



Elk River | Qukin ʔAmakʔis
**Monitoring
Collaborative**

Monitoring Working Group

15th Meeting – September 9, 2026 - Meeting Notes

Attendance

1. Abby Cousins, General Manager, *North Coal*
2. Allie Ferguson, Cumulative Effects Specialist, *Yaqit ʔa-knuqti'it First Nation*
3. Arlo Bryn-Thorne, Program Manager, *LLC*
4. Ashlee Jollymore, Consultant, *MacHydro*
5. Betty Rebellato, National Fish Passage Program Improvement Coordinator, *CWF*
6. Caitlin Henneker, Program Manager, *ERA*
7. Mariah Arnold, Aquatic Program Director, *EVR*
8. Natasha Neumann, Research Hydrologist, *BC Ministry of Forests*
9. Samantha Mertens, Land and Resource Specialist, *BC WLRS*
10. Stewart Rood, Professor of Environmental Science, *University of Lethbridge*
11. Tyler Phillips, Lands Director, *Yaqit ʔa-knuqti'it First Nation*

Meeting outcomes

Leadership transition: ERA	Caitlin advised the group that Chad Hughes has stepped down as Executive Director of the Elk River Alliance to focus on his master's studies. Ben Ingle, previously Operations Director, has stepped up as Interim Executive Director.
EDF applications	Roughly 50% of letters of intent progressed to full applications, resulting in nine organisations signing a secondary recognition letter with a combined funding request of just over \$16 million. A funding decision is not expected until sometime in 2027, with exact timing uncertain based on past EDF turnaround.

Data overview report: IJC acceptance and next steps	The ERM’s Data Overview Report was submitted to the IJC’s technical working groups and study management team in time for their final report. ERM heard it was directed as a mandatory read and guiding document for the IJC’s report. The MWG will produce a Version 2 to correct inconsistencies and improve readability, alongside a condensed plain-language summary shared as an ArcGIS StoryMap, both timed to launch at the Sustaining Water Symposium. Action items - Caitlin to finalise Version 2 and the ArcGIS StoryMap by mid-October, and send a motion via email for approval to publish on the website. - Caitlin to contact Allie Ferguson offline to discuss how to incorporate the land and water use study into the public-facing report.
Sustaining Water symposium	The Symposium has been pushed to mid-to-late November or early December to allow newly elected municipal councillors to attend and to align with the IJC. The event will run as an interactive poster-board session with a single 20-minute keynote, hosted in Sparwood at the Causeway. The group discussed day vs evening timing to balance technical and public audiences, and explored adding a remote or streamed option for the keynote. Action items - Caitlin to get feedback from Kat on speaker availability. - Caitlin to revise the timing and date based on conversations with Stella and Kat, and provide an update to the group in the next few weeks. - Caitlin to contact ERM members for participation and information sharing for the Symposium.
2027 ERM work approach and report card	Caitlin outlined Steering Committee-approved focus areas for 2027 to 2029, including supporting the Cumulative Land Use Monitoring Project (contingent on EDF funding) and exploring a watershed report card using metrics from the Data Overview Report. Several members cautioned that data binning and categorisation is challenging without an established scientific rationale, drawing on past experience with similar tools, and the group agreed the concept needs further definition before proceeding. Initial support was encouraging for this project. Action items - Caitlin to have offline conversations to develop a strategy and

	approach for a potential watershed report card or alternative data communication tool, and bring a more fulsome discussion to the next meeting. - Caitlin to push next Monitoring Working Group meeting to Q1 2027.
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Meeting minutes

Opening	[C. Henneker] advised that Chad Hughes has stepped down as ERA's Executive Director to focus on his studies. Ben Ingle, previously Operations Director, has stepped up as interim Executive Director.
General business: EDF	[C. Henneker] reported on the EDF application process. Approximately 50% of the group's letters of intent (LOI) progressed to full applications, resulting in nine organisations signing a secondary recognition letter with a combined funding request exceeding \$16 million. She noted the full application stage did not allow changes to objectives, goals, or KPIs set at the LOI stage, which limited flexibility. However, the application framing supports both the group and individual applicants' chances of success. A funding decision is not expected until sometime in the new year, with timing uncertain based on EDF's track record.
General Business: Data overview report and IJC	[C. Henneker] shared that the Data Report was submitted to the IJC's TWGs and study management team in time for their final report. The head of the study management team has since circulated it as a mandatory read and guiding document. [C. Henneker] thanked the group for contributing over the last 18 months. [C. Henneker] noted the report is not yet publicly available; it has been shared with select reviewers, including a water quality team at EVR, generating useful discussion. The team is preparing a Version 2 to correct title and naming inconsistencies and improve graph readability, alongside an approximately eight-page plain-language summary to be shared as an interactive ArcGIS StoryMap. Both are intended to launch alongside the Sustaining Water Symposium, after which a motion will go out by email seeking approval to publish on the website.

	[A. Ferguson] asked about the timeline for sharing the public-facing report with the ERMC for feedback before it goes out publicly. [C. Henneker] confirmed Version 2 and the StoryMap are expected by early to mid-October, subject to data-support availability, and that she would like a separate conversation on incorporating the land and water use study into the report, given how condensed it has become.
Sustaining Water Symposium	[C. Henneker] proposed pushing the Symposium to mid-to-late November or early December. This would allow newly elected municipal councillors (who begin sitting in early November) time to attend, and to align with the IJC's reporting timeline so a study board representative could speak to the report. She proposed an interactive poster-board format, with tables for participants to share information via screens or printed materials, supplemented by a single 20-minute keynote rather than several shorter talks. The event is proposed for Sparwood, running as a drop-in event with the keynote from roughly 6:00 to 6:30pm. [A. Cousins] questioned whether a winter date would limit attendance from further afield due to driving conditions, noting this may be a bigger consideration for future events not tied to municipal election timing. [C. Henneker] agreed this was a trade-off, noting the alternatives are holding it in November with somewhat limited turnout or delaying to March or April. The event may end up focused on a more technical or locally engaged audience rather than drawing wider regional turnout, which would still be a worthwhile outcome. [A. Bryn-Thorne] supported waiting for newly elected councillors to attend and suggested adding a remote or streamed option to offset the weather-related timing risk. [C. Henneker] was open to streaming the keynote and distributing materials from the interactive booths afterwards. [S. Rood] supported the proposed approach, noting EDF outcomes should be known by March, which could allow four or five funded groups to present their five-year plans at a future event. He was comfortable with either the proposed November or December timing or a spring alternative. [A. Ferguson] raised that daytime sessions tend to draw more organisational and council attendance while evenings draw more public attendance, and asked whether a dual-session format, as with Without

	Water, might suit both audiences. [C. Henneker] was open to a two-part session (1 to 3pm followed by 4 to 7pm), but said the primary audience for this Symposium is intended to be more technical and specific than the general public. Broader community engagement can be handled separately through media outreach and communications about the report. [S. Mertens] confirmed BC WLRS' interest in participating with an information-sharing session on CEMF's aquatic objectives, noting a daytime slot would be easier given travel from Cranbrook. [C. Henneker] proposed shifting the afternoon session earlier, to roughly 2 to 5pm, to accommodate this while still capturing both audiences.
2027 ERM work and watershed report card	[C. Henneker] opened discussion on whether to build a watershed report card using data and methodology from the Data Report, seeking views on whether there is interest and whether the report's existing metrics and parameters would be appropriate to reuse. [B. Rebellato] supported the concept but suggested building it from a literature review of existing reports rather than directly from compiled raw data, which would involve more work but be more accurate given past issues with data requiring re-QA/QC. [C. Henneker] agreed this was a strong option given the volume of relevant data not incorporated into the current report. [A. Bryn-Thorne] was supportive in principle but cautioned, from past experience, that defining scientifically defensible discrete categories or grades is difficult. His previous attempt eventually dropped a letter-grading scheme in favour of presenting established categories (poor, medium, high) as they were, since a graded system didn't hold up with advisors. [M. Arnold] noted EVR's existing ADIT (Aquatic Data Integration Tool) uses colour-coded categories built on toxicological benchmarks, but that establishing those bins took years of engagement through the Environmental Monitoring Committee; without existing toxicological benchmarks, binning becomes highly value-driven and contentious. She recommended clearly defining the report card's purpose and intended message before determining bins, so the bins are not shaped by the results.

[S. Rood] suggested framing next steps around two questions arising from the data inventory: what important gaps remain, and what trends are emerging over time, noting the latter links naturally to a report card concept. **[A. Jollymore]** agreed feedback from experienced members was valuable and echoed the need to revisit the original goals of the Data Report before deciding on a communication tool. She noted a simpler tool than an 80-page report would ideally align with the ERM's adaptive monitoring work.

[C. Henneker] summarised that there is interest in communicating watershed data more accessibly to the community, whether via a report card, a literature-review synthesis, or a deeper look at a specific trend or gap. This needs further offline conversation before a fuller discussion at the next meeting. She took an action to have those conversations and develop a proposed strategy and approach before Q1 2027 meeting.

The group agreed to delay the next Monitoring Working Group meeting to Q1 2027 rather than meet in December.