



Information on

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Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Alberta is an ecologically diverse province. The wide range of land forms and vegetation communities create a large mosaic of natural landscapes that provide habitat for Alberta's fish and wildlife. Public lands are an important source of fish and wildlife habitat and these habitat requirements are integrated into public land management.

Habitat on Public Land

Public land in Alberta is diversified and it accommodates a variety of uses. This land provides a wide range of habitat for plants and animals, including unique, threatened, rare and endangered species. For example, public land under disposition in southern Alberta provides the largest expanse of native grasslands remaining in Canada. Grazing by livestock, deer, elk and other species helps maintain the unique characteristics of these rangelands.

In the eastern slopes region, mountain and foothill streams, along with their adjacent riparian areas, support some of Alberta's best trout fisheries. In east and central Alberta, public land provides habitat for: endangered species like the piping plover; northern pike spawning; and, waterfowl staging and nesting. In northeastern and northwestern Alberta, mixed wood boreal forests form a mosaic of habitat types that support threatened bull trout, woodland caribou and large populations of moose. In addition, the mature stands of forest provide critical nesting habitat for many migrating song birds.

Integrated Management

The management goals for particular resources such as fish and wildlife are developed by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development's Fisheries or Wildlife Management Division. The land manager then integrates these resource goals into the overall management of public land. Fish and wildlife habitat goals can generally be achieved through a variety of planning and implementation measures, described below.

Management Plans

Various types of land and resource management plans address wildlife habitat requirements and establish management objectives and goals for wildlife within a region or district. Examples of these plans include regional and sub-regional integrated resource plans, regional integrated decisions, resource management operational plans, range improvement plans, species management plans, and endangered species recovery plans.

Protected Areas

Public lands that represent the natural heritage and biological diversity of the province may receive designation as a protected area. In Alberta, protected areas include natural areas, ecological reserves, wilderness areas, and wildland provincial parks. Under the Special Places Program, additional public lands are being designated to complete the protected areas framework.

ABOUT PUBLIC LANDS

Land and resource management agencies can also formally register a specific interest in public land by placing a reservation or notation on the government records. For example, protective notations identify lands where resources are being managed to achieve a particular land use or conservation objective. Currently, approximately 1.5 million acres of wildlife habitat are under protective notations.

Terms and Conditions on Dispositions

All activities approved on public land are subject to various operating conditions. For example, grazing lessees must adhere to carry capacities set by the Province. These carry capacities ensure there is enough forage left for wildlife and other uses. Timing restrictions are often placed on approvals to ensure the designated activities don't interfere with critical fish spawning, bird nesting periods, critical wintering ranges or calving grounds.

When activities are proposed near ecologically sensitive areas, land managers establish setback distances to restrict how close any development can occur. Setbacks limit the impact of the activity along rivers, streams, lakes, and permanent and naturally occurring bodies of water.

Dispositions

Dispositions may be issued to resource management agencies or non-governmental organizations for the purpose of enhancing the fish and wildlife habitat potential of a parcel of public land. For example, a license of occupation issued to Ducks Unlimited Canada may allow for the construction and maintenance of a water control structure or the management of the bed and shore of a permanent and naturally occurring body of water, to assist in the managing of waterfowl populations in Alberta.

Land Exchanges

The government may negotiate a land exchange involving public and private land as a way to support various resource management objectives. In some instances, a parcel of public land with low habitat value and high agricultural potential may be exchanged for private land with marginal agricultural potential and high wildlife habitat value.

Partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The land manager and resource management agencies often work in partnership with non-governmental organizations to achieve common fish and wildlife conservation and habitat enhancement goals. These NGOs include:

- Alberta Conservation Association
- Alberta Fish and Game Association
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Land Stewardship Centre of Canada
- Trout Unlimited Canada
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Western Walleye Council
- Universities

If you require updated information, contact any of the offices below:

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Lands Division
Rangeland Management Branch
South Tower, Petroleum Plaza
9920 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2M4
Telephone: (780) 427-3595

Forestry Division
Forest Management Branch
9920 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2M4
Telephone: (780) 422-4590

OR call Lands or the Fish & Wildlife office in your area.

OR you can visit the Lands Division Website:
http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/land/c_1.html