

ELK RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

2018
ANNUAL
REPORT



FROM OUR CHAIR YEAR-END SUMMARY 2018

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The past year has been one of transition for the ERA. In the spring, our founder and Executive Director Lee-Anne Walker informed the Board of her intention to retire. The Board extends our heartfelt thanks to Lee-Anne for her years of passion, dedication and creativity, and wish her all the best in her retirement. The Board is determined to ensure that Lee-Anne's vision of a grassroots organization dedicated to connecting people to the Elk River lives on. We have been implementing a transition plan since Lee-Anne's announcement.

There have been challenges, the most notable of which is our continued lack of a new Executive Director, despite a concerted recruitment effort. That recruitment effort is being renewed and we hope to succeed in our search in the relatively near future. In the meantime, our contractors Ayla Bennett, Beth Millions and Brett Elmslie have shown incredible dedication and adaptability as they worked on projects, ran summer camps and special events, raised funds, and dealt with administrative requirements. We are very fortunate to now have Stephanie Hirn providing essential administrative and management support. The Board extends sincere thanks to our volunteers, funders and partners who have stayed the course with us.

I extend my sincere thanks to all of the ERA Board members who have stepped up to support our contractors, implement the transition plan, and provide direction and assistance with a wide range of activities associated with keeping ERA on track and successful.

Stella Swanson
Chair



ERA - Success by the numbers

62 MEMBERS

75 IN-STREAM VOLUNTEER HOURS
WATER MONITORING

205 KG OF GARBAGE WERE COLLECTED
FROM BANKS OF THE ELK RIVER

1600 TOTAL VOLUNTEER
HOURS IN 2018

11360 M2 OF WETLAND &
RIPARIAN AREA ENHANCED

56 YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN ELK
WATERSHED DISCOVERY CAMP

TEAM MEMBERS



Lee-Anne Walker

Founder & Senior Advisor
Past Executive Director

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."
— Margaret Mead



Allie Ferguson

Past Interim Executive
Director

"Eventually all things merge into one, and a river runs through it"
— Norman Maclean



Ayla Bennett

Program Manager,
Water & Education

"Only if we understand, will we care. Only if we care, we will help. Only if we help shall all be saved."
— Jane Goodall



Beth Millions

Program Manager,
Restoration & Stewardship

"Life is like the river, sometimes it sweeps you gently along and sometimes the rapids come out of nowhere."
— Emma Smith



Brett Elmslie

Program Coordinator,
Flood, Fish & Fish Habitat

"Nature is one of the most underutilized treasures in life. It has the power to unburden hearts and reconnect to that inner place of peace."
— Janice Anderson

PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

ACCEPTING BEAVERS AND ENHANCING WETLANDS PROJECT



This project began in 2017, starting with the installation of pond levellers in two wetlands within Fernie to help maintain healthy beaver habitat and functional wetlands while minimizing upstream flooding caused by beaver dams. Further wetlands enhancements occurred in the spring of 2018 with the installation of basking platforms and improved nesting habitat for Western Painted Turtles. These activities would not have been possible without the help of the 48 students with Wildsight's Eco-Stewards who contributed 192 volunteer hours to the project. Further educational programs have also brought 100 students from Isabella Dicken Elementary School, Frank J. Mitchell Elementary School, and The Fernie Academy to local wetlands to learn about the importance of beavers within their watershed. Three interpretive signs have been installed in wetlands around Fernie as part of this project. This project is nearing completion, but a similar project will be taking place in Hosmer in 2019.

NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA (NCC) FIORENTINO WETLAND ENHANCEMENT PROJECT NEAR HOSMER



Construction occurred in 2017, and further enhancements were completed in the spring and fall with the help of MAST students and Fernie Secondary Students through Wildsight's Know Your Watershed program. 76 Volunteers contributed a total of 210 volunteer hours to the project in 2018 planting 315 native seedlings, 325 plugs and 400 live stakes. We are currently seeking funding for further enhancements in 2019.

ELK RIVER SHORELINE CLEANUP

Our 8th Annual Cleanup of the shoreline along the Elk River in Elkford, Sparwood and Fernie was a success, despite the very cold temperatures and snow! This year volunteers also cleaned up sections of the Elk River before and after the event, including participants from Frank J. Mitchell Elementary School, Fernie Secondary School, Teck, and community volunteers. In total, 288 volunteers provided 560 volunteer hours, cleaning up 205 kg of garbage.



SPARWOOD BEAVER WETLAND ENHANCEMENT PROJECT



We are now moving into the final year of this multi-year invasive species control project intended to improve the health of the Sparwood Beaver Wetland. With the help of students and community members we have conducted several weed removal and native plant re-vegetation events since 2016. In total, 188 volunteers have contributed 625 volunteer hours to the project. In 2019 we will again partner with EKISC to host more weed pulls, and in the fall we will complete the project by removing the tarps that have been laid to control the invasive reed canary grass growth that is threatening to form a dense monoculture in the wetland and planting native vegetation in its place.

ELK RIVER MAP AND GUIDE INCLUDING GEOCACHE



The Elk River Map and Guide (completed in 2017) has been a huge success and has been flying off the shelves at stores around town. We are currently looking to make revisions to the map and are working on a reprint for the spring of 2019.

ALEXANDER CREEK SLOPE RESTORATION PROJECT



In the spring we completed the final phase of this restoration project, with 12 volunteers providing 36 volunteer hours planting 44 native plants along the upland section of the stream and reseeding with a native grass seed. We are now watching the plants continue to grow over the years, helping to stabilize a once eroded stream bank.

STORM WATER SOLUTIONS

This new project aims to develop informed strategies to reduce the negative effects of storm water on riparian ecosystems and communities in the Elk Valley. In 2019 you will see initiatives to increase public awareness and education surrounding storm water which will create an opportunity to take action in mitigating the effects of altered hydrology and decreased water quality from storm water being discharged into the Elk River.



ELK WATERSHED DISCOVERY CAMP



Since 2014, ERA has run the Elk Watershed Discovery Camp for adventurous youth who are excited to learn in the Elk Watershed. The campers get hands wet and muddy feet, exploring mountains, marshes, forests and rivers. They learn practical, hands-on skills and meet professionals who work in various environmental careers. In 2018, ERA increased the number of camps from 2 to 3 weeks, increasing outreach capacity. As well as adding *new* activities (i.e. canoeing on the Kootenay, fish dissection), ERA maintained the favourites (i.e. whitewater rafting, fly-fishing, geocaching, stand up paddle boarding, river float). In 2019, ERA will deliver 3 weeks of camp again, continuing to offer camp favourites while adding new learning opportunities.

FINANCIALS

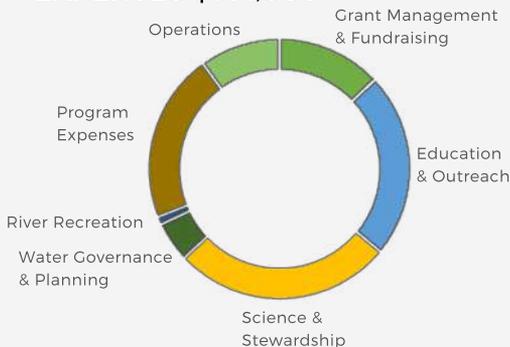
CHARITABLE STATUS

The Elk River Alliance has been granted charitable status! Now if you donate, you will receive a tax receipt. If you value the work that we do, please consider making a donation to keep the Elk River drinkable, fishable and swimmable for future generations.

REVENUE \$220,000



EXPENSES \$144,000



Special Thank you

This year, Canadian folk musician Chris Coole released a new album titled 'Road to the River'. He loves the Elk River SO MUCH that he decided to donate 750 albums to the Elk River Alliance, in addition to 100% of proceeds from online sales! Thanks to Chris' generosity, the ERA has been able to put over \$1000 towards keeping the Elk River drinkable, fishable and swimmable for future generations.

COMMUNITY-BASED WATER MONITORING (CBWM)



Healthy tributaries contribute to the health of the Elk River watershed. CBWM is a useful way to fill information gaps within existing watershed data and to increase public access to this information utilizing a citizen science approach. Elk River Alliance staff, board members and Streamkeepers volunteers have been monitoring water quality in the watershed since 2011. In 2018, ERA continued to monitor four sites each on Lizard and Alexander Creeks for high and low flow; completed community engagement survey, to assess community priorities for monitoring; and, hosted a stakeholder workshop and community open house on Nov 26th. In 2019, ERA will: release "report cards" for stream health on Lizard and Alexander Creeks, add new streams to our monitoring program, including Coal Creek and Boivin Creek; and will add sampling on the mainstem of the Elk River (subject to funding).

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stella Swanson	Chair	Marie Wilfong	Director
Steven Marlborough	Vice Chair	Lynn Muller	Director
Ron Lentz	Secretary	Levi Strom	Director
Jason Metcalfe	Treasurer	Tyler Carson	Director
Matt Noseworthy	Director	Carla Fraser	Director
John Poirier	Director	Mike Tomney	Director
Roxane Esch	Director		

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS & PARTNERS

Align Surveys Ltd. | BC Hydro | BC Parks | BC Rural Dividend Program | BC Wildlife Federation | Canyon Raft Company | City of Fernie | College of the Rockies | Columbia Basin Trust | Columbia Basin Watershed Network | Cows and Fish | District of Elkford | District of Sparwood | Elk River Guiding Company Ltd. | Elkford ATV Club | Elkford Secondary School | Environment and Climate Change Canada | Fernie Brewing Company | Fernie Secondary School | Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program | Columbia Basin | Foothills Silviculture | Frank J Mitchell Elementary School | Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation | Independent Grocer | Isabella Dicken Elementary School | Jaffray Elementary and Jr. Secondary School | Ktunaxa Nation Council | Lotic Environmental | MacHydro | Mainstreams | Nature Conservancy of Canada | Pacific Streamkeepers Federation | Regional District of East Kootenay | Save on Foods | Sparwood Secondary School | Taylor MacDonald Construction Ltd. | Teck The Fur-Bearers of Alberta | University of Lethbridge | Valley Vitals | Vast Resource Solutions | Wildsight

891 2nd Ave PO Box 537
Fernie BC V0B 1M0
(250) 423-3322
(e) info@elkriveralliance.ca

www.elkriveralliance.ca
www.facebook.com/elkriveralliance
@elkriveralliance#myelkriver

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