



ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

Homegrown conservation since 1986.



Red Fox

MANITOBA **HABITAT HERITAGE** CORPORATION

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation is a non-profit Crown corporation that works in partnership with public and private agencies to conserve, restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. MHHC’s programming focusses on maintaining biodiversity and water quality in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation has been expanding its horizons this year; from breaking new ground restoring a native prairie complex to coordinating its planning with the latest research, the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC) has been implementing new programs and finding ways to constantly improve its conservation programs. While stretching to cover new ground and engage new cooperators, MHHC continues to ensure its core work, the permanent conservation of important habitat, remains its primary objective. This year, MHHC protected over four thousand acres of natural habitats with perpetual conservation agreements, resulting in landowner payments totalling more than half a million dollars.

Wildlife images in this report were supplied by Robert Taylor (unless otherwise noted), an acclaimed landscape and wildlife photographer who lived in Winnipeg, Manitoba and was a recent recipient of the prestigious Order of the Buffalo Hunt, presented to him by Premier Greg Selinger. Sadly, Robert Taylor passed away on August 15, 2013.

MHHC OVERVIEW

Last year, the MHHC Board of Directors approved a new five-year strategic plan for the Corporation. Contained within this plan were objectives designed to ensure MHHC retains its position as a national leader in the delivery of conservation programming. The MHHC Board of Directors and staff continually review its suite of conservation program options to keep MHHC at the forefront of conservation program delivery in Manitoba.

MHHC has made significant progress in each of the three core strategies of its strategic plan. Under “Habitat Strategies”, MHHC has continued to find success in the delivery of its conservation agreement program. To date, MHHC has permanently protected 129,647 acres (52,468 ha) of important habitat through land acquisition and conservation agreements. Of this total, 4,214 acres (1,705 ha) were protected in 2012/13 (Figure 1). It also implemented a first-of-its-kind habitat bank at Oak Hammock Marsh that provides a working example of innovative conservation strategies (see pg. 25).

A core principle of MHHC has always been the development and fostering of partnerships. Partnerships continue to be emphasized in the strategic plan as one of the “Means Strategies”. The foremost partners of MHHC are the private

landowners of Manitoba. Through its programs, MHHC directly engaged 416 individual landowners this year alone. Another long-standing partnership has been with the Turtle Mountain Conservation District. To date, \$1.3 million has been spent in the District to address erosion concerns and to support species at risk and waterfowl conservation (see pg. 10).

The last strategy within MHHC’s strategic plan focusses on strengthening the links between all of the Corporation’s programs and activities on the landscape. Objectives within this “Coherence Strategy” were designed to ensure MHHC maximizes the benefits of its programs by connecting with existing internal and external conservation plans, current policy and the latest research. On this front, MHHC was able to host a workshop bringing together its conservation partners to review the current best practice research as relates to species at risk and native prairies. This workshop had immediate impacts on the way MHHC utilizes its own properties and delivery of habitat enhancement initiatives (see pg. 23).

While MHHC continues to use permanent securement of habitat as the base of its conservation programs, it is constantly working to ensure it is meeting the conservation needs of today and tomorrow.

Conservation Agreements - Explained

MHHC’s primary tool for long-term habitat conservation is the Conservation Agreement (CA). Essentially an easement, a CA enables MHHC to enter into an agreement with a landowner for the purpose of protecting the habitat without affecting the parcel’s other land uses or ownership. The agreement is

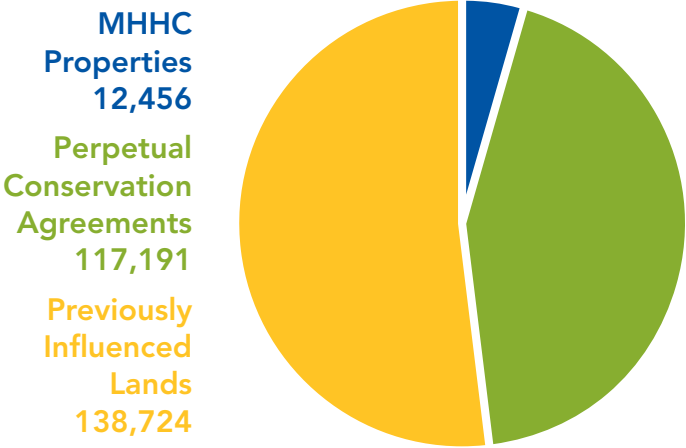
perpetual and recorded on the land title; remaining in force even if the land changes hands. Most areas that have a CA may continue to be used for agricultural activities such as haying and grazing as long as the natural values are protected.

VISION

Natural habitats across Manitoba landscapes and watersheds are supported in ways that preserve and support healthy ecosystems, biodiversity and community well-being.

MANDATE

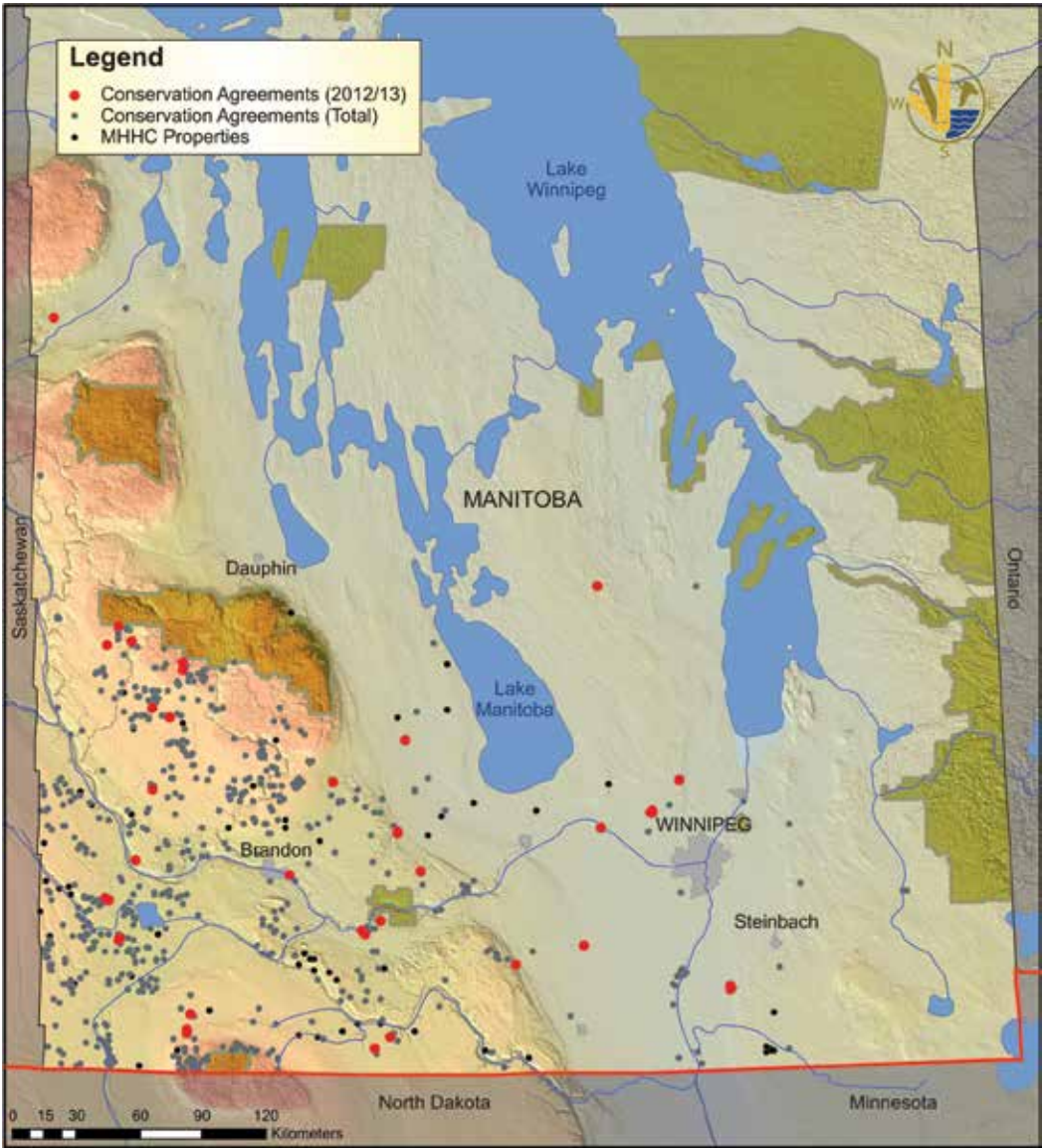
The conservation, restoration and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and populations throughout Manitoba, for the benefit of all Manitobans.



Accomplishments reported in each section of this document are not cumulative as the achievements may be reported under multiple categories depending on the delivery partnership.



Figure 1: MHHC’s properties and conservation agreements





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The Honourable Gord Mackintosh
Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship
Rm 330 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

September 25, 2013

Dear Minister:

It is my pleasure to present to you the 2012/13 Annual Report and audited Financial Statements for The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation. The reporting periods for these are April 1st, 2012 through March 31st, 2013.

Sincerest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Whitaker", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

John Whitaker
Chair

Homegrown conservation since 1986.

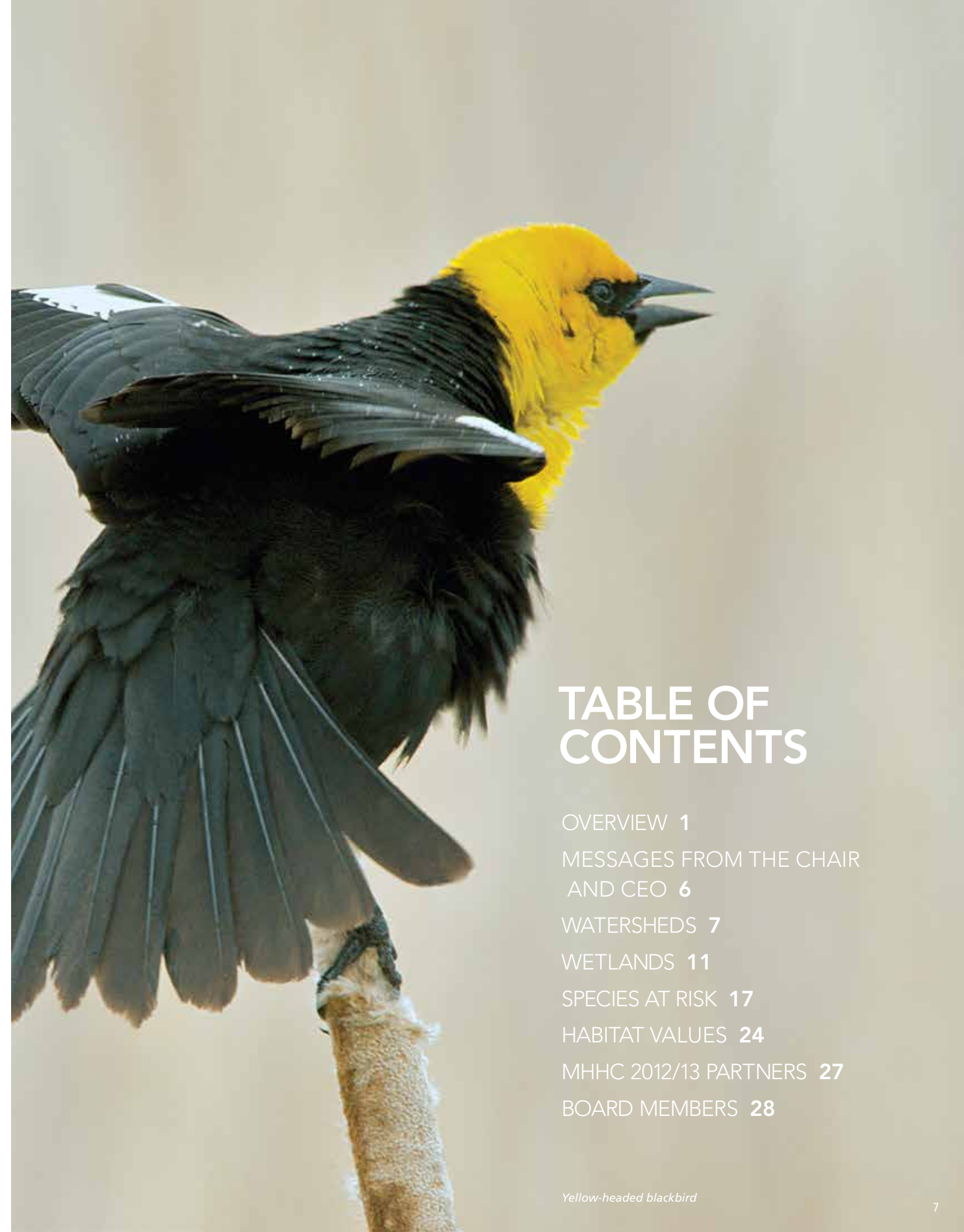


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MESSAGES FROM THE CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In a fast paced world of headline news and 140 character tweets, adaptability, a trusted name, a proven track record and, yes, even kitchentable communication are important in maintaining relevance. The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC) has long been known for its ability to effectively and efficiently deliver conservation programs, one-on-one, with the landowners of rural Manitoba. But to ensure MHHC is not yesterday's headline, it is evolving with the changing times.

The MHHC Board and staff have been working hard to ensure the Corporation continues to be a leader in conservation programming. By proactively engaging researchers and demonstrating innovative field-scale conservation methods, MHHC is ensuring it can deliver the right program, in the right place, at the right time.

The work that the people of MHHC are doing now is making sure MHHC will always be the right conservation organization for the job.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Biodiversity or water: what is MHHC's main thing?

Two years ago, as the ink was drying on the Corporation's most recent strategic plan, I began to focus on the messaging to communicate that plan to partners. All those good and meaningful words, running to over 22 pages, had to be distilled down to the proverbial seven-second sound bite.

MHHC has focussed on wildlife habitat over the last two decades and its habitat conservation strategies emphasize wetlands, grasslands and riparian areas that are, for the most part, above the water line. We can do most of our field work in low shoes.

My answer to the question I pose is found in a statement Dr. David Brooks, Senior Advisor on Fresh Water of the Friends of the Earth made to a gathering of Conservation District representatives five years ago: *Every land use decision is a water choice.*

The accumulated watershed research points to the critical role of natural lands delivering clean water, reducing flood peaks and storing carbon. With this recognition, MHHC is putting ever-greater efforts to ensure its habitat conservation activities tie to provincial watershed management objectives and Conservation District programs. Wildlife are a valued by-product of good watershed management and *vice versa*.

At the end of the day, MHHC marches under two banners: biodiversity AND water.

Pictured above: John Whittaker, Chair, MHHC (left) and Tim Sopuck, CEO, MHHC (right)



WATERSHEDS

Jackfish Creek

It only takes one major rainfall event to see the watersheds that surround us.

The water flows off the land through man-made drains and natural dips and hollows and into small waterways. As the small creeks and streams fill with water and run into larger rivers, we sometimes see catastrophic results when these rivers overflow and spill onto the surrounding landscape.

While naturally occurring, these forces can be magnified by people's actions on the land. Conservation districts, working with local stakeholders, create Integrated Watershed Management Plans for each of their watersheds; laying out ways to manage the surface waters, its quality and overall watershed health. Working closely with conservation districts, MHHC uses just such local information to put the funds it receives to the best use within conservation district watersheds, with the ultimate goal of maintaining a healthy watershed that can provide benefits to all who live within it—the plants, animals and people.

FROM PLANS TO PROGRAMS, A CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Conservation districts of Manitoba are the province’s community force for conservation and resource management in rural landscapes. These organizations, locally governed, managed, and supported, are very effective in the development and implementation of conservation actions within their local watersheds.

Each conservation district in Manitoba has been charged with the task of developing comprehensive watershed management plans. These plans create an outline of the main actions and objectives that will help to maintain or improve the health of the watershed. By accessing knowledge from within the community, they define what areas to target with which type of program. It is here that MHHC and conservation districts can use each other’s strength and best work together.

MHHC is a national leader in the delivery of conservation agreements to protect habitat in agricultural landscapes. This attribute makes a partnership with conservation districts ideal

as their watershed plans, local knowledge and connections within the community can be used along with MHHC’s delivery capacity to maximize benefits to the watershed and its residents.

The conservation of habitat within conservation districts can be designed for multiple purposes including nutrient capture and water quality improvements, the management of surface waters, the protection of sensitive or unique areas, or areas benefitting fish and/or wildlife.

MHHC has formed partnerships with eight districts to date, and in 2012/13, MHHC has conserved 667 acres of land in partnership with six districts.

WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

The area of land over which all water will drain to a single point such as a lake or river junction.

Table 1: Conservation agreement delivery in partnership with conservation districts

Conservation District	Prior to 2012/13		2012/13		Total	
	CAs	Acres	CAs	Acres	CAs	Acres
East Interlake	3	159	5	212	8	371
La Salle Redboine	1	82	1	22	2	104
Pembina Valley	1	77	1	95	2	172
Seine Rat River	1	47	0	0	1	47
Swan Lake Watershed	1	133	1	84	2	217
Turtle Mountian	21	3,559	0	0	21	3,559
Upper Assiniboine River	0	0	1	80	1	80
Whitemud Watershed	13	10,523	4	174	17	10,697

Total 41 14,580 13 667 54 15,247

CAs reported include all CAs where conservation districts provided staff or financial resources.



THE HARRIS WETLAND RESTORATION

MHHC’s largest restoration, this wetland is now regaining its original function, which includes flood risk reduction in the town of Grosse Isle.





Willow planting along Mary Jane Creek with Pembina Valley Conservation District

GREEN BANKS CLEAR WATERS

Together with project partners, MHHC continues to influence riparian zones and local watersheds in positive ways. To improve watershed planning and conservation targeting, the vegetation cover (and relative health) of four waterways were mapped. To help communities move forward in finding effective and sustainable solutions to local watershed issues, a diverse audience of 350 people were engaged through 12 awareness and capacity-building workshops. On the ground, 27 riparian enhancement projects were completed—primarily willow planting and fence installation—which affects over 11 kilometers of stream bank.

This ongoing project is made possible by the financial support of RBC Royal Bank through the RBC Blue Water Project funding. Since receiving the award from RBC Royal Bank, MHHC and its project partners have mapped the vegetation of eight waterways, delivered 18 educational workshops and carried out 43 site-specific projects to improve watershed and riparian health.

CONSERVATION POTLUCK

Everyone has been to a potluck supper. The host decides a place and time, invites guests and does some general organization of the event, while the invitees all bring what they can to the table. This same notion can be applied in the partnership that has developed to support the protection of habitat and at-risk species in the Turtle Mountain Conservation District (TMCD). Through this gathering of like-minded organizations and funders, \$1.3 million dollars has been provided to landowners within the TMCD as a direct incentive to permanently conserve habitats important for species at risk and watershed health.

After several years work, in 2006 the TMCD unveiled the first Integrated Watershed Management Plan in Manitoba. These plans are being developed throughout Manitoba and are a core function, in their creation and delivery, of all conservation districts. Under this plan, it was recognized that the retention and restoration of upland and wetland habitats will benefit the watershed of East Souris River.

“From the outset of implementing the plan, our priority was source water protection, especially within the subwatersheds feeding the water supply reservoirs for Deloraine and

Boissevain,” explains Richard Sexton, TMCD Vice-Chair. “As a result, most of the work we have partnered on with MHHC is along the slopes of the Turtle Mountain. Each year the District allocates funds from its annual budget for this program. Through our partnership with the MHHC we have been able to realize significant progress toward achieving our goal.”

By having explicit goals and target areas within which to work, TMCD and MHHC were able to coordinate efforts and access additional conservation program funds from national sources including Environment Canada and Wildlife Habitat Canada and even internationally through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

“The Turtle Mountain Conservation District has been at the forefront of cooperation between the MHHC and conservation districts in Manitoba,” says Tim Sopuck, CEO of MHHC.

There are currently 92 conservation agreements in effect in the District. With the additional funding opportunities MHHC has been able to access through this partnership; a total of \$1.3 million dollars has been paid to landowners within the TMCD.



Eared Grebe Family

Individual wetlands play an important part in maintaining ecosystem health.

They filter water, store carbon, holdback stormwater, provide water storage, and a place for biodiversity to flourish. As such, they are an important part of the landscape and MHHC works to preserve these crucial ecosystem elements.

In spite of the many known benefits that wetlands provide, their numbers are still declining. MHHC is actively working to slow, and eventually stop, this ongoing loss of wetlands in Manitoba by preserving and enhancing those that remain and restoring the ones already lost.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR PRAIRIE POTHOLE PRESERVATION

The need to conserve prairie wetlands on private lands was one driver behind the creation of conservation agreement legislation in Manitoba. Once enacted, this legislation was immediately used to permanently conserve prairie wetlands. This was achieved through a partnership with the Delta Waterfowl Foundation that, to this day, allows MHHC to access funding from the United States for the retention, restoration and enhancement of prairie wetlands. Through the partnership with Delta Waterfowl, the Prairie Pothole Project has now conserved more than 49,000 acres of threatened prairie wetlands.

This core program of MHHC's, the Prairie Pothole Project, continued in this year and significant progress in wetland conservation and restoration was made. A total of 1,739 acres of wetlands and surrounding upland habitats were permanently conserved, 159 wetland acres were restored and more than \$278,000 in incentives was paid to landowners. In addition, 200 waterfowl nesting tunnels were installed within selected wetlands. These structures provide a safer location for mallards to raise a brood, essentially increasing nest success from less than 5% to about 80%.



ILLINOIS DUCK STAMP PROJECT

Through Delta Waterfowl Foundation MHHC is able to access funding from individual States through their duck stamp programs. Delta Waterfowl's partnerships with these States results in the protection of important nesting habitat in Manitoba. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has been a long-time partner, granting over half a million dollars in the last ten years to provide landowners a financial incentive to protect over 6,000 acres of duck nesting habitat on their lands. These protected areas also provide many other benefits to both wildlife and people. Being able to access these funds has been instrumental in bringing more conservation dollars into Manitoba.



Hooded Merganser pair



RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN ACTION

Waterfowl scientists and hunters began to see a drop in waterfowl populations throughout North America in the 1980s. This was in stark contrast to high population levels experienced in the previous decade. It was quickly recognized that if the conservation community could affect change in waterfowl populations, a coordinated continental-scale effort would be needed to improve the populations of ducks, geese and swans.

Led by the application of practical research into the reasons for waterfowl declines and strategies to increase them, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) was created in 1986. This bilateral plan became recognized world-wide as a model for resource management planning. Today, the NAWMP continues to evolve using new science and new partners, including Mexico.

Since its inception in 1986, over \$4 billion has been spent on waterfowl conservation programs across North America and \$1.93 billion in Canada. This funding has come from a variety of sources including private donors, foundations, governments and others. Canada, its landowners and residents have significantly benefitted from this plan as the majority of ducks

breed in the Canadian prairies. To support conservation in this region, NAWMP partners in Canada receive \$20-25 million per year from the North American Waterfowl Conservation Act, a conservation funding source delivered through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. An additional amount of approximately \$9 million is annually contributed to the partnership by Environment Canada. These funds support direct, on-the-ground, delivery of conservation programs.

In Manitoba, these funds support a variety of initiatives that include programs for the permanent conservation of private lands, the restoration and enhancement of wetlands, and the planting and management of upland cover.

MHHC is currently working with other NAWMP partners in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to develop a new five year NAWMP implementation plan that will coordinate the efforts of all partners. Through this coordination, and through the rigorous targeting of waterfowl conservation programs, NAWMP partners in Manitoba are working to maximize the positive impact they are having on waterfowl populations here in Manitoba, regionally across the prairies, and internationally, across North America.

North American Waterfowl
Management Plan



50,102
ACRES

secured under the NAWMP
program in Manitoba
in 2012/13

Manitoba
Habitat Heritage
Corporation
4,134 acres

Ducks
Unlimited
Canada
45,795 acres

Nature
Conservancy
of Canada
2,093 acres



RODEO COWBOY AT HOME ON THE RANGE

It is all over in eight seconds or less. Known to be the most physically demanding of the rodeo events, you need to be one tough cowboy to compete in the bareback event.

Colin Adams is not only a cowboy willing to mount 1,200 pounds of surging, bucking power (and use only one hand to hang on), he is also one that is at home on horseback watching over his herd of Black Angus cattle.

Growing up working on the family ranch, Colin developed a keen interest in rodeo and after completing a college education, courtesy of a scholarship earned through High School Rodeo, he now balances his time between his rodeo career and the building of his own ranching operation. While on the road pursuing his rodeo career, Colin's parents, Gord and Brenda provide support by overseeing the joint ranching operation. It is through his parents and their love and respect of the land that Colin has acquired his conservation ethic.

Putting the Adams family ethic into practice, Colin has permanently protected 230 acres of wetlands and 247 of upland habitat through a perpetual conservation agreement with MHHC.

"We always conserve the land," said Colin. "We don't knock down any trees or fill sloughs. Sloughs are meant to be sloughs and the trees are left."

Colin recognizes that cattle ranching is not about holding on for the next eight seconds—he saves that for the rodeo arena—it is about managing the land with the next eight decades in mind. "It is impressive to see his desire to protect the ranch and the habitat rather than try to drain and clear it," said Tom Moran, MHHC's Habitat Conservation Specialist and resident of the area. "In an area where many folks want to eliminate wetlands and turn the sod, Colin's attitudes are encouraging and they set a good example for others."

As a young rancher facing the costs of a setting up and expanding his herd, Colin sees no downside in the signing of a conservation agreement. The agreement allows him to manage the land as he normally would and it provides him a source of funds to reinvest in his operation.

"I am just getting into cattle ranching and it is cash in my pocket that I can invest back into my operation to upgrade equipment and buy replacement heifers," says Colin. "There is no downside to this." What is good for Colin and his ranch is equally good for the environment.



Colin Adams riding bareback, Charlotte Artyshko



Colin Adams checking his cows



Bison

One of the world’s foremost conservationists and author, Aldo Leopold, once wrote that, “One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen.” (A Sand County Almanac, 1949)

When Tom and Sabrina Schlup purchased their farm in 1999, they couldn’t be considered “laymen”, they knew that the land had been wounded, “the tops of the knolls were eroded and nearly bare of soil that is now in the potholes below,” commented Tom, “the place looked like an old dish rag that had been washed too many times.” Tom also knew that he and his wife could nurture it back to health.

In October, with the help of the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, the Schlups completed the thirty-third wetland restoration project on their farm, repairing the wounds from years of intensive cultivation and drainage.

The entire farm is now in pasture with all the former cropland seeded to tame forages. Tom is also bale-feeding his bison herd on the once nearly bare knolls to improve the organic content of the formerly eroded soils.

The rolling landscape that Tom and Sabrina now manage is a product of shifting glaciers during the last Ice Age, which left a fertile land perforated with numerous small wetlands. It lies

“the place looked like an old dish rag that had been washed too many times”
- Tom Schlup

THE HEALING HAND

in the middle of the prairie pothole region, the duck factory for central North America. However, over the decades with the advent of new technology and bigger farm machinery, the wetlands became a nuisance to larger farming equipment and the wetlands were drained.

“When I first talked to Roy [MHHC’s Habitat Conservation Specialist],” Tom recalls, “I didn’t really have a sense for how many sloughs we were going to restore, I just told him to plug every hole! The more water the better.”

Small earth dikes were constructed to stop the downstream flow of water, allowing the wetlands to re-establish. On the Schlups’ farm, the size of the restored wetlands vary from less than half an acre up to six acres.

Each wetland is protected under a permanent conservation agreement, or easement, which restricts the use of the land to activities that maintain the ecological integrity of the land. The easement is recorded on the land title and remains in force with the transfer of ownership. The agreement is entirely voluntary and the landowner receives a one-time payment.

“We didn’t start this with self-benefit in mind. We just think that bush should remain bush, and sloughs should remain sloughs.” Tom explains. “The easements on the projects will prevent the next landowner from undoing all the work we are doing.”



Burrowing Owl Family

Mixed-grass and tall-grass prairie are some of the most threatened habitats in the world.

Native prairie provides many benefits to society including improving ground water infiltration, storing large amounts of carbon, reducing erosion, maintaining high biodiversity and providing safe zones for pollinators and other valuable insects. Despite the many services they provide, these habitats and the species that depend upon them are endangered.

As a whole, cattle producers are the largest group of land managers actively managing species at risk habitats in Manitoba. How these producers maintain their pastures can have significant impacts on the health and viability of at-risk species. MHHC works with producers on native mixed grass prairie to help ensure that native prairie pastures will remain for many generations to come. By preserving this habitat, and continually working on ways to improve it, MHHC and its cooperating landowners are on the forefront of prairie conservation in Manitoba.



Grassland Habitat, Kathy Murray

FUNDING SPECIES AT RISK CONSERVATION

MHHC receives funding to protect species at risk habitat from the federal government’s Habitat Stewardship Program for Species At Risk (HSP). Each year, with funds from this program, thousands of acres of native mixed- and tall-grass prairie are conserved in Manitoba. MHHC also uses these funds to conserve riparian areas to protect spawning habitats of vulnerable aquatic species at risk, like the carmine shiner. The program is designed to support activities listed in individual species’ recovery plans that will result in significant benefits for species identified as either being endangered, threatened or of special concern. Criteria for this program are such that each habitat piece conserved must be part of the home range for a species at risk; therefore maximizing the benefits to each species.

CONSERVING GRASSLAND HABITATS

The Critical Wildlife Habitat Program (CWHP) is a partnership involving the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship - Wildlife Branch, and other organizations on a project specific basis. The CWHP goal is to identify, preserve and manage remaining grassland habitats in Manitoba, especially habitats of unique, rare and endangered species. MHHC manages CWHP grants from the Manitoba’s Habitat Enhancement Fund and the federal Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. Funding for CWHP activities is also received through Manitoba’s Endangered Species and Biodiversity Fund.

Mixed-grass Prairie Habitat Stewardship

The Mixed-grass Prairie Habitat Stewardship Project promotes agricultural activities and prairie management that incorporate wise land stewardship and biodiversity conservation. It raises landowner awareness of the value of native grasslands and guides future management and stewardship activities by providing information to focus conservation efforts. The project implements, monitors, and evaluates, twice-over rotational grazing, and provides prairie enhancement through prescribed burning, brush mowing and invasive species control.

An additional 5,261 acres of native grasslands were inventoried in 2012/13, bringing the total acreage in the Mixed-grass Prairie Inventory to 195,160. Of this total, 60% has been graded as “good quality”.

A total of 2,350 acres of native grassland were secured on privately owned lands under seven, 5-year twice-over grazing management agreements. An additional 405 acres of shrubs were mowed on project lands and, in partnership with MHHC staff, 74 acres were managed through prescribed burning.

Tall-grass Prairie Communities and Species at Risk

The Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve (Preserve) is the largest intact tall-grass prairie in the province and contains several endangered and threatened species. CWHP works in a multi-agency partnership to ensure that management is effective in maintaining ecosystem viability and tracks the impacts of all major local and landscape-scale threats.

The Tall Grass Prairie Communities and Species at Risk Project conducted detailed vegetation and species at risk surveys at the Preserve on a quarter section of Crown land being proposed for designation as a wildlife management area

and on two properties acquired by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Species at risk monitoring for small white lady’s-slippers, western prairie fringed-orchids, Riddell’s goldenrod, western silvery aster, Great Plains ladies’-tresses, Culver’s root and other rare plants continued on all Preserve lands and road allowances in the Preserve area. Twenty acres of invasive and exotic species (leafy spurge and St. John’s wort) were removed from tall-grass prairie lands to enhance the habitat for species at risk.





Golden-winged Warbler

PROTECTING THE ENDANGERED

In 2012/13, MHHC conserved 1,504 acres of habitat for species at risk with conservation agreements. The landowners, who should be lauded for keeping this habitat intact and voluntarily signing it up to be conserved, were rewarded with payments totalling \$191,350. Overall, MHHC has signed up 48,038 acres of species at risk habitat over the past thirteen years and paid out over \$3.59 million dollars to Manitoba landowners.

MANAGING HABITAT FOR SPECIES AT RISK

In addition to its permanent conservation program, MHHC also receives funds for the management of species at risk habitat through the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. Management activities are completed by MHHC and in partnership with the Critical Wildlife Habitat Program and include mowing shrubs and prescribed burns. These management activities help maintain pastures and grasslands in a condition suitable for many species at risk; research suggests that many mixed-grass prairie species prefer large areas of open rangeland (for more on how MHHC is working with current research see page 23). In Manitoba, there are many historic grassland areas that have become overgrown with shrubs. When these shrubs are mowed or burned, it allows more grassland species to flourish in these areas.

MHHC conserved habitats for the following species at risk this year

HAIRY PRAIRIE-CLOVER
WHITE FLOWER MOTH
BAIRD'S SPARROW
BURROWING OWL
PALE YELLOW DUNE MOTH
COMMON BOBOLINK
NIGHTHAWK
LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE
BARN SWALLOW
SMOOTH GOOSEFOOT
GOLD-EDGED GEM
DAKOTA SKIPPER
FERRUGINOUS HAWK
PRAIRIE SKINK
SPRAGUE'S PIPIT
DUSKY DUNE MOTH
WESTERN SPIDERWORT
CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR

CELEBRATING CONSERVATION

This year the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation received national recognition for its participation in the Ecological Gifts Program. “It is a great honour to recognize Canada’s 1,000th Ecogift, a donation by Karl Gerrand and Trevor Pizzezy, marking the success of the of the Ecological Gifts Program since its creation in 1995,” said the Honourable Candice Bergen, Minister of State for Social Development. “With this program, Canadians can take real action to protect and conserve our country’s ecosystems for present and future generations.”

Over the past 18 years, Canadians have donated over 370,000 acres of private land valued at approximately \$630 million. Canada’s Ecological Gifts Program has encouraged private landowners to conserve ecologically sensitive land by donating it to a qualified recipient like MHHC. Donors have the comfort of knowing that their cherished piece of nature will be cared for in the future, and they receive significant income tax benefits.

“Donating a perpetual conservation agreement on this land has been a very rewarding experience,” said Karl Gerrand. “It feels good to know that this land will remain undeveloped forever,

and that future generations will be able to enjoy a natural untouched wilderness that past generations have taken for granted.”

MHHC is a recognized recipient of conservation interests through the Ecological Gifts Program and is responsible for the long-term protection of Ecogift donations. “Working to conserve Canada’s natural legacy through partnerships is what MHHC does,” commented John Whitaker, Chair of the MHHC.

When asked why he chose to protect this land, Trevor Pizzezy noted that he did it with his children in mind. “One of the reasons I have valued having the land and want to protect it for the future is because of the opportunity it has provided for my children to be exposed to the natural environment and the educational opportunities it has provided me as a parent,” said Pizzezy.

“Regardless of the season, observation of the natural environment is a great way for any of us to learn something new.”



Trevor Pizzezy, John Whitaker (Chair, MHHC), Honourable Candice Bergen, and Karl Gerrand (from left to right)



Ongoing research, Stacey Carnochan

RESEARCH, ON-THE-GROUND

At times, research conclusions are viewed harshly by the public. So what? That’s obvious. How does that impact me? can all be responses to some of the “latest findings” that populate the news feeds and headlines.

Dr. Nicola Koper’s work cannot be accused of lacking real-world implications. She has been leading crucially important research on prairie habitats and their inhabitants, such as grassland birds, which is actively shaping conservation program delivery in Manitoba.

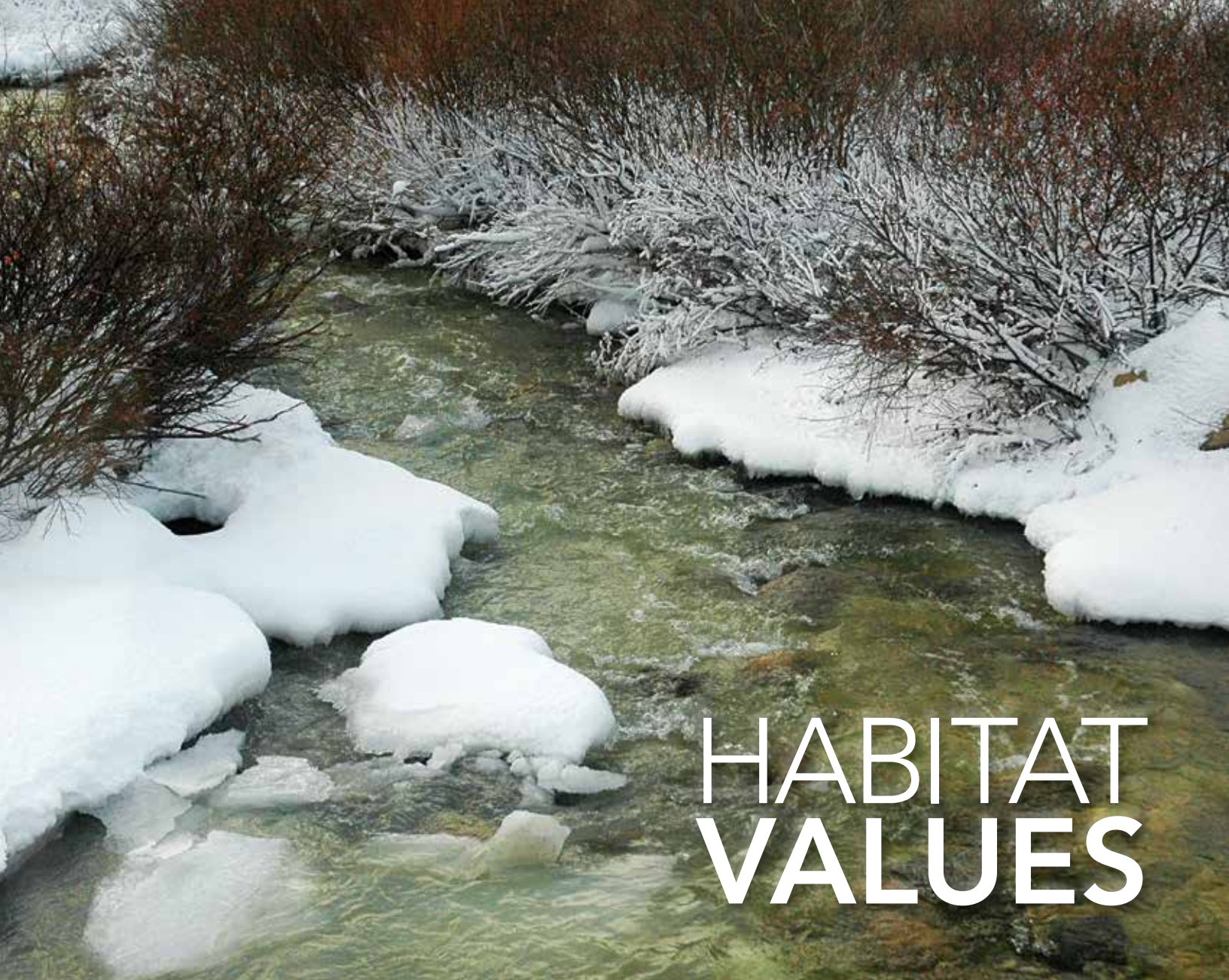
The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC) has always developed conservation programs based on the application of the best available science. By doing this, MHHC is actively transforming research to on-the-ground impacts and ensuring it is offering programs that have the best conservation impact.

The delivery of conservation programs for species at risk has been a focus of MHHC’s for more than a decade. In keeping with its tradition of connecting science and conservation program delivery, this year MHHC hosted a workshop to further the engagement between conservation science and conservation delivery.

Through the workshop, the latest research on effective conservation programming for prairie grasslands and grassland songbirds was presented to MHHC staff and conservation partners by the scientists and graduate students who conducted the studies. Much of this research was related to how people can best utilize the landscape, primarily for agriculture, while having neutral or positive impacts on species at risk.

As the owner and manager of over 12,000 acres of prairie and aspen parkland habitat in Manitoba, MHHC is using this information to adapt its management of these lands and to develop new programs. The management principles recognized through the workshop were to enhance the species composition and vegetation structure heterogeneity within grasslands, lower cattle stocking rates, utilize season-long grazing, and eliminate shrubs. As a direct result of the research presented at this workshop, MHHC will now annually enhance 1,000 acres of grassland habitat through the reduction of shrubs within pastures.

From the university halls to the native pasture, MHHC helping Manitoban’s conserve species at risk.



HABITAT VALUES

Spring flows

Scarcity increases value. The rarer an object, the more value it typically possesses.

Animal watchers will embark on global tours to see a rare animal and mass conservation campaigns are developed around endangered species. But, natural habitats in general, particularly in developed regions of the world (including Manitoba) are quickly becoming rare, and are not always recognized for their full value.

MHHC is working diligently within Manitoba to ensure that the full value of the Province's natural habitat is known. By highlighting the true costs to society that will result when habitat is lost and by helping project developers minimize their ecological footprints through habitat mitigation, MHHC is working to ensure Manitoba continues to have healthy, functioning ecosystems for generations to come.



Often used to tear up prairie, this blade is now helping to restore it.

TAKING HABITAT TO THE BANK

When waterfowl populations concentrate in large numbers, significant crop losses can be experienced resulting in direct economic losses for the producer. To minimize these losses, sacrificial fields, or lure crops, are planted to draw migrating waterfowl away from privately owned fields. Shifting trends in crop production and other conditions around Oak Hammock Marsh has reduced the need to use lure crops to mitigate wildlife impacts and has created an opportunity to use these fields to mitigate human impacts.

The decommissioning of several lure crops in the Oak Hammock Marsh Wildlife Management Area created an opportunity to convert these annually cultivated fields back into their native condition, tall-grass prairie. Through funding from Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Funding Program and Wildlife Habitat Canada, the Prairie Habitat Revival Project is serving to demonstrate 1) that prairie habitats can be restored and 2) a system of compensation whereby habitat that will be destroyed by a development project is proactively replaced by a habitat restoration project.

MHHC is a Manitoba leader in the development of habitat mitigation practice. Habitat mitigation recognises the need for development to occur but also highlights the values, goods and services that are lost along with the natural habitat. The mitigation process works to avoid, minimize or offset these losses. The Prairie Habitat Revival Project is demonstrating that habitat offsets can be created, accumulated, and applied to future development projects that will have unavoidable impacts on natural habitats.

By demonstrating the "habitat banking" concept, MHHC is taking steps towards the goal of ensuring that there is no net loss of habitat in Manitoba. By restoring habitat in advance of its loss elsewhere, MHHC is creating habitat "credits" that it can then "bank" and assign to specific compensation needs in the future.

Through this project, MHHC and its partners, including Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, are turning fields that were once needed to mitigate wildlife impacts into fields that are now mitigating human impacts.

These former lure crops will soon be a refuge for native prairie species and a lure for prairie enthusiasts alike.



Prairie Crocus

ONE ACRE OF WETLAND IN
MANITOBA HAS AN ANNUAL EGS
VALUE RANGE OF \$420 - \$700.

DEFINING THE COST OF HABITAT LOSS

Habitats can have a range of “values” extending from emotional to economic and can be expressed on a personal, local, regional and even global scale. While one’s personal connection to habitat cannot be adequately captured with a dollar figure, there are some values that can be quantified and form the basis of a habitat’s Ecological Goods and Services (EGS) value.

The concept of EGS is that society, in some way, benefits from the functions of a healthy ecosystem. These can be “goods” such as clean water or “services” such as crop pollination. By defining these benefits and estimating the costs associated with using alternative ways to deriving the same benefits, an EGS value can be assigned to the habitat.

Wetlands are one type of habitat that have particularly high EGS values due to the broad range of goods and services they provide. Nutrient removal is just one service that this habitat type provides. Based on recent research by Ducks Unlimited Canada, it has been found that a one acre restored

wetland can retain four kilograms of phosphorus per year. A conservative estimate of the cost to remove one kilogram of phosphorus within a wastewater treatment system is \$50; therefore, based on this treatment cost, a one acre wetland provides a nutrient capture service worth \$200 per year.

\$35.3 million:
Environmental Goods and
Services value of MHHC lands

The conservation programs that MHHC delivers ensures that natural habitats are maintained on the landscape and can continue to provide to society a range of goods and services. The current annual EGS value of lands that MHHC has permanently conserved is estimated to be \$35.3 million.

MHHC 2012/13 PARTNERS

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Association of Manitoba Municipalities
Bird Studies Canada
Delta Waterfowl Foundation
Ducks Unlimited Canada
East Interlake Conservation District
Environment Canada
International Institute
for Sustainable Development
Keystone Agricultural Producers
La Salle Redboine Conservation District
Landowners
Manitoba Agriculture,
Food and Rural Initiatives
Manitoba Beef Producers
Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
Manitoba Conservation Districts Association

Manitoba Forestry Association
Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation
Manitoba Wildlife Federation
Nature Manitoba
Parks Canada
Pembina Valley Conservation District
Prairie Habitat Joint Venture
Seine Rat River Conservation District
State of Illinois
Swan Lake Watershed Conservation District
The Nature Conservancy of Canada
Turtle Mountain Conservation District
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District
Whitemud Watershed Conservation District
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Kevin Teneycke	Nature Conservancy Canada
John Williams	Manitoba Wildlife Federation, Habitat Trust

* Executive Committee member

A special recognition and thanks goes out to the dedicated individuals of the MHHC Board of Directors who retired their position in 2012/13. These engaged conservationists include, Dwight Williamson, Ralph Groening, Ron Bennett, Rob Olson and Barry Todd.



Bison

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