

## BHI Partners:

### Local Governments:

Beaver County  
Camrose County  
Lamont County  
Leduc County  
Strathcona County

### Government of Alberta:

Agriculture and Rural Development  
Environment  
Municipal Affairs  
Sustainable Resource Development  
Tourism, Parks, and Recreation  
Alberta Innovates Technology Futures

### Government of Canada:

Elk Island National Park,  
Parks Canada Agency  
Agri-Environment Services Branch,  
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada

### Academia:

University of Alberta

### Industrial Partners:

Alberta Industrial Heartland Assoc.  
Northeast Capital Industrial Assoc.  
Fort Air Partnership  
Strathcona Industrial Assoc.

### Non-Gov't Organizations:

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

## Bison Transfer to Russia:

The Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) of the Russian Federation, Elk Island National Park, and the Canadian Wildlife Service have created an exciting partnership; a partnership that has had a positive impact on the international recovery and conservation of Wood Bison; a partnership that begins here in the Beaver Hills.

Elk Island National Park has two species at risk identified under the Species at Risk Act (SARA); one of them is the Wood Bison. Nationally, Wood Bison are listed as "Threatened". Globally, this wildlife subspecies is found in wild nature only in Canada. The Elk Island herd was introduced into the park in 1963 for the purpose of recovering the species and continues to serve as Canada's national Wood Bison recovery herd.

Aiming to restore a viable population of Wood Bison into an area of Russia where the species existed historically, the partners have established a Russian-Canadian working committee that has implemented a Transfer Protocol Agreement for the transfer of Wood Bison from Elk Island National Park to the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Russian Federation.

The first successful transfer occurred in 2006. Subject to the annual Wood Bison census, up to 30 (10 males and 20 females, certified as disease-free) will eventually be transferred from the source herd at Elk Island National Park. In November of 2010, the next group of bison will be rounded up and selected for transfer. The bison will depart for Yakutia accompanied by two Parks Canada employees around December 17, 2010.

In Yakutia, restoration of the wood bison will add to the ecological integrity of the Sakha ecosystem, and help to promote growth in the northern region's economy and improve social well-being. The program has become a major international conservation event and serves as a basis for further wildlife species recovery efforts within the Russian Federation. This too, could be an important conservation backup source of Wood Bison in case of an unexpected disaster occurring in Canada. Overall, it is an invaluable international benefit in the conservation of this wildlife sub-species.

Come and see Wood Bison in the Beaver Hills, at Elk Island National Park!

Maureen Shenher, Partnering, Engagement and Communications Officer  
Elk Island National Park



Release of the Wood Bison at Sakha Republic, Russian Federation



## Wetland Health Project:

The BHI is partnering with a UofA research team and several other agencies to assess the ecologic and social challenges in implementing Alberta's new Wetland Policy. This includes indicators of wetland health, ecosystem services, decision support systems and analysis of social barriers that will allow better regional planning and implementation of the wetland policy.

Wetlands are nature's 'kidneys'; they filter and trap sediment, and purify our water supplies. Wetlands can be important groundwater discharge areas, and in dry years are important drought refuges for wildlife and livestock, and also form important natural fire breaks. In wetter years they control flooding and prevent erosion by absorbing large amounts of water and releasing it slowly.

Historically, the loss of wetlands in Alberta was predominantly due to agricultural activities, however, in recent years losses are primarily due to residential and industrial development. Drought and lack of spring run-off also significantly reduces surface water levels &/or the amount of wetlands.

Since 2003 an interim wetland policy requires developers to replace every hectare of damaged or destroyed wetlands with 3 hectares of new or restored wetlands somewhere else, regardless of their function or quality. This creates a risk that Alberta could lose extensive wetland benefits even if areal extent of wetlands remains the same.

The BHI will assist researchers at the UofA to find ways to evaluate, create, restore, and replace wetland functions through scientifically defensible guidelines applicable to implementing new policy.

## Local Land Trust Advances Conservation



The Edmonton and Area Land Trust (EALT) has secured title to three quarters of land in one of the largest working ranches in the Capitol Region. The ranch lands are in the Beaver Hills Initiative area, and create a key habitat link between Elk Island National Park, the Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Grazing Reserve, and the Ministik Lake Game Bird Sanctuary.

EALT is pleased to have made its first acquisition, in partnership with a consortium of conservation agencies, utilizing the Ecological Gifts program of Environment Canada. Benefits of supporting conservation this way include 100% of the donation is eligible as a direct tax offset, as well as reduced capital gains. Corporate donors may deduct the amount of their gift directly from their taxable income, and any unused portion may be carried forward for up to 5 years.

EALT works throughout the Capitol Region, with land owners, to conserve natural areas and rural landscapes through donations of land, money, or conservation easements, for future generations. Lands eligible for consideration are environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, forested and agricultural lands, and conservation corridors. Together, we can make a difference!

Pam Wight  
Executive Director  
Edmonton and Area Land Trust



Cattle drive in Leduc County

# Beaver Hills Initiative

**Innovations in:**  
**Data and information sharing**  
**Strategic coordination of planning**  
**Partnership building**

## Valuing Woodlots:

Woodlots are any tract of land, size or shape that contains an area of trees, either naturally occurring or planted. Woodlots play a very important role in Alberta's agricultural landscape as over 1.5 million hectares are woodlots. Agroforestry practices can enhance the biodiversity, water and energy conservation and provide valuable revenue from timber. Except for parks and protected areas, the majority of lands in the BHI are extensively treed and are privately owned woodlots. The average size of woodlots in Alberta is between 60 and 100 acres, however in the BHI, most are between 5-40 acres, due to parcelization.

Very few landowners consider having a woodlot as investment. There are, however, some signs in recent years that landowners do see woodlots as potential future investment

The value of the woodlots are often measured by their ability to produce forest products. Some estimates indicate that between 10 to 20% of the timber supply in Alberta comes from privately owned woodlots, a value of \$70-80 million per year in standing timber value. The 2006 Census of Agriculture reported sales of forest products directly from agricultural operations in Alberta of over \$6.6M and in the BHI sales totalled over \$109.5K as follows: Strathcona \$38.3K, Leduc \$53.7K, Beaver \$9.8K, Camrose \$7.6K.

The environmental and social values of woodlots are even more significant than the direct market values from forest products. Many landowners value their woodlots for providing wildlife habitat, protecting riparian areas as well as protecting soil from water or wind erosion. Recently, many landowners are exploring the potential for carbon credits from their woodlots, as well as provision of Ecological Services to society. Even though many landowners don't practice ecotourism or agri-tourism as a business opportunity; many landowners use their woodlots for recreation, hunting and other personal pleasures. The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, the second best time is now!

Toso Bozic, Woodlot Specialist  
Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development

## Transferable Development Credits:

**Natural capital** is receiving increasing attention in the wake of recent growth pressures and concerns about the sustainability of our landscapes. For many years the BHI has fostered stewardship and conservation of the region's natural capital. Experience shows that the conservation of natural capital, far from hurting the economy, delivers a number of important services that contribute to the high quality of life to Albertans, including clean water, flood protection, and recreational opportunities at a low cost to taxpayers.

In 2007, the BHI investigated the feasibility of using *Transferable Development Credits* (TDCs) to provide incentives to private landowners to secure natural capital investments. TDCs allow landowners in areas with valued natural capital to sell development credits in areas targeted for more intensive development. TDC programs can be targeted to promote multiple community development and conservation objectives. The initial study showed that the BHI already meets many of the requirements for a successful TDC program including the identification of conservation objectives, and a land management framework.

The objectives of this project include building education and awareness on the potential opportunities associated with such instruments. The results of the project will illustrate how TDC markets might evolve in the rest of Alberta. The BHI will be working closely with community members, the Government of Alberta and the land trust community to ensure lessons learned are shared.

Copies of the Initial Feasibility Study are available at:  
<http://www.ducks.ca/province/ab/partners/beaver/tdc/index.html>

Dr. Marion Weber  
Alberta Innovates Technology Futures

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# Working Together

For a sustainable region, through  
shared initiatives and  
coordinated action



## Fall 2010 Newsletter

### Upcoming Events

#### September

10-12 - Alberta Parks Volunteer Conference at Sherwood Park  
12 - Harvest the Past & Heritage Food Festival at Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village  
12 - Terry Fox Run  
18 - Fall Fest 2010 at Sherwood Park  
29-Oct 1st - Canadian Land Trust Alliance Conference at Banff

#### October

3-9 - Fire Prevention Week  
21-23 - Alberta Recreation and Parks Association Conference at Jasper

#### November

5-14 - Farmfair at Edmonton Expo Centre  
21 - Celebration of Lights at Sherwood Park  
27 - Christmas in the Heartland at Josephburg

#### December

4 - Quilted Christmas at Sherwood Park

#### Feb 2011

4-6 - Alberta Assoc of Agricultural Societies Conference at Mayfield Inn, Edmonton  
11-12 - Canadian Birkebeiner at Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreational Area

#### Apr 2011

4-6 - Growing Rural Tourism Conference at Camrose

### BHI Greetings

Welcome to our 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the BHI Newsletter. Thank you for taking the time to read about our on-going activities.

The BHI is continuing to move forward with science-based projects that will assist our decision makers in planning sustainable communities today and for future generations. Action and tremendous dedication of members and partner agencies are ensuring conservation and stewardship of the environment, fundamental to our quality of life, is not forgotten in these challenging times.

On behalf of the BHI and all of our partners, I thank everyone involved for remaining committed to the vision to support cooperative efforts to sustain this unique landscape and the quality of life it provides. We hope you find the updates informative and enjoy learning of all the activities of the Beaver Hills Initiative.

Brenda Wispinski  
Executive Director

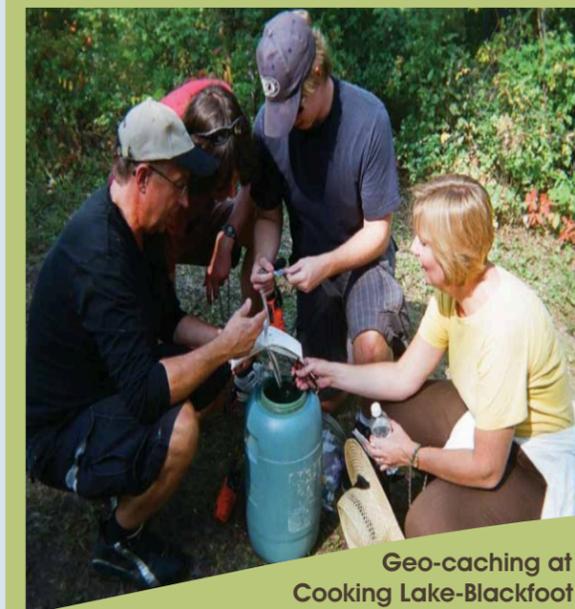
[www.beaverhills.ab.ca](http://www.beaverhills.ab.ca)

### Benefits of the BHI Partnership:

Integration of expertise across disciplines and jurisdictions, sharing of resources by joint implementation of projects, leveraged funding

Development of a world-class model of a sustainable community, addressing social, economic and environmentally factors equally

Data sharing and access for regional land use planning and ongoing land management



Geo-caching at  
Cooking Lake-Blackfoot  
Provincial Recreational Area