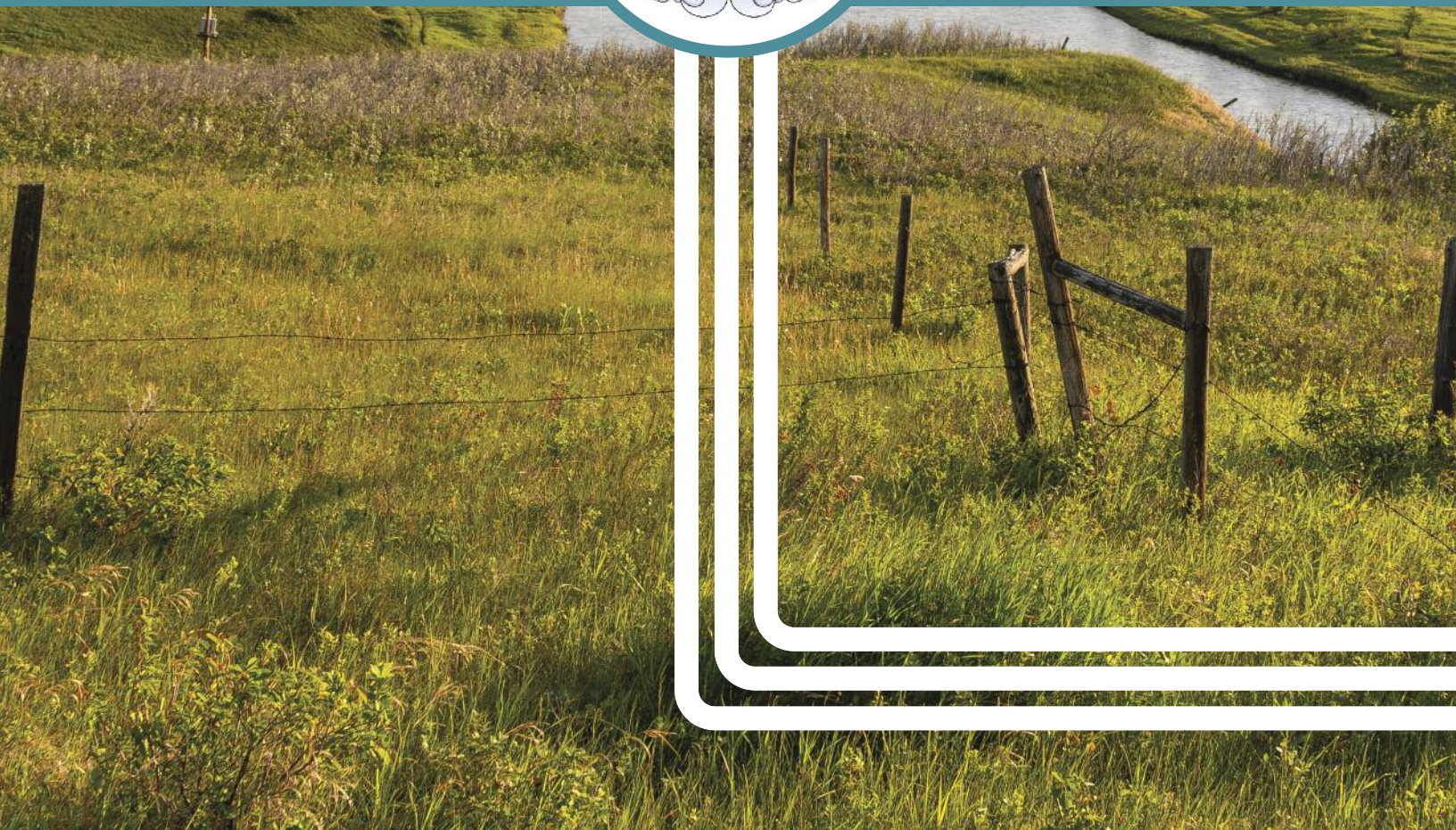




OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL



2022 • 2023 ANNUAL REPORT





The Oldman Watershed Council acknowledges that we live on the traditional territory of the Niitsitapi who have stewarded this land since time immemorial and who are still stewarding it today. The Oldman watershed and Sikoohkotoki (Lethbridge), where our office is located, is part of Treaty 7 and home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. The OWC acknowledges our responsibility to honour the treaties and commits to working towards reconciliation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit People.

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02



03

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

The OWC Board of Directors continues to excel in its critical role as a forum for all voices within our watershed. I am very proud of our continuing governance work intended to strengthen the organization. This year, we developed a Consensus Decision-Making Policy to solidify our commitment to diverse and respectful discussion.

Operationally, our remarkable staff do great things, in no small part due to Shannon's exceptional leadership. Together, the OWC team continues to break records. This year, our membership is up by 34%, and our partnerships have increased by 60%—a testament to how much our community cares about our watershed.

Thanks to our committed funders, generous donors, dedicated volunteers, and enthusiastic staff, we have accomplished much this past year. The annual report provides an opportunity to highlight these achievements and share our plans. It is important for us to keep OWC stakeholders informed of our goals and efforts to improve the watershed. Please take the time to appreciate the images, stories, and statistics summarizing our impressive work.

Doug Kaupp, MBA, P.Eng.
General Manager, Water and Wastewater
City of Lethbridge



04

- 3,656 people directly engaged, including 1,566 youth through seven projects, 26 presentations, and 69 events.
- 10,425 readers of 14 blogs
- 115,500 views of eight videos
- 27 people trained in the CABIN stream monitoring protocol
- Social media following up 19% on Facebook to 2,695, up 29% on Instagram to 1,022, and up 18% on TikTok to 465

And we don't intend to slow down—we can't; we are already feeling the impact of climate change, and it is putting our communities at risk. The seasonal drought conditions in 2021 and 2022 were devastating to many farmers and ranchers in the Oldman watershed. If drought conditions continue in future years, we will all feel the impact through slowed economic activity, higher food prices, and ecosystems struggling to provide the services we depend on. Long-term drought, and the poor water quality that follows, is a looming threat in our watershed, and we must prepare now to face the challenge. As such, OWC is focused on building resilience through tried and true nature-based solutions.

For our indigenous leaders nature-based solutions are not just the latest buzzwords—it is a way of life. I have been honored to learn from Elders and Knowledge Keepers about how living in reciprocity with nature is the only way to achieve true sustainability. By honoring the land and water that provides—and respecting nature's limits—the Niitsitapi have survived here for millennia. Newcomers to this land have much to learn from the Niitsitapi, and I am so thankful to Ninna Piiksii, Api'soomaahka, Randall Wolf Tail, Kansie Fox, Alvin First Rider, Noreen Plain Eagle, Elliot Fox, and Harley Bastion for sharing their wisdom with me over the years. I am incredibly thankful for the partnerships we have built together that are restoring the health of the watershed and our relationship to the land.

I deeply appreciate the multitude of partners, donors, funders, and volunteers who support OWC and offer my sincere thanks to each of you. In particular, I would like to thank OWC's amazing team: Sofie, Jon, Kallie, Susanna, Shannon H, and Conlan, and the Board of Directors, especially our Chair, Doug Kaupp, for their time, energy, and commitment, and for making my days enjoyable. I am so proud of what we have achieved together and look forward to shaping an even brighter future with you!

Shannon Frank

NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The highlight of my year was being given a Blackfoot name, Water Singing Woman, by my dear friend and mentor, Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head), at the Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association (KEPA) Summit in September at Red Crow Park in Standoff, Kainai Nation. I was thrilled to be part of a ceremony to honor eight partners of KEPA, and I am truly honored to receive this gift.

The OWC has another year of impressive numbers to report, as we continue our goal to be more effective and impactful than ever before. Our dedicated team of four permanent staff and two temporary staff keeps breaking our past records. Here is a snapshot of the year:

- 70 funders and donors
- \$369,920 of in-kind support from 122 partners and volunteers
- Membership up 34% to 558 members from 14 sectors
- Partnerships up 60% to 122
- 8,450 willows planted at 10 sites



ABOUT THE OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL

The Oldman Watershed Council (OWC) is a not-for-profit organization in southwestern Alberta, Canada, the traditional territory of the Niitsitapi (the real people in Blackfoot) and home to the Blackfoot Confederacy. We are one of 11 Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils in Alberta, designated by the provincial government, to provide an independent voice for watershed management and health under the province's Water for Life Strategy.

The Council consists of the staff and OWC members who work collaboratively with all stakeholders to improve the Oldman River watershed by:

- Improving and sharing knowledge
- Building and strengthening stakeholder partnerships
- Providing a science-based forum for all voices to be heard
- Promoting and facilitating community and institutional action and stewardship
- Developing and implementing integrated land and water plans

The Council is governed by a Board of Directors composed of nineteen perspectives from various stakeholder sectors, including four members at large.

The OWC began to form in September 2004 when the Oldman River Basin Water Quality Initiative merged with the Oldman Basin Advisory Council. When the Province's Water for Life Strategy was released, these two groups combined to provide a diverse partnership knowledgeable in all areas of watershed management, including sustainable water management and land use practices in the Oldman basin.

Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils are mandated to create a State of the Watershed Report and an Integrated Watershed Management Plan. The OWC has accomplished these targets and is moving through implementation.

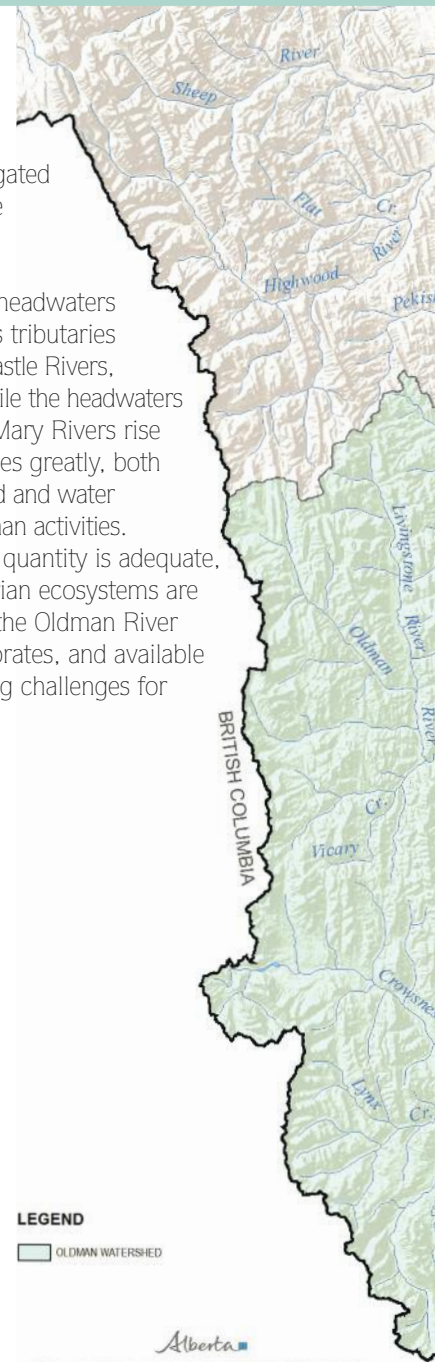
About our Watershed

A watershed is an area of land that drains into a water body, like a creek, river, or lake. Our Oldman watershed is all the land that eventually drains into the Oldman River through its tributaries.

The Oldman watershed is a large, diverse land and water system in southern Alberta, covering 23,000 km² in southwestern Alberta and 2,100 km² in Montana. It extends eastward from the forested slopes of the Rocky Mountains, through rangelands

in the foothills, dryland and irrigated agricultural plains, to the prairie grasslands.

The Rocky Mountains feed the headwaters of the Oldman mainstem and its tributaries (Crowsnest, Livingstone, and Castle Rivers, Willow, and Pincher Creeks), while the headwaters of the Belly, Waterton, and St. Mary Rivers rise in Montana. The watershed varies greatly, both in terms of the status of the land and water resources and impacts from human activities. In headwater sub-basins, water quantity is adequate, quality is fair to good, and riparian ecosystems are generally healthy. However, as the Oldman River flows east, water quality deteriorates, and available water supplies diminish, creating challenges for those downstream.



LEGEND

OLDMAN WATERSHED

Alberta
OLDMAN WATERSHED

0 10 20 30 40
kilometres

Base Data provided by the Government of Alberta under the Alberta Open Government Licence of November 2014.
Produced by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, South Saskatchewan Region, Regional Information Unit, Lethbridge, March 2015.
The Reader and the Crown provide this information without warranty or representation as to any matter including but not limited to whether the data / information is correct, accurate or free from error, defect, damage, or hazard and whether it is otherwise useful or suitable for any use the user may make of it.
© 2015 Government of Alberta





Our 2010 Oldman River State of the Watershed Report produced the following results:

INDICATOR	SUB-BASINS						
	MOUNTAIN	FOOTHILLS	SOUTHERN TRIBUTARIES	PRAIRIE		MAINSTREAM	OLDMAN WATERSHED
TERRESTRIAL & RIPARIAN	Good	Good	Fair	Poor		Good	Fair
WATER QUALITY	Good	Fair	Poor	Fair	Poor	Poor	Fair
WATER QUALITY	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Good Fair	Good Fair
OVERALL	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair

OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Andrew Hurly (Vice Chair)
Academia
University of Lethbridge



Autumn Barnes (Treasurer)
Agriculture
Lethbridge College



Doug Kaupp (Chair)
City of Lethbridge



Maureen Bell (resigned)
Environment Non-Government
Water Conservation Trust



Todd McCoy
Federal Government
Government of Canada



Kristen Dykstra (resigned)
Health
Alberta Health Services



Mike Swystun
Health
Alberta Health Services



Mike Bruised Head
Indigenous
Kainai Ecosystem
Protection Association



Randall Wolf Tail
Indigenous
Piikani Public Works



Errol Kutcher
Industry
Spray Lake Sawmills



Cade Nixdorf
Industry (Alternate)
Spray Lake Sawmills



Martin Van Diemen
Irrigators
Lethbridge Northern
Irrigation District



Erik Cline
Member at Large



Rick Cooke
Member at Large



Henk De Vlieger
Member at Large



Chloe Devoy
Member at Large



Randy Bullock (resigned)
Municipal Districts
and Counties
Cardston County



Cam Francis
Municipal Districts
and Counties
Cardston County



Linda Cerney
Provincial Government
Alberta Environment
and Protected Areas



Michael Wagner
Provincial Government
Alberta Forestry
and Parks



Chad Willms
Provincial Government
(Alternate) Alberta
Environment and
Protected Areas



Kent Bullock
Towns and Villages
Village of Barnwell



Heather Caldwell
Towns and Villages
(Alternate)
Town of Coalhurst



Lori Goater
Wildlife & Habitat
Conservation
Southern Alberta Group
for the Environment



Anne Stevick
Wildlife & Habitat
Conservation (Alternate)
Rancher

OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL'S STAFF



3

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2

4

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6

5

1. Shannon Frank	Executive Director	2010 - Present
2. Sofie Forsstrom	Education Program Manager	2015 - Present
3. Jon Martin	Communications Manager	2018 - Present
4. Kallie Val-Zehan Desruisseaux	Office Manager	2018 - Present
5. Conlan Donahue	Watershed Stewardship Assistant	2022 - Present
6. Shannon Hart	Watershed Stewardship Assistant	2022 - Present
Alumni		
7. Susanna Bruneau	WPAC Collaboration Initiative Manager	2021 - 2022

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & FUNDERS 2022 - 2023

Over \$250,000

Government of Alberta - Environment and Protected Areas

\$50,000 to \$100,000

Government of Alberta - Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program
 Government of Alberta - Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
 RBC Foundation

\$40,000 to \$49,000

City of Lethbridge
 Government of Canada - EcoAction Community Funding Program
 Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation

\$20,000 to \$39,000

Government of Canada - 2 Billion Trees
 Alberta EcoTrust Foundation
 Alberta Conservation Association
 Spray Lake Sawmills
 Government of Canada - Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk

\$1,000 to \$10,000

Edmonton Community Foundation
 St. Mary River Irrigation District
 Government of Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
 Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District
 Lethbridge County
 Town of Taber
 Municipal District of Taber
 Calgary Foundation - J.N. Fyvie Family Fund
 Vulcan County
 Town of Cardston
 Town of Claresholm
 Town of Pincher Creek
 Calgary Foundation - Perlette Fund

Under \$1,000

Town of Picture Butte
 Terry Kerkhoff
 Shannon Frank
 Richard Cooke
 Alberta Irrigation Districts Association
 Antoine Gendron
 Gerhardt Hartman
 Cheryl Bradley
 Village of Barnwell
 River Collective Co
 Helene Wirzba
 Doug Kaupp
 Raymond Irrigation District
 Janice Newberry
 Town of Stavely
 United Irrigation District
 Rosemary Jones
 Virginia Grinevitch
 Village of Hill Spring
 Village of Lomond
 Andrew Hurly
 Village of Carmangay
 Anonymous
 James Fujikawa
 Town of Vauxhall
 Elspeth Nickle
 Ellen Carter
 Barbara Lundstad
 Heather Sinton
 Barb Clarke
 Linda Cerney
 Trace Associates
 Graeme Greenlee
 William Singer III Api'soohmahka
 Cheryl Fujikawa
 Kallie Val-Zehan Desruisseaux
 CanadaHelps.org
 Todd McCoy



Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation



IN-KIND DONATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS FROM APRIL 1, 2022 TO MARCH 31, 2023

Description	Person	Organization	Value (\$)
Board of Directors			
	Doug Kaupp	City of Lethbridge	11,151
	Andy Hurly	University of Lethbridge	7,165
	Lori Goater	SAGE (Southern Alberta Group for the Environment)	7,155
	Michael Wagner	Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism	6,985
	Linda Cerney	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas	6,637
	Errol Kutcher	Spray Lake Sawmills	6,612
	Randall Wolf Tail	Piikani Public Works	6,541
	Cam Francis	Cardston County	6,541
	Autumn Barnes	Lethbridge College	6,475
	Erik Cline		5,780
	Chloe Devoy		5,448
	Martin Van Diemen	Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District	4,445
	Rick Cooke		4,433
	Henk De Vlieger		3,552
	Jana Mackenzie		3,495
	Todd McCoy	Government of Canada	3,410
	Kent Bullock	Village of Barnwell	3,075
	Chad Willms	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas	2,720
	Mike Swystun	Alberta Health Services	2,532
	Ninna Piiksii, Mike Bruised Head	Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association	2,390
	Alan Harrold	Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District	2,050
	Kristen Dykstra	Alberta Health Services	2,045
	Maureen Bell	Water Conservation Trust	2,040
	Randy Bullock	Cardston County	680
Community Resilience and Knowledge Sharing Project			
		Cows and Fish	30,335
		Eastern Slopes Biomonitoring Collaborative	20,000
		Piikani Nation Secondary School students	6,630
	Students	Lethbridge College	5,100
	Truman Big Swallow & Jamison Russell	Blood Tribe Land Management	4,930
	Rebeca Spencer		3,703
		Piikani Nation Lands Department	3,655
		University of Guelph / WWF	3,000
	Brian Hills	Livingstone Landowners Group	2,929
	Cody Johnson	Livingstone Landowners Group	2,810
		Blood Tribe Land Management	2,125
	Anne and Quentin Stevick		1,913
	Clancy Holthe		446
	Allan Garbutt	Livingstone Landowners Group	398
		Alberta Parks	252
		City of Lethbridge	5,000
		Lethbridge College	
WPACs Collaboration Initiative			
		WPAC Collaboration Initiative Committee, 11 WPAC Boards	104,125

Description	Person	Organization	Value (\$)
Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers			
	Board of Directors		13,300
	Clancy Holthe		2,720
	Joe Mans	Vital Green Farms	2,720
	Mike Munton	Benchmark Angus	2,720
	Api' Soomaahka (William Singer III)	Naapi's Garden and Katoyiss Seed Bank	2,040
	Andrew Martin	Monster Caesar Studios	1,870
		Bourbon & Butter	1,494
	Doug Kaupp	City of Lethbridge	1,360
	Kelti Baird	[Theoretically] Brewing Company	1,360
	Glen and Kelly Hall	Timber Ridge Ranch	1,360
	Cody Spencer	Sweetgrass Bison	1,360
	Willemijn Appels	Lethbridge College	1,360
	Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)		1,360
	Cami Tanner	Herbal Apothecary	680
	George Lohues		680
	Kylee Mourning		680
	Christine McKee		680
	Justin Bruised Head	Blood Tribe Land Management	680
Watershed Legacy Program			
		Fort Macleod Lions	12,920
		Glenfiddich Ranch and You Betula Environmental Inc.	8,787
	Len and Diana Carlson		850
	Carla Preachuk	MD of Willow Creek	425
	Erin Anderson	MD of Ranchlands	255
	Anne Stevick	Bar 15 Simmentals	255
	Autumn Barnes	Lethbridge College	255
	Norine Ambrose	Cows and Fish	255
	Holly Kinas	Miistakis Institute	255
RBC Tech for Nature Virtual Reality			
	Virtual reality participants		\$8,373
			\$381,759

Thank you to all of our partners and volunteers who make these vital projects possible!



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Summary of Financial Expenditures

	2022-2023	2021-2022
Restoration and Education	\$293,182	\$362,370
Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers	\$222,691	\$19,071
Administration and Office Space	\$130,325	\$162,807
WPACs of Alberta Collaboration Initiative	\$61,787	\$53,291
Communications	\$49,626	\$87,313
Watershed Legacy Program	\$9,433	\$22,557
Fundraising	\$1,600	\$2,622
Youth Education	\$1,358	\$2,451
Indigenous Partnerships	\$-	\$219,241
	\$770,002	\$931,723

For detailed financial information, please see Audited Financial Statements.



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

The Community Resilience and Knowledge-Sharing project is increasing environmental and community capacity in our watershed. Through attending reciprocal knowledge-sharing events, offering training workshops, and collaborating with partners and land managers on hands-on habitat enhancement projects, we have been expanding our network of watershed stewards. This year, we achieved an unprecedented number of willow stake plantings and reached a large audience thanks to our generous funders, dedicated volunteers, and the hard work of our staff, including our Watershed Stewardship Assistants, Shannon Hart and Conlan Donahue.

Accomplishments:

Building Community Capacity:

- Hired and trained 2 Watershed Stewardship Assistants, Conlan Donahue and Shannon Hart.
- Engaged 54 land managers, partners, and volunteers in hands-on stewardship.
- Hosted 6 training events and trained 27 people in bioengineering (including 10 junior high students and 8 college students).

- Certified 24 people in CABIN aquatic biomonitoring protocols, and 1 OWC staff member became certified CABIN trainer, the only one in Alberta.

Improving Environmental Capacity:

- Organized live staking of 8450 willows at 10 riparian sites throughout the watershed
- Attended 4 weed pulls and supported 1 day of grasslands invasive species biocontrol using goats for targeted grazing.
- Invested in a beaver coexistence project on Todd Creek and a tree-planting project along Willow Creek (to be implemented summer 2023).
- Attended other stewardship projects, including:
 - Beaver dam analog installation at 1 site with Blood Tribe Land Management
 - Bioengineering along the Castle River with Cows and Fish
 - Bioengineering along Girardi Creek with Trout Unlimited Canada

Knowledge-Sharing:

- Watershed Stewardship Assistants developed 2 new interactive games about invasive species, set up 10 pop-up education stations, attended 22 public outreach events, and talked to over 2600 people.



OWC's 2022 Watershed Stewardship Assistants, Shannon Hart and Conlan Donahue.



Half of the Volunteers at Ed Gregor Stewardship Day in the Crowsnest Pass. June 4th, 2022

- Staff attended Indigenous knowledge-sharing events such as an Indigenous Plant Walk at Lethbridge College, Blackfoot Confederacy Native Trout Project Workshop, 7th Annual KEPA Summit, and Truth & Reconciliation training at Kainai Nation.
- OWC supported Piikani Nation Lands Department's production of native plant booklets and educational signage.
- Our Education Program Manager presented at Bow River Basin Council's biomonitoring workshop and the Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society's Conference.
- We grew OWC's social media presence to over 1000 followers on Instagram and 17k likes on TikTok. Watershed Stewardship Assistants published a weekly Facebook post called "The Weekly Current" allowing the public to follow along on their adventures and activities.

Evaluating environmental health:

- 3 riparian health assessments conducted by Cows and Fish, and 3 conducted by Blood Tribe Land Management.
- 3 range health assessments conducted by Blood Tribe Land Management.
- Aquatic health assessments were completed at 9 restoration sites by CABIN-certified staff, Indigenous partners, and volunteers.

Project Support

This project was supported by grants and in-kind contributions from:

- Watershed Restoration and Resiliency Program (Government of Alberta)
- Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk (Government of Canada)
- EcoAction Community Funding Program (Government of Canada)
- Canada Summer Jobs (Government of Canada)
- 2 Billion Trees (Government of Canada)
- Alberta Conservation Association
- Spray Lake Sawmills
- Cows and Fish
- Blood Tribe Land Management
- Piikani Nation Lands Department
- Piikani Nation Secondary School
- Living Lakes Canada
- University of Guelph
- WWF Canada
- Livingstone Landowners Group
- Alberta Parks
- Lethbridge College
- Many volunteers

Thank you for your support!



Partners

Funders



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OWC volunteer extraordinaire, Rebeca Spencer!

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMITTEES

Alberta Water Council

Alberta's eleven Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils have a seat on the Alberta Water Council Board of Directors and actively participate in project teams to shape the Government of Alberta's policy and provide tools for watershed managers.

In 2022-23, the Alberta Water Council focused on three projects:

- 1. Water for Life Action Plan**, where partners will identify actions their community or sector will commit to undertaking over the next 10 years to address risks and opportunities and support the goals and directions of the Water for Life Strategy.
- 2. Source Water Protection Phase 1: Risk Assessment Tools and Data**, aims to develop increasing access to a suite of practical tools and resources to assist drinking water providers and local decision-makers in understanding and assessing risks to their drinking water sources.
- 3. Improving Drought Resilience in Alberta Through a Simulation** will allow communities to test, in a workshop environment, proposed drought management structures, communications channels, tools, and resources.

The OWC provides input and support to the elected Watershed Planning and Advisory Council representatives on project teams and the Board of Directors.

Thank you very much to the 2022-23 volunteers for all the time and energy you put into bringing a watershed perspective to the Alberta Water Council:

Morris Nesdole	Athabasca Watershed Council
Steve Meadows	
and Mark Bennett	Bow River Basin Council
Tim Romanow	Milk River Watershed Council Canada
Adam Norris	Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance

Agriculture's Water Future Project

Led by WaterSMART Solutions Ltd, this project team is working with stakeholders to develop water stewardship plans across an entire agricultural supply chain. The objective is to measure the costs and benefits of water stewardship planning and implementation so that producers, processors, and end-users can understand the value of potentially becoming certified by the Alliance for Water Stewardship — a global certification process. Thank you to Andy Hurly for serving on this committee on behalf of OWC!



South Saskatchewan River Basin Intra-basin Water Coordinating Committee

The OWC participates in this committee to provide advice to the Government of Alberta on managing water during periods of water shortage and how to best meet the Master Agreement on Apportionment, which shares water between the prairie provinces. Thank you to Martin Van Diemen, Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District, and Doug Kaupp, City of Lethbridge, for serving as OWC's representatives on this vital Committee.

Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association

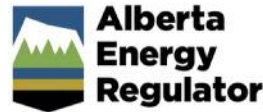
KEPA's Annual Summit is a highlight of the year, where captivating presentations and tours showcase the important work being done by members of Kainai Nation. The 2022 Summit involved three days at different locations across the traditional territory of the Niitsitapi (the real people in Blackfoot). This year's theme was Naapi, oot ahs sip pi sa (the holder of sacred water). Throughout the Summit, attendees experienced powerful Niitsitapi origin stories and learned from traditional ecological knowledge. Thank you to Ninna Piiksii, Kansie Fox, Api'soomaahka, Alvin First Rider, and many others involved in KEPA for your leadership and dedication to KEPA and the

watershed!

Alberta Energy Regulator Multi-Stakeholder Engagement Advisory Committee

This committee provides diverse perspectives to the Alberta Energy Regulator to help improve the regulatory system. In 2022-23, the committee provided input regarding the new Liability Management Framework to reduce orphan wells and abandoned infrastructure and the new geothermal and mineral mining regulations.

This committee is important because it keeps stakeholders informed as regulations change and offers opportunities for discussion about how each sector will be impacted. Thank you to Petra Rowell, Executive Director of the Athabasca Watershed Council, for serving as the Alberta Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils representative on this committee!



Recreation Advisory Group

OWC is a member of the Government of Alberta's Recreation Advisory Group to provide input on recreation management in the headwaters of the Oldman watershed. The group is made up of stakeholders from all sectors, who have important discussions about the implementation of recreation management plans and park management plans. The group discusses linear features density, designated trail systems, infrastructure needs, restoration plans, and much more.

Thank you to Andy Hurly for representing OWC on this important Committee!

Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent

The Roundtable is a network of networks, bringing over 100 groups together from all sectors to share information, resources, and best practices. The forum helps protect the headwaters of North America that provide water to millions of people and flow through a large portion of the continent all the way to the Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Hudson Bay.

Thank you to Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head) for your valuable contributions to the Roundtable and for keeping OWC up to date on the group's projects!

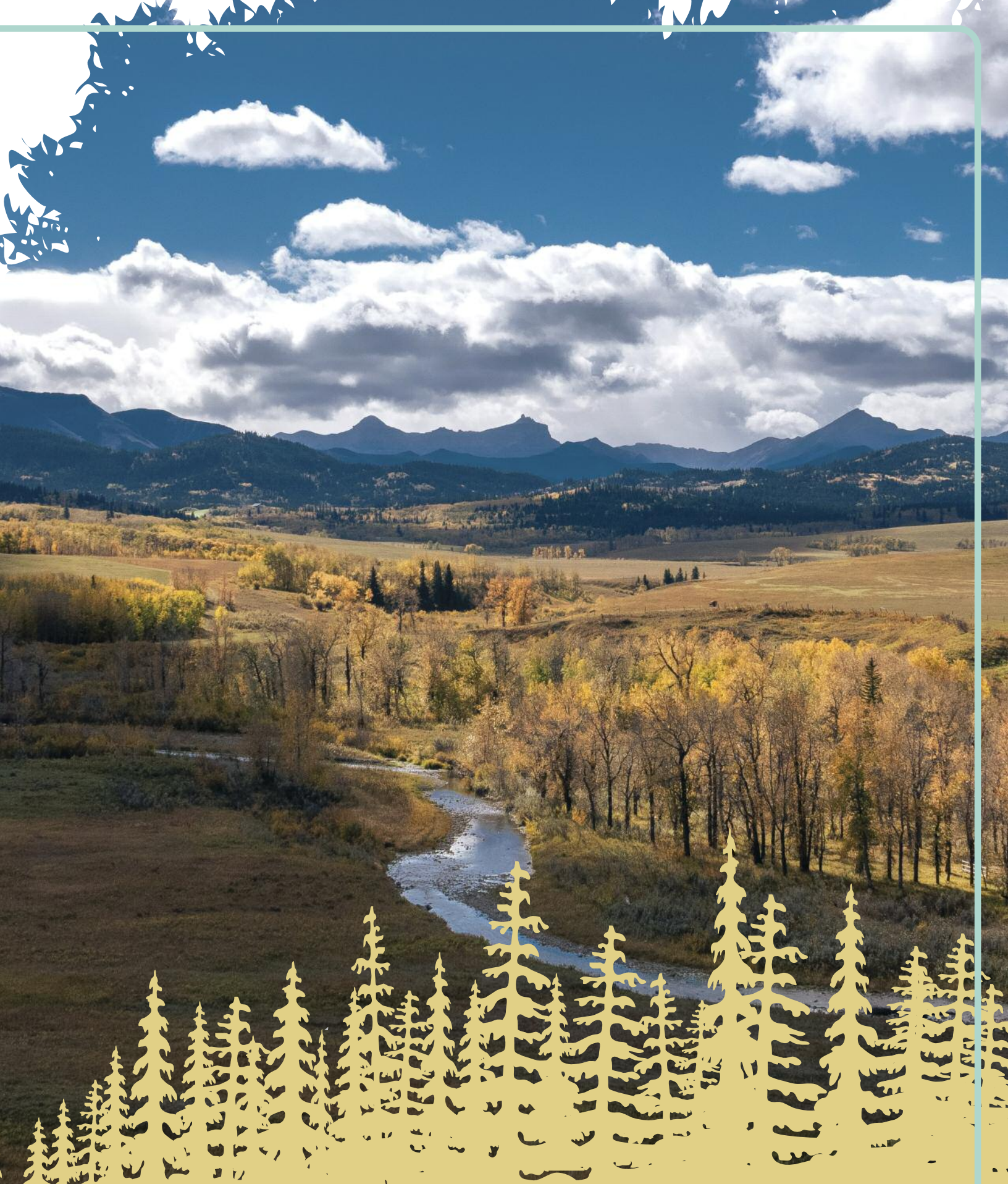
Spray Lake Sawmills / Crowsnest Forest Products Public Advisory Committee

The OWC participates in this committee to provide input to the Forest Management Plan being developed for a portion of the headwaters of the Oldman watershed. The committee's role is to review the Values, Objectives, Indicators, and Targets that guide forest modelling and the forest management plan implementation and evaluation.

International Joint Commission St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study Board Public Advisory Group

The OWC participates in this group to advise on the perspectives and needs of the watershed and its residents who are affected by apportionment of water in the St. Mary watershed and to assist in the development and execution of public engagement activities.







PROFILING THE WATERSHED

This year marked the third year of our Profiling the Watershed project, an experiential learning and virtual reality initiative. Thanks to the support from the RBC Foundation's Tech for Nature grant program, this innovative project consists of two main parts: 1) a VR training program for watershed stewardship, and 2) an immersive environment for climate monitoring using 360° video and ambisonic audio location captures.

The OWC VR experience offers participants an engaging training program where they acquire essential skills for stewardship work in the headwaters, such as invasive species removal and willow staking. Once their training is complete, they venture into a virtual headwaters area where they can apply their newfound skills. The immersive environmental captures take participants on a virtual journey to an authentic real-world location within the watershed, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in the sights and sounds in a format where they are able to direct their experience.

These two components of the experience not only provide valuable knowledge and practical abilities but also foster a deeper connection between participants and their watershed. By experiencing the environment firsthand and engaging with its unique characteristics, participants develop a profound appreciation for their local ecosystem. This place-based learning approach encourages a stronger sense of stewardship and promotes a sustainable relationship with the watershed. The OWC VR experience empowers participants to become active contributors to the preservation and well-being of their natural surroundings.

This year, we were pleased to have delivered the VR program to hundreds of individuals from across age groups and backgrounds in the watershed, further developing the experience along the way. Additionally, we have also gathered ambisonic location captures from around the watershed and look forward to unveiling this new experience in 2023.

Watch for our interactive programming at an event near you, or contact our office to book a private VR experience for yourself, your group, or your organization.

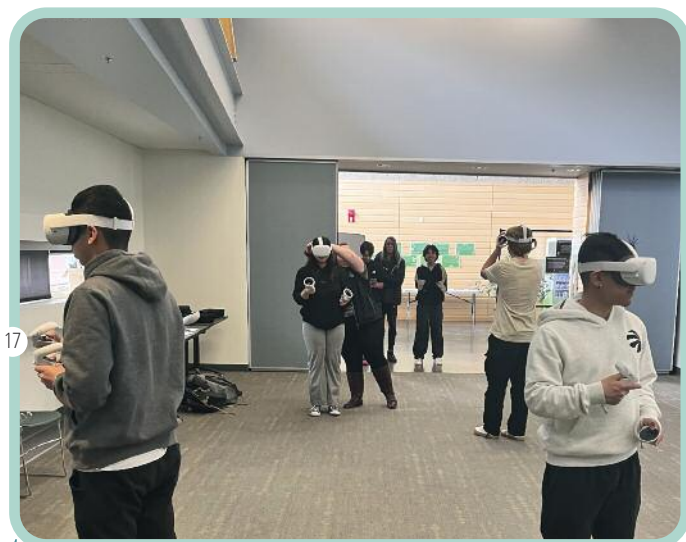
Thank you to the RBC Foundation for their generous support of this project through their Tech for Nature fund.



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WATERSHED LEGACY PROGRAM

Farmers and ranchers have an important responsibility as stewards of our watershed, and the OWC is proud to support them in this vital role. We have been supporting rural watershed enhancement projects since 2009, and since then, we have invested in 77 education and restoration projects. These grassroots, producer-led projects have improved the health of streambanks, fish and wildlife habitat, and water quality, benefiting all of us.

Congratulations to our 2022-23 grant recipients!

Glenfiddich Ranch and You Betula Environmental Inc., who are testing beaver coexistence strategies to protect vegetation along Todd Creek in the MD of Pincher Creek.

The Carlson family, who are fencing a natural spring and a dugout and installing a solar watering trough in the MD of Willow Creek to reduce grazing pressure.

The Fort Macleod Lions, who are planting trees in their campground and along Willow Creek in the MD of Willow Creek to reduce erosion and provide shade.

Thank you to the WLP Team and all our funders!

Watershed Legacy Program Team:



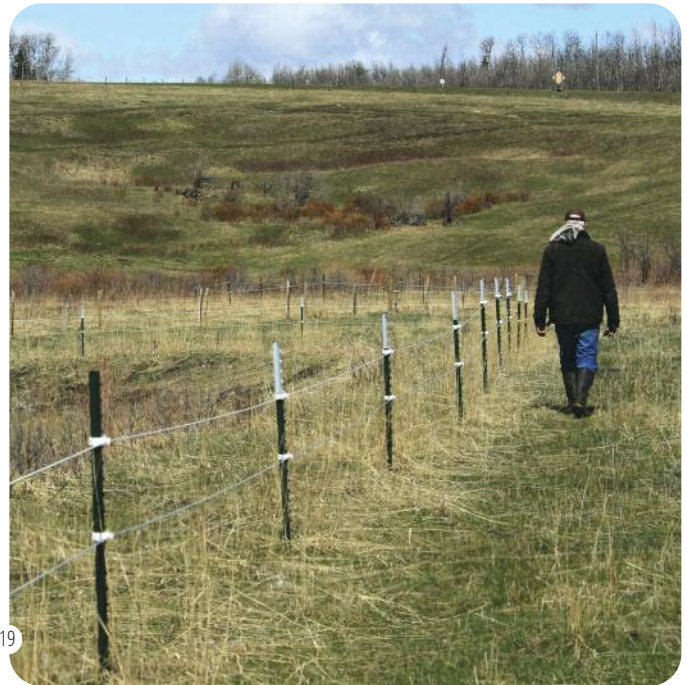
Watershed Legacy Program funders:



Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation



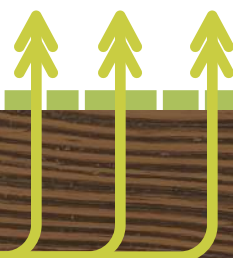
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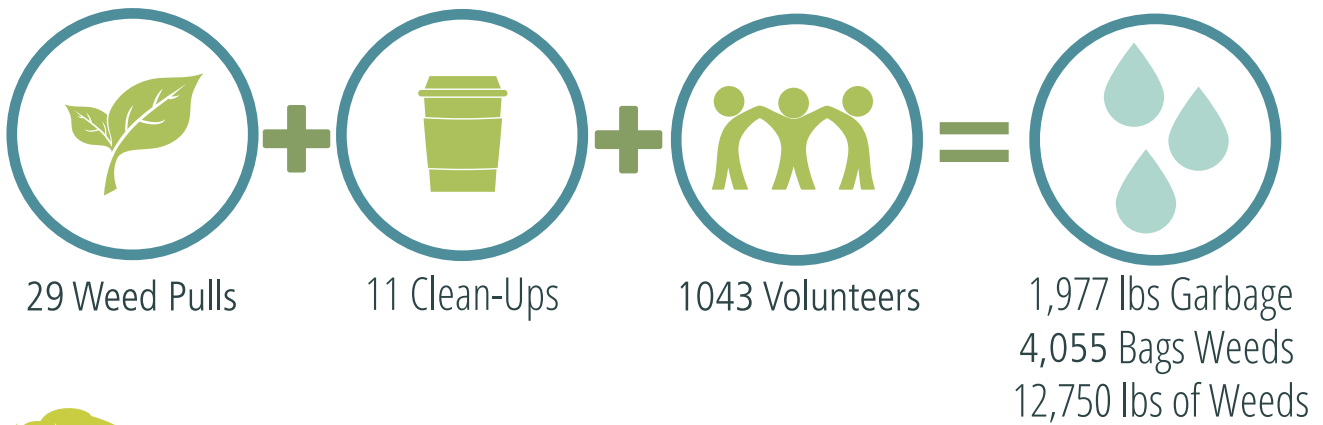
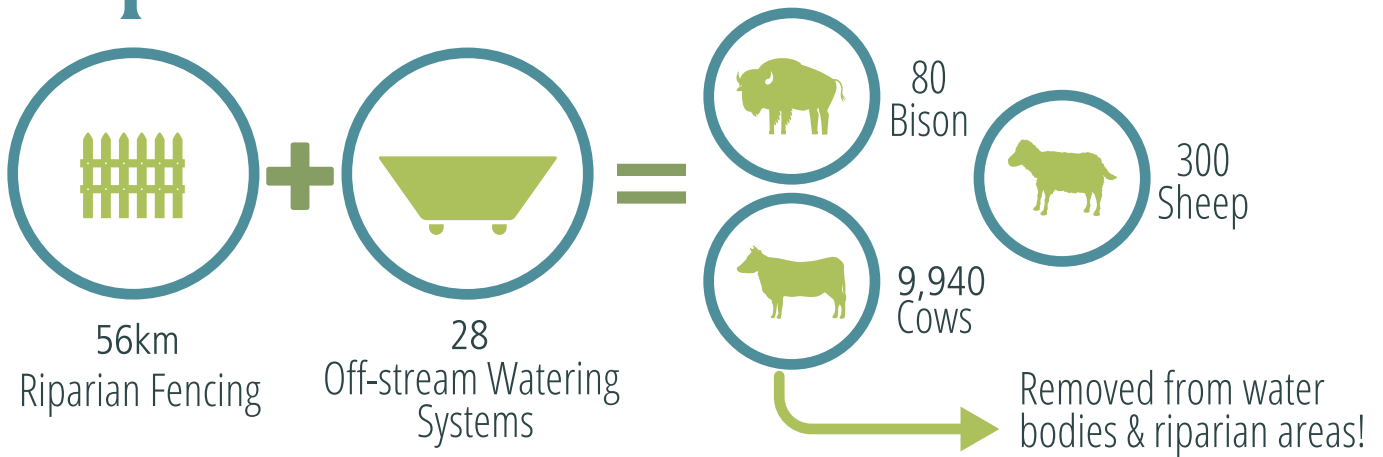
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77 FUNDED PROJECTS

Impacts



14 Hectares Wetland Restored

8 Bio-Control Releases

6 Bioengineering Projects

1900 Willows Planted

304 Plans, Assessments, Surveys

380 People Engaged in Educational Events

2 Cattle Crossings

WATERSHED PLANNING AND ADVISORY COUNCILS OF ALBERTA (WPACs)

The OWC is one of the eleven WPACs in Alberta, with each major river having its own council. WPACs work in four main areas:

- 1) Convening and collaborating
- 2) Education and literacy
- 3) Planning
- 4) Monitoring and reporting

WPACs meet regularly to learn from each other and maintain a strong provincial voice with the Government of Alberta, as well as the Government of Canada more recently. Together, we shape the role and future of WPACs as leaders in watershed management, stakeholder engagement, and environmental education.

Alberta WPACs Collaboration Initiative

This year, we achieved a historic milestone by completing the Alberta WPACs Collaboration Initiative, which focused on developing guiding policies and procedures for our collective work. The initiative aimed to build relationships between WPACs, allow for mutual support, and assist in addressing province-wide topics of mutual interest.

The goal of this project was to strengthen WPACs' ability to collaborate successfully by establishing clear goals and processes. The decision-making process we developed will enhance WPACs' capacity and confidence in working collaboratively at the provincial scale, leading to increased impact and recognition for Alberta WPACs.

As part of this collaborative effort, the Alberta WPACs developed shared vision, mission, and value statements that served as the foundation for developing a decision-making framework. The WPACs of Alberta now have a Governance Manual in place to guide decision-making.

For the first time, WPACs were able to hire a full-time staff member for one year to support their provincial-scale collaboration, thanks to a grant from the Alberta Ecotrust Foundation and contributions from all WPACs. The new Collaboration Initiative Manager worked with all 11 WPACs to coordinate the collaborative work and develop the decision-making process.

Collaboration Initiative Committee

Thank you to committee members for steering the project:

Susanna Bruneau	Collaboration Initiative Manager, Co-Chair
Shannon Frank	Oldman Watershed Council, Co-Chair
Mike Murray	Bow River Basin Council
Josée Methot	Red Deer River Watershed Alliance
Meghan Payne	Lesser Slave Watershed Council
Kayla Hellum	Lakeland Industry & Community Association (Beaver River watershed)
Rhonda Clarke-Gauthier	Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance

Education and Outreach Committee

The WPACs of Alberta also collaborate on provincial-scale education and outreach activities, sharing learnings and programs with each other. Education and Outreach staff from all WPACs are encouraged to work collaboratively, learn from each other, and adopt successful programs from other watersheds. Additionally, the committee hosts an annual webinar for World Water Day. In 2022, the event attracted 100 participants from across the province.





UNITING RURAL PRODUCERS AND URBAN CONSUMERS

Uniting Rural Producers and Urban is a multi-year project with the objective of educating, engaging, and informing urban consumers in Southern Alberta about agriculture and watershed stewardship through a comprehensive suite of communication materials. The program serves as a bridge between individuals not involved in food production systems and those who are.

We had an exceptional third and final year of the project, successfully reaching tens of thousands of people across the watershed. This accomplishment was made possible through our nine-episode web series, "OWC: Eats!", and the "Ten Questions With..." interview series. In these videos, we engaged in meaningful discussions with our agricultural partners about essential aspects of food production, the environment, water, climate, and other topics relevant to our watershed. The videos amassed more than 110K views, while the written interviews have been directly accessed by over 5,000 people on our website.

Furthermore, we hosted a series of five remarkable in-person events, including two farm-to-table dinners, two watershed photography tours, and a local food cooking class. These events were highly popular among the members of our community who were able to attend. **As a result, an overwhelming 91% of participants expressed a stronger sense of connection with food growers, 87% reported an increase in their knowledge of food production, 95% felt a greater sense of empowerment from understanding the origins of their food, and 89% acknowledged the importance of watershed health.** A detailed report highlighting the outcomes of these in-person events is available on our website.

Lastly, we organized a province-wide virtual knowledge-sharing event titled "From the Field: Lessons Learned Delivering Public Agriculture Literacy Programming." More than 50 individuals from diverse sectors, including First Nations, government, non-profits, environmental groups, industry, and our community, joined us for a direct and focused panel-style Q&A discussion with three agriculture communications experts. During this event, we delved into key aspects of effectively communicating with a public audience about agriculture.

We extend our gratitude to the Canadian Agricultural Partnership for their funding and continuous support of the project. Additionally, we express our heartfelt appreciation to all the producers and participants who have played a vital role in bringing this project to life.



22



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 CANADIAN
AGRICULTURAL
PARTNERSHIP

Alberta
Government

 Government
of Canada Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada 





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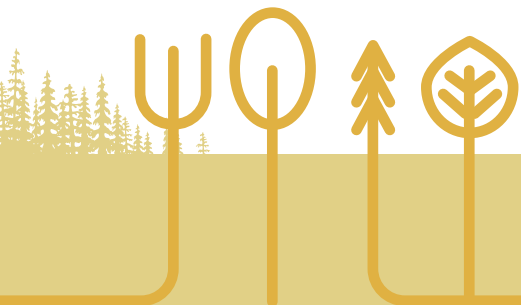
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YOUTH EDUCATION

This year, we are proud to report that our programming reached over 1500 youth and students in our watershed! In addition to public events and family-based outreach activities, we delivered 14 school programs, including:

- The Oldman watershed debut of **X-Stream Science**, a field-based program based on CABIN stream monitoring protocols, adapted for grade 8-12 students. Equipment for this program was purchased the year before with funds from Alberta Conservation Association.
- **Water Quality? Ask the Bugs!** a modified indoor version of a stream bioassessment created by Project WET that fits in perfectly with the grade 9 curriculum.
- **Get Sedimental About Your Watershed**, a program designed specifically for grade 8 students attending Day on the Creek. Students simulate the role of plants in reducing streamside erosion, use scientific equipment to measure turbidity, and discuss implications for water quality.
- **Deep Roots: The Story of Alberta's Grasslands**, a distance learning program in which students learn about Alberta's grasslands and some species at risk found here.
- **Wetland Field Day** organized for grade 5 students by Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association at Police Outpost Provincial Park.
- **Caring for our Watersheds**, in which students are asked to submit a proposal for a project idea to improve their watershed. 85 students from the Oldman watershed submitted proposals this year - and three of them made it into the top 10 in Alberta! Congratulations!
- **Career Fairs** and individually-tailored classroom presentations delivered by request.

Funding

Delivery of our youth education programs is woven into our other projects, and partially funded by:



In partnership with:
 Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association
 Prairie Conservation Forum
 Alberta Parks
 Career Transitions - Southern Alberta
 Battle River Watershed Alliance
 Helen Schuler Nature Centre
 Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association
 Piikani Nation
 AdaptABLE Outdoors





30

Grade 8 students simulated the role of riparian vegetation in preventing sedimentation in creeks at Day on the Creek in Pincher Creek, May 2022.



33

Children and their families learned about native trout on Canada Day at Henderson Lake.



31

Our first delivery of the new X-Stream Science program, Pincher Creek, May 2022.



34

Barons Family Fun Day, July 2022.



32

Students got to examine the skulls of various animals found in our watershed during Wetland Field Day at Police Outpost Provincial Park, September 2022.



35

Grade 5 students explored animals' adaptations during Wetland Field Day at Police Outpost, September 2022.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Membership
increased by **34.1%** 
to **558** members



14

blogs released read by
+10,400 people



88

presentations delivered
to +4052 people



6

times in the news
across Canada



60%

Partnerships increased
to 122



OWC: Eats video

+110,000
views

3643



Twitter



2695



Facebook



1900



LinkedIn



1035



Instagram



468



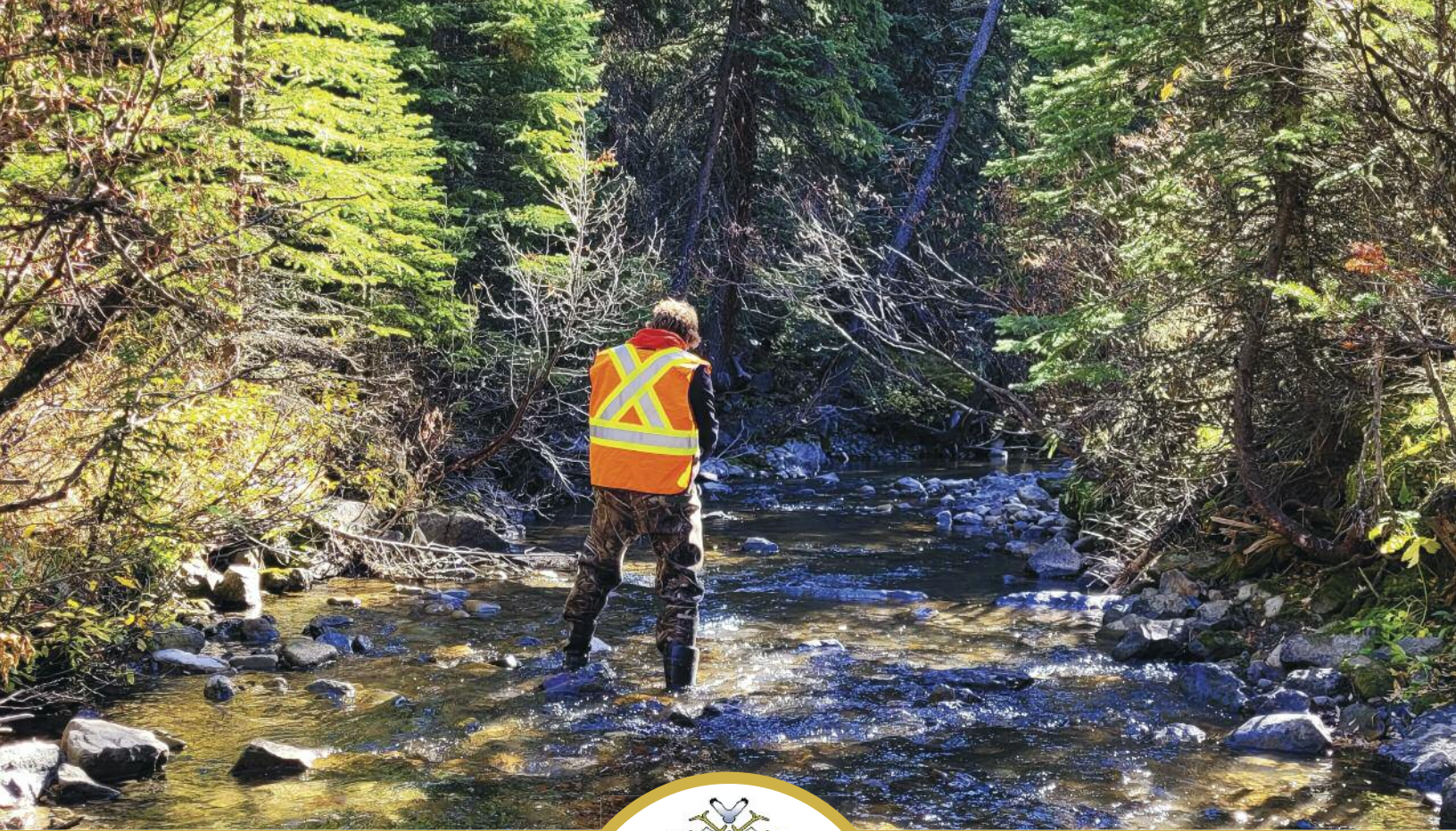
TikTok



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04	OWC	29	Dryden Roesch
05	Conlan Donahue	30	Conlan Donahue
06	Jon Martin	31	Conlan Donahue
07	Conlan Donahue	32	Conlan Donahue
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