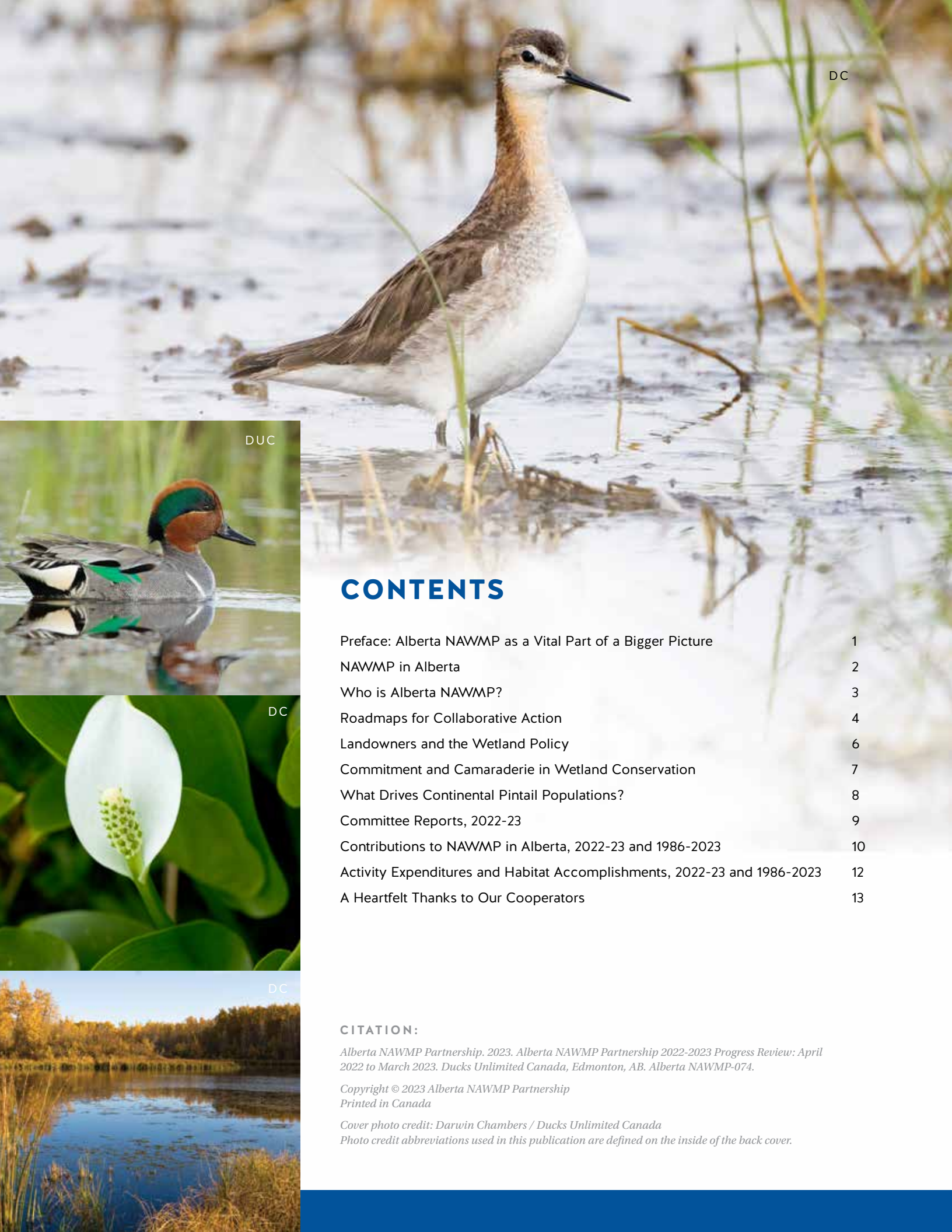




ALBERTA **NAWMP** PARTNERSHIP

2022-2023 PROGRESS REVIEW
APRIL 2022 TO MARCH 2023





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PREFACE: ALBERTA NAWMP AS A VITAL PART OF A BIGGER PICTURE

For people like me with careers in wildlife conservation, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) stands out as a visionary initiative for conservation on a continental scale. Created over 35 years ago on strong foundations of science and collaboration, NAWMP continues to this day to be a vibrant force for habitat conservation. The Alberta NAWMP Partnership is very much a part of that remarkable tradition.

As the new Chair of the Alberta NAWMP Partnership's Board, I'm excited by the pivotal role that Alberta NAWMP plays in conserving wetland and upland habitat in the province. And I'm proud to see how important Alberta NAWMP is to the success of the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (PHJV) and NAWMP.

The PHJV, one of NAWMP's regional partnerships, has responsibility for prairie, parkland and boreal landscapes in western Canada. Combined, these landscapes are the most important waterfowl breeding areas in North America.

When NAWMP began in 1986, the PHJV was one of the original six joint ventures – the Canadian Prairies were already well known as a critical region for breeding waterfowl. Since then, the PHJV has developed a series of science-based Implementation Plans, which guide the efforts of Alberta NAWMP and its counterparts in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The first article in this Progress Review, called *Roadmaps for Collaborative Action*, highlights the PHJV's latest Implementation Plans for the Prairie Parklands and the Western Boreal Forest. These plans, covering 2021 to 2025, set out inspiring objectives for 2025 and 2040. They continue the PHJV's long-term focus on conserving waterfowl populations and their habitat, while also expanding efforts to conserve other types of birds. As well, the plans emphasize increasing engagement with diverse stakeholders about the value of conserving wetland and upland habitat.

The agricultural sector is a very important stakeholder for Alberta NAWMP because farmers and ranchers manage most of the wetlands within the province's settled area. In *Landowners and the Wetland Policy*, we look at a new publication called *Landowner Guide to the Alberta Wetland Policy*. In many ways, rural landowners are implementers of this policy, so understanding how the policy relates to their own situation is key. This guide helps with that. To develop the guide, Alberta NAWMP gathered input from many

“...I'M EXCITED BY THE PIVOTAL ROLE THAT ALBERTA NAWMP PLAYS IN CONSERVING WETLAND AND UPLAND HABITAT...”

organizations, including technical information from Partner agencies, and feedback on drafts from agricultural groups.

Commitment and Camaraderie in Wetland Conservation profiles Travis Ripley, who was the Alberta NAWMP Chair from 2015 to 2022. Serving as Chair was a rewarding experience for Ripley. He found Alberta NAWMP to be an innovative, forward-thinking group with a passion to accomplish great things in waterfowl and wetland conservation. And he enjoyed the opportunities he had as a representative of Alberta NAWMP to be a part of regional, national and international forums for wildlife conservation.

In *What Drives Continental Pintail Populations?*, we learn about some of the latest research on northern pintail duck populations, which have been declining for three decades. One of the key players in this collaborative research is Dr. Mitch Weegman, the Ducks Unlimited Canada Endowed Chair in Wetland and Waterfowl Conservation at the University of Saskatchewan. A few years ago, the researchers built an advanced pintail population model for the Prairies, a valuable tool for improving delivery of conservation efforts. Now, with the help of Alberta NAWMP funding, the researchers are tackling the even more complicated challenge of developing a continent-scale pintail population model.

On behalf of Alberta NAWMP, I thank the many agencies and individuals who share our passion for conserving wetland and upland habitat and helped make this past year a success.

I am pleased to present the Alberta NAWMP Partnership 2022-2023 Progress Review.

Sue Cotterill
Chair, Board of Directors
Alberta NAWMP Partnership

NAWMP IN ALBERTA

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) is a landmark partnership between Canada, the United States and Mexico for habitat conservation to sustain continental waterfowl populations.

Created in 1986, NAWMP defines and prioritizes geographic regions across the continent based on their biological values for waterfowl and other wetland-associated birds. Its initiatives address regional and continental priorities, using a collaborative approach at local, regional, national and international levels.

NAWMP achieves its goals through voluntary regional partnerships that implement local actions. The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (PHJV) is the regional NAWMP partnership with responsibility for prairie, parkland and boreal landscapes in western Canada. Combined, these landscapes are the most important waterfowl breeding areas in North America. They contain some of the most productive waterfowl areas in the world. Conserving these landscapes is vital to the maintenance and recovery of mid-continent waterfowl populations.

Since its inception in 1986, the PHJV has developed a series of science-

based Implementation Plans to guide its activities. Nowadays, the PHJV has separate Implementation Plans for the Prairie Parklands and the Western Boreal Forest. The current plans, which cover the period from 2021 to 2025, continue the PHJV's enduring commitment to conserving waterfowl populations and their key habitats, while augmenting the PHJV's attention on conserving all types of birds. The plans also advance the work started under the PHJV's 2013-2020 Implementation Plans to heighten emphasis on engagement with hunters, other conservationists and the general public.

The PHJV works with its provincial NAWMP organizations in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to act on these Implementation Plans. The Alberta component of these plans provides the springboard for the Alberta NAWMP Partnership's activities. The Partnership is composed of three government and two non-government organizations. It is directed by a Board of Directors and a Management Committee, which are advised by Policy and Communications subcommittees. The board and committee members are mainly drawn from the five Partner agencies.

Alberta NAWMP coordinates joint projects, communications, planning and policy support, and facilitates funding options among the Partners. It supports Partner activities through technical and logistical

assistance and by advancing innovative ideas through facilitation, funding support and capacity building.

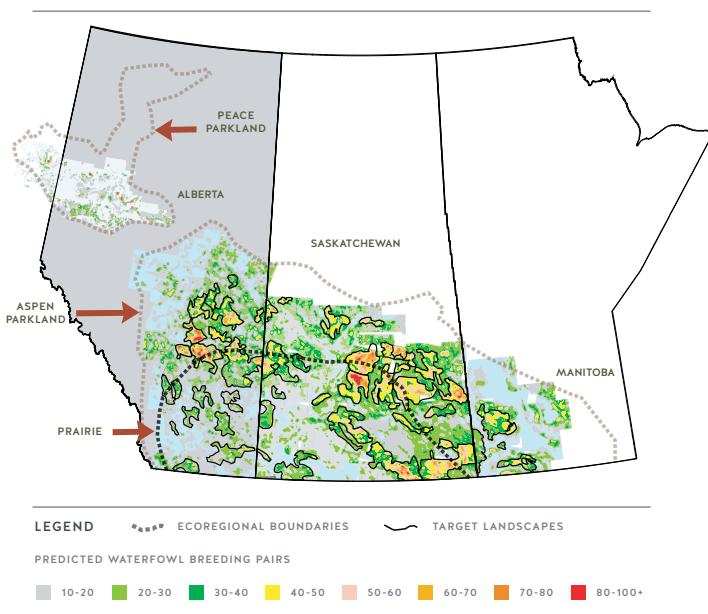
ALBERTA NAWMP (PHJV) VISION

HEALTHY PRAIRIE, PARKLAND AND BOREAL LANDSCAPES THAT SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE BIRD POPULATIONS AND PROVIDE ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO SOCIETY.

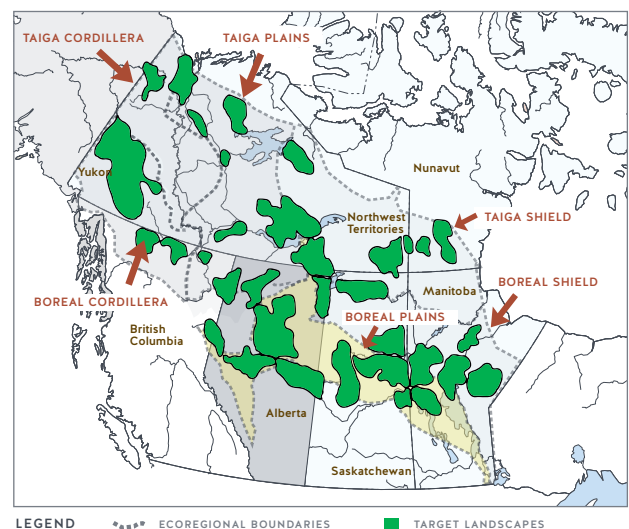
ALBERTA NAWMP (PHJV) MISSION

PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TO ACHIEVE HEALTHY AND DIVERSE WATERFOWL AND OTHER BIRD POPULATIONS THROUGH CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS. THESE PARTNERSHIPS STRIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF THE LANDSCAPE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.

PRAIRIE PARKLANDS TARGET LANDSCAPES



WESTERN BOREAL FOREST TARGET LANDSCAPES



WHO IS ALBERTA NAWMP?

Our motto – Advancing Conservation Together – expresses what the Alberta NAWMP Partnership is all about. Our successes in conserving waterfowl and their key habitats spring from the synergy of collaboration.

The Partnership is composed of one federal and two provincial government departments and two non-government organizations that all have a responsibility for Alberta's wetlands as part of their mandates. The five Partners continually seek opportunities to work with each other and with regional and municipal organizations and other stakeholders. These collaborative networks enhance existing wetland and upland stewardship efforts, launch innovative initiatives that otherwise might not happen, and build interest in and capacity for wetland and upland conservation in Alberta.

Together, the Partners and their collaborators are making exciting progress on shared conservation goals.

HOW WETLAND LANDSCAPES RELATE TO EACH PARTNER AGENCY'S ROLES, OBJECTIVES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

GOVERNMENT

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas is the lead provincial agency responsible for the stewardship of Alberta's air, land, water and biodiversity. It administers the Alberta Wetland Policy, the objective of which is to conserve, restore, protect and manage Alberta's wetlands to sustain the benefits they provide to the environment, society and economy.

The **Alberta Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation** includes the Department of Agriculture and Irrigation and a number of agencies, boards and commissions. Among the Ministry's responsibilities are policies, legislation, regulations and services necessary for Alberta's agriculture and food sectors to grow, prosper and diversify while supporting environmentally sustainable resource management practices and inspiring public confidence in the quality and safety of food.

Environment and Climate Change Canada is the lead federal department for a wide range of environmental issues. The department's programs focus on minimizing threats to Canadians and their environment from pollution, and conserving and restoring Canada's natural environment, including water, air and soil quality.

PRIVATE, NON-PROFIT

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) is a registered charity that has over 80 years of experience in wetland conservation and restoration. DUC partners with government, landowners, industry, Indigenous peoples and non-profit organizations to conserve wetlands for the benefit of society, waterfowl, other wildlife and the environment.

Nature Conservancy of Canada, in partnership with corporations, governments, individual donors and landowners, works to achieve the direct protection of Canada's most important wild spaces through property securement and long-term stewardship of these properties. This work maintains critical lands and waters for wildlife and ensures clean air and water for our future generations.

ALBERTA NAWMP PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEES, 2022-23

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron Bennett, Environment and Climate Change Canada
Katelyn Ceh, Nature Conservancy of Canada
Sue Cotterill (Chair), Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (Incoming)
Thorsten Hebben, Ducks Unlimited Canada
Travis Ripley, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (Outgoing)
Jamie Wuite, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation

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Kristen Lorenz, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation
Glenn Mack (Chair), Alberta Environment and Protected Areas
Nathalie S. Olson, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas
Alain Richard, Ducks Unlimited Canada (Boreal)
Tracy Scott, Ducks Unlimited Canada (Prairie-Parkland)

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Gerry Haekel, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas
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Mark Lyseng, Alberta Beef Producers
Glenn Mack, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas
Alain Richard, Ducks Unlimited Canada (Boreal)
Tracy Scott (Chair), Ducks Unlimited Canada (Prairie-Parkland)
Karen Sundquist, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation
Marsha Trites-Russell, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (Incoming)
Reg Warkentin, Team Alberta Crops (Incoming)

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Joy Aguilar, Environment and Climate Change Canada
Jennifer Golletz, Ducks Unlimited Canada (Prairie-Parkland) (Outgoing)
Mary McIntyre, Ducks Unlimited Canada (Prairie-Parkland) (Incoming)
Raina Mithrush, Ducks Unlimited Canada (Boreal) (Incoming)
Nathalie S. Olson (Chair), Alberta Environment and Protected Areas
Melissa Orr-Langner, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation
Vacant, Nature Conservancy of Canada

COORDINATOR

Greg Hale, Alberta NAWMP Partnership



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ROADMAPS FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION

To get where you want to be, you need a great plan. The efforts of the Alberta NAWMP Partnership and the NAWMP organizations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba are guided by the Implementation Plans (IPs) of the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (PHJV). The 2021-2025 IPs review the substantial accomplishments under the previous 2013-2020 plans and set out inspiring objectives for 2025 and 2040.

The PHJV is a partnership of the Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments, the federal government, and non-government conservation organizations. It is one of many NAWMP joint ventures across Canada, the United States and Mexico. These regional, voluntary partnerships all work towards NAWMP's aim of conserving habitat to sustain abundant and resilient continental waterfowl populations.

Formed when NAWMP started in 1986, the PHJV has created a series of IPs as roadmaps for collaborative action. "The PHJV's Implementation Plans are strategic and science-based. We use them to guide the planning, implementation and evaluation of our conservation efforts," explains Vanessa Charlwood, Chair of the PHJV Advisory Board.

The IPs are updated generally on a five-year cycle. "The Implementation Plans have evolved to meet the persistent and new challenges that face the waterfowl conservation community," she notes. "They are regularly modified to reflect current and anticipated landscape conditions that species might be facing, socio-economic trends, emerging priorities for waterfowl and other bird conservation, and new knowledge about bird populations and their habitat."

"THE IMPLEMENTATION PLANS HAVE EVOLVED TO MEET THE PERSISTENT AND NEW CHALLENGES THAT FACE THE WATERFOWL CONSERVATION COMMUNITY."

The information in the PHJV IPs is also used in leveraging and matching funding, including funds available for NAWMP activities under the U.S. North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

"The success of the PHJV and our accomplishments under the IPs are shaped by the invaluable contributions of all of our partners and supporters in both Canada and the U.S.," says Charlwood, who is the Acting Associate Regional Director General, West and North with Environment and Climate Change Canada.

"That includes investments from the federal governments on both sides of the border, provincial governments, state governments, municipal governments, and working with Indigenous peoples, corporations and environmental non-government organizations. Key NGOs delivering PHJV programs in Alberta include Ducks Unlimited Canada and Nature Conservancy of Canada, who are both Alberta NAWMP Partners."

In the early years of NAWMP, the PHJV had responsibility only for the Prairie Parklands of Canada so its plans targeted that region. Then, starting in the early 2000s, the PHJV increasingly expanded its activities into the Canadian Western Boreal Forest (WBF). And since the 2013-2020 planning cycle, the PHJV has had separate IPs for the Prairie Parklands and WBF.

"There are tight linkages between the Prairie Parklands and the Western Boreal Forest. For instance, in years when the Prairie Parklands are too dry, waterfowl may overfly the area and go to the Western Boreal Forest," Charlwood notes.

"However, the two regions are quite different. They are different in their land tenure systems. Different conservation partners work in those regions. They face different threats and issues from a waterfowl habitat perspective. And the type of conservation work that we do in each of the regions is different. So, it makes sense to have separate plans."

Together, these two regions support about 50% of North American breeding waterfowl.

PHJV IPS AND ALBERTA NAWMP

Alberta NAWMP is integral to the success of the PHJV and NAWMP. "Alberta has a significant portion of the Prairie Parklands and the Western Boreal Forest, the two most important areas for breeding waterfowl in North America," says Sue Cotterill, the new Alberta NAWMP Chair. "Alberta and Alberta NAWMP play a key role in providing support and direction to help meet overall population and habitat targets set by the PHJV."

For the Alberta NAWMP Partnership, the IP objectives provide a framework

for targeting efforts in conservation programming, research, policy support, and outreach/engagement in Alberta.

“The IPs also provide information about how each province contributed to meeting the previous plan’s objectives, which highlights the importance of maintaining a functioning Alberta NAWMP Partnership,” notes Cotterill, Acting Executive Director of the Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Branch of Alberta Environment and Protected Areas.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2013-2020

“In the 2013-2020 plans, the PHJV focused on identifying high priority habitat areas for both waterfowl and non-game bird species. We recognized that waterfowl need wetlands but they also need upland habitat in order to thrive,” says Charlwood. “By including upland habitats in our habitat goals and objectives, we were able to make sure that waterfowl are doing well while also benefitting other species like shorebirds, waterbirds and landbirds.”

Reviewing the Prairie Parkland accomplishments in 2013-2020, Charlwood says, “Since the plan was implemented, duck populations for all species increased above the 10-year average for abundance, except for northern pintail. ...We achieved 42% towards our habitat restoration objectives, about 430,000 acres, and we achieved 96% of our habitat retention objectives, about 791,000 acres. And we had a total investment of about \$395 million, with about 86% of that allocated directly to habitat conservation programs.”

She also notes, “The PHJV and partners play an active role in the wetland policy arena, and we saw some significant changes across the Prairie Provinces during 2013-2020. For example, the Alberta Wetland Policy was approved in 2013 and implemented in 2015, affecting about 130,000 acres of wetlands.”

In the WBF in 2013-2020, the PHJV was active in habitat retention-based stewardship efforts for large-area conservation through strategic partnerships with governments and organizations responsible for managing the land base. Another important focus was research to address knowledge gaps around issues like the effects of human activities and climate change on WBF bird populations. The resulting information is key to targeting future conservation efforts in the region.

During 2013-2020, the eight duck species with more than 25% of their populations

in the WBF increased in combined 10-year average abundance by 14%. However, populations of many other types of birds, including forest-associated and wetland-associated species, experienced dramatic declines in abundance across the WBF.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2021-2025

“We use the best available science to identify our habitat objectives – in other words, how much habitat we need here to support waterfowl populations that help meet NAWMP’s continental waterfowl population objectives,” explains Charlwood.

“For 2021-2025, the PHJV’s highest priority is protecting, enhancing, restoring critical existing wetlands and grasslands. For the first time, we have set both waterfowl and grassland bird habitat retention targets, and our habitat restoration objectives include grassland restoration.”

Cotterill adds that much of the remaining intact native grassland in Canada is found in Alberta and that the PHJV’s increased grassland focus is critical to maintaining healthy populations of many other wildlife species, along with waterfowl.

“We have some ambitious habitat restoration objectives, including over 18,000 wetland acres [in the Prairie Parklands] by 2025,” notes Charlwood. “That requires significant funding and focused efforts from all three Prairie Provinces.”

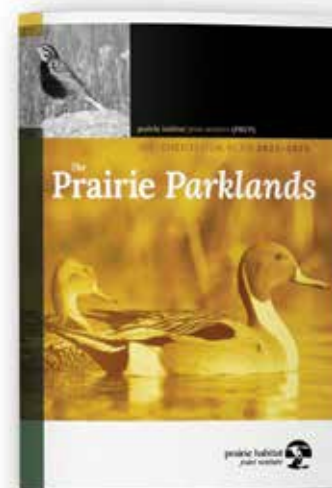
For the WBF, the PHJV’s habitat objective for 2025 is to conserve or influence an additional 75 million acres, which will help secure waterfowl population objectives for the region. The PHJV is also continuing to develop and expand its partnerships to influence policy and practices relevant to bird conservation in the region. Current activities also include research efforts such as work to determine the cause of the serious declines in abundance of some bird species.

Both 2021-2025 IPs emphasize the need to increase engagement with stakeholders. For instance, Alberta NAWMP and its collaborators are expanding efforts to engage with ranchers and the cattle industry as a whole to advance grassland conservation.

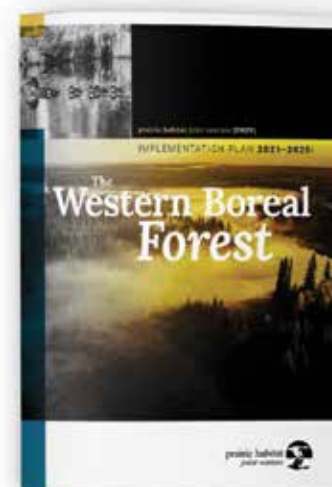
“We are taking a broader inclusive approach to partnership including Indigenous people and the public more broadly. We recognize that our work is all about relationships, so we need to engage with more folks in our work,” Charlwood notes.

Cotterill stresses that outreach efforts are critical to ensuring that the importance of conserving wetland and upland habitat for numerous species – not just waterfowl – is understood and valued by Albertans. “Each Alberta NAWMP Partner has a different reach, making individual and collective outreach efforts important.”

She concludes, “Without the various partners in Alberta involved, Alberta NAWMP and the PHJV wouldn’t be as successful as they have been over the years. This strong collaboration and leveraging each other’s strengths are key to the success of the partnership and an essential part of the future.”



PHJV



PHJV

LANDOWNERS AND THE WETLAND POLICY

The Alberta Wetland Policy has important implications for landowners who work around wetlands on their land. However, those implications aren't always easy to understand. The new [Landowner Guide to the Alberta Wetland Policy](#) aims to help landowners better understand their rights and responsibilities under the policy.

The policy's goal is to 'conserve, restore, protect, and manage Alberta's wetlands to sustain the benefits they provide to the environment, society, and economy.' The policy is implemented through the provincial Water Act's approval process. A Water Act approval is required for any proposed project that has the potential to impact any type of water body. The proposed project must also meet the Wetland Policy's requirements to avoid or minimize wetland impacts and to replace wetland losses if such impacts cannot be avoided.

The Alberta NAWMP Partnership developed the Landowner Guide as part of the Partnership's ongoing commitment to address the needs brought forward by the agricultural sector regarding the Wetland Policy.

"Agricultural producers manage the vast majority of wetlands within the settled area of the province. The bottom line is, if we want to achieve successful implementation of the Wetland Policy, we need to engage directly with the folks who manage these lands," explains Tracy Scott with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). He is chair of Alberta NAWMP's Policy Committee and a member of the Management Committee.

"However, both Alberta NAWMP and DUC have regularly heard questions about the Wetland Policy directly from landowners and through Alberta NAWMP's agriculture-related working groups and associations like the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta. Landowners are asking: What is the policy? Does it apply to me? What do I have to do as a result of it?"

"The department receives questions from landowners every day on how the Water Act and the Alberta Wetland Policy would apply to their property," says Amanda Cooper with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (EPA), the department responsible for the policy and the Water Act.

"There has been a lot of confusion for landowners on what activities could or could not be conducted around a wetland on private lands. Often landowners would look to the Wetland Policy to provide guidance on this; however, the policy is a guidance document about how the Province will manage wetlands. The information they were seeking is contained in the Water Act and the Water Ministerial Regulation. As the Water Act is a legal document, understanding the language can be challenging."

She notes, "The Landowner Guide brings the information from all three documents – the Water Act, Water Ministerial Regulation and the Wetland Policy – together in one place in a format that is accessible for landowners and focuses on questions landowners ask. The guide also provides information on the importance and benefits of wetlands in a way that is specific to landowners."



"... TO ACHIEVE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WETLAND POLICY, WE NEED TO ENGAGE DIRECTLY WITH THE FOLKS WHO MANAGE THESE LANDS."

To develop the guide, Alberta NAWMP gathered input from different organizations with differing areas of expertise and perspectives. This input included technical information from Partner agencies like EPA, DUC, and Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation, and feedback on drafts from agricultural groups like Team Alberta Crops, Alberta Beef Producers, and the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta.

"In many ways, rural landowners are implementers of the Wetland Policy, so understanding how the policy relates to their own situation is key," says Scott.

He adds, "A little known fact is that rural landowners are also the primary recipients of wetland replacement fees paid under the Wetland Policy. That is, landowners receive payment for voluntary wetland restoration. For instance, in DUC's Wetland Restoration Lease Program, we pay landowners for restoring previously drained wetlands, and that money comes from those replacement fees."

Cooper and Scott are both looking forward to sharing the guide with landowners across Alberta. Scott says, "We sincerely hope the guide provides a good service to the landowners who steward our wetland resources and will help to enhance implementation of the Wetland Policy."

To download the Landowner Guide, go to abnawmp.ca or wetlandsalberta.ca. Contact the [Alberta NAWMP Partnership Coordinator](#) to request a print copy.



TRAVIS RIPLEY

TR

TR



"[ALBERTA NAWMP] IS ALL ABOUT PARTNERING TO ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS IN WATERFOWL AND WETLAND CONSERVATION."

COMMITMENT AND CAMARADERIE IN WETLAND CONSERVATION

Back in 2015, Travis Ripley was about to take on a demanding, expanded role in Fish and Wildlife with the Government of Alberta. That's when his colleague Ron Bjorge encouraged Ripley to also step into the role of Chair of the Alberta NAWMP Partnership's Board.

Bjorge was retiring as Chair and from Fish and Wildlife. He told Ripley that being involved with NAWMP – not just Alberta NAWMP but the whole continental initiative of NAWMP – had been one of the most inspiring experiences in his career. "Ron said to me, 'I don't want you to lose this opportunity. You will be taking on many new wildlife responsibilities with the Government, but please keep active in NAWMP,'" says Ripley.

"That's when I joined the Alberta NAWMP Board as Chair, and it's been so rewarding!"

Ripley has always loved fishing, hunting and spending time outdoors. That enthusiasm put him on a path to a fulfilling career with Fish and Wildlife. His early roles included fisheries biologist and then regional manager. Next, he became the Executive Director of Fisheries Management. "That's where I met and worked closely with Ron, who was the Executive Director of Wildlife Management. When Ron retired, I assumed the Executive Director position for policy for both the Fisheries and Wildlife programs."

Then in 2020, Ripley's Executive Director responsibilities further increased to encompass the entire Fish and Wildlife

Program as well as the Invasive Species, Species at Risk, and Wildlife Health and Disease Programs. This past year, he moved to a new position with a different branch of the Government, and Sue Cotterill is now the new Alberta NAWMP Chair.

"I always found Alberta NAWMP to be a very positive, forward-thinking group," notes Ripley. "Alberta NAWMP is where people come together to share a passion for the work that is NAWMP. It is all about partnering to accomplish great things in waterfowl and wetland conservation. Alberta NAWMP has definitely been able to punch above its weight and make a real contribution."

For Ripley, one of the highlights of his term as Chair was Alberta NAWMP's role in implementing the Alberta Wetland Policy. This policy acknowledges the importance of wetlands, and sets priority and direction for situations where development pressures encounter wetlands. "Alberta's Wetland Policy is one of the leading policy pieces across the Prairie Pothole Region. It was profound and rewarding to see something like that happen in Alberta."

Alberta NAWMP helped in promoting awareness of the Wetland Policy, addressing some technical needs for implementing the policy, and tackling the need for outreach on wetlands. A centrepiece of this outreach effort was the Wetland Education Network (WEN). He says, "WEN was more grassroots-driven and a great step forward in increased awareness about wetlands."

"One of the things that stands out for me about Travis is his commitment to partnering at the regional, national and international levels," notes Alberta NAWMP Coordinator Greg Hale.

Ripley enjoyed the welcoming, innovative atmosphere and the synergy of shared goals in his work with the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture, on the Wildlife Habitat Canada board, and on the executive of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA).

For example, he was part of an AFWA task force in 2021 to enhance the Fall Flights program. This program is a long-term initiative to encourage U.S. states and Canadian provincial and territorial governments to provide funding for waterfowl habitat projects in Canada. "Our work culminated in six recommendations focused on affirming strong financial leadership and collaboration to make sure we are improving opportunities for wetlands and waterfowl."

Ripley concludes, "Ron was right – NAWMP is rewarding work! When you are exposed to forums at national and international levels with real camaraderie and a focus on doing some great things, it elevates your day-to-day work to a new level. Alberta NAWMP helped launch me into that world. I'll always be thankful for that and for the people I've worked with."

WHAT DRIVES CONTINENTAL PINTAIL POPULATIONS?

Northern pintail duck populations have been declining for 30 years. A few years ago, researchers built an advanced pintail population model for the Prairies, a valuable tool for improving conservation delivery. Now, with the help of Alberta NAWMP funding, they are tackling the even more complicated challenge of developing a continent-scale pintail model.

“For the most part, duck populations have responded favourably to wet conditions on the prairies over the last 60 years that data have been collected. But pintail populations have not,” says Dr. Mitch Weegman, the Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) Endowed Chair in Wetland and Waterfowl Conservation at the University of Saskatchewan (USask).

This “conservation conundrum” motivated the previous study to model pintail population dynamics in the Prairie Pothole Region, a region with exceptional waterfowl habitat that stretches from Alberta to South Dakota. Weegman, then at the University of Missouri, was part of the team involved in that study.

“From a conservation delivery perspective, we wanted to know where in the Prairie Pothole Region pintail productivity was low and where it was relatively high, so we could target investments to improve productivity,” he explains.

“We’re really lucky that the Prairie Pothole Region data are so strong. Pintails and other waterfowl have been studied on the Prairies almost continually for 60 years.” With the high quality banding data, band-recovery data, and breeding population survey data, the researchers were able to develop a regionally-explicit, integrated population model of pintail population dynamics.

The team used the model to test hypotheses about drivers of pintail populations like climate change and land use change and to explore likely weather and land use scenarios to understand the effects on pintail populations in different subregions across the region.

The current project to take the modelling to a continental scale is being led by Dr. Dan Gibson, a post-doctoral researcher with Weegman’s group at USask. Weegman’s group is collaborating on this project with DUC, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), and the University of Minnesota.

Building this continent-scale model involves bringing together datasets for three breeding regions – the Prairie Pothole Region, a partially surveyed area north of the Prairies, and Alaska – plus two wintering regions – California and the lower Mississippi Valley.

“The model includes an impressive amount of information for the Prairies, pretty good data for Alaska, and very little information for the northern area. And the wintering regions have banded birds but less frequently even than Alaska,” he notes. So, the researchers have tapped into a wide range of data sources, melded different datasets and made assumptions to fill data gaps.

“When you begin stitching together multiple breeding regions, multiple wintering regions, full movement estimates among and



DUC

“FOR THE MOST PART, DUCK POPULATIONS HAVE RESPONDED FAVOURABLY TO WET CONDITIONS ON THE PRAIRIES ...BUT PINTAIL POPULATIONS HAVE NOT.”

between them, there are relatively few examples across ecology, so we’re developing and customizing these models. It is really exciting but also challenging work,” he says.

With the one-year funding from Alberta NAWMP, the team developed the model’s framework. Now, they are working on hypothesis testing. Down the road, they plan to conduct scenario-playing and then develop a pintail management plan that prioritizes habitat investments considering the full annual cycle for pintails.

Long-term funders of this and other pintail modelling research include DUC and ECCC. As well, DUC supports Weegman’s position as Chair in Wetland and Waterfowl Conservation at USask. DUC endowed this chair in response to a call from conservation professionals around North America who were concerned that, as waterfowl faculty were retiring, those positions were not being filled with similar wetland and waterfowl expertise.

Weegman, who started as the DUC Endowed Chair in 2021, is the first person to hold this position. He finds leading this program to be an exciting, rewarding experience. “Our research team and the hundreds of people working on these projects around the world are equipping our students with the skills they need to develop conservation strategies that promote waterfowl populations or increase the resilience of these populations...The program is providing an immense, world-class training opportunity for students, and advancing [waterfowl] ecology and statistical analyses all at once.”

COMMITTEE REPORTS, 2022-23

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Members are director-level executives from each Alberta NAWMP Partner agency. They are responsible for: defining Alberta NAWMP's vision, mission, goals and strategies; directing medium-term implementation plans; approving annual work plans and budgets; and ensuring accountability for work plans and budgets. They also facilitate information exchange and engagement opportunities between their own agency and Alberta NAWMP.

The Board of Directors held quarterly meetings (web-based) in the fiscal year 2022-23 (FY23), providing guidance to the Management Committee and Policy and Communications subcommittees. The FY23 Work Plan and Budget was successfully implemented, and the final report completed. The Board also developed FY24 Work Plan projections. Board members participated and engaged with the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (PHJV) Advisory Board and various subcommittees, including hosting an internal presentation and discussion session with representatives of the PHJV Human Dimensions Committee. The Board provided support to various grant funding initiatives through the Partnership and the PHJV. It continued to support development of the new PHJV Implementation Plans (IPs).

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Members are senior managers from each Partner agency who facilitate integration of operational opportunities between their own agency and Alberta NAWMP. This Committee shares responsibility with the Alberta NAWMP Coordinator for project-based decision-making and expenditures established in annual work plans and medium-term implementation plans.

The Management Committee held monthly meetings (web-based) as well as topic-specific meetings. It held two joint meetings with the Board. The Committee approved Science Fund support to research projects on: the value of wetlands in livestock production landscapes; assessing social science and human dimensions capacity in western Canada; and quantifying drivers in northern pintail populations. The Committee continued discussions on the role of human dimensions within the Partnership, and members participated in PHJV Policy and Human Dimensions Committees. The Committee provided support to the Policy and Communications subcommittees. As part of the PHJV IP planning and development, "all birds' conservation" modeling was used to project habitat objectives, highlighting the importance of stewardship of grasslands, especially native grasslands. The FY23 Work Plan and Budget was successfully implemented.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

The Communications Committee leads information sharing, event hosting and promotion among the Partner agencies and beyond. Members are typically communication specialists from each Partner agency.

The Communications Committee continued monthly meetings (web-based), including project-specific meetings. It hosted a series of webinars including a focus on native grassland conservation, all birds' conservation modelling and habitat objective setting. The Committee continued to implement the Partnership's Communication Strategy, including revisions to www.abnawmp.ca and the first steps to refresh and revise www.wetlandsalberta.ca. Ongoing communication efforts included the quarterly eNewsletter and articles profiling Science Fund research. Also, the Committee supported wetland conservation through events such as World Wetlands Day and its affiliated Symposium. Other projects successfully implemented included: publication and distribution of the Landowner Guide to the Alberta Wetland Policy; third year of a landowner engagement project for trumpeter swans; development of sector-specific engagement and evaluation tools; and initiation of a municipal sector-based focus group to provide input on a draft municipal wetland guide. The Alberta NAWMP Progress Review for 2021-2022 was completed.

POLICY COMMITTEE

The Policy Committee members monitor relevant policy, planning and program developments in their agencies and advise on opportunities for Alberta NAWMP support. Members are usually senior policy specialists within the Partner agencies.

The Policy Committee met monthly (web-based) including specific project meetings by working group members. Several projects were implemented including: jurisdictional reviews of solar energy development impacts to wetlands, and wetland credit and banking programs across North America. In addition, a wetland restoration economic roundtable was held with key natural resource economists. The Committee initiated an update of the municipal wetland guide, including a focus group session with municipal representatives from across Alberta. Committee members participated in the PHJV Policy Committee's interprovincial grassland policy discussions. The Committee identified emerging and ongoing issues to address in the near future including: the value of working landscapes; rural communities' role in wetland and grassland stewardship; ongoing wetland loss across Alberta; and wetland and grassland policy performance measures.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO NAWMP IN ALBERTA, 2022-23 AND 1986-2023

AGENCY TYPE	AGENCY	2022-23 TOTAL	1986 - 2023 ^a CUM. TOTAL
CANADIAN CORPORATIONS		\$414,997	\$25,103,061
CANADIAN EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS			\$475,281
CANADIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada		\$38,532,523
	Canadian federal - unspecified		\$484
	Environment and Climate Change Canada	\$14,194	\$21,482
	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Canada Nature Fund	\$3,039,305	\$6,787,490
	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service	\$509,303	\$43,110,532
	Environment and Climate Change Canada - EcoAction		\$85,571
	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Habitat Stewardship Program		\$3,655,828
	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Natural Areas Conservation Program		\$28,599,754
	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Natural Heritage Conservation Program	-\$38,354	\$779,684
	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Nature Smart Climate Solutions	\$2,062,185	\$2,813,791
	Fisheries and Oceans Canada		\$3,940
	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada		\$18,761
	Millennium Bureau of Canada		\$1,120,100
	Natural Resources Canada		\$40,000
	Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada		\$194,736
	Parks Canada		\$54,660
	Public Works and Government Services Canada		\$500
		\$5,586,633	\$125,819,836
CANADIAN NOT FOR PROFIT	Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta		\$275,000
	Alberta Beef Producers		\$954,531
	Alberta Conservation Association	\$236,555	\$4,571,184
	Alberta Conservation Tillage Society		\$125
	Alberta Ecotrust Foundation		\$22,542
	Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company		\$240
	Alberta Fish and Game Association		\$1,506,348
	Alberta Native Plant Council		\$600
	Alberta Research Council		\$5,000
	Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation	\$5,223,744	\$11,536,202
	Antelope Creek Habitat Development		\$5,000
	Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Foundation		\$5,500
	Canadian Circumpolar Institute		\$3,500
	Canadian Nature Federation		\$1,800
	Canadian non-government organizations - unspecified		\$180,264
	Carthy Foundation*	\$7,212	\$7,212
	Climate Change Central		\$5,000
	Cropmasters		\$46,300
	Ducks Unlimited Canada		\$3,377,366
	Eastern Irrigation District		\$75,085
	Edmonton Community Foundation		\$72,075
	Edmonton Springer Spaniel Club		\$200
	George Cedric Metcalf Foundation		\$50,000
	Imperial Oil Charitable Foundation		\$5,818
	Institute for Wetland and Waterfowl Research		\$5,500
	Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship		\$2,000
	James L. Baillie Memorial Fund		\$2,000
	Lakeland Industry & Community Association		\$14,051
	Land Stewardship Centre of Canada		\$18,000
	Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation		\$45,317
	Nature Alberta		\$15,000
	Nature Canada		\$1,128,000
	Nature Conservancy of Canada	\$3,924,573	\$15,145,890
	North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance		\$234,023
	Peace Parkland Naturalists		\$600
	Pheasants Forever		\$17,400
	Project Second Life Society		\$6,000
	Richard H. G. Bonnycastle Graduate Fellowship		\$15,000
	Richardson Foundation Inc.		\$374,788
	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation - Canada		\$4,500

AGENCY TYPE	AGENCY	2022 - 2023 TOTAL	1986 - 2023 ^a CUM. TOTAL
CANADIAN NOT FOR PROFIT	Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation		\$350
	Shell Conservation Internship Program		\$7,296
	Shell Environmental Fund		\$25,123
	Soil Conservation Council of Canada		\$3,417
	Southern Alberta Land Trust Society		\$613,119
	Sustainable Forest Management Network		\$20,000
	The Calgary Foundation	\$370	\$47,444
	The Flanagan Foundation		\$29,049
	The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation		\$6,999
	The Kahanoff Foundation		\$701
	United Farmers of Alberta		\$18,447
	Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association	\$100,000	\$100,000
	Western Irrigation District		\$673,433
	Weston Family Foundation	\$1,314,987	\$1,566,521
	Wildlife Habitat Canada	\$150,848	\$4,396,932
CANADIAN PROVINCIAL & TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS	World Wildlife Fund Canada		\$36,000
		\$10,958,289	\$47,279,792
	Agriculture Financial Services Corporation		\$446,527
	Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation		\$10,570,726
	Alberta Culture and Community Spirit		\$8,000
	Alberta Energy and Utilities Board		\$8,300
	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas	\$4,779,016	\$42,991,277
	Alberta Transportation		\$9,246
	Alberta Treasury Board and Finance	\$18,005	\$771,967
	Saskatchewan Water Security Agency		\$10,000
		\$4,797,021	\$54,816,043
CANADIAN REGIONAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	Big Hay Lake Drainage District		-\$34,639
	Bonnyville (Municipality of)		\$22,653
	Calgary (City of)		\$269,669
	Camrose County		\$14,907
	Carstairs (Town of)		\$96,000
	Edmonton (City of)		\$211,005
	Flagstaff County		\$41,337
	Grande Prairie (City of)		\$7,832
	Grande Prairie County		\$2,022
	Greenview (Municipal District of)		\$6,962
	Lakeland (County of)		\$2,800
	Lamont County		\$30,425
	Manawan Drainage District		\$34,750
	Medicine Hat (City of)		\$8,005
	Minburn County		\$78,080
	Newell County		\$28,750
	Ponoka County		\$2,310
	Red Deer County		\$1,811
	Rocky View County		\$721,759
	Special Areas Board		\$325
	St. Albert (City of)		\$17,820
	St. Paul County		\$19,287
	Stettler County		\$2,780
	Strathcona County		\$87,629
	Strathmore (Town of)		\$198,627
	Sturgeon County		\$68,085
	Sylvan Lake (Town of)		\$30,000
	Wheatland County		\$3,200
			\$1,974,191
CANADIAN OTHER	Canadian - unspecified	\$3,724,880	\$60,034,078
UNITED STATES - ALL SOURCES	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. state governments, Ducks Unlimited Inc., Anonymous Foundation, other	\$14,325,800	\$328,139,351
INTERNATIONAL	Conservation International Bahamas		\$59,744
GRAND TOTAL		\$39,807,620	\$643,701,377

a. Includes data from Prairie Habitat Joint Venture - Alberta (Source: NAWMP National Tracking System).

* New contributor in 2022-23

ACTIVITY EXPENDITURES AND HABITAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2022-23 AND 1986-2023

AGENCY	ACTIVITY	EXPENDITURES 2022-23	HABITAT ACRES 2022-23	NET HABITAT ACRES 1986-2023
ALBERTA AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (includes Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, a former Alberta NAWMP Partner)	Securement			425,195
ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTED AREAS	Securement			10,507
DELTA WATERFOWL FOUNDATION	Communication and education	\$7,491		
	Management (habitat assets)	\$3,564	100	1,952
	Wetland restoration	\$1,824	11	11
DWF TOTAL EXPENDITURES		\$12,879		
DUCKS UNLIMITED CANADA	Communication and education	\$2,403		
	Compensatory mitigation	\$3,443,978	1,239	3,713
	Conservation planning	\$1,184,223		
	Habitat Joint Venture science	\$477,652		
	Habitat restoration	\$2,948,661	168,126	1,219,378
	Habitat retention (≥10 years through permanent)	\$32,987,629	31,458	2,431,546
	Habitat retention (<10 years)	\$685,981	238,908	519,990
	Land and water policy support	\$13,735		-175,320*
	Management (habitat assets)	\$3,928,292		2,561,314
DUC TOTAL EXPENDITURES		\$45,672,554		
ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE CANADA - CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE	Communication and education	\$2,667		
	Conservation planning	\$2,892		
	Habitat Joint Venture science	\$113,000		
ECCC TOTAL EXPENDITURES		\$118,559		
NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA	Conservation planning	\$508,249		
	Habitat restoration	\$6,160		73,017
	Habitat retention (≥10 years through permanent)	\$11,854,262	7,547	367,551
	Management (habitat assets)	\$373,496	7,547	369,663
NCC TOTAL EXPENDITURES		\$12,742,167		
OTHER AGENCIES	Communication and education; Conservation planning; Habitat Joint Venture science; Land and water policy support	\$135,070		4,133
TOTAL EXPENDITURES 2022-23		\$58,681,229		
TOTAL HABITAT RETENTION ACRES (≥10 Years through Permanent), 2022-23 and 1986-2023			39,005	3,234,799

NOTES

This table shows expenditures and habitat activities for the Alberta Prairie and Parkland eco-regions (Source: NAWMP National Tracking System). Variable timing of funds both contributed and received under NAWMP may result in differences between total funds received versus expended each fiscal year. Related habitat retention or restoration acres are similarly affected.

ACTIVITIES:

- Communication and education: communications specific to activities in approved proposals under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). NOTE: all other communication activities are not eligible for NAWCA funds.
- Compensatory mitigation: involves creation, preservation, restoration and/or enhancement of wetlands or uplands as compensation for impacts on other wetlands or uplands.

- Conservation planning: biological, agrological and engineering planning and targeting activities that occur prior to actual program delivery.
- Habitat Joint Venture science: activities that evaluate the effects and inform future improvement of the NAWCA program throughout the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture.
- Habitat restoration: actions to increase carrying capacity for wetland-associated migratory birds and other wildlife.
- Habitat retention (≥10 years through permanent): protection of wetland and/or upland habitat through land title transfer or binding long-term conservation agreements with landowners.
- Habitat retention (<10 years): activities that promote or directly result in the sustainable use of land for the purpose of conserving wetland-dependent birds and their habitats.

- Land and water policy support: activities that identify or support development of policies benefiting wetlands or associated uplands. NOTE: these activities are not eligible for NAWCA funds.
- Management (habitat assets): actions to maintain carrying capacity for wetland-associated migratory birds and other wildlife on habitat retained for ≥10 years through permanent.

HABITAT ACRES:

- Habitat Acres, 2022-23: habitat acres retained, restored or managed between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023. NOTE: total acres are not cumulative.
- Net Habitat Acres, 1986-2023: cumulative total of habitat acres since 1986, less expired agreements.

*Denotes change in acre status from 2008 reporting period.

A HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR COOPERATORS

The Alberta NAWMP Partnership sincerely thanks all the individuals, companies, governments, conservation organizations, charitable foundations, academic institutions, and others who have contributed funds, conducted research, and collaborated with our Partners, to successfully deliver NAWMP programming across Alberta. As a key partner to the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture, our motto is Advancing Conservation Together. As a cooperator, you have played a vital part in our progress toward achieving our vision of healthy prairie, parkland and boreal landscapes that support sustainable bird populations and provide ecological and economic benefits to society.

A COMPLETE LIST OF OUR COOPERATORS
FROM 1986 TO 2023 IS AVAILABLE AT
[ABNAWMP.CA](https://abnawmp.ca)

PHOTO CREDITS

DC	Darwin Chambers/Ducks Unlimited Canada
DUC	Ducks Unlimited Canada
PHJV	Prairie Habitat Joint Venture
TR	Travis Ripley

ALBERTA NAWMP PARTNERSHIP AND ITS PARTNERS



Environment and
Climate Change Canada
Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada



Conserving
Canada's
Wetlands



OTHER NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NAWMP PARTNERS

North American
Wetlands
Conservation Act



*North American Waterfowl
Management Plan*



prairie habitat
joint venture



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