

# MANITOBA HABITAT HERITAGE CORPORATION

Homegrown conservation since 1986.



## ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018

Manitoba 





*Green-winged Teal, Cameron Meuckon*

# 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 by offering habitat stewardship programs to private landowners.

Cover photo: (Left to Right) Wendy & Ryan Shearer and Patricia & Elwood Shearer



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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 R3C 0V8

Your Honour:

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2018.

Yours sincerely,

Rochelle Squires  
Minister



*Brent Pooler*  
CHAIR

Having come onto the Board of Directors only recently, it has been my pleasure to learn how MHHC has become woven into the fabric of habitat conservation in Manitoba and beyond.

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Act of 1986 created MHHC with a mandate to conserve, restore and enhance habitat. Initially MHHC granted provincial funds to other organizations and had two part-time staff from the provincial government to support that work.

The organization evolved to delivering habitat conservation activities directly and has grown to 15 staff carrying out conservation programs from six field offices. Those activities conserve and enhance wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, watershed lands and priority habitats for species at risk. Over 350,000 acres of habitat have been affected by MHHC, including 200,000 acres of permanently protected habitats.

Interestingly, MHHC is now poised to come back to its roots. The government of Manitoba has announced it will establish the Conservation Trust, a permanent endowment fund to support a wide range of conservation activities. That announcement included a major role for MHHC: it will administer a granting program to distribute annual Trust revenue to conservation groups in Manitoba. Speaking for the MHHC Board, I applaud Manitoba for this unique conservation legacy and extend sincere thanks for this vote of confidence in the Corporation.

## MESSAGES

These days, organizations must expect, and ultimately welcome, the need to evolve in the face of challenges and opportunities.

MHHC continues to adapt to the reality of accelerating farm land values, which has driven up the cost of conservation. In addition to focusing its funds on areas with the highest conservation values, MHHC is adding new approaches to encourage land donations from landowners wishing to leave a conservation legacy. The value of land and conservation interest donations to MHHC exceeded \$2.49 million in 2017/18 (see page 15).

This year also saw full implementation of new land stewardship projects on native grasslands for species at risk. Here, conservation objectives are realized by the bonds of cooperative working relationships with landowners. SARPAL (see page 20) also helped cement working relationships with Manitoba Agriculture and the Manitoba Beef Producers organization. These are important new program dimensions for the Corporation.

At year-end the Province of Manitoba's announced its intention to establish the Conservation Trust and to designate MHHC as administrator of Trust revenues (see page 7). It's a tremendous opportunity for MHHC to deliver its conservation mandate but this time the evolution is not occurring on the ground. Rather, it's all about new structures and processes required to deliver an effective granting program. This is new stuff for MHHC – the last three decades have been about grant-seeking, not grant-making – but a fundamental consideration that has served MHHC well over three decades still comes into play: ensure that all MHHC activities ultimately serve the interests and aspirations of Manitobans.



*Tim Sopuck*  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER



# Overview



Mountain Bluebirds, Cameron Meuckon

# MHHC

## CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Total habitat accomplishments (acres)

	Prior to 2017/18	In 2017/18	Total
Acquired Properties	14,591	320	14,911
Perpetual Conservation Agreements	182,085	4,089	186,174
Term Conservation Contracts	143,380	10,300	153,680
Total	340,056	14,709	354,765

**14,911**  
acres of publically  
accessible lands

**\$2.5  
MILLION**  
value of habitat  
donations in 2017/18

**66,460**  
acres of  
donated habitat

**201,085**  
acres of natural habitats  
permanently conserved

## MHHC CONSERVATION OPTIONS

### CONSERVATION AGREEMENT

A conservation agreement (CA) is an easement that permanently conserves the habitat and supports beneficial outcomes like water quality enhancements and biological diversity without affecting the parcel's ownership. Through a CA, a landowner may continue to use and manage the property as they have in the past while making a long-term contribution to the environment. Landowners receive financial compensation for signing a CA in the form of a cash payment or tax receipt.

### LAND DONATION

MHHC accepts donations of suitable habitat on a case-by-case basis, either by acquiring the property or by signing a conservation agreement. Donations of land or conservation agreements are managed in a locally appropriate manner and respecting the donor's wishes. Tax receipts are provided for the appraised value of the land.

### CONSERVATION CONTRACT

Ten-year habitat conservation contracts are available in targeted locations for activities that include habitat restoration or enhancement.





# A Conservation Legacy

## FOR MANITOBA

### *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.

## A VERY BIG DEAL

In its March 2018 Budget Speech, the Province of Manitoba made a significant and unique commitment in nature conservation for all Manitobans, current and future. With an investment of \$102 million, the Conservation Trust will be created to address, as the minister of Finance, Cameron Friesen stated, "... [our] responsibility to protect our environment for future generations". The Budget Speech also named MHHC to set up a new granting program to disburse Trust revenues for conservation purposes.

This historic investment will be one of the largest contributions made to the Winnipeg Foundation and annual investment revenues are estimated to be about \$5 million. These revenues will be granted to conservation groups working in Manitoba. Tim Sopuck, MHHC CEO, noted that the Corporation is in the process of finalizing an agreement between the Winnipeg

Foundation and the Province and is hopeful that an initial call for proposals will be announced in the fall of 2018.

"Wetlands, woodlands, grasslands – they all have a series of benefits to the well-being of society, including cleaner water, reducing floods and storing carbon. There's a climate change benefit to having all those natural areas remaining and actually expanding on the landscape," said Sopuck.

In a little over three decades, MHHC conservation activities have influenced over 350,000 of land in Manitoba. While MHHC's current mix of conservation programs will continue, the Conservation Trust will create a new opportunity for MHHC to enable community-based organizations to deliver conservation projects.

With annual revenues from the Trust continuing long-term, this investment is a conservation legacy for all Manitobans.



# CONSERVING MANITOBA'S Watersheds

1,202  
acres  
CONSERVED

20  
PROJECTS  
in partnership with  
Conservation Districts

214  
acres of wetlands  
RESTORED

Moose with Calf, Cindy Hiltz

## TEAMING UP FOR BIG RESULTS

TEAM - Together Everyone Achieves More. We've heard and seen this acronym many times for it holds an evident truth. It certainly is true for a wetland restoration project that was successfully completed northeast of Carberry. The project involved the collaboration of many partners, including the local landowners, MHH, Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Whitemud Watershed Conservation District (WWCD).

It all began with local landowner, Dave Baron, approaching the WWCD to seek assistance in storing extra water within a wetland on his property. As the project progressed, it became clear that they could make a greater impact if more partners were involved.

That's when adjacent landowner Dave Meyers, the Conservation District, and MHH started working together towards a common goal. Before long, construction was underway and a small earthen dam was built to hold back and slow down water on the escarpment.

MHH's role was to work with the landowners to permanently secure and conserve almost 175 acres of wetlands and surrounding uplands. The landowners signed conservation agreements with MHH that allows them to continue farming their lands while protecting the natural habitat.

"In addition to the conservation of wildlife habitats, our goals were to prevent nutrient loading into Lake Winnipeg and to protect erosion-prone lands in the escarpment," said Wes Pankratz, MHH Habitat Conservation Specialist in Minnedosa.

Whitemud Watershed CD Manager Chris Reynolds said that the WWCD has many opportunities for projects that will benefit the landscape, but limited funding can be an obstacle.

"By ourselves, we don't have the budget, but with all our partners, we can do a lot more. We've done quite a few projects with MHH and they've always been a good partner. Whenever we come to them with ideas on projects or ask them to get involved, they've always been ready and willing," said Reynolds.

The restoration construction was completed by WWCD with funding provided from Environment and Climate Change Canada and the conservation agreements were secured through the Sustainable Slopes program (see page 10). The variety of funders, along with all the other partners working together to make this project happen, made this a true TEAM project.



"We've done quite a few projects with MHH and they've always been a good partner."

— Chris Reynolds, Manager, WWCD



This project was undertaken with the financial support of:  
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and  
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et  
Changement climatique Canada





Manitoba Escarpment, Jeff Dyck

# SAVING THE SLOPES

Over 13,000 years ago, glaciers retreated from the land, leaving their mark across the landscape. One of these affected landforms was the Manitoba Escarpment which formed the western shoreline of a once vast lake, glacial Lake Agassiz. Rising several hundred feet, this former shoreline is now a breakpoint between the low and flat Red River Valley to the east and the higher, hummocky prairie to the west.

Along this boundary, a corridor of habitat developed that runs from South Dakota through to the Porcupine Hills in Manitoba. The steeply sloped nature of the escarpment once imposed limitations to agricultural activity, in particular cropping, which resulted in significant portions of the corridor remaining as intact natural habitat. However, with changes in technology, people, not glaciers, are now exerting their influence on the escarpment and habitat loss has accelerated.

Five years ago, MHHC began a program to protect the privately-owned habitat along the escarpment. In partnership with the Pembina Valley Conservation District and the Manitoba Forestry Association, MHHC was awarded funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to place perpetual conservation agreements on these susceptible slopes through its “Sustainable Slopes” program.

Having funding to implement conservation agreements in this region for the first time, landowners lined up and over 560 acres of habitat were conserved in the first phase of the

program. With additional funding from ECCC, MHHC was able to expand the program north to include the escarpment within the La Salle Redboine and Whitemud Watershed conservation districts in 2015.

Over the course of MHHC’s Sustainable Slopes program, for which funding was exhausted this year, MHHC and its conservation district partners perpetually conserved 1,770 acres of habitat in partnership with landowners, of which, 365 acres were donated by landowners.

MHHC will continue to work with the conservation districts and landowners wishing to donate a conservation agreement along this valuable wildlife corridor. These valuable slopes, which revegetated 13,000 years ago when Lake Agassiz receded, will now be maintained for years to come.



A Sustainable Slopes project

# CONSERVATION DISTRICT PARTNERSHIPS RESULTS

In 2017-18 MHHC conserved 994 acres in partnership with seven different conservation districts.

MHHC has completed over 120 projects with conservation districts over the years, resulting in conservation of 64,185 acres of habitat.





CONSERVING MANITOBA'S

# Wetlands



2,008

acres of  
waterfowl habitat  
CONSERVED

1,737

hen houses  
MAINTAINED

174,509

DUCKS  
breeding on habitat  
conserved in 2017/18

Ring-necked Duck, Cameron Meuckon

## HUNTING AND CONSERVATION

It is generally not known that hunters and hunting groups are one of the largest stakeholders in conservation and do a lot more giving than taking.

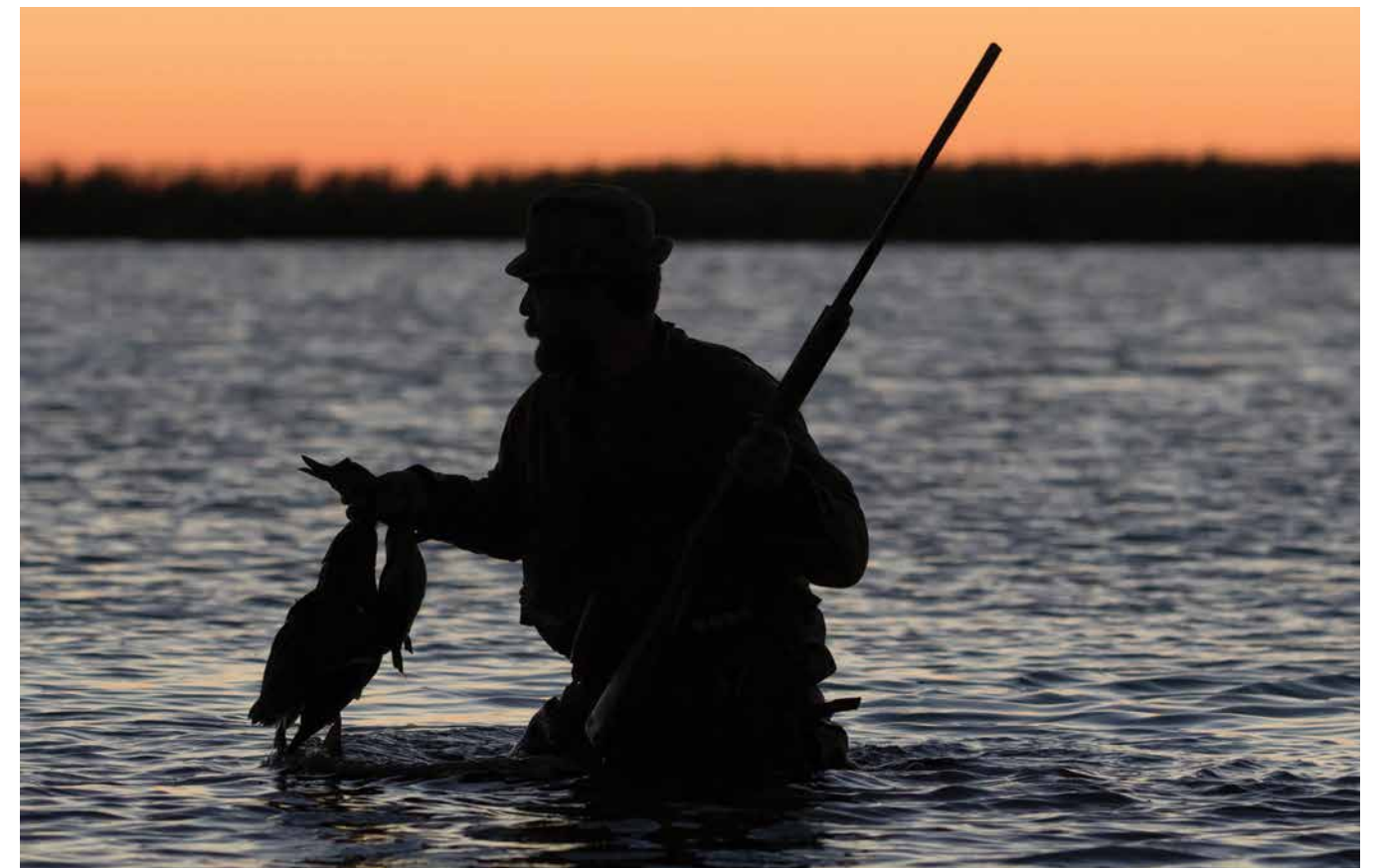
Over 100 years ago, one of MHHC's most important partners, Delta Waterfowl, was formed by an avid waterfowl hunter, James Ford Bell. Mr. Bell wanted to ensure a future for waterfowl, and the hunting of these birds, and so encouraged a philosophy of giving two birds for every bird taken.

This notion remains at the heart of Delta Waterfowl, North America's oldest waterfowl conservation group, according to Jim Fisher, Delta's Director of Conservation Policy. "Delta is 'The Duck Hunters Organization' and as such we are supported by hunters to do conservation, research and hunting advocacy work across North America. Delta strives to work with hunters, farmers and trappers to conserve wetlands and produce ducks."

Through work by Delta, countless scientific publications on duck ecology and populations have been produced. This foundation of knowledge has led to the effective delivery of over \$2 billion in waterfowl conservation programming through Delta, MHHC and other waterfowl partners across North America.

In addition to donors who, as individuals, support conservation, significant funds are made available for waterfowl programs in the United States and Canada through U.S. federal and state governments. These funds are generated from taxes and/or fees paid by individual hunters when purchasing firearms, ammunition and hunting licences and then awarded to conservation groups. Similar conservation funding mechanisms exist in Canada, where the Canadian federal duck stamp funds are used to fund Wildlife Habitat Canada and the conservation programs they support. These Canadian and American funding sources, which are largely comprised of hunter-dollars, provide conservation groups like Delta and MHHC funding to protect and enhance waterfowl habitat.

In the past year, through its partnership with Delta, MHHC has received funding from the states of Wisconsin, Mississippi, and Arkansas, which were used to lever additional funds from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada, and Manitoba. Together, governments, non-government organizations, individuals and hunters across North America are creating the foundation of conservation.



Delta Waterfowl Foundation



# FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

The Shearers have been farming in the Municipality of Glenboro-South Cypress for over 100 years. Ryan and Wendy Shearer are continuing in the footsteps of Ryan's parents, Elwood and Patricia, by operating a fourth-generation mixed cattle and grain farm and are making sure to leave room for nature.

One of the Shearers goals is to ensure that some of the land that they have today remains in its natural state and available for more generations to come; that is why they partnered with MHHC. Between the two Shearer families, conservation agreements now conserve almost 1,500 acres across their properties.

"Knowing that it would be a pasture forever and that wildlife would always be there is important to us," said Ryan. "It was what Mother Nature intended it for, so that's how we wanted it to stay. Kain [Ryan and Wendy's son] is really interested in the farm and if everything goes right, we hope it will stay in the family forever and he'll be the fifth generation to farm it."

"All of the remaining habitats that we have are important, we continue to protect what we can. It benefits biodiversity, wildlife and keeps a natural flavour to our rural landscape which is so important," said Tom Moran, MHHC Habitat Conservation Specialist from the Boissevain area.

The Shearers' pasture of sandy hills, native prairie grass, spruce trees and over 100 acres of wetlands is typical of the area. The wetlands are important duck nesting habitat and contribute to the realization of duck population goals under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. But in order to maintain an ideal habitat for ducks, the protection of the associated uplands is as important as the wetland itself.

"As a general rule, for every acre of water you need three acres of upland nest cover for a duck. This allows them to nest and raise their brood. This property is ideal in that sense," said Moran.

Along with ducks, their cattle also share the land with a wide variety of birds and other wildlife including deer and elk.

Over the years, Ryan and his father Elwood have seen some of the land in the area cleared and turned into cultivated acres but the result, in their opinion, hasn't always been positive.

"Some areas grow a decent crop, but in others, not much of anything grows. Some of the land that is broken just blows and blows and makes a mess," said Ryan. "Mother Nature made it this way for a reason, there's just no sense in fighting with her. We're happy to be able to use it the way we've been using it and not have to worry about it being broken up someday."

# DONATIONS OF VALUABLE HABITAT

Having lived in the area and farmed the land their whole lives, Elwood and Patricia Shearer have a good understanding of what part of their land is suitable for crop production and what should remain as native pasture and woodlands. When they discussed conservation agreements with MHHC's Habitat Conservation Specialist, Tom Moran, they knew what areas they wanted to conserve.

When MHHC receives funds for conservation, the money is usually targeted to specific regions or habitats, such as wetlands for ducks or grasslands for Species at Risk. The targeted areas are often the most vulnerable to habitat loss, or important habitat for specific species that are in decline. This approach sometimes leaves a gap in funding for conservation of lands that, while being valuable wildlife habitat, do not fall within target regions.

This was the case on the Shearer property. Some of the lands that Elwood and Pat wanted to include in the conservation agreement were native prairie grasslands, a highly threatened habitat for several Species at Risk. However other habitat the Shearers wanted to include was not eligible for funding. This

habitat is still important to conserve and provides innumerable benefits to society through the ecological goods and services it provides.

Filling the gap between quality habitat and funding restrictions, MHHC can accept the donation of a conservation agreement on habitat for which it cannot provide a cash payment. A tax receipt for the donation can be applied to offset taxes. Going a step further, habitat donations can be certified through the Government of Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. This program certifies the value of the habitat and potentially provides additional tax benefits to landowners who donate ecologically sensitive habitat. The Shearers generously selected this approach on the lands not eligible for funding.

In 2017/18, MHHC received donations of 911 acres of permanently conserved habitat, valued at over \$2.49 million. In return, MHHC's donation program provided benefits to landowners, like the Shearers, who recognize the value of their natural habitats and want to leave a legacy of conservation for future generations.



Shearer Family



# JUST DUCKY

When you combine your education with your hobby, and add in a life-long passion, only good things can happen - especially when it comes to the environment.

Gord Hammell of Erickson, MB, said that even as a young child he had his nose pressed up against the window of the car looking for ducks. Today, the retired dairy farmer is still keenly interested in waterfowl and spends much of his spare time studying one particular species, Lesser Scaup, which has been in decline in western Canada.

He conducted a study on scaup about 40 years ago while working on a degree with the University of Guelph. After he sold his dairy farm in 2008, he was eager to stay active, so he decided to do a new study, which meant trekking around sloughs, counting ducks once again.

"I don't golf. I count ducks and my wife tolerates it," laughs Hammell. "This area is one of the most famous areas in the world for scaup research and I've always been interested in waterfowl studies."

It comes as no surprise with his interest in waterfowl that Hammell is also passionate about wetlands and the maintenance of them. As such, he was eager to work with MHHC on a conservation agreement to restore five wetlands in a pasture that he rents to a local cattle producer.

"I bought it in 2011 and it was severely overgrazed and wasn't divided up for rotational grazing. If you want to undertake rotational grazing to improve soil health and the carrying capacity for the animals and wildlife then you need a water source in each of the pastures," said Hammell.

Over the years, Hammell has seen a lot of land in the area drained but he has always done what he could to maintain natural wetlands. The project, funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada, restored six acres of wetland habitat. Adding these acres to the other wetlands that MHHC restored across Manitoba this year, over 200 acres of drained wetlands have been returned to the landscape.

"It's worked out really well. We gained two to three feet of water in the spring for all the ponds that were existing, which is the most significant time for the majority of waterfowl. We stored some water that didn't get into Lake Winnipeg, stored some nutrients on the farm and we didn't lose any foraging acres," said Hammell.

As a champion of MHHC, Hammell helps to share program information with his neighbours and friends in an effort to protect as much natural habitat as possible.



Gord Hammell counting ducks, Below: Restored wetland habitat on Gord Hammell's property





# CONSERVING MANITOBA'S Species at Risk



10,240

acres of habitat  
ENHANCED

14

species at risk  
BENEFITTING

1,340

acres of habitat  
permanently  
CONSERVED

Loggerhead Shrike, Christian Artuso



Ruth Stewart out on the Prairie

## WET PRAIRIE

The prairie ecosystem is resilient. It adapts to extremes of flood and drought.

Southwest Manitoba has experienced almost two decades of above normal precipitation. When it floods, the excess moisture is held deep in root systems and in shallow pools on the surface, which provides ducks, frogs, and other species that thrive in wet conditions, a place to flourish. It also results in prairie areas to start to look like marshlands. This has been especially true in the Oak Lake area.

As weather patterns shift, it is probable that heat and drought-like conditions will return. This is when the land slowly releases the stored water, once again providing a home for grassland species.

"We know from various studies that the Sprague's Pipit, Chestnut-collared Longspur, and Baird's Sparrow were once in more abundance on the land, but because of recent excessive flooding, we're not finding the same numbers. We're confident that if we're able to bring back more of the native prairie grasslands that they'll return," said Carol Graham, MHHC Habitat Conservation Specialist from the Reston area.

Ruth Stewart owns a piece of prairie like this near the northern shores of Oak Lake. In dry years Ruth's land is home to several species at risk. In recent years the water levels in the area have been high, diversifying the habitat and drawing in wetland species.

Ruth Stewart has owned the property since 1985 and is intent on keeping it as natural as possible. She doesn't want it broken and turned into cropped acres, so she entered into a conservation agreement with MHHC to maintain the prairie. Ruth Stewart is also actively managing this habitat to encourage the re-emergence of grasses through cattle grazing and mowing.

"I wanted to have something there in the future for wildlife and I wanted the land left in its natural state," said Ruth Stewart. "At one time it was used for hay production, as the grass comes back maybe it will be as productive as it was at one time."

Encouraging the return of dryland grasses on the property will be good for the grassland Species at Risk that once called this property home. The funding for this agreement came from the Habitat Stewardship Program, an Environment and Climate Change Canada funded program focused on protecting habitats for Species at Risk.

MHHC has protected over 64,000 acres of habitat for Species at Risk through the Habitat Stewardship Program since first receiving funding in 2000 and added 1,180 acres in 2017/18.



# PROTECTING THE *Flock*

Thanks to a variety of government programs, interested organizations, and conscientious landowners, a great deal has been done over the years to help ensure that species native to Manitoba do not become extinct. One such program is the Species at Risk Partnership on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) program funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada.

In the last three years, MHHC has been deeply engaged in partnerships with the Manitoba Beef Producers and Manitoba Agriculture to deliver and promote the program. SARPAL is based on providing landowners, those primarily involved in the cattle industry, with incentives to enhance their pasture management practices which then helps maintain an important habitat for Species at Risk: prairie grasslands.

MHHC Habitat Conservation Specialist Tom Moran worked with local beef farmers, Tyran and Ashley Wells, to develop a plan that would help to enhance the native prairie grassland on one of their pastures located seven miles west of Waskada.

“Our land is known as a hotspot. It’s wide open native prairie grassland with lots of birds on it. People are often going there to see what species they can find, it’s nice to know that you can work with people to make sure those species keep going. We were happy to do more to protect it,” said Tyran.

Tyran and his wife only started farming in 2012. With high costs and tight margins, being able to access additional funds to improve their grazing land through the SARPAL program was welcome.

“We added two more dugouts to spread out the water source for the cattle to better utilize the entire pasture, plus we fixed up some of the fences. There’s not a lot of margin in the cattle business so when someone tells you about a program where you can get funding to improve fencing and whatever else, you should take it,” said Tyran.

The Chestnut-collared Longspur, Ferruginous Hawk, Loggerhead Shrike and Burrowing Owl are all designated Species at Risk and can be found in Waskada and surrounding area. The long-term goal is to support grazing on native pastures, because effective grazing of those areas will maintain the prairie grassland habitat for Species at Risk.

MHHC facilitated enhancements to over 10,240 acres of Species at Risk habitat through improved fencing, enhancing watering systems and mowing shrubs on grasslands this year. These projects were often completed by the landowners themselves with supplies being paid for through the SARPAL program.

## RIGHT PROJECT RIGHT PLACE

Conservation program delivery is not just about doing the right thing, but also doing the right thing in the right place. Under the SARPAL program, MHHC partnered with local bird experts at Bird Studies Canada and the Important Bird Area program to complete surveys for grassland birds on properties enrolled in the SARPAL program. Over 500 sightings of Species at Risk, including Loggerhead Shrike, Sprague’s Pipit, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Baird’s Sparrow, and Bobolink were recorded on program lands.

These surveys were used to inform the SARPAL “Keep Grazing” incentive program and monitor conservation outcomes for grassland birds. Program activities included the management of shrub encroachment and invasive species, fencing and watering systems to support improved grazing, and management on sensitive habitats.





CONSERVING MANITOBA'S

# Habitat Values

\$64.6  
MILLION

VALUE OF SERVICES  
provided to  
Manitobans by  
natural habitats

14,911

acres of MHC land  
available for  
PUBLIC USE

625

CATTLE GRAZING  
on MHC lands

Cameron Meuckon

## ROAD TO A GREENER TOMORROW

Twenty years ago, MHC and the province of Manitoba began a funding program that has become a model for development. At the time, the departments of Natural Resources and Highways and Transportation committed to “no net loss” of wetland habitat in key waterfowl breeding areas and set up the Habitat Mitigation/Compensation Fund. This fund allowed for wetland losses to be offset by the protection and restoration of other basins.

Essential in this partnership between what is now Manitoba Sustainable Development, Manitoba Infrastructure and MHC, is the “Mitigation Hierarchy” of Avoid, Minimize and (as a last resort) Compensate.

It is not always possible to avoid all the wetland habitat when road safety considerations or construction feasibility are considered. When wetland impacts need to occur, Infrastructure tries to minimize the impact and what impacts remain are offset through engagement of MHC and its conservation work.

MHC looks for conservation projects that balance the wetland losses with gains in an area close to the construction. These

projects include the restoration of wetlands that have previously been drained, or the conservation of existing wetland complexes in the area, protecting them from future damage. By doing this, the ecosystem services, or benefits, that were provided by the habitat lost to construction are replaced.

In the past 20 years, the partners have utilized the Habitat Mitigation/Compensation Fund for unavoidable losses on nine highway construction projects. This has resulted in 2,142 acres of habitat being conserved and 60 acres of wetland habitat being restored.

This partnership has been beneficial to all the participants. Infrastructure ensures that its actions are not adversely affecting the overall wetland and watershed health during its construction works, Sustainable Development continues to ensure the province protects the environment during growth and MHC meets its objectives to maintain, restore and enhance Manitoba's wildlife and fish habitat. Ultimately, it is Manitobans that benefit by having safer roads while still enjoying the benefits that wetlands provides.



Pothole Landscape





# CONSERVATION CATTLE

Southern Manitoba is part of the Northern Great Plains region, a once vast expanse of grassland that covered much of central North America. While the majority of this grassland habitat has unfortunately been lost, many of the plants and animals that relied on this habitat still exist in remnant areas of native habitat or replanted grasslands. It is largely thanks to the beef industry that these habitats exist and continue to offer significant wildlife benefits. Cattle grazing mimics the effects of large herds of ungulates which the grassland ecosystem historically relied upon. MHHC has been actively working with the beef industry to demonstrate the compatibility of livestock and wildlife on private lands and on its own lands.

Scott Beaton, one of five MHHC Habitat Conservation Specialists, recently established a grazing system on a new property, a donation to MHHC from the late Neil McEachran near Treherne, Manitoba. The goal of this system is to maintain and enhance habitat for wildlife through grazing and wetland restoration. “Our mandate is to maintain habitat for wildlife while we take on projects to meet these goals we accomplish a lot more.”

Beaton’s sentiment is echoed by another MHHC Habitat Conservation Specialist, Wes Pankratz, who manages 16 properties in the Minnedosa area.

“I think grazing cattle can be a win-win-win situation for the wildlife, the pasture health and the weight gains of the herd.

However, there has to be a balance. If we graze only for weight gains and production, then the wildlife habitat could suffer. Conversely, if we graze only for wildlife, the other two could suffer,” said Pankratz.

And while the McEachran property now provides additional pasture for a local beef producer, the mix of grassland and wetlands continue to support local wildlife. Beaton noted that “this project created two small wetlands that are relatively rare in this landscape. The wetlands provide a habitat for ducks and other waterfowl to use before larger bodies of water open up in the spring. As well, elk, deer and a whole host of other wildlife in the area will take advantage of the resource now that it’s available to them.”

MHHC continues to work with local producers, in particular beef producers, to achieve these win-win-win situations. “The impact, through proper grazing, will improve soil fertility, enhance the grass stand, sequester carbon, infiltrate moisture, recycle nutrients, support local wildlife populations and so on. We’re pleased to be able to provide much needed pasture to a shrinking land base for cattle producers.” said Pankratz.

MHHC works with local cattle producers on 19 of its properties. This management maintains grassland health while supporting local beef producers.



McEachran Property





# 2017/18 *Partners*

Delta Waterfowl Foundation  
Ducks Unlimited Canada  
East Interlake Conservation District  
Environment and Climate Change Canada  
International Institute for  
Sustainable Development  
Keystone Agricultural Producers  
La Salle Redboine Conservation District  
Landowners  
Manitoba Agriculture  
Manitoba Beef Producers  
Manitoba Conservation Districts Association  
Manitoba Infrastructure  
Manitoba Sustainable Development

Manitoba Wildlife Federation  
Nature Manitoba  
Pembina Valley Conservation District  
Prairie Habitat Joint Venture  
State of Arkansas  
State of Mississippi  
State of Wisconsin  
Swan Lake Watershed Conservation District  
The Nature Conservancy of Canada  
Turtle Mountain Conservation District  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
Whitemud Watershed Conservation District  
Wildlife Habitat Canada



# 2017/18 Board of Directors



In late 2017/18, five new Directors were appointed to the MHHC Board. Special thanks are extended to former Directors who recently stepped off the Board: John Whitaker, Don Norquay, Sharon Gurney, and Murray Dubowits.

2017/18 Board of Directors: Brent Pooles (Chair), Dimple Roy (Vice Chair), Nathan Sims, Maureen Krauss, Cornell Pashé, Caron Clarke, Kathy Jasienczyk, and Ken Sharpe (not pictured)





**WINNIPEG**

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