



Nicole Bushfield, on her family's decision to sign the largest conservation easement with DUC in Saskatchewan: "It's great to have opportunities to continue doing what I love and enhance grasslands at the same time."

Prairie pride

FAMILY COMMITS TO RECORD-BREAKING CONSERVATION AGREEMENT IN SASKATCHEWAN

By Donna Boyle

Saskatchewan cattle producer Nicole Bushfield strides across a vast, undulating field of grass before stopping to share a wetland view with a group of visitors. She is proud of the land, and the legacy her family – the Lambs – is leaving future generations.

In December 2015, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) signed its largest conservation easement (CE) ever in Saskatchewan with the Lamb family. The agreement covers 3,282 acres (1,328 hectares) southeast of Saskatoon in the Allan Hills area where the family runs an operation of around 350 cattle.

"It's a big deal for us too," says Bushfield. "The hills really are pristine. So that was one thing I was happy of – a legacy our family will get to make – is that it will get to be protected."

Bushfield's father, John Lamb, purchased the land in 2005. In 2006, he contacted DUC's Saskatoon office and was introduced to conservation programs specialist Richard McBride.

"We met for the forage program where they [DUC] provided some financial assistance to put the cultivated land into grassland," says Lamb. "It worked well for us. It was right along our lines of thinking that we wanted to turn this land into a forage production property and they were keen to help us."

Ten years later, the Lambs signed their CE with DUC.

"There's really good synergies between Ducks' programs and our business and personal objectives," says Bushfield.

The easements provide financial incentives for the Lambs, allowing them to purchase more land in the area, which will also have CEs attached. DUC in turn, works with the Lambs to ensure that wetlands will not be drained or developed.

This land in the Allan Hills hosts a high density of waterfowl, estimated by DUC at 40 to 60 pairs per square mile.

"It's amazing to see the variety and the diversity of the duck species," says Bushfield. "There's lots of elk and moose in the area, too."

Growing up, Lamb enjoyed hunting sharp-tailed grouse with his father, brother and cousins. "I got a love for the prairie there and those fall days, wind in the face, sun on your back and being out in the open and it was always fun spotting the geese," says Lamb. The cattle operation, he notes, lets his kids experience the prairie landscape in their own way.

The Lambs intend to enjoy the beauty of nature in the Allan Hills, and their farming lifestyle, for a long time.

"You spend some time in the hills, and see how special it is. It is something I'd like my kids to be able to enjoy some day and their kids, too," says Bushfield.