

# THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

## PROGRAM HELPS PROTECT ALBERTA LAKES, WATERWAYS

With the Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program, the province has stepped up its efforts to protect lakes and other water bodies from being invaded by species like zebra and quagga mussels. And in the last two years, the province has become a leader in preventing these harmful aquatic invasive species.

"We've managed to mobilize with very few dedicated resources and gain huge momentum and support," says Kate Wilson, aquatic invasive species specialist with Alberta's Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD).

"This year we opened 12 watercraft inspections and passed legislation to provide for a more robust program."

The AIS program has also held an aquatic invasive species summit with people from all over the world, monitored more than 70 water bodies for invasive mussels and launched a "clean, drain, dry your boat" campaign. The program has received "a massive amount" of public support, Wilson says.

"We are capitalizing on an opportunity to prevent harmful aquatic invasive species that threaten our environment, economy, and communities before it's too late," Wilson says. "This is one of the greatest threats to freshwater resources."

While it's led by ESRD, the program is only made possible with the co-operation and



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collaboration of government departments and external partners. These include justice and solicitor general, agriculture and rural development, the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency (AEMERA), the Alberta Irrigation

Projects Association, Alberta Invasive Species Council, Alberta Lake Management Society, Alberta Summer Villages Association, WPACs, stewardship groups, and others.

"Being a finalist for the award is an honour and a testament to the power of partner-

ships," Wilson says. "I think award programs like this are an outstanding way to recognize groups, projects and achievements that are innovative, collaborative, and go above and beyond. People need more good news stories — they are out there."

## Network connects people and nature

When it started in 2002, the Camrose Wildlife and Stewardship Society (CWSS), a volunteer-based organization, wanted to raise awareness about green space stewardship through community-based, weekly summer interpretive events and speakers.

Then CWSS started adding high-profile stewardship activities, research projects, and an annual wildlife festival.

In 2014, the project graduated from awareness to action when the City of Camrose adopted a municipal green space master plan. The document will help integrate environmental responsibility into the city's operations and guide the allocation and development of parks in Camrose. CWSS helps deliver the Wildlife and Greenspace Stewardship Project, a green space network that enhances community values and quality of life for people who live in Camrose.

The CWSS demonstrates how a grassroots organization can help local governments

achieve a vision of creating unique, desirable, and sustainable communities.

"Both ecological and social research grounded this project since its inception," says Glen Hvenegaard, a professor of environmental science and geography at the University of Alberta, Augustana campus in Camrose.

For example, promoting enhanced management of green space and all wildlife species, especially its flagship species, the purple martin population has grown twentyfold since 2002.

"For purple martin conservation, data loggers were attached to locally-reared birds, allowing us to identify migration and wintering areas," Hvenegaard says.

Adding the technical component increased the project's profile, increased civic pride and political support for further local action.

Being a finalist for the Emerald Awards is "a pat on the back for the hard work to con-



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nect people and nature," Hvenegaard says. "People working on these kinds of projects need to receive positive feedback about their actions."

He says it's important to celebrate environ-

mental achievements because it provides examples of activities across the province for others to learn about and implement in their own communities.

"Alberta is doing amazing work."