
ELK RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I start by thanking our board members, volunteers, and supporters for their commitment, and especially our staff who enabled us to adapt and continue to work safely in a pandemic environment. This year we advanced along our path to long-term sustainability. We adopted a new Strategic Plan with mission and program goals centered on our values and niche in the Elk Valley. We strengthened our organization including working to secure a broad and sustainable funding base and cultivating a dedicated group of employees and volunteers. We have a strong Board with knowledgeable members representing our community. In turn, the Board was excited to appoint Chad Hughes as our Executive Director, with Beth focusing on field projects. We are in active discussion with not-for-profit and corporate partners to establish the Elk Valley Watershed Monitoring Collaborative to track the health of the watershed.

I want to thank the individual, local business, government, and corporate donors for their confidence in the ERA.

Yours for a healthy river,

George Greene, Chair



A healthy river ecosystem that sustains the Elk Valley for present and future generations

- 13** SITES ON 7 TRIBUTARIES OVER THE ELK RIVER WATERSHED MONITORED. THIS INCLUDED 50 WATER SAMPLES, 25 BENTHIC INVERTEBRATE SAMPLES AND THE DEPLOYMENT OF 13 AUTOMATED LOGGING DEVICES
- 100** BAGS OF WEEDS AND GARBAGE COLLECTED BY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS OVER THE YEAR THROUGHOUT THE ELK RIVER WATERSHED
- 130+** COMMUNITY MEMBERS VOLUNTEERED IN SOCIALLY DISTANCED ACTIVITIES WITH THE ELK RIVER ALLIANCE DURING 2020
- 550+** VOLUNTEER HOURS GIVEN TO WATER MONITORING, WEED PULLS AND RIVER CLEANUP ACTIVITIES
- 650+** WATER SAMPLES COLLECTED FROM COAL CREEK FOR SEDIMENT ANALYSIS. A TEAM OF VOLUNTEERS WORKED DAY AND NIGHT, RAIN AND SHINE OVER 8 MONTHS TO PRODUCE A COMPREHENSIVE DATASET OF SEDIMENT LEVELS & STREAMFLOW

PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

Community-Based Water Monitoring



Community-based Water Monitoring was limited to low flow sampling in the fall of 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions, but expanded from Lizard, Alexander, Boivin, and Coal Creeks to include Morrissey Creek. Due to Covid-19, volunteer input was limited to ensure the safety of community members. ERA participated in a STREAM e-DNA sampling trial through Living Lakes Canada (LLC) which involved training and benthic invertebrate sampling. 2021 will see increased collaboration with industry, NGO, and government partners to develop a more comprehensive monitoring collaborative for the Elk River Watershed.

Shoreline Cleanup



A traditional shoreline cleanup was not possible in the face of Covid-19. Instead, groups in Covid 'bubbles' came out throughout the summer and fall to conduct their own 'mini cleanups'. A total of 36 Elk Valley residents turned out to clear refuse from around the Elk River and its tributaries. A grand total of 18 bags of refuse were collected, along with 14 car batteries and large pieces of scrap metal that were embedded in a bank near Elkford and fallen into the river after high water eroded that part of the bank. In 2021 we will be ready for Covid-19 restrictions and eager to get out and continue to remove garbage and invasive plants, either through mini cleanups or a regular event.

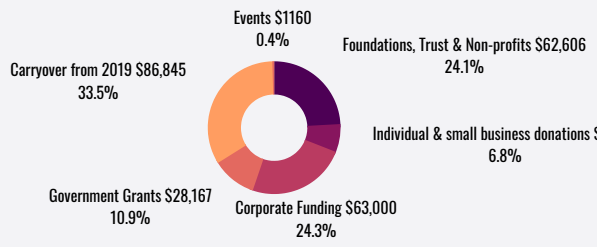
Weeds Out of our Watershed



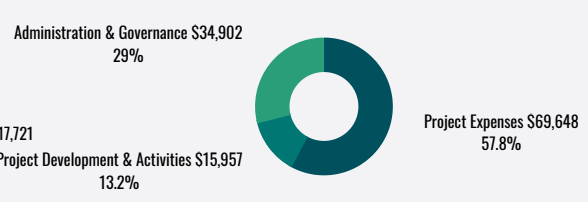
The Weeds Out of Our Watershed project saw Elk Valley and South Country community volunteers working to remove invasive plants from put-in and take-out locations along the Elk River near Elko. The project had to be modified to accommodate smaller groups, but the volunteers that came out pulled extra hard to get the task done. In total, 39 volunteers still came out and pulled 45 bags of invasive weeds from the sensitive areas. We also shared numerous posts on our Facebook page to help educate the broader community, so if you are interested in learning more about spotted knapweed, blueweed, or several other noxious invasive plants, please check out our page!

FINANCIALS

REVENUE \$259,498



EXPENSES \$120,506 *



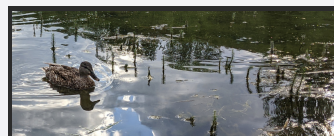
*A surplus of \$ 138,992 will be carried over to 2021 for project delivery. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, with agreement from funders, a substantial proportion of project delivery was extended for delivery in 2021.

Hydrometric Monitoring



One level logger and 12 temperature logging pendants were deployed on seven streams throughout the Elk River Watershed. Over time, the data collected will be used by biologists, climate change researchers, land managers, and industry groups to better understand the effects of climate change on the Elk River and its tributaries. In 2021, this project will be expanded to include additional high and low elevation sites within the Elk River headwaters and Elk Lakes.

Stormwater Solutions



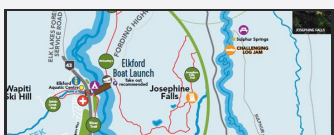
In 2020 the second phase of the Stormwater Solutions project kicked off, with a lot of prep setting us up for 2021. Several weedpulls throughout the summer removed invasive plants from the stormwater ponds around Fernie, with 26 volunteers removing 20 garbage bags of weeds. In 2021 we will be planting native aquatic vegetation around these ponds and installing three floating wetlands in Maiden Lake to improve filtration and provide greater habitat to aquatic animals. We will also be creating an educational film and installing some interpretive signs to improve water literacy and encourage community members to take steps to improve the water quality in the Elk Valley.

Sedimentation Investigations



A pilot project to investigate sedimentation on Coal Creek was launched in 2020. This included installation of a level logger, volume measurements to determine water level to discharge and water sampling. A dedicated team of volunteers collected over 650 water samples from April to October to produce a dataset detailing the levels of sediment in Coal Creek. The project will continue in 2021 to collect further data and produce a sediment monitoring protocol for other community groups. This will allow groups to produce tangible evidence of the effect of land use practices such as clear-cut logging, road development and clearing.

Elk River Map and Guide



The Elk River Map and Guide was sold at guide and gear shops around town. In 2021 the guide will continue to be available, and can also be purchased at ERA's new office location at 1111 2nd Ave.

Thank you

OUR FUNDERS

Teck Coal Limited
Columbia Basin Trust
Big Bang Bagels

Habitat Conservation Trust
Foundation • Regional District of the East Kootenay • TD Friends of the Environment Foundation • The Vancouver Foundation

Cabelas • Dickhout Family Foundation • Elk Valley Thrift Shop • Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC • Kootenay Fly Shop • Patagonia • Sharon Taylor REMAX • Swanson Environmental

BC Hydro • Canadian Tire • Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program • George Greene • Robert & Tjarda Barratt

OUR PARTNERS

Align Surveys Ltd. • BC Parks • British Columbia Water Monitoring Collaborative • Water Hub • Canyon Raft Company • City of Fernie • College of the Rockies • Columbia Basin Watershed Network • District of Elkford • District of Sparwood • East Kootenay Invasive Species Council • Elk River Guiding Company Ltd. • Elkford Secondary School • Fernie Brewing Company • Fernie Secondary School • Foothills Silviculture Inc. • Frank J Mitchell Elementary School • Independent Grocer • Isabella Dicken Elementary School • Jon Bisset • Living Lakes Canada • Lotic Environmental • Machydro • Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development • Mow and Snow • Nature Conservancy of Canada • One Water BC • Parastone • Save on Foods • Sparwood Secondary School • Swanson Environmental • The Fernie Academy • Tourism Fernie • Valley Vitals • Vast Resource Solutions • Wildsight

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Last year was undoubtedly a challenging period for the Elk River Alliance. However, with our dedicated staff and volunteers, we have adapted and restructured operations to better monitor and improve the Elk River and its watershed. A focus on long-term development has produced sustained projects with a range of industry and non-profit partners, and we are successfully re-building capacity to deliver our programming. Volunteer engagement was strong considering Covid-19, and we aim to increase the range of Covid-19 friendly volunteer opportunities. We are looking at 2021 with a renewed sense of optimism.

Chad Hughes, Executive Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS	TEAM
Chair/Treasurer	Interim Executive Director
George Greene	Chad Hughes
Vice Chair	Restoration Ecologist
Ashlee Jollymore	Beth Millions
Senior Advisor	Bookkeeper
Lee-Anne Walker	Jennifer O'Donnell
Directors	
Ayla Bennett	
Alexa Hurdal	
Nic Milligan	
Stella Swanson	

OUR NEW ADDRESS

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