

Eastern Irrigation District Wildlife Guide - 2024



Welcome To The Eastern Irrigation District

The Eastern Irrigation District (EID) maintains its administrative office in the town of Brooks. The district encompasses an area of approximately 600,000 Hectares (1.5 million acres) bounded by the Red Deer River to the north east and the Bow River to the south west. In the early 1900's the irrigation system was constructed to divert water from the Bow River to the semi-arid landscape creating an oasis in the desert. Today the EID delivers water to irrigate over 121,000 Hectares (300,000 acres) of privately owned farmland and retains ownership of close to 240,000 Hectares (600,000 acres) of mostly native prairie rangeland.

Agricultural production was the driving force behind the creation of the irrigation project but along with it came a new diversity of wildlife species living in habitats created by willow growth in canal seepage areas and spill water marshes. The EID strives to manage its water and land resources with a multi-use approach, fulfilling the district's mandate to provide water to the irrigation farmers while at the same time taking into account wildlife habitat requirements and the recreational opportunities of the area.

Public Access Guidelines

The Eastern Irrigation District includes within its boundary the majority of the County of Newell. Almost all the land within the EID is privately owned with the district being the largest landowner. Public access is generally permitted on the EID community pastures, but certain guidelines are to be followed:

1. DO NOT DISTURB LIVESTOCK. No public access near cattle.
2. All automobiles MUST stay on established roads or designated routes where posted. No exceptions. No off-highway vehicles.
3. Hunting and fishing is generally permitted on EID owned community pastures during the legal recreational season by individuals in possession of the appropriate recreational licenses. NO HUNTING PERMITTED NEAR LIVESTOCK.
4. Leave gates as you find them.
5. No fires permitted. Extreme caution must be used to prevent grass fires. EID lands may be closed to public access during high fire hazard conditions.
6. No camping permitted except in designated campgrounds.
7. Pets must be supervised and kept under control at all times.
8. OBEY ALL SIGNS. Some areas may have designated routes, some areas may be foot access only, or in some cases have temporary closures to public access.
9. All watercraft must be registered with EID's Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program and follow approved prevention procedures. Only launch trailered watercraft from approved launches.

In many areas of the EID, the land is under private, non-EID ownership and the landowner's permission must be obtained for

access. The majority of the irrigation ditches within the EID are on these private lands and the landowner has control of public access to these waterways.

The Eastern Irrigation District manages its land and water with a multi-use philosophy which benefits everyone. By adhering to these few simple access rules on EID owned lands and asking for permission to access other private lands you are investing in the future. **Remember access to these private lands is a privilege not a right. Please "Use Respect" and enjoy your visit to the EID. Failure to abide by these rules and guidelines will result in loss of access to EID lands & reservoirs. Public access to EID private lease land is at the discretion of the leaseholder.**

Outdoor Recreation

Camping

Within the EID there are many camping opportunities including; Kinbrook Island Provincial Park, Dinosaur Provincial Park and World Heritage Site, Tillebrook Provincial Park, Crawling Valley Campground, Rolling Hills Reservoir Campground, Emerson Bridge Campground and Bow City Campground. Most of these camping areas are adjacent to water bodies providing opportunities such as swimming, boating, windsurfing, sailing, waterskiing, fishing and wildlife viewing.

Wildlife Viewing

Wildlife viewing is fast becoming a very popular pastime in the area. The EID includes a variety of landscapes from native prairie, to wetlands, to farmland, to river valleys. With the different landscapes comes a diversity of wildlife species including birds of prey, shorebirds, songbirds, mammals and a number of different reptiles. The bird watching enthusiasts should pick up the EID bird checklist including 270 species that may be found in the district. There are a number of sites that have been developed with interpretive trails and viewing platforms. Wildlife viewing sites to consider in your visit to the EID are; Kinbrook Marshes, Interlake Buck for Wildlife and the Hatchery Marsh.

Fishing

Many of the irrigation reservoirs found in the area support excellent fish populations. Anglers can expect to catch Northern Pike, Walleye and Whitefish in most of the larger bodies of water. Some of the more popular fishing spots are Crawling Valley Reservoir, Lake Newell Reservoir, Rolling Hills Reservoir and Tilley B Reservoir. Please check the Alberta summary of sport fishing regulations for catch limits and restrictions.

The area rivers also provide fishing opportunities with the Bow River producing catches of Northern Pike, Walleye, Whitefish, some Trout and Sturgeon. Catches in the Red Deer River include Northern Pike, Walleye, Sauger and Goldeye.

Hunting

The EID has excellent game bird populations and is widely known for its pheasant hunting. Pheasants can be found throughout the cultivated areas but it must be remembered that the majority of these lands are privately owned and permission must be sought for hunting access. There are a number of habitat properties

Range 18 Range 17 Range 16 Range 15 Range 14

Township 26

Township 25

Township 24

Township 23

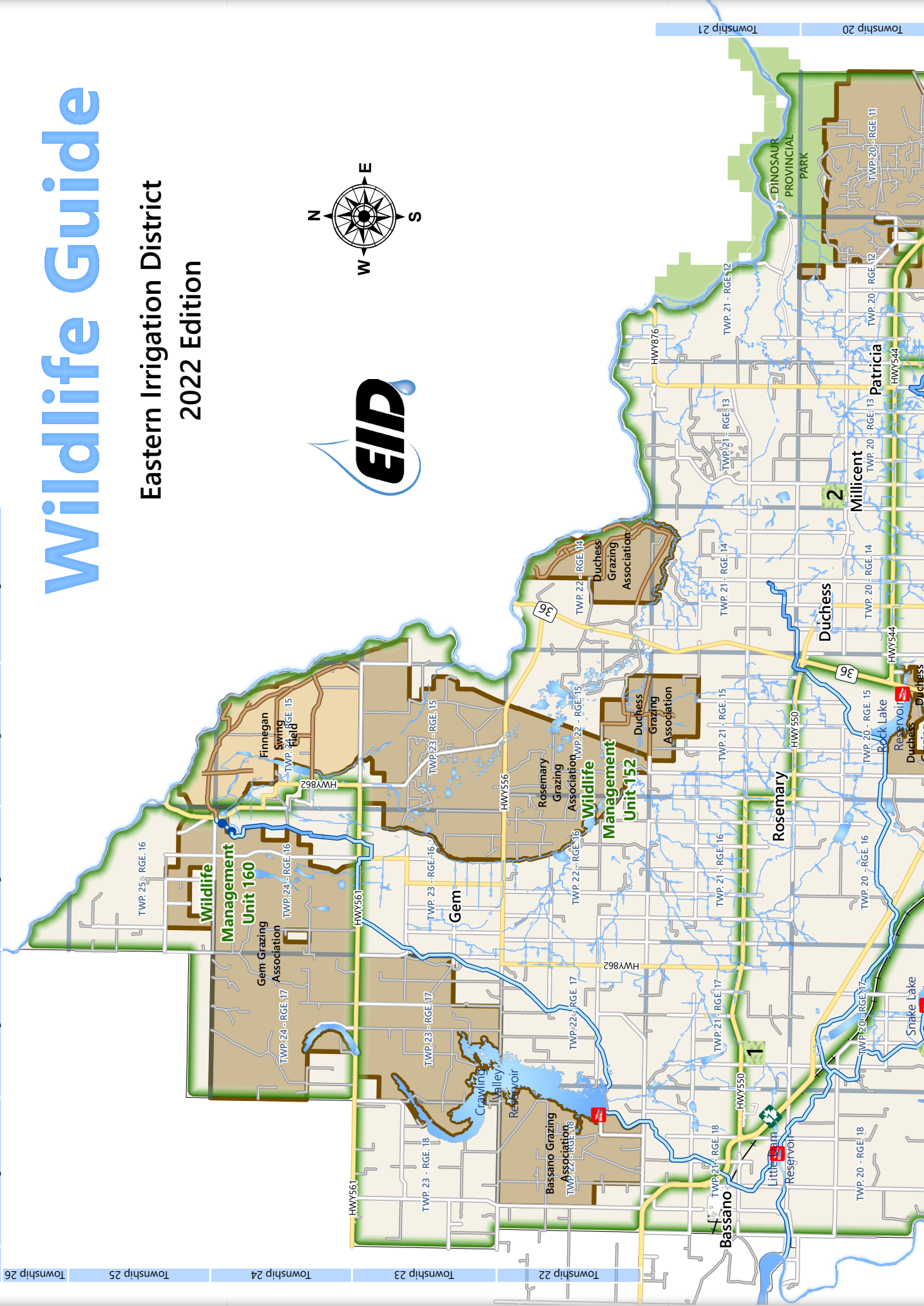
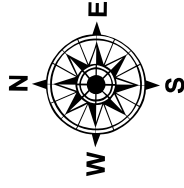
Township 22

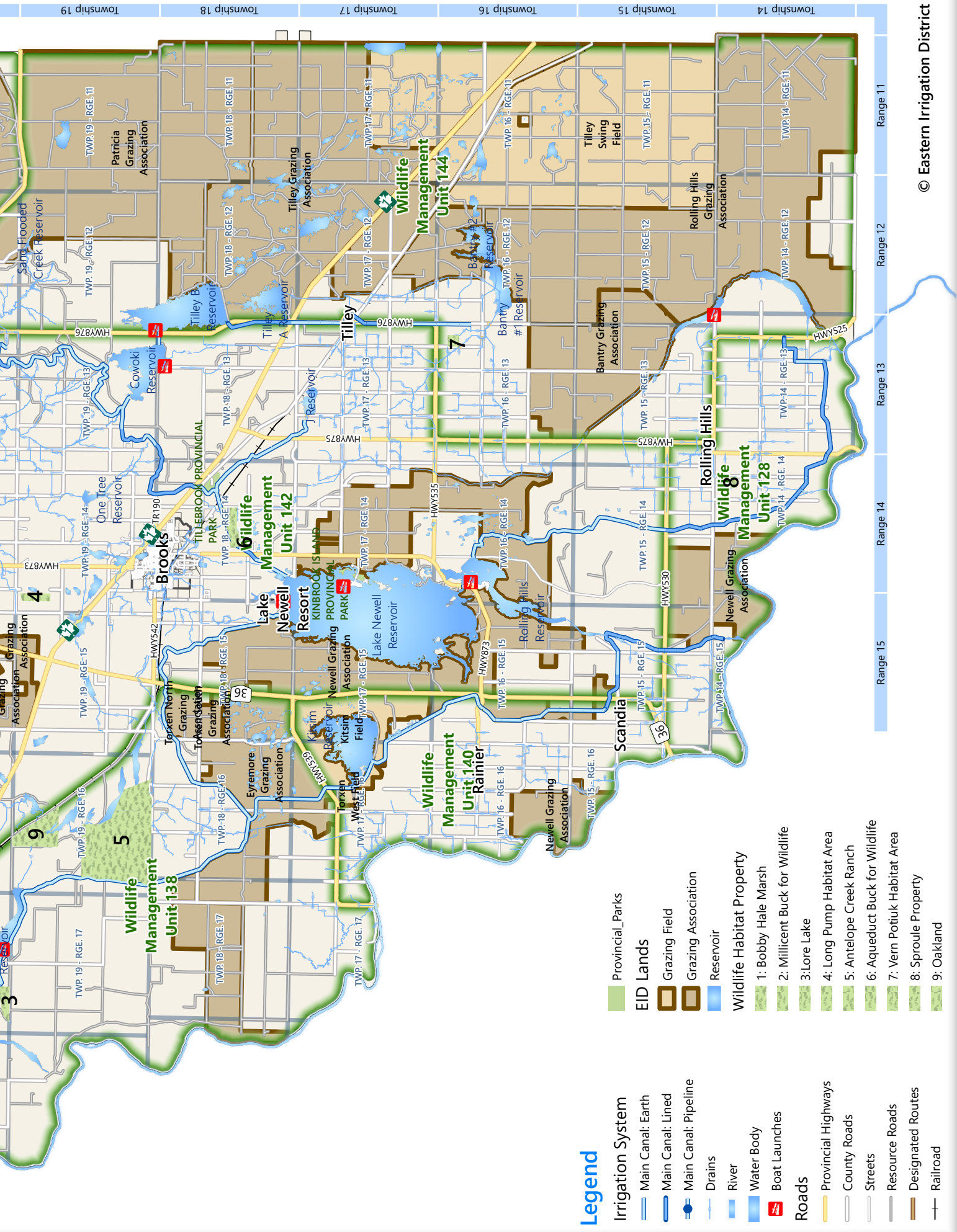
Township 21

Township 20

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within these cultivated regions which are managed for wildlife and foot access hunting is permitted. Many of these properties are pheasant release sites as well. (Please refer to map for these locations). Other upland game birds found within the district include Gray Partridge and Sharp-tailed Grouse. There are also excellent waterfowl hunting opportunities within the EID, with both pass shooting over the Ducks Unlimited wetlands and irrigation reservoirs and stubble shoots in the farm lands.

Big game animals found in the area include Pronghorn Antelope, White-tailed Deer, Mule Deer, Moose and Elk. Hunting for these ungulates is restricted to special license draws with the exception of antlered White-tailed deer which is a general license. The highest ungulate populations are generally found along the river drainages, although good numbers can often be found in much of the farming areas. Antelope may be found throughout the majority of the prairie rangelands.

Wetland projects:

Almost eighty years of working closely with Ducks Unlimited Canada, with the cooperation of provincial wildlife managers has seen the creation of over 70 wetland habitat projects within the district's boundaries totaling in excess of 15,000 Hectares (37,500 acres) of marsh lands.

EID PHD:

"Partners in Habitat Development" is a habitat initiative based on the partnership of many diverse organizations and the agricultural community working together to establish and enhance wildlife habitat within the cultivated areas of the EID.

Since the PHD's inception in 1998, there have been over 500 projects completed which have included the planting of almost 1,000,000 trees and shrubs, the installation of over 180 kilometers of fence to control livestock access to habitat sites, the development of 42 wetland projects and the seeding of 60 hectares of dense nesting cover. The PHD program has become very popular with the regions landowners and has had a positive impact on the area's wildlife resources.

Key partners involved in the EID-PHD, past and present, include: The Eastern Irrigation District, County of Newell, Agroforestry & Woodlot Extension Society, Alberta Fish & Game Association, Alberta Conservation Association, Pheasants Forever Calgary, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Brooks & District Fish & Game Association, Brooks Pheasant Festival, Lakeside Farm Industries, and the Crop Diversification Center South.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

The Eastern Irrigation District (EID) is in the business of water.

One of the largest threats to that business is the introduction of Aquatic Invasive Species. Many aquatic invasive species such as Zebra or Quagga Mussels (*Dreissena* sp.), European Common Reed (*Phragmites australis* subsp. *australis*), Eurasian Milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) or Flowering Rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) are able to colonize a water body so rapidly and so densely as to negatively impact water conveyance, recreation and habitat.

The EID contains 13 irrigation reservoirs, over 4000 kilometers of canals, pipelines & drains and tens of thousands of water control structures. The introduction of aquatic invasive species could severely compromise the EID's operations and costs millions of dollars per year to mitigate.

In 2018, the EID initiated an Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program. All boaters wishing to access EID reservoirs must follow approved prevention procedures and complete a watercraft information form stating they will not knowingly spread aquatic invasive species. As part of the program, trailered watercraft must only be launched from approved boat launches and boaters must check in with the campgrounds, marina, or EID office before launching. Canoes, kayaks, and other non-trailered watercraft may continue to be launched at random locations, but the boaters are still required to check in with the campgrounds, marina, or EID office prior to launching.

Please clean, drain and dry your watercraft before moving to a new water body and do not release garden or aquarium plants or pets into the wild.



DON'T LET THEM CATCH A RIDE

CLEAN + DRAIN + DRY YOUR BOAT

As an Alberta angler, you are always looking for that next great fishing experience, both inside and outside of the province. This can vastly increase the risk of moving aquatic invasive species as they hitch a ride on boats, trailers, and angling equipment. Invasive species, such as zebra and quagga mussels, can collapse fisheries, potentially taking away new fishing experiences or the next big catch. They can also damage boats and personal property and cost millions in repairs to vital infrastructure.

Protect Alberta waters and local fisheries by keeping our waters free of invasive species. **CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY** your angling equipment as well as your boat every time you take it out of the water.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON INVASIVE SPECIES, CALL:
1-855-336-BOAT (2628)

Alberta Government

Please "Use Respect" and ask for permission to access private lands.

Report a Poacher Toll Free (24hrs a day)

1-800-642-3800

We hope you enjoy your visit to our area and invite you to return in the future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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