# Protocol: Partners Communications

Final and approved - 19 November 2024

## 1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this protocol is to provide a framework for the effective and transparent communication on the Elk River Watershed Collaborative Monitoring Program (the Program), between and among Partners (internal) and from Partners to Elk Valley communities and interests (external). The protocol objectives are:

- Guide the communications of the Program towards the Elk Valley communities and interests (external), with these communications undertaken by the Program Coordinator
- Guide the communications within the Program (internal)
- Provide a framework for building towards a collective position on data and knowledge within the Elk River Watershed as it pertains to the monitoring questions

## 2.0 PRINCIPLES

The following principles serve as guidance for Program communications. Communications should:

- Provide transparency on Program decision-making with all aspects of the Program, including membership, governance structure, monitoring questions and monitoring findings, with these decisions communicated in a timely and transparent manner
- Provide readily accessible and understandable data and knowledge to the Partners and public, with data available in an easily accessible format, on a free and open basis

- Ensure that Partners are informed in a timely manner and approving of communications made by the Program Coordinator on behalf of the Program

- Give a voice to Partner Organisations with representatives speaking with the authority of their own organisation on their organisation's participation and contributions to the Program

## 3.0 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The following ensures that the Program acts in a transparent manner and provides accessible data and knowledge to interests and communities.

## 3.1 Communication Channels

The following channels aim to improve the transparency of Program activities, increase the reach of the Program, and improve the visibility of Partner's work as it pertains to the Program goals:

**Meeting minutes**

- Minutes contain the main comments made by participants, key decisions, and actions

- Participants can ask for specific comments during meetings to go "off-the-record" – so that these comments are not included in minutes

- Unless otherwise requested, differing opinions will be recorded in the meeting minutes

- Minutes are prepared for review by the meeting participants within 14 days post meeting and made public on the website after review

**Program progress reports**

- Program progress reports are prepared annually by the Program Coordinator and provide Partners with an update on Program delivery

- Progress reports can be used by Partners to advance the work of the Program e.g. fundraising, informing decision makers

**Program technical reports**

- Technical reports will be developed by select Partner representatives with the guidance of the Monitoring Working Group
- Technical reports serve to make data and knowledge (as it pertains to the monitoring questions) available and accessible to the public
- Technical reports aim to express the collective position of the Program Partners

**Newsletters**

- If deemed necessary by the Steering Committee, newsletters may be distributed to Partners and interested parties as the target audience and published on the Program website to be available to the larger public
- The content of newsletters may include photos, quotes, and storytelling from participants

**Public events**

- The Elk Valley communities and interests are actively engaged through annual public events featuring Partner's work, different ways of understanding and knowing, collaborative monitoring activities, and address widely shared public concerns
- Public events will provide a space for the public to ask questions to subject matter experts and give Partners an opportunity to provide feedback on the Program
- Promotional materials are developed by the Program Coordinator, with Partners encouraged to distribute materials to their networks

**Website**

- The Program website is hosted on elkrivercollaborative.ca
- The website covers all the approved Program materials, including meeting minutes, Program progress reports, Program technical reports, and newsletters

- The website provides a space to feature partner resources, and partner profiles
- The website is fully accessible to the public except for selected pages (to be determined) whose access may be restricted to Partners only
- Partners are encouraged to link to the Program website from their respective websites

## 3.2 External Communications Protocol

The following guidelines ensure that external communications made by the Program Coordinator or Partners on behalf of the Program accurately represent the shared position of Partners participating to the Program:

### Public events

- The Program Coordinator will seek the approval of the Steering Committee prior to planning public events on behalf of the Program
- Requests for Partner presentations will be made no less than 3 months prior to the presentation date
- Materials developed by the Program Coordinator representing the Program are to represent the collective position of Partners participating to the Program, and will be sent for review by the Steering Committee no less than 2 weeks prior to presentation
- Partners are to be clear when representing the position of their organisation or the collective position of the Program Partners
- Where possible, presentations at public events will be recorded and made public on the Program website, given the expressed permission of the presenter

### Document publication

- Draft versions of newsletters are submitted to the Steering Committee for review no less than 30 days before publication on the Program website
- Draft versions of Program Progress Reports are submitted to the Steering Committee members for review no less than 30 days before

publication on the Program website

- Meeting minutes will be made publicly available on the website after meeting participants have had 14 days to review the minutes
- Draft versions of Program Technical Reports will be submitted to the Steering Committee for expressed approval no less than 30 days prior to publication

## 4.0 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The following guidelines ensure transparent and timely communications within the Program:

- Meeting invites for the Steering Committee will be sent out no less than 5 months prior to the date of the meeting

- Meeting invites for the Monitoring Working Group will be sent out no less than 1 month prior to the date of the meeting

- The Program Coordinator will send materials for Steering Committee meetings and Monitoring Working Group meetings for review no less than one week prior to the meeting date

- Materials will not be altered without notice after they are sent for review

## 5.0 DATA AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

### 5.1 Partners Continue to Govern the Data and Knowledge they Collect

Program communications recognize the organisations collecting data as "data owners" and the organisations holding knowledge as "knowledge holders," such as Yaqıt ʔa·knuqłi'it's traditional ecological knowledge and the local knowledge of fly-fishing outfitters and their guides. The Program encourages data owners and knowledge holders to publicly share their data and knowledge on:

- The Columbia Basin Water Hub, with data owners and knowledge owners signing a data-sharing agreement with Living Lakes Canada
- BC's provincial databases including the Environmental Monitoring

System (EMS) and AQUARIUS Time-Series
- Canada's government databases, including the Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN) database and the Water Office database

All Program communications honour the terms of data-sharing agreements signed by data owners and knowledge holders, specifically their terms of confidentiality. Specific protocols for the sharing of Indigenous knowledge will be developed, led by Yaq̓ït ʔa·knuqɬi'it e.g. First Nations Principles of ownership, control, access, and possession, OCAP® to ensure First Nations own and control how information from Indigenous sources is stored, interpreted, used, or shared. Accordingly, data or knowledge made publicly available through existing data-sharing agreements can be used as content in Program communications without additional agreement/consent, as appropriate.

## 5.2 A Collective Position

Partners are to work together to move towards a unified collective position on the publicly available data and knowledge. Program communications demonstrate the efforts of Partners to continuously improve their capacity to collaborate with other Partner organisations, making the following information available:

- Names of the representatives of Partner organisations, along with their positions within the organisation and a description of their responsibilities in the organisation
- Quotes from Partners to highlight the Partners' efforts to engage in open and frank dialogues with other Partners and the Elk Valley communities
- Contributions of Partner organisations to the Program

Elk Valley communities expect Partners to develop a collective position on the results of the overall collaborative monitoring effort:

- Partners to develop a joint position on the "trustworthiness" of the available monitoring data; the Monitoring Working Group is

responsible for providing guidance on scientific methods and the Steering Committee is responsible for approving final report publications

- The Monitoring Working groups is to assess the available monitoring data against the monitoring questions for each approved monitoring priority

- The Monitoring Working Group is to collectively choose data assessment methods and establish the confidence levels associated with these data assessment methods

- After the Monitoring Working Group reaches a consensus on the results of their data assessment, these monitoring results are communicated to the Steering Committee and, if approved, these are then communicated in an accessible manner to Elk Valley communities