



Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association

SAPAA Report

• Biodiversity
• Protected Areas
• Plant Food

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<https://sapaastewards.com/>

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I. Introduction

A. Background

Alberta's Steward program started in the 1980's and has since expanded to over 60 organizations to protect 248 sites across Alberta. SAPAA was established in 2000 to support stewards of Alberta's protected areas. However in 2018, the government changed their policies quietly and withdrew funding, leaving the stewards in the program with a lack of direction and support. Stewards remain enthusiastic about the organization, and SAPAA's new goal is to decide if the organization has a path forward with their plan, SAPAA 2.0.

B. Objectives

Our consultation team outlined the three main goals that would benefit SAPAA:

- Perform research into Canada and similar governments for a system or structure similar to SAPAA's, specifically with volunteer stewards and program cohesiveness with active roles and awareness of stewardship duties.
- Analyze the SAPAA 2.0 plan for viability in the long term — can it generate energy and connection with Albertans to maintain volunteers and attention to these protected areas in order to facilitate monitoring and similar maintenance duties?
- Provide our feedback and recommendations for SAPAA on their 2.0 plan in order to determine the successfulness in its implementation.

This report will consist of our team's research findings, analysis and recommendations. We'll be using data from online sources as well as consultation and other areas where applicable in order to find the best results. Our key areas of focus are finding similar programs in order to utilize successful program methods already in place, but this report will also consider the proposed plan by SAPAA in order to determine marketability on a public level, as generating Albertans interest is priority to the overall success of SAPAA 2.0. The value of our study can be determined as providing clear feedback to SAPAA in our final report, be it an overhaul of their plan entirely to fit the format of another existing program or to advise changes to further the current plan's long-term social viability.

II. Jurisdictional Scan

A. Scan Scope

This scan included data most relevant to SAPAA, starting from within western Canada, Canada as a whole, then outward to the western United States, then the United States as a whole, and finally Australia and New Zealand as the furthest data points with similar qualities to the other sources.

B. Canadian Data

1. British Columbia

Stewardship Centre for British Columbia

The Stewardship Centre focuses on education and supporting stewards of British Columbia. The

organization centres on strengthening stewardship by providing stewards with the tools and training they need to effectively maintain and protect the lands. While the organization is not directly involved in specific designated areas, they serve as a support mechanism by providing resources to stewards to streamline their duties.



Reasons for Success

The organization offers a stewardship series of readable guides providing specifics about each region (costal, wetlands, etc.). These include information about scientific, legal, and recreational aspects of each area to help ease the responsibilities of stewards. Resources are offered about species and habitat to look out for and how to troubleshoot any harms to the land, as well as giving tips for other activities such as hiking and climbing. A huge emphasis is placed on educational programs within the organization. Facilitating educational involvement with local schools and youth groups, spreading awareness of ecosystem degradation and teaching how to maintain nature allows the group to help create a next generation of environmentally conscious and protection-oriented individuals.

The group also heavily relies on visibility, and spreading awareness in local communities of their presence to once again build a consciousness of conservation. Although we are unaware as to the steps they have taken to promote this visibility, it has paid off with residents often calling stewards first when issues arise in local areas.

BC Lake Stewardship Society (BCLSS)

BC Lake Stewardship focuses on supporting stewards of BC lakes, once again providing them with resources and information to help build their knowledge and aid in their maintenance of the land. They focus on incorporating knowledge and hands-on experience to manage lakes for the benefit of future generations. The group works with local communities and stewardship organizations to provide education and resources to ease the work put in by those working to protect lakes and habitats.



Reasons for Success

The BCLSS offers a LakeKeepers program with in depth training and manuals. This includes workshops for teaching proper protocols (such as using monitoring tools) and reporting procedures taught both in class and around the lakes. Manuals are provided for each grouping of lakes, providing information on stewardship duties, things to look out for, as well as boating information and future management plans.

The group heavily relies on citizen science, focusing on training stewards in proper lake sampling needed for meaningful data collections. The group organizes different levels of commitment from each stewards, and signs them responsibilities accordingly to maintain constant and quality sampling, and interchanges their stewards so as to not overwork them but still support their operations. BCLSS also offers toolkits for developing local stewardship organizations. These provide guidance to communities attempting to create their own stewards programming, stewards who once again have access to in-depth hands-on training provided by BCLSS.

Coastal First Nations

Coastal First Nations rely on Indigenous communities to steward coastal lands and oceans to maintain resources and protect local wildlife. These groups have established local governance counsels of Indigenous nations who make decisions and run their local stewardship programs, but work collaboratively to share information and implement initiatives that benefit all the regions collectively.



Reasons for Success

Coastal First Nations governance councils are run by a mini government of local stewardship representatives who represent each region. These regions carry out stewardship programs relatively independently (in regard to daily activities and small time projects), but councils come together to share knowledge and ideas to overseeing boards in regards to regional stewardship initiatives, and work together to make decisions as to what benefits all regions the best. Coastal watchmen are employed as the 'on the ground guards' to uphold and enforce both traditional and contemporary Indigenous laws. They steward their own local regions in which they live, and work on implementing each nation's own unique territorial stewardship projects.

Additionally Coastal First Nations offer all stewards (especially coastal guard watchmen) regional monitoring tools, which are standardized digital equipment for collective monitoring. All information and reporting is shared through a web based data source, allowing access to all information on a local and regional basis. This facilitates better decision making, and permits different regions (who are often facing similar problems) to work collaboratively in creating solutions.

Government Collaborative Stewardship Framework in British Columbia



The Collaborative Stewardship Framework established by the government of British Columbia focuses on creating initiatives to work collaboratively with Indigenous individuals to steward the land and protect ecosystems from degradation. It utilizes both Indigenous and western knowledge to create solutions to problems, and shifts decision-making power from solely being in government hands. The project divides the province into different zones, and works with the numerous Indigenous communities to collectively work together to protect lands and improve resource management.

Reasons for Success

Fostering both western and Indigenous conservation tactics, the BC government and associated lands have placed great emphasis on building relationships between diverse cultures and areas of knowledge. Groups involved often share similar interests of maintaining lands and strengthening connections with nature, as well as creating a safe shared space for collaborative leadership. Cooperative stewardship with Indigenous communities and groups creates the

mending of lifestyles and knowledge bases, exposing more individuals to the naturalist orientation of living, and strengthening the decision-making process.

2. Western Canada

Stewards of Saskatchewan/Nature Saskatchewan

Stewards of Saskatchewan is 5 voluntary stewardship programs across the region that work with landholders and land managers to maintain ecosystems and protect species. The organization mainly focuses on working with independent land holders, but still actively recruits volunteers and members to help with surveying the land, reporting information, and maintaining contact with landowners. The main goals from the initiative focus on conserving species and habitats, while also supporting agricultural producers.



Reasons for Success

To ease their work, Stewards of Saskatchewan focus each program on flagship species to promote awareness of biological diversity. These species are often the most rare or endangered, being the most affected by harms and ecosystem degradation. These flagship species allow volunteers to focus their efforts on the most endangered animals, in the hope of creating benefits for all those that share the ecosystem. Volunteers programs focus on education and research, with each volunteer steward matched to a designated local land, monitoring and reporting ecosystem issues. They are provided management plans and reporting forms to streamline their efforts, but are also involved in developing and leading recreational activities and tours.

People who choose to have their lands stewarded are offered support in conservation and education as to how to promote conservation. Additionally, lands can be connected to a treaty land-sharing network, in which farmers/ranchers and Indigenous people share the land, collectively stewarding and sharing diverse knowledge for ecosystem protection.



Canadian Wilderness Stewardship Program (Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Manitoba Chapter)

The Canadian Wilderness Stewardship Programs extend all across Canada, with one of the most successful programs being the Manitoba chapter. The program is funded by the Canadian government under Canada Service Corps Programs, and primarily focuses on empowering youth as the next generation of stewards. The program offers extensive training in civic engagement, advocacy, and land conservation, with a specific focus on Indigenous youth. Alberta also has a Canadian Wilderness Stewardship Program, which shares similar responsibilities and opportunities as the Manitoba chapter.

Reasons for Success

The program offers extensive training in wildlife management and ecosystem conservation, hosting conferences and webinars educating youth volunteers in the importance of stewardship and advocating for the land. The program teaches skills in government policies of conservation and problems solving, and mixes traditional Indigenous knowledge with western science.

Youth can also participate in summits designed to get the next generation outside and actively involved in programs especially to those who have limited access, but also provide wilderness excursions on a more regular basis to get youth involved in stewardship duties. Community service projects are offered to transfer their educational knowledge to real conservation work, highlighting skills or nature in preserving the lands and building leadership skills.

Alberta Fish and Game Volunteer Stewardship Program

Alberta Fish and Game offers volunteer stewardship opportunities in which individuals have the same role and responsibilities as fish and game officers, with an emphasis on maintaining habitats and ecosystems. Similar to other organizations, volunteers steward the lands and report problems to the health of the environment.



Reasons for Success

Alberta Fish and Game offers comprehensive training to volunteer stewards, outlining skills in habitat management and protection. It outlines duties and best practices, and provides resources and support options for volunteers. These mainly come in the form of manuals and inspection forms, outlining important things to watch for in each area. This practice resembles most other resources offered by other organizations, and provides support to volunteers to ease their workloads.

Alberta Parks

Alberta Parks offers some stewardship programs, with individuals tasked with observing and informing parks and park rangers about any management needs. They are often registered under other conservation groups/societies, and lend a helping hand when needed. These individuals are linked to one or two parks, and complete observations and inspections on behalf of the parks management team. The initiative has made it clear that these individuals are not legally representing the government and are not enforcement authorities, but are solely there to observe and report.



Reasons for Success / Concerns

This initiative eases the work of park rangers and provides opportunities to get more involved in local communities for the public. The standard inspection reports and observation forms make the reporting process easier, although sometimes these forms deter stewards from actually implementing any changes. Additionally the outright divide stated by the government between park rangers and stewards often discourages stewards from getting involved in the program, and makes some individuals feel as though they are providing ‘free labour’ for an otherwise paid position of park rangers.

3. Canada

Junction Creek Stewardship Committee

Junction Creek Stewardship Committee is an organization focusing on restoring and maintaining urban waterways in the City of Greater Sudbury. With similar framework and goals as the other organizations, this committee focuses on education and knowledge sharing, while researching and monitoring



*Junction Creek
Stewardship Committee*

*Comité d'intendance
du ruisseau Junction*

areas to better provide them with support. The committee focuses on monitoring the water with volunteer use of equipment and maintaining habitats for at risk species.

Reasons for Success

With similar programs as other organizations (recreational activities, educational workshops, volunteer research), one thing that separates the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee from other groups is their youth council. Each year the committee recruits around 10 high school students to sit on a youth council, who work alongside and collaboratively with the organization to create solutions and implement initiatives relating to conservation. This focuses on developing leadership skills, as well as advancing their knowledge on policy implementation and conservation skills.

Nature Trust of New Brunswick

Nature Trust of New Brunswick works to create management plans for designated land trusts. These lands are often privately owned and owners work with the organization to help maintain and steward the lands. With many of the same goals as other organizations mentioned, Nature Trust works with volunteer stewards to facilitate activities and education sharing in order to promote conservation.



Reasons for Success

Nature Trust heavily relies on technology to promote visibility of their program and local area activities. They provide an app for online interactive maps with information on the history of areas and events taking place, as well as guides for hiking and monitoring biodiversity as a tourist. They also provide information about volunteer opportunities on their online app to recruit more stewards. Additionally the app offers the “passport to nature”, with users collecting stamps and information about areas they have visited.

Quebec Labrador Foundation

With similar goals as other conservation organizations, this foundation focuses on stewarding on conservation of parks and protected areas on a wider scale. Specifically their emphasis is on knowledge sharing, working regionally, nationally, and even internationally to create solutions for diverse problems in different areas.



The development of their programs focuses on tradition, culture, and heritage, and they strive to protect both people and animals who share traditional lands.

Reasons for Success

Quebec Labrador Foundation places a heavy emphasis on easing information sharing. They are hoping to implement the National Parks Service Collaborative for Innovative Leadership, which aims to accelerate the spreading of ideas and information to a wider audience, and inspire more collective collaboration to solve problems and maintain conservation on a wider scale (internationally).

- **Les Amis De La Montagne**

(Environmental Conservation) | Quebec

Friends of the Mountain is an organization in charge of conserving Mount Royal within Montreal. Although not explicitly stewarding the mountain, members are actively protecting the area and supporting the mountain's needs to ensure its conservation. The organization focuses its effort on engaging the community through environmental education, with the main goal of protecting the mountain's interests.



Reasons for Success

The program heavily relies on community involvement, and offers a wide range of educational programs and workshops to drop-in visitors for promoting conservation. They also partner with local schools to teach youth about the environment both in the classroom and within the parks. For adults, the group offers structured recreational activities including hiking and picnic packages, as well as renting equipment for other activities. Embedded within these programs are educational lessons regarding land conservation and more information about how to get involved in protecting the mountain.

On the technical side the group partners with trained biologists and specialists to survey areas and create site specific solutions for conservation. Site initiatives are spearheaded by these researchers and supported by volunteers who 'put in the hard work' and continue to monitor their program's progress as it continues.

Summarized Findings Table

Organizations	Relevant Data
Stewardship Centre for British Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support through stewardship guides and education • Heavy reliance on visibility and awareness to local communities
BC Lake Stewardship Society (BCLSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LakeKeepers program with training and manuals for stewardship • Heavy reliance on citizen science and involvement locally
Coastal First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliance on Indigenous communities and local knowledge and governance • Regional monitoring tools (standardized digital equipment) for all stewards for reporting and information sharing
Government Collaborative Stewardship Framework in British Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with Indigenous individuals for stewardship, preventing only government from being in power over protected lands
Stewards of Saskatchewan/Nature Saskatchewan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with landowners for species and habitat conservation • Promotion of biological diversity and support with education and research
Canadian Wilderness Stewardship Program (Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Manitoba Chapter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal government funded • Extensive training in wildlife management and ecosystem conservation • Hosts conferences and webinars for educating youth
Alberta Fish and Game Volunteer Stewardship Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive training to stewards in habitat management and protection through materials and manuals
Alberta Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer stewardship using standardized inspection report forms and observation forms
Junction Creek Stewardship Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on water management with volunteer use of equipment and maintenance of habitats • Youth council is unique and important to building engagement with high

	school students
Nature Trust of New Brunswick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy reliance on technology for visibility promotion and local activities • Provides an app with interactive maps and history of the areas as well as events and hiking guides, etc.
Quebec Labrador Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on knowledge sharing and ease of information and ideas to a broad audience
Les Amis De La Montagne (Environmental Conservation) Quebec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on community engagement through environmental education • Partnership with local schools to educate youth • Recreational activities for adults such as hiking and picnics, rental equipment with environmental education included

C. North American Data

Much of the data sourced from the United States was either focused more on advocacy to the government through petitions and donations on the main websites over volunteers taking action themselves in the environment, or managed under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's jurisdiction or supported through alternative government funding. In this, there was a common pattern of membership through donation as a popular support method for non-profits to be considered in future work. It also highlighted the necessity of governmental backing for long-term project work on a larger scale if not matched with donations and grants.

1. Northwestern United States

Alaska Wildlife Alliance

A voice for Alaskan wildlife, the grassroots organization promotes ecosystem management for its intrinsic value and the benefit to present and future generations. Their work is the only statewide program in Alaska informing wildlife management policies and mobilizing the public since 1978. The organization identifies, researches, and monitors ecosystems as well as increases public awareness and develops programming to support marine mammals and endangered species.



Reasons for Success

The organization has a lot of volunteer opportunities that help engage and inform both the public and the volunteers. Tabling events, *Wildlife Wednesday* presentations and Q&As by experts, training to help monitor endangered beluga whales, and photography and videography donated to the organization for use among other things. By building a broad base of volunteers to support them, be it just photos or their timetabling, it builds community for the organization.

Washington Conservation Corps

While a product of the AmeriCorps agency of the US government that works to engage citizens in volunteer work, the WCC supports young adults and veterans in fostering meaningful career development in environmental studies through community service work with mentorship from environmental professionals. The organization is partnered with over 100



organizations including national parks and forests, conservation districts, and non-profit organizations among other groups.

Reasons for Success

The combination of experienced mentorship and dedicated volunteers has supported WCC since 1983, allowing for a strong network of volunteers to work with the program from varying age groups. Due to their extensive partnerships, WCC has been able to plant over 400,000 native trees and shrubs, improve 3,000 acres of habitat, build and maintain over 600 kilometres of trails, and help respond to local and natural disasters.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife: Gray Lodge Wildlife Area



California Department of
Fish and Wildlife

Gray Lodge Wildlife Area is a diverse ecosystem of approximately 9,100 acres hosting over 300 migrant birds and mammals. The area is very popular with locals and tourists alike, as it has year-round wildlife viewing, fishing and hunting in regulated seasons, educational programs, self-guided nature trails as well as guided tours. Gray Lodge has the vested interest and engagement of people to visit Gray Lodge as well as their year-round volunteer base running the area as described on their site:

“In all seasons, volunteers monitor and help put up wood duck nest boxes, lead nature walks, assist with nature programs for schools, staff the visitors' booth, assist with restoration projects, remove non-native vegetation, contribute to the general maintenance, and act as part of the Gray Lodge team.”.

Reasons for Success

Gray Lodge has more government support from California Department of Fish and Wildlife unlike SAPAA's non-profit management, but what they do best is volunteer engagement and retention of all ages, involving individuals in diverse ecosystems and having them help in work such as nest boxing for habitat preservation. This large network of volunteer training and programming allows for people to be aware of the world around them and have more compassion for nature as well as enjoyment and appreciation of what it can give them such as hiking trails and wildlife viewing.

2. United States

The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) of the U.S. Forest Service

While the program is run in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Agriculture, it also has a lot of cooperation and connection between private landowners and conservation districts in order to help them get the information and tools required to manage their forests and woodlands, which in turn provide timber, wildlife habitat, watershed protection and recreational opportunities among other things on said land.



Reasons for Success

FSP in particular has many goals in common with SAPAA regarding awareness and marketability of their organization, as their strategic plan engages with the public heavily. FSP put a strong focus on building community partnerships with other protection organizations on both state and federal levels: "Use traditional and new media to reach more audiences: radio, billboards, television, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube channels, Google+, mobile apps, QR (quick response) codes, and/or blogs. Message and advertise through media frequented by potential owner clients including absentee landowners." There was also a concern of lack of knowledge by government bodies that the program exists at all, something their cooperative work aimed to help mitigate by building up branding and awareness of the program.

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

This non-profit organization was started in 1971 by a variety of concerned citizens about the declining state of Chesapeake Bay. Through long-term planning and committed involvement they've been working to support clean waters and restoration of ecosystems in the watershed.



Reasons for Success

The Alliance works with local decision-makers and governments on watershed priorities, train volunteers and provide the tools and resources for water quality monitoring, build projects for individuals to have more agency as well as community leadership initiatives and multi-media promotion of their work to engage and connect with stakeholders.

Summarized Findings Table

Organizations	Relevant Data
Alaska Wildlife Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of volunteer opportunities to engage and inform the public • Training to help monitor endangered species
Washington Conservation Corps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Government project • Uses an experienced mentorship program with volunteers • Works with young adults and veterans for diversity
California Department of Fish and Wildlife: Gray Lodge Wildlife Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular with tourists and locals • Year-round activity • Educational programs • Self guided and guided tours • Government support
The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) of the U.S. Forest Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnered with USDA • Cooperates with private landowners and conservation districts. • Information and tools in exchange for natural resources
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement from local government • Community effort • Multimedia

D. International Data

1. Australia & New Zealand

Research of various environmental stewardship organizations in Australia and New Zealand. Out of over 20 organizations approached, we received only three responses. Each of these three organizations were asked three questions that SAPAA could find helpful; those questions regarding volunteer coordination, management of protected areas and organizational funding.

Victorian National Parks Association

The Victorian National Parks Association is based in Carleton in the Australian state of Victoria. The organization deals with nature conservation and supports policy to protect natural areas, as well as inspiring connections with nature throughout their community. We exchanged emails with Dr. Maddy Willcock and she gave me insights into the organization. The Victorian National Parks Association runs a 10-week educational program to help build environmental knowledge among volunteers, as well as those simply looking to better help the natural world around them. The Victorian National Parks Association works in more of a hands-off format when it comes to the management of protected areas as they work with state parks services and aboriginal organizations, but do not directly manage the protected areas as an organization.



The Victorian National Parks Association relies on local and state governments for funding for their work as well as philanthropic grants donated by generous and environmentally minded individuals. Although there are differences between SAPAA and the Victorian National Parks Association, SAPAA could still integrate components such as an educational program and community-based environmental knowledge into its organizational structure.

Australian Government Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water

The Australian Government Commonwealth

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water or DCCEEW for short is a government-run department. The department looks after the nation's natural sites as well as overseeing its water and energy resources and coordinates Australia's response to climate



change. The DCCEEW does not have any volunteer components as it deals directly with Australian land owners. The DCCEEW organizes protected areas through agreement with land owners as the land owners will oversee active management of their land and in exchange the government will pay for up to 15 years of costs in labour and capital.

The DCCEEW's Environmental Stewardship Program is entirely funded through government programs for 10-15 year periods, the current contract finalizes in 2027 and there will not be any extension to this program. This organization does not have many relations to SAPAA as they work in different roles and there are different forms of volunteering, funding and management of protected areas.

Conservation Volunteers New Zealand

Conservation Volunteers New Zealand was founded in 2006 and specializes in volunteer coordination for conservation projects across New Zealand. The organization coordinates



its volunteers online, as volunteers can sign up for various and specific projects across New Zealand such as a Migrant Conservation in Auckland and the Coronation Planting of trees in Punakaiki. The organization manages protected areas through the volunteers on the ground and are guided by experienced Conservation Volunteer Team Leaders, who know the environment well as well as being enthusiastic about the roles. The volunteers do hands-on work such as tree planting, plant maintenance, weed control, conservation fencing, predator control among other tasks.

Funding for Conservation Volunteers New Zealand comes from a combination of donations from environmentally-minded individuals as well as partnerships with corporations such as Mobil and Mondelez International, community partners such as the Sustainable Business Network and Million Metres Stream Projects as well as government partners such as Forestry New Zealand and the Department of Conservation. Conservation Volunteers New Zealand does well in their volunteer organization as in 2023 the organization planted almost 180 thousand trees and removed over five million square meters of invasive weeds among other species. *SAPAA should look to copy the success of volunteering and funding by ways of incorporation of team leaders and increasing partnerships with local organizations.*

Summarized Findings Table:

Organizations	Relevant Data
Victorian National Parks Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 week educational program • Indirect management of protected areas • Funding from governments and grants • Community based
Australian Government Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government run • No volunteer component • Land-owner oriented • Contracts between landowners and government for labour and capital
Conservation Volunteers New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online volunteer coordination • Hands-on volunteer work • Funding through donations and partnerships • Team leaders for volunteers

E. Findings

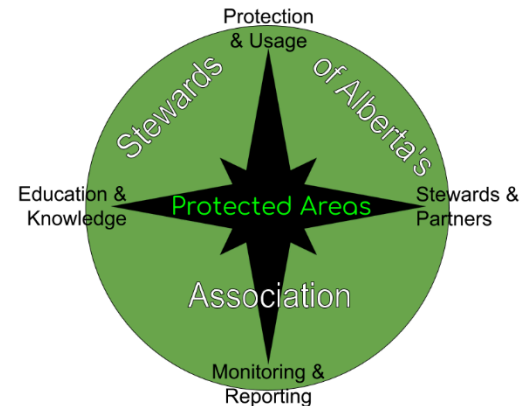
Key Ideas	How to Execute
Training and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manuals including key information • Troubleshooting/reporting guides • Workshop and in-class training • How-tos for equipment use • Educational book on species/habitat management • General public engagement with area-related activities (photography, habitat building, etc.) to build knowledge and community • Mentorship and student engagement
Use of Apps and Online Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive maps • Information about recreational activities • Engagement with the public using photos and videos for building awareness • Guides for visitor reporting • Information about volunteer opportunities • Games/stamp collective when visiting areas
Centralized Data Collection/Collaborative Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stewards have access to reports to collectively create solutions • Stewards are informed of similar issues in other areas
Facilitation Traditional Indigenous Knowledge and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New perspectives to same interest (conservation) • Increase collaboration • Create new volunteers
Use of Flagship Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on most endangered/at risk species • Reduce workload of stewards • Produce secondary benefits to other species

III. Analysis

F. SAPAA 2.0 Assessment

1. Priorities of SAPAA

With SAPAA's movement into the transformation of SAPAA 2.0, the emphasis of the organization still centres around environmental conservation. The organization wants to focus on supporting and recruiting volunteer stewards, with the goals of maintaining its viability as an association.



SAPAA's (2.0) priorities are contained within the SAPAA compass:

Protection and Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on protection and responsible use of public lands • Flora-Fauna-First; areas maintain their natural state • Point supported by other three
Stewards and Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis and appreciation of stewards • Support and safety of citizen stewards • Access to information and communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Supported by technology • Acknowledgment and appreciation of associated partners
Education and Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on stewards, visitors, then general population • Video libraries and certifications • Methods for stewards to share best practices • A website as well as newsletter releases • Information sessions with local communities • Annual 'Meet the Minister' sessions
Monitoring and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Trust by Verify' orientation • Producing 'State of Protected Areas' report • Tools for stewards and partners to monitor usage • Information incorporated into Ministry's annual report

2. SAPAA Consultation

The consultation done for the purposes of this report was done in two different groups: a discussion with the board executive and a “town hall” meeting for the membership.

While there was some overlap of individuals participating, overall both groups had unique perspectives that allowed for better insight into SAPAA's functions and future.

The executive's response centred strongly on the concerns of lacking volunteer support, lacking government support, and an unclear future for the organization. While there was agreement on the importance of a stewardship program in protecting the environment and preventing the government from deciding to use the land for developments or other investments, there was a lot of concern that with the changing nature of society, there would be a different kind of interest in environmental stewardship that needs to be adapted to. Involvement of younger volunteers is something all of the executives agreed on but gaining their interest and long-term volunteer support would be a challenge.

The membership had more to say on the relevancy of SAPAA as an organization — key to this is the notion of a volunteer community that SAPAA creates for the stewards.

Some areas for improvement were listed as improvement to the stewardship reporting system, more use of social media sites such as Facebook for sharing information on, staff to continue to keep up the connections of the volunteer network, more newsletters, and more involvement in conferences and get-togethers to allow for more networking.

G. Strengths & Weaknesses

1. Focus on Local Involvement

SAPAA 2.0 highlights a strong focus on stewardship and support, with safety, education and communication at the forefront. Furthermore, its current priorities are beneficial to its main focus of environmental protection as a whole. However, SAPAA 2.0 lacks mention of a broad base beyond the stewards, such as a community connection with more of the locals of the areas. *The incorporation of locals further into the stewardship as a whole may be supportive in adding local knowledge, history or context to the areas that may be unknown to SAPAA as an organization doing visits.* This could also benefit volunteer recruitment in the long run.

2. Visibility and Engagement

SAPAA 2.0 does look at education and knowledge with a local focus to support those in the area protecting the lands involved, from stewards and visitors first to the public as the last priority. While this makes sense with the smaller level SAPAA has been working on currently, it does lack strength in building recognition, awareness and knowledge on a larger scale than current volunteers. *SAPAA 2.0, in order to generate excitement and energy to attract interest from other groups such as students, youth and families, should have a related section on public engagement and social networking.* This kind of work can help generate new donors and public interest, which can aid in goals of environmental protection — it can be hard to care about the mismanagement of protected areas when people don't know it's happening in the first place.

3. Volunteer Recruitment

For the transition towards SAPAA 2.0, and following comments identified within the consultation, members have identified the need to recruit more volunteers and retain said volunteers to ensure SAPAA's success in the future. With the burden of volunteering being ever amplified and changing dynamics in younger generations' volunteering habits, SAPAA needs to move towards a system that focuses on reducing that burden and easing the ability to volunteer. *By streamlining its operations, incorporating technologies, advertising sustainability and nature, and relieving the workloads of volunteers, volunteer recruitment and retainment becomes an achievable goal.*

IV. Recommendation

To aid SAPAA's further work as a non-profit, we recommend the following steps;

1. Secure Government Support for SAPAA

As SAPAA is dealing with Crown land, no alterations to the land base can be made without government permission. But as seen in the research of Canadian, American and international organizations, government support or involvement is an important part of an organization's success. Not only does the government allow for added authenticity in the eyes of the citizens, but it allows for legal and financial assistance to the organization's future endeavours, and can be a source of additional protection to a public area. One great example is the involvement of the Nature Conservancy of Canada with Halfmoon Lake Natural Area, allowing for additional protection to the location to prevent destructive behaviours on the public land and extending the area of conserved land which promotes ecological integrity.

While SAPAA may still continue as a non-profit with grants and donations, government support may be required in order to properly protect the lands themselves, and it is worth considering either continued work to regain Alberta government's involvement or look to federal support from the Government of Canada.

2. Educational Programs

The Victorian National Parks Association runs a 10- week program to educate the volunteers about their roles as well as knowledge about the natural environment around them. A similar program could have success with SAPAA in building understanding and overall knowledge. The creation of an educational program would allow the SAPAA volunteers and stewards to understand their roles and responsibilities to a higher degree, as well as allowing for the possibility for a bonding experience between the stewards that could ensure greater success in future endeavours.

In addition to this concept, SAPAA could connect with the education system at all levels, from elementary and high school to expose youth to the environment and the role of the environmental steward, and further involvement from post-secondary institutions for various purposes such as environmental studies of the areas and their natural habitats, business management and organization for SAPAA's ongoing work, and community service engagement to build interest and engagement in a network of individuals who may choose to continue to work with the organization. Adoption of Indigenous education and knowledge may also be considered as SAPAA can choose to work with Indigenous environmental stewardship groups or further work with the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta as a potential option.

3. Social Media and Community Presence

A crucial component of the success of any organization is information transfer to the public. With the advancement of electronic media, a social media presence is a key for any organization to be recognized. To this end, we believe that SAPAA should expand its online presence, especially on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. SAPAA already has a Facebook page; however, the uploaded content should be made more appealing to a wider audience, particularly younger people. Posting photos and videos of the natural areas and providing details about the areas that SAPAA is involved in could very well attract some people to SAPAA and expand its volunteer staff. The use of hashtags strategically can help as well — a common example is the #yeg for Edmonton local events, as it allows people to find them easily. In particular, inviting individuals visiting these areas themselves to share their photos and videos and tag SAPAA (#SAPAA) would build a collection of images and link back to the organization in particular. This technique is especially useful for photography and videography platforms such as Instagram a, and can be expanded on by individuals with more experience in social media management.

Furthermore, work such as setting up a table with information on SAPAA at events in different communities or collaborative projects with local environmental protection

groups may help build awareness in more diverse communities and bring more attention to SAPAA's efforts.

4. Passport to Nature/Interactive Maps

SAPAA could introduce a "Passport to Nature" for those who walk through the protected areas. The small document could contain facts, additional information and perhaps even a fun quiz or game for children and those looking to enjoy their time in nature. The document could help attract tourism as it can transform a walk or a hike into a fun adventure where the person learns a lot about the nature around them. Additionally, SAPAA could introduce interactive maps and hiking information for hikers. These interactive maps could increase the hiking experience by providing additional information about the terrain and the wildlife, so people walking in the trails could learn more about the area itself. Both the Passport of Nature and the Interactive Maps could contain information about SAPAA and what the organization does, allowing for another possibility of reaching out to the public.

While SAPAA is currently working with student groups to build better reporting websites, this work in the future may make exploring natural areas feel safer and more interesting for visitors to the areas. As not all protected areas show up with services such as Google Maps, it can be difficult to find them without clear instructions or a guide, which adds to the likelihood of individuals staying closer to home for their adventures.

V. Conclusion

Following the research and analysis of stewardship programs nationally and internationally, five key areas of program development were identified:

- Training and education of stewards are often provided, and supplemental manuals and troubleshooting reports ease workloads.
- The use of apps and online platforms engages visitors and provides information and entertainment to guide their journeys.
- Centralized data collection streamlines information access and allows stewards to collectively solve problems and identify similar issues.
- The inclusion of Indigenous communities and knowledge facilitates community and brings new volunteers with differing perspectives and knowledge bases.
- The use of flagship species allows stewards to focus their conservation effort on the most endangered species, reducing the workloads for volunteers and bringing benefits to the broader ecosystem.

To this end, our team recommends the following to build on the current SAPAA 2.0:

1. The return of government support for SAPAA in some capacity to aid with continued stewardship of the land in the future,
2. The implementation of an educational program for interest and engagement from academic institutions and building support from young individuals,
3. A more developed social media presence with a focus on photography or videography to build engagement and support/donations
4. The introduction of a passport to nature and/or interactive maps to aid those travelling through the protected areas.

Our team strongly believes in the aforementioned recommendations for the ongoing success of SAPAA. In implementing our proposed suggestions, we believe SAPAA can further engage with a broader audience than currently, and can begin to build up more long-term engagement from Albertans. These suggestions should allow SAPAA to have more success in awareness overall, engagement from the student and young adult environmental community, and more potential volunteers or donors to engage with the work SAPAA does.

VI. Appendices

Canada

Stewardship Centre for British Columbia

<https://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/about-scbc/>

Stewardship Centre for British Columbia (Strengthening Stewardship)

<https://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/programs/strengthening-stewardship/>

BC Lake Stewardship Society (Programs)

<https://www.bclss.org/programs>

BC Lake Stewardship Society (Lakekeepers Manual)

<https://www.bclss.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/LakeKeepers-Manual-FINAL-July-4-2022-reduced.pdf>

Coastal First Nations (Governance)

<https://coastalfirstnations.ca/our-stewardship/coastal-stewardship-network/governance/>

Coastal First Nations (Coastal Guardian Watchmen)

<https://coastalfirstnations.ca/our-stewardship/coastal-guardian-watchmen/>

Coastal First Nations (Regional Monitoring System)

<https://coastalfirstnations.ca/our-stewardship/coastal-stewardship-network/regional-monitoring-system/>

Collaboration Stewardship Framework (British Columbia Government)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/collaborative-stewardship-bc/collaborative-stewardship-framework>

Stewards of Saskatchewan

<https://www.naturesask.ca/what-we-do/stewards-of-saskatchewan>

Stewards of Saskatchewan (Steward Resources)

<https://www.naturesask.ca/resources/resources-for-stewards>

Canadian Wilderness Stewardship Program (Manitoba Chapter)

<https://cpaws.org/our-work/the-canadian-wilderness-stewardship-program/>

Canadian Wilderness Stewardship Program (Empowering Manitoba's Youth)

<https://cpawsmb.org/canadian-wilderness-stewardship-program/#:~:text=The%20Canadian%20Wilderness%20Stewardship%20Program.protecting%20Canada%27s%20land%20and%20waters>

Alberta Fish and Game Volunteer Stewardship

<https://afga.org/271-2/>

Alberta Fish and Game Volunteer Stewardship (Stewardship Manual)

[https://www.afga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/volunteerstewardshipmanual.p
df](https://www.afga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/volunteerstewardshipmanual.pdf)

Alberta Parks (Stewards)

[https://www.albertaparks.ca/albertaparksca/about-parks/alberta-parks-partnershi
ps/volunteering/stewards/#:~:text=AlbertaParks.ca,-Visit%20Our%20Parks&text=
Stewards%20share%20an%20interest%20in.in%20more%20than%20130%20sit
es](https://www.albertaparks.ca/albertaparksca/about-parks/alberta-parks-partnerships/volunteering/stewards/#:~:text=AlbertaParks.ca,-Visit%20Our%20Parks&text=Stewards%20share%20an%20interest%20in.in%20more%20than%20130%20sites)

Junction Creek Stewardship Committee

<https://junctioncreek.com/about-us/>

Junction Creek Stewardship Committee (Youth Council)

<https://junctioncreek.com/junction-creek-youth-council-2023-24/>

Nature Trust of New Brunswick

<https://www.naturetrust.nb.ca/en/who-are-we>

Nature Trust of New Brunswick (History and Programs)

<https://www.naturetrust.nb.ca/en/our-history>

Nature Trust of New Brunswick (Passport to Nature)

<https://www.naturetrust.nb.ca/en/passport-to-nature>

Quebec Labrador Foundation

<https://qlf.org/programs/stewardship/>

Les Amis De La Montagne

<https://www.lemontroyal.qc.ca/fr/notre-mission-et-role>

Les Amis De La Montagne (Recreation and Events)

<https://www.lemontroyal.qc.ca/fr/activites-de-groupe>

North America

Alaska Wildlife Alliance

<https://www.akwildlife.org/>

Alaska Wildlife Alliance (Strategic Plan)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bc75d83e4afe931ade4f0d8/t/5f977e8386fe6937c4292d92/1603763917765/Strategic+Plan_Final.pdf

Washington Conservation Corps

<https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/jobs-at-ecology/washington-conservation-corps>

California Department of Fish and Wildlife: Gray Lodge Wildlife Area

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Lands/Places-to-Visit/Gray-Lodge-WA#11638162-volunteering>

The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) of the U.S. Forest Service

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/forest-stewardship/program>

The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) of the U.S. Forest Service (Strategic Plan)

https://www.fs.usda.gov/spf/coop/library/fsp_strategicplan.pdf

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

<https://www.allianceforthebay.org/>

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (Strategic Plan)

<https://www.allianceforthebay.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Strategic-Plan-20>

Following the research and analysis of stewardship programs nationally and internationally, five key areas of program development were identified:

- Training and education of stewards are often provided, and [23-2028.pdf](#)

International

Victorian Parks Association

<https://vnpa.org.au/>

Australian Government Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/>

Conservation Volunteers of New Zealand

<https://conservationvolunteers.co.nz/>