

OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL



2024 • 2025 ANNUAL REPORT





LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Oldman Watershed Council acknowledges that we live and work on the traditional territory of the Niitsitapi, who have stewarded this land since time immemorial and continue to steward it today. The Oldman watershed and Sikoohkotoki (Lethbridge), where our office is located, are part of Treaty 7 and the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta, District 1. The OWC acknowledges our responsibility to honour the treaties, and commits to working toward reconciliation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

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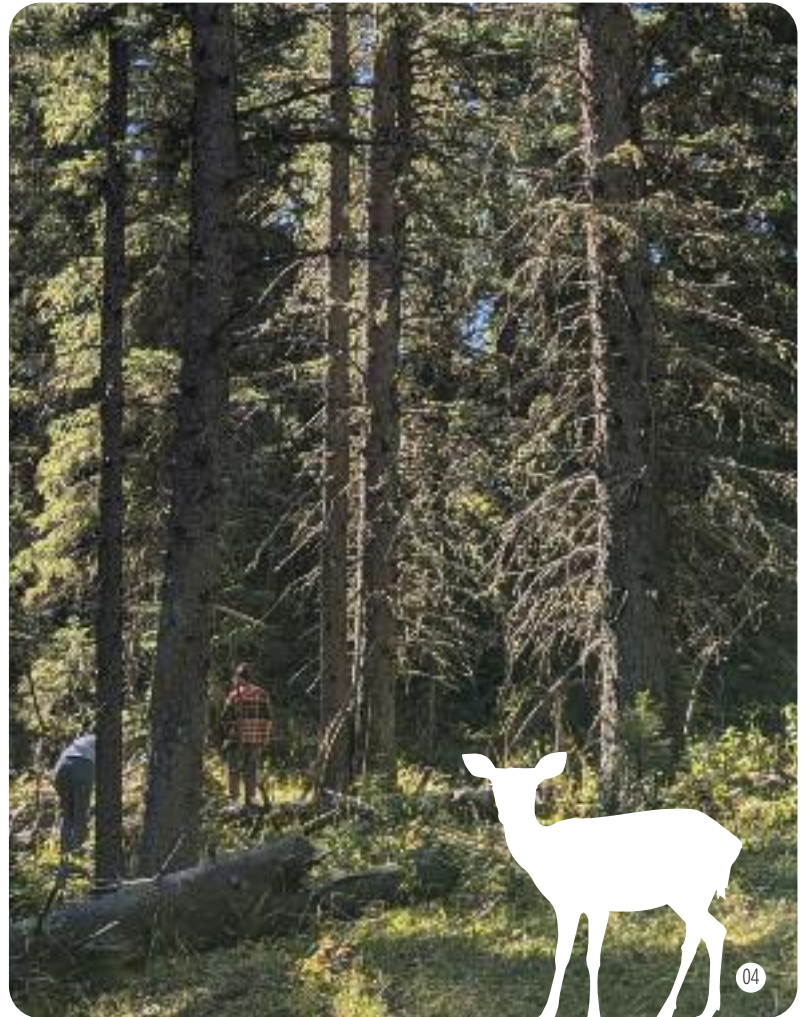
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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

The OWC Board of Directors continues to stand out in its essential role as an effective forum for all voices within our watershed. Our collective experience and wisdom show in the quality of our ongoing governance work intended to improve the organization.

OWC operational highlights include improving watershed literacy, delivering restoration projects, performing surface-water-quality and groundwater monitoring, as well as posting numerous informative blogs on topics ranging from dealing with drought and the potential effects of coal mining to the wonder of native bees. Thank you to our committed funders, generous donors, dedicated volunteers, and enthusiastic staff who make this all possible.

The annual report provides an opportunity to highlight these achievements and share our plans. This past year, the OWC has been very productive. 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 awesome work.

Doug Kaupp, MBA, P.Eng.
City of Lethbridge



NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This fiscal year, OWC launched several exciting initiatives that we are thrilled to share with you in this report.

We welcomed our new Restoration Manager, Debra Still, to the team, and she has hit the ground running—rehabilitating the watershed with partners from Indigenous communities, the agricultural sector, municipalities, and individual stewards, all of whom care deeply about preserving our natural assets. Our restoration activities are complemented by two critical education and engagement programs targeting youth and backcountry recreationists. Education spurs action, and OWC is a regional leader facilitating both.

In November 2024, we hired a Development Manager, Jana MacKenzie, to enhance our fundraising efforts and cement relationships with elected officials across governments. This renewed focus on fund development and government relations is essential for the long-term success of OWC, and I am excited to see OWC taking this crucial step.

We established a valuable partnership with Living Lakes Canada to implement a groundwater education and monitoring program across the Oldman watershed. Their expertise and leadership on this critical topic are adding significant monitoring capacity, with nine new water wells slated for monitoring in 2025, in addition to the thirteen wells monitored by the Government of Alberta.

With renewed funding from the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, we kick-started a new four-year agricultural-literacy program called Connecting People, Innovations, and Solutions. Building on our past achievements, this program will strengthen trust between rural agricultural producers and urban consumers who both rely on the same watershed.

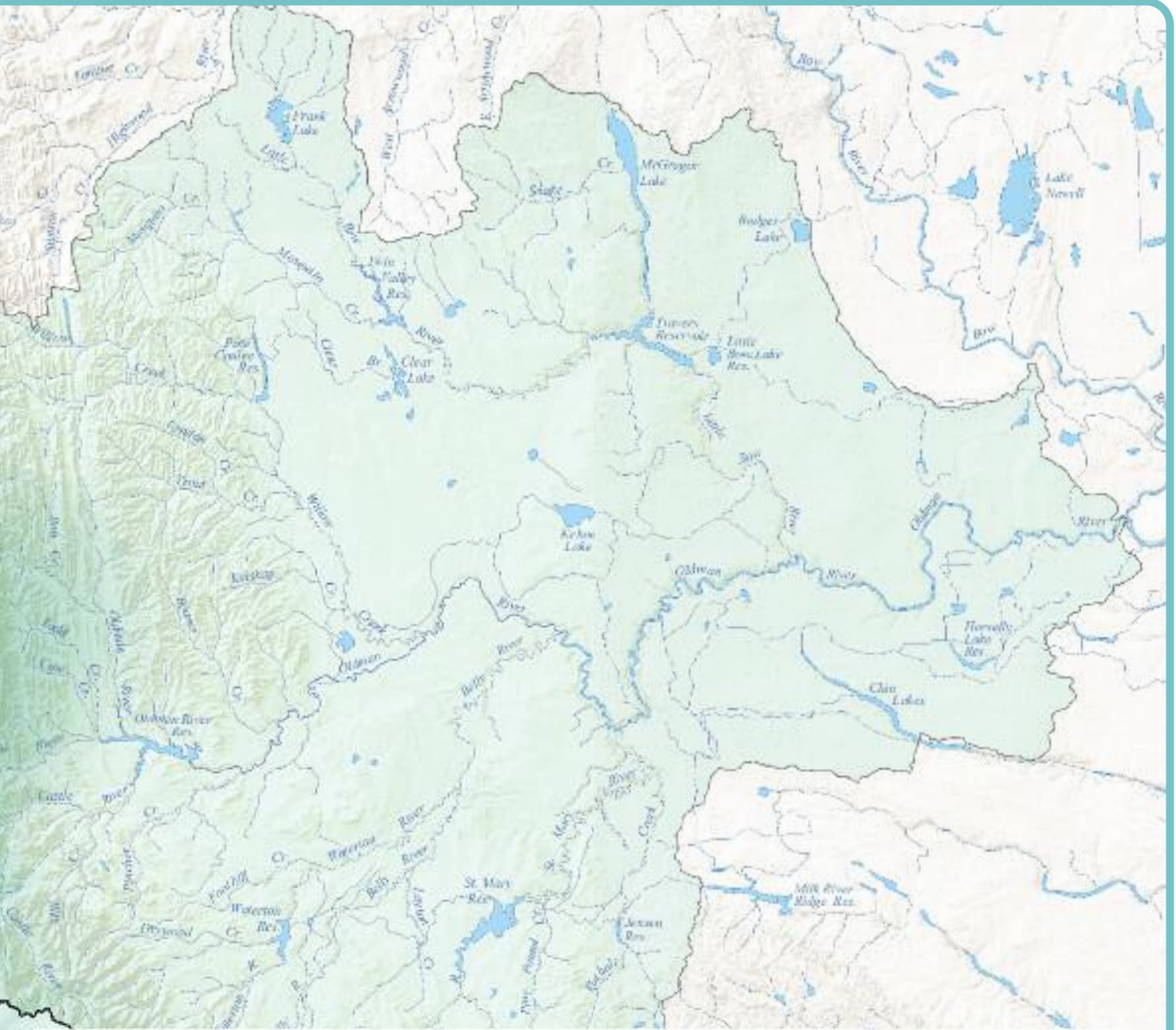
I would like to recognize and thank OWC's phenomenal staff and Board of Directors for another year of exciting accomplishments. Together, we are proving that a small team of dedicated people can make a real difference by working cooperatively. The long-term commitment that many of our staff and Directors have made to OWC gives us incredible stability and consistency, making it possible to dream bigger and achieve more.

A heartfelt thank-you to our many donors, funders, and volunteers who invest their dollars and time in our projects. Your support keeps us going and inspires us each day. A special thank-you to Kim Sturgess, who donated a record-setting \$25,000 this year—our largest-ever personal donation.

2025-26 is shaping up to be another blockbuster year for OWC, and I look forward to working side by side with all of you to make it happen!

Shannon Frank





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
OVERALL	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair

OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Doug Kaupp
(Chair)
City of Lethbridge



Erik Cline
(Treasurer)
Member at Large



Andrew Hurly
(Vice Chair)
Academia
University of Lethbridge



Megan Andre
Environmental Non-Profit
Organization
Nature Conservancy of Canada



Autumn Barnes
Member at Large



Mike Bruised Head
Indigenous
Kainai Ecosystem
Protection Association



Heather Caldwell
Towns and Villages
(Alternate)
Town of Coalhurst



Linda Cerney
Provincial Government
Alberta Environment
and Protected Areas



Rick Cooke
Member at Large



Cheryl Dash
Provincial Government (Alternate)
Alberta Environment
and Protected Areas



Henk De Vlieger
Member at Large



Chris Gallagher
Irrigators
Lethbridge Northern
Irrigation District



Allan Garbutt
Wildlife & Habitat
Conservation Livingstone
Landowners Group



Errol Kutcher
Industry
West Fraser



Cam Gardner
Rural Municipalities
MD of Ranchland



Terrence Lazarus
Member at Large



W.R. (Bill) MacMillan
Agriculture
Lethbridge County



Cade Nixdorf
Industry (Alternate)
West Fraser



Brad Schlossberger
Towns and Villages
Town of Claresholm



Keshav Singh
Federal Government
Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada



Mark Svenson
City of Lethbridge
(Alternate)



Michael Wagner
Provincial Government
Alberta Forestry
and Parks



Randall Wolf Tail
Indigenous
Piikani Public Works



Kristen Dykstra
Health
Alberta Health Services



BOARD OF DIRECTORS ALUMNI

Wade Goin, Health, Alberta Health Services

Martin van Diemen, Irrigators, Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District

Todd McCoy, Government of Canada

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 Val-Zehan
Desruijsseaux
Accountant +
2018 - Present



Rachel Morris
Watershed
Stewardship Assistant
2024 - Present



Debra Still
Restoration Manager
2024 - Present



Jana MacKenzie
Development Manager
2024 - Present



Maria Albuquerque
Watershed
Stewardship Assistant
2023 - 2025



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & FUNDERS 2024 - 2025

Over \$300,000

Government of Alberta
 - Environment and Protected Areas
 Government of Alberta - Watershed
 Resiliency and Restoration Program

\$100,000 and over

Government of Alberta - Sustainable
 Canadian Agricultural Partnership
 Government of Alberta - Public Land
 Trails Grant Program

Over \$50,000

Calgary Foundation
 Government of Canada
 - Habitat Stewardship Program for
 Species at Risk
 City of Lethbridge

\$30,000 to \$40,000

Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis
 Government of Canada
 - Lake Winnipeg Basin Program
 Alberta Ecotrust Foundation
 Government of Alberta
 - Rangeland Sustainability Program
 Samuel Hanen Society for Resource
 Conservation

\$25,000 to \$27,000

Spray Lake Sawmills/West Fraser
 Alberta Conservation Association
 Kim Sturgess

\$10,000 to \$15,000

Health Canada Pest Management
 Regulatory Agency
 Edmonton Community Foundation

\$5,000 to \$10,000

Lethbridge County
 Government of Canada
 - EcoAction Program
 Government of Canada
 - Canada Summer Jobs
 St. Mary River Irrigation District
 Government of Canada - 2 Billion Trees
 Calgary Foundation
 - J.N. Fyvie Family Fund
 CF Industries
 TD Friends of the Environment
 Foundation

\$1,000 to \$4,000

Town of Taber
 Town of Cardston
 Town of Pincher Creek
 Vulcan County
 Town of Fort Macleod
 Calgary Foundation - Perlette Fund
 Terry Kerkhoff
 Cheryl Bradley

Under \$1,000

Town of Picture Butte
 Rod Armstrong
 Magrath Irrigation District
 Shannon Frank
 Alberta Irrigation Districts Association
 M.D. of Ranchland No. 66
 Api'soomaahka, William Singer III
 Village of Barnwell
 Doug Kaupp
 Hélène Wirzba
 Raymond Irrigation District
 Town of Vauxhall
 Crowsnest Conservation Society
 Janice Newberry

Town of Stavely
 James Fujikawa
 United Irrigation District
 Virginia Grinevitch
 Andrew Hurly
 Kirsten Hironaka
 Knud Petersen
 Richard Cooke
 Rosemary Jones
 Anonymous
 Elanore Asselin
 River Collective Co.
 Doug French
 Kristine Mulhall, Reciprocal Waters
 Meagan Charlton, Meagnetic
 Barb Clarke
 Colleen Rosenegger
 Danya Braun
 Elspeth Nickle
 Graeme Greenlee
 Heather Sinton
 Mountain Bluebird Trails
 Riock Roberts
 Trace Associates
 Darcy Turner
 Barbara Lundstad
 Boundary Creek Landowners Association
 Lethbridge & District Horticultural Society
 Peter Jowett
 Ross Hodgetts
 Deighen Blakely
 Diane Conley
 Joy Shelford
 Patricia McBride



Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation



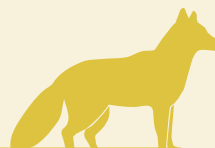
PARTNERSHIPS AND IN-KIND DONATIONS FROM APRIL 1, 2024 TO MARCH 31, 2025

Monitoring and Reporting

Title	Organization	Name	InKind Value (\$)
Community Based Groundwater Monitoring Program	Living Lakes Canada		\$200,000
	BGC Engineering		\$15,000
	Piikani Nation Land Management		\$10,000
	Technical Advisory Team		\$11,000
CABIN Eastern Slopes Collaborative	ABI Environmental	Diane Edwards	\$510
	ABI Environmental	John Swann	\$510
	Alberta Forestry & Parks	Michael Wagner	\$64
	Athabasca Watershed Council	Alysa Kenn	\$170
	Athabasca Watershed Council	Mitch Wincenaylo	\$298
	Athabasca Watershed Council	Sarah Shortt	\$468
	Blackfoot Confederacy	Justin Bruised Head	\$128
	Bow River Basin Council	Brooke Kapeller	\$170
	Bow River Basin Council	Joe Fowler	\$298
	Bow River Basin Council	Mike Murray	\$468
	Elbow River Watershed Partnership	Flora Giesbrecht	\$425
	Environment and Climate Change Canada	Emily McIvor	\$170
	Fisheries and Oceans Canada	Jamie Card	\$170
	fRI Research	Ben Kissinger	\$128
	fRI Research	Benjamin Kissinger	\$170
	fRI Research	Claire Allore	\$128
	fRI Research	Léna Mazuryk	\$128
	Friends of Fish Creek	Emma Stroud	\$170
	Friends of Fish Creek	Ross Anderson	\$298
	Ghost Watershed Alliance Society	Bryne Weerstra	\$638
	Ghost Watershed Alliance Society	Marina Krainer	\$340
	Lesser Slave Watershed Council	Jess Lario	\$298
	Lesser Slave Watershed Council	Kate Lovsin	\$170
	Lesser Slave Watershed Council	Meghan Payne	\$298
	Living Lakes Canada	Renee Lazor	\$128
	Living Lakes Canada	Renee Lazor	\$170
	Living Lakes Canada	Sarah Towne	\$170
	Livingstone Landowners Group	Allan Garbutt	\$128
	Livingstone Landowners Group	Cody Johnson	\$170
	Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance	Ashley Garnham	\$298
	North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance	Michelle Gordy	\$128
	North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance	Rosey Radmanovich	\$170
Parks Canada	Shelley Humphries	\$170	
Red Deer River Watershed Alliance	Darian Coulter	\$510	
Elbow River Watershed Partnership	Flora Giesbrecht	\$170	
Red Deer River Watershed Alliance	Francine Forrest	\$128	



Title	Organization	Name	InKind Value (\$)
CABIN Reference Model	Red Deer River Watershed Alliance	Sam Bennett	\$170
	RiverWatch	Michelle DeBruyne	\$170
	University of Alberta	Jeremy Fitzpatrick	\$128
	University of Calgary	David Barrett	\$213
	Government of Alberta	Wes Greenwood	\$128
	Athabasca Watershed Council	Mitch Wincentaylo	\$340
	Athabasca Watershed Council	Petra Rowell	\$128
	Athabasca Watershed Council	Sarah Shortt	\$638
	Bow River Basin Council	Brooke Kappeler	\$128
	Bow River Basin Council	Joe Fowler	\$468
	Bow River Basin Council	Mike Murray	\$106
	Elbow River Watershed Partnership	Flora Giesbrecht	\$128
	Environment and Climate Change Canada	Emily McIvor	\$340
	Environment and Climate Change Canada	Lana Shrimpton	\$170
	Ghost Watershed Alliance Society	Bryne Weerstra	\$638
	Ghost Watershed Alliance Society	Marina Krainer	\$468
	Government of Alberta	Claire Classen	\$298
	Government of Alberta	Justin Hanisch	\$16,000
	Lesser Slave Watershed Council	Meghan Payne	\$128
	Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance	Adam Norris	\$128
	Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance	Ashley Garnham	\$298
	Miistakis Institute	Danah Duke	\$128
	Miistakis Institute	Ken Sanderson	\$298
	Miistakis Institute	Nilo Sinnatamby	\$298
	North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance	Mary Ellen Shain	\$298
	North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance	Michelle Gordy	\$638
	Parks Canada	Shelley Humphries	\$468
	Red Deer River Watershed Alliance	Darian Coulter	\$638
	Red Deer River Watershed Alliance	Francine Forrest	\$213
	University of Alberta	Jeremy Fitzpatrick	\$6,170
	Bow River Basin Council		\$14,000
	Elbow River Watershed Alliance		\$5,000
Ghost Watershed Alliance Society		\$11,560	
Red Deer River Watershed Alliance		\$4,000	
Training for Stream Sampling	Government of Alberta	Brian Meagher	\$128
Stream Sampling		Lucy Copp	\$43
	Alberta Parks		\$21
	Livingstone Landowners Group	Cody Johnson	\$2,433
	Piikani Nation Lands Department		\$255
Monitoring and Reporting Total			\$312,736



Convening and Collaborating

Title	Organization	Name	InKind Value (\$)		
Board of Directors		Allan Garbutt	\$4,080		
		Autumn Barnes	\$3,400		
		Lethbridge County	Bill MacMillan	\$4,760	
		MD of Ranchland	Cam Gardner	\$680	
			Erik Cline	\$4,080	
			Henk De Vlieger	\$2,040	
			Rick Cooke	\$5,440	
			Terrence Lazarus	\$2,040	
			Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	Keshav Singh	\$2,040
			Alberta Environment and Protected Areas	Cheryl Dash	\$2,720
			Alberta Environment and Protected Areas	Linda Cerney	\$4,760
			Alberta Forestry and Parks	Michael Wagner	\$3,400
			Alberta Health Services	Kristen Dykstra	\$2,720
			Alberta Health Services	Wade Goin	\$2,720
			City of Lethbridge	Doug Kaupp	\$5,440
			City of Lethbridge	Mark Svenson	\$4,080
			Government of Canada	Todd McCoy	\$1,360
			Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association	Ninna Piiksii,	
				Mike Bruised Head	\$3,400
			Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District	Chris Gallagher	\$4,080
			Nature Conservancy of Canada	Megan Andre	\$3,400
			Piikani Public Works	Randall Wolf Tail	\$2,720
			Spray Lake Sawmills/West Fraser	Errol Kutcher	\$4,760
			Town of Claresholm	Brad Schlossberger	\$4,760
			University of Lethbridge	Andy Hurly	\$5,440
		Casino Volunteer		Allan Garbutt	\$510
				Annamarie Harper	\$1,020
Anne Stevick	\$510				
Ansh Padakar	\$510				
Bill MacMillan	\$510				
Brandi Ekelund	\$1,020				
Camila Hollanda	\$510				
Deb Rodda	\$510				
Doug Kaupp	\$510				
Judy Cooke	\$510				
Linda Cerney	\$510				
Lisa Lambert	\$510				
Rick Cooke	\$510				
Shane Dorchak	\$510				
Talayna Ekelund	\$1,020				
Todd McCoy	\$510				
Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership in Alberta	Attended S-CAP Food Producer Consultation Events	Food Producers	\$30,905		

Title	Organization	Name	InKind Value (\$)
	Completed S-CAP Surveys	Individuals	\$14,760
Use of board meeting space throughout the year	Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District		\$1,500
Convening and Collaborating Total			\$141,175

Education and Literacy

Title	Organization	Name	InKind Value (\$)
Outreach		Erik Cline	\$255
		Philip Shields	\$425
		Rebeca Spencer	\$425
	Alberta Parks	Joan Petersen	\$253
	Alberta Parks	Tamara Stanley	\$253
	X-Stream Science Student Field Program	Elliot Fox	\$749
	Milk River Watershed Council Canada	Jessica Olsen	\$680
Education and Literacy Total			\$3,039

Planning and Implementation

Title	Organization	Name	InKind Value (\$)
Assisted with Restoration Activities			
		Alana Bartol	\$785
		Amanda Moreton	\$765
		Api'soomaahka,	
		William Singer III	\$680
		Bette Beswick	\$500
		Bob Springer	\$553
		Brad Tonita	\$1,275
		Emily Purvis	\$1,628
		Linda Christensen	\$298
		Nigel Derksen	\$1,020
		Olivia Lacey	\$255
		Rhonda and	
		Brian Reach	\$1,020
		Sam Moreton	\$595
		Sarah and Harley Green	\$850
		Sheldon Stanley	\$255
		Tamara Stanley	\$255
		Tammie Stafford	\$425
		Toupey Luft and	
		Chris Anderson	\$1,700



Title	Organization	Name	InKind Value (\$)
		Van Singher	\$1,020
	Alberta Health Services	Adam Kehler	\$383
	Alberta Health Services	Cecilia Watt	\$383
	Alberta Health Services	Damien Friesen	\$383
	Alberta Health Services	Elizabeth Jensen	\$383
	Alberta Health Services	Ky Cardall	\$383
	Alberta Health Services	Leland Shepherd	\$383
	Alberta Health Services	Olsa Morne	\$383
	Barbero Steelhorse Ranch	Brent Barbero	\$680
	McCain Foods		\$250
	McCain Foods	Bobby Gilbertson	\$255
	McCain Foods	Cayley Groten	\$255
	McCain Foods	Cole Ritchie	\$255
	McCain Foods	Colin McLean	\$255
	McCain Foods	Daniele Anderson	\$255
	McCain Foods	Kelcey Alemen	\$255
	Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association	Ninna Piiksii,	
		Mike Bruised Head	\$680
	Riverland Ranch	Harley Richards	\$850
	Town of Claresholm	Denise Spencer	\$680
	Windy Coulee Canadian Horses	Heidi Eijgel	\$2,975
Partnership for Restoration Activities	Agroforestry & Woodlot Extension Society	Emily Purvis	\$21,600
Riparian Health Assessment			
& Plant ID workshop	Cows and Fish		\$450
Planning and Implementation Total			\$46,250
Grand Total			\$503,200

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

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL EXPENDITURES

	2024-2025	2023-2024
Restoration and Education Projects	\$ 373,302	\$ 375,702
Administration and Office Space	\$ 157,113	\$ 142,430
Monitoring and Assessments	\$ 142,555	\$ 49,932
Connecting People, Solutions and Innovations	\$ 130,794	-
Government Relations	\$ 46,416	\$ 41,576
Communications	\$ 27,212	\$ 169,398
Youth Education	\$ 21,387	\$ 1,775
Community Engagement and Events	\$ 3,274	\$ 19,485
Fundraising	\$ 2,847	-
WPACs of Alberta Collaboration Initiative	\$ 1,162	\$ 9,418
	\$ 906,062	\$ 809,716

This summary does not include any non-cash expenses (amortization).
For detailed financial information, please see Audited Financial Statements.



2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013

HISTORY OF THE OWC - KEY MILESTONES

- 2003** Alberta's Water for Life Strategy approved, establishing three partnerships (Alberta Water Council, Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils, and local stewardship groups) as mechanisms to achieve goals.
- 2004** Oldman River Basin Water Quality Initiative merged with the Oldman River Basin Advisory Committee to form the Oldman Watershed Council. Initiated a water-wise garden project at Wilson Middle School and conducted a survey on yard care practices and water quality sent to over 2,000 households.
- 2005** Completed the Lethbridge Storm Water Education Program: Design and Evaluation Report. Incorporated as a registered not-for-profit society and created a team for the State of the Watershed Report.
- 2006** Installed wetland interpretive signs in SunRidge. Established five new goals to guide the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP).
- 2007** Launched the Yellow Fish Road stormwater education program and held the first "Holding the Reins: Landowners' Summit" in Fort Macleod.
- 2008** Debuted at the Lethbridge Home & Garden Show; held the first Watershed Science Forum; celebrated 5-year anniversary.
- 2009** Initiated Caring For Our Watershed Youth Contest with Agrium. Hosted the first Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup and Watershed Science Tour. Launched Prairie Urban Garden.
- 2010** Completed the Oldman River State of the Watershed Report and hosted the first Green List Awards. Finalized visioning for the IWMP.
- 2011** Installed wetland interpretive signs at the Birds of Prey Centre in Coaldale. Identified 34 risks for IWMP, establishing eight priority goals.
- 2012** Completed action plan for Goal 1 of the IWMP and conducted the Willow Creek Watershed aquifer mapping and groundwater management planning study.
- 2013** Completed several key projects: Headwaters Indicators Project, Crowsnest Watershed aquifer mapping, and launched the "Xeriscape Your Yard" workshop. Formed the Partnership Advisory Network for the Headwaters Action Plan.



2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024

2014 Undertook multiple studies and rebranded with a new emblem, website, and social media presence. Completed the Dutch Creek Linear Features Classification Project and launched aquatic invasive species awareness.

2015 Began Engaging Recreationists project and organized the first restoration event at Dutch Creek.

2016 Released a film project including a historical timeline, held Voices of the Oldman: Agriculture Matters sessions, and formed the Headwaters Action Team.

2017 Initiated the Southern Alberta Water Charter, launched a highly successful blog, and participated in the first Day on the Creek event.

2018 Held the first Donor Appreciation Lunch, formed new partnerships, and won a custom beer from Phillips Benefit Brew.

2019 Engaged 2,200 people in the Headwaters Restoration and Education project.

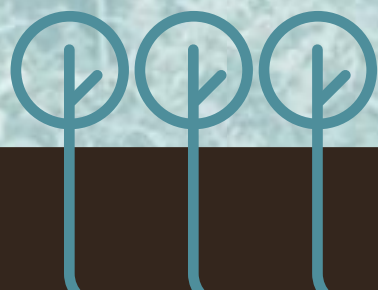
2020 Celebrated 15th anniversary, launched a benthic invertebrate biomonitoring program, and developed virtual reality experience.

2021 Invested in Indigenous-led projects, developed a Neutrality Policy, and created the Eastern Slopes Biomonitoring Collaborative.

2022 Set records in willow planting, training, and membership growth. Launched the Uniting Urban Consumers and Rural Producers project.

2023 Focused on drought communications and pesticide monitoring, explored a new State of the Watershed assessment, and conducted the first Economic Impact analysis revealing significant contributions to the GDP and job creation.

2024 Launched a new groundwater monitoring project in partnership with Living Lakes Canada. Largest personal WPAC donation ever from P. Kim Sturgess.



CONVENING AND COLLABORATING

OWC'S STRATEGIC GOAL

OWC is a diverse, inclusive forum for sharing information, and spurring collective action.

Our community values the OWC's unique role as a neutral convener and catalyst for collective action. We welcome and represent everyone who lives, works, or plays in the watershed

Supports Alberta's Water for Life Strategy Key Direction:

- Water for Life partners are empowered, informed, and fully engaged in watershed stewardship.

Supports Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils' (WPACs) Convening and Collaborating Role:

- WPACs provide a forum for stakeholders and Indigenous communities to share information, and identify, discuss, and recommend priorities within their watershed.
- WPACs work in partnership with stakeholders and Indigenous communities to support or lead projects to address watershed-related issues.

Supporting Community Stewardship

In 2024–25, we completed 17 restoration days and engaged 11 new landowners. These workdays built community capacity by showcasing restoration techniques and expanding public knowledge of drought resiliency. Projects included stream-bank restoration using wattle fencing and willow planting, along with electric fencing that allows beavers to remain without disrupting our work.

Alongside the Piikani and Kainai Nations, OWC continued working with Naapi's Garden and the Katoyiss Seed Bank, completed a Naamoo (bee) educational colouring book, and installed beaver-dam analogues. We have also planned projects for 2025–26, such as an off-site watering system for the linii (bison) initiative, additional willow planting to foster cultural connections, and riparian fencing, with more exciting work to come.

Collaboration with other non-profits keeps collective efforts moving forward. The Beaver Creek Watershed Rehabilitation Project—a partnership with Cows and Fish and Freshwater Conservation Canada—is improving habitat for threatened westslope cutthroat trout in Beaver Creek. Cows and Fish and Freshwater lead riparian health inventories, stakeholder outreach, and habitat improvements using low-tech, process-based restoration. OWC conducts CABIN assessments to establish baseline stream health at restoration sites. By pooling strengths, resources, and expertise, we make a difference in our watershed.

OWC continues to champion the Eastern Slopes Aquatic Biomonitoring Collaborative and—new this year—the Reference Model Project. Guided by OWC, WPACs, stewardship groups, First Nations, researchers, and government agencies are developing aquatic-monitoring programs and building Alberta's first CABIN reference model for the Eastern Slopes.

Canada



ALBERTA
ecotrust



CALGARY
FOUNDATION
FOR COMMUNITY, FOREVER

Alberta
Government



Amplifying our Impact Through Partnerships

Alberta Ecotrust Water Coalition

OWC's Executive Director is a founding member of this new coalition, which is building a stronger voice for Alberta's environmental sector. This year, the Coalition advocated for greater provincial investment in nature-based solutions by meeting with eight Ministers and MLAs. Its main focus was enhanced funding for the provincial Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program, relied on by municipalities, irrigation districts, and nonprofits for natural-infrastructure projects that reduce flood and drought impacts.

As a new network, the Coalition is developing governance structures and a long-term vision. By learning from successful models in other provinces, it has the potential to transform Alberta's environmental sector. OWC is proud to be part of this exciting initiative and thanks Alberta Ecotrust for its leadership.

Drought Response: Water Sharing Agreement Process

OWC was invited to participate as an observer in the Water-Sharing Agreement process facilitated by WaterSMART Water Management Solutions on behalf of the Government of Alberta. Major water users—irrigation districts, municipalities, and industry—voluntarily agreed to significantly reduce consumption due to low supply levels. Separate groups were organized for each watershed, including one for the Oldman River mainstem and one for the southern tributaries. Agreements were activated for both Oldman groups, unlike in the Bow and Red Deer watersheds, where activation was unnecessary.

OWC was impressed by how quickly participants agreed to substantial reductions and signed voluntary agreements. The spirit of collaboration in southwest Alberta remains our greatest strength, and OWC thanks all participants for their cooperation.

Alberta Water Council

Alberta's eleven WPACs hold a seat on the Alberta Water Council Board of Directors and actively participate in project teams that shape provincial policy and create tools for watershed managers. In 2024–25, the Council focused on two projects:

1. Source Water Protection Phase 1 – Risk Assessment

Tools and Data: Developed practical tools and resources to help drinking-water providers and local decision-makers assess source-water risks. The Healthy River Ecosystem Assessment System (THREATS) tool was released in 2024.

2. Improving Drought Resilience in Alberta Through a Simulation:

Enabled communities to test proposed drought-management structures, communication channels, tools, and resources in a workshop setting. The final report and recommendations were released in 2024.

OWC provides input and support to the elected WPAC representatives on project teams and the Board. Thank you to Steve Meadows, Al Corbett, and Doug Kaupp for serving as WPAC representatives.

Economic Development Lethbridge (EDL)

OWC's Executive Director holds a seat on the EDL Board of Directors, representing the environmental sector. Understanding regional economic drivers and their relationship to watershed health—especially during drought conditions—is essential. The Oldman watershed underpins sustainable development, and economic growth is impossible without reliable water. This connection helps OWC build relationships, foster trust, and share information across diverse sectors.

South Saskatchewan River Basin Intra-Basin Water Coordinating Committee

OWC participates on this committee, advising the Government of Alberta on water-shortage management and on meeting the Master Agreement on Apportionment, which allocates water among the Prairie Provinces. Thank you to Martin Van Diemen, Chris Gallagher (Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District), and Doug Kaupp (City of Lethbridge) for representing OWC. Add logo nearby: Government of Alberta

Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association (KEPA)

OWC assists with organizing the annual KEPA Summit and serves as the group's fiscal partner. This year, three workshops developed a new four-year strategic plan. The 2024 Summit spanned three days at locations across Niitsitapi territory, featuring captivating presentations, tours, and powerful stories rooted in traditional ecological knowledge. Thank you to Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head), Api'soomaahka (William Singer III), Makoy'oo'h'kinni (Elliot Fox), and all KEPA members for your leadership and dedication.

Alberta Energy Regulator Multi–Stakeholder Engagement Advisory Committee

This committee provides diverse perspectives to the Alberta Energy Regulator as policies evolve. It keeps stakeholders informed and enables discussion about sector–specific impacts. Thank you to Petra Rowell, Executive Director of the Athabasca Watershed Council, for representing Alberta’s WPACs.

West Fraser / Crowsnest Forest Products Public Advisory Committee

OWC sits on this committee to review the Forest Management Plan for a portion of the Oldman headwaters. The committee examines Values, Objectives, Indicators, and Targets that guide forest modelling, implementation, and evaluation. Thank you to Rick Cooke for representing OWC.

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

This group advises on the diverse perspectives and needs of watershed residents affected by water apportionment in the St. Mary system. Thank you to Cheryl Bradley for keeping OWC informed of study progress.

Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils of Alberta

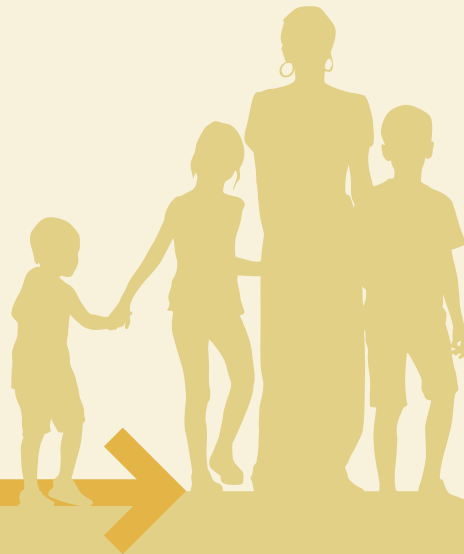
Alberta’s eleven WPACs meet periodically to share learnings, coordinate messaging to the Government of Alberta, and collaborate on initiatives such as World Water Day and the Eastern Slopes Biomonitoring Collaborative.

Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society (AWES)

OWC is a partner in the Two Billion Trees Western Coalition led by AWES, which provides matching funds for tree and willow planting. Our organisations also shared a Restoration Manager position for one year, increasing planting capacity in southern Alberta and enhancing OWC’s restoration initiatives. Thank you to AWES for spearheading this work.

Lethbridge Urban Nature and Environment Roundtable

This informal network of Lethbridge–based organisations meets twice a year to share project updates and identify mutual support. By cross–promoting volunteer opportunities and events, we leverage each other’s networks to engage more people.







PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

OWC'S STRATEGIC GOAL

Plans are implemented, and governments have the watershed information and local knowledge they need to make informed decisions.

Listening to our community and setting priorities together remain critical to collaborative watershed planning and implementation. Through in-depth engagement from 2008 – 2014, we created a shared vision, identified and prioritized risks, and set eight goals within our Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP). Two of those goals have action plans. The **Headwaters Action Plan** captured vital community priorities that informed the Government of Alberta's **South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP)**. Because headwaters protection is a key focus of the SSRP, this represents a significant win for both the watershed and the OWC.

When the SSRP was released in 2014, we shifted from action planning, to supporting implementation of the SSRP and our IWMP goals. We participated actively in the **Livingstone–Porcupine Hills Land Footprint Management Plan** and

Recreation Management Plan public–advisory committees, and we led education initiatives and restoration projects on public land.

As drought conditions intensify and water limitations challenge producers and restoration sites, planning and preparation to enhance climate resilience remain a top priority.

- **Supports Alberta's Water for Life Strategy**
 - **Key Direction:**
 - Albertans will have access to the knowledge required to achieve safe drinking water, healthy aquatic ecosystems, and reliable, high-quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.
- **Supports WPACs' Planning Role:**
 - WPACs provide knowledge and regional perspectives that inform government policy.
 - WPACs prepare IWMPs and coordinate their implementation; government uses these plans as advice for issue identification and regional response.





A Trusted Voice for Vital Information

Partners, elected officials, and members rely on the OWC as a credible source of unbiased information, especially during drought or when contentious issues such as coal development arise.

Decision-makers need timely watershed information and local knowledge when developing plans, policies, and evaluating development applications. The OWC shares this information with elected and senior officials at both the provincial and municipal levels.

Drought dominated 2024 – 25, prompting the Government of Alberta to facilitate historic **Water-Sharing Agreements** among major users. The OWC joined the process as an observer and was encouraged by the collaborative spirit within Oldman-watershed sub-groups, which quickly agreed to reduce consumption.

The province asked watershed councils to support this effort by sharing information and encouraging conservation. **ABwater.ca**, launched in 2023, now hosts five videos, nine blogs, news articles, and resources, attracting 924 page-views this year. We promoted conservation and shared updates at 10 events

and 13 presentations, speaking with 1,307 people in person and tens of thousands more online.

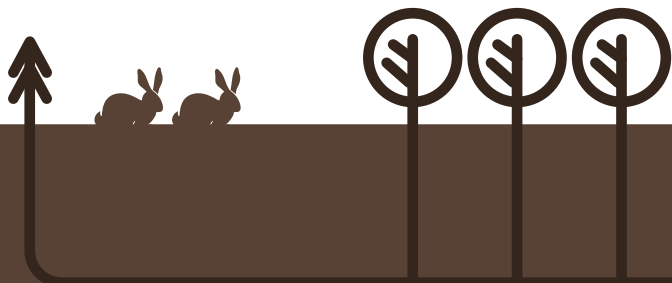
Beyond drought, the OWC provided insight during three provincial engagement processes—*water availability*, a *provincial Nature Strategy*, and the *10-year review of the SSRP*. We emphasized the value of natural infrastructure for water storage and filtration, carbon capture, and biodiversity protection, highlighted monitoring gaps, and identified areas where progress is lagging.

Coal-development impacts remained contentious. We supplied scientific information through one presentation and a frequently-asked-questions blog viewed 1,141 times, and we spoke directly with 500 people at five events.

By offering a neutral forum for all voices, we maintain broad trust across sectors.

Restoring Natural Infrastructure to Improve Water Security

Investing in natural infrastructure is essential to enhance restoration productivity and build a healthier watershed. Planting willows stabilizes streambanks affected by scouring



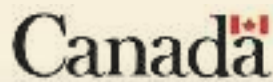
and erosion by trapping sediment, slowing water velocity, and reinforcing soil. In 2024, the OWC planted more than **5,000** willows and trees, completing 12 riparian restorations with 10 landowners—six of them new collaborators—and returning to two sites for additional work. Using locally harvested, climate-adapted willow stock reduces winter kill. We employed plugs and one-gallon pots and transplanted an additional **600** plants on site. These projects restored **4 km** of shoreline, **40,399 m²** of riparian area, and installed 18 beaver-dam analogues (BDAs) and 21 erosion-control structures. The work also generated new projects for 2025.

Grasslands are vital to watershed integrity and biodiversity. In 2024, we began year one of a five-year plan to convert a **28-hectare** crested-wheatgrass field back to native prairie. Following a range-health assessment, we will prescribe a native grass seed mix once invasive-species treatment is complete. We continue to support **Naapi's Garden** and the

Katoyiss Seed Bank, enhancing native prairie plants that are critical to Blackfoot culture. More than **3,000** native plants have been established, a range-health assessment completed, and a photo-monitoring portfolio created to track progress.

Four native bumblebee species—*Gypsy Cuckoo*, *Western*, *Yellow-banded*, and *Suckley's Cuckoo*—are in rapid decline. Restoring grasslands and increasing native-plant diversity are critical to their survival. We are installing four native pollinator gardens each year in Kainai and Piikani Nations, Claresholm (designated critical habitat in 2022), and Lethbridge. Public engagement is vital, so we continue outreach and presentations and will host **bioblitz days** in 2025. We also created **Naamoo**—bee in Blackfoot—a book designed by **Api'soomaahka (William Singer III)**, founder of Naapi's Garden and the Katoyiss Seed Bank, to connect Western and Blackfoot perspectives.

This work is possible thanks to the generous support of our funders: the Government of Canada — Two Billion Trees Program, Habitat Stewardship Program, and EcoAction Program; the Government of Alberta Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program; Alberta Ecotrust Foundation; Calgary Foundation; and the Hanen Society.



Samuel Hanen Society for Resource Conservation



WILLOW METRICS

Willows harvested	Willows planted 2024-2025 (total)	Unrooted willow stakes planted	6" willow plugs planted	1-gallon potted willows planted	Willow Give-Away
600	2035	600	760	675	60

LANDHOLDER METRICS

Planting sites	Properties where planting occurred	New landholders (not worked with OWC previously)	Landholders involved with planting activities (joined with volunteers on planting day)
11	11	6	12

OTHER RELATED METRICS

Beaver dam analogues built	Erosion Control Structured	Native plants installed	Native shrubs/trees	Garbage cleanups	Bags of garbage from garbage cleanups
18	21	3056	4166	1	3



MONITORING AND REPORTING

OWC'S STRATEGIC GOAL

Provide up-to-date watershed health information, and support provincial initiatives.

The first Oldman River State of the Watershed Report was released in 2010. Since then, the OWC has focused on filling the data gaps identified in that report. We have completed groundwater studies, benthic-invertebrate monitoring, riparian-health assessments, pesticide monitoring, and other data-collection activities to broaden the next assessment, scheduled to begin in 2025. Up-to-date watershed information is essential for community members and decision-makers—especially during drought, when difficult choices must be made.

Supports Alberta's Water for Life Strategy

– Key Direction:

- Albertans will have access to the knowledge needed to achieve safe drinking water, healthy aquatic ecosystems, and reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.

Supports Watershed Planning and Advisory Council's (WPACs) Monitoring and Reporting Role:

- WPACs provide information about regional issues and monitoring needs related to watershed health and management.
- WPACs produce 'state of the watershed' reports that identify watershed conditions, local pressures and data / research gaps that should be addressed.

Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN): Sampling and Building a Reference Model for the Eastern Slopes

This was an exciting year for our CABIN work. We trained three new CABIN Field Technicians, sampled an unprecedented 19 sites, and made solid progress on the Eastern Slopes reference-model project. Sampling ran from late August through October. Some days were tougher than others—conditions ranged from hot to snowy, and terrain from steep slopes to cryptic creeks—but every field day was rewarding. We explored beautiful parts of the watershed with a dedicated crew of staff and volunteers.

CABIN is one of the tools OWC uses to establish baseline stream-health conditions and to monitor changes at sites where we implement restoration or beneficial-management practices. This year, we also sampled at partner-led habitat-improvement sites. At the very start of our season, we visited four sites on Beaver Creek—OWC's contribution to the Beaver Creek Watershed Rehabilitation Project with Cows and Fish and Freshwater Conservation Canada (formerly Trout Unlimited Canada). In September, our crew trekked up the Forestry Trunk Road, then continued on foot—with all gear—to sample Salt Creek, where Spray Lake Sawmills installed willows at a bridge crossing in 2022. We spent magical days on the western edge of the Porcupine Hills and out on the prairie near Cardston, where Freshwater Conservation Canada is leading bioengineering work.

OWC continues to build capacity for aquatic biomonitoring by leading the Alberta Eastern Slopes Aquatic Biomonitoring Collaborative. This informal, growing network now includes about 50 people from more than 30 organisations—WPACs, stewardship groups, First Nations, government, research institutions, and more. By using the common, comparable CABIN protocol, members can answer local research questions, contribute to State-of-the-Watershed reporting, and inform watershed management. The collaborative meets virtually several times a year to share updates and discuss project planning, funding, and training.

A subset of CABIN Project Managers met four times to coordinate sampling of reference sites across the Eastern Slopes. Using the final report and GIS files from Phase I (prepared by The Miistakis Institute), Project Managers identified, scouted, and sampled reference sites in their watersheds (Phase II). To date, two entire ecoregions are complete; resources will focus on sampling the remaining seven ecoregions in upcoming seasons. We are pleased with this progress and look forward to completing Alberta's first CABIN reference model for the Eastern Slopes.

Thank you to our funders—Spray Lake Sawmills / West Fraser (via the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta), Alberta Ecotrust Foundation (Environmental Impact Grant), and Government of Canada programs (Lake Winnipeg Basin Program, Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk). We also appreciate the in-kind support of our partners and volunteers:



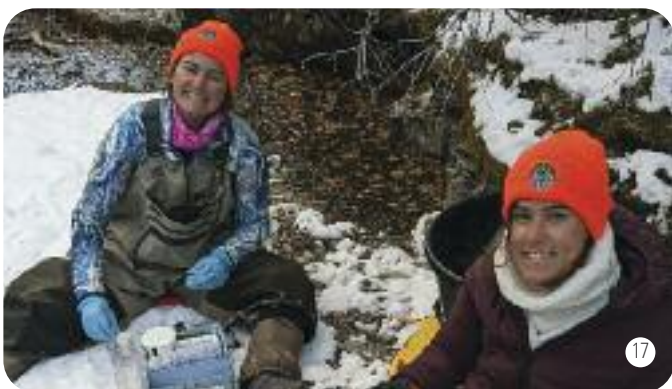
Our first field day of CABIN sampling at Beaver Creek. Kallie, Deb, Sofie, and Rachel.



Newly-certified CABIN Field Technicians Rachel, Deb, and Jeremy with CABIN Trainer Sofie.



Maria straddling the hard-to-find Indian Creek. We spent a lot of time scouting to find our sites this week!



Sampling two sites on Yarrow Creek involved a full day of scouting, hauling equipment up and down some steep slopes, and sitting in the snow while measuring dissolved oxygen (Rachel, left) and processing the invertebrate sample (Maria, right)!

- University of Lethbridge – space for decontamination to prevent the spread of whirling disease
- Landholders – access to sampling sites
- Government of Alberta – research and collection permit, campsite access
- Brian Meagher – trout-redd identification training
- Cody Spencer – volunteer CABIN sampler
- Everyone involved in the Alberta Eastern Slopes Biomonitoring Collaborative

Monitoring the Oldman River for Pesticides

Returning for a second year, the Oldman Watershed Council participated in the Health Canada Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) pilot water-monitoring program—a Canada-wide effort to develop a national pesticide-monitoring framework and showcase federal partnerships with local organisations. OWC collected surface-water samples from two Oldman River locations: Pavan Park (north, downstream of Lethbridge) and Popson Park (south-west, upstream of Lethbridge).

Our accountant-plus-field-hand Kallie led the sampling, collecting 97 samples, each analysed for 205 pesticides. Results from both sites showed pesticide concentrations below established government guidelines, indicating pesticides are not accumulating above expected levels at these points in the river. Thank you to the Health Canada Pest Management Regulatory Agency for investing in this initiative.

Groundwater Monitoring Program

This year, the Oldman Watershed Council launched a partnership with Living Lakes Canada to create a community-based groundwater-monitoring program for the Oldman watershed. Drawing on extensive experience from British Columbia's Columbia watershed, Living Lakes is bringing proven expertise to southwest Alberta at a critical moment: multi-year droughts have heightened the need for reliable water sources, particularly for livestock producers whose creeks, dugouts, and springs have run dry.

During 2024–25, the initiative established a Technical Advisory Team to guide the work, identify local needs, and oversee a data-gap analysis that will determine priority monitoring sites. We also hosted two community-engagement meetings—one in Pincher Creek and one online—to gather input, with two additional workshops scheduled for May 2025.

Using cutting-edge underground-mapping technology, the team located potential water sources beneath a community pasture in collaboration with Piikani Nation Land Management. The next phase will see the partnership install and monitor nine wells, arranged in three clusters across three regions. These wells will substantially expand the watershed's groundwater data set and complement the thirteen wells already monitored by the Government of Alberta.

Thank you to Living Lakes Canada for leading this vital project.

State of the Watershed Assessment

To prepare for the next State of the Watershed Assessment, the OWC interviewed fourteen people to identify the content that would be most useful to future users. The resulting summary report, completed in 2024–25, gave clear guidance. Interviewees emphasized that the assessment should weave Indigenous perspectives together with social and economic data, rather than focusing solely on environmental analysis. They also highlighted the value of an online, interactive platform that can be updated as new information emerges. Municipalities and land managers expressed a strong need for fine-scale data, although existing gaps still make this challenging.

Acting on these insights, the Board created a subcommittee to recommend a course of action. The plan calls for a first year devoted to fund development and partnership building, a second year focused on data analysis, and a third year set aside to complete and release the assessment.

Thank you to Andy Hurly, Linda Cerney, and Cheryl Dash for serving on this committee.



EDUCATION AND LITERACY

OWC'S STRATEGIC GOAL

All residents have opportunities to learn about their watershed and understand how to protect it.

The OWC has always recognized that watershed issues are people issues, and that is why goal 1 of our Integrated Watershed Management Plan is to "improve the understanding and strengthen the commitment of residents to the health of the watershed.

Supports Alberta's Water for Life Strategy Key Direction:

- All sectors understand how their behaviours impact water quality, quantity and the health of aquatic ecosystems, adopt a 'water conservation ethic' and take action.

Supports Watershed Planning and Advisory Council's (WPACs) Education and Literacy Role:

- WPACs will work to improve environmental literacy throughout their watersheds so residents can become better stewards of land and water.

Youth Engagement

This year, we delivered fifteen school programs and two extracurricular sessions to a total of 455 students and youth. Our X-Stream Science field program—where students conduct hands-on sampling in a local creek—expanded to ten sessions, including visits to both Kainai and Piikani Nations. We also offered the Grade 8 field experience *Get Sedimental About Your Watershed*, the Grade 3 classroom presentation *Water Ways*, and our virtual-reality headwaters stewardship program.

In March, we coordinated and led a Project WET (Water Education Today) workshop for educators in the watershed, equipping eighteen teachers with new resources, certification, and greater confidence to deliver water- and climate-focused lessons.



To measure impact, we introduced educator and student surveys this year.

In our 2024 surveys, all educators:

- ✓ strongly agreed that students learned real-world applications of what they are taught in school;
- ✓ agreed that the experience was empowering;
- ✓ felt more confident in their ability to teach students about the topic;
- ✓ felt more connected to their watershed after the activity.

All educators and the majority of students:

- ✓ learned new information and skills;
- ✓ had a better understanding of environmental science following the program.

More than half of students...:

- ✓ agreed that the experience helped them better understand what they have learned in school;
- ✓ believe their actions affect the watershed;
- ✓ want to learn more about their watershed.

Beyond formal programs, our public outreach events engaged another 1,300 youth with games and activities on native fish, invasive species, responsible recreation, and native pollinators.

School program delivery and survey development were supported in part by the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation Grant, the Alberta Conservation Association Conservation, Community, and Education Grant, and the Alberta Branch of the Canadian Water Resources Association.

Virtual Reality and Ambisonic Captures Map

Our Virtual Watershed Stewardship Training program remains a ready to use, hands on experience that transports participants to the Oldman headwaters—allowing them to plant willows, put out campfires, and tackle invasive species in a safe, virtual setting. The experience continues to be delivered at community events, in classrooms, and even in the backcountry, and is available to be booked.

We also maintain OWCmap.ca, the ambisonic capture and 360 video platform that lets users explore key sites across the watershed in an interactive environment. The map's core library is live and accessible so educators, watershed enthusiasts, and residents can explore areas of the watershed at any time.

This year, the same 360 degree video and ambisonic technology moved from outreach into operations. We began piloting it

within our restoration monitoring protocol, capturing immersive scenes at project sites to create a detailed time series record of change. The goal is to develop a practical, multimedia standard that complements traditional measurements and helps future OWC staff—and the public—see and hear how restoration work improves land and water over time.

The core work of these projects was possible in part through the RBC Foundation's Tech for Nature program.

Connecting People, Innovations and Solutions

Improving agricultural literacy and public trust has been identified as a top priority by the agricultural community since the 2017 Voices of the Oldman: Agriculture Matters report, and we continue to listen closely to our community. Through the four year Connecting People, Solutions, and Innovations (CPSI) project, the Oldman Watershed Council is building stronger bridges between producers and consumers while celebrating innovation, stewardship, and shared success across the watershed.

Between November 2024 and February 2025, producer consultation sessions in Taber, Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, and Claresholm gathered more than sixty ranchers, dairy and potato growers, irrigators, brewers, and other agricultural professionals. In the discussions, participants described a range of interests, topics, concerns, and successes, including how precision agriculture, regenerative grazing, and high efficiency irrigation are reshaping their operations, and they spoke passionately about compassionate animal care, soil health, and water conservation—driven by deep family legacies and environmental responsibility. They also highlighted economic pressures and public misconceptions, underscoring the need for transparent storytelling, school engagement, and trusted partnerships that showcase real world farming successes.

To understand consumer perspectives, OWC designed a public survey exploring connection, sustainability, and innovation. Staff and volunteers collected 654 responses—540 at in person events across southwestern Alberta and 114 online. Respondents strongly agreed that water management is vital for sustainable farming, environmental projects are essential to Alberta's future, and new technologies can enhance productivity and stewardship. Many, however, were unsure how Alberta's practices compare with other regions or how eco-friendly methods function on local farms. Seniors reported the highest overall confidence, while younger respondents showed the greatest curiosity about innovation.





The CPSI project will use these findings to guide its next phases, creating a series of communications assets, including videos, hosting live events, and conducting in depth interviews with producers, subject matter experts, and industry leaders. By combining the insights from producers and urban audiences, CPSI will translate the data into clear, practical resources that raise agricultural and environmental literacy, build trust among watershed partners, and support the shared stewardship of land and water.

- This work is funded through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a joint initiative of the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta.

Advancing Recreation Literacy on Public Land

This year's recreation-literacy project built on a decade of backcountry programming and applied proven social-science strategies to encourage sustainable use of designated trails and backcountry areas. The work, identified as the top priority in our Integrated Watershed Management Plan – Headwaters Action Plan, also advanced the Government of Alberta's Recreational Literacy Strategy for Public Lands.

Watershed Stewardship Assistants Maria and Rachel engaged more than 1,330 recreationists through face-to-face conversations at seven public events and targeted backcountry programs. By setting up interactive displays with games, information, and giveaways at popular staging areas, and by roving random-camping zones to meet people where they were, staff sparked respectful discussions that evoked personal values, deepened understanding of recreational impacts, and promoted responsible behaviour. OWC also supported partner events such as trail building with the Alberta Hiking Association, a cleanup with the Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad, the Alberta Native Trout Council Angling Fair, Syncline Outdoor Day, and Family Ice Fishing Day with Alberta Parks.

We revived our "For the Love of" campaign, inviting twenty groups and individuals to share on a whiteboard and social media what they cherish about the backcountry and how they plan to care for it. Their passions ranged from fishing, trees, camping, and wildlife to mountain views, paddle boarding, quadding, side-by-siding, exploring, and creating family memories. Pledges included using bridges, packing out garbage, practising Leave No Trace, preventing the spread of invasive plants, handling fish properly, never leaving food unattended, and teaching children to respect the land.

New this year was a winter-outreach effort aimed at hunters, snowmobilers, skiers, and snowshoers. We adapted our games and display materials for cold-weather activities, attended indoor and outdoor events, and took advantage of Alberta's sunny winters—supplemented by warm layers and fire pits courtesy of event hosts—to keep conversations comfortable and engaging.

Another innovative element involved documenting four popular recreation areas with 360-degree video and ambisonic audio. Captures of random-camping spots, motorized trails, a bridge crossing, and a non-motorized multi-use trail were taken during summer, fall, and winter, underscoring Albertans' year-round love for public lands.

Overall, recreationists welcomed the chance to talk, play, and share their affection for the backcountry. Families particularly enjoyed the interactive games and the "For the Love of" campaign. Most participants saw themselves as responsible recreationists and were receptive to ideas for reducing their impact and caring for the places they hold dear.

This project was funded by the Government of Alberta's Public Land Trails Grant.



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



Alberta

Canada



Membership
increased by **12%**
to **734** members
from 12 sectors

81 funders
and donors

Partnerships
up **12%**
to **217**

10 people trained in
willow staking
techniques

14
new blogs

Over
27,500
views of 5 videos
on Facebook

\$503,200
of in-kind support from
167 partners and volunteers

4,934
people directly engaged,
including **1,376** youth,
through **57** events

23,000
website visits with
20,000 unique visitors

11,721
people read blogs on
our website (our Whirling
Disease blog was read over
3,105 times this year!)

3 people trained in the CABIN
stream monitoring protocol
at 1 training event

Facebook
3,109

2,045 willows
1,890 shrubs
1,110 trees
3,056 other
native plants

planted at **16** restoration events

2,031
people subscribe
to our newsletter

LinkedIn
1,988

Instagram
1,292

TikTok
697

Social Media



27

28

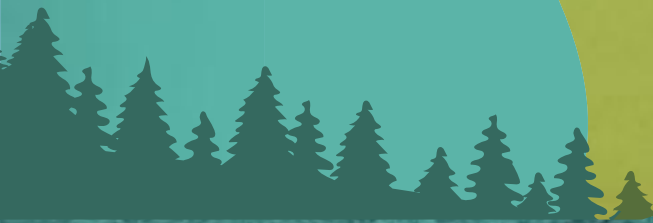


PHOTO CREDITS

Photo

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