

ELK RIVER ALLIANCE



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This year was one of substantial growth for the Elk River Alliance. Led by Executive Director Chad Hughes and his team we now have three and a half full-time staff to deliver on our ambitious programming. The Elk Valley Watershed Monitoring Collaborative Program was launched together with a wide-range of Elk Valley interests including the Tobacco Plains Band, municipalities, national and regional conservation groups, fishing outfitters, the mining industry, and scientific experts. The online community engagement forum on our Community-Based Water Monitoring program attracted 30 participants who provided us with really insightful feedback on the health of the Elk River watershed. These activities, along with strong volunteer involvement in river clean-up and restoration projects, social media and good media coverage, have all raised our profile across the Elk Valley – creating community expectations that we will work hard to meet. I would like to thank local, corporate, government, and trust organizations for their financial support, with a special thanks to Teck Resources for dedicating three years of seed funding to the Collaborative Monitoring Program. I would also like to express my appreciation for the passionate Elk Valley community members for continuing their involvement with ERA through volunteering, donations, and engagement in ERA events. In 2022 we look forward to strengthening our membership and collaboration with partner organizations throughout the Elk Valley – they provide the foundation for our science and education work to ensure the sustainable stewardship of the Elk River and its tributaries.

-George Greene, Board Chair

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

PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

Elk River Shoreline Cleanup



This Fall we were able to return to a regular in-person shoreline cleanup! Cleanup stations in Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford saw 90 volunteers collecting over 48 bags of garbage. We collected data on the trash picked up and found that the most common items included cigarette butts, beverage cans, plastic, food wrappers, and plastic bags. Additionally, we extracted 19 more car batteries from the riverbank near Elkford, adding to the 14 batteries already extracted in 2020.

Hosmer Wetland Restoration



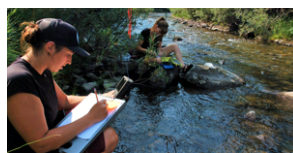
Since 2017 ERA has assisted the Nature Conservancy Canada in restoring the Hosmer gravel pit into a wetland ecosystem. This year, we were able to plant 1640 wetland and native plants thanks to the help of 92 volunteers. Additionally, we installed a trial animal exclusion plot to protect our seedlings, and serve as an experiment to determine the effect that herbivores have on Elk Valley restoration viability. In the coming year, we will expand our restoration efforts on additional conservation lands, focusing on riparian and floodplain cottonwood forests.

Stormwater Solutions



With the help of 42 volunteers we installed 3 floating wetlands and planted 1500 riparian & wetland seedlings in Fernie's Maiden Lake and Annex Pond. As a retention pond for stormwater runoff, Maiden Lake receives fertilizers and other urban pollutants. Using wetlands is an effective way to mitigate stormwater, allowing wetland plants to use up excess nutrients from fertilizer and filter out other pollutants. In 2022, we will be installing interpretive signage that describes our floating wetland project and educates the public about stormwater pollution. We will also be hosting a workshop and releasing a short educational video on how to mitigate stormwater pollution on one's property.

Hydrometric Monitoring



While our Coal Creek hydrometric station was sadly lost during the November atmospheric river flooding event, we installed six temperature sites in 2021: three along Michel Creek, one in the Fording River, and two in the Elk River, adjacent Elkford and on in the headwaters near the Elk Lakes. These stations generate valuable long-term temperature datasets to give us an understanding of the effects of climate change on stream temperature, and can be used for a variety of fish and wildlife investigations and land management decisions.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE



17 Temperature loggers

2 Stormwater sampling sites

3 Sediment sampling sites

10 CBWM sampling sites

1 Hydrometric Station



1640

PLANTS PLANTED
AT HOSMER
WETLAND



257

VOLUNTEERS
INVOLVED



418

NEW SOCIAL
MEDIA
FOLLOWERS



2463

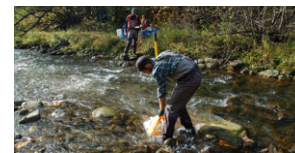
CONTENT LIKES



18

NEWS ARTICLES
ABOUT OUR
WORK

Community Based Water Monitoring



Our annual CBWM program continued monitoring 10 sites across 5 tributary creeks in the Elk River watershed. We are immensely grateful for the help of our volunteers who helped us collect samples. Additionally, we released two educational videos covering our program, and 15 infographics on the programs aims, methods, interest points and results. During a webinar/community forum we presented our 2020 results, which showed that most tributary creeks are in stable condition; however, sites downstream of heavy land-use show deviation from reference condition. We have also included the results from an eDNA analysis for the first time, which showed the presence of *Tubifex tubifex* – a vector for salmonid whirling disease – in Boivin Creek.

Summer Camp



This year, ERA's camp leaders hosted 64 campers during our four week-long day camps! Thank you to Elder Alfred Joseph and Laine Gravel from the Ktunaxa nation for teaching our students wilderness survival skills. Campers learned to distinguish edible and poisonous plants, built shelters, learned to fly fish, rafted down the Elk River and learned swiftwater rescue techniques. Thank you also to Canyon Raft guides for keeping our students safe on the water.

Elk River Access Improvement



A partnership with Tourism Fernie, ERA was able to secure funds for an upcoming project aiming to improve river access points with informational kiosks on river safety, fishing regulations, and interpretive information on river ecology. Safe and sustainable river use is a priority for ERA, the Fernie Tourism Master Plan, and RDEK Area A Sustainable Tourism Project. Awarded \$300,000 under the BC Ministry of Tourism 'Targeted Regional Tourism Development Program', the river will see improved boat launches, river information kiosks, parking, and user amenities. The project aims to implement access point improvements in 2022.

FEATURED PROGRAM

Elk River Watershed Collaborative Monitoring Program



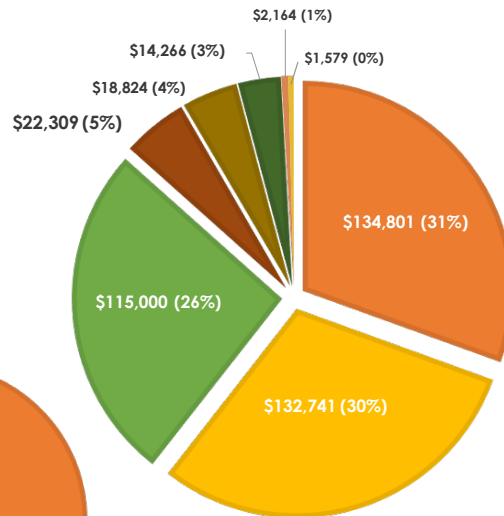
This year we initiated the Elk River Watershed Collaborative Monitoring Program with the goal of developing an independent and credible water monitoring program to better understand the health of the Elk River system. The goal is to feel the river's pulse and determine whether it is in balance, or if things are getting better or worse. This is a new and exciting effort that brings together organizations with a vested interest in Elk River health to jointly monitor the watershed health. On December 3, 2021 we hosted the inaugural forum, which brought together 27 representatives from 16 groups including Tobacco Plains Band members, local fly shops, mining industry professionals, researchers, and environmental groups. This program is still in its early stages, but a key focus will be assessing cumulative effects of climate and land use on Elk River watershed health. Over the next year, we aim to lay out the organizational and logistical foundations of the collaborative and start designing the implementation of the monitoring program. So far we have put together two Interim Working Groups working to 1) put in place the governance arrangements to set direction and oversee the work of the Monitoring Collaborative and to 2) set the design for the collaborative monitoring program.

FINANCIALS

INCOME

TOTAL: \$442,187

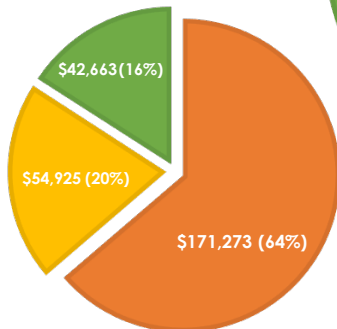
- Foundations, Trusts and Not-for profits
- 2020 Revenue Carried Forward
- Corporate Donations
- Revenue from Sales of Goods and Services
- Federal and Provincial Grants
- Local Business Donations
- Private Donations
- Other



EXPENSES

TOTAL: \$268,862

- Project and Program delivery
- Administration and Governance
- Development and Engagement Activities



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

After a tumultuous few years of the Covid-19 pandemic, ERA has landed on its feet and is headed in bold new directions. Our capacity and capabilities have vastly improved with the addition of three amazing staff members (Kaileigh McCallum, Evgeni Matveev and Anne-Caroline Kroeger). We have expanded our hydrometric and water monitoring programs, improved our data management, and are collecting valuable data on climate impacts for decision-makers and future adaptation work. A focus on project and program development has resulted in a broadscale Cottonwood ecosystem restoration program across the Elk Valley. We also saw the start of the Elk River Access Improvement initiative, which will be an exciting component of our education and outreach programming in 2022. As restrictions lifted we were able to return to in-person volunteer events, and we are incredibly grateful to Elk Valley residents for rolling up their sleeves and working to preserve this watershed. We are also very grateful to local business supporters for their contributions to our work, in particular Teck Resources and Big Bang Bagels. We look forward to continuing this work, and we thank our funders, partners, donors, and supporters for believing in our mission.

-Chad Hughes, Executive Director

NEW HIRES



Some new faces joined ERA this year! Kaileigh McCallum came on as a Junior Ecologist, Anne-Caroline Kroeger started in the fall as a Program Manager for the Monitoring Collaborative, and Evgeni Matveev has taken on the role of Outreach and Education Coordinator.

TEAM

Chad Hughes	Executive Director
Kaileigh McCallum	Junior Ecologist
Anne-Caroline Kroeger	Program Manager
Evgeni Matveev	Outreach and Education Coordinator
Megan Bell	Summer Camp Coordinator
Alexis Collier	Summer Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

George Greene	Chair, Fundraising Working Group Lead
Ashlee Jollymore	Vice-Chair
Danielle Wiess	Treasurer
Lee-Anne Walker	Founder & Director, Communication & Education Working Group Lead
Stella Swanson	Director and Technical Working Group Lead
Ayla Bennett	Director
Jason Gravelle	Director
Nic Milligan	Director
Kevin Atherton	Director

CONTACT

	/elkrivalliance
	@elkrivalliance
	@ElkRiverBC
	info@elkrivalliance.ca
	www.elkrivalliance.ca



1111 2nd Ave
PO Box 2095
Fernie, BC
V0B 1M0
250-430-5320

FUNDERS



PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

