



Elk River Watershed
Qukin ʔamakʔis
Collaborative Monitoring Program
Program Charter

(Final and Approved - v14 - May 8, 2023)

Purpose of this Charter

This Charter is the foundational document in which we, the Collaborative Partners, agree to the Program's objectives, principles, and implementation responsibilities and commit to common action.

As Partners of the Elk River Watershed Monitoring Collaborative ('The Monitoring Collaborative'), we commit to work collaboratively to help deliver the Elk River Watershed Collaborative Monitoring Program ('The Program') to achieve our shared goal and objectives.

Land Acknowledgement

We, the Collaborative Partners, recognize and will work with an open heart to ensure that the Program is built on the understanding that the Elk River watershed is shared with *Yaqit ʔa-knuqʔi* 'it and the Ktunaxa peoples.

Program Need

The wide set of interests using the Elk River have a need for independent information on the state of the Elk River and its tributaries to understand what is "*in tune*" and what is "*out of sync*" in the watershed.

Information needs to take into account the cumulative effects and specific impacts of land, water and resource uses and pressures, as well as climate change impacts, on *ʔa-kxamís qápi qapsin'*: (All Living Things) in *Qukin ʔamakʔis* (the Elk River Valley). There is a wide array of disparate environmental monitoring activities underway in the Elk Valley for a variety of purposes. Addressing the issues faced in the watershed today requires data that cannot be collected by any one observing system - there is a need for an exchange of high-quality data across data collectors and data management programs. This demonstrates the need for a unified monitoring approach and unified open data portal to ensure that monitoring efforts contribute to building a holistic understanding of this watershed's health.

Shared Goal and Objectives

The *Elk River Watershed Collaborative Monitoring Program* ('The Program') aims to build a comprehensive understanding of the health of the Elk River system to inform evidence-based decision-making.

Ultimately, the Program will “feel the pulse” of the Elk River and its tributaries, and determine the health and resilience of the Elk River system and whether it is getting “better or worse.”

Program-specific objectives are as follows and will be reviewed periodically:

1. Assemble, manage, assess and communicate monitoring data and information from multiple sources to make them easily available, accessible, and usable by all watershed interests on the open-data portal Columbia Basin Water Hub, *with this portal working to meet shared data standards.*
2. Undertake monitoring activities to track both short and long-term changes in Elk river system indicators from source to mouth, in the mainstem and tributaries, which
 - a. Are built on science, Indigenous knowledge, and local knowledge;
 - b. Are adaptive in the sense that they are continuously

- improved to meet the needs of river users;
- c. Build an understanding of Elk river system changes in the context of individual and cumulative effects of human activities and climate change, and;
 - d. Inform management actions by other bodies including First Nations, government policy agencies, regulatory agencies, municipalities, anglers and outfitters, and industry.

Program activities

The following activities are *inside* the Program's scope:

- *Data-related activities*: collection, management, assessment interpretation, communication and making data available while respecting the need to protect Indigenous and local knowledge, *following shared data standards*
- *Monitoring activities*: design, monitoring planning and in-field data collection activities on the health of the Elk River system, including but not limited to: Surface or groundwater flow, surface or groundwater water quality, groundwater interactions with surface water, aquatic invertebrates and aquatic algae, fish habitat, and fish populations including Westslope cutthroat trout.

The following activities are *outside* the Program's scope:

- *Stewardship and advocacy activities*: including management actions, conservation and restoration actions - these are left to Elk Valley communities, industry, government and other actors to carry out.

Collaborative Partner Commitments

We, the Collaborative Partners, recognize that our collaboration is founded on the *willing participation* of a broad and balanced set of Elk Valley interests, including Indigenous and other communities, municipalities, government

agencies, hunters, anglers and outfitters, resource industries and land developers, conservation and other not-for-profit organizations, expert organizations and individuals.

We have a strong focus on building and maintaining meaningful relationships *inside* the Collaborative, amongst all involved Collaborative Partners, and *outside* the Collaborative, with other interests in the Elk River watershed. We work to ensure that the various needs and expectations of Elk Valley communities are built into our work and we work to ensure that monitoring results are communicated and discussed with end users.

We, the Collaborative Partners, agree to sign *Letters of Understanding* or formal *Contractual Agreements* to define the terms for the participation of our organizations. We participate by:

- Contributing to the direction of the Program;
- Providing resources to support the Program, either technical, human and/or financial resources;
- Providing data, information and knowledge from current, new and historical monitoring activities, monitoring findings and monitoring priorities and/or;
- Implementing monitoring activities.

We recognize that the success of the Program will be tied to our substantive contributions, our acting on our commitments, and the strength of the relationships forged through collaboration. Our participation and actions in the Program are guided by the Governance Principles defined in the Annex to this Charter. We will annually review our progress and effectiveness in adhering to this Charter and Principles to advance the Program's goal and objectives.

Governance Principles

In adopting these Principles, we commit, as Collaborative Partners, to develop and track actions that demonstrate adherence to these Principles.

Respect for Ktunaxa Territory

Decision-making and activities demonstrate an understanding that Qukin ʔamakʔis (Elk River watershed) is shared with the Yaqit ʔa-knuqʔi 'it and Ktunaxa peoples

Reconciliation

Commitment by all Partners to an open-handed, open-hearted approach to Indigenous community involvement at an equal-level

Independent

The Program and results of this program are, and are seen to be, independent of influence of any one Partner or interest

Credible

Knowledge, including scientific, Indigenous and local, informs the design, delivery, assessment and communication of monitoring activities to produce credible data and results

Collaborative decision-making

Partners have equal voice and say in forming strategic decisions that guide the Program and work together to achieve jointly agreed objectives

Transparency

All aspects of the Program, including membership, governance structure, monitoring questions, and monitoring findings are made available to Partners, Elk Valley communities and interests in a timely manner

Relevant

Monitoring design and implementation respond to the needs of Elk Valley communities and decision-makers, whose mandates and responsibilities include stewardship of the watershed

Open Access and Understandability

Data provided by Partners is available and easily accessible on a free and open basis and Monitoring results are reported in a readily accessible and understandable manner

“We commit to work collaboratively in good faith and with good heart to help deliver the Elk River Watershed Collaborative Monitoring Program to achieve our shared goal and objectives”

CANADIAN WILDLIFE
FEDERATION



FÉDÉRATION
CANADIENNE DE LA FAUNE



FERNIE
CITY OF FERNIE
BRITISH COLUMBIA



Yaqit Pa'knuqti'it



Teck



Ministry of
Environment and
Climate Change Strategy

