Manitoba Habitat Conservancy

HOMEGROWN CONSERVATION SINCE 1986

The Conservation & GROW Trusts

2024/25

IMPACT REPORT

INDEX

Conservation Leadership and Partnership in Action

Since 1986, Manitoba Habitat Conservancy (MHC) has been dedicated to conserving, restoring, and enhancing habitat across Manitoba. Its mission is to deliver lasting conservation benefits by investing in initiatives that support productive natural landscapes. To date, MHC has conserved over 230,000 acres of habitat and successfully implemented a wide range of conservation programs. Over time, MHC has increasingly fostered partnerships and voluntary, farm-friendly conservation initiatives that enhance ecosystem health and biodiversity. This extensive experience, combined with insights from local, regional, and national organizations, has informed the development of the grant programs for the Trusts, ensuring they are effective, practical, and impactful.

Executive Summary

The Conservation Trust, GRowing Outcomes in Watersheds (GROW) Trust, and Wetlands GROW Trust are driving meaningful conservation across Manitoba. This report highlights the impact of their granting commitments and the Ecological Goods and Services (EG&S) outcomes generated from previous investments, with results reported to March 31st, 2025. These outcomes are made possible through the Province of Manitoba's support for conservation, administered through their significant capital investments with The Winnipeg Foundation.

Together, the Trusts fund projects that help communities and ecosystems adapt to climate change and connect people with natural landscapes and animals.. By supporting nature-based solutions and natural infrastructure, these projects improve water quality, reduce flooding, enhance drought resilience, protect biodiversity, support harvestable wildlife, sequester carbon, strengthen soil health, and provide access to nature.

Since their inception, the Trusts have committed $60.9 million to 244 conservation projects across Manitoba. In 2025-25, outputs and estimated outcomes were aggregated from 35 completed projects.

Ecological Goods and Services (EG&S) outcomes from completed projects were calculated using the Trust Outcome Assessment Tool (OAT). The OAT estimates that the projects have sequestered 135,589 tCO2e, stored 115,653 pounds of phosphorus, provided 4,730 acre-feet of flood storage, and recharged 4,830 acre-feet of drought recharge (additional outcomes are provided in Appendix A).

History of the Trusts

The Government of Manitoba created the Conservation Trust (CT) in 2017 with a $102 million endowment at The Winnipeg Foundation to generate ongoing revenues for nature-based solutions to climate change. That commitment grew with the creation of the GROW Trust in 2018 ($52 million) to advance watershed conservation, and the Wetlands GROW Trust in 2019 ($50 million) to protect some of our most threatened ecosystems. Together, these Trusts represent a $204 million legacy investment, generating $8–10 million each year for conservation projects across the province.

MHC administers these Trusts by establishing granting programs (with the Province as a partner for the GROW Trusts), overseeing project selection, monitoring finances and outcomes, conducting evaluations, and reporting on results. These responsibilities are formalized through a tri-party agreement between Manitoba, The Winnipeg Foundation, and MHC, reflecting a commitment to transparency and accountability.

From the beginning, MHC has worked closely with provincial staff and conservation partners to design programs that are both effective and practical for those delivering conservation on the ground. In 2019, the first grants were awarded, launching a process built on collaboration and expertise.

A cornerstone of the process is the structured proposal review, which draws on both internal and external expertise. Applications are evaluated by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), a group of specialists in watershed planning, agriculture, conservation programming, and wildlife and soil health, who provide recommendations to MHC's Board of Directors for final funding approval. This ensures that every dollar invested is directed to projects with the greatest impact for Manitoba's lands, waters, and communities.

On the Horizon

The Trusts are constantly evolving to meet the needs of Manitoba's landscapes, communities, and conservation partners. Looking ahead, three areas of focus are guiding our efforts:

Lowering Unnecessary Barriers

MHC is developing a new granting stream under the Conservation Trust to make funding more accessible, inclusive, and reflective of the diverse communities leading conservation work across the province. This work, shaped by our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Policy, is being carried out with the support of an Indigenous-led consulting group to ensure it is thoughtful, culturally appropriate, and responsive. Our goal is to reduce barriers and open new pathways, so more voices and knowledge systems are represented in conservation funding. A pilot is anticipated for 2026.

Advancing the Outcome Assessment Tool

Measuring the impact of conservation is essential to building strong programs. In partnership with IISD, MHC is enhancing the Outcome Assessment Tool (OAT) with updated research, GIS integration, and new functionality to capture benefits such as economic impacts. These improvements will help ensure Trust-funded projects are evaluated with the best available science and that their ecological and community benefits are clearly demonstrated.

Investing in Our Database

Behind the scenes, we are also investing in the continued development of the Trusts' database, a project management and reporting system that supports everything from grant applications to long-term tracking of conservation outcomes. As this system grows, it will streamline reporting for grantees, improve data accuracy, and create a powerful platform for measuring the long-term impact of conservation investments across Manitoba.

Together, these initiatives signal the Trusts' commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and accountability – ensuring conservation funding continues to make meaningful impacts on people, wildlife, and the land we all share.

The Trust Intakes

Manitoba Habitat Conservancy manages three Trusts that fuel conservation efforts across the province. While each Trust has its own emphasis, together they create powerful opportunities to invest in Manitoba's natural infrastructure. From these three revenue sources, we operate two annual grant proposal intakes.

- **The Conservation Trust intake – funding a wide range of conservation projects**
- **The GROW intake – focusing on watershed health and agricultural landscapes**

These intakes provide pathways for communities, organizations and landowners to access funding that supports healthier landscapes and stronger ecological goods and services (EG&S) for Manitobans.

The Conservation Trust

The Conservation Trust supports projects that conserve, restore, and enhance natural infrastructure across Manitoba's working landscapes. This competitive program is open to local and provincial not-for-profits, Watershed Districts, and national organizations with a programming base in Manitoba.

At its heart, the Trust aims to fund projects that make a measurable difference on the ground. Priority is given to initiatives that conserve land and water while delivering multiple ecological goods and services – from cleaner water and healthier soils to climate resilience.

To guide investments, six funding categories were created:

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

The largest share of funds flow into Watersheds, Habitat and Wildlife, and Soil Health, where projects can deliver broad and lasting benefits. The remaining categories support the development of conservation tools, new ideas, and opportunities for Manitobans to connect with and learn about nature.

GROW

The GROW Trust and Wetlands GROW Trust fuel the Growing Outcomes in Watersheds (GROW) program. Delivered by Manitoba's 14 Watershed Districts, GROW helps farmers and landowners adopt practices that improve watershed health while working alongside their agricultural operations.

By focusing on watershed management and resiliency, GROW projects reduce flooding and drought risks, improve water quality, and enhance nutrient management. Typical activities include:

- **Water Retention**
- **Wetland Conservation**
- **Wetland Enhancement and Restoration**
- **Upland Enhancement**
- **Upland Restoration**

Through partnerships with landowners, communities, governments, and non-profits. GROW ensures conservation works for people, agriculture, and nature alike.

Trust EG&S Outcomes

Trust Outcomes								
	CONSERVATION TRUST						GROW TRUST	
EG&S Outcomes	**Watersheds**	**Habitat and Wildlife**	**Soil Health**	**Innovation**	**Planning**	**Connecting People to Nature**	**GROW**	**Wetlands GROW**
Improved Water Quality	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Flood Mitigation	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Improved Drought Resistance	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Increased Biodiversity	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Increased Production of Harvestable Wildlife Species	●	●		●	●		●	●
Enhanced Carbon Sequestration	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Increased Soil Health	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Economic Benefits: Jobs & Income	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Recreational Opportunities to Connect People to Nature						●		
Activities that Enhance a Recognized Greenway or Equivalent Natural Area						●		
Increased Public Access to Nature						●		
Interpretive Programs Delivered in Natural Areas						●		

Results to March 31, 2025

FUNDING COMMITMENTS FROM THE TRUSTS

From inception to March 31, 2025, a total of **$60,989,491.67** million has been committed to projects through the Trusts.

A breakdown of commitments, by Trust, is provided in Table 2 below. Details of funding commitments by category are provided in Appendix B.

Table 2: Cumulative Trust Granting Summary

	PRIOR YEARS	CURRENT YEAR	
Stage in Process	Conservation and GROW Trusts 2018 –2024	GROW Trust 2025	Conservation Trust 2025
Letter of Interest (LOI)			
Submitted	307	13	33
Denied	47	0	3
Approved	260	13	30
Applications			
Submitted	244	13	29
Denied	41	0	6
Approved	211	13	23
Funding			
Trust Funds	$50,506,899.00[1]	$7,645,092.67	$2,837,500.00
Match Funds	$89,129,130.00	$14,864,025.00	$7,645,092.67
Match Ratio[2]	2.16:1	3.69:1	2.69:1

[1]Adjusted to reflect changes in granting commitments to date
[2]Incentive payment amounts are not included in the calculation of match ratio for GROW projects

Total granting commitments to March 31, 2025:	**$ 60,989,491.67**

Results to March 31, 2025

The summary below reports the outputs and outcomes from 35 Trust-funded projects finalized during the 2024–25 Grant Funding Year (GFY). A comprehensive table of aggregated outputs for this reporting period may be found in Appendix A. For a list of the 35 projects, their summaries and grant amounts, see Appendix C.

WETLAND ACRES

7,317	2,060	153
Conserved	**Enhanced**	**Restored**

WATER RETENTION ACRE-FEET

708	252	545
Temporary	**Extended**	**Permanent**

GRASSLAND / PERENNIAL COVER ACRES

27,436	161,920	13,523
Conserved	**Enhanced**	**Restored**

RIPARIAN AREA ACRES

2,083	5,699	36
Conserved	**Enhanced**	**Restored**

WOODED ACRES

827	11,207	17
Conserved	**Enhanced**	**Restored**

Other Significant Activities

In addition to acres impacted, projects supported by the Trusts generate a wide range of other outcomes. A selection of these is highlighted below, with further details available in the accompanying tables and supporting material.

- Number and/or length of trees and shrubs planted (in shelterbelt, farmyard, and other settings)
- Structures for wildlife (e.g. duck nesting structures)
- Structures (trails, signage, kiosk, etc.) commonly related to Connecting People to Nature projects
- Communications activities (advertisements, workshops, etc.) in relation to Trust-funded projects
- Decision support tools developed

It should be noted that a small number of projects do not have deliverables that are easily expressed in acres impacted on-the-ground. This is particularly true for the Innovation, Conservation Planning and Connecting People to Nature categories. If a project has the potential to impact a definable region (e.g. a plan affecting a certain watershed), those acres are identified in the table as 'influenced'. While these projects do eventually result in EG&S benefits, they are not directly comparable to projects whose impacts are direct and can be measured in the current project period.

Trust Outcomes

The purpose of the Trusts is to cost-effectively provide EG&S outcomes derived from conservation efforts and includes activities that supplement or improve: water quality, flood mitigation, drought resilience, biodiversity, harvestable wildlife, carbon sequestration, and soil health. EG&S describes the various benefits that are provided by natural infrastructure, both for society and for ecological processes. These services can often supplement or replace constructed infrastructure through their natural processes, for example by increasing flood protection or contributing to water filtration.

The Trust Outcome Assessment Tool (OAT) – developed by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) who reviewed scientific literature and consulted with an expert steering committee – takes the reporting information provided by the Trust recipients and calculates an estimate of the EG&S that the project provides.

In 2020, IISD completed the first phase, a literature review to identify quantitative/qualitative values and ranges for the EG&S outcomes related to activities most supported by the Trusts. This literature review resulted in the Evaluation Matrix, which was validated by an experienced steering committee.

To analytically quantify EG&S outcomes from Trust funded projects, phase two saw the development of the OAT. This tool facilitates the actual calculation of the EG&S outcomes and operate off of two primary variables. The first variable, Acres of Habitat, provides the primary input for determining the magnitude of the EG&S calculated, while the second variable, the Additional Required Input Data, represents the EG&S value of the habitat. Currently the second variable is assessed by Unit Change in Land. Unit Change in Land determines the relative benefit of EG&S calculations, which is dependent on initial land use for a given project activity. For situations where the land use does not significantly change, for example with conserved habitat, the tool utilizes the concept of avoided loss to represent the EG&S outcomes.

TABLE 3: 2023–2024 Trusts EG&S

HABITAT	WETLANDS	WATER RETENTION	WOODLANDS	RIPARIAN	GRASSLANDS	TOTAL
Water Quality lbs TP removed/yr	22,955.8	244.4	360.4	250.7	18,624.9	42,436.1
Water Quality lbs TN removed/yr	229,557.7	2,240.1	252.3	2,165.1	60,587.8	294,803.0
Flood Storage acre-ft storage	3,633.5	1,096.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	4,729.8
Drought Storage acre-ft storage	14,533.9	545.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15,078.9
Drought Recharge acre-ft recharge/yr	1,744.1	65.4	103.7	223.0	2,694.3	4,830.5
Flood Capture acre-ft capture/event	-	-	140.7	223.0	2,694.3	3,058.1
Biodiversity and Harvestable Wildlife acres of habitat	5,146.0	0.0	4,039.2	4,111.9	48,508.8	61,805.9
Carbon Sequestration tCO2e/year sequestered	11,282.3	0.0	18,838.3	11,088.4	17,557.4	58,766.5
Soil Health tSOC content/yr	9,820.1	0.0	4,490.2	5,578.5	32,423.6	52,312.3

*Green numbers represent acre-ft capture/event

Categories Supported by Conservation Trust

HABITAT & WILDLIFE

Projects designed to improve habitat quality and quantity.

WATERSHEDS

Projects that have water quality and quantity (water retention, drought mitigation, etc.) as key EG&S outcomes.

SOIL HEALTH

Activities that build soil organic matter, decrease soil erosion, and increase carbon sequestration through perennial cover management, or other cropping practices that maximize the period of living roots in the soil on agricultural lands.

INNOVATION

On-the-ground pilot projects that are designed to focus on new approaches to the conservation of land, water, and wildlife. Deliverables must be tied to on-the-ground projects within the grant period.

CONSERVATION PLANNING

Large area planning initiatives in an eco-regional, basin, or multi-species scale.

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE

Successful projects in the Connecting People to Nature category have included landscape enhancements, infrastructure enhancements, and in-person outdoor-based interpretive programming.

Activities Supported by GROW

Water Retention

Water retention projects increase adaptive capacity for climate change, landscape and ecosystem resiliency, including reducing peak flows and enhancing water supply opportunities for agricultural use. Projects including small dams, temporary backfloods, or on-farm water retention basins, can reduce flooding downstream, improve water quality, and provide local habitat benefits.

Wetland Conservation, Enhancement and Restoration

Wetlands store water, sediment, nitrogen, phosphorus and carbon, thereby contributing to watershed resilience and water quality, while providing numerous benefits related to biodiversity, habitat and climate change.

Buffer Establishment

Buffers are natural or engineered transitions between landscape features, including:

Shelterbelts: reduce wind-based soil erosion, create habitat, and increase yields.

Perennial cover buffers: between field edges and riparian areas provide protection from nutrients, chemicals and mechanical disturbance.

Eco-buffers: multiple rows of a variety of native local ecozone trees and shrubs.

Buffers and grassed waterways: permanent vegetation in low or highly sloped areas to channel water flow during runoff and heavy rain events.

Riparian Area Management

Riparian areas are the transition zone between waterbodies and surrounding uplands. Riparian areas provide riverbank and shoreline stabilization and erosion control, and capture sediments, pathogens, nutrients and pesticides from surface runoff before entering waterbodies.

Upland Area Management

Upland area management includes practices on annual cropland, pasture, hayland, wooded areas, and sensitive soils that influence watershed resilience and water quality. Encouraging management appropriate to soil types and topography will provide benefits to soils (reducing erosion, improving both water holding capacity and carbon sequestration), biodiversity and habitat.

Defining Moments

Behind every acre conserved, every partnership made, and every project completed is a story. These are some of the moments that stood out in 2024/25.

Signs of Connection: Interpretive Signage and Oral Storytelling at Aki Centre

Since 2019, Seven Oaks School Division's Ozhaawashkwaa Animikii-Bineshi Aki Onji Kinimaagae' Inun (Blue Thunderbird Land-based Teachings Learning Centre, or Aki Centre) has been facilitating land-based learning for students in the division, while restoring 35 acres of the tallgrass prairie that was native to the site before it was converted into cropland. By offering programs that weave together Western and Indigenous ways of knowing and being, Aki Centre is working to reconnect people with the land and build relationships across nations as an act of reconciliation and as part of education.

Aki Centre's 2022 Conservation Trust project, *Interpretive Signage & Oral Storytelling Project at Ozhaawashkwaa Animikii-Bineshi Aki Onji Kinimaagae' Inun*, was developed to support the growing awareness of and interest in the site from members of the public. While the site is open to the public for recreational use, there was a lack of interpretive signage to communicate the story and intent of landscape enhancement projects and assist visitors with wayfinding.

Over the course of three years, staff at Aki Centre brought together youth, Indigenous Elders, artists and leaders to collaborate on the creation of eight interpretive signs, a process that involved oral storytelling, visual art and written word. At the heart of this project was the intent to centre Indigenous voices and worldviews. "What we wanted was for the stories to come from the Elders, for the stories to come from people who've always lived here and whose families have always lived here," says Alexis Nazeravich, the Learning Centre Operations Coordinator. "In that way, the collaboration was really essential."

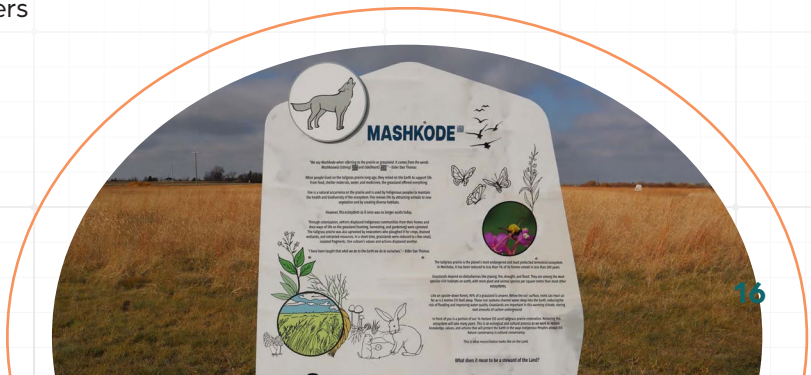
Through brainstorming sessions, themes for each sign were identified, which were further distilled and clarified through land-based stories, teachings and philosophies from Elders Mary Courchene and Dan Thomas. The Elders' stories were recorded, providing the basis for the written text on the signs. These recordings are accessible on the signs via a QR code, supporting the retention of languages and traditional oral storytelling practices, and inviting visitors to listen to the Elders speak in their own words. The signs, which also include Anishinaabemowin words and translations, illustrate how the ethic of conservation and protection of the natural world is deeply embedded in Indigenous cultures. "It's in their stories, right?" explains Nazeravich. "It's in their worldviews. It's in their views and actions and relationships. And it's even in their language. And that's something that we tried to convey on the signs."

The program Mino-Bimaadiziwin for Indigenous Youth connected 9 youth to the project, led by local Anishinaabe artist, Jamie Issac. The group explored various kinds of interpretive signage and thought critically about the frequent lack of representation of Indigenous voices, cultures, histories and truths. In addition to informing the content of the signs, youth in the program contributed art and photography representing their perspectives and cultures, producing a visually stunning result.

The eight interpretive signs were installed at Aki Centre in the fall of 2024 and have already invited reflection and inspired learning with visitors to the site. As one middle years student commented, "On the Mashkode [sign], I liked how at the end it said 'What you do to the earth is what you do to yourself,' because it tells us why we should take care of the land... like giving back to the earth, making sure we have a balanced relationship with the land."

RECIPIENT: Seven Oaks School Division

PROJECT: Interpretive Signage & Oral Storytelling Project at Ozhaawashkwaa Animikii-Bineshi Aki Onji Kinimaagae' Inun



Restoring Wetlands and Grasslands Across Manitoba's Working Landscapes

RECIPIENT: Ducks Unlimited Canada
PROJECT: Prairie Habitat Restoration in the Working – Landscapes of Manitoba Part 1 & 2

Across Manitoba, wetlands are disappearing at an alarming rate. These ecosystems provide critical benefits, from storing water to buffer against floods and droughts, to filtering runoff, recharging groundwater, capturing carbon, and sustaining wildlife. With support from the Conservation Trust and GROW Trust organizagtions such as Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and the Assiniboine West Watershed District (AWWD) have taken major steps to restore, conserve, and enhance wetlands while working closely with local landowners.

For Ducks Unlimited Canada, the *Prairie Habitat Restoration in the Working Landscapes of Manitoba* project exceeded expectations. Originally aiming to restore and conserve 2,015 acres, DUC worked with landowners across high-risk landscapes to restore and secure more than 5,800 acres of wetlands and grasslands. Restoration included 86 wetland acres and over 2,000 acres of grassland, achieved through programs like forage incentives and Conservation Agreements. "Habitat loss is one of the biggest challenges we face," said Lena Vanden Elsen, Conservation Program Specialist with DUC. "The funding that the Conservation Trust provides helps us to do really important work here, it really allows us to be successful."

RECIPIENT: Assiniboine West Watershed District
PROJECT: GROW Conservation Auction 2022-23

Elsewhere in Manitoba, AWWD's *Watershed Resilience in a Changing Climate* project focused on both protecting wetlands and building new water storage capacity. The district conserved over 1,100 acres of class I and II wetlands and created an additional 194 acre-feet of runoff storage through small dams. Combined with converting 1,168 acres to permanent cover and installing fencing and off-site watering systems, the project helped address flooding risks, protect riparian areas, and improve soil health. "These wetlands (class I and II) are some of the most at-risk, but also arguably the most effective and beneficial for storing and purify surface water," said Ryan Canart, general manager at AWWD. "They provide vital habitat for many species, from frogs and salamanders to migratory waterfowl, they provide for recharge of ground water, they help maintain and moderate the hydrological cycle and last but not least they help in reducing peak velocities and erosion in times of heavy precipitation."

Both organizations emphasized the critical role of the Conservation and GROW Trusts in making this work possible. For DUC, Trust funding leveraged additional matching dollars and provided long-term stability for habitat programs. For AWWD, the Trusts were described as a "game changer", more than doubling impact on the landscape and helping watershed districts across Manitoba scale their efforts. "Every organization has fixed costs," said Canart. "Funding levels that go beyond your fixed costs are available to be applied 100% towards projects, in this respect, these additional trust funds makes all watershed districts more effective and impactful."

From restored grasslands, to wetlands that buffer communities against climate extremes, the projects led by DUC and AWWD demonstrate how Trust funding, strong partnerships, and landowner collaboration can deliver conservation outcomes at scale. As Vanden Elsen reflected: "You don't mess with a good thing. We'll continue to build on our projects with the Trusts putting forward proposals to do habitat restoration, conservation enhancement work here in Manitoba."

Supporting Grassland Stewardship through GROW and Conservation Trust

RECIPIENT: Manitoba Beef Producers

PROJECT: Grassland Enhancement Program 2023

There is growing awareness of the importance of grassland ecosystems and the vital role they play in supporting biodiversity, carbon storage, flood mitigation and nutrient cycling. What is sometimes less recognized, however, is the essential role that cattle production plays in conserving and sustaining these threatened landscapes. By grazing the land, cattle help maintain the habitat in its grassland form, preventing its conversion and ensuring it continues to provide ecological benefits. To support this, the Conservation and GROW Trusts are partnering with organizations that work directly with the cattle industry to advance grassland conservation.

"Our beef producers on the landscape are critical land stewards," says Carson Callum, Executive Director of Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP). Cattle producers have an interdependent relationship with grasslands, relying on the availability and health of pastures for the success of their operations. At the same time, cattle grazing protects grasslands from the increasing threat of conversion to annual cropping systems. With the removal of bison, once abundant on the prairies prior to colonization, cattle now provide the disturbance, grazing patterns and nutrient input needed for thriving grasslands.

As the voice of the industry, MBP represents about 6,000 producers and helps them strengthen their operations in ways that benefit both their herds and the environment. This includes helping producers purchase the equipment necessary for implementing grazing practices that support sustainable land management. "We want to support the producers that want to see improvements to [their] land and maintain it in the most natural environment that they can," says Callum.

In their 2023 Conservation Trust project, *Grassland Enhancement Program 2023*, MBP worked with 53 producers to enhance 16,033 acres of grassland through fencing and watering systems, which allow producers to implement rotational grazing practices. In addition, over 12,000 acres were secured for 10 years through agreements with landowners who are implementing beneficial management practices on their land.

Many Watershed Districts have similar initiatives available as part of their GROW program. For instance, in their 2022–24 GROW project, West Interlake Watershed District (WIWD) supported seven producers in installing new cross-fencing and watering systems, resulting in the enhancement of 1,440 acres of grassland. "Farmers are the stewards of the land and possess the practical knowledge to implement beneficial management practices like rotational grazing, which helps to maintain soil health, improves water retention, and enhances drought resilience, ultimately benefiting both the agricultural sector and the environment," explains Derek Kaartinen, WIWD Technician. "Their active involvement is essential for effective conservation efforts."

With most remaining grasslands in Manitoba located on privately held land used for cattle production, partnering with cattle producers to conserve and responsibly manage these areas is essential to mitigating the impacts of climate change. GROW and Conservation Trust–funded projects are demonstrating that producer-led, incentive-based initiatives deliver outcomes that benefit both producers and the

RECIPIENT: West Interlake Watershed District

PROJECT: 2022 Working with landowners to improve watershed health in the West Interlake Watershed

Going Once, Going Twice: GROW Conservation Auction 2022–23

RECIPIENT: Eastern Interlake Watershed District

PROJECT: GROW Conservation Auction

The East Interlake Watershed District (EIWD) is taking a unique approach to conservation through its *GROW Conservation Auction 2022–23*. Instead of setting a flat rate for ecological practices, EIWD invited landowners to competitively bid to deliver ecological goods and services. This method ensures cost-effective and impactful conservation outcomes while allowing landowners to weigh in on the price that works best for their operation.

"These auctions are great for providing diversity to projects," explained Armand Bélanger, manager at EIWD. "This district has a big variety in landscapes, from conventional ag to forested areas, prairies, and all of our wetlands. So it's good mix."

The auction welcomed a wide variety of projects from wetland protection and enhancement, to soil health improvements, shelterbelts, and tall grass prairie establishment. In total, the 2022–23 auction helped conserve, enhance, or restore 651 acres of wetlands, riparian, and upland areas, created 113 acre-feet of water storage, and established regenerative practices on 910 acres of farmland. Among those outcomes was the restoration of 274 acres of tall grass prairie, a habitat vital to pollinators and songbirds.

Funding support from the GROW Trust was crucial in making this work possible. "Over the past few years, with the help from the Trusts and other funding, it now feels like the Watershed District can deliver a multi-faceted program and reach out to a much bigger area to offer it," said Bélanger. "So we're reaching goals a lot quicker than we would have if we didn't receive this funding."

The response from landowners has been remarkable. "There was over 444 bids that the executive board and GROW board reviewed," noted Bélanger. "So that's 30 to 60 bids a month that the board is reviewing, it's really remarkable."

One standout outcome has been the interest in tall grass prairie restoration. "A number of people want to convert pasture land into native tall-grass prairies. And we've done this for a number of years. Not only should we be enhancing wetlands, but also just bring back with tall grass prairies the best we can," said Bélanger. He pointed to two recent sites near St. Andrews and Stonewall, seeded with a native seed drill which, despite a drought year, are already taking hold.

For Bélanger, the auction model shows what's possible when innovative funding meets local action. "The Watershed District is turning into a hub of information for landowners, and we're using things like the Trusts to help deliver that programming. It takes hundreds and hundreds of hours, but it's turning out great."

Appendix A

Trust Outputs for Fiscal Year 2024 – 2025

Trust Outputs

		TRUST-FUNDED	MATCH-FUNDED	TOTAL
	ACTIVITIES	Acres	Acres	Acres
Wetland	Conserved	4,863.2	2,454.0	7,317.2
	Enhanced	1,109.8	949.7	2,059.5
	Restored	152.5	–	152.5
	Total	**6,125.5**	**3,403.7**	**9,529.2**
Riparian	Conserved	2,007.6	75.4	2,083.0
	Enhanced	2,538.5	3,160.1	5,698.6
	Restored	32.5	3.0	35.5
	Total	**4,578.6**	**3,238.5**	**7,817.1**
Upland–Grassland	Conserved	20,733.7	6,702.5	27,436.2
	Enhanced	24,329.1	137,591.3	161,920.4
	Restored	11,893.0	1,630.0	13,523.0
	Total	**56,955.9**	**145,923.8**	**202,879.7**
Upland–Wooded	Conserved	206.1	52.7	258.8
	Enhanced	5,891.0	4,047.3	9,938.3
	Restored	197.7	232.6	430.3
	Total	**6,294.9**	**4,332.6**	**10,627.4**

Note: Acres are double counted if an enhancement or restoration activity also includes conservation (securement) within the project period

		TRUST-FUNDED	MATCH-FUNDED	TOTAL		
	ACTIVITIES	Acre-feet	Acre-feet	Acres	Acre-feet	Number of Basins
Water Retention Structures	Temporary	421	287	708		
	Extended	171	81	252		
	Permanent	294	251	545		
	Total	**886**	**619**	**1,505**		

		TRUST-FUNDED	MATCH-FUNDED	TOTAL
	ACTIVITIES	Acres	Acres	Acres
Other Outputs	Bufferstrips	164.6	511.6	**676.2**
	Delayed grazing	–	–	**–**
	Delayed haying/mowing	–	–	**–**
	Fencing and/or off-site watering system	13,297.3	–	**13,297.3**
	Grassed Waterways	327.5	24.0	**351.5**
	Invasive species control (match only)	–	–	**–**
	Livestock Crossing	2,040.9	842.0	**2,882.9**
	Nest Tunnels Installation	250.0	–	**250.0**
	Nest Tunnels Maintenance	–	300.0	**300.0**
	Pasture improvement	284.9	–	**284.9**
	Pollinator Habitat	1.3	103.1	**104.4**
	Prescribed/Controlled Burn	–	–	**–**
	SAR related BMP's	11,781.3	4,252.6	**16,033.9**
	Shrub Control via mowing or herbicide	469.3	452.8	**922.1**

	ACTIVITIES	TOTAL QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION
Engagement	Events	447	Number of events carried out (seminars, webinars, workshops, tours, etc)
	People Engaged	19,960	Number of active participants at events
	Communication materials produced	888	Number of pieces produced (Brochures, booklets, flyers, etc)
	Communication Outreach	274,602	Number of people reached via media (print, radio, web, social media, etc).
	Producers with Conservation Contracts	320	Number of producers with conservation contracts
	Producers with Conservation Contracts with EFPs*	60	Number of producers under contracts with Environmental Farm Plan receiving annual incentive payments
	Producers with Conservation Contracts with EFPs receiving annual incentive payments*	25	Number of Producers under contracts with Environmental Farm Plan receiving establishment and/or annual incentive payments
	Partnerships Established	19	Number of partnerships established

*Reported only by GROW projects

		TRUST-FUNDED	MATCH-FUNDED	TOTAL	
	ACTIVITIES	Quantity	Quantity	Quantity	Units
Additional Outputs	Pipelines	0.5	2.2	2.8	KM
	Well Development	2.0	–	2.0	Number
	Trees planted	13,149.0	12,289.0	25,438.0	Number
	Abandoned Wells Sealed	–	12.0	12.0	Number
	Riparian Area Restoration	–	1.0	1.0	KM
	MAW Communications	–	5,000.0	5,000.0	Number of People
	Signs Installed	25.0	–	25.0	Number of Signs
	Management Plans Developed	5.0	13.0	18.0	Number of Documents
	New partnerships	1.0	4.0	5.0	Number of New Parterships
	Prescribed Fire Events	1.0	8.0	9.0	Number of Prescribed Fires
	Avian Species Monitoring	–	157.0	157.0	Number of Point Counts
	Motus Tags for SAR	–	12.0	12.0	Number of Tags

Appendix B

List of Projects Funded By Funding Category – 2025

List of Funded Projects By Funding Category 2025

Granting Commitments

CONSERVATION TRUST 2025	$ 2,837,500.00
GROW TRUST 2025	$ 7,645,092.67
TOTAL	$ 10,482,592.70

Conservation Trust Projects 2025

PROJECT CATEGORY	ORGANIZATION NAME	PROJECT NAME	TRUST FUNDED AMOUNT
Connecting People to Nature	Assiniboine College	Enhancing the Manitoba Weed Identification and Native Plant Gardens at Assiniboine College	$ 33,000.00
Conservation Planning	Assiniboine West Watershed District	LiDAR for Targeted Natural Infrastructure Systems Design in the Shell River Basin	$ 25,000.00
Habitat and Wildlife	Association of Manitoba Community Pastures	Improving Manitoba's Community Pasture Rangeland Biodiversity and Health	$ 350,000.00
Innovation	Birds Canada – Manitoba Office	Integrating Biodiversity into Agricultural Risk Management	$ 99,500.00
Connecting People to Nature	Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Manitoba Chapter	Community Conservation Education Series	$ 75,000.00
Habitat and Wildlife	Delta Waterfowl	Wetland conservation and enhancement in Manitoba to improve duck reproductive success 2025–26	$ 80,000.00
Connecting People to Nature	Delta Waterfowl	Increasing the Number of Canadian Hunters through Delta's First Hunt and University Hunting Programs 2025–26	$ 25,000.00
Watersheds	Ducks Unlimited Canada	Improving Watershed Health in Manitoba's Working Landscapes through Habitat Restoration, Retention and Enhancement	$ 600,000.00
Connecting People to Nature	Friends of the Living Prairie Museum	A Prairie for Everyone	$ 56,000.00
Soil Health	Holistic Management Canada	2026 Regenerative Accelerator: Adoption of Farming Practices to Enhance Manitoba's Natural Infrastructure	$ 242,000.00

Habitat and Wildlife	Lake Winnipeg Foundation, Inc.	Fish and bird habitat restoration at the mouth of the Winnipeg River	$	50,000.00
Habitat and Wildlife	Manitoba Beef & Forage Initiatives Inc.	Amplifying success in grassland restoration and enhancement: connecting extension, agronomy, and incentive programs – Phase 3	$	350,000.00
Habitat and Wildlife	Manitoba Beef Producers	Grassland Enhancement Project 2025	$	300,000.00
Connecting People to Nature	Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve	Improving Public Access to Conservation Lands in Rural Municipality of Harrison Park	$	21,000.00
Habitat and Wildlife	Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve	Harrison Park Mixed Grass Prairie Pollinator Habitat Restoration	$	35,500.00
Watersheds	Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve	Edwards Creek Bank Stabilization	$	27,000.00
Connecting People to Nature	Riverdale Community Development Corporation	Upgrade the Rivers Wetland Centre of Excellence	$	10,000.00
Connecting People to Nature	Save Our Seine River Environment Inc.	Seine River Corridor Urban Restoration and Enhancement Initiative - PHASE 2 (2025-2027)	$	55,000.00
Connecting People to Nature	The Fort Whyte Foundation Inc. o/a FortWhyte Alive	Accessibility priorities in Connecting People to Nature at FortWhyte Alive	$	43,000.00
Habitat and Wildlife	The Nature Conservancy of Canada	2025 – Enhancing Grazing Systems to Support Grassland and Wetland Biodiversity	$	150,500.00
Conservation Planning	The Nature Conservancy of Canada	Enhancing the resiliency of the tall-grass prairie ecosystem in the Interlake and southeastern Manitoba	$	165,000.00
Habitat and Wildlife	The Nature Conservancy of Canada	Developing a conservation strategy for the rare Interlake alvar ecosystem	$	25,000.00
Connecting People to Nature	West Interlake Watershed District	West Interlake Watershed Pollinator Gardens - Interconnection Between Communities and Our Native Pollinators	$	20,000.00

GROW Trust Projects 2025

WATERSHED DISTRICT	PROJECT NAME	TRUST FUNDED AMOUNT
Assiniboine West Watershed District	Striving for Watershed Resilience	$ 2,149,876.00
Central Assiniboine Watershed District	Farming the Best – Conserving the rest within the Central Assiniboine Watershed District – 6	$ 494,750.00
East Interlake Watershed District	GROW Conservation Auction 2025-26	$ 130,000.00
Inter-Mountain Watershed District	IMWD GROW Program 2025-2026	$ 213,500.00
NorthEast Red Watershed District	Northeast Red Watershed District GROW Program 2025-2027	$ 231,166.67
Pembina Valley Watershed District	Pembina Plum #6	$ 1,117,400.00
Redboine Watershed District	GROW 2025-2027	$ 479,950.00
Seine Rat Roseau Watershed District	GROWing EG&S in Seine Rat Roseau Watershed District 2025-2027	$ 204,500.00
Souris River Watershed District*	Soil and Water Conservation Programming in the Souris River Watershed – GROW 6	$ 988,000.00
Swan Lake Watershed District	Enhancing Swan Lake Watershed Health 2025	$ 394,760.00
West Interlake Watershed District	Building watershed resiliency: A Sustainable Path 2025	$ 528,703.00
Westlake Watershed District	2025-2027 Westlake Watershed District's Water Retention and Cover Cropping Projects	$ 115,017.00
Whitemud Watershed District	Project E	$ 597,470.00

Appendix C

Finalized Project Summaries for Fiscal Year 2024 – 2025

Photo Credit: Manitoba Wildlife Federation

GROW Trust

Assiniboine West Watershed District

2022 Watershed Resilience in a Changing Climate

Assiniboine West Watershed District worked with watershed residents to increase the amount of ecological services provided from our watershed, by:

• Protecting 1165.2 acres of vulnerable class I&II wetlands and developing an additional 194 acre-feet of peak flow runoff storage, to further flood proof our region and downstream communities.

• Converting 1,168.1 acres to permanent cover, and installing 12 off-site water systems, with 36.5 km of fencing to improve soil health and protect the watersheds' riparian areas.

Central Assiniboine Watershed District

2022 Farming the Best – Conserving the rest within the Central Assiniboine Watershed District – 3

The Central Assiniboine Watershed District through the Growing Outcomes in Watersheds (GROW) program, looked at implementing projects that improved the overall health within the Central Assiniboine Lower Souris Integrated Watershed Management Plan. A few of our major objectives were to Reduce the impacts of flooding and erosion along the Assiniboine and Souris Rivers, reduce peak flows within tributaries that feed the larger waterways within the watershed, protect and maintain waterways to protect cropland and reduce downstream erosion and to protect and restore natural areas to maintain the habitat. To achieve those objectives the following activities were implemented. Small dams, class 1&2 wetlands protection, riparian and rotational fencing and restoring perennial cover. The projects implemented impacted a total of 8479.65 acres while reducing peak flows by slowing or permanently storing 19.5 acre feet and temporarily storing 102.5 acre feet of water. All water retention projects were secured with 10 year contracts to ensure project longevity and success.

East Interlake Watershed District

GROW Conservation Auction 2022-23

Conservation auctions are a unique form of procurement where landowners competitively bid to provide ecological goods and services (EG&S), ensuring cost-effective and impactful conservation outcomes. The GROW CA 2022-23 welcomed bids for a wide range of eligible activities aligned with the priorities outlined in local Integrated Watershed Management Plans and GROW guidelines. This CA helped conserve, enhance and restore 651 acres of wetlands, riparian and upland areas, it created 113 acre feet of water storage, and 910 acres of farmland established new or enhanced to regenerative agricultural practices.

Inter-Mountain Watershed District

Building Inter-Mountain Watershed District's Capacity

The Inter-Mountain Watershed District hired a GIS Technician to configure our LiDAR data and develop maps and templates to assist with project planning.

North East Red Watershed District

2022 – 2024 NRWD GROW Program

The Northeast Red Watershed District successfully implemented four water retention projects, one upland conservation project, and one riparian area management project with the programming assistance from the MHC Trust fund from the 2022 to 2024 fiscal years.

The projects completed by the Northeast Red Watershed District resulted in 16 acre feet of water stored, the enhancement of 10 acres of riparian area, and the conservation of 11 acres of upland area in the Cooks–Devils Creek Watershed.

Pembina Valley Watershed District

2022 Pembina Plum Initiative #3

We have secured over 400 acres of class 1 and 2 wetlands, protected over 140 acres of riparian area from livestock damage, installed 16km of riparian fences, protecting 149.9 acres and restricted 1924 livestock from sensitive riparian areas, this also included 16 offsite watering systems. We have constructed 5 water retention projects creating 77 ac/ft temporary and extended permanent storage. We have restored/conserved 732 acres of marginal, saline and flooded acres through funding towards seeding perennial forage and through match funding enhanced over 60,000ac of farmland. As well, 5 livestock crossings, which will protect 8 acres of streambank from eroding. At PVWD we have helped plant 29.2 km of shelterbelts with over 10,000 trees through GROW trust funding, in addition to thousands of trees through the partnership with Stanley Soils.

Pembina Valley Watershed District

Pembina–Plum Initiative #4

PVWD allocated all funding of our Pembina–Plum Initiative #4. We were able to conserve over 226 new acres of shallow wetlands, create nearly 90 ac/ft of water retention storage. 16 acres of erosion control.1,000 livestock were excluded from Riparian areas by installing12km of riparian fencing. 50 acres of flood prone croplands, 270 marginal/saline acres converted to permanent cover. 30 acres bluff conserved. 21,000 trees planted.

Redboine Watershed District

GROW Program 2023–25

The Redboine Watershed District 2023–25 GROW Program helped conserve, restore, and enhance 770 acres of wetlands, 1280 acres of riparian area, and 53,928 acres of upland areas across our district. GROW Program and partnering projects planted 5,000 trees in 41.8 acres of woodland/shelterbelts, and stored 216 acre–feet of surface run–off though retention projects. 52,933 acres of soil health BMPs were implemented.

Seine Rat Roseau Watershed District

GROWing EG&S in the Seine Rat Roseau Watershed District 2023–2024

EG&S Alternative Land Use projects in the Seine Rat Roseau Watershed District improved water quality, built resiliency to climate change and reduced erosion of marginal or environmentally targeted soils across 1618.5 acres by implementing water retention, cover cropping, riparian, grassland and shelterbelt projects. Additional benefits will included the creation of wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration and soil enhancement/protections.

Souris River Watershed District

2022 Soil and Water Programming in the Souris River Watershed District

This project focused on the securement of class 1&2 wetlands in annual cropland through 10 year conservation agreements restricting drainage, the enhancement and restoration of upland grasslands and riparian areas, establishment of shelterbelts for reduction in soil erosion, increasing water retention capacity to minimize peak flows and increase holding capacity. These activities contributed to enhancing flood and drought resiliency, greater biodiversity and habitat, increased carbon sequestration, improved water and soil quality and an overall more resilient watershed to climate change impacts.

Souris River Watershed District

Soil and Water Programming in the Souris River Watershed Distirct – GROW 4

The project focused on the securement of class 1&2 wetlands in annual cropland through 10 year conservation agreements restricting drainage, the enhancement and restoration of upland grasslands and riparian areas, establishment of shelter belts for reduction in soil erosion, increasing water retention capacity to minimize peak flows and increase holding capacity. These activities are helping to enhance flood and drought resiliency, greater biodiversity and habitat.

Swan Lake Watershed District

2022 Enhancing Watershed Health by Improving Water Quality and Nutrient Management

The Swan Lake Watershed District is continuing to implement the GROW program into the District and has achieved planting shelterbelt trees; conserving Class 1 and 2 wetlands; conserving upland wooded and grassed area buffers; conserving sensitive riparian area; general public engagement throughout the Swan Valley; and more than 10 landowners signed up through the program.

West Interlake Watershed District

2022 Working with landowners to improve watershed health in the West Interlake Watershed

The WIWD's GROW Program made significant strides in conservation and land restoration despite challenges like extreme weather, staff constraints, and restructuring. Over two years, the program engaged 85 producers. Contracts were signed with 58 producers, conserving 208 acres of riparian areas, improving soil health on 2,230 acres, and restoring 2,810 acres of grassland. The WIWD installed 6 alternative watering systems, enhancing 960 acres and excluding 250 livestock from riparian areas. Additionally, 4.8 km of fencing, enhancing 640 acres of land and 0.5 km of shelterbelts were established. Outreach efforts reached over 30,000 people, boosting interest in stewardship activities. Despite rising costs from wage increases, administrative expansions, a building purchase, and inflation, the WIWD's effective resource management underscored the program's success and positive environmental impact.

Conservation Trust

Birtle Miniota & District Development Corporation

Riparian Forest Interpretive Kiosk

Birtle Miniota & District Development Corp in partnership with the Assiniboine West Watershed District and the Conservation Trust have finalized the visitors information kiosk located at the Assiniboine Riparian Forest in South West Manitoba. In the picturesque Assiniboine valley along Highway 83 north lye a 5 acre arboretum and wayside rest stop frequented by locals and travelers alike. With the help of the Conservation Trust the community has created an attractive outdoor kiosk to display information about the natural environment. 8 large panels of graphic and print information discussing the flora and fauna of the region, the geology and human history as well as the current and ongoing conservation efforts in the region have been erected. This kiosk will add greatly to the public's understanding of the natural world around them and be cherished for many years to come.

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Manitoba Chapter

Fisher River Cree Nation Conservation Areas Initiative

Our goal is to protect the southeastern Interlake's thriving natural landscape so it can continue to provide sustainable economic opportunities and to support cherished lifestyles. We are accomplishing this by designing a realistic, balanced conservation proposal for a 1.1 million hectare study area which accounts for regional interests and values. The initiative is led by Fisher River Cree Nation in partnership with regional First Nations (Peguis First Nation and Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation) and the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

Manitoba Forage & Grassland Association

Soil Health: Addressing watershed priorities for producers and wildlife habitat–PHASE 3 (2022)

For the third project in the past four years, MFGA successfully partnered with three Watershed Districts (WD) to better understand and deal with underlying resource concerns in agricultural Manitoba around degradation of Agro-Manitoba's soil health, especially the depletion of soil organic matter. At project's end, nearly 3100 acres were enhanced via cover and intercrops as per the project specifications each year of the project. This project was expanded to two years to better learn from our project between seasons. Recently we received approval from the Conservation Trust to allow cropped acres to be subscribed to this project for two years, in line with other cover crop programs being offered by other groups so we could get a better handle on Soil Health and the impact on the physical and biological characteristics of soil to have the biggest impacts on water quality and quantity at a watershed scale. The project was fully prescribed over the two years and achieved all goals in two of the three Watershed Districts. Poor growing conditions and program competition resulted in one of the watersheds under-delivering in 2023.

Manitoba Wildlife Federation

The Wildlife Management Area Enhancement Initiative – Pilot Projects

The Manitoba Wildlife Federation is happy to announce that after a one year delay of the WMA Enhancement Initiative Pilot Project, due to environmental conditions, the first year of habitat management was successfully carried out!
The Manitoba Wildlife Federation has partnered with the Province of Manitoba Wildlife branch to use two Wildlife Management Areas in the province as a pilot for testing the effects of habitat management techniques on the areas of wild lands that are in need of restoration. This project has taken baseline vegetation and wildlife assessments data from

the Langruth and Broomhill WMAs, installed fence and water resource infrastructure and finally implemented a rotational grazing practice of cattle with the goal to fight against the accelerated rates of encroachment on these WMAs in order to create a more productive habitat for wildlife.

Whitemud Watershed District

WWCD Distributed Multi-Functional Water Storage

Whitemud Watershed District did encounter some stalls in this project which include staff turnover, design change and inclement weather. With that said, the project's final product met all the need set out prior to delivery. The original metrics of 6 sites, 150 acre-feet of storage and 50 acres of wetland habitat were altered slightly because of the design change. This was turned into 1 large site by constructing a berm around the entire quarter section. The change in design increased the overall storage to 250 acre-feet but decreased the wetland habitat to 30 acres. This was due to the licensing restrictions on digging in wetlands which then changed the design.

Association of Manitoba Community Pastures

Advancing Sustainable Range Management Objectives on Manitoba's Community Pastures

Thanks to Conservation Trust funding, the Association of Manitoba Community Pastures delivered new range management investments at Manitoba's Community Pastures with over 13,600 acres of rangelands enhanced across the Province. With match support, the area enhanced rises to a total of 22,400 acres. Improvements to grazing management promote the ecological goods and services unique to rangelands and include fencing, water sources, and brush management controls. The Project, Advancing Sustainable Range Management Objectives on Manitoba's Community Pastures, was also supported by range health assessments and avian surveys.

Bird Studies Canada – Manitoba Office

Implementation of the Bird-friendliness Index as an Outcome Based Indicator of Biodiversity

Through this project, Birds Canada made major progress toward implementing the Bird-friendliness Index (BFI) in real-world market, policy, and Business Risk Management (BRM) applications that reward producers for positive biodiversity outcomes. Bird surveys were conducted across 28 farms in the Aspen Parkland of Manitoba, leading to the calculation of BFI scores and methodological improvements that better capture the positive bird and conservation outcomes in the Aspen Parkland of Manitoba. Engaging producers throughout the project helped advance producers' knowledge of the bird species — including Species at Risk — present on their farms, and informed our approach to future applications of the BFI that will improve the financial viability of biodiverse farms. Final outputs included a comprehensive technical report on BFI methodology and findings, and a standalone evaluation of the BFI's potential for integration into agricultural and conservation programs. This project has been instrumental in advancing the BFI towards market and policy applications designed to reward producers for positive impacts on birds and biodiversity. It directly contributes to our long-term vision of creating working landscapes that are full of birdsong and bursting with life.

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Manitoba Chapter

Expanding Access to Outdoor Education

This year, CPAWS Manitoba set out to deliver on 3 objectives: develop partnerships, deliver place-based learning opportunities for children 3-14, and deliver activities to the public through activity tables and public programs. Through these objectives, we hoped to make environmental education and outdoor learning opportunities accessible to

underserved communities, get children outside learning, and promote environmental literacy. We are thrilled to report that we have met or exceeded our expected results delivering 500 workshops, contests, field trips and activities to 11,497 Manitobans!

Objective 1 focused on delivering educational programs to underserved communities through schools and community groups. Over 30% of our programming was successfully delivered to underserved populations, exceeding our equity and inclusion goals.

Objective 2: We provided inquiry-based, curriculum-aligned workshops and field trips for children ages 3–14. While we anticipated offering 304 workshops to approximately 6,430 participants, we exceeded those targets by delivering 376 workshops that reached 7,113 children through schools, camps, and after-school programs.

Objective 3: We supported lifelong learning by delivering nature-based workshops and public programs for adults and families. We originally projected 90 workshops reaching 6,020 participants. In practice, we conducted 124 workshops, engaging 4,384 participants in collaboration with community partners.

Across all objectives, we worked to make environmental education more inclusive, accessible, and impactful, with a focus on equity, engagement, and hands-on learning in the natural world.

Delta Waterfowl

Wetland Conservation and Enhancement in Manitoba to Improve Duck Reproductive Success

Delta Waterfowl Foundation successfully installed 250 Hen House structures with funds from the Conservation Trust and maintained and/or enhanced another 300 previously installed structures as part of the project match. We expect that roughly 1,237 mallards will be produced across these 550 structures as a result of this project during the 2025 breeding season. In addition, a total of 260.7 acres of habitat were perpetually secured; resulting in quality breeding and nesting waterfowl habitat for generations to come.

Ducks Unlimited Canada

Prairie Habitat Restoration in the Working Landscapes of Manitoba – Part 1 and 2

Building on a long history of successful program delivery, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) restored and conserved significant grassland and wetland habitat as part of the Prairie Habitat Restoration in the Working Landscapes of Manitoba – Part 1 project. Using long-term incentive programs targeted to the needs of the primary producers that we work with, DUC leveraged financial support from the Conservation Trust to exceed project goals. Results included the restoration of 86 wetland acres and 1,340 grasslands acres. Using Trust-funded incentive payment programs, DUC also conserved 48 acres of restored wetlands and 986 acres of restored grasslands. Match funding brought an additional 542 acres of conserved wetlands and 634 acres of grassland to the project for a total of 3,636 acres restored and conserved as part of this project.

The Prairie Habitat Restoration in Working Landscapes of Manitoba – Part 2 project restored and conserved both wetland and grassland habitat. Ducks Unlimited Canada with support from the Conservation Trust significantly exceeded the original habitat goal of 1,340 acres by restoring and conserving 2,176 acres of critical breeding waterfowl and wildlife habitat. This was accomplished through the delivery of incentive-based programming to landowners that restores and conserves habitat using long-term agreements. Restoration projects included the construction of earthen plugs that restored a total of 67 acres of small pothole wetlands, while 796 acres of cropland was converted to tame grasslands. Incentive programs funded by the Trust also conserved 487 acres of restored grassland. Through the use of match funding, DUC also conserved 827 acres of habitat, consisting of 274 acres of wetland and 553 acres of grassland.

Kelsey Watershed District

Off-Site Watering for Riparian Health

The Kelsey Watershed District was successful at providing 4 solar watering-trough systems for approx. 500 head of cattle, along with fencing thereby accomplishing the goal of removing livestock from the riparian zone along waterways. There was a combined total number of enhanced landscape of approx 30 acres along with approx. 2.5km of fencing installed.

Manitoba Beef & Forage Initiatives Inc.

Amplifying success in grassland restoration and enhancement: Connecting extension, agronomy, and incentive programs – PHASE 2

Significant grassland restoration occurred on Manitoba's landscape due to a strong partnership between the Manitoba Beef and Forage Initiative (MBFI) and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). The two agencies "Amplified success in grassland restoration and enhancements" by leveraging their expertise and "Connecting extension, agronomy and incentive programs". The result was 3182.52 acres of grasslands restored, 284.94 acres were enhanced, and over 223,433 people reached via program promotion, communications, and in-person learning events.

Manitoba Beef Producers

Grassland Enhancement Program 2023

With so many species at risk (SAR) depending on Manitoba's declining grasslands as critical habitat, it is essential that enhancement and securement activities preserve this land. In addition to SAR, grasslands are also essential to the livelihoods of Manitoba's beef producers, with ranch success being tied to the availability of grasslands and grassland health for cattle grazing. With funding from the Conservation Trust, Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP) has worked with cattle producers to increase the health of grassland habitats by implementing beneficial management practices (BMPs) and securing grasslands through term agreements. Under this program, a total of 16,033.9 acres of grassland habitat have been enhanced by BMPs implemented by 53 landowners. These BMPs that enhance grassland include the installation of 121 km of fencing and 48 watering systems, as well as 201 acres of woody vegetation control. These BMPs improve grassland health through improved grazing practices and land management. BMPs delivered under this project are associated with 10-year securement agreements, which have resulted in 12,100.4 acres of grasslands secured.

Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre

Reenvisioning Oak Hammock

After 18 months of closure, a complete renovation of the Centre and immediate surrounding area was completed. The goal was to provide current audiences that do come out with a significantly enhanced interpretive experience as well as attract new audiences.

The Centre created engaging interpretive signage along the main trail system to 'connect people with wetlands'. The goal is to ensure that the tens of thousands of people visiting the site annually are provided with a quality educational experience in a safe and accessible manner, all while exploring the beauty of this Ramsar site (Wetland of International Significance).

Save Our Seine River Environment Inc.

Innovative Approaches to the Seine River Greenway Urban Restoration and Enhancement

This 2-year project impacting 20,625 unique annual visitors involved three objectives funded by the Conservation Trust:

1. To enhance woodland reforestation through the introduction of novel resilient species and by working on high priority areas along the Seine River corridor

2. To enhance riparian conservation, enhancement and restoration through the creation of the SOS Ecological Restoration and Enhancement Living Laboratory which will serve as an educational node, and will also include trail enhancement and interpretive signage

3. To enhance ecological assessment mapping and reporting through a geomatics/geographic mapping and reporting system

Seven Oaks School Division – Ozhaawashkwaa Animikii-Bineshi Aki Onji Kinimaagae' Inun

Interpretive Signage & Oral Storytelling Project," a Connecting People to Nature initiative

Seven Oaks School Division's Ozhaawashkwaa Animikii-Bineshi Aki Onji Kinimaagae' Inun has taken great care in creating eight interpretive signs rooted in Indigenous Knowledges and Land-based teachings that share through oral storytelling, visual art, and written word. This has been a collaborative, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary production and process involving Indigenous Elders, Leaders, Artists and Youth, and supported by staff and students with unique skill sets in building trades, audio production, and digital technology. Within our healing landscape and embraced by an emerging restored grassland, these signs intend to facilitate connection to the Earth, Language, and Culture for all visitors within our school division community and beyond.

The Fort Whyte Foundation Inc. o/a FortWhyte Alive

Outdoor Classroom to Connect People with Nature

As a way to better provide outdoor education opportunities in all weather, FortWhyte Alive has constructed an open-air classroom adjacent to the back plaza of the Richardson Interpretive Centre.

This classroom construction will dramatically improve opportunities to connect new audiences to the outdoors and enhance experiences in nature for all participants of varying ages, abilities and demographics, in all seasons.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada

A turning point in Manitoba's prescribed fire community: enhancing capacity and inter-agency cooperation

This project facilitated two multi-agency/organizational, practical, hands-on prescribed fire training workshops and one fire knowledge sharing session with an Indigenous community. We reached 62 participants from 12 organizations/ agencies, representing 2 provinces and the United States. Building on NCC's experience and partnerships with the Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange (CPPFE) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Minnesota, we conducted prescribed fire on 1,362 acres (551 hectares) across 9 burn units in the Tall Grass Prairie Area on NCC-owned or managed land with multiple partners. Prescribed fire activities enhanced 381 ac (154 ha) of forest, 561 ac (227 ha) of grassland and 420 ac (170 ha) of wetland. Public notifications describing prescribed fire activities were posted within the local community and delivered to neighbours, reaching at least 50 contacts. The spring 2023 Tall Grass Prairie Aspen Parkland – Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX), hosted by NCC in partnership with CPPFE and TNC, demonstrated the importance of knowledge sharing, partnership building and training opportunities to have durable conservation outcomes

at the landscape-scale. This project helped create a sustainable process for experiential training and knowledge sharing for partners to increase their own capacity and implement prescribed fire across Manitoba.

Enhanced biodiversity-focused grazing systems

This project enabled the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) to implement land management activities that will contribute to improving soil health and increasing soil carbon sequestration by managing grasslands with compatible grazing. Resilient grasslands support flood and drought mitigation measures, enhance soil health, contribute to biodiversity, and provide wildlife and ecosystem benefits. Having these projects available for grazing also contributes to local economies through collaboration with agriculture producers & partners. This project resulted in 3 grazing management systems being developed and modified on approximately 1,970 acres of NCC and partner lands, and overall improved grassland management on 430 acres of grassland, 970 acres of forest, and 570 acres of wetland. Match funding conserved 436 acres of upland grasslands and 50 acres of upland forest. The activities followed NCC's landscape-scale Natural Area Conservation Plans and property specific management plans and grazing plans. The activities followed an evidence-based adaptive management planning and evaluation framework. Within NCC's Natural Areas, NCC owns over 50,000 acres of conservation land and partners with dozens of agricultural producers.

Enhancing soil health for the future using regenerative agriculture practices

Annual soil cultivation for cropping can destroy soil structure making it prone to wind and water erosion, while perennial species help stabilize soil, improve structure and benefit both above and below ground ecosystem functions. With support from Conservation Trust, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) established 335 acres of perennial vegetation cover on 3 formerly cultivated fields, enabling the improvement of soil health through regenerative agriculture practices. Match funding conserved 466 acres of upland grassland on the Lake Ranch property. This project helped improve local biodiversity, water availability, ecosystem services, carbon sequestration, and resilience to climate change.

Expanding native prairie seed production in support of a growing private & public land diversified restoration economy

Nature Conservancy of Canada supported by a Conservation Trust grant, contracted the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan to complete an Assessment of the Native Plant Materials Industry of Manitoba – 2024. The assessment, as well as historical information and an analysis of Manitoba native plant and seed grower needs was used to complete the Native Seed Strategy, Restoration in Manitoba 2024. Both reports describe the current state of native plant materials currently available in Manitoba and the Native Seed Strategy includes a list of target species and a native seed zone map as well as multiple recommendations with respect to increasing the native seed supply and awareness to support restoration projects undertaken by conservation agencies.

MHC Offices

Main Location

HEAD OFFICE

302–140 Bannatyne Ave.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 3C5
204.784.4350
granting@mbhabitat.ca

BRANDON

930 Victoria Avenue East
Brandon, MB
R7A 2A4
204.724.0583

Field Offices

HAMIOTA

Box 16
Hamiota, MB
R0M 0T0
431.235.3058

MINNEDOSA

30 Main Street
Box 1044, Minnedosa, MB
R0J 1E0
204.573.4840

RESTON

402 4th Street
Box 189, Reston, MB
R0M 1X0
204.821.4943

ROSSER

302–140 Bannatyne Ave.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 3C5
204.471.9663

SHOAL LAKE

306 Elm Street
Box 28, Shoal Lake, MB
R0J 1Z0
204.729.7592

TREHERNE

208 Railway Ave
Box 164, Treherne, MB
R0G 2V0
204.871.1569

MBHABITAT.CA