

Who is the ERA?

Vision

To promote a new ERA in watershed thinking where well managed human activities result in healthy ecosystems and a robust economy.

Mission

Operating since 2011, ERA is a community-based water group that aims to connect people to the Elk River ensuring it is drinkable, fishable and swimmable for future generations.

Guiding Principles

- Stimulate conversation, share information and facilitate community input to encourage sustainable water decision-making in the Elk Valley.
- Promote a new ERA in watershed thinking by coordinating a community voice to contribute to watershed planning and management activities, regulatory processes and other regional water initiatives.
- Bring together diverse points of view and offer a safe place to dialogue about the Elk River.
- Unite not divide.

Approach

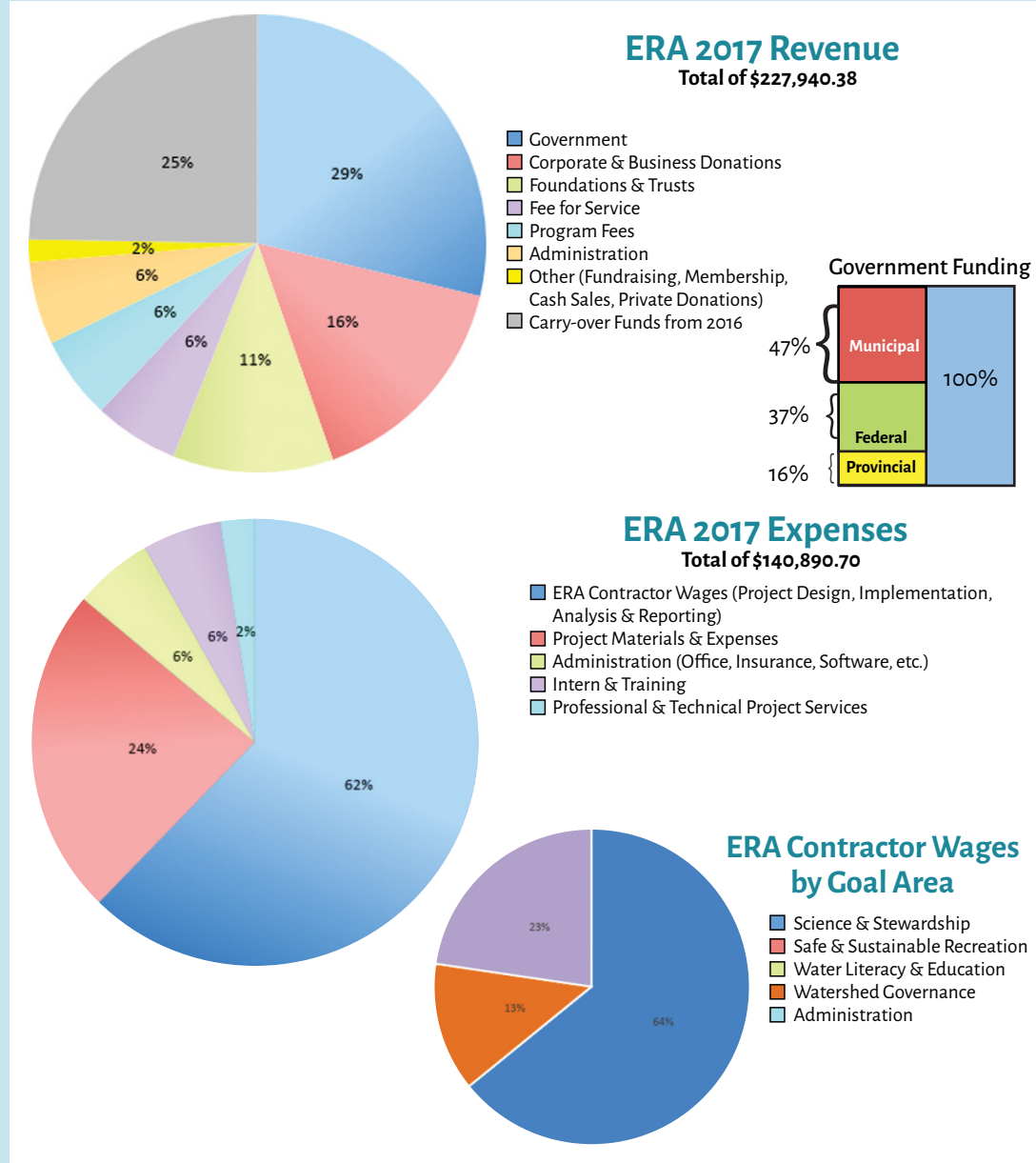
ERA uses education and outreach programs that raise watershed literacy, informs sustainable water decision-making and collects science to prioritize community involvement that protects, enhances and restores aquatic ecosystems.

4 Goals

- Using **education and outreach programs**, residents know where their water comes from, how it is used and ways to keep it healthy for future generations.
- Collect watershed **science** and data to prioritize community **stewardship** action that protects, enhances and restores aquatic ecosystems.
- Convene and facilitate community input to encourage sustainable **watershed decision-making**.
- Promote **safe and sustainable recreational use** of the Elk River.



ERA by the Numbers – 2017 Pie Charts



Thank you to our funders and partners:

Canada | BRITISH COLUMBIA | Regional District of East Kootenay | FERNIE CITY OF FERNIE BRITISH COLUMBIA | SPARWOOD

CBT, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation-Public Conservation Assistance Fund, BC Wildlife Federation, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Elk Valley Thrift Store Society, Sparwood Futures Society

Teck Coal, Garrett Ready Mix, FR Rentals LTD., East Kootenay Community Credit Union, BC Hydro, Canyon Raft Company, The Gear Hub, Elk River Guiding Company, Save On More Foods, Independent Foods, Align Surveys LTD., Canfor, CanWel, Marie Louise Poltzin (VAST), MacHydro

Elkford ATV Club, Sparwood Fish and Wildlife Association, Elkford Rod and Gun Club, Wildsight Elk Valley Branch, Fernie Tourism, Kootenay Conservation Partnership, Columbia Basin Watershed Network, College of the Rockies, The Fernie Academy, School District # 5



Elk River Watershed Alliance (ERA) Annual Report 2017

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Executive Director Summary of the Year 2017

2017 marks ERAs fifth anniversary of full operation as an independent, not-for-profit society. The traditional anniversary gift for 5 years is wood, which symbolizes the growth and strength of ERAs strategic and collaborative effort toward a healthy watershed.

Growing organically, driven by the talent and energy of contractors, board members, volunteers, funders and partners, ERA functions as a collective to deliver benefits to the many branches or creeks and communities or main stem in our watershed. Winning the Fernie Chamber of Commerce ‘Spirit of Fernie’ award in 2017, this honour recognizes that people power fuels ERA's humble efforts and represents the value that our actions must protect both aquatic health and a robust economy.

ERA's diverse projects enable us to learn together from our successes and challenges. Always improving, ERA strives for stability to stand on our own and confidence to lean on others when we need help.

Wood, like watersheds, conveys this elixir through the trunk or main stem. Water is the life-blood of all living things and it must be protected for future generations and all life. The energy inspiring ERA fuels good decision making in the Elk River watershed and water continues to unite us as we strive to construct a sustainable future.

PHOTO:
LA, Allie and Beth
in office

Thank you to the ERA Board of Directors for their wisdom, encouragement and dedication as champions for a healthy watershed:

- Stella Swanson (Chair) Director – Science and Collaborative Decision Making
- Levi Strom (Vice-Chair) Director – Youth
- Roxane Esch (Secretary/Treasurer) Director – River Recreation
- Mike Bennett Director-At-Large
- Tyler Carson Director – Commercial Fishing
- Carla Fraser Director – Industry Coal
- Bob Livsey Director – Fernie Nature Club
- Lynn Muller Director – Elk River Businesses
- Matt Noseworthy Director – Commercial Rafting
- John Poirier Director – Fishing
- Mike Tomney Director – Education
- Ron Lentz Director – Community Based Water Monitoring

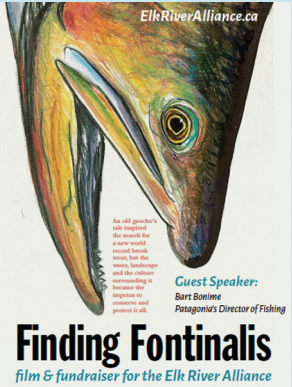
Lee-Anne Walker, Executive Director (2011 to present)



ERA Programs and Projects

1. Education & Outreach

- Support classroom educators to deliver **CBT Know Your Watershed** in Fernie/Sparwood/Elkford assisting with stream science and coordination/delivery of student action projects.
- Delivered fully subscribed **Elk Watershed Discovery Camps** for one week in July and August with 36 youth 10-14 years old. Due to popularity and request, ERA is offering a third week in 2018!
- Mining Week** collaborated with Teck Coal since 2014 delivering curriculum based school programs to 21 classes and 500 students grades 3-6 in the Elkford, Sparwood and Fernie.
- Elk River Raft Race** donated the revenue of \$1800 to the Elk Watershed Discovery Camp for the second year in a row.
- Submitted twelve articles to the local media **The Free Press, Elk Valley Herald, E-Know, Fernie.com**.
- Produced and distributed electronically the ERA **Current Newsletter**.
- ERA contractor Beth Millions became BC Wetlandkeeper certified at the week long BC Wildlife Federation Wetlands Institute. She certified 10 new **Wetlandkeeper stewards** through the BC Wildlife Federation 2½ day course offered at the College of the Rockies fall 2017.
- Established 14 stations for the **Elk Watershed Geocache** from the Elk River headwaters to its mouth, accessed through geocaching.com. It proved to be a popular family activity and will be better promoted in 2018 through Tourism Fernie.
- Installed **Alexander Creek Interpretive Kiosk** highlighting 5-years of community based water data collected and ERA's bioengineering, streamside restoration initiative on a 50 m section of Alexander Creek.
- Hosted in partnership with Patagonia **Finding Fontinalis Film** as an education and fundraising event raising over \$2000 for community-based water monitoring, and recruited new Streamkeeper volunteers for low flow monitoring.
- Hosted **For the Love of Rivers** presentation with Kurt Fausch, author and fish/wildlife/conservation biology professor from Colorado State University.



2. Science & Stewardship

- Community Based Water Monitoring** – Collecting High/Low Flow data using Streamkeepers, SHIM & CABIN protocols on Lizard (since 2011) and Alexander (since 2012) Creeks. Looking at adding Boivin Creek in Elkford in 2018.
- Beginning the analysis and communication of ERA's community-based water data to decision makers and community through the new program **Making Community Water Data Matter**.
- Installed 2 pond levelers at **West Fernie and McDougall Wetlands in Fernie**. Wrapped trees to reduce beaver felling. Developing 3 interpretive signs and western painted turtle habitat improvements as part of ERAs **Accepting Beavers and Enhancing Wetlands** initiative to be installed Spring 2018.
- Narrated 3-minute **walk through the Ancient Morrissey Cottonwood Trail** video for Nature Conservancy of Canada promoted through their website. View at this link - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ob_KQwsrXPY
- Removed several **rock weirs on Coal Creek** with 18 youth in August.
- Continued to monitor and enhance streamside restoration projects on **Lizard & Alexander Creeks**. Implemented 2 pilot enhancement prescriptions to control reed canary grass at the **Sparwood Wetland**.
- Continue to monitor the **Fernie Heronry at the McDougall Wetland**.



3. Watershed Decision-Making

- Participated as a speaker, presenters and facilitators at the Living Lakes Canada/Columbia Basin **Water Data Hub: Cracking the Code in 3-D** in Invermere fall 2017. Working on implementing the recommendations as part of the committee in 2018.
- Convening and facilitating the **Elk River Flood Committee** promoting a collaborative and coordinated approach to the recommendations from the Elk River Flood Strategy, 5 years after the destructive 2013 flood.
- Participated in the **Elk Valley Cumulative Effects Management Framework** Working Group (since 2012) and the launch of its first products at an open house in Fernie and stakeholder workshop in Elkford.
- Represented environmental non-government organizations and a founding member of the Steering Committee for **Teck Community of Interest**.
- Attended **CBT Climate Action workshops in Fernie and Elkford** to identify priority initiatives for mitigation and adaptation projects in the Elk Valley. Represented community interests at **environmental assessment open houses for Bingay (Centremount) coal development**.
- Made **presentation to District of Sparwood** to partner on constructed wetlands to treat urban stormwater before discharge to the Elk River.

Photo

Photo

4. Sustainable & Safe River Recreation

- Developed and distributed 500 copies of **Elk River Map Guide** highlighting watershed facts, hazards, put-in/take-outs, fishing friendly and safety tips.
- Coordinated the 7th annual **Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up** in Elkford, Sparwood and Fernie. Due to increased toileting waste at public put working toward improving recreational river amenities for the Elk River.
- Developed and installed **interpretive and directional signage, and improved public parking and new access trail to Silver Springs**.

