

# **Elk River Watershed Qukin ʔamakʔis Collaborative Monitoring Program**

**Year 4.2 Progress Report**

**February 1, 2025 - January 31, 2026**

**April 1, 2026**



# Year 4.2 Highlights

Over the new Year 4.2 aligned reporting period, from February 1, 2025, to January 31, 2025, Collaborative Partners worked to:

- **Executed** Without Water symposium in June 2025 for more than 100 attendees. A \$60k event co-hosted by Yaqit ʔa·knuq̓i 'it First Nation, Living Lakes Canada, and the Elk River Alliance on behalf of the Collaborative.
- **Published** a What We Heard report from Without Water that captures important themes and discussions from the event.
- **Orchestrated** large-scale grant ecosystem for ECCC's Environmental Damages Fund to reduce redundancy between organisations and highlight partnerships within the Elk Valley.
- **Presented** data overview report data work to the International Joint Commission for collaboration. continued IJC communications on reporting and IJC Technical Working Group support.
- **Welcomed** Ashlee Jollymore as chair of the Monitoring Working Group, succeeding Stella Swanson who now operates in an advisory capacity.
- **Welcomed** Ka·kin onto the Steering Committee to provide technical support and forestry insights.
- **Expanded** Monitoring Working Group meetings to support knowledge sharing sessions between members and partners.

# Land Acknowledgement

The Elk River Watershed Collaborative Monitoring Program recognizes recognize that our work takes place on the traditional land and waters of Yaqit ʔa-knuq̄i 'it First Nation.

We acknowledge ʔakanuxunik, the people from where the water comes out of the mountain, as the longstanding caregivers of Qukin ʔamakʔis (the Land of the raven) and Camna ʔamakis (Land of the wood tick), the Elk River Watershed.

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# Collaborative Program Update

The Elk River Watershed Collaborative Monitoring Program has shifted its reporting structure to align with the financial year. Going forward, the Collaborative's annual progress report will be delivered after financial year closure at the end of January each year.

In this reporting season the Collaborative was proud to host the Without Water symposium, co-hosted by Yaqit ʔa·knuq̓i 'it First Nation, Living Lakes Canada, and the Elk River Alliance in Grasmere, BC.

From this event the Collaborative produced a What We Heard document to highlight the important themes and conversations discussed. From this report, Yaqit ʔa·knuq̓i 'it First Nation, Living Lakes Canada, and the Elk River Alliance signed a joint letter to the BC Province to encourage establishing local decision-making authority within the Elk Valley.

The Collaborative thanks its 10 signed Partners for their continued participation and for its additional Members, all sharing knowledge in good faith to feel the pulse of the Elk River.



# Steering Committee Update

The Steering Committee is the Collaborative's decision-making body, driving direction, scope, and priorities. With the Program Manager, the Steering Committee assigns roles and responsibilities for the Monitoring Working Group and Implementing Partners (organizations that agree to lead specific work activities), as well as approve budgets and provide guidance.

Steering Committee Chair, Kat Hartwig: "This year the Collaborative grew significantly in terms of partnership-building between its members and relevant report outputs. The co-hosted Without Water symposium showcased the Collaborative executing a regional event of great relevance for the partnership as well as the general public.

"Partnerships within the Collaborative continue to be strengthened through the Environmental Damages Fund ecosystem applications. Local organisations are working together to maximise efficiencies, build synergies, and reduce redundancies, which is essential for our collective water stewardship and water security efforts."


The Steering Committee is composed of 13 seats distributed across watershed interests and right holders, with 12 of 13 seats currently served. One available seat remains as of January 31, 2026: Rod & Gun clubs.

The Steering Committee assembles twice annually to provide guidance on high-level strategic decisions. In Year 4.2, the committee held two meetings on June 4, 2025, and January 28, 2026:

- **Onboard** John Pumphrey, Chief Operating Officer at Ka·kin, to join the Steering Committee as a forestry industry consultant.
- **Onboard** Nick Pennell, Manager of Engineering, to replace Charity Biermann as City of Fernie representative on the Steering Committee.
- **Onboard** Alison Burton, Aquatic Health and Sciences Director, to replace Matthew Gay as EVR representative on the Steering Committee.
- **Decision** to support local watershed governance and education in the Elk Valley, without being the body that creates a governance board.

# Steering Committee Composition: 2025

Provincial Government	Municipalities and Districts	First Nations Government	Resource industry	Recreational Groups	eNGOs
<b>ENV</b> Patrick Williston	<b>City of Fernie</b> Nick Pennell	<b>Yaq̓it ʔa-knuq̓i'it</b> Kyle Shottanana	<b>EVR</b> Alison Burton	<b>Rod &amp; Gun Club</b> (tbd)	<b>Living Lakes Canada</b> Kat Hartwig
<b>WLRS</b> Cassidy van Rensen	<b>District of Sparwood</b> Patrick Sorfleet	<b>Ktunaxa Nation Council</b> Bonnie Harvey	<b>Forestry Consultant</b> John Pumphrey Ka·kin	<b>Elk River Guiding Co.</b> Paul Samycia	<b>Elk River Alliance</b> George Greene
			<b>North Coal</b> Abby Cousins		<b>Canadian Wildlife Federation</b> Betty Rebellato

 Vacant position

# Monitoring Working Group Update

The goal of the Monitoring Working Group (MWG) is establishing Program methods including data collection, management, sharing, visualization, and interpretation methods. The MWG ensures Program methods have sound footing based on available science, and Indigenous and local knowledge.

MWG Chair, Ashlee Jollymore: “Working Group members were engaged throughout the year, providing valuable feedback on data report progress. Furthermore, partner presentations from EVR and the BC Province demonstrated the Collaborative’s value in knowledge sharing and its vast expertise.”

In Year 4.1 the Monitoring Working Group held four quarterly meetings to:

- **Welcome** Ashlee Jollymore as Chair of the Monitoring Working Group
- **Onboard** Allie Ferguson, Cumulative Effects Specialist at Yaqit ʔa-knuqti 'it First Nation, to replace Jason Gravelle
- **Onboard** Arlo Bryn-Thorn, Columbia Basin Water Monitoring Framework Program Manager, to replace Paige Thurston

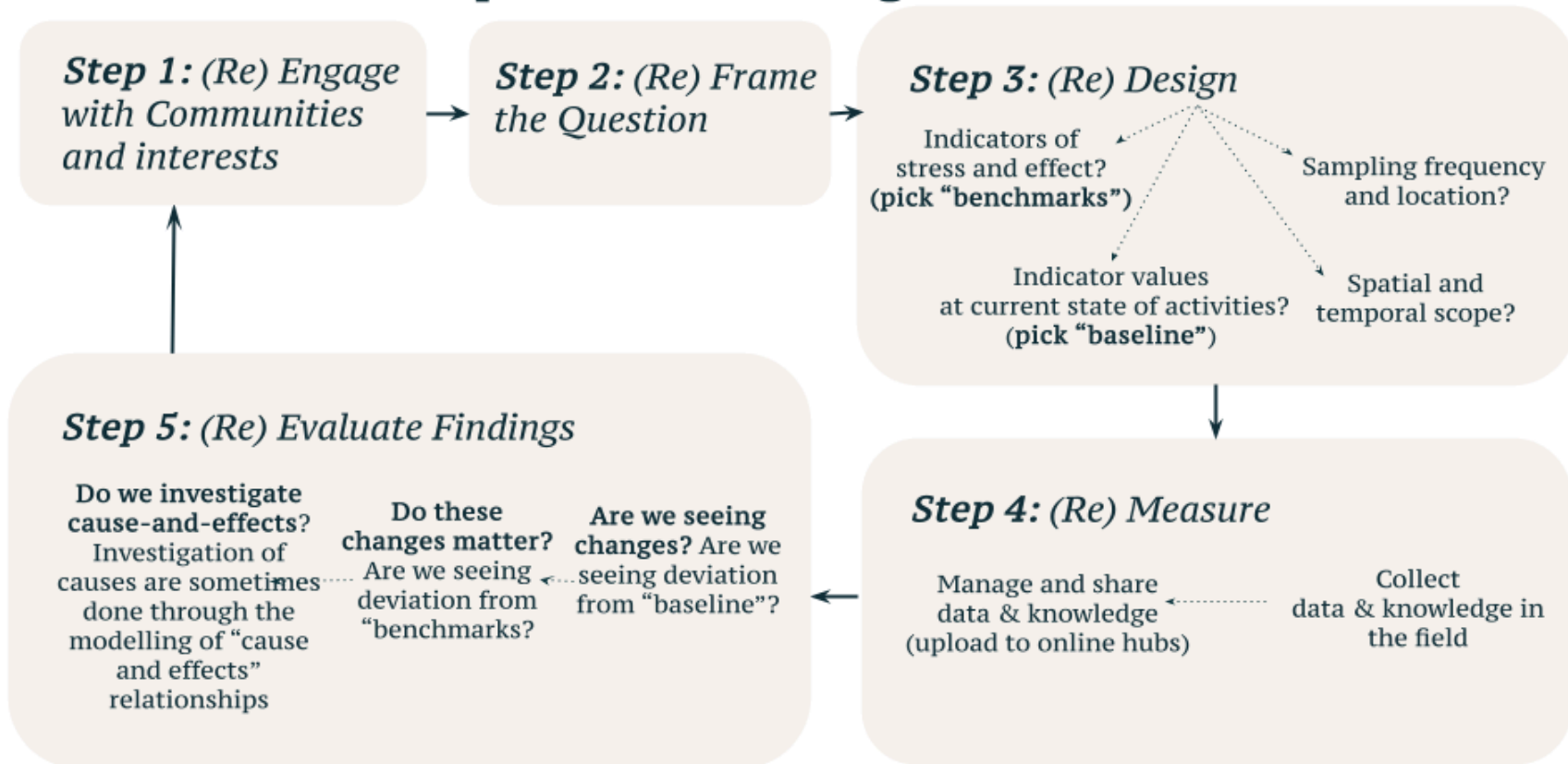
The Collaborative’s **data overview report** was due for completion during Year 4.2. However, due to staff turnover and the Without Water symposium, the report is due for completion in mid-2026. The report made progress across:

- **Determine** indicators for inclusion that best demonstrate land use impact.
- **Refine** report scope to focus on data availability and accuracy, with some visual representation of key parameters.
- **Correct** data and assigned data owners for all available sites.
- **Receive** valuable report feedback and input from Working Group and Steering Committee members
- **Present** to the International Joint Commission on data consolidation and visualisation, as well as opportunities for localised data and knowledge sharing.

# Monitoring Working Group Composition: 2025

Provincial Government	Municipalities and Districts	First Nations Government	Resource industry	eNGOs	Recreational groups	External Advisors
<b>ENV</b> Kara Przeczek	<b>City of Fernie</b> Nick Pennell	<b>Yaq̓it ʔa-knuq̓i'it</b> Allie Ferguson	<b>EVR</b> Mariah Arnold	<b>Elk River Alliance</b> Stella Swanson	<b>Kootenay Fly Shop</b> Josh McSkimming (dormant)	<b>Jon Bisset &amp; co.</b> Jon Bisset (dormant)
<b>WLRS</b> Samantha Mertens	<b>Elkford</b> Jesse Huisman	<b>Ktunaxa Nation Council</b>	<b>North Coal</b> Abby Cousins	<b>Living Lakes Canada</b> Arlo Bryn-Thorn		<b>MacHydro</b> Ashlee Jollymore (MWG Chair)
<b>FOR</b> Natasha Neumann	<b>Sparwood</b> Patrick Sorfleet			<b>Canadian Wildlife Federation</b> Betty Rebellato		<b>University of Calgary</b> Kelly Munkittrick
	<b>RDEK</b>			<b>CLEAR</b> Jeph Virtue		<b>University of Lethbridge</b> Stewart Rood
						<b>University of Waterloo</b> Bill Annable

# Framework: Adaptive Monitoring



# Public Outreach

## **Without Water 2025**

On June 5th 2025, the Without Water Symposium took place on Yaq̓it ʔa·knuq̓i'it First Nation territory (Grasmere, BC). The event brought together Indigenous leaders, scientists, government representatives, community members, and industry to address watershed values, knowledge, and decision making in Southeast BC. This held space for important conversations from myriad voices and this document outlines the themes, concepts, and solutions discussed.

The pre and post-event media secured 21 different pieces of media coverage including two CBC radio interviews, a local Rewind Radio interview, and repeated media coverage across the region. Anecdotally, the Without Water symposium is regularly mentioned as a great success and much-enjoyed conference among ERA's partners and the general community.

### *An Event in Two Parts: Part 1*

Invite-only full-day event with broad ranging delegates all present to discuss the region's pressing water issues. Commencing with a flag bearing ceremony and welcome keynote from Councillor Kyle Shottanana, the day's intentions were set in being in ceremony with nature. Two panel sessions focused on the shared values of water, threats communities face in relation to water, and what information is used when looking at water-based management decisions. In the afternoon, attendees went on a wetland tour where ʔakanuxunik showcased firsthand how water scarcity is impacting both the land and community.

### *Part 2*

A public evening event over a shared meal, with a keynote speech from Grand Chief Stewart Phillip and open Q&A panel. This was an opportunity to field questions and facilitate a two-way dialogue between a broad cross-section of

community members and a range of speakers from across the spectrum of the day's events.

Relevant information:

- Grand Chief Stewart Phillip's [keynote address](#)
- The [What We Heard at Without Water](#) report
- [CBC pre-event interview](#) with Kyle Shottanana
- Fernie Fix opinion piece on [localised watershed decision-making](#) (from What We Heard media release)

