Elk Island’s 2013 Wood Bison transfer to Russia:

A Memorandum of Agreement and Protocol of Understanding have been signed by Parks Canada, Environment Canada and Government of the Sakha Republic in the former Soviet Union, to transfer 30 wood bison calves from Elk Island National Park to Lenski Stolby Nature Park in Yakutia, Republic of Sakha, Russia between March 17-21, 2013. Disease testing is in progress. Previous wood bison transfers occurred in 2006 and 2011. The wood bison previously transferred to Republic of Sakha are thriving and reproducing.

To maintain herd health within fully-fenced Elk Island National Park, bison population growth must be controlled. Approximately 100 wood bison must be removed every second year. Transfers of bison for conservation initiatives is first priority in finding a new home for the animals. This year, the only request received for such purposes was from the Republic of Sakha. In addition to the 30 calves being sent to Russia, 20 calves will go to the University of Saskatchewan for reproduction research while 50 bison, including breeding bulls, will be sent for auction.

Maureen Shenher
Elk Island National Park

A Walk in the Trees:
Studies show that walking among trees not only reduces stress, but offers other unseen benefits from communing with the plants of the forest. A walk in a forest or treed area can be of great benefit if you are feeling stressed. ‘Shinrin-yoku’ in Japanese literally translated means Forest Bathing, and the practice has become a recognized relaxation and stress management activity in Japan.

Around the world people are connected to forests or trees in one way or another. Regardless where they live, many people have a favourite forest or treed place where their minds and bodies naturally feel stress relief. Each culture in world has sacred forest or sacred tree of great significance. In Greek mythology, certain trees are dedicated to particular Greek Gods – oak to Zeus, olives to Athena, pine to Pan and etc. In native North American folklore, the Creator created a Sacred Tree around which the people could gather to find wisdom, security and healing power. In various Holy writings, trees and plants are very often seen as manifestation of divine knowledge and renewed power.

Research has shown benefits of being immersed in nature and amongst trees on mood, stress level and the immune system. These studies indicate a decrease in anxiety, anger and depression, and also an increase in the overall vigor of the participants. Recent studies are showing a link between walking among the trees, breathing in the air, and an increase in immune function in humans. They also found that these positive effects remained in the body up to 7 days after the forest walks.

Forest Bathing can be done anywhere and this is another example of how beneficial Alberta’s trees and forests are.

For more information please contact: Brenda Wispinsk Executive Director

Working Together

BHI Summer 2013 Newsletter

Greetings from the BHI’s Executive Director

Welcome to another edition of our BHI Newsletter. The updates reflect just a few of the many activities and projects of the BHI. We hope you enjoy reading and learning about our activities and find them useful.

Our biggest news this season is that we were successfully awarded grant funding earlier this spring from the provincial Regional Collaboration Program to continue a wide range of regionally-focused research and development activities focusing on advancing conservation planning in the Beaver Hills area. The funding will support an update to the BHI’s Land Management Framework, integrating research from past projects and working with the municipalities, land owners and citizens continuing to move forward conservation efforts of the Beaver Hills Initiative.

I would also like to say thank you again to all the hard working Beaver Hills Initiative partners, what a great 10 years it has been and looking forward to many more. Enjoy our newsletter stories and information, and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks everyone!

Brenda Wispinsk
Executive Director

Protecting Nature While Growing:
The Beaver Hills Initiative [BHI] strives to maintain the quality of the lands, water and other natural resources while balancing community development within the unique ecosystem of the Beaver Hills. Rich in biodiversity and natural habitats, the landscape of the Beaver Hills provides unique plant and animal life compared to the surrounding agricultural and urban landscapes. It is extensively treed area, with abundant wetlands in a boreal-mixed forest habitat. Increasing pressures in relation to population growth in Alberta capital region are resulting in increased land use pressures from the surrounding area. The BHI recognizes that quality of life is closely tied to the appreciation of natural resources in the area. The BHI provides information and research to decision makers of participating municipalities that encourage innovative approaches to balance growth and development with ecological function.

An exciting project that the BHI has undertaken is the Biosphere Reserve nomination to UNESCO and, if approved, will be the second one in all of Alberta. This designation would help foster sustainable development, plus benefit and build local capacity for research, monitoring and educational opportunities.

I encourage you to visit the BHI website for more information, plus dates to upcoming events, seminars and conferences in your region.

Bonnie Riddell, Councillor
Strathcona County

For a sustainable region, through shared initiatives and coordinated action
**Vision:** The Beaver Hills Initiative values the region for its natural beauty, quality of life and supports cooperative efforts to sustain the quality of water, land, air, natural resources, and community development.

**BHI Partners:**

**Local Governments**
- Beaver County
- Lamont County
- Strathcona County

**Government of Canada**
- Elk Island National Park, Parks Canada
- AESB, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

**Government of Alberta**
- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Environment
- Municipal Affairs
- Sustainable Resource Development
- Tourism, Parks and Recreation

**Academia**
- University of Alberta
- Alberta Innovates Technology Futures

**Industrial Partners**
- Alberta Industrial Heartland Association
- Fort Air Partnership

**Non-Government Organizations**
- Alberta Invasive Plants Council
- Alberta Fish and Game Association
- Alberta Lake Management Society
- Alberta Land Trust Alliance
- Alberta Sports Recreation & Wildlife Foundation
- Beaver Hills Dark Sky Preserve
- Cosmic Journey
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Edmonton and Area Land Trust
- Land Stewardship Centre of Canada
- Miistakis Institute
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance
- Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
- Worley Parsons

**‘New-Style’ Biosphere Reserves:**

As the Beaver Hills Initiative continues to work on its Beaver Hills Biosphere Reserve nomination, it is worth noting that there are now 610 Biosphere Reserves in 117 countries, including 16 Biosphere Reserves in Canada. New additions to the global network are required to assign greater consideration to implementing innovative approaches to sustainable development outside the “core” protected areas.

In 2012, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire (GSA) became the first of Scotland’s “new style” Biosphere Reserves. The GSA in its proposal outlined those factors that are important for all “new style” Biosphere Reserves, including nominations such as the Beaver Hills.

While continuing the three major functions of conservation, development and logistics/capacity building, Biosphere Reserves are important for the following reasons:

- convey international recognition as a unique brand
- require no new legislation of policy change
- prioritise community involvement
- prioritise resource allocation
- stimulate economic growth
- act as a testing ground for novel approaches to sustainable development
- champion inter-agency and interdisciplinary working
- encourage international links
- support research into future land use change
- deal with the long term future for the planet

Biosphere Reserve designation will give global recognition to the importance of the Beaver Hills and international endorsement to what the Beaver Hills Initiative is already doing and the considerable accomplishments it has realized to-date.

Dr. Guy Swinnerton
Professor Emeritus University of Alberta
Chair, Protected Areas Working Group

Despite its ecological importance, the ability of beavers to modify landscapes by building dams and digging channels can have serious financial and operational consequences for facilities such as roads and trails.

A new study by researchers at Augustana Campus, University of Alberta incorporates the use of pond leveling devices and culvert fencing to help mitigate flooding of valuable facilities while still allowing beaver colonies and wetlands to remain intact. This study also compares operational costs of current management practices (e.g., backhoes, removing dams with dynamite) relative to the alternative techniques. Early findings indicate that using structures such as pond levelers not only reduces conflict, but might even save money over the long run for land managers in areas with ongoing human-beaver conflicts.

Dr. Glynnis Hood, Ph.D.
University of Alberta

**Upcoming Events:**

**July 2013**
- 6 - EALT’s Weeding for Wildlife at Golden Ranch
- 7 - Savour Strathcona [formerly Tomato Fair]
- 18 - Berry Workshop at Brookville Hall
- 26-28 - 100th Annual Bruce Stampedede

**August 2013**
- 9-10 - Bounty in Beaver County
- 11 - Ukrainian Day at Ukrainian Cultural Village
- 14 - Communities in Bloom at Sherwood Park
- 17 - South Cooking Lake Trail Days
- 24 - Strathcona County Mayor Celebration
- 24-25 - Babas & Borshch Festival at Andrew
- 25 - Friends of Ukrainian Music Festival at Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village

**September 2013**
- 1 - Beaver Hills Dark Sky Preserve 7th Anniversary at Elk Island National Park
- 3-8 - Tour of Alberta
- 8 - Harvest Food Festival at Ukranian Cultural Village
- 17 - Healing Power of the Forest at Strathcona County Library

**October 2013**
- 6-8 - Alberta Professional Planners Institute’s 2013 Conference at Jasper
- 21 - Municipal Elections
- 23 - ARPA/IPFRA Congress at Lake Louise

**November 2013**
- 12-15 - AAMDC Fall Convention at Edmonton