

Partner Perspectives

Credible data drives conservation success



Kara Tersén, NCC

Partner Perspective

NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA

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Bob Demulder
Regional Vice President, Alberta
Nature Conservancy of Canada

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Overview

Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is a private, non-profit group that partners with corporate and individual landowners for the direct protection of key biodiversity reserves through property donation, purchase or conservation agreement. Since 1962, the organization and its partners have helped conserve more than 800,000 hectares of ecologically-significant land nationwide.

Challenge

NCC identifies areas that are home to the greatest levels of biodiversity and in the most need of conservation, using inventory data to show where certain key species and intact ecosystems exist. Natural Area Plans showing the range of these biodiversity targets are then overlain with human activity maps, and the areas where the most values and development risks overlap are prioritized for conservation. Accurate information and plans are needed to identify these priority areas, and to make the case for conservation with private, corporate and government partners.

Solution

NCC developed a partnership with Foothills Research Institute in 2009 in order to gain current, accurate information on the grizzly bear, as a proxy for wide-ranging carnivores. "We needed information on bears south of the Bow River, because that is one of our focal areas for conservation work" says Bob Demulder, NCC's Regional Vice President for Alberta. "Our aim is to determine what private lands adjacent to southern protected areas might be important for conservation. I knew from my previous experience on the Institute Board that the Institute was the best place for the most current and accurate information of this type – as well as the support mechanisms to assist us in our planning."

Results

The research institute's Grizzly Bear Program provided NCC with comprehensive map data including bear movement patterns and habitat preference. The information has helped NCC complete four Natural Area Conservation Plans, and another will be under way in the Porcupine Hills. The information has also contributed to securing at least 10 significant properties in the southern east slopes such as the 10,000 ha OH Ranch easement just west of Longview. The property spans the Highwood and Sheep rivers and is adjacent to Kananaskis Country in the west. During a tour of the property in mid-June at least two grizzly bears were observed along with a wide range of plant and animal species. "We are a science-driven conservation organization, and the more we can use credible third-party data in our planning, the more successful we will be," says Demulder.

Learn more at www.foothillsresearchinstitute.ca