably more important than ever to strengthen our membership. Being the largest conservation, hunting and angling organization in Alberta comprised of members with a wide variety of related interests, it is not likely that we will ever achieve a time when everyone will be 100% happy with the direction and actions taken. What is required though is for leadership to develop and demonstrate the value of



a united approach which will promote buy-in from the broadest range of outdoor enthusiasts.

With licensed anglers in the 350,000 range, hunters around 150,000, large numbers of recreational shooters, and numerous people who enjoy the outdoors for a wide array of reasons, there is certainly plenty of opportunity. This goal will not be achieved however, without the input and assistance of the membership. Improved communication has been a major undertaking of the Executive and solid two-way transfer of information between members, clubs, zones and the provincial office will be required. An active membership providing feedback, ideas and suggestions along with promoting the work of the association will be a major factor in building the modernized AFGA. Together we need to shape an organization that attracts

and serves a broad perspective of outdoor enthusiasts.

Relaxing regulations for COVID has allowed for an in-person AFGA Wildlife Awards Banquet which takes place on May 7th. Many thanks to those who took on planning and hosting this event on quite short notice. Getting our members together again has been long awaited and much needed. Congratulations to all of the 2020 and 2021 wildlife award winners. Additionally, the AFGA Narrow Lake Youth Camp and Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) Program look to be a go this summer which is great news for our association. Looking forward to seeing these two great programs underway again and thanks to everyone involved in making them happen.

Along with the Annual Wildlife Awards Banquet, I would like to recognize the efforts of all the AFGA Of-



ficial Measurers and those involved with maintaining the Alberta records system and producing the Alberta Wildlife Records book. This requires a ton of volunteer time which often goes unacknowledged. Recently, I had the honour of scoring a bighorn ram for Ryan Mitchell which qualifies for the Alberta Records Book and Boone and Crockett Awards Book. Ryan's is a great story in that he is a regular Alberta resident hunter who, through the Minister's Special Licence (MSL) raffle, won the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep Special Licence. He followed up his good fortune with success on the mountain and it couldn't have all come together for a nicer guy. Congratulations Ryan! Fantastic to see a MSL unfold this way. The included photo is Ryan with his ram.



The Turkey Management Plan is out so check to see what it entails. The Alberta Conservation Association is practicing their turkey capture and release skills relocating some Alberta turkeys from areas with abundant populations to locations where they are a bit sparser. This will prepare them to import turkeys next year from British Columbia and Manitoba in order to increase our turkey population and species available in Alberta.

The Mule Deer Management Plan Committee has met again. We will be going through the allocation process for mule deer in a couple of WMUs with the biologist involved in setting them. This should be a very worthwhile exercise. With no sign of the Alberta Game Policy Advisory Council (AG-PAC) meetings or a Five-Year Outfitter Allocation Review on the horizon, at least work on this committee has provided an opportunity to bring forward and discuss some of our concerns.

At time of writing, I have managed to check out some deer feeding areas in search of shed antlers. I have found a couple of sets and a hand full of singles but it is looking like a very hard winter on deer in Northern Alberta due to a large volume of snow. On a year such as this, with the harsh conditions, I won't search bush trails

or bedding areas until well into the spring for fear of pushing yarded up deer causing them to utilize critical energy reserves. Searching in these open feeding areas, I have already discovered a number of deer carcasses including a couple of whitetail bucks likely fallen to advantaged predators. Don't forget to contact Alberta Fish and Wildlife for a permit for any found dead wildlife you wish to keep. I hope for an early spring to give the deer a break and a better chance for survival. If you get a chance, take part in some predator control to keep their numbers in check.

By the time this article is published, Spring Bear and Snow Goose seasons should be well underway. Both of these species' populations are at very high levels so I encourage anyone interested in these hunts to get out, enjoy the great outdoors and harvest some fresh table fare these hunts will provide. If you are fortunate enough to harvest a trophy bear, I recommend getting the skull cleaned, air-dried for 60 days at room temperature, and officially scored as soon as eligible. Skulls are notorious for continuing to shrink well beyond the required drying period so if you wait for club scoring events, which are usually sometime after the fall hunting season, your trophy may not earn full credit for what it grew.

Good luck this spring hunting season and with any fish and big game draw applications you enter. I am hoping to get in, a late season ice fishing trip with some quality wall tent time as before we know it, the open water fishing season will be upon us. I am also looking forward to a much better year with the opportunity for us to celebrate and share our outdoor way of life together once again. We will still have many challenges to face but I believe in the power of people, and the ability to get together will rejuvenate our effort and resolve, in making things happen. Hope to see you at a Fish and Game event or in the great outdoors! 🐾



Fishing Chair Report

By Darryl Smith

Fishing Chair

What Lies Ahead?

I had it in the back of my head that I would be talking about how the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) should move forward based on the Membership Focus Priorities Programs (MFPP) Committee report that is now available online through the AFGA website. The report provides a frank assessment but also lays out future vision, challenges, and opportunities for the organization. The hope of the committee members was to provide a path that would build on the over 100-year legacy of AFGA.

Instead, I find myself contemplating whether the provincial arm of the organization can survive following the defeat of the Special Resolution during the Annual General Meeting that was intended to provide time to restructure and revitalize AFGA. While the vote showed that 71% of the delegates supported the direction, Special Resolutions require a three-quarter majority to pass. In the next month, the AFGA Executive will need to consider what options are available to maintain the viability of the organization at a provincial level.

Regardless of what happens at a provincial level, there are AFGA clubs across the province that will continue to be involved in conservation, education, stewardship, advocacy, citizen science, and programs that benefit not only their communities but the overall province. For these local voices to be heard, it requires communication and meaningful engagement platforms at

local and regional levels.

As we move into the endemic phase of living with COVID-19, it is time for the organization to get back to its roots and continue moving forward. The AFGA Fisheries Caucus which is made up of Zone and Club Fishing Chairs plus other key contacts, has proven to be a valuable platform to discuss issues, propose solutions, and guide the AFGA in its advocacy endeavours related to fisheries in Alberta. With the help of the caucus, we will quantify and identify AFGA club and member involvement related to fisheries, habitat, outdoor recreation, stewardship, and ethics as they impact sportfishing in Alberta. The contribution of AFGA is undervalued and lacks respect from those empowered to manage Alberta's fisheries on behalf of Albertans. We need each of you to help in letting AFGA know what you are undertaking in these areas. No endeavour is too small. The future of sportfishing is as much tied to introducing a neighbor to the pastime as it is to academic research. Please connect with the Fishing Chairs at your club, zone, or provincial level. You can always reach me as your AFGA Provincial Fishing Chair at fishchair@afga.org.

AFGA has presented extensive researched positions related to our vision for the direction of fisheries management in Alberta. Much aligns with the path the province is following. Where there are gaps, they are related to lack of meaningful engagement, conflicting science, and priority set-



ting. We are currently in the process of assembling the consensus-based science related to critical concepts that need more in-depth engagement. These concepts include indirect mortality, catchability, regulatory options, meaningful consultations, optimal sustainable yield, research protocols, and risk metrics.

Depending on where you live in the province or how quickly winter shifts to spring, the prospect of being on the open water casting a line is near. For most of us this will be at a stocked, put and take trout fishery. The modernization and expansion of provincial fish hatcheries, stocking programs by both the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), the Alberta Government, and projects involving ACA or local AFGA clubs, allow most of us to have opportunity on our doorstep. Over 25 percent of the fishing in Alberta takes place at these stocked ponds and lakes. They are a critical part of the sportfishing equation with its social, economic, and environmental implications. It was interesting to read the recent provincial budget where one of the key objectives was tied to enhancing angling and hunting opportunities through effective fish and wildlife program management. The initiative supporting this was \$42.5 million allocated to improve angling opportunities and the provincial fish stocking program in 2022-23. Kudos to the Alberta government under the leadership of Minister Nixon for making this a priority. 🐾



Environment Chair Report

By Glenn Heather

Environment Chair

Cheviot Mine: What is required to successfully re-establish the habitat and the ecosystems after mining activities? Where we are today?

As you may have heard, Teck Resources Ltd, is finished mining coal in the foothills/mountains near Cadomin.

There was a meeting held February 2nd, with representatives of the Friends of Cadomin, Alberta Trappers Association and your Alberta Fish and Game.

The meeting was hosted by AEP, based out of Hinton, asking our opinions as to what we believe a land Management Plan should entail, to have this land turned back to the Crown which then could be used by Albertans, as it once was.

Purpose of Land Management Plan: The LMP provides land and resource management objectives for the plan area to guide ongoing and future reclamation activities. This provides clarity regarding how the area may be accessed in future and what land uses may be considered, to not compromise the reclamation of the areas

Quite quickly it was questioned why the recommendations of the Luscar & Gregg River Mines Land Management Plan Regional Integrated Decision, recommended by the Luscar and Gregg River Mines Land Management Plan Working Group back in August 2012 has not been completely integrated and completed. There were significant efforts from stakeholders



to develop this comprehensive package, requests by government at the time to give guidance to Teck Coal, and again reestablish these areas back to Albertans. Ten years later, we still do have this close to completion, now AEP, wants to get opinions what to do at the Cheviot mine.

Alberta Fish and Game welcomes any and all consultation from our Government, so we were glad to see a dialog is being established, however, talking about one project when another one from ten years ago, is still not complete? This brings forth challenging questions. AEP has agreed to speak with us again and potentially answer the downfalls of the past and progression in the future.

Sadly at this point I cannot say any-

thing is concrete as to what will happen, related to access and habitat reestablishment in any of the Teck Coal mining land at this point.

Below is a sample of what was recommended by the Luscar and Gregg River Mines Land Management Plan Working Group in 2012. It looks very applicable to what we would want today.

The working group considered elements such as legislation, regulatory requirements, existing land-use commitments, access management, recreational opportunities, conservation values and landscape capabilities of rehabilitated lands.

Objectives are to: maintain viable and healthy fish and wildlife populations; manage wildlife and protect habitat; manage fish and protect watersheds; maintain biodiversity; recreational opportunities will be compatible with the existing wildlife and watershed values; water and watersheds are healthy, productive and sustainable; and effective education and communication, enforcement, monitoring and evaluation, and stewardship.

I'll keep you posted, as additional meetings occur and hopefully a direction can be communicated as how to best get your Crown land back to Albertans.

Take care, stay safe and preserve our habitat. 🐾

Wildlife Trust Fund Program

FEATURE PROPERTY

JACK PINE, VILNA & NORTH VILNA PROPERTIES

By **Natalie Horne**

Thanks to all of you, who are following our Wildlife Trust Fund Property features. These properties are amongst the proudest achievements of the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA). Our membership takes great pride in the legacy these properties are creating for future generations.

If you are unfamiliar with the Wildlife Trust Fund, it is Alberta's oldest and most well-respected land trust. It includes over 100 properties that stretch from the extreme southern reaches of the province all the way north to Manning. These properties encompass nearly 50,000 acres of important fish and wildlife habitat. In addition to conserving critical habitat, Wildlife Trust Fund properties provide recreational opportunities for all outdoor enthusiasts.

In this feature we will be highlighting three properties, all within approximately 30km of each other, Jack Pine, Vilna and North Vilna. All three properties are in the northeast area of our province, just east of Smoky Lake along Highway 28. With their close proximity to each other, they provide the perfect recreating or hunting opportunities for those who live in or wish to visit the area.

Jackpine (Alberta Discover Guide D3-111) is a 161-acre site located on quarter section NE-12-060-13-W4M,



19km east of Smoky Lake and on the north side of Highway 28, and the Bellis Lake Natural Area. The property falls under Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) 504 and 260. Our part-



ners in the property management are the Alberta Conservation Association, the County of Smoky Lake, and the Vilna Fish and Game Association.

As you would expect from the name, mature jack pine dominates the property throughout, with some trembling aspen, balsam poplar, birch, alder, willow and rose also found on the property. Jack Pine consists of very sandy soil so there is a sparse understory, and the site is mostly flat, which makes hiking or snowshoeing a real pleasure!

This site, like most of our Wildlife Trust Fund Properties, is day use only, with no

open fires and while it is foot access only, Jack Pine is unique as an exception is in place for a snowmobile trail. This snowmobile trail forms the north boundary and cuts through a



portion of the property from north to south. We ask anyone accessing the property via snowmobile to always remain on the designated snowmobile trail. A power line forms the east boundary of the property, the west boundary of the property is not marked and Highway 28 forms the south boundary.



Wildlife found on the property includes white-tailed deer, moose, fox, coyote, and a variety of small game and bird species. With the assistance of the Vilna Fish and Game Association, the AFGA acquired Jack Pine from the County of Smoky Lake in 1998 and continues to maintain and enhance the wildlife habitat associated with this property. We encourage all our members to get out to visit the area. It has potential for hunting of upland game birds and big game during legal hunting seasons, and fantastic recreational opportunities year-round.

Travelling just over 20km east of Jack Pine, along Highway 28 brings you to the second property we are featuring



this month, Vilna (Alberta Discover Guide D4-35).

This 160-acre site is located on quarter section SE-36-059-13-W4M and falls under WMU 502. This property was acquired in 2006 and several partnerships made the purchase and ongoing conservation of the site possible. These include the Alberta Conservation Association, Athabasca Fish and Game, Beaver River Fish and Game, Edmonton Fish and Game, Fort Saskatchewan Fish and Game, Innisfree Fish and Game, Lloydminster Fish and Game, Northeast Alberta Fish and Game (Zone 5), Sherwood Park Fish and Game, Spedden Fish and Game, St. Paul Fish and Game, Vilna



Fish and Game, and Willingdon Fish and Game.

When discussing the property acquisition of both Vilna and Jack Pine, Jerry Tchir, past president of the Vilna Fish and Game Association, made special

mention of members John Gordey and John Goruk who sadly passed away in 2011 and 2012, respectively. Jerry discussed how both Johns played a huge part in securing these properties for the Wildlife Trust Fund; we sincerely thank them for their contributions in keeping this land in trust for future generations to appreciate. We would also like to extend our thanks to Mike Nay who has been a volunteer land steward on Vilna and Jack Pine for several years. Without the work of Mike and other volunteers, the ongoing maintenance of these properties would not be possible. If you would like to volunteer as a land steward for these, or any other



Wildlife Trust Fund properties, please email communications@afga.org.

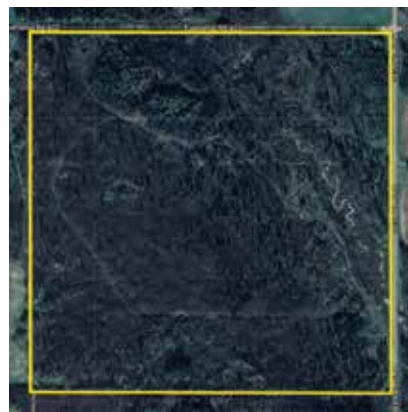
Vilna consists of a full quarter section of native parkland habitat and is fully fenced. The site is foot access only, day use only, with no open fires. The uplands are gently rolling, and the majority of the canopy consists of mature tree cover including aspen and white spruce. The understory is diverse with snowberry, dogwood, >



Saskatoon, chokecherry, willow and wild raspberry.

There are many signs of wildlife on the Vilna property and the area winters a large population of ungulates. There are occasional moose on the property, as well as black bear. Ruffed grouse have ideal nesting, drumming and brood rearing habitat. Small clearings also allow a diversity of songbirds to stage and/or nest on the property. Woodpeckers, and other cavity nesting birds have outstanding habitat options. Visiting Vilna, you're sure to see some form of wildlife or wildlife signs year-round. The property also offers fantastic hunting opportunities during the legal hunting season for the area.

Travelling just 3km north of the Vilna property, along Range Road 130, brings you to the third property we are featuring this month, North Vilna



(Alberta Discover Guide D4-123). This 161-acre site is located on quarter section NE-12-060-13-W4M

and falls under WMU 502. It has mature mixedwood forest stands, on the south and north ends and is otherwise covered in young aspen. A creek runs through the east half of the site and wildlife in the area includes moose, white-tailed and mule deer, black bear and ruffed grouse.



North Vilna is fenced, day use only, foot access only, and no open fires are permitted. The AFGA partnered with the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) and Suncor Energy Foundation in managing this property in 2018 and we would like to thank ACA Senior Biologist, Roy Schmelzeisen, for the contribution of details and pictures pertaining to this property for this article.

ACA purchased the North Vilna property in 2011 and was funded by Suncor Energy Foundation through the ACA Partners in Conservation



program. Much of the property had been logged in 2007 and the regrowth to date has been substantial.



With the creek running through the eastern portion of North Vilna, wildlife signs are numerous and diverse. It's the perfect place to recreate, or hunt during the legal seasons. North Vilna has nesting boxes scattered throughout and was used by the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) for bird count and collection data in 2016, when over 32 species of birds and animals were noted as utilizing the property.

If you're planning to visit, or already live in the northeast area of Alberta, we would suggest a visit to one or more of these properties; they are the perfect place for a family adventure.



We would also like to remind our readers that proper management of our Wildlife Trust Fund properties depends heavily on AFGA members and our volunteer land stewardship program. If you are interested in volunteering as a steward, conducting biannual inspections, and assisting habitat staff with maintenance and special projects, contact us via email at communications@afga.org.

Z O N E R E P O R T S



ZONE 1 REPORT

By Greg Bird

Welcome everyone and thank you for taking the time to read the AFGA reports, always an excellent source of current information about the AFGA and affiliated clubs. We have been working very diligently on behalf of the membership to renew and modernize the organization to better position us going forward in these challenging times. Each of our sub-committees have been meeting regularly and working through suggestions and ideas to this end. I welcome any and all feedback, unique

ideas for our club re-organization, and general comments. Please do not hesitate to reach out with anything you feel may be of value to this process. The more we have on the table, the better the brainstorming and eventual outcome that will result for the betterment of not only our club, but our resources.

At the time of publication, it will be draw submission time once again. No doubt all of you have already spoken to your fellow hunting companions, decided on species and location, and now it is time to submit and wait to see if this year is your year for that elusive tag! That brings to mind the great work your provincial Hunting Chair has done this past year to monitor and compile data on the tag allocations throughout the province. I am continually awed by how much work Brian Rudyk is doing on all your behalf regarding this complex issue.

The anglers in our midst will also be getting excited by now and planning those fishing trips with friends and families. Alberta has beautiful waterways to offer this recreational activity, and diverse species of fish to enjoy. This also is an incredibly and sometimes contentious issue between government, advocacy groups, and end users. This is yet another example of how your AFGA works diligently to secure and maintain this resource, not just for the present, but to ensure its continued safety and stability. We should all commend our provincial Fishing Chair on this, as Darryl Smith works tirelessly to ensure our waterways are protected and remain accessible to anglers and recreationalists alike.

As it appears, and many are hoping, some of the long-standing COVID restrictions are soon to be relaxed, and it may allow for some face-to-face normality in meetings to come. I am hoping that we will soon be able to work into such meetings and as such I would appreciate an invite to your individual club meetings. This will allow me to get to know some of you better and learn about some of the very meaningful projects you are planning and currently have on the go. I would like to celebrate your hard efforts in this publication was well, so please reach out and let me know if there is anything you would like published. You can contact me at zone1director@afga.org.

Good luck to you all, stay safe, and get out and enjoy that wonderful resource we are blessed with. Enjoy your summer and fall outdoor seasons, hopefully it will create lifelong memories for all of us.

ZONE 2 REPORT

By Joe Baranyay

Over the past few years there seems to be a lot of complaints from clubs about the lack of communication from AFGA Executives to clubs, and the lack of transparency. I have heard this from a number of clubs at quite a few meetings. The question that seems to arise is, what do we get for our membership fees, and what is AFGA doing for us. Well I am here to tell you that I have never worked with a more dedicated group of volunteers that are trying to do the right thing for members by trying to hold

AFGA together and fight the fight on behalf of members on all fronts of hunting, fishing and conservation. Anyone who thinks that we are idle has not turned their computers on and read the communication that has been sent out to share with their club members.

I have sent out numerous requests for clubs to partake in showcasing their clubs in this magazine but it must fall on deaf ears or delete buttons. In the last six articles of Outdoor Canada West, we have had very little participation. I know that COVID has played a big part in our lives but your AFGA Executive has had monthly virtual meetings and all of the committees have produced reports. As I said, this group has had more meetings than a lot of past Executive boards, in spite of COVID.

Here are two reports from Zone 2 clubs on their activities:

**Sarcee Fish and Game
- Ivan Langdon**

We have been able to resume some in-person general meetings but we still offer the virtual option for the members that cannot attend.

On January 7th and 8th, Sarcee members volunteered to work a casino for a portion of the funds, there were many in attendance for the event.

On January 22nd we had our Annual Horn Scoring event with decreased entries this year. Changes were made to follow the current COVID guidelines. The event was enjoyed by everyone in attendance.

Unfortunately, we will not have a booth at the Calgary Boat and Out-

doors show due to the event being cancelled for this year.

Our annual banquet is to be held on March 12th at the Thorncliffe - Greenview Community Centre.

Sarcee donated \$5,000 to the turkey release program in Alberta.

**Okotoks and District Fish and Game
- Matt Zazula**



As with many clubs, the Okotoks and District Fish and Game Association has planned and held more events in recent months. They were able to hold a combined in-person / virtual Annual General Meeting. Some new blood was added to the long-standing Executive, which shows growth and interest in the club. Okotoks held a horn scoring event at a local brew pub this past February. It was a huge success, with lots of heads brought in and a great turnout. (See photo attached.) This was a win-win, with the club having a free facility to hold the event in a public setting and a local business being supported. Okotoks is also in the planning stages of holding its first ever Wild Game banquet, scheduled for June. Local interest is high and they're hoping for a sold-out evening. Membership numbers have been maintained. Like so many clubs, Okotoks is happy for things to open up and get back to doing the things everyone loves to do.

We are still working on lease land access and this will be a long contentious issue. I have spent some time sitting in on Real Property Alberta meetings with the Legislative Assembly committee and will report after meeting with Highwood MLA, R.J. Sigurdson who chairs the committee, in the near future.



ZONE 3 REPORT

By Harold Drok

The Zone 3 clubs from Central Alberta are currently working together to put on the first in-person Alberta Fish and Game Association, Wildlife Awards since pre-COVID 2019. We have a great team putting in lots of effort including Andy Hogberg, Alan Henderson, Christine Frandsen, Leonard Davis, Arnold Winkler, Greg Lunn, Dan Mosier and Dave Powell. There appears to be lots of interest in participating in the Wildlife Awards Banquet scheduled for May 7, 2022 in Lacombe at the Lacombe Memorial Centre. We will be presenting the awards for 2020 and 2021. Congratulations to all of the winners!

Ice fishing in Central Alberta certainly has been interesting this year, the Red Deer Fish and Game West Lake has seen fewer anglers this winter because of recent fish stocking programs in Central Alberta. Dickson Trout Pond has been stocked with Rainbows and Tiger Trout, and Cow Lake was stocked with Rainbow Trout; reports have been favourable for the fishers.

Watch your club emails and Facebook page for upcoming Youth Camp dates in the Central Zone as well as club projects that many clubs will be undertaking. Red Deer will be looking for volunteers to assist with the Alberta Youth Pheasant pen relocation project starting this spring. Check with your local club where you can volunteer, there's always something you can do to benefit your local Fish and Game Club.



ZONE 4 REPORT

By Chelsea Jaeger

I am continuing on with the theme of featuring clubs from Zone 4. This month's article comes from Spruce Grove Fish and Game's President, Mark Feist.

Spruce Grove Fish and Game is still active as far as COVID restrictions allow. It has been a difficult year with many cancelled meetings and events. However, we are preparing to build swallow and bluebird nest boxes this spring. These will then be available for us to handout at events in Spruce Grove throughout the summer. Harry White will build duck nesting boxes that the club will take out to Chickakoo Park in March while we maintain the 35 nest boxes (Goldeneye and Bufflehead) already in place.

Many thanks to the Alberta Conservation Association, Golden Spike Lumber Sales, and Spruce Grove Fish and

Game members for making this project possible. Special thanks to Brett Calverley, Harry White, George Tameling and Terry Baron on assembly duty.

We just had our antler measuring event and were able to score twelve current and non-current racks. The best was a 154 Pope and Young white-tail deer. I also had the opportunity to score a Dall sheep. Spruce Grove Fish and Game will be co-hosting a Kids-Can-Fish event with Onoway Fish and Game on March 5, 2022. The club is hoping to have a wild game dinner at some point this spring; check our social media for updates.

Sadly, we lost three members last year. Vic Smigelski had been a long-term member, Ken Lemieux lost a battle with cancer, and lastly, a huge fish and game voice, Bernie Letourneau. I will especially miss him as he was always available to help me at the annual horn scoring event.

Check out our webpage at www.sprucegrovefishandgame.org.



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ZONE 5 REPORT

By Cynthia Pawliuk

After a winter of cold temperatures that led to outings being postponed, it was great to see people finally getting outdoors. Late in the winter I saw lots of tents on the lake and many people walking out due to the flood water. Thankfully now spring is upon us, and I hope people got out to get those last days of fishing in before spawning started; I have heard of some great fish being caught.

Here in Zone 5, with some COVID restrictions being lifted, it's nice to see that clubs are having horn measuring events, club wildlife award nights, and in-person meetings. Let me know what your clubs are up to this spring and summer so that I can share your highlights with all of Zone 5 and all



the other AFGA clubs.

I've had good chats with the clubs from Fort Saskatchewan, Lamont and Lloydminster and I think we are all doing the same in trying to keep things moving in a positive way. I have had a few ladies that sit on our Beaver River Fish and Game club say "Hey, I would like to take your Hunter Education course!" These two gals do not hunt (yet), and they fish very little but hopefully they'll be taking up

a new hobby. Just maybe, I might get one of them out next fall for a day.

Our Zone recently held a casino and I would like to thank everyone that came out and volunteered. It was good to see people that I have not seen in a year or more and we all had a few good laughs.

In February we held the AFGA AGM via Zoom and there quite a few delegates that attended but hopefully in 2023 we will be able to hold it in person so we can all catch up with each other and maybe see some new faces and make new friends. It would be good to share some good fishing and hunting stories from the last couple of years.

Narrow Lake Conservation Centre's, youth camp coordinator, Samantha, will be taking registrations for the camps this year; it fills up very fast. In preparation there is work being done on some old buildings, and a work-bee happening May 28th and 29th. Narrow Lake will also be having a raffle so if anyone would like I can send you contact information.

Being a Zone Director is a nice, new challenge for me. I like the lines of communication that I am able to create between clubs and AFGA to get out as much information as possible. When we all work together, we can move mountains! 🐦



**Alberta Fish and Game Association
Annual Parade of Donations**

We are pleased to continue with our annual tradition of the Parade of Donations and gratefully recognize the following Clubs and individuals who have donated a total of \$20,600 to assist with the Wildlife Trust Fund program, the Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) camps, and the continued legacy of the Alberta Fish and Game Association.

- Dunvegan Fish and Game
- Edmonton Old Timers' Fishing Club
- Lethbridge Fish and Game
- Onoway and District Fish and Game and Gun Club
- Picture Butte Fish and Game
- Sarcee Fish and Game
- Spruce Grove Fish and Game
- St. Paul Fish and Game
- Whitecourt Fish Game
- Colin Jackson

Donations are always gratefully accepted through the "DONATE" button on our website at afga.org.

Thank you