

**WATER RITES:
Reimagining Water in the West**
Edited by Jim Ellis

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the elbow river



watershed partnership

flora giesbrecht

about the elbow

Rising in the eastern ranges of Alberta's Rocky Mountains, the Elbow River is small, yet significant. It not only supports the ecosystems within its 1,200 km² watershed, but contributes to the lives of the one in six Albertans who drink from its waters. From its mountain headwaters, the Elbow flows through the foothills, past the communities of Bragg Creek and the Town of Redwood Meadows, through the agriculture and grasslands of Springbank, and into the City of Calgary, to enter its Glenmore Reservoir. From there, it meanders through urban communities to join the Bow River at Fort Calgary.

The ERWP provides a forum for learning about watershed management and the land-water connection. Using local knowledge and scientific expertise, it promotes watershed management improvement through collaborative, targeted, and cost-effective actions by citizens and stakeholders. We are surely "working together for a healthy Elbow River watershed."

goals

- Encourage individuals and communities to take responsibility for protecting and enhancing water quality and quantity in the Elbow River watershed
- Encourage the use of new technologies for water conservation
- Encourage best water-management and land-use practices
- Support cooperation, coordination, and knowledge sharing among stakeholders
- Minimize the negative impacts of land uses on water quality and quantity
- Increase awareness and understanding of the watershed

achieving our goals

Achieving our goals requires the collaborative efforts of groups (private sector, government, and public interest) active in the Elbow watershed. The Partnership provides a forum to focus and coordinate watershed management efforts. Actions necessary to protect or maintain the watershed are identified, and the ERWP works cooperatively to implement those actions with appropriate organizations or agencies.

The Partnership acknowledges that individual groups are working and will continue to work towards their individual objectives. The Partnership is not a regulatory group and does not seek the authority to compel action. Member organizations can be expected to fulfil externally mandated (i.e., Legislated or Codes of Practice) responsibilities but it is not the role of the Partnership to ensure that they do so. Agencies with regulatory authority retain that responsibility and there is no expectation that any of that authority will be delegated to the Partnership.

guiding principles

Environmentally appropriate management practices are cost effective

Effective environmental and watershed stewardship practices come from a forum where all stakeholders can participate and contribute

Our approach is open, inclusive, and purpose-driven

Stakeholders are encouraged to contribute their expertise in the process

Stakeholders work in cooperation with one another toward achieving our goals



Previous spread & right: photos by Robert Lee.

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We respect and value the opinions of others

The process is flexible to allow for change

Membership is voluntary

We follow the best available scientific understanding of issues, cause and effect relationships, and best management practices

Decision-making in all committees is by consensus

The ERWP has a variety of active projects each year, including our unique flagship partnership program, the Freshwater Field Study. Together with Alberta Environment and Parks, Kananaskis Region, since the program began in 2005 we have educated over 15,000 students from grades 8, 9, and 11 about the headwaters of the Elbow.

some other ERWP projects include:

Elbow River Watershed Management Plan update — this will be an opportunity for broad stakeholder engagement in the revision of our 2009 plan

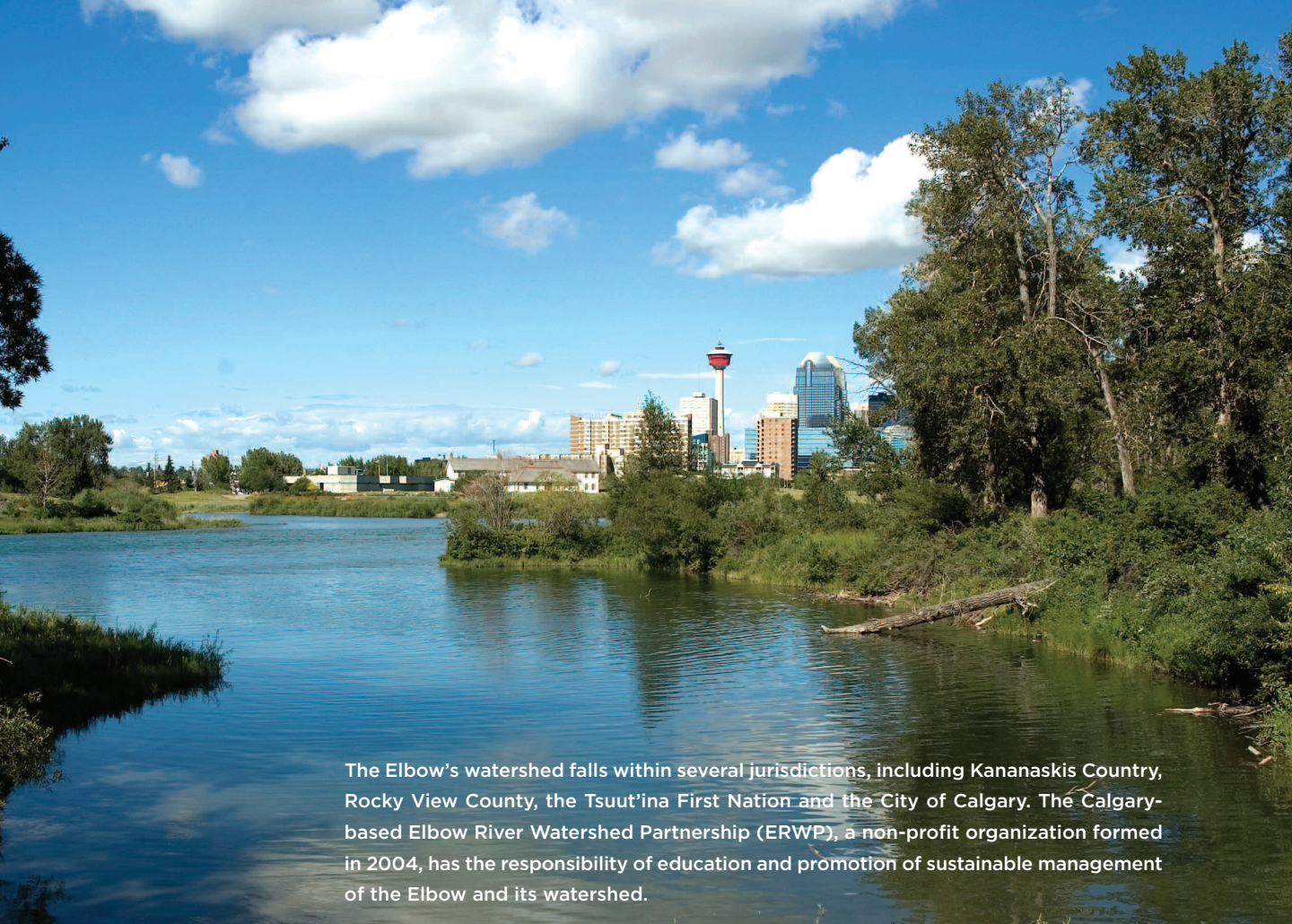
Riparian Restoration — using natural processes and volunteer labour, we are restoring damaged areas along creeks and wetlands.

Communications — via our online newsletter and other social media, public outreach, presentations, and mini-symposia

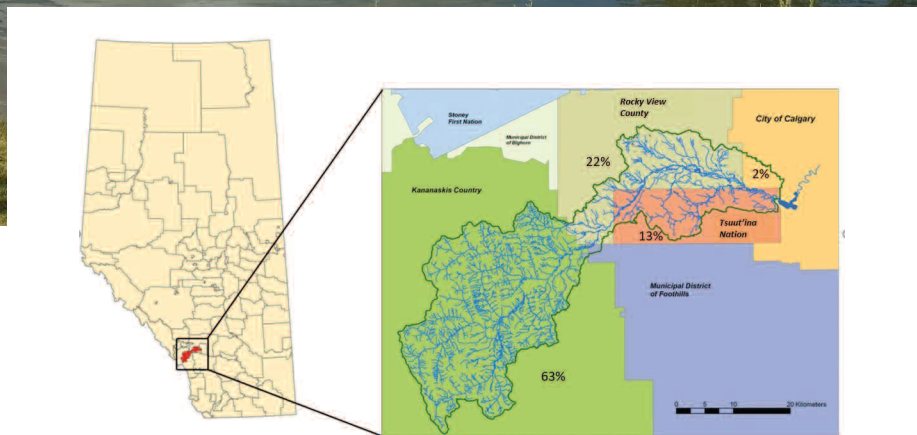
New Watershed Interpretive Trail — an interpretive signs loop in West Bragg Creek

Water Quality Monitoring (based on Citizen Science) — this annual program has operated for twelve seasons to date

Other watershed topics for discussion and education include: proposed flood mitigation projects (e.g., the Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir), the Southwest Ring Road construction, wetlands studies, land uses in the watershed (e.g., agriculture, forestry, off-highway vehicles, residential development, and stakeholder initiatives such as The City of Calgary Headwaters Protection Strategy and The City of Calgary Riparian Action Program).



The Elbow's watershed falls within several jurisdictions, including Kananaskis Country, Rocky View County, the Tsuut'ina First Nation and the City of Calgary. The Calgary-based Elbow River Watershed Partnership (ERWP), a non-profit organization formed in 2004, has the responsibility of education and promotion of sustainable management of the Elbow and its watershed.



This image depicts the Elbow Watershed and the jurisdictional boundaries

Please visit our website www.erwp.org for more information about the Elbow River and the Elbow River Watershed Partnership.