

# MANITOBA HABITAT HERITAGE CORPORATION

Homegrown conservation since 1986.



## ANNUAL REPORT 2018/2019

Manitoba 





*Mallard drake, Walter Potrebka*

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## MANITOBA **HABITAT HERITAGE** CORPORATION

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation is a non-profit provincial Crown Corporation working to sustain biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and community well-being in Manitoba. This is achieved with private land stewardship programs and funding provided by the Conservation Trust.





MINISTER OF  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Legislative Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA  
R3C 0V8

Her Honour, the Honourable Janice C. Filmon, C.M., O.M.  
Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba  
Room 235  
Legislative Building  
Winnipeg MB R3C0V8

Your Honour:

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation  
for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2019

Yours sincerely,

Rochelle Squires  
Minister



*Brent Pooles*  
CHAIR

On behalf of the MHHC Board of Directors, I am pleased to thank the Province of Manitoba for its unprecedented approach to funding conservation in Manitoba, and for selecting MHHC to take on a fundamental role.

The Province of Manitoba has invested \$154 million in two permanent and irrevocable endowment funds – the Conservation Trust and the GROW Trust. An initiative of this magnitude and unique nature requires good will and close cooperation among the parties. I am gratified by the manner in which the province and The Winnipeg Foundation worked with the MHHC Board and staff to establish the trusts and resulting programs. Clear direction has been provided for the annual proceeds from the trusts that MHHC will administer. I also wish to thank fellow board members for their insights and guidance.

The Conservation Trust and GROW Trust have captured the attention of conservation community across the continent. In an era where all governments are challenged to simply maintain program funding, this action will significantly advance conservation in Manitoba for decades to come. We applaud the province for this bold and lasting decision.

## MESSAGES

This year included the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation's most significant organizational adjustment in the last three decades. Implementation of the \$102.0 million Conservation Trust - created by province of Manitoba, held and invested by The Winnipeg Foundation, and investment proceeds administered by MHHC – required new skill sets, staff, processes and even software to develop and implement the Conservation Trust grant program (see page 8). Remarkably, at year end the province committed to a second trust fund – the GROW Trust – with a further \$52.0 million contribution.

MHHC has primary responsibility to deliver a granting program funded by revenues from the trusts. At year end MHHC neared the finish line for grant awards for the first slate of Conservation Trust projects.

This achievement was made possible with more than a little help from MHHC's friends, and a few strangers as well. Consultations were carried out in the province as well as with public and private granting groups across Canada. In the end, MHHC staff implemented an effective grant intake and review process within a tight schedule.

Of course, MHHC still had its existing mix of conservation programs to deliver. Funding growth led to increased project objectives, which MHHC delivery staff achieved. Excellent conservation delivery results were recorded for wetlands, watersheds, grasslands and priority habitats for species at risk. Of particular note was the completion of a three-year arrangement with the Manitoba Beef Producers and Manitoba Agriculture to deliver grasslands stewardship projects with cattle producers under the federal Species at Risk Partnership on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL). The direct involvement of the cattle industry in species at risk recovery has been applauded by the conservation community across Canada.

I congratulate the MHHC Board and staff for an excellent year on the conservation program delivery front as well as the unprecedented Conservation Trust opportunity. Next year looks to be no less...interesting.



*Tim Sopuck*  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER

# Overview



Black-throated green warbler, Cameron Meuckon

## *Objects*

Conservation, restoration and enhancement of Manitoba fish and wildlife habitats and populations.

## *Vision*

Habitats across Manitoba's lands and waters sustain biodiversity, healthy ecosystems, and community well-being.

## *Mission*

To be a leader, and a partner of choice, in delivering diverse habitat conservation programs through partnerships with the community and governments.

MHHC'S

# Conservation

## LEGACY

**15,230**  
acres of MHHC-owned,  
publically accessible lands

**\$2.2  
MILLION**  
granted

**186,226**  
acres of land permanently  
conserved by a  
conservation agreement

**65,363**  
acres conserved  
through donation





## A YEAR OF *Conservation Success*

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation is the province's "Homegrown Conservation" team that has been working with, and for, Manitobans over the past 32 years. With a history of over 366,000 acres (148,000 ha) of conservation work, MHHC has continued its private land-focussed habitat conservation programming in 2018/19. By working with private landowners, the Corporation has delivered wildlife-friendly programming on 14,593 acres (5,906 ha) of natural habitats across southern Manitoba in the past year.

Building on MHHC's continued success in conserving natural habitats, the Corporation has now expanded its reach through the creation of a new conservation funding model for Manitoba. Made possible by an unprecedented investment in conservation by the Province, MHHC is working closely with The Winnipeg Foundation to lead a unique conservation funding approach designed specifically to benefit Manitoba's environment and people. With the permanent

endowment of \$154 million of public funds, MHHC will provide local groups access to approximately \$7 million per year to implement conservation work in Manitoba. With the initial capital investment by the government of Manitoba, and the ongoing fund management provided by The Winnipeg Foundation, these annual funds will be available for conservation work across Manitoba, forever. In the inaugural year of the Conservation Trust, MHHC was able to provide 31 organizations with funding to help implement conservation work in Manitoba.

With the proven delivery record of MHHC, and now the availability of permanent conservation funding for its partners, MHHC's ability to affect Homegrown Conservation work in Manitoba is firmly rooted and it will continue to grow towards its vision of "ensuring habitats across Manitoba's lands and waters sustain biodiversity, healthy ecosystems, and community well-being".

Over the past year, MHHC made significant progress towards the realization of its vision, that Manitoba's natural habitats sustain biodiversity, support healthy ecosystems and contribute to community well-being. This was achieved through habitat conservation and enhancement in the areas of watersheds, wetlands, and species at risk. In addition to the on-the-ground work MHHC has achieved directly, the new trusts for conservation, and the projects it funds, is expanding the Corporation's positive impacts on the landscapes and people of Manitoba.

### IN 2018/19 MHHC ACHIEVED:

- **14,593 acres (5,906 ha)** of habitat conservation in Manitoba
- **\$1.9 million** in cash or donation receipts provided to landowners

- **\$102 million** committed to the Conservation Trust
- **\$52 million** committed to the GROW (Growing Outcomes for Watersheds) Trust
- **52 proposals** from 38 conservation groups received for funding

- **443 acres (179 ha)** of watershed habitat conserved
- **5,895 kilograms** of phosphorus stored
- **138 acres (56 ha)** of wetlands restored

- **2,728 acres (1,105 ha)** of wetland habitat conserved
- **17,058 ducks** living on habitat conserved by MHHC
- **2,023 Hen Houses** maintained

- **11,354 acres (4,598 ha)** of Species At Risk habitat conserved
- **12 Species At Risk** benefiting
- **11,130 acres (4,504 ha)** of grasslands enhanced through SARPAL programs

- **\$62 million** worth of environmental goods and services provided to Manitobans
- **799 cattle** grazing on MHHC lands

Take the proven strength of MHHC's program delivery, partnerships, and reputation, combine that with an unprecedented public investment in conservation, and you have a powerful opportunity for conservation in Manitoba. The work MHHC, its partners, and Manitobans have completed this year will have lasting benefits for wildlife and future generations.



# MANAGING MANITOBA'S Trusts for Conservation

## 58

proposals from 38  
CONSERVATION GROUPS  
received for funding

## \$102 MILLION

committed to the  
CONSERVATION TRUST

## \$52 MILLION

committed to the  
GROW TRUST

## THE CONSERVATION TRUST

The Province of Manitoba took a major leap forward in its ability to fund environmental enhancement projects when the Conservation Trust was announced in the March 2018 Budget Speech. Almost one year later, Manitoba established a second fund for conservation, the GROW Trust. By the end of March 2019, the combined conservation investment in these funds totalled \$154 million. MHHC has a major role in ensuring that these unique and enduring initiatives will support and inspire important conservation projects for generations to come.

The Conservation Trust concept was first introduced in the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan, an environmental policy and program document, released in November 2017. It was proposed to support climate change mitigation and adaptation through nature-based conservation and enhancement activities. The Conservation Trust was formally announced by Manitoba in the March 2018 Budget Speech. Development and implementation occurred throughout 2018/19.

MHHC consulted extensively in Manitoba and across Canada before developing the Conservation Trust framework. Those consultations informed many key activities: development of program criteria and a grants review process; an electronic application process through an online grants management system; program administration processes; and an evaluation framework for review of proposals as well as assessment of projects.

The purpose of the Conservation Trust is to support on-the-ground projects that benefit watersheds, habitat and wildlife, and soil health in Manitoba's working landscapes. These projects, individually and collectively, will deliver a broad range of ecological goods and services to Manitobans. Targeted outputs for the Trust are increasingly being called "natural infrastructure", as they complement networks of roads, dams, levees and other "built" infrastructure to reduce flooding, store water in dry periods deliver other key environmental benefits, including wildlife habitat, carbon storage, and improving the resilience of our working landscapes to the impacts of climate change.



*Rick Frost, CEO of The Winnipeg Foundation; Brent Pooles, MHHC's Board Chair; the Honourable Brian Pallister, M.L.A. Premier of Manitoba; and the Honourable Rochelle Squires, M.L.A. Minister of Sustainable Development at the announcement of the first projects to be funded by the Conservation Trust*





Peter Lindsay

# THE CONSERVATION TRUST

## AGREEMENT AND PARTNERS

The tripartite Conservation Trust agreement, between Manitoba, The Winnipeg Foundation and MHHC, was signed in early December 2018. Shortly thereafter, the inaugural call for proposals was announced.

Manitoba established the Conservation Trust with an irrevocable \$102 million contribution to The Winnipeg Foundation. Of that total, \$3 million was available immediately to establish the Trust and to fund Conservation Trust projects in advance of the first flow of investment revenues from the Trust. The remaining \$99 million was invested in the Trust and the interest

from it will produce an annual revenue stream beginning in 2019/20.

Under the tripartite agreement, the Trust assets are held in perpetuity by The Winnipeg Foundation, which is one of Canada’s largest community foundations, with assets of over \$1 billion. Annual revenues from the Trust (estimated to be about \$5 million under current rates of return) will be awarded to conservation groups via a granting process managed by MHHC, which also has responsibilities to monitor and report on Conservation Trust activities to the other parties to the agreement.

## PROPOSAL PROCESS

A structured proposal solicitation and review process is central to the Conservation Trust. Criteria were established for each of five categories of funding:

- Watersheds
- Habitat and Wildlife
- Soil Health
- Innovation and Conservation Planning
- Connecting People to Nature

Owing to the ability to deliver the largest array of ecological goods and services, the Watershed and Habitat and Wildlife categories were allocated the largest percentage of available Conservation Trust funds.

MHHC implemented a web-based grants management system. Proposal development, review, and contribution agreements are managed electronically, eliminating the need for paper transactions. As part of the review process, MHHC assembled a Technical Advisory Committee from many disciplines to review and rank proposals. The MHHC Board has responsibility for final approval of all proposals.

Non-government groups active on working landscapes in Manitoba can apply for funding for projects that contribute to one or more of the Conservation Trust’s outcomes, bring significant matching funds (2:1 or better), and work partnerships to achieve their objectives.

## PROJECTS

In 2018/19, the MHHC Board of Directors approved five projects totaling \$500,000. Three of those projects are summarized on pages 14 and 15. An additional 36 proposals were finalized for review and approval by the Board. That process was completed in early April.



## CATEGORIES OF CONSERVATION TRUST FUNDING



Habitat and Wildlife



Watersheds



Connecting  
People to Nature



Soil Health



Innovation  
and Planning



Projects supported by the Conservation Trust will mitigate floods and droughts, improve water quality by decreasing nutrients and other pollutants entering waterways, conserve biodiversity, increase production of harvestable wildlife, improve soil health, decrease soil erosion, and improve climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration and reduction of other greenhouse gases. Projects will also provide other value to Manitobans, such as improving recreational opportunities to connect people to nature.



Representatives from The Winnipeg Foundation, Manitoba and MHC at the signing of the Conservation Trust agreement on December 10, 2018.  
(Left to right, back row: Caron Clarke, MHC Board member; Dimple Roy, past MHC Board Vice-Chair; Kathy Jasienczyk, MHC Board member; Maureen Krauss, MHC Board member; LuAnn Lovlin, The Winnipeg Foundation Director of Communication and Marketing; Susan Hagemelster, The Winnipeg Foundation Director of Finance; Gerald Ouellette, MHC Business Manager; Front row: Rick Frost, The Winnipeg Foundation CEO; the Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tim Sopuck, MHC CEO)

## GROW TRUST

At the end of the fiscal year Manitoba established a second trust fund, the GROW Trust (Growing Outcomes in Watersheds). As with the Conservation Trust, signatories to the GROW Trust agreement are Manitoba, The Winnipeg Foundation, and MHC. While there are many similarities between the GROW and Conservation Trusts, the GROW Trust will emphasize ongoing support for projects that require annual incentive payments to landowners, which is envisioned under Manitoba's GROW program. The GROW Trust may also support ongoing operating costs for activities that require many years of activity, such as annual maintenance of tree plantings.

Manitoba established the GROW Trust with a contribution of \$52 million, of which \$2 million is allocated to initial projects and start-up costs. The remaining \$50 million was placed in an irrevocable Trust managed by The Winnipeg Foundation, to generate annual revenues for GROW Trust projects. The details for this new Trust will be developed in the new fiscal year.



# CONSERVATION TRUST *Projects*

## WHITEMUD WATERSHED CONSERVATION DISTRICT DISTRIBUTED MULTI-FUNCTIONAL WATER STORAGE

The Whitemud Watershed Conservation District received a \$100,000 grant towards their \$323,000 Distributed Multi-Functional Water Storage project. A series of small water storage projects will provide permanent wetland habitat while reducing peak flows during floods and retaining water during dry periods. These projects will help mitigate the effects of flooding and drought, while creating wetland habitat, capturing nutrients and increasing the watershed's climate change resilience.

*Water storage project site, Chris Reynolds*



*Group canoeing on the Seine River, Leigh Anne Parry*

## SEINE RIVER GREENSPACE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT: ENHANCING NATURAL HABITATS ALONG THE SEINE AND CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE SEINE

Save Our Seine Environment Inc. received \$100,000 towards their Seine River Greenspaces Enhancement Projects, totaling \$318,000.

The Seine River provides important natural habitat for wildlife and people in the heart of Winnipeg. As Winnipeg grows, more people are drawn to experience nature along the river by foot, bicycle, canoe or kayak.

Save Our Seine will work with community volunteers and the City of Winnipeg to restore native vegetation, rehabilitate eroded streambanks, repair and improve popular trails, improve interpretive signage, and provide public- and school-based interpretive programs.

## KIRKELLA COMMUNITY PASTURE GRASSLAND ENHANCEMENT

The Manitoba Forage and Grasslands Association was granted \$100,000 to work in partnership with the Rural Municipality of Wallace-Woodworth and the local pasture's patrons committee to enhance the 3,000 acre (1,215 ha) Kirkella Community Pasture west of Virden. The \$200,000 project includes pasture assessment and improvement activities designed to enhance grassland and wetland habitat, improve pasture productivity and increase soil health and carbon capture. While the Community Pasture is important to the bottom line of local cattle producers it is also one of the largest intact native habitats remaining in the area.



*Kirkella Community Pasture, Duncan Morrison*





# HEALTHY LANDSCAPES AND HEALTHY LAKES

Wetland restoration is one of the most effective tools in the conservation toolkit. Working with willing landowners, for the past decade MHHC had improved wildlife habitat, stored carbon, held-back water, provided drought resilience and kept excess nutrients out of Manitoba's surface waters by restoring more than 1,400 acres (565 hectares) of wetlands. It was the sequestration of nitrogen and phosphorous, and the benefits that provides to Lake Winnipeg, that was the driver of MHHC's most recent funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Standing on the shore of Lake Winnipeg, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Honourable Catherine McKenna, announced \$400,000 in funding for MHHC and its project partner, Ducks Unlimited Canada.

"The Government of Canada is making historic investments in protecting nature, including freshwater resources such as Lake Winnipeg. Clean water is an essential resource for Canadians: It's critical for our health, the environment, and the economy. And the Government of Canada is pleased to work with environmental groups, Indigenous Peoples, and government partners to collaborate with communities within the Lake Winnipeg Basin and achieve tangible results to improve the overall health of the lake."

The goal of this project is to keep over 88,000 kilograms of phosphorus and 33,400 kilograms of nitrogen from entering Manitoba waterways. This means the equivalent of about seven dump trucks of phosphorus will no longer find its way into Manitoba waters; resulting in cleaner, healthier lakes for the people and wildlife of Manitoba.



Left to right: Terry Duguid, MP; the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Tim Sopuck, MHHC CEO and Mark Francis, Head of Conservation Programs (Manitoba), Ducks Unlimited Canada at the announcement of funding for wetland restoration in Manitoba.





# Natural Habitat

## FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

The Andrew Family on their farm

"We're pretty excited about preserving our land, we think it's really important. What we're doing is on a small scale, but it's our way of doing a little something."

A few years back, Kris and Jen Andrew, bought what they refer to as their very own sanctuary. Their quarter-section of land gives them the space to hobby farm and the opportunity to enjoy nature at its best.

"We just sit on the deck and wildlife is right out our back door," said Kris. "We spend a lot of time on the land. We snowshoe in the winter, we take our kids out on walks, we horseback ride, quad and even paddle around in our small boat on the water."

The property, northeast of Rossburn, has some cultivated acres along with small wetlands and large wooded areas that are representative of the aspen parkland typically found on the south side of Riding Mountain National Park.

Roy Bullion, Habitat Conservation Specialist for the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, said the couple recently signed a perpetual conservation agreement on the wetland and wooded areas of their property and restored two small wetlands. These restorations contributed to a total of 138 acres of wetland restorations

completed by MHHC this year. The Andrew's project was supported by funding from the State of Louisiana and the Lake Winnipeg Basin Program.

"This young family is passionate about their land and preserving it. Their forward-thinking is positive for maintaining wildlife habitat," said Roy.

The Andrews said it's common to see black bears, deer, ducks, geese, and coyotes on the land. They've heard of moose sightings and on one occasion they even spotted a timber wolf. Species at Risk, such as the Canada warbler and the red-headed woodpecker, which have been sighted nearby, also benefit from the wooded areas of conserved land on their property.

"When we first moved here and saw all this bush and nature, we were hooked. It's nice to be able to preserve these things because so often you drive down the road and there are so many farmers pushing bush to gain a few more acres. I get it, money is money, and you need as many acres as possible, but it's also nice to have some land that is left alone," said Kris. "If we can buy more land someday, we would take advantage of MHHC programming again if it works."





## INVESTING IN ●●● *Habitat Goals*

*Inset photo: This project, built by the Assiniboine Hills Conservation District, is a small dam water storage and all season alternate watering system that reduces flooding and nutrient run-off while providing a water source for cattle, Neil Zalluski*

*Yasemin Keeler, Turtle Mountain Conservation District*

Watersheds are complex ecological systems and it is important to maintain the health of watersheds as they can have direct impacts on human, wildlife and plant survival.

A watershed collects rainfall and other precipitation and directs the water to a stream, river or lake. It is important to monitor watersheds to ensure they are healthy and maintained well into the future.

To help manage provincial watersheds, the Assiniboine Hills Conservation District (AHCD) and the Turtle Mountain Conservation District (TMCD) have been working towards achieving the objectives outlined in their comprehensive Integrated Watershed Management Plans.

However, they haven't been working on their own. MHHC has been supporting the Conservation Districts by working with them to help meet their targets. MHHC's role is to work with landowners to sign conservation agreements on lands identified by the Conservation District. These agreements provide long-term protection and conservation of the landscape.

"We have a good working relationship and a good connection with MHHC; they have the expertise in dealing with

conservation agreements. It's important to maintain these partnerships, so we can continue to take on these important projects and have the funding to do so," said Neil Zalluski, AHCD Manager.

Some of today's biggest concerns regarding watersheds include clearing of natural cover, large scale irrigation, invasive species, and excessive drainage, all of which can affect on soil erosion, riverbank stability, as well as surface water quantity and quality.

The watershed management plan for the Turtle Mountain Conservation District was developed in 2006. Yasemin Keeler, TMCD Manager, said that their goal was to secure 25 percent of natural cover, and with the help of MHHC they managed to surpass this goal.

"This has helped us to provide habitat which is having an impact on the bird population. We've had sightings of the Threatened red-headed woodpecker in the area, which is a positive. There's always more that can be done, but there's definitely been an impact from the work we've done in protecting areas of natural cover and wetlands," said Yasemin.



CONSERVING MANITOBA'S

## *Wetlands*

11

**PARTNERS**  
providing funding for  
wetland conservation

2,728

acres of wetlands  
**CONSERVED**

2,023

Hen Houses  
**MAINTAINED**

17,100

**DUCKS**  
living on habitat  
conserved by MHHC





Funding for wetland conservation comes from a variety of sources, including governments, conservation groups, and private individuals. Many of these funds originate from hunters through the purchase of Duck Stamps. These funds are collected and distributed to conservation groups across North America via U.S. state grants and, in Canada, through Wildlife Habitat Canada.

The support for wetland conservation provided by the organizations listed below is greatly appreciated. Manitoba's people and wildlife continue to benefit from this ongoing support.

# WATERFOWL PROGRAM PARTNERS



# CONSERVATION FUNDING THAT KNOWS NO BOUNDS



One of the world's most respected international wildlife management frameworks, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, was released in 1986. Three years after this, new federal legislation created a way for the United States to fund wetland conservation across North America. Now, for the past 30 years, the U.S. federal government has been spending at least half of all funds generated under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) on wetland conservation projects in Canada and Mexico. Over this period, NAWCA has provided \$1.6 billion in conservation funding, affecting 30 million acres (1.2 million ha) of habitat. Across North America, there have been 6,000 conservation partners that have leveraged NAWCA's \$1.6 billion to access another \$4.6 billion in conservation funding.

While there are many NAWCA partners in Canada, MHHC is one of only three conservation organizations that directly receives NAWCA funding directly. Accessing NAWCA funds is a challenging process that few organizations can navigate; so much so, that MHHC is the only provincially-based organization to do so. However, MHHC cannot do this on its own. Delta

Waterfowl was a former applicant to NAWCA and was instrumental building capacity within MHHC. Delta continues to provide key match funding, science support, and helps maintain an international profile for the Corporation.

Through the Delta - MHHC relationship, the Corporation receives about \$320,000 per year from six U.S. states. These revenues are generated from the sale of state duck stamps that all waterfowl hunters need to purchase along with their hunting licence. These small purchases by individual hunters result in significant conservation actions across North America, including here in Manitoba.

Leveraging these relationships, over the past 12 years MHHC has received \$5.4 million (USD) through NAWCA, which has generated an additional \$7.2 million (USD) in conservation funding from both Canada and the U.S. The success is not in the funding however, but in the work. These funds have allowed MHHC to permanently conserve more than 80,000 acres (32,400 ha) of wetland and upland habitat in Manitoba, enhance more than 3,500 acres (1,418 ha), and play a significant role in the long-term future of waterfowl in North America.



MHHC hosts Lacy Alison from US Fish and Wildlife Service on a tour of the MHHC's NAWCA projects



## CONSERVING

# Family Heritage



The landowners along with Wes Pankratz, MHHC's Habitat Conservation Specialist in the Minnedosa area

As you drive down backcountry roads in rural Manitoba it is easy to identify old yard sites. Quite often you'll see some older buildings, rows of lilac or caragana, or maybe even a family cairn.

Some of these homesteads have been abandoned or forgotten, but others remain a special place for families to visit. This is certainly the case when it comes to the Johnson Family Farm.

In 1907, Elmer Johnson moved to Canada from Clyde, Kansas to start a new life. He purchased land south of Minnedosa, met his future wife Hilma Berg, and together they started farming and raising a family of eight children.

It was a mixed farm with cropped land, sheep, bees, and an orchard. And now, even after 112 years, it is still owned by members of the Johnson family and has been designated as a Century Family Farm.

Sisters Heather Deneka, Barbara Froehler, and Ruth Murray currently own the quarter-section of land that was originally homesteaded by their grandfather. They grew up on their parents' farm, just a quarter-mile down the road.

"When our grandpa died in 1966, our uncle took over the land and then his son, our cousin Grant, took it over from him. A little over five years ago Grant wanted to sell the property,

so the three of us jumped on the opportunity to buy it. We wanted it to stay in the family," said Heather.

To their knowledge, the property, which is made up of grasslands, wooded areas, and wetlands, has never been cultivated. With the intent to conserve the land for future generations and honour their grandparents, the siblings signed a conservation agreement with MHHC.

And while the native habitat is protected for waterfowl and wildlife, it can (and is) still being used for things such as pasturing cattle. The old yard site, however, remains a special place for hosting family gatherings. The Johnson family gathers almost every year at the farm to celebrate the history of their family with picnics, bonfires and other activities. By creating a memory garden, they also honour those who started it all.

"It was always such a happy place to be, said Barb. I have no idea how many times we went down the road to Grandmas. We have such fond memories of picking apples and grapes, tending to the bees, looking for fossils, exploring, and always following Grandpa and Grandma around. We're grateful that we were able to keep the property and that it is here for our family to enjoy."



Landowners Heather Deneka, Barbara Froehler, and Ruth Murray holding a picture of their grandparents Elmer and Hilma Johnson



# CONSERVING MANITOBA'S Species at Risk

11,354

acres of Species  
At Risk habitat  
CONSERVED

12

Species At Risk  
BENEFITTING

11,130

acres of grasslands  
ENHANCED

*Sprague's pipit, Cameron Meuckon*



*Gord Adams checking on his pasture*

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR SPECIES AT RISK

"It takes everything to make the world go around. Everything has a purpose and everyone has to work together to make it work."

With this thought in mind, it was an easy decision for Gord Adams and his son Colin, to take part in the Species at Risk Partnership on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) program.

Together the father and son have a herd of 300 Black Angus cattle that they raise in and around the Pipestone area. Although they've been implementing rotational grazing with their cattle for several years, the SARPAL program allowed them to enhance this summer feeding practice.

Through this conservation program, the Adams were able to upgrade their pastures with new fencing and a watering system. One of the newly fenced areas created an enhanced spring paddock, which has helped to reduce grazing pressure on other native grasslands at the start of the grazing year.

"It's a win-win for everybody. You just do things the way you've been doing it," said Gord Adams. "As long as the cattle are out there grazing, the birds will be there. It's been a good program for us and a lot of other producers."

MHHC partnered with the Manitoba Beef Producers and Manitoba Agriculture to implement the SARPAL program which is funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada. Its purpose is to provide farmers with opportunities and funding to enhance their operation while at the same time conserving habitat for species at risk.

Species that are either Endangered or Threatened such as the Baird's sparrow, bobolink, burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, and the loggerhead shrike benefit from the conservation of these native prairie grasslands as it provides them with the habitat needed to survive and flourish. Many of these species, as well as others, are typically found in southwestern Manitoba.

At the end of this three year program, MHHC had exceeded its SARPAL program goal with over 20,000 acres of species at risk habitat being maintained and enhanced. The success of these projects and the partnerships that were developed will have a lasting effect on the environment, on preserving native grassland and ultimately ensuring that species at risk have the habitat they require to thrive.



# Valley of Grass

The native grassland habitats of the Souris River Valley and Blind Souris Valley are one of the few contiguous blocks of native habitat within the mixed-grass prairie region of southern Manitoba. This region is critical habitat for endemic bird Species At Risk, including the Sprague's pipit, chestnut-collared longspur, Baird's sparrow, and ferruginous hawk. Buffalograss, a native grass Species At Risk, is also found in this region.

In collaboration with landowners who manage these grasslands, as well as funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation has conserved 5,927 acres of native

mixed-grass prairie habitat in the Souris Valley through conservation agreements. Almost 30% of the native grassland habitat in this area is protected in perpetuity by conservation agreement.

In 2018/19, an additional conservation agreement was signed along the slopes of the valley protecting another 80 acres of this valuable landscape. Overall 437 acres of habitat for species at risk was protected through Habitat Stewardship Program in 2018/19, bringing the total area of Species At Risk habitat secured by MHHC through this program to 64,800 acres.



Clockwise from top: Bobolink, burrowing owl, loggerhead shrike, chestnut-collared longspur, ferruginous hawk, Sprague's pipit  
Centre: buffalograss

All bird photos by Christian Artuso



# CONSERVING MANITOBA'S *Habitat Values*

15,230

acres of MHHC land  
available for  
PUBLIC USE

\$62  
MILLION

VALUE OF  
ECOLOGICAL SERVICES  
provided to  
Manitobans by  
habitats conserved  
by MHHC

799

CATTLE GRAZING  
on MHHC lands

## CATTLE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT – A HARMONIOUS CONNECTION

When Harvey “Wayne” Freeman bequeathed his farmland to the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation in 1996 it looked a bit different to how it does today. Of the 996 acre property, located just outside of Killarney, MB, 600 acres were in annual crop production and 396 acres of the Long River valley and surrounding prairie were used to graze cattle. Mr. Freeman felt that there was a place for both cattle and wildlife on the land and therefore donated it to MHHC, a wildlife organization, to manage.

Touted as the “one of the largest private land donations for habitat conservation in Manitoba”, MHHC set about ensuring that Mr. Freeman’s wishes were followed. A Land Management Advisory Committee, which included agriculture and wildlife representatives as well as neighbours, was organized and a plan was developed. The cultivated acres were converted to permanent cover to provide both wildlife habitat and hay for livestock, a watering system was installed to allow cattle access to fresh water and reduced pressure on the wetlands and riparian areas, and a grazing and haying schedule was set for the property.

When Tom Moran, the Habitat Conservation Specialist (and part-time cowboy) for MHHC started managing the property

nine years ago, the previously grazed areas had not been used for several years and haying was the only agricultural use on the property. Tom’s experience in wildlife management and land use, combined with his interest in supporting and working in the beef industry, led to a revised management strategy for the area. The management plan was revamped and all acres were converted to grazing as this will enhance grasslands and improve biodiversity. Working with local cattle producers, a grazing system has been implemented where cattle are rotated through paddocks twice a year. Stocking rates are set to be functional for the beef producer and to ensure wildlife habitat benefits. The project involved updates to the fencing and watering systems, as well as some shrub control to enhance the prairie grasses. Many of these improvements were funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada. Through funding from Wildlife Habitat Canada, 58 acres of wetlands on the property were restored, benefitting both the property and the downstream environment.

While the land may look different today, Mr. Freeman’s wish to see an abundance of wildlife coexisting, and benefiting from, the cattle on the site is being realized.



Tom Moran, MHHC Habitat Conservation Specialist, surveys the Freeman Property on his preferred mode of transportation





Common yellowthroat, Cameron Meuckon

# GIFTS TO MANITOBA

The staff of the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation take pride in the many connections that they make with local community members. Because of the relationships that have developed over the past 30 years of MHHC working in local communities, the Corporation now receives more donations of land and habitat than any other conservation group in Manitoba.

Over the past year, four landowners have entrusted MHHC with more than 1,000 acres (400 ha) of wildlife habitat. Added to previous years' gifts, MHHC has been the recipient of 65,363 acres (26,451 ha) of land or conservation agreements in southern Manitoba. The value of this habitat has been appraised at over \$12 million, but the real value is in the preservation of these lands as a refuge for both people and wildlife.

MHHC accepts gifts of habitat in two ways; through donation of fee simple land or through donation of a conservation agreement. In a fee simple land donation, MHHC receives title to the land and is responsible for paying taxes and managing the property, along with all the other duties of being the landowner. MHHC makes these lands available for public use, respecting the donor's wishes and the ecological integrity of the

lands. Uses typically include some agricultural activity, as a way to manage the property, as well as open access for nature hikes and hunting (for an example of how MHHC cares for gifts of land through the years, see page 31).

When donors gift a conservation agreement to MHHC, the landowner retains the ownership of the land and may continue to use and manage the property as they have in the past. A conservation agreement ensures that the habitat on the property remains long after they are gone but doesn't transfer ownership to the Corporation. MHHC will regularly check in to ensure that the habitat protected under the conservation agreement remains intact.

In both cases a tax receipt for the appraised value of the land or conservation agreement is provided to the donor.

MHHC would like to express our sincere thanks to Robert Bates, Joyce Wedderburn, Glendon Ralph Bessant, and Jim and Helen Searle for their generous donations of wildlife habitat to MHHC and the people of Manitoba over the past year.



Family memorial to Glendon Ralph Bessant on land where a conservation agreement has been donated to MHHC





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Bird Studies Canada  
Delta Waterfowl Foundation  
Ducks Unlimited Canada  
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State of Arkansas  
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Turtle Mountain Conservation District  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife Habitat Canada

*... and 50 Manitoba landowners who have partnered with MHHC on conservation projects.*



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