



Volunteer

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2017

Notes from the Managing Director

I am humbled and honoured to be stepping into the role of managing director that Bob Haysom has managed so well for the past 14 years. I look forward to working with you and serving you and helping the collective body achieve our goals.

I am now fully settled into my new office which is physically located at the Little Bow Pheasant Ranch on the Little Bow River just south of High River, which is home for me. After 20 years of commuting to the City, the 5-minute drive out in the country is greatly appreciated. A big shout out and thanks to the members for allowing me to work in such a great space.

The most common question I have received since I started is "Where does the money go?". To this end, moving forward I will do my best to keep you informed. I plan to send out a newsletter on a quarterly basis. If there is anyone out there that knows anything about design and layout and would like to help me in making this look a little prettier – it would be appreciated. As well, our website is a great tool to keep you informed. Michell and Dan MacDougall do an excellent job in keeping the site fresh and up to date. I see the sponsor logos are all updated on the site. Please be aware of who they are and do your best to support them as they have supported us. Other means of staying in touch is to follow us on Facebook or Twitter, which are both updated daily. Historically PF Calgary has partnered on several sites throughout southern Alberta. Projects such as East Hays, Legacy, Grantham Lakes, Bull Trail and Silver Sage are a few examples of fee simple purchases that PF Calgary supported, all of which will be here for perpetuity for Albertans to enjoy.

Ross creek property has been expanded upon and our friends at Medicine Hat – PF Chinook has been putting in sweat equity to enhance this super sight.

PF Calgary has been focusing its support on the Milk River Ridge Reservoir Project, which is also a super site that has it all. Firstly, its big – 1100 acres in total. It provides a mix of conservation and restoration. That is, approximately half of the property is in native grass that will be conserved and half is being enhanced with forage and shrub plantings. We have a diverse and large number of partners, the project helps with many natural benefits, not the least of which is supporting the lifecycle of upland gamebirds – all on public land. PF Calgary is proud to be a lead funding agency in this terrific project. This project is being watched by municipal and provincial governments, irrigation districts and several environmental non-government agencies and will be replicated on reservoirs and canals throughout southern Alberta, primarily for the water quality benefits.

Milk River Ridge Reservoir Project

Milk River Ridge Reservoir is located approximately 50 kms south of Lethbridge. The reservoir is used for irrigation and provides drinking water for the towns of Raymond and Stirling. Recreational opportunities such as fishing and water skiing are also provided by this reservoir. Crown lands, under the jurisdiction of Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP), exist around the entire periphery of the reservoir and also along the canal systems coming into and leaving the reservoir.

One of the purposes of these crown lands is to provide a vegetative buffer around the reservoir and canal systems – these buffers play a critical role in filtering nutrients (manure, fertilizers) during runoff. In the past, these vegetative buffers have also provided functional wildlife habitat for a variety of species ranging from mule deer to ring-necked pheasants.

However, several decades of abuse, primarily in the form of 'free farming' (i.e. trespass livestock grazing and cropping), have negatively impacted the condition and effectiveness of the vegetative buffer. Water quality testing conducted by the County of Warner revealed high levels of nutrients, and the degraded state of the vegetation has drastically reduced the wildlife habitat value.

In 2013, a partnership was formed between Alberta Environment and Parks and the County of Warner. The goal was to reinstate the crown land boundaries via surveying and fencing, and re-establish the vegetative buffer to its full extent. At this time, the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) and PF Calgary joined the partnership to assist with the habitat component.

By end of 2015, over 200 acres of permanent cover has been reseeded along the reservoir and canals, and over 25 km of fencing has been completed to protect the corridor lands – there is still much more to go as there is over 1000 acres of crown lands associated with this waterbody. A large area (approx. 140 acres) on the west end of the reservoir contains over 80 acres of reseeded ground alone. Over 1,800 shrubs have also been planted here to provide even more habitat structure for wildlife.

Last year, a wetland was constructed on the west end of the reservoir to capture runoff, allowing for the filtration and settlement of nutrients before draining into the main reservoir itself. The resulting cattail/bulrush wetland will also provide excellent wintering habitat for wildlife, such as pheasants. This included the installation of a canal intake and waterline to the wetland which will provide the opportunity to supplement the wetland with water during dry years.

The entirety of this project within the County of Warner will take another 2-3 years to complete. The partnerships that have been developed throughout the last three year have played a very critical role in the successes and progress of this project thus far. Collaboration between AEP, The County of Warner, ACA, Pheasants Forever Calgary, Lethbridge Fish and Game, Magrath Rod and Gun Club and the Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association has all made the rapid progress on this project possible. Additional and very welcomed partners in 2016 include Irrican Power, St Mary River Irrigation District, Taber Irrigation District, Raymond Irrigation District, and the New Dayton Rod and Gun Club.

Ongoing support from partners will be critical in the continued success of this program. It is a great opportunity to show how government agencies, municipalities, counties and non-government organizations can work together to implement valuable stewardship initiatives. It also provides a great platform to promote and expand beneficial land use practices to private lands extending beyond the crown lands along the canals and reservoirs.



Ross Creek

The Ross Creek Conservation Site is a 1097 acre site that was purchased initially in 2012 by funding from Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Fish and Game Association (Wildlife Trust Fund and Medicine Hat Fish and Game), Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, La Terra Ventures, Pheasants Forever – Calgary Chapter, Pheasants Forever – Chinook Chapter. And additional 160 acres adjacent to the Ross Creek Conservation Site was purchased in the spring of 2017, adding to the overall size of the site.

Historically the site and adjacent lands consisted of native prairie. In the 1940's, the land was partially broken to accommodate hay and cereal grain crops. The site recently was managed for livestock grazing and hay production. Approximately 640 acres of the site remains unbroken, while the remaining acres consist of tame grass communities and riparian vegetation along Ross Creek.

This parcel represents an opportunity for native prairie conservation as well as enhancement activities for upland birds, ungulates, and species at risk. The majority of the site is existing native grass communities while the remaining 297 acres are comprised of a mix of native trees and shrubs along Ross Creek and tame grasses and ephemeral wetlands. The overall intent of this purchase is to conserve habitat for grassland birds, particularly Sprague's Pipit and complete enhancements to benefit other species such as sharp-tailed grouse and ring-necked pheasant. Through this project, we will also be able to provide sustainable recreation opportunities



Circle E

Ducks aren't the only feathered friends benefitting from conservation partnerships in Alberta.

Recent collaborative efforts between Pheasants Forever Calgary and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) are resulting in the continuation of the conservation of pheasant habitat which is also home to waterfowl and other wildlife in southeastern Alberta.

Southeastern Alberta is home to several DUC projects built in the 1950s and '60s when the organization worked with irrigation districts to drought-proof the prairies by putting water on the land. Many of these projects now require extensive work to be maintained and operated.

Pheasants Forever Calgary and DUC cost-shared the re-construction of three of the segments of the Circle E project, located 15 miles southwest of Bow City, Alta. This project, originally constructed in 1954, includes 32 wetland basins or 2,000 acres of wetlands situated on more than 10,000 acres of native grasslands that are surrounded by intensive irrigated cropland.

DUC and Pheasants Forever Calgary work together to ensure these projects continue to provide productive habitat for pheasants, waterfowl and other wildlife including species of risk and species of concern such as the burrowing owl and short-eared owl respectively.



Circle E – pasture center right

Science

Pheasants Forever, is a science based organization that invests in research that helps inform decision makers on what policies and practices need to be employed to maximize the efficiency of putting your dollars to work. PF Calgary purchased radio collars for testing on Hungarian partridge recently and they were tested for the first time this spring. As of June 21, 3 of the 4 hens were located and each had successfully hatched their clutch of eggs. The selection of their nest locations will help managers determine optimum habitat needs to get densities of partridge up to that magic 50 pairs per square kilometer.



Strategic Planning



of PF Calgary met for a 2-day strategic planning session at the Little Bow Pheasant Ranch in early June. Outdoor Canada's long-time hunting editor and former managing director of Upland Gamebirds Alberta, Ken Bailey facilitated the session.

You will see a continued focus on habitat acquisition and improvement in southern Alberta. We will be recruiting volunteers to support our programs and fundraising initiatives, which we will diversify. Enhancing communications was deemed important and we will embark on a youth mentored hunt program. The plan is still in draft, however, some of the strategies identified

implemented.

2017 Board of Directors

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Important Dates

Thursday, September 7 – Director's Invitational Shoot