

ANNUAL REPORT

BATTLE RIVER
WATERSHED ALLIANCE

2023-2024



Message from the Co-Chairs

Battle River Watershed Alliance (BRWA) is a non-profit organization and designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council under *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. Our mandate is to:

- Assess the state of the watershed,
- Develop watershed management recommendations,
- Convene and collaborate with partners to implement watershed management, and
- Build awareness through education & literacy programs.



Melissa Orr-Langner, Board Retreat 2024

At a recent event, our Board completed a fun exercise to illustrate our connections to the land and water. We mapped our family ties, favourite natural areas, and community gems.

As we review the activities and accomplishments in 2023-24, we would like to acknowledge the BRWA staff for fostering community connections and

leading programs that help build sustainable communities. We would also like to thank our members - the over 1600 individuals and organizations that share our commitment to health in the watershed.

Your support of BRWA and stewardship within the Battle River and Sounding Creek Watersheds is greatly appreciated.

Finally, we would like to thank the funders, organizations, and individuals who contributed to BRWA programs this year. Please take a moment to review the map on page six and consider your connections in the watershed.

- Alan Corbett and Ryley Andersen

Directors

Agriculture

Khalil Ahmed, Battle River Research Group
Terry Vockeroth, County of Paintearth

Business/Industry

Dustin Owens, Heartland Generation
Ryley Andersen, BRWA Co-Chairperson

Health & Wellness

Marilyn Weber

Individual

Alan Corbett, BRWA Co-Chairperson
Greg Smith, BRWA Treasurer
Peter Pullishy

Municipal Government

Bill Lawson, MD of Wainwright (Apr-Oct)
Bruce Cummins, MD of Wainwright (Nov-Mar)
Dale Pederson, Beaver County
Preston Weran, Town of Blackfalds

Ex-officio

Jamie Bruha, Alberta Environment & Protected Areas
Melissa Orr-Langner, Alberta Agriculture & Irrigation
Catherine Peirce, BRWA Exec. Director



Photo Caption: (L to R) Terry Vockeroth, Ryley Andersen, Alan Corbett, Melissa Orr-Langner, Marilyn Weber, Jamie Bruha, Peter Pullishy, Khalil Ahmed, Greg Smith, Dale Pederson. Not in image: Bruce Cummins, Bill Lawson, Dustin Owens, Preston Weran. Stoney Creek Centre, Camrose, AB

VISION: We exist to have a watershed that sustains all life by using sound knowledge, wisdom, and wise actions to preserve our watershed for future generations.

MISSION: We achieve our vision by providing relevant science, social science, policies, and education for a diverse community of people to create solutions to our watershed's challenges.

OUR WORK: Our work focuses on two major themes of engagement and sustainability. These themes inform three key areas: Watershed Management, Watershed Engagement, and Watershed Stewardship. Our fourth overarching strategic area is Alliance Management.

Message from the Executive Director

Extreme weather events this past year reinforced the value of stewardship.

- Alberta initiated a stage 4 water shortage management response plan in the Battle and Sounding Creek watersheds by May 2023.
- Stettler County, County of Paintearth, and the Special Areas declared a state of agricultural disaster due to drought.
- There were 60 days of poor or unhealthy air quality in Camrose between April and September.
- The worst air quality in the world was recorded in Alberta on May 21, 2023.
- A grid alert was issued in January 2024 due to ongoing extreme cold temperatures. Albertans were asked to reduce peak electricity demand with the potential for rotating outages.
- Water levels and flow in the Battle River at Ponoka was the fifth lowest January measurement of the last 25 years.

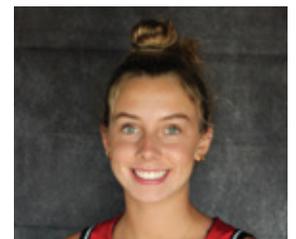


(L to R) Kandra Forbes, Sheila Logelin, Sarah Skinner, Morgan Lievers, Susanna Bruneau, Catherine Peirce. Mirror Lake, Camrose AB

Our efforts to build climate resilience continue. BRWA met with local governments and residents to share the new state of the watershed report, contributed over \$250,000 to landowner, riparian restoration projects in recent years, and collaborated with the province to support drought preparedness.

A highlight for staff in 2023 was the Mimiw Sakahikan Aquatic Restoration Project at Samson Cree Nation. We learned from Elders and knowledge keepers, shared best management practices, and contributed to water quality monitoring at a unique Land2Lab youth camp. We were also fortunate to take part in a water ceremony led by Elder Bernice Stoney, who honoured the life-giving spirit of water on the shores of Pigeon Lake. In the words of Elder Bernice, *Nipîy is life, Water is life.*

I am grateful to our partners, board, the members of our community, and the team at BRWA for their passion for the environment. Please read on to learn more about BRWA initiatives in 2023-24. - Catherine Peirce



A special BRWA thank you to Augustana summer students, Morgan Lievers and Belle Dodds, and Community Service-Learning students Teniola Subair, Adrian Lam, and Mackenzie Mrazik. Adrian & Mackenzie's photo credits: Augustana

Stewardship

OTIS (OuTstanding In Stewardship) Award Winners 2023

Stewardship is our collective responsibility to care for land, air, water, and biodiversity in a way that conserves all of its values, be they ecological, economic, social, or cultural.

Individual

Rebecca King cares about her land, mother nature, and the environmental impacts of farming. From rotating her crops to provide nutrient-rich soil, to working with County of Vermilion River ALUS to return marginal land back to its riparian state, she works to ensure balance. Her passion for natural wetlands to lessen erosion and create natural habitats for birds, pollinators and wildlife, is exemplary. Rebecca advocates and spreads the word to local farmers about the benefits of her experiences.



Agriculture

Darrel Fipke has used all the principles of range management to run a successful custom grazing operation for over 25 years, and protected water on his land. Darrell was a farm member of the ALUS Wetaskiwin-Leduc Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) from 2016-2023 and played an integral role in building the community program from its inception. Darrell still mentors and encourages other producers to adopt beneficial management practices on their property.



Organization/Business

Scandia Roadside Native Prairie Restoration Project is a community-led pilot project to steward prairie ecology and biodiversity. This work was organized in conjunction with road reconstruction completed by Camrose County in 2019 and is supported by the Alberta Native Plant Council, the Edmonton Native Plant Society, and InnoTech Alberta. The volunteers remove invasive species and reintroduce wildflowers and other native species, creating a network of ecological corridors throughout the municipality.



Youth

Nipisihkopahk Wellness Social Development Department, Samson Cree Nation - Mimiw Sakahikan Aquatic Habitat Project brought together youth, knowledge holders, and Elders to participate in community events. The focus was on sharing experiences, knowledge, and methods rooted in traditional practices to care for the land and water with land-based traditional education. Participants developed skills that align with Samson Cree Nation community values. The program provided youth with land-based traditional education grounded in ceremony and Nêhiyaw teachings about Pigeon Lake (mîmîw sâkahikan).



Nominations for 2024 open July 1st.



Buffalo Trail (2017-2023)

PROGRAM COMPLETED

\$225,000 invested in conservation and restoration to protect shoreline, wetlands and riparian health

**~60 kilometres
220 acres** riparian lands along the Battle River, Sounding Creek, Ribstone Creek, Okwanim Creek, Mud Lake, and various wetlands

14 landowner collaborators



7 riparian fencing projects



11 off-stream livestock waterers



16 riparian health inventories



PLUS enhanced livestock stream crossing and a riparian planting project



Funded by the Government of Alberta's Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program

Battle River and Sounding Creek Stewardship Community of Practice

BRWA started the Battle River and Sounding Creek Stewardship Community of Practice in 2023. The goal is to:

- Foster a stewardship ethic.
- Connect learning to action.
- Promote and showcase stewardship actions in the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds, and across Alberta.
- Encourage collaboration among community members and organizations.

There are 25 organizations and 30 individuals from lake stewardship groups, wildlife and nature clubs, agriculture and land use, economic development, provincial and national conservation groups, and local on-the-ground projects.



RiparianCARE

BRWA has over \$80,000 to contribute to landowner projects over the next two years through our RiparianCARE Program. In addition to funding, BRWA also offers technical support for these riparian conservation and restoration projects. The program is available throughout the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds.

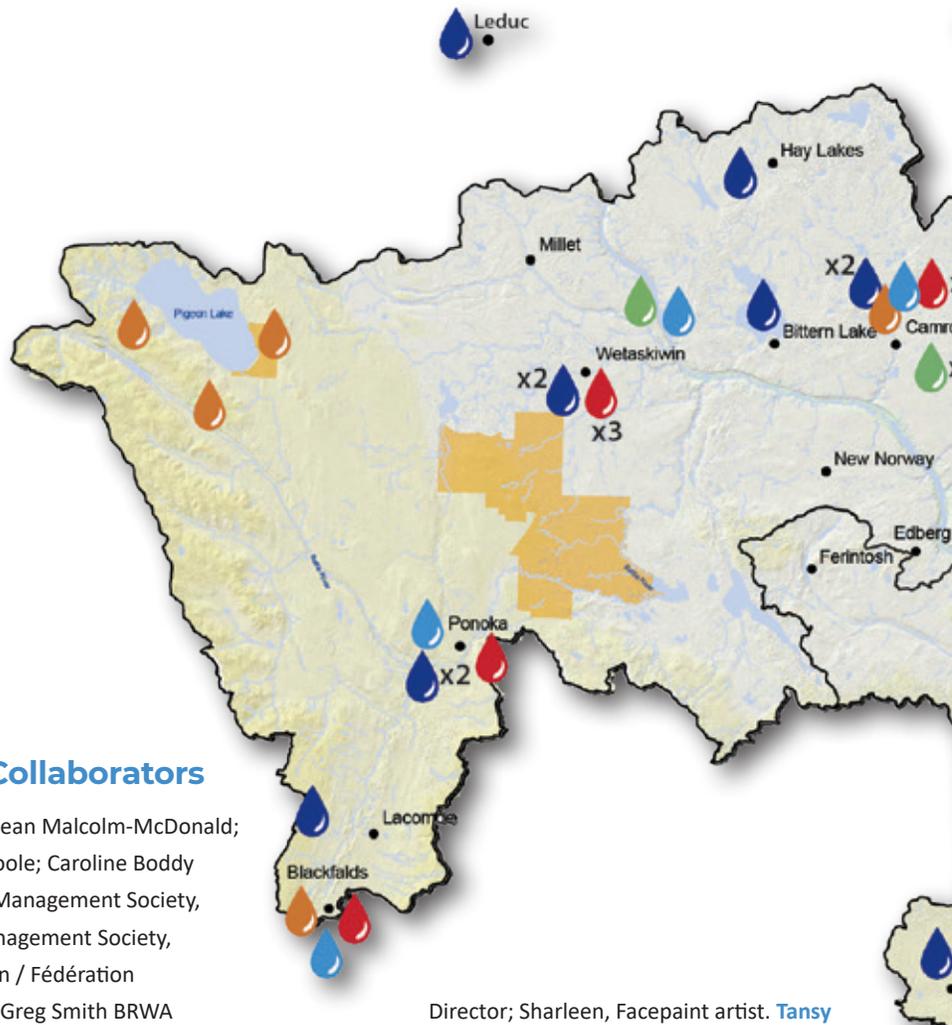
Funded by the Government of Alberta's Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program



Watershed Engagement & Action

LEGEND

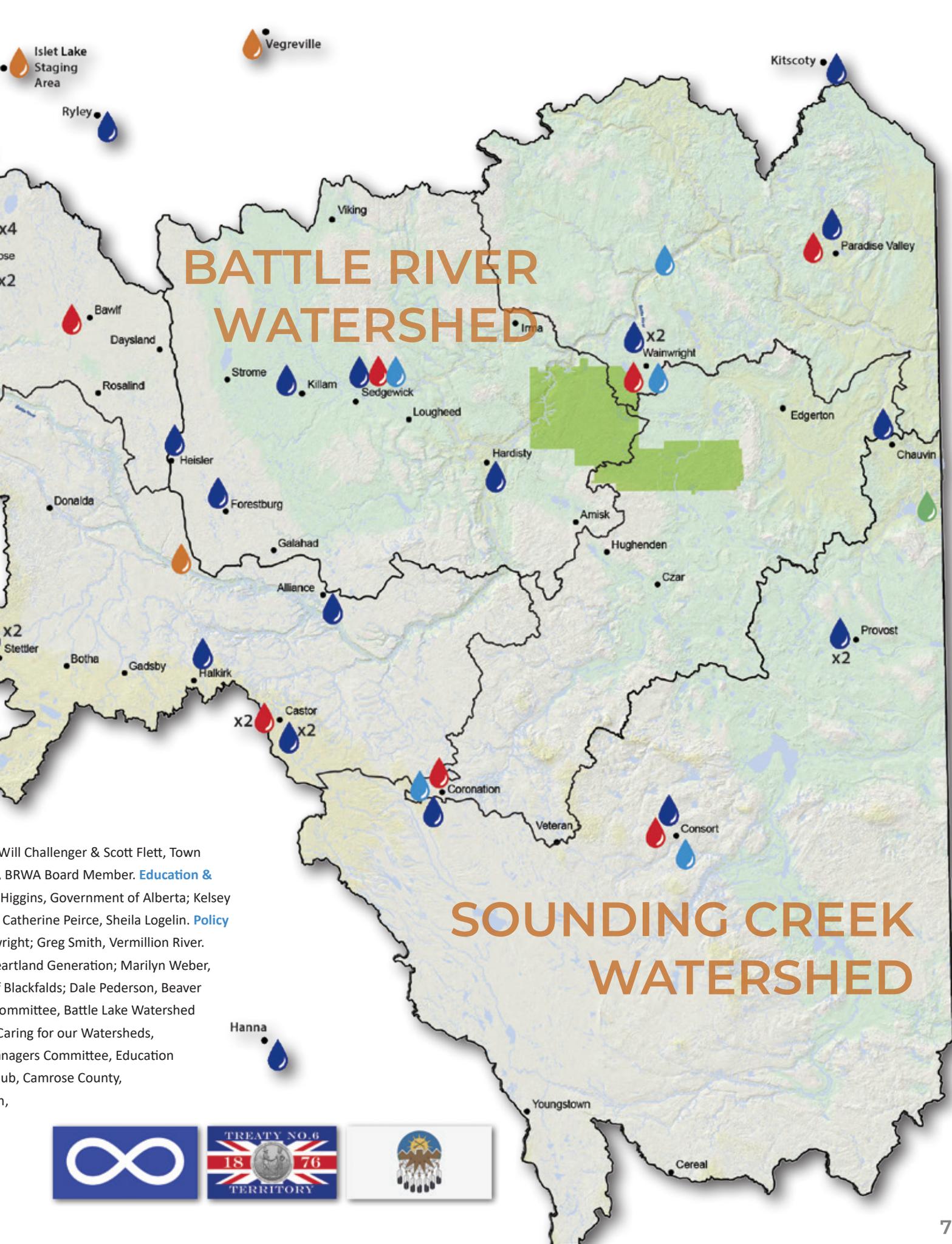
-  Monitoring
-  Engagement
-  Education
-  Alliance
-  Stewardship



Volunteers, Committee Members & Collaborators

Watershed Festival Volunteers: Susan Kokas; Diane Hanson; Jean Malcolm-McDonald; Alex Retfalvi & Shana Boyd, Heartland Generation; Melanie Poole; Caroline Boddy Canoes. **Exhibitors:** Cows and Fish - Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society, Alberta Parks, Strathcona Raptor Sanctuary, Alberta Lake Management Society, Alberta Community Bat Program, Canadian Wildlife Federation / Fédération canadienne de la faune, Diplomat Mine Interpretive Site, and Greg Smith BRWA

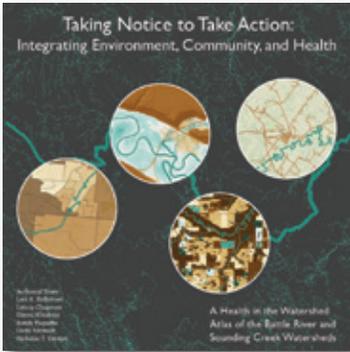
Pull Volunteers: Wetaskiwin Aquatera Water Treatment Plant staff, Camrose Fish & Game Association members. **Bird Survey Volunteer:** Greg Smith. **Caring For Our Watersheds Judges:** Jamie Hoover, Town of Blackfalds; Jennifer Mercer, Nutrien; Sofie Forstrom, Oldman Watershed Council; Catherine Peirce, BRWA; Cody Field, City of Calgary; Scott Millar, North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance; Mike Murray, Bow River Basin Council; Joey Temple; Travis Culham, Heartland Generation; Peter Guthrie, Edmonton Public Schools. **Community Service-Learning Student Placement Program, University of Alberta, Augustana Campus:** Mackenzie Mrazik, Teniola Subair. **Land and Water Committee:** Dale Pederson, Beaver County; Anjah Howard & Doug Lyseng, Camrose County; Terry Vockeroth, County of Paintearth; Cathie Erichsen Arychuk, County of Vermilion River; Alan Corbett, Alberta Drainage Council; Bart Muusse, Ducks Unlimited Canada; Howard Shield & Melvin Thompson, Flagstaff County; Jamie Bruha, Arin MacFarlane-Dyer & Melissa Orr-Langner, Government of Alberta; Dwayne West, Lacombe County; Glinis Buffalo, Samson Cree Nation, Glinis Buffalo Consulting; of Wainwright; Adrian Lam, University of Alberta Augustana Campus; Aaron Leckie, City of Camrose; Rick Melia, Pigeon Lake Watershed Association; Greg Smith, **Engagement Committee:** Justin Babcock, Ponoka County; Kim Barkwell, Leduc & Wetaskiwin Counties; Greg Bowie, Agricultural Producer; Jamie Bruha & Janine Spicer-Rawe & Kerri O'Shaughnessy, Cows & Fish; Joey Temple; Susan Kokas; Diane Hanson; Greg Smith, BRWA Board Member. **Finance Committee:** Greg Smith, **Committee:** Preston Weran, Town of Blackfalds; Alan Corbett, City of Camrose. **Executive Committee:** Alan Corbett, City of Camrose; Ryley Andersen, MD Wainwright. **Board of Directors:** Khalil Ahmed, Battle River Research Group; Terry Vockeroth, County of Paintearth; Ryley Andersen, BRWA Co-Chairperson; Dustin Owens, He Agricultural Producer; Alan Corbett, BRWA Co-Chairperson; Peter Pullishy; Greg Smith, BRWA Treasurer; Bill Lawson, MD of Wainwright; Preston Weran, Town of County; Jamie Bruha & Melissa Orr-Langner, Government of Alberta (Ex-Officio). **External Committees:** Alberta Citizen Science Community of Practice Steering C Synergy Group; Beaver Hills Biosphere, Stewardship Community of Practice, Peaceful Valley Advisory Committee; Pigeon Lake Watershed Association; Nutrien - C Coordinators Committee; Regenerative Agriculture Lab; Wetaskiwin-Leduc ALUS Partnership Advisory Committee; Watershed Planning and Advisory Council, Ma and Outreach Committee, Technical Committee. **State of the Watershed Engagement Participants:** Beaver County, Beaver Hills Biosphere, Buffalo Lake Nature Cl City of Camrose, County of Paintearth, County of Vermilion River, Drainage Council, Flagstaff County, GFoundation, Government of Alberta, Heartland Generation Lacombe County, Louis Bull Tribe, Maskwacis Cree Tribal Council, Montana First Nation, Otipemisiwak Métis Government, Pigeon Lake Watershed Association, Prentice Institute, Samson Cree Nation, Town of Castor, Town of Viking, University of Alberta, Village of Forestburg, Village of Hay Lakes, Village of Heisler, Wainwright Wildlife Society



Will Challenger & Scott Flett, Town
 BRWA Board Member. **Education &**
 Higgins, Government of Alberta; Kelsey
 Catherine Peirce, Sheila Logelin. **Policy**
 Wright; Greg Smith, Vermillion River.
 Hartland Generation; Marilyn Weber,
 Blackfalds; Dale Pederson, Beaver
 Committee, Battle Lake Watershed
 Caring for our Watersheds,
 Managers Committee, Education
 Club, Camrose County,
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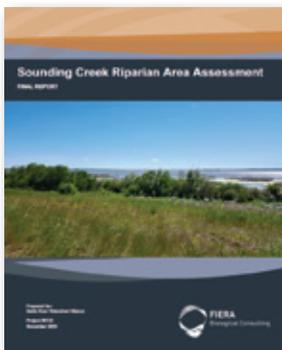
Watershed Management



State of the Watershed - Community Conversations

BRWA brought people together to discuss the latest state of the watershed report, ***Taking Notice to Take Action: Integrating Environment, Community and Health*** (A Health in the Watershed Atlas). This Health in the Watershed Summit engaged Indigenous, municipal, provincial, and community leaders. The broader watershed community was also surveyed for their feedback. Gathered input will guide reporting, monitoring, watershed management recommendations, and actions on the ground.

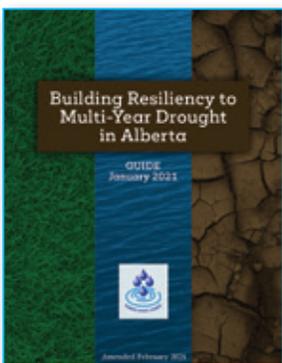
200+ Participants



Sounding Creek Riparian Condition

New riparian intactness data is available for creek and lake shoreline in the Sounding Creek watershed. "Intactness" is a measure of the riparian (shoreline) condition. BRWA and watershed partners can use this information to identify priority areas for riparian conservation and restoration. You can view the data and final report on the Riparian Web Portal at www.riparian.info.

2,000+ kms of creek & lake shoreline intactness measured



Drought Resilience

BRWA collaborated with Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) across Alberta for training on the Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta guide. WPACs developed this resource in partnership with the Alberta Water Council to share helpful information and drought updates (including river flows) with local governments who are actively implementing drought and emergency management measures.

8 Workshops | 235 Participants | 60 Local Governments | 19 NGOs

Aligning Watershed Management Recommendations and Land Use Policy & Programs

Guided by the Land and Water Committee, BRWA is working with local governments to develop an Implementation Guide for Aligning Watershed Management Recommendations in Land Use Policy and Programs. A review of local land use policies was completed along with program discussions with local governments, including the Maskwacis Cree Nations and Otipemisiwak Métis Government. While some watershed management recommendations are captured in existing policy, more is needed. The Guide will be a tool for local governments to improve water management for future generations.

Watershed Engagement & Education



Caring for our Watersheds

An education program that engages students in preserving and improving their local watersheds through student-led solutions.

- 570** Students attended information sessions
- 598** Students contributed to proposals
- 299** Proposals submitted
- 18** Schools represented
- 25** Teachers supporting student submissions

Finalists from across Alberta - Bonnyville, Calgary, Cardston, Edmonton, Leduc, and Lloydminster



Habitat Tour Pilot - Grade 6

In 2023, BRWA designed a new education program including a hiking tour, teacher's guide, and educational activities. Two classes from Castor joined us to pilot the new program.

Location: Big Knife Provincial Park

Funded by: Heartland Generation

Highlights:

- 4** Ecoregions
- 2** Species at risk
- 5** Invasive species
- 25** Native plants, birds & animals

FF4F - Future Farmers for Fresh Water (2020-2023)

181 Participants

4H groups explored beneficial management practices for agricultural operations and contributed to riparian tree planting.

PROGRAM COMPLETED

Education Engagement*

3,500+
students/youth

641
teachers

83
schools

Number of students/youth by program

- 296** Discover Your Wetlands (Grade 5)
- 241** X-Sream Science (Grade 7-9)
- 35** Habitat Tour (Grade 6)
- 135** Waste in Our Watershed, WOW Camrose (Grade 4)
- 36** Waste in Our Watershed, WOW Wetaskiwin (Grade 4)
- 153** Summer programs
- 50** Land2Lab Camp, Samson Cree Nation
- 1500** Science Fair

* Engagement numbers include Caring for Our Watersheds

We would like to acknowledge financial support for education programs from: Nutrien, Enbridge, Charities Aid Foundation America, and Heartland Generation.

Learn more about BRWA Education Programs:



Watershed Engagement & Education



800+ Participants



BRWA hosted events and contributed to many partner-led events - Health in the Watershed Summit; Watershed Festival at Big Knife Provincial Park; Tour of Heartland Generation Plant, Forestburg; Tansy Pull at Wetaskiwin Water Treatment Facility and Pleasure Island; Land2Lab Camp, Water Ceremony, Ice Fishing, Samson Cree Nation; Purple Martin Festival; New Canadians event; Pigeon Lake's Love the Lake Family Fun Day; Paddle the Battle, Tide Creek; IBA Caretaker and Bird Watching.

Thank you volunteers and participants!

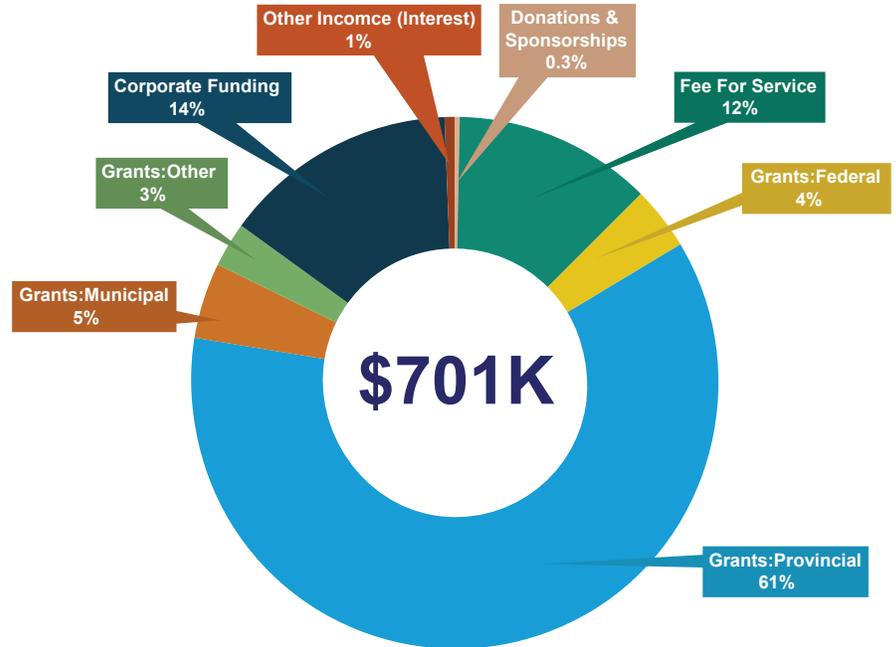
Alliance Management

Funding Partners

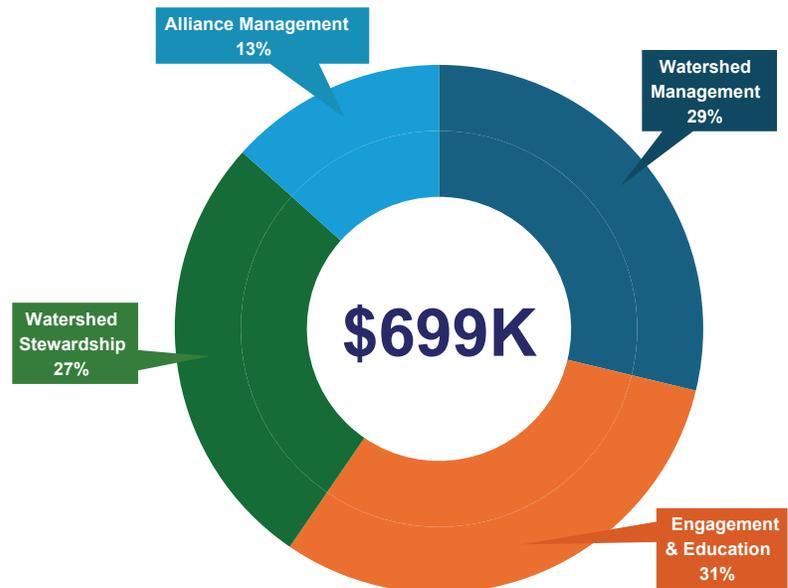
Anjah Howard – Midge Memorial
 Battle River Community Foundation
 Beaver County
 CAF America
 Camrose County
 Camrose Energy
 Cargill
 City of Camrose
 County of Paintearth
 County of Vermilion River
 David & Helen Samm – Midge Memorial
 ECO Canada – Morgan
 Enbridge
 Flagstaff County
 Government of Alberta
 Government of Canada
 Heartland Generation
 Lacombe County
 Leduc County
 Nutrien
 Ponoka County
 Samson Cree Nation
 Special Areas Board
 Summer Village of Argentia Beach
 Summer Village of Crystal Springs
 Summer Village of Golden Days
 Summer Village of Grandview
 Summer Village of Ma-Me-O Beach
 Summer Village of Norris Beach
 Summer Village of Poplar Bay
 Town of Blackfalds
 Town of Daysland
 Town of Wainwright
 Vern Malone Fund
 Village of Bittern Lake
 Village of Chauvin
 Village of Donalda
 Village of Edgerton
 Village of Paradise Valley
 William Sears – Midge Memorial

Financials

Revenue



Expenses





Above: Train trestle at Fabyan; Front cover: Kids exploring at Big Knife Provincial Park

Land Acknowledgement

The Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds have been the home, meeting ground and travelling route for many Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. We gratefully acknowledge the traditional territory and ongoing presence of Indigenous Peoples and Nations within these watersheds. Their experiences, teachings, knowledge and wisdom inform and enrich our collective efforts to care for the land and water of this region. These watersheds are located in Treaty 6 and 7 territory, and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government Districts 2, 3, 8, 11, and 12. Fulfilling the spirit and intent of these treaties is an ongoing process, and the Battle River Watershed Alliance is committed to building strong and respectful relationships with the Indigenous Peoples of this land, with all living beings, and with the land and water on which we all depend.



Connect With Us:

The Battle River Watershed Alliance office is located at ᐱᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂ (asiniskaw sipisis - Stoney Creek) in Treaty 6 territory

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5415 49 Ave, Suite 3, Camrose AB, T4V 0N6
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OTIS@battleriverwatershed.ca
1 (888) 672-0276

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