



Elk River Watershed
Qukin
ʔamakʔis Collaborative
Monitoring
Program

Steering Committee

Second Meeting - June 27, 2023 - Meeting Notes

Attendance

1. Anne-Caroline Kroeger, Program Manager, *Elk River Alliance*
2. Cait Good, Senior Lead - Aquatic Sciences, *Teck*
3. Evgeni Matveev, Education and Outreach Coordinator, *Elk River Alliance*
4. George Greene, Chair, *Elk River Alliance*
5. Hunter Smith, Program Coordinator, *LLC*
6. Ian Sharpe, Trustee, *Morice Watershed Monitoring Trust*
7. Jesse Huisman, Director of Engineering and Public Works, *District of Elkford*
8. Joanna Line, Project Engineer, *City of Fernie*
9. Kaileigh McCallum, Ecologist, *Elk River Alliance*
10. Kat Hartwig, Executive Director, *LLC*
11. Matthew Gay, Program Director - Water Strategy, *Teck*
12. Nick Lapointe, Senior Conservation Biologist in Freshwater Ecology, *Canadian Wildlife Federation*
13. Paige Thurston, Columbia Basin Water Monitoring Framework Program Manager, *LLC*
14. Patrick Sorfleet, Director - Planning and Development, *District of Sparwood*
15. Patrick Williston, Senior Environmental Impact Biologist, *ENV*
16. Paul Samycia, Owner and Guide, *Elk River guiding Company*
17. Samantha Mertens, Ecosystems Biologist, *WLRS*
18. Stella Swanson, Director, *Elk River Alliance*

Meeting outcomes

Theme description	Program Manager to revise language for Themes 1 and 2 to demonstrate how the two are linked
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Overlap with CEMF	Members agree there is duplication between the CEMF database and interface. Proposed to develop language with the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship to explain interactions with CEMF.
Data trustworthiness	Suggested that data owners assign a data quality grade to the data they collect using Teck’s grading system to create a uniform mechanism for assessing trust of datasets.
Comparing data to benchmarks	Proposed to update the program communications protocol to outline the limitations of data interpretation, submit the revised protocol to the Steering Committee for approval at its next meeting and, once approved, attach it to the Steering Committee’s Terms of Reference.
Forecasted funding shortfall	Program Manager agreed to follow up one-on-one with the City of Fernie, Teck, BC ENV and BC WLR about potential Collaborative funding.

Meeting minutes

Partner impression of program early success	<p>[G. Greene] Quoted Kelly Munkittrick’s experience with similar initiatives, who says that early successes are important to keeping initiatives like ours going. Asked for feedback from participants on their perception of early wins/successes [A. Kroeger] Presented the deliverables regarding hydrometric installations, starting with training provided by BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy Jonathan Jeffery on June 6, 2023. The Elk River Alliance and Living Lakes Canada installed a first hydrometric station on July 27, 2023, on Lizard Creek with MacHydro consultants, and a second hydrometric station on Forsyth Creek on August 10, 2023, with this equipment then winterised to ensure it would survive winter [P. Williston] Viewed the development of two hydrometric stations as really valuable progress, with high-quality flow and temperature information extremely important – and terrific contributions to improving our understanding – a good example of early success. [J. Line] Showed appreciation for Elk River Alliance’s learnings on practical challenges when installing and maintaining monitoring stations and said these would be valuable to the City of Fernie, which plans to winterize its own hydrometric equipment later by the end of 2023 [A. Kroeger] Presented the implementation agreements now in place with Living Lakes Canada and the Elk River Alliance to jointly lead the implementation on Theme 1 and Theme 2</p>
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	<p>and Yaqit ?a-knuqli ‘it leading on the implementation on Theme 3. Asked the participants to take some time to review and edit the language presented for Themes 1, 2 and 3, as this language has evolved over the years and would be used in upcoming grant applications [P. Sorfleet] Commented that Theme 1 appears more human-centric and Theme 2 appears more eco-centered, which works well as grants are often focused on specific themes. [N. Lapointe] Asked to delete “quantity” from the description of Theme 2 [I. Sharpe] Commented that Themes 1 and 2 are intertwined and asked to add language at the bottom to describe how these are related [A. Kroeger] Agreed to revise the language as proposed.</p>
<p>Interactions with CEMF</p>	<p>[P. Sorfleet] Shared his impression that the program duplicates efforts of the Elk Valley Cumulative Effects Management Framework. Suggested that we clearly communicate what each initiative is about. [N. Lapointe] Agreed that the overlap with CEMF is of the most concern – especially regarding the duplication of databases and user interfaces. The more this initiative can be coordinated with CEMF, the better. [S. Mertens] Agreed to coordinate the program with CEMF so that resources are shared, costs are minimized, and benefits are maximized. [G. Greene] Proposed to develop language with the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship to explain interactions with CEMF. [S. Mertens] Provided a starting point: “BC WLRS is trying to develop a framework to show how monitoring knowledge can be used as an input in decision-making. For this process, BC WLRS needs to get up-to-date monitoring data. BC WLRS finds that much up-to-date monitoring data is missing and has not been aggregated. That is where BC WLRS sees the Elk River Watershed Collaborative Monitoring Program fitting - feeding BC WLRS the aggregated and up-to-date monitoring data on CEMF’s stream indicators.”</p>
<p>Data trustworthiness</p>	<p>[P. Samycia] Shared his awareness that among outfitters and angling communities, some do not fully trust Teck’s monitoring data. Expressed the need for the program to “communicate trust on data”, starting with individual data owners speaking on the trust in the data they collect/own individually, and then moving on to partners preparing to speak collectively as to whether they stand behind the data they are putting forward collectively. [C. Good] Agreed that the confidence and trust in data is an important objective for program communications. [S. Swanson] As a starting point, proposed that data owners communicate on data quality for their datasets, with expectations for individual data owners laid out in the program communications protocol. [A. Kroeger] Proposed that, at a</p>

	<p>minimum, going forward, data owners assign a data quality grade to the data they collect using Teck’s grading system (Teck - Permit 107517 - Surface Water Quality Monitoring 2021 - Annual Report); assigning grade 1 to the data of known data quality with sufficient QA/QC information for data owners to be confident that this data accurately represents the environmental conditions at the time of monitoring and data considered acceptable for use in decision-making. Grade 2 would be assigned to data of only partially known data quality with limited QA/QC information available, so that data owners only use this data for qualitative uses, while grade 3 is assigned to data of unknown data quality where uses are restricted to qualitative comparisons to grade 1 or 2 data.</p>
<p>Comparing data to benchmarks</p>	<p>[P. Sorfleet] Asked to establish limitations to the interpretation of data: “Any data interpretation beyond the building of a data warehouse is at risk of being perceived as political by the municipalities who may consequently retract from the program”. [S. Swanson] Reminded the Steering Committee that it had adopted an adaptive monitoring framework for the program which plans to establish benchmarks for monitoring data comparison purposes to determine if data was above or below these - in objective statements - without “veering into conclusions, causations or recommendations”. [P. Williston] Agreed to compare data to benchmarks and guidelines. [N. Lapointe] Agreed that establishing causation is not what this program should be doing. It is recommended that we stop before we get into causation and develop our own process to establish benchmarks and do so transparently. [S. Swanson] Summarized the debate and concluded that there was approval for benchmarks and guidelines to be developed on the advice of the Monitoring Working Group – and these were later brought to the Steering Committee for approval. [S. Mertens] Looked forward to this group working with BC WLRS to develop benchmarks and learn from CEMF’s experience. [C. Good] Agreed that the biggest accomplishment of this group will be to develop broadly-accepted benchmarks. [S. Swanson] Proposed that the program also establishes data quality objectives (DQOs) for monitoring data. [All] Agreed to proceed with the proposed DQO exercise [S. Swanson] As a starting point and immediate follow-up action item, proposed to update the program communications protocol to outline the limitations of data interpretation, submit the revised protocol to the Steering Committee for approval at its next meeting and, once approved, attach it to the Steering Committee’s Terms of Reference.</p>

<p>Program visibility through website</p>	<p>[E. Matveev] Presented the preliminary website structure hosted at https://elkrivercollaborative.ca/ [J. Line] Asked to build in a “latest news & updates” section in the website. [M. Gay] Asked to test the website with a small group before officially launching and publicizing it, and building a tool to track the number of hits, i.e. website traffic. [P. Williston] Asked to show the Elk Valley Water Quality Hub of BC ENV as a resource on the website. [C. Good] Asked how data shown on the website resources tab would “move” between databases – e.g. Teck uploads data to the EMS database on a quarterly basis - how long would it take for the data to update on this website ? i.e., how often would the program website be updated? Asked that we look for opportunities to link databases to keep data relevant, up to date and accurate. [E. Matveev] Responded that he would automate data updates as much as possible but there will be examples where human time will be needed to manually update data on this website. [N. Lapointe] Asked to build on the experience of Canadian Wildlife Federation’s Nick Mazany-Wright to build the website resources tab. [P. Sorfleet] Admitted that he plans on only using the website resources tab. [G. Greene] Added to Nick’s and Patrick’s point that the website needed to be the “public face” of the program as well as being an “information base” that people would use. [C. Good] Encouraged partners to build hyperlinks to https://elkrivercollaborative.ca/ in their own websites once given the “go-ahead”.</p>
<p>Solutions to forecasted funding shortfall - including Teck Penalty Fund</p>	<p>[A. Kroeger] Forecasted a funding shortfall for the program of \$67,200 for 2023, considering the recently approved ReDi grant of \$25,000. Forecasted a funding shortfall of \$570,000 for 2024 and another shortfall of \$570,000 for 2025, with some uncertainty in these forecasted numbers. [G. Greene] Proposed to address the program funding shortfalls using three solutions, one of which would be for partners to raise money themselves, i.e., pay for program delivery. Asked partners if there was an interest in providing a small base funding - tested the idea of an annual subscription/fee for the partners’ participation in the program. [J. Line] Thought that the City of Fernie might be able to provide financial help for implementing the Lizard Creek hydrometric station. [P. Sorfleet] Said that annual discretionary grants are the way forward for the District of Sparwood - recommended we look at the District of Sparwood Class 1 and Class 2 community grants, where Class 1 grants are one-off grants and Class 2 grants are potentially ongoing. [S. Mertens] Had preliminary conversations on funding from her Ministry to this program, with uncertainty about their ability to</p>

provide money this year with budgets already set - saw a fair chance for next year's budget. **[P. Williston]** Planned a conversation with his Director following this meeting regarding the annual fee - and would need to plan another - separate - conversation with his Director regarding ENV stepping in to run monitoring stations. **[M. Gay]** Was happy for Teck to continue contributing and was willing to start the conversation on signing another funding agreement. **[G. Greene]** Said that his takeaway was that there was an openness with partners to make direct contributions, but these would be annual agreements, not recurring/ongoing agreements. **[A. Kroeger]** Agreed to follow up one-on-one with the City of Fernie, Teck, BC ENV and BC WLRs. **[G. Greene]** Presented a second proposed solution for partners to take on implementation roles alongside ERA, LLC and YQT. **[A. Kroeger]** Explained that the understanding, as discussed above, is that BC WLRs already sees itself as participating in implementation. Similarly, BC ENV is already participating in implementation through their staff, Jonathan Jeffery, who provides hydrometric training. **[P. Williston]** Would need to have a separate conversation with his Director for BC ENV to step in to run one or more monitoring stations. **[K. McCallum]** Shared her understanding that preliminary chats were underway at BC ENV to step in and take over stations. This might happen with the station at Coal Creek, but this wouldn't happen until 2024. **[G. Greene]** Presented the third solution where Partners take on fundraising roles alongside ERA, LLC and YQT to ask outside granting agencies, foundations and corporations for money. **[P. Samyca]** While his business would not make direct financial contributions, said that his clients are already paying daily licensing fees to the Freshwater Fisheries Society, which collects these fees and sends some money back to the Elk Valley. **[A. Kroeger]** Agreed to engage the Freshwater Fisheries Society in a discussion on grantmaking. Provided an update on granting opportunities, with the ECCC Teck Penalty Fund presented as the biggest potential source of money to look forward to, with up to \$58M available to dispense, but money at best flowing in early 2024. Provided an update to participants on plans for ERA, LLC and YQT to submit a joint proposal to ECCC for this Teck Penalty Fund. Asked if any other partner wanted to join in this proposal. **[P. Williston]** Promised to ask ENV's monitoring, assessment and stewardship team about their interest in joining this proposal. **[G. Greene]** Promised to circulate the Teck Penalty proposal outline to the Steering Committee for review.