

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



ELK RIVER ALLIANCE

EDUCATION 

MONITORING 

RESTORATION 



LAND STATEMENT

The Elk River Alliance is fortunate to work in partnership with Yaqit ʔa·knuqʔit First Nation to steward the lands and waters of ʔakanuxunik' ʔamakis (the land of the people from where the water comes out of the mountain). The Elk River and its tributaries flow through the Ktunaxa districts of Qukin ʔamakʔis (land of the raven) and ʕamha ʔamakʔis (land of the wood tick).

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chair



GEORGE Greene

The Elk River is the foundation of our environment, our way of life, even our local businesses. It's importance to ʔakanuxunik', the enduring land stewards of Yaqit ʔa·knuqʔit First Nation, Elk Valley community members, visitors, and wildlife cannot be overstated. Yet, our watershed faces mounting pressure from a growing array of land-uses and climate change. Despite the urgency of these threats, political attention and government support for watershed conservation has declined. This makes the role of community, both individuals and organizations, all the more important.

those of you who step up to help care for the watershed, and for your encouraging words at events, online and when we meet on the street. Thank you for being involved in restoration work, monitoring tributaries, and thoughtfully donating to our cause, your participation and support remind us of how powerful collective action can be. Last summer when ERA needed it most, it was the community, who helped us purchase a truck to continue field programs. Thank you for standing with the Elk River watershed.

Executive Director



CHAD Hughes

The Elk River Alliance exists to support the stewardship of our watershed; to advocate for responsible decision-making by all of us to ensure the health of all living things. Our staff and board are continually inspired by and grateful for

To our members, volunteers, donors, board, and staff; your commitment makes our work possible. For those looking to support this community of watershed stewards, we encourage your membership, participation, and donations to amplify our cause.

VISION

A resilient Elk River watershed sustaining all communities and living things through shared stewardship.

MISSION

Unite, inspire and act with the Elk River community to care for the watershed.

PROGRAM AREAS

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Community is at the heart of everything ERA does. Through school presentations, market booths, and interpretive signs along the riverbank, we work to engage, educate, and foster deeper watershed understanding and care.

COMMUNITY BASED

WATER MONITORING

From the Elk River headwaters to Morrissey Creek, ERA tracks flow levels, temperature, and stream health of tributaries otherwise unmonitored by government or industry. This data helps to understand stream changes over time and cumulative environmental impacts from industry, urban development, and climate change.



RESTORATION

A multi-year, landscape-level program to restore deforested streamside habitat. This improves streambank stabilization, reduces erosion, mitigates flood risks, and supports native terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

ELK RIVER MONITORING

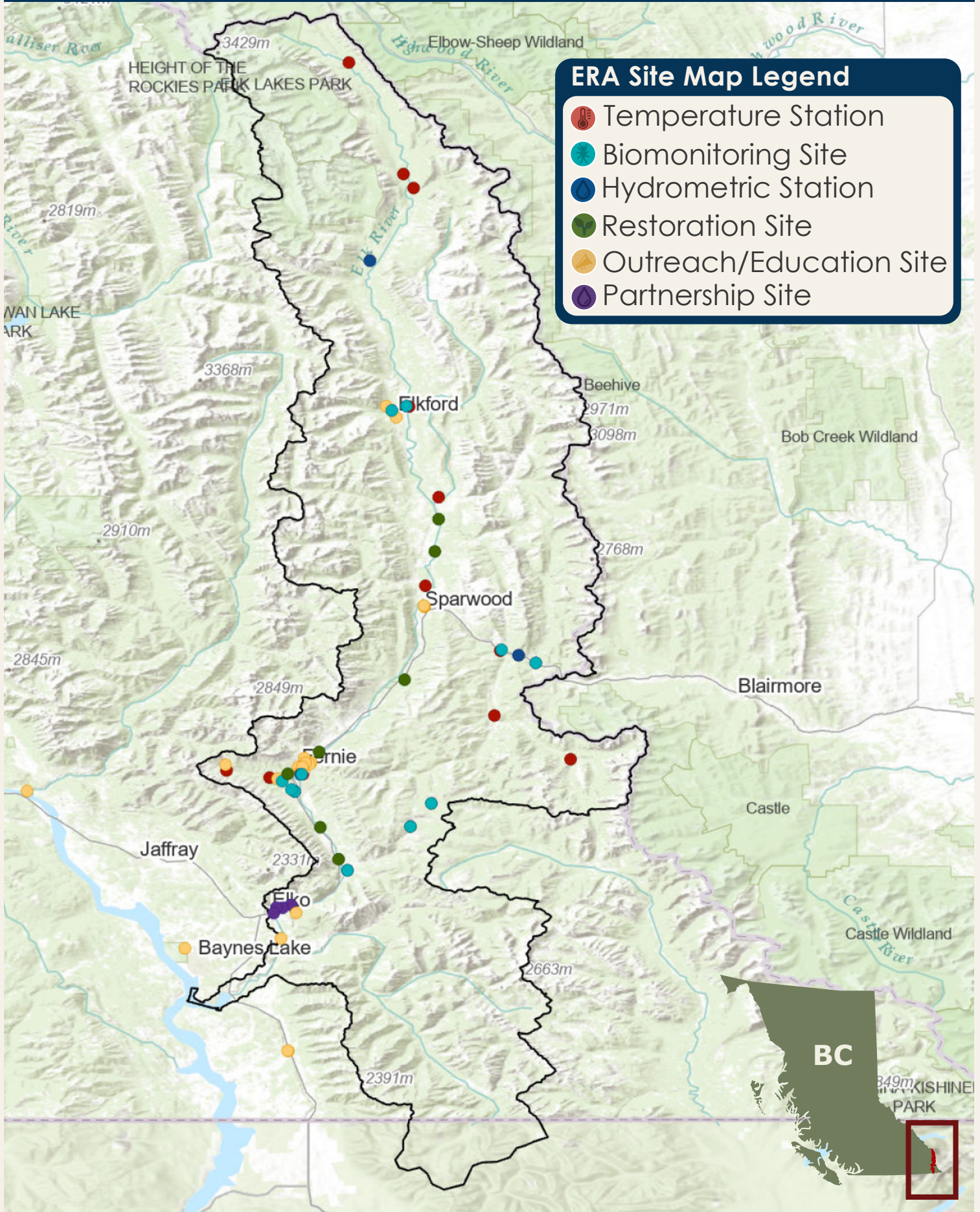
COLLABORATIVE

Brings together diverse knowledge holders to share watershed information and encourage more effective watershed management. The group encourages high-quality data sharing with a unified monitoring approach using publicly available data.

ELK RIVER DISCOVERY CAMPS

Each summer children get to spend a week outside, fostering environmental connection through outdoor activities and learning. Campers explore the watershed through swimming, rafting, fly fishing, hiking, and learn from Ktunaxa knowledge holders.

OUR WORK ACROSS THE ELK RIVER WATERSHED



RAISING SAPLINGS TO HELP RESTORATION THRIVE

To improve planting success for the Cottonwood Restoration Program, ERA piloted a plant nursery where collected native livestakes (young tree cuttings) were planted and cared for from spring through summer. Our first year raised **2,650 healthy native saplings** that were grown and planted at Big Ranch Conservation Area.

In natural conditions, young trees have low survival rates as their roots struggle to reach the water table in dry seasons. Pesky elk also often eat the few leaves they manage to grow! Growing trees from local cuttings provides two key benefits: First, trees with established roots and leaves get a head start at growth and are more likely to survive. Second, local cuttings means trees



will already be genetically adapted to thrive in Elk Valley conditions.

This project was supported by **ERA volunteers who contributed 260 hours** to make this possible! In 2026, we will **triple our nursery size** after 2025's success.

INCREASING WATER KNOWLEDGE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

ERA is all about collaboration and our hydrometric program is no different! During the 2025 field season, ERA and Living Lakes Canada (LLC) combined staffing resources. ERA provided mentorship and training to LLC staff, who in return helped collect hydro measurements. Additionally, we joined LLC staff on Bugaboo Creek, using ERA's Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) to take high flow measurements. We also worked with CLEAR to record four discharge measurements on the Elk River. These measurements will help assess possible inflow rates from the mainstem Elk into the Lower Elk aquifer near Elko. Working with partners creates learning opportunities and develops a stronger water monitoring community!





WHAT WOULD THE REGION LOOK LIKE WITHOUT WATER?



Elk River | Quikin ʔamakʔis
Monitoring Collaborative

Growing environmental stressors create an urgent need for informed, collaborative decision-making to safeguard the Elk River watershed's future. Without Water, co-hosted by Yaqʔit ʔa knuqʔi'it, LLC and ERA, was a platform to foster mutual understanding of ongoing water knowledge, and determine future steps needed to protect the region's water.

Hosted on Yaqʔit ʔa knuqʔi'it territory, the event brought together First Nations leaders, scientists, government representatives, community members, and industry to address watershed values, knowledge, and regional decision-making.

Over 100 attendees discussed watershed challenges including drought, pollution, and the uncertainty of climate change. Daytime attendees went on a wetland tour where ʔakanuxunik showcased how water scarcity is impacting both the land and community. Evening participants shared a meal and listened to a keynote speech and panel discussion. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, delivered a powerful keynote on removing barriers, taking meaningful action, and creating a better future.



COMMUNITY UNITES TO CLEAN UP THE WATERSHED

The 14th annual ERA shoreline clean up removed a record number of trash from the environment! To help keep the watershed clean, ERA organizes a Valley-wide clean up every September. This year with the help of 328 students and 62 community volunteers, 11,000+ pieces of trash were extracted.

This incredible effort reflects community dedication to preserving the Elk River for generations of people and wildlife to come. The commitment inspires and reminds us that individual collective action can make all the difference for the river and the life it supports. Help us beat our record for World Rivers Day 2026!



WE GOT A TRUCK!

Earlier this year, ERA faced a major challenge: Without a field truck, staff could not access key sites to carry out restoration and monitoring work across the watershed. But thanks to overwhelming community support, ERA raised \$40,127 to purchase a dedicated field truck!

Without community support we would not have

met our field season goals. A special thanks goes to PDC Environmental, who donated a temporary vehicle to help us get around during the spring season.

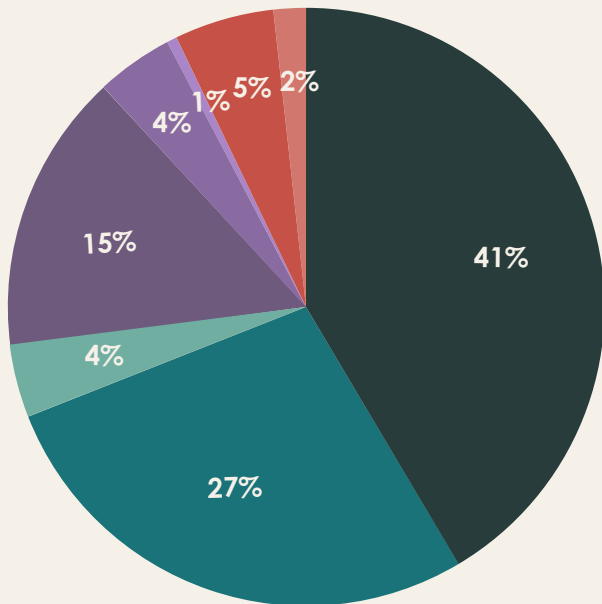
Keep an eye out for the truck around the Valley as a visible reminder of what can be accomplished when a community comes together to support environmental stewardship!



2025 FINANCIALS

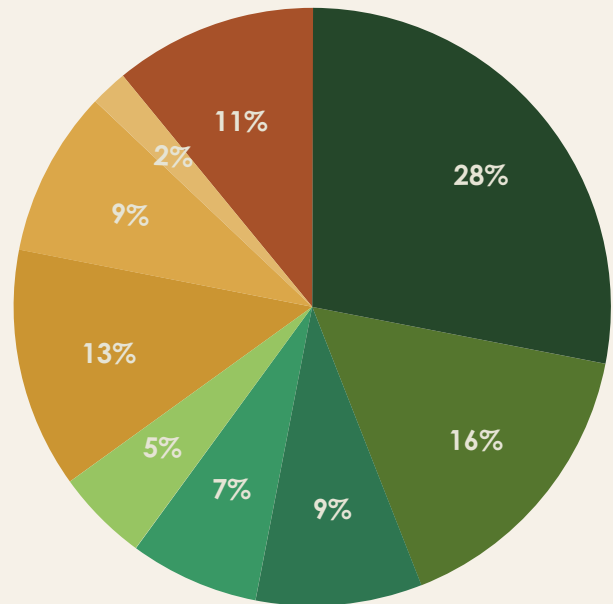
1st February 2025 - 31st January 2026

Revenue: \$769,818



- Non-Profit/Trust Grants
- Government Grants
- Corporate and Private Grants
- Donations
- Sponsorships
- Membership Dues
- Sale of Services
- Sale of Merchandise

Expenses: \$790,714



- Restoration
- Monitoring Collaborative
- Water Monitoring
- Education and Outreach
- Summer Camps
- Administration
- Revenue Development
- Governance
- Capacity Building

In addition \$49,362 was raised and recorded as a capital contribution.

2025 PROJECT FUNDERS

BC Government/ BC Gaming
BC Parks
Cabela's
City of Fernie
Columbia Basin Trust
Elk Valley Thrift Store Society
Environment and Climate Change
Canada
Farmland Advantage
Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program
Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC
Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation
Living Lakes Canada

Nature Conservancy Canada
Nature Trust British Columbia
Outdoor Recreation Council of BC
Real Estate Foundation of BC
Regional District of East Kootenay
Royal Bank of Canada
Sitka Foundation
S.M. Blair Family Foundation
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
TELUS Friendly Future Foundation
Trans Canada Trail
Vancouver Foundation

2025 ORGANIZATIONAL DONORS

\$20,000+



\$5,000+ Dickhout Family Foundation

\$1,000+ Bidston Charitable Fund
Canyon Raft Company
DP Martin Family Foundation
Elk Valley Thrift Shop
Fernie Old School Boxing
G Bart Davies

Julie Comete
Lohn Family Foundation
Tourism Fernie

\$100+

Braden Maybury
Catherine Bull
Chris MacLean
Claire Hirst
David Card
Dawn Voysey
Edward Ralfe
Elk River Guiding
Emily Brydon
Emma Wescott
George Greene
Graham Preston
Helmut Kron

Herald Kane
Jeph Virtue
Jodi MacMillan
Jonathan Unno
Judy McMahan
Kim Carter
Kue Young
Kyle Merritt
Laura Nelson
Lee-Anne Walker
Margaret Creagh
Marian Ma
Marie Wilfong

Megan Schmidt
Neil MacDonald
Nicky Benzie
Robyn Peel
Rooftop Coffee Roasters
Shawnyce LeRoy
Sheri Bentley
Stella Swanson
StellarVista Credit Union
Sylvia Ayers
TC Energy
Tim Davis

2025 MONTHLY DONORS

ALISON PREECE

ANIE HEPHER

ANNE-CAROLINE KROEGER

CASEY BRENNAN

CHAD HUGHES

DAVID CARD

EVGENI MATVEEV

SYLVIA AYERS

2025 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Amateur Rafting Society of Excellence
Ambassador Wild
Canyon Raft Company
City of Fernie
Claris Media
Collective for Lower Elk Aquifer Restoration
College of the Rockies & MAST program
CP Rail
Cranbrook Fly Fishers
District of Elkford
District of Sparwood
Elk River Guiding Company
Elk Valley Dolphins
Elkford Secondary School
Fernie Brewing Company
Fernie Chamber of Commerce
Fernie Distillers
Fernie Legion

Fernie Lions Club
Fernie Secondary School
Fernie Trails Alliance
Flathead Rivers Alliance
Frank J. Mitchell Elementary School
GPI Chartered Professional Accountants
Isabella Dicken Elementary School
Jason Trochette
Jon Bisset
Jon Jeffery & Katy Fraser
Kootenay Conservation Program
Kootenay Trout Hatchery
Ktunaxa Nation Council
Living Lakes Canada
Lotic Environmental
Machydro
Michael Spoonhunter
Nature Conservancy of Canada

Nature Trust of British Columbia
Nupqu
Paul Dore
Polar Peak Books and Treasures
Rooftop Coffee Roasters
Shaggy Designs
SKC Farm Sales and Fencing
Ski Base
Sparwood Secondary School
St. Mary's Fly Fisherman
Twin Meadows Animals Rescue
Tourism Fernie
Tunnel 49
Turtle Haven Rentals
Wildsight Elk Valley
Xylem
Yaqit ʔa·knuqii'it First Nation

OUR PEOPLE BOARD



- GEORGE** Greene
Chair & Treasurer
- KEVIN** Atherton
Vice Chair
- LEE-ANNE** Walker
Founder & Secretary
- ERIN** Webber
- JASON** Gravelle
- KEEGAN** Street
- LYNN** Muller
- MAC** Dressler
- MARSHA** Clarke
- MIKE** Wrigglesworth

THANK YOU!

Passionate community members started ERA, and likeminded people continue to help our organization care for the watershed. Volunteers, members, and community partners are ERA's backbone. Your dedication makes it possible to achieve hands-on impactful work, including data collection, tree planting, community outreach, and environmental stewardship.

We are deeply grateful for every hour given, membership purchased, partnership forged, and voice raised in support of watershed health. Together, we will continue to foster a healthy watershed, guided by the concerns and values of the community that makes this work possible.

IN 2025,
617
VOLUNTEERS
CONTRIBUTED
1,289
HOURS

STAFF

CHAD Hughes
Executive Director

EVGENI
Matveev
Communications
Manager

**ANNE-
CAROLINE**
Kroeger
Community Liaison

BEN Ingle
Operations Manager

CAITLIN
Henneker
Collaborative
Manager

JENNIFER
O'Donnell
Bookkeeper

OLIVIA
Heintzman
Communications &
Education Coordinator

TADHG Dignan
Field Coordinator

SARAI Ramirez-
Saldaña
Restoration
Coordinator

FYNLEY Kujit
CBWM Coordinator

ALESHIA Conley
Grants &
Communications
Coordinator

ALEX
McClymont
Camps Manager &
Data Analyst

AYLA Treadwell
Camps Director

CYNTHIA Fraser
Admin Assistant



SEASONAL STAFF

- TAHLIA** Russell
- PARIS** Nunn
- HAMISH** Kingma
- JUNO** Montgomery
- HAZEL** Sutherland
- OLIVIA** Steven
- BRADEN** Maybury
- ADAM** Jones

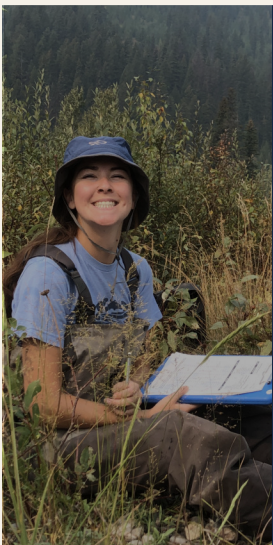
2025 IMPACT SUMMARY



OVER 90%
OF PARENTS WOULD
RECOMMEND
THE ELK RIVER
DISCOVERY
CAMP
AND HAVE THEIR
CHILDREN ATTEND
AGAIN.



OUR WASTEWATER
DISCHARGE REEL
WAS SHARED BY
OVER **120**
ELK VALLEY
RESIDENTS
AND SPOKEN ABOUT
IN THE COMMUNITY
FOR WEEKS
AFTERWARDS.



WITHOUT
WATER'S WHAT
WE HEARD
REPORT
ALLOWED ERA AND
LLC TO PRESENT
DELEGATIONS AT ELK
VALLEY COUNCIL
MEETINGS IN SUPPORT
OF ESTABLISHING A
**WATERSHED
GOVERNANCE
TABLE.**



CABIN MONITORING
FOUND INCREASING
TEMPERATURES
AND **DIVERGENT BENTHIC
INVERTEBRATE SPECIES**
IN MORRISSEY
CREEK,
PROMPTING
FURTHER
INVESTIGATION.

OUR FIRST YEAR
COTTONWOOD NURSERY
ACHIEVED AN
88%
SURVIVAL RATE
AND ENCOURAGED ERA
TO EXPAND THE
NURSERY TO **10,000**
SAPLINGS FOR 2026.



EAST KOOTENAY
RESTORATION
PROFESSIONALS
WERE BROUGHT
TOGETHER TO SHARE
KNOWLEDGE LEARNED IN
THE FIELD, CREATING A
**NETWORK OF
SHARED KNOWLEDGE.**

