



OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL

2021 • 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

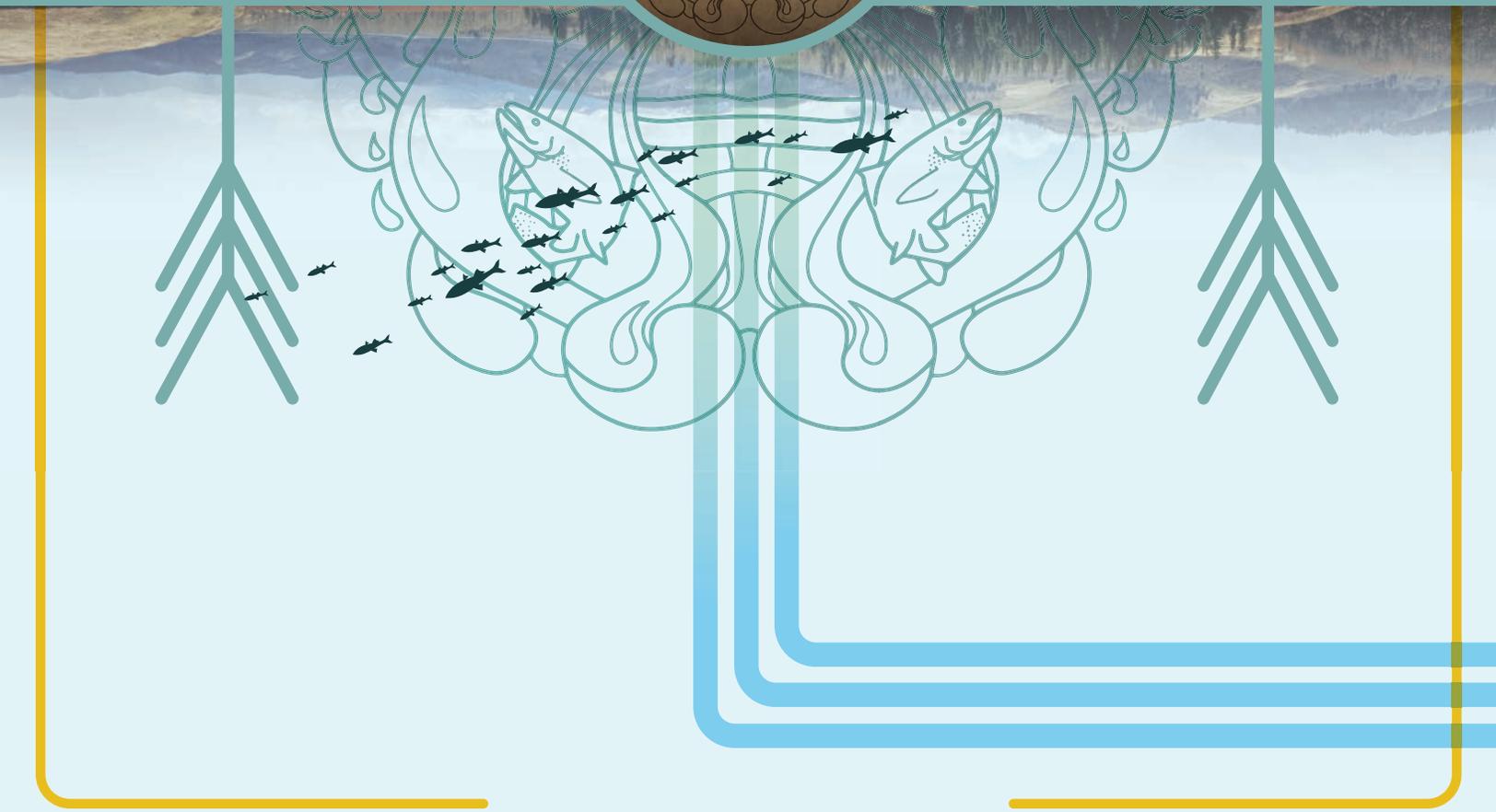
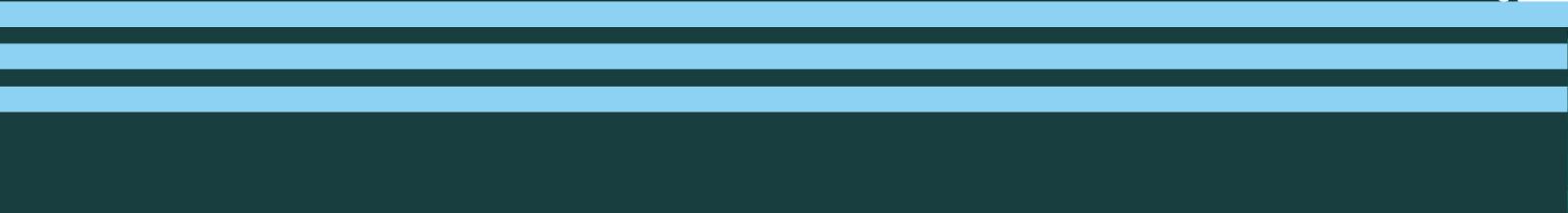


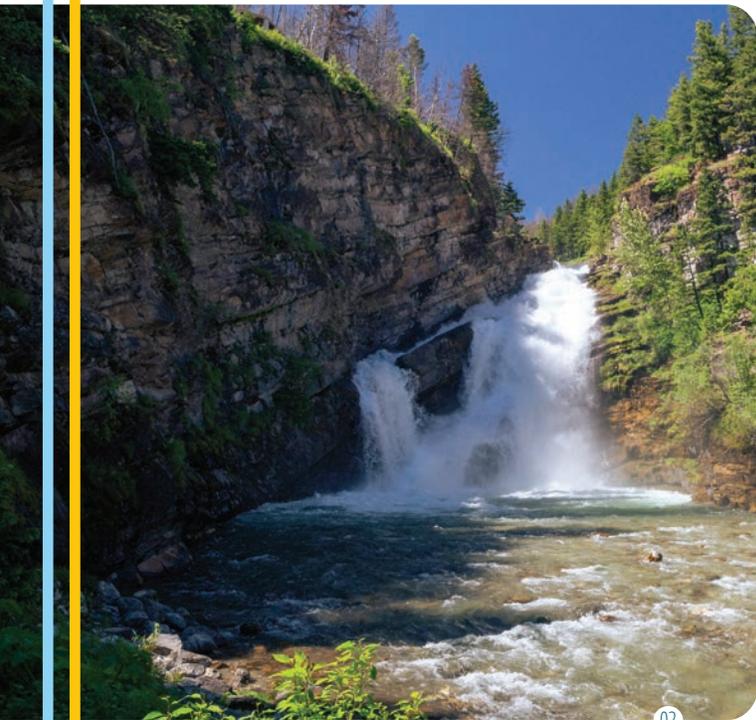


TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 04 • Notes from the Chair and Executive Director
 - 06 • About the Oldman Watershed Council
 - 08 • Board & Staff
 - 10 • Donors & Funders
 - 11 • In-Kind Donations
 - 13 • Financials
 - 14 • Indigenous Partnerships
 - 16 • Partnerships and Committees
 - 18 • 2021-2022 Summary of Achievements
 - 22 • Profiling the Watershed
 - 24 • Headwaters Restoration and Education
 - 26 • Watershed Legacy Program
 - 28 • Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils of Alberta
 - 30 • Uniting Rural Producers with Urban Consumers
 - 32 • Youth Education
 - 34 • Community Outreach
- 
- 



01



NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Our transition to the 'new normal' is underway. We started the year with virtual board meetings, and now, thanks to a very helpful (meeting) Owl, we are able to have hybrid meetings. With assistance from this virtual wildlife, we are facilitating greater participation from across the province and cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions.

Regardless of the format, the Board of Directors continues to fulfill its critical role as a forum for all voices. This year, one of the Board's key achievements was developing a Neutrality Policy to entrench OWC's long history as an unbiased, apolitical, science-based organization into our governance system. I would like to thank Jan Newberry and Jana MacKenzie for leading this effort. We are proud to be neutral and take this role—and the trust that comes with it—very seriously. We have reestablished a public presence with the reopening of our office in a new location and encourage you to stop by. I am looking forward to seeing you again at events and in the field, as we all become more comfortable with in-person interactions.

This was a record breaking year for OWC in many ways and I am so proud to be a part of the amazing team that makes it all possible. Thank you to all our funders, donors, dedicated members, passionate staff, and awesome directors for your hard work and ongoing support for the health of our precious watershed.

Doug Kaupp, MBA, P.Eng.

General Manager, Water and Wastewater
City of Lethbridge





NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year we were determined to learn from the challenges of 2020, namely covid and drought, and bounce back stronger than before. Our team put in the extra kilometres on the road and in the office, and it showed.

This year we smashed records:

- Revenue of over \$1 million
- \$191,100 in support of Indigenous-led watershed stewardship initiatives
- 70 funders and donors
- 414 members from across 14 sectors
- 73 project partners
- 2500 willows planted along 11 streams
- 49 presentations to 1063 people
- 17 people trained in stream monitoring protocol
- Online following of 11,446 people

And we don't intend to slow down—we can't; our environmental challenges are mounting, which puts our communities at risk. The drought conditions in 2021 were devastating to many farmers and ranchers. If similar drought conditions continue in

future years, we will all feel the impact. Long-term drought is the biggest looming threat in our watershed and we must be prepared to adequately face the challenge. As such, OWC is focused on building resilience through tried and true nature based solutions.

For Indigenous leaders nature-based solutions are not just the latest buzzwords—it is a way of life. I have been honoured to learn from Elders and Knowledge Keepers about how living in reciprocity with nature is the only way to achieve real sustainability. By honouring the land and water that provides—and respecting nature's limits—Indigenous People have thrived in Blackfoot Territory for millennia. Newcomers to this land have much to learn from our Indigenous neighbours 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, as they allow for the restoration of the health of the watershed and our relationship to the land.

This was a pivotal year for the 11 Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) of Alberta. We hired our first ever staff person to activate the provincial WPACs Collaboration Initiative and lay the foundations for how we will govern the collective. This is the first crucial step towards scaling up the impressive results we are seeing in our local watersheds. In the future, we will look back and celebrate this year as a historic achievement that kick-started a healthier, more resilient future for Alberta's watersheds.

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 my staff; Sofie, Jon, Kallie, and Susanna, 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

ABOUT THE OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL

The Oldman Watershed Council (OWC) is a not-for-profit organization in Southern Alberta, Canada. 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 and Indigenous communities to improve the Oldman River watershed by:

- improving and sharing knowledge
- building and strengthening stakeholder and Indigenous 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 that is composed of nineteen perspectives from various stakeholder sectors and Indigenous communities, including four members at large.

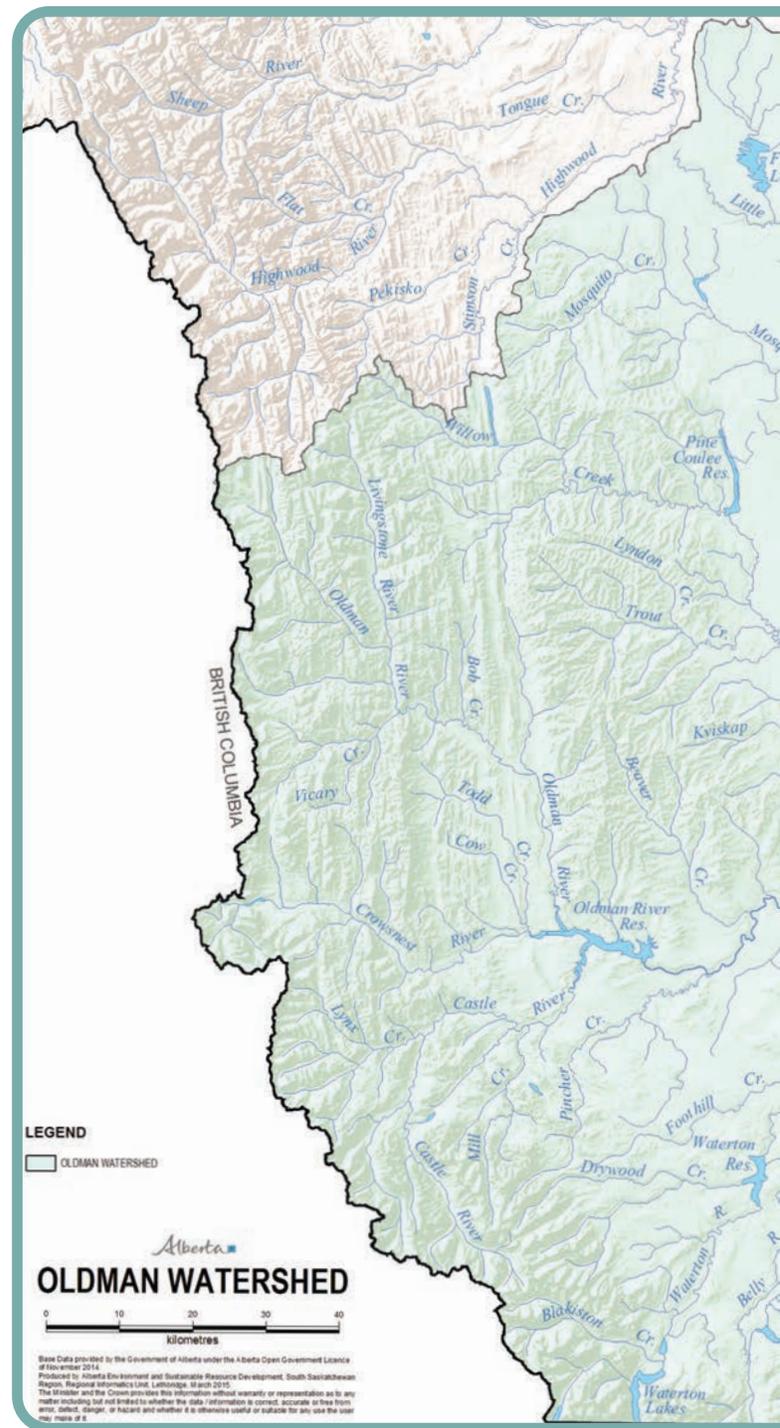
The OWC began to form in September 2004, when the Oldman River Basin Water Quality Initiative merged with the Oldman Basin Advisory Council. When the Province's Water for Life Strategy was released, these two groups combined to provide a diverse partnership knowledgeable in all areas of watershed management,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

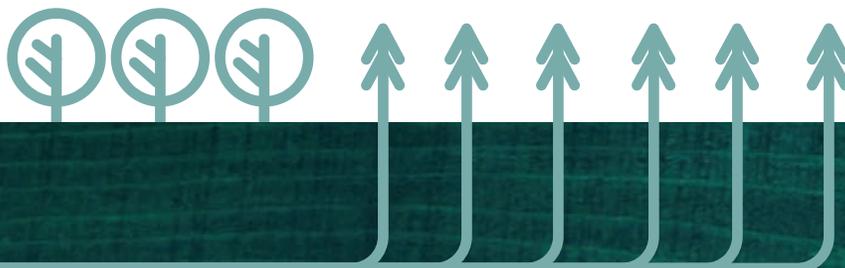
A watershed is an area of land that drains into a water body, like a creek, river, or lake. Our Oldman watershed is all the land that eventually drains into the Oldman River through its tributaries.

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





04

mainstem and its tributaries (Crownsnest, 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 subbasins, 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.



OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Doug Kaupp (Chair)
City of Lethbridge



Andrew Hurly (Vice Chair)
Academia
University of Lethbridge



Alan Harrold (Treasurer)
Irrigators
Lethbridge Northern
Irrigation District



Autumn Barnes
Agriculture
Canola Council of Canada,
Lethbridge College



Maureen Bell
Environment Non-Government
Water Conservation Trust of
Canada



Todd McCoy
Federal Government
Government of Canada



Kristen Dykstra
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



Erik Cline
Member at Large



Jana MacKenzie
Member at Large



Henk De Vlieger
Member at Large



Jan Newberry (resigned)
Member at Large



Chloe Devoy
Member at Large



Randy Bullock
Municipal Districts
and Counties
Cardston County



Linda Cerney
Provincial Government
Alberta Environment
and Parks



Michael Wagner
Provincial Government
Alberta Agriculture
and Forestry



Chad Willms
Provincial Government
(Alternate) Alberta
Environment and Parks



Kent Bullock
Towns and Villages
Village of Bamwell



Heather Caldwell
Towns and Villages
(Alternate)
Town of Coalhurst



Blair Painter (resigned)
Towns and Villages
Municipality of Crownsnest
Pass



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



Anne Stevick
Wildlife & Habitat
Conservation (Alternate)
Rancher

OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL'S STAFF



Shannon Frank
Executive Director
2010 - Present



Sofie Forsstrom
Education Program
Manager 2015 - Present



Jon Martin
Communications Manager
2018 - Present



Kallie Desruisseaux
Office Manager
2018 - Present



Susanna Bruneau
WPAC Collaboration
Initiative Manager
2021 - Present



Brandon Rieger
Outreach Assistant
Summer 2021



Sydney Taplin
Outreach Assistant
Team Lead
Summer 2021



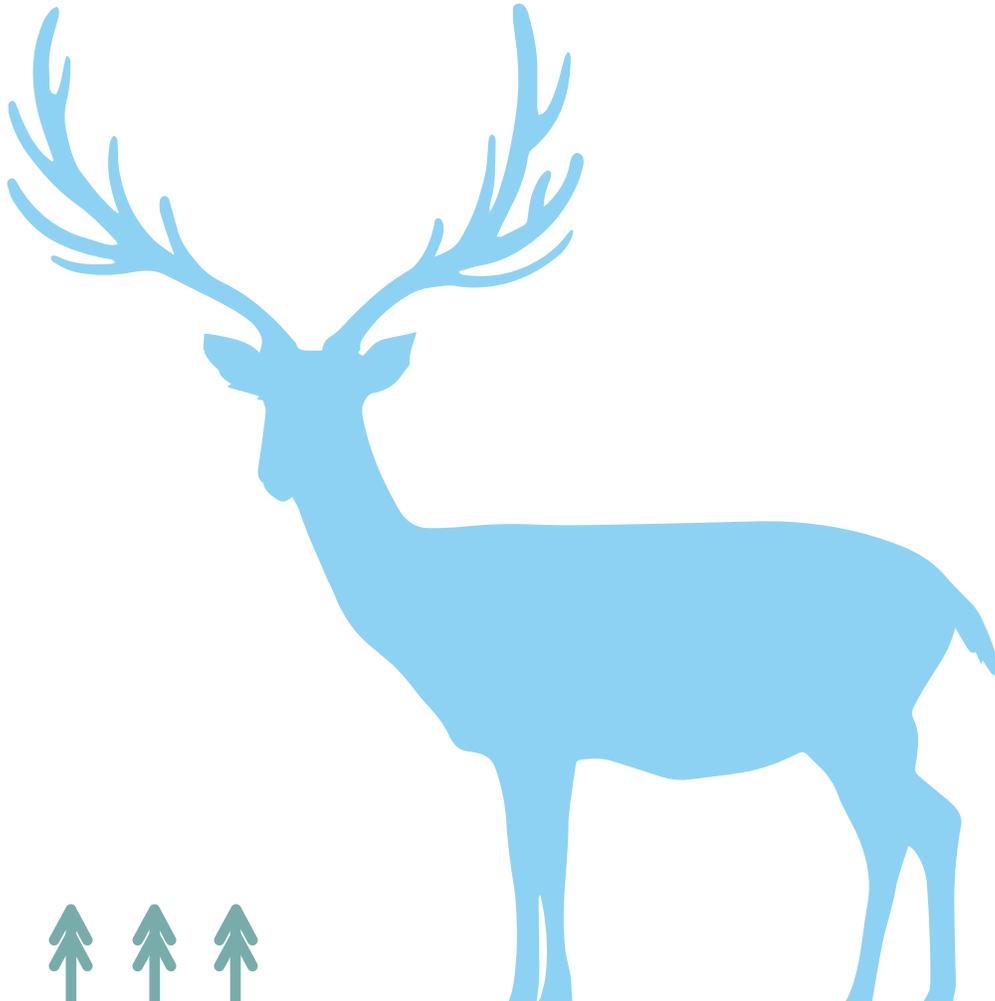
Jessica Tinholt
Outreach Assistant
Summer 2021



Randy Paquette
Outreach Assistant
Summer & Fall 2021



Quiche
Office Dog
2017 - Present





THANKS YOU TO OUR DONORS & FUNDERS 2021 - 2022

Over \$400,000

Government of Alberta - Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program

Over \$250,000

Government of Alberta - Environment and Parks

Over \$100,000

Government of Alberta - Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development

\$25,000 to \$50,000

City of Lethbridge
RBC Foundation
Calgary Foundation
Alberta Ecotrust Foundation
Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation
Spray Lake Sawmills

\$10,000 to \$20,000

Government of Canada - EcoAction
Government of Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
Government of Canada - Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk
Alberta Conservation Association
Edmonton Community Foundation

\$2,400 to \$9,000

Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District
St. Mary River Irrigation District
Lethbridge County
Municipal District of Taber
Calgary Foundation - J.N. Fyvie Family Fund
MD of Pincher Creek
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

\$1,000 to \$2,000

Vulcan County
Town of Pincher Creek
Town of Taber
Town of Fort Macleod
Town of Nanton
Terry Kerkhoff

Under \$1,000

Calgary Foundation - Perlette Fund
Town of Picture Butte
Alberta Irrigation Districts Association
Cheryl Bradley
MD of Ranchland No. 66
Shannon Frank
Helene Wirzba
Doug Kaupp
Raymond Irrigation District
Janice Newberry
Town of Stavely
Anonymous
United Irrigation District
Village of Lomond
Rosemary Jones
Virginia Grinevitch
Andrew Hurly
Village of Cowley
Benevity
Jim Fujikawa
Town of Vauxhall
Autumn Barnes
Heather Sinton
Janna Casson
William D Wyatt
Kallie Val-Zehan Desruisseaux
CanadaHelps
Cade Nixdorf
Graeme Greenlee
Peter Lappin
Curtis Goodman
Cheryl Fujikawa

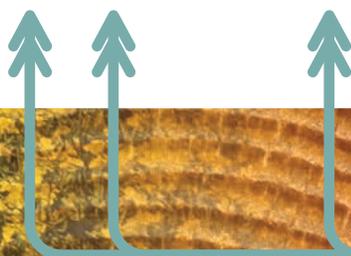


Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation



IN-KIND DONATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS FROM APRIL 1, 2021 TO MARCH 31, 2022

| Description | Person | Organization | Value (\$) |
|---|--|---|------------|
| Board of Directors | | | |
| | Doug Kaupp | City of Lethbridge | 10,625 |
| | Andy Hurly | University of Lethbridge | 9,265 |
| | Alan Harrold | Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District | 4,675 |
| | Jana Mackenzie | | 4,420 |
| | Michael Wagner | Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development | 4,250 |
| | Linda Cerney | Alberta Environment and Parks | 4,085 |
| | Lori Goater | Southern Alberta Group for the Environment | 3,825 |
| | Errol Kutcher | Spray Lake Sawmills | 3,676 |
| | Niina Piiksii | Kainai Environmental Protection Association | 3,501 |
| | Maureen Bell | Water Conservation Trust of Canada | 3,400 |
| | Randall Wolf Tail | Piikani Public Works | 3,400 |
| | Erik Cline | | 3,400 |
| | Henk DeVlieger | | 2,975 |
| | Chad Willms | Alberta Environment and Parks | 2,550 |
| | Autumn Barnes | Canola Council of Canada | 1,700 |
| | Autumn Barnes | Lethbridge College | 1,275 |
| | Chloe DeVoy | | 1,275 |
| | Jan Newberry | | 1,233 |
| | Kristen Dykstra | Alberta Health Services | 1,148 |
| | Todd McCoy | Government of Canada | 1,020 |
| | Cade Nixdorf | Spray Lake Sawmills | 850 |
| | Randy Bullock | Cardston County | 595 |
| | Cam Francis | Cardston County | 595 |
| | Kent Bullock | Village of Barnwell | 595 |
| Indigenous Partnerships | | | |
| | Kansie Fox, Alvin First Rider and team | Blood Tribe Land Management | 85,874 |
| | Noreen Plain Eagle and team | Piikani Nation Land Management | 32,853 |
| | Api'soomaahka | Naapi's Garden and Katoyiss Seed Bank | 27,520 |
| | Students and staff | Piikani Nation Secondary School | 19,575 |
| | Kimmy Shade, Elliot Fox and team | Blackfoot Confederacy | 18,010 |
| | Community volunteers | | 8,253 |
| Headwaters Education and Restoration | | | |
| | Students | Lethbridge College | 18,169 |
| | | Eastern Slopes Biomonitoring Collaborative | 12,920 |
| | Staff | Calgary Heritage Coffee Roasters | 4,760 |
| | Community volunteers | | 4,335 |
| | Recreationists | | 3,270 |



| Description | Person | Organization | Value (\$) |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| | Staff | University of Guelph / WWF | 2,100 |
| | Hélène Wirzba | Alberta Environment and Parks | 2,040 |
| | Amber Bennett | Wirzba Consulting | 1,500 |
| | Tamara Stanley | Upaya Consulting | 1,500 |
| | Denis Haché | Alberta Environment and Parks | 612 |
| | | | 85 |
| Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers | | | |
| | Andrew Martin | Monster Caesar Studios | 1,870 |
| | Api' soomaahka | Naapi's Garden and Katoyiss Seed Bank | 1,360 |
| | Glen Hall | Timber Ridge Ranch | 1,360 |
| | Kelly Hall | Timber Ridge Ranch | 1,360 |
| | Cody Spencer | Sweetgrass Bison | 1,360 |
| | Autumn Barnes | Canola Council of Canada | 170 |
| Watershed Legacy Program | | | |
| | Harry Streeter | T over V Ranch | 13,810 |
| | Glen and Kelly Hall | Timber Ridge Land and Cattle | 6,446 |
| | Cody Spencer | Sweetgrass Bison | 4,480 |
| | Brent Barbero | Barbero Steelhorse Ranch | 3,735 |
| | Tony and Debbie Webster | Webster Ranch | 2,001 |
| | Anne and Quentin Stevick | Bar 15 Simmentals | 2,000 |
| | Autumn Barnes | Canola Council of Canada | 680 |
| | Erin Anderson | MD of Ranchland | 680 |
| | Autumn Barnes | Lethbridge College | 340 |
| | Jamie Puchinger | Farming Smarter | 340 |
| | Lindsey Davidson | Municipality of Crowsnest Pass | 340 |
| | Carla Preachuk | MD of Willow Creek | 340 |
| | Anne Stevick | Bar 15 Simmentals | 340 |
| | | | 360,721 |

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS WHO MAKE THESE VITAL PROJECTS POSSIBLE!



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Summary of Financial Expenditures

| | 2021-2022 | 2020-2021 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Headwaters Restoration and Education | \$362,370 | \$127,504 |
| Indigenous Partnerships | \$219,241 | \$33,666 |
| Administration and Office Space | \$162,807 | \$194,138 |
| Communications | \$87,313 | \$112,799 |
| WPACs of Alberta Collaboration Initiative | \$53,291 | - |
| Watershed Legacy Program | \$22,557 | \$21,820 |
| Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers | \$19,071 | \$19,198 |
| Fundraising | \$2,622 | - |
| Youth Education | \$2,451 | - |
| | \$931,723 | \$509,125 |

For detailed financial information, please see Audited Financial Statements.



INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS

The Oldman watershed is a part of Treaty 7, and the traditional territory of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) People. The Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) includes 4 Nations: Kainai-Blood Tribe, Siksika, Peigan-Piikani, and Aamskapi Pikuni.

Our Indigenous partners continue to teach us how to live lightly on the land and we are honoured to learn from their wisdom and knowledge. The traditions and culture of the Blackfoot are rooted in respect for the Earth and there is much we can learn about sustainability from their time-tested experience living on this land for time immemorial.

In 2021-22, the OWC was proud to invest \$191,100 in local Indigenous-led projects that are supporting cultural and environmental restoration. Our partners from Siksikaitsitapi, Kainai Nation and Piikani Nation are leaders in demonstrating how to braid traditional ecological knowledge and western scientific knowledge together.

We are honoured to be a small part of the many valuable initiatives being undertaken by our Blackfoot partners, and share these highlights from 2021-22:

- The Blackfoot Native Trout Recovery Project is building the capacity of Blackfoot land management staff to complete eDNA sampling, redd (spawning nest) surveys, and habitat restoration across their traditional territory. Learning from and sharing Indigenous knowledge is an important component of the project. Elder interviews, storyboards, and a story map are underway to communicate the value of fish and water to the Blackfoot People. OWC participated in the kick-off workshop in the Upper Oldman to share our work and support the project. We also staked willows together throughout the fall season, and at Dutch Creek, we learned how to give an offering before planting. Elliot Fox, Project Coordinator, shared the results of the project at OWC's Annual General Meeting in June 2021.

- Piikani Nation Land Management is building resilience to climate change by restoring grasslands used for livestock forage and implementing nature-based solutions. Progress is tracked through range health assessments and by establishing range reference sites to use as a comparison over time. Together, with help from students and teachers from Piikani Nation Secondary School, we staked hundreds of willows along Crowlodge Creek to reinforce an eroding cliff.

- Blood Tribe Land Management (BTLM) completed valuable range, riparian, and species assessments to measure the health



of the land and help guide management decisions. The return of the iinnii was a historic moment, and the restoration initiatives underway will ensure habitat and forage for the iinnii is re-established as well. We staked hundreds of willows along the St. Mary River, which will support watershed health, teepees, and sweat lodges. The impact of these restoration activities will be measured through stream health assessments. This year two OWC and six BTLM staff were trained together in how to complete these assessments using the well respected CABIN and STREAM protocols.

- The Kainai Environmental Protection Association is a vital forum that facilitates relationship building and the sharing of information between the many individuals and groups involved in the environmental sector in Naapi's Territory. An annual summit is a landmark event featuring inspiring presentations and tours, but unfortunately had to be cancelled because of the pandemic.
- Naapi's Garden and Katoyiss Seed Bank are initiatives led by Api'soomaahka (Running Coyote) at his home on Kainai Nation. With support from Blood Tribe Land Management, OWC and many partners, the land is being restored. Prescribed burns and goats are assisting with invasive species management, and native seeds, shrubs and willows are being replanted to restore

grasslands and riparian zones. This year, OWC's Outreach Assistants helped plant 700 potted shrubs and grasses, as well as thousands of native seeds. These experiences were featured in a blog on our website. The summer drought meant Api'soomaahka was watering the plants every few days, which is no small job when relying on a cistern. Our special thanks to him for nurturing the plants through the drought! We were honoured to have Api'soomaahka speak at the World Water Day event and share his knowledge with 180 participants from across Alberta.

Thank you to our partners:



**Naapi's Garden
Katoyiss Seed Bank**

Thank you to our funders for making these partnerships possible:



09



10

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 on project teams to shape Government of Alberta policy and provide tools for watershed managers.

In 2021-22, 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 to understand and assess 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 structure, 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 2020-21 volunteers for all the time and energy you put in to bring 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 Hurlly for serving on this committee on behalf of OWC!

South Saskatchewan River Basin Intra-basin Water Coordinating Committee

The OWC participates on 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 Alan Harrold, 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 normally a highlight of the year, where captivating presentations and tours showcase the important work being done by members of the Kainai Nation. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic the KEPA Summit was cancelled in 2021. OWC participates to learn from traditional ecological knowledge and support our Indigenous partners. Thank you to Mike Bruised Head, 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 2021-22, 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 Jim Fujikawa 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.

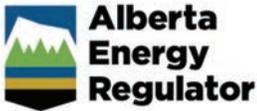
Thank you to Andy Hurly for representing OWC on this important Committee!

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.

Usually, the primary event for the Roundtable is its annual 3-day conference, where participants learn from their neighbours across the Crown of the Continent, and strengthen their transboundary relationships. OWC was planning to assist with organising a 2021 conference in Lethbridge to showcase Indigenous knowledge and local projects, but it was unfortunately cancelled due to the pandemic.

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



**Kainai Ecosystem
Protection Association**

2021-2022 SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

The 11 Watershed Planning and Advisory Council's (WPACs) of Alberta have 4 designated roles under the Government of Alberta's Water for Life Strategy:

1. Convener and Collaborator
2. Planning and Policy
3. Monitoring and Reporting
4. Education and Literacy

OWC's key achievements within each role are highlighted below.

Convener and Collaborator

- More than doubled our core operational grant of \$255,000 from Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) with an additional \$365,918 from non-AEP sources.
- Total revenue of \$1,023,097 from 70 funders, a new record for OWC.
- Received \$360,721 of in-kind support from 73 partners and volunteers.
- Membership of 416, including 37 organisational members from 14 sectors, and 377 individual members.

- 23 board members from 14 sectors donated expertise, time and money, and shared valuable insights that would be nearly impossible to replicate.
- The Board of Directors developed a Neutrality Policy to cement OWC's foundation as an unbiased, apolitical, and diverse forum for all voices.
- Kickstarted the WPACs Collaboration Initiative and are chairing the development of a consensus-based decision-making process and strategic plan, which will provide the foundation for WPACs to contribute to the new Water for Life Action Plan for Alberta.

Planning and Policy

- To achieve the goals within the OWC's Integrated Watershed Management Plan, and the Government of Alberta's South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP), and Livingstone Porcupine Hills Land Footprint Management Plan, we lead and support riparian restoration activities, in collaboration with many partners. This year, we planted over 2500 willow stakes along 11 streambanks. During these planting events, we trained 47 volunteers in proper willow-staking techniques. We also hired a contractor to complete



bioengineering of decommissioned recreation areas along Dutch Creek and invested in 3 riparian enhancement projects led by agricultural producers through our Watershed Legacy Program. Streambank rehabilitation initiatives are critical to enhancing resilience to floods and droughts, the objective of Alberta's Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program, and to ensure the water quality objectives within the SSRP Water Quality Management Framework are met.

- The OWC invested \$141,100 in Indigenous-led environmental initiatives. The funding supported 65 range health assessments, 15 riparian health assessments, the establishment of 10 range reference sites, 4 willow staking events, multiple beneficial management practices on 13 pastures, prescribed burns and goats for invasive species control at Naapi's Garden, and the planting of 700 potted plants and thousands of native seeds to re-establish a native grassland ecosystem.
- The OWC also invested \$50,000 in the Blackfoot Confederacy Native Trout Recovery Project to build the capacity of Blackfoot land management staff to complete eDNA sampling, redd surveys, and habitat restoration. The project also includes knowledge weaving, and

learning from and showcasing Indigenous knowledge through 10 Elder interviews, storyboards, and a story map. This partnership supports Alberta's Native Trout Recovery Program.

- To fulfil our designated role of being "a source of knowledge and regional perspective for related government policy development", the OWC contributed neutral, science-based watershed information and local, multi sector perspectives to 3 government bodies; Alberta's Coal Policy Committee, the Alberta Energy Regulator Multi Stakeholder Engagement and Advisory Committee where WPACs hold a seat, and the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development regarding the formation of the Canada Water Agency.
- Attended 9 hands-on stewardship events to support our partners.



SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

Monitoring and Reporting

- The OWC leads a citizen science stream monitoring program using the highly respected Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN) protocol, which is overseen by Environment and Climate Change Canada. In 2021, we collected benthic invertebrate samples and site characteristics from 8 streams and hired Cows and Fish to perform riparian health assessments along 6 streams on public and park land to measure the efficacy of riparian restoration activities.
- In support of AEP's goal to advance citizen science in Alberta, the OWC is building the capacity of other groups to become certified in using the CABIN protocol. OWC staff assisted with training 9 field technicians in the North Saskatchewan watershed and organised CABIN field training for 2 OWC and 6 Blood Tribe Land Management staff. We continue to host meetings for the Eastern Slopes Biomonitoring Collaborative—a network of experts supporting WPACs and watershed stewardship groups in developing stream biomonitoring programs across the province.

Education and Literacy

- Directly engaged 3500 people, including 550 youth, through 8 projects, 49 presentations, and 35 events.
- Through our Headwaters Education and Restoration project, we hired 4 seasonal Outreach Assistants who spoke to 1024 recreationists about responsible use of public lands, in support of Alberta's Recreational Literacy Strategy. We also completed 218 surveys of recreationists to gauge how behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs have changed since our baseline surveys in 2017. The Outreach Assistants delivered interactive educational programs to 751 people at 14 events.
- To support reconciliation, we hosted Blackfoot speakers at two online events where 235 participants learned from Blackfoot ways of knowing, and through partnerships engaged 273 Indigenous youth in educational activities.
- The OWC continued to support Alberta's curriculum by promoting the Caring for our Watersheds contest; 73 students from two schools submitted 36 proposals, which are being judged in April 2022. We delivered our first two distance learning programs, to 49 students in classrooms and learning online at home.
- Communicated regularly with an online following of 11,446 people.

- Released 19 blogs to educate and engage our membership and followers.
- Further developed a cutting-edge virtual reality experience to instil stewardship behaviours in participants.
- Created 3 videos and 3 written interviews examining beneficial watershed practices by agricultural producers.







PROFILING THE WATERSHED

In 2021-2022, we completed the second year of our high-tech Profiling the Watershed virtual reality and experiential learning project. Made possible by RBC Foundation's Tech for Nature grant program, this future-looking project has two primary components: 1) a custom watershed stewardship virtual reality (VR) training program and 2) an immersive environment, and climate monitoring through 360° and ambisonic audio location captures.

In the OWC VR experience, participants complete training for stewardship work in the headwaters including invasive species removal and willow staking. After their training, they head out to a virtual headwaters area and put their skills to use. The immersive environmental captures allow for participants to be virtually transported to a real-world location within our watershed, experiencing the sights and sounds in a controllable format. Both components equip the participant with knowledge and skills that will deepen their relationship with their watershed and encourage place-based learning.

In the first year of this project, we developed the framework and initial interactive experiences, paving the path for continuation of the project. For the second year of the project, we refined and expanded both components, enriching the VR experience, creating a better user experience, and generating more data points for the interactive environmental captures.

The VR Virtual Watershed Stewardship is available now at in-person events and at the new OWC office (booking required). While we were optimistic that we would be able to deliver the programming to a large number of people last year, the realities of the pandemic required us to limit the number of participants who were able to experience the programming through the head-mounted Oculus units. For the upcoming year, we will be delivering these materials to people in the watershed, and hopefully expanding the project further to encompass more areas and have a greater degree of public access.

We had the pleasure of sharing aspects of the project at the 11th World Environmental Education Congress in Prague in March. It was great to share the ideas, technology, and principles behind the project with an international audience.

Watch for our interactive programming at an event near you. Or contact our office to book a private experience.

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



A beautiful day for an ambisonic location capture in the Castle region.



Capturing willow staking at a WLP site in the foothills.



Sofie and Jon shared some of OWC's work, including *Profiling the Watershed*, at the 11th World Environmental Education Congress in Prague, Czech Republic.

HEADWATERS RESTORATION AND EDUCATION

Surveying Backcountry Recreationists

This year we hired four seasonal Outreach Assistants, Sydney, Jessica, Randy, and Brandon, to conduct recreationist surveys in the backcountry. They completed 218 surveys and spoke to over 1000 recreationists about their values, concerns, and stewardship activities in our headwaters. The results of our 2017 and 2021 survey responses highlight some promising trends, and also help us to identify some areas where more education and engagement may be helpful.

Engaging Recreationists in Through Watershed Education

We delivered various interactive educational programs about benthic macroinvertebrates (insects that live on the bottom of creeks), native fish, and invasive species in 2021. In total, we educated over 750 people at 14 public outreach events and day use areas. The Outreach Assistants also created a beautiful, brand-new educational program, in which participants build a Lego bridge over a model streambank, to encourage keeping wheels out of water. It was very well received at its debut at the 2021 Recreational Stewardship Fair at Caesar's Flats!

The Outreach Assistants also launched OWC's TikTok channel. They created over 70 videos featuring educational content and documenting their summer experiences, from delicious backcountry cooking and environmental trends, to working in a heat wave and general fieldwork fun. You can follow our TikTok account at @oldmanwatershedcouncil.

Restoring Streambanks back to Health

Brandon stayed on after the summer to assist with fall fieldwork. Together with landowners, volunteers, and partners, we stabilized streambanks using bioengineering techniques at nine sites across our headwaters. Each volunteer restoration event included a safety talk, willow-staking demonstration, lots of physical effort and teamwork, and a delicious locally-sourced lunch. We also hired a contractor to complete bioengineering along Dutch Creek. Over 2500 willows were staked into the ground, a new record for OWC!

Watershed Health Assessments

We collected benthic invertebrate samples using the CABIN and STREAM protocols at seven previous or future restoration sites in our headwaters and had riparian health assessments conducted at six sites. One of these sites involved a 5-kilometer hike in with all of our sampling equipment; it was a long but rewarding day! These assessments tell us how healthy our creeks and rivers are, and allow us to monitor the impact of

our restoration activities.

Samples have been submitted to labs for water chemistry, DNA metabarcoding, and morphological / taxonomic analysis. We were pleased that the water quality of our 2020 sites scored 'excellent' or 'very good' based on the Hilsenhoff Biotic Index.

Communicating Results

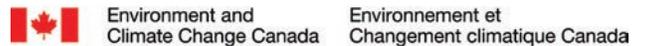
We delivered a number of presentations about this project to audiences across the province, country, and even the world! One highlight of the year was presenting at the 11th World Environmental Education Congress in Prague in March 2022. While networking at the event, our Education Program Manager contributed a video about this project for an 'Environmental Education and Community Engagement' online course that is being offered worldwide in May-June 2022 by Cornell University's Civic Ecology Lab.

Project Support

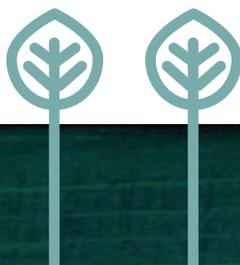
This project was supported by grants and in-kind contributions from:

Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (Government of Alberta), Alberta Conservation Association, Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk, EcoAction Community Funding Program, Canada Summer Jobs, Spray Lake Sawmills, Cows and Fish, Siksikaititapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), Alberta Parks, Calgary Heritage Roasting Company, Wirzba Consulting, Upāya Consulting, Living Lakes Canada, University of Guelph, World Wildlife Fund Canada, and numerous volunteers. Thank you for your support!

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



UPĀYA CONSULTING





21

2021 Outreach Assistants. L-R: Brandon Regier, Randy Paquette, Jessica Tinholt, and team lead Sydney Taplin.



25

Planting willows along West Castle River with Calgary Heritage Roasting Company and Alberta Parks.



22

Follow-up recreationist surveys in the backcountry.



26

Volunteer restoration event at Dutch Creek, November 2021.



23

Teaching families about native fish in our headwaters.



27

OWC's certified CABIN Field Technicians collecting benthic macro-invertebrates to assess aquatic ecosystem health in the headwaters.



24

New "Wheels out of Water" educational activity created by 2021 Outreach Assistants.



28

Hiking 5 km each way to conduct aquatic and riparian assessments at a past restoration site in the headwaters.



29

Sofie presenting OWC's headwaters project at the 11th World Environmental Education Congress in Prague, March 2022.



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 72 education and restoration projects. These grassroots, producer-led projects have improved the health of streambanks, fish and wildlife habitat, and water quality, which benefits all of us.

Congratulations to our 2021-22 grant recipients!

Sweetgrass Bison who are fencing along the Oldman River in Lethbridge County to carefully manage bison grazing within a riparian pasture. This will protect the floodplain, while also providing much needed forage during times of drought.

Bar 15 Simmentals who are installing off-stream watering troughs to attract cattle away from ponds and springs in the Municipal District of Pincher Creek.

T over V Ranch who are reducing grazing pressure on Willow Creek using electric fencing and portable water troughs in the MD of Ranchland.

Thank you to the WLP Team and our Funder!

Watershed Legacy Program Team:



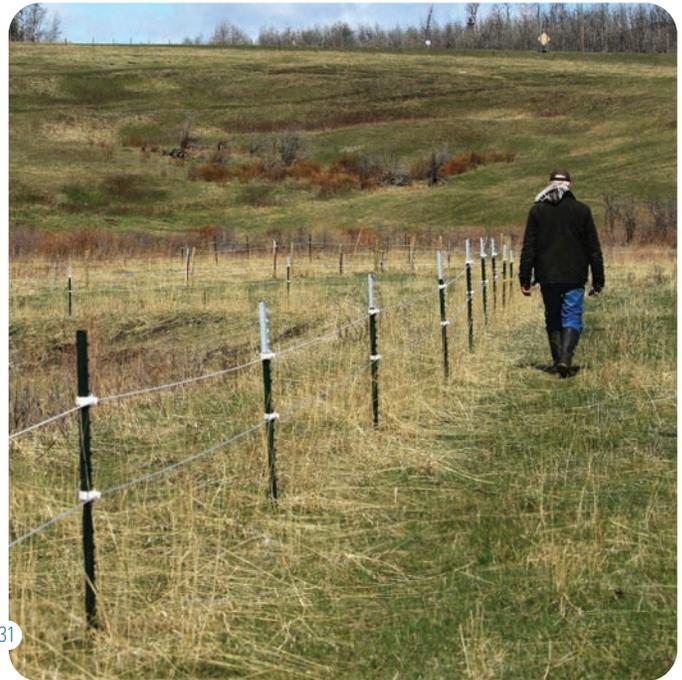
Watershed Legacy Program Funder:



Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation



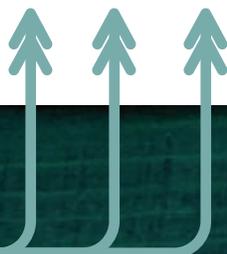
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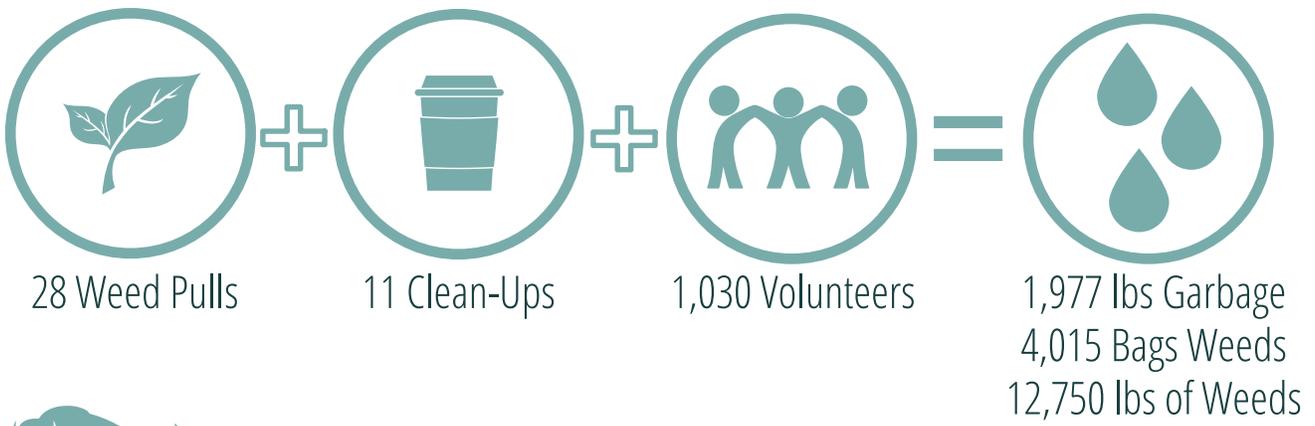
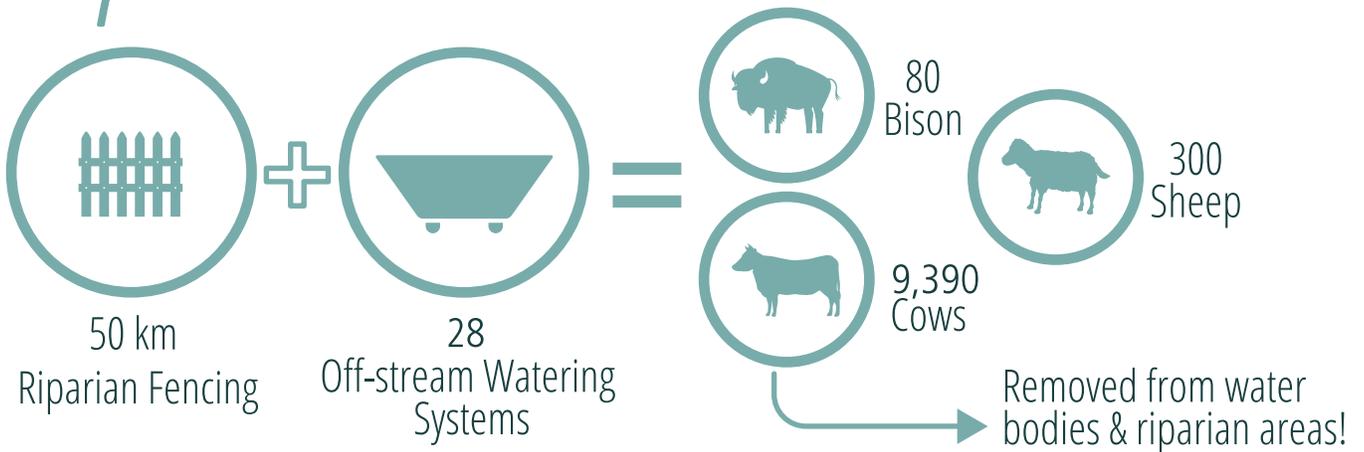
32





72 FUNDED PROJECTS

Impacts



12 Hectares Wetland Restored

8 Bio-Control Releases

6 Bioengineering Projects

1300 Willows Planted

304 Plans, Assessments, Surveys

380 People Engaged in Educational Events

2 Cattle Crossings

WATERSHED PLANNING AND ADVISORY COUNCILS OF ALBERTA (WPACs)

OWC is one of 11 WPACs in Alberta; there is one for each major river. WPACs work in 4 main areas:

1. Convenor and collaborator,
2. Education and literacy,
3. Planning and policy,
4. Monitoring and reporting.

WPACs meet regularly to learn from each other and to maintain a strong provincial voice with the Government of Alberta, and more recently, the Government of Canada. 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 reached a historic milestone and started the Alberta WPACs Collaboration Initiative. The initiative will strengthen relationships between WPACs, allow for mutual support, and assist us in addressing province-wide topics of mutual interest.

The goal of the first year of this project is to strengthen the ability for WPACs to collaborate successfully by setting clear goals, and developing guiding policies and procedures for how we will work together as a collective. The process we develop will build WPAC capacity and our confidence in working collaboratively at the provincial scale. This way, we can have more impact and increase the recognition of Alberta WPACs.

As part of this collaborative work, the Alberta WPACs have developed a shared vision, mission, and value statements to guide decision making.

For the first time, WPACs were able to hire a full time staff person to support their provincial scale collaboration with a grant from Alberta Ecotrust Foundation and contributions from all WPACs. The new Collaboration Initiative Manager works with all 11 WPACs to coordinate the work of the collaborative, as well as developing 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

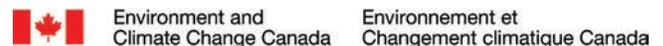
Education and Outreach Committee

The Education and Outreach Committee collectively presented a webinar on UN World Water Day, March 22. The theme for the UN World Water Day 2022 was "Groundwater: Making the Invisible, Visible". Groundwater is a critical source of water for many, especially in rural Alberta. The speaker panel offered unique perspectives from hydrogeologist Dr. Brian Smerdon (University of Alberta), poet/professor Dr. Rita Wong (Emily Carr University), and artist/educator Api'soomaahka (Kainai Nation). The event had over 180 participants, and many elected officials, with a recorded greeting from Minister of Environment and Parks, Jason Nixon. It was a great event which showcased the positive collaborative work of WPACs.

In advance of World Water Day, OWC sponsored an hour of The Road Home on the CKUA Radio Network. Broadcasting across the province (and streaming online for listeners outside of Alberta), the sponsored hour featured music and poetry about rivers and watersheds, and mentioned the important work WPACs do.

OWC's participation in this province wide event was funded by the EcoAction Community Funding Program.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Thank you to our funders and partners for making this initiative possible.





UNITING RURAL PRODUCERS WITH URBAN CONSUMERS

Uniting Rural Producers and Urban Consumers is a multi-year project that aims to educate, engage, and inform urban consumers in Southern Alberta about agriculture and watershed stewardship through a suite of communications materials. The program connects those who are not involved in food production systems, with those who are.

In the second year of the project, we created three episodes of a web series, called OWC: Eats!, where we sit down with an expert involved in food production in our watershed. In the upcoming year, we will be releasing these engaging videos, as well as sharing in-depth written interviews with the producers, and planning live events.

For a number of reasons, including one of the worst droughts we have experienced, 2021 was a tough year for those involved in many areas of food production. It has been such an enlightening and humbling experience to hear these stories first hand and learn more about the innovative work that is being done in our region. Ranging from process improvements and practice changes, to the addition of new physical infrastructure and the restoration of native plant species, what we have learned is inspiring and we are excited to share these stories with you in the coming year.

This project is largely dependent on building meaningful relationships through in-person communication; the ever-changing situation with COVID-19, as well as last year's drought, created a few challenges. Developing a new program under this context also helped shape the focus of our discussions, highlighting the urgency with which we must work to protect our agricultural industry, economy, and watershed from the uncertainty created by a changing climate and severe weather events.

Watch our social channels in the coming months to catch the web series and share in the knowledge offered by the fantastic members of our food production community.

Thank you to CAP for their funding and continued support of the project, as well as a big thank you to all of the producers and participants who have helped make the project come to life.



Bison grazing at Sweetgrass Bison/Riverland Ranch.



Glen and Kelly Hall of Timber Ridge Ranch show off their WLP-funded off-site watering location.



Off-site watering for cattle at Timber Ridge Ranch.





Api' soomaahka shared his story with us at Naapi's Garden.



Api' soomaahka discussing native plants at Naapi's Garden.



Touring a WLP site at Riverland Ranch with Cody Spencer.



Shannon and Jon on set for an episode of OWC:Eats!.



Cody Spencer of Sweetgrass Bison shares his story with us.



Shannon and Api' soomaahka at Naapi's Garden.



YOUTH EDUCATION

This year OWC engaged over 550 youth through our fun and interactive programs. We had 73 students from two local schools submit 36 proposals to the provincial Caring for our Watersheds contest, and a project from Magrath Junior Senior High School placed in the top 10 (out of 275 proposals)!

In July, OWC was invited to talk to the Junior Forest Rangers about benthic macroinvertebrate sampling and how these insects that live on the bottom of creeks tell us about the health of the stream, attended the Pincher Creek Children's Festival in August, and taught Grade 5 students about animal adaptations during the Wetland Field Day at Police Outpost Provincial Park in September. We delivered our first two distance learning programs, both to classrooms and individual students learning online at home.

In 2022 we will begin delivering "X-Stream Science," a curriculum-based stream monitoring school program for junior/senior-high classes. This program was developed by the Battle River Watershed Alliance and the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance, and we look forward to offering it in the Oldman watershed soon!

Project Support

OWC's youth education program is supported in part by the financial and in-kind support from Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum, Waterton Biosphere Reserve, and Battle River Watershed Alliance.



Teaching students about adaptations at the Wetland Field Day in September 2021.



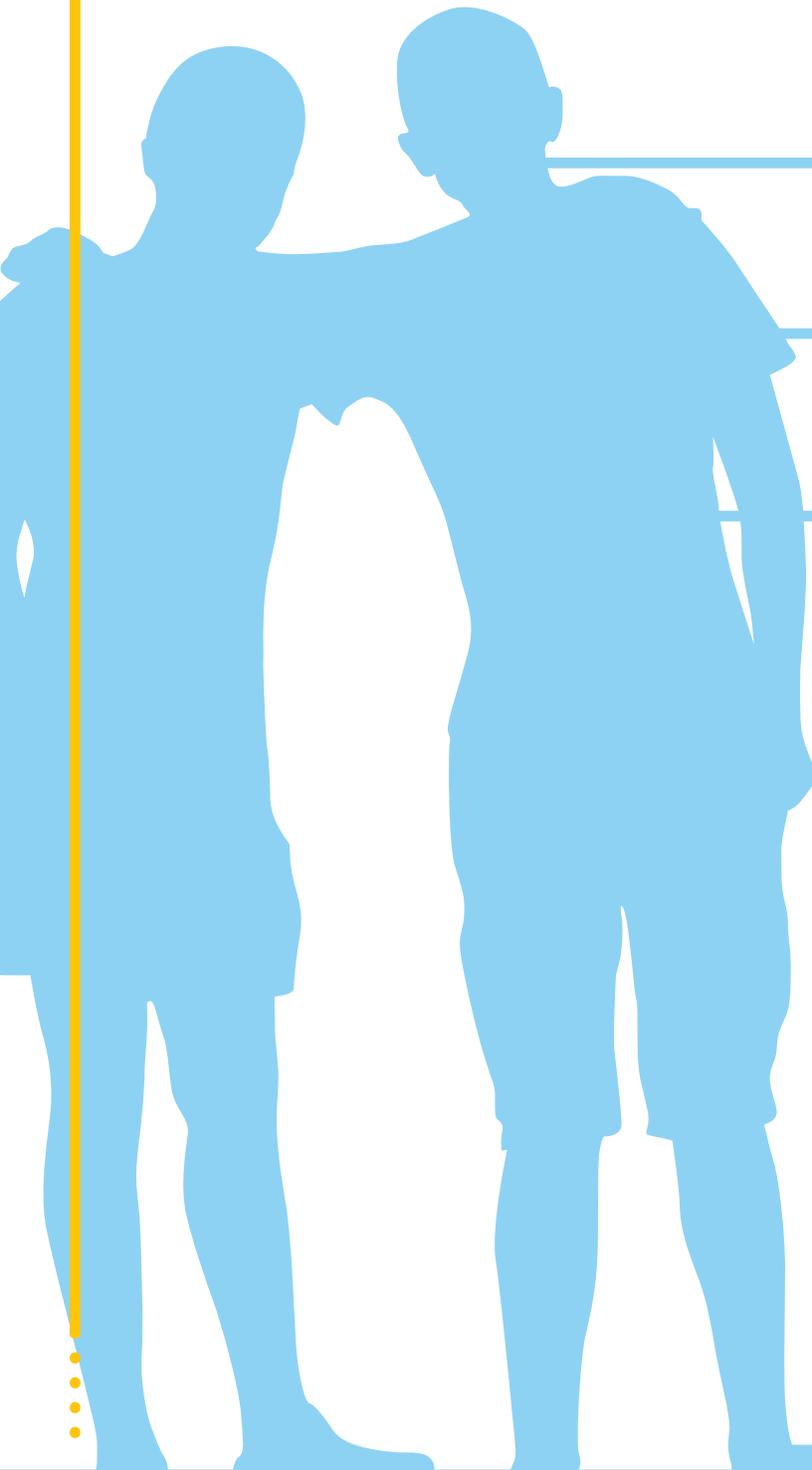
Teaching Junior Forest Rangers about benthic macroinvertebrate sampling in July 2021.





COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Membership increased by 49%



19
blogs released



49
presentations delivered
to +1063 people



9
times in the news
across Canada

3704

Twitter



2259

Facebook



1864

LinkedIn



795

Instagram



393

TikTok



PHOTO CREDITS



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| 05 | Jon Martin | 31 | Jon Martin |
| 06 | Api' soomaahka | 32 | OWC |
| 07 | Randy Paquette | 33 | Randy Paquette |
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| 15 | Jon Martin | 41 | OWC |
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