

ATHABASCA WATERSHED COUNCIL

2024 - 25

ANNUAL

REPORT



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# WHO WE ARE

*We've worked across the watershed for 16 years.  
Congratulations to everyone on our busiest year to date!*

The Athabasca Watershed Council formed in 2009, to work towards achieving the Water for Life goals:

- safe, secure drinking water supply,
- healthy aquatic ecosystems, and
- reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

We celebrated 15 years of working across the Athabasca watershed last year. To learn more about the work we've done over our operational history, check out our [15 year report](#).

This year we've been busier than ever, leveraging grant funding, partnerships and internship opportunities to expand work in our headwaters. We continue to support our Healthy Shorelines Initiative, and our watershed education initiatives. Our work is guided by our [4-year strategic plan \(available on our website, \[athabascawatershed.ca/governance-documents\]\(http://athabascawatershed.ca/governance-documents\)\)](#).

## VISION

The Athabasca watershed is ecologically healthy, supporting resilient communities and a sustainable economy.

## MISSION

To demonstrate leadership and facilitate informed decision-making in the Athabasca watershed by bringing stakeholders and Indigenous peoples together to achieve our shared vision.

## VALUES

**Water and Ecological Health**, a blessing and a gift, essential for the environment, economy, society, and the spirit.

**Inclusivity and consensus decision-making**, building integrity and trust by respecting all points of view including the cultures, knowledge and communities of Indigenous peoples.

**Accountability**, being responsible, timely, transparent and purpose driven but also allowing for creativity, innovation, and organizational risk taking.

## TREATY LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Traditionally the lands of the watershed were important to the Stoney, Cree, Denè, Secwépemc, Blackfoot, Ktunaxa, Métis and other First Nations peoples (see [native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca)). Today, the Athabasca Watershed Council acknowledges that the Athabasca watershed includes land that is part of Treaty 6, Treaty 8, and Treaty 10 territories, and the Métis homeland. We make this acknowledgment as an act of Truth and Reconciliation, showing our respect for the land and the Indigenous peoples who have used this land since time immemorial. This is one step in a journey of reconciliation; we are committed to advancing our journey and strive to continue to learn about the histories, languages, cultures and stewardship of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and all First Peoples of Canada. As in the past, the Athabasca River remains important for hunting, fishing, transportation and cultural value for both Indigenous communities and settlers who work, live and play across the watershed.*



# WHERE WE ARE NOW

## Communications, Education, and Community Engagement Strategic Goals 1 and 2

Goal #1: The AWC provides easily accessible water-related information to stakeholders/sectors, the public and Indigenous peoples, leading to improved knowledge about the Athabasca watershed (Education & Literacy).

Goal #2: The AWC is actively engaged and engages others in mobilizing resources and commitments to achieve shared outcomes (Convenor and Collaborator).

We had a successful year for Communications, Education, and Community Engagement! Between our events and activities, we completed a Salmonids of Alberta Colouring Book featuring illustrations of our native trout, char, and whitefish species.

*Oncorhynchus mykiss*

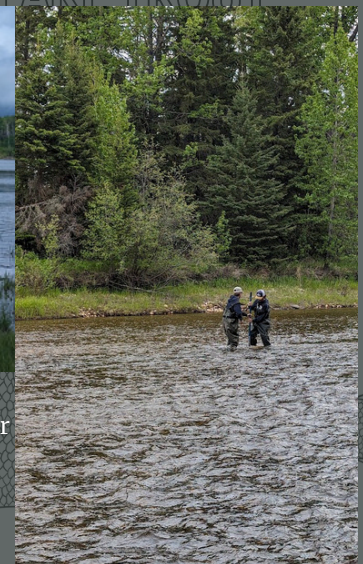
*Prosopium williamsoni*

Here are some of our statistics from the past year:

- 350 newsletter subscribers (sign up on [our website!](#))
- 9788 website visitors
- 2254 social media followers
- Over 11 000 views on YouTube, with a video collaboration with Michael Short
- 34 events hosted or participated in
- the ALMS conference in September and Water in Alberta's Boreal in February were great collaborations and learning opportunities
- 43 communities visited
- 1500 adults engaged
- 890 youth engaged



X-Stream Science: Teacher Demo with Inside Education (left). Kick-netting in the Freeman River (right). Water Quality testing at the Heart River Dam, delivered in collaboration with the Lesser Slave Watershed Council (top).



ATHABASCA RAINBOW TROUT

*Oncorhynchus mykiss* sp.

LAKE WHITEFISH

*Coregonus clupeaformis*



# WHERE WE ARE NOW

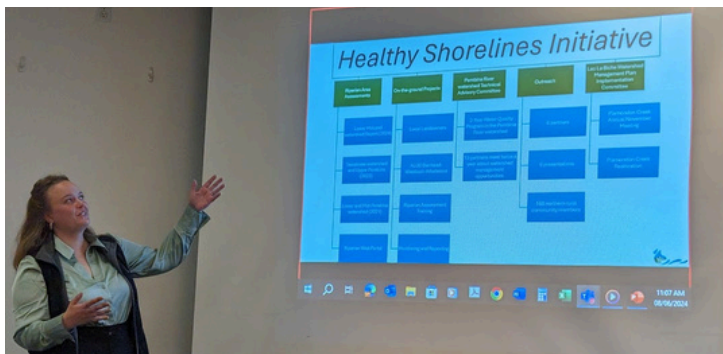
## Science Strategic Goals 3 and 4

Goal #3: The AWC is a credible, recognized authority on the condition of the Athabasca watershed; this information informs Athabasca River Integrated Watershed Management Plan implementation, whose goals are achieved via healthy and active relationships with Athabascans and others (**Monitoring and Reporting**).

Goal #4: The AWC promotes the alignment and integration of land and water statutory and non-statutory policies, plans and program across jurisdictions where needed to achieve 'Water for Life' goals and a healthy Athabasca River watershed (**Policy and Planning**).

1 State of the Watershed (SoW) Report completed (2014); updated SoW started in 2024.

1 Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) completed (2022), being implemented through several projects. Learn more about our IWMP at <https://athabascawatershed.ca/iwmp/>



Sarah delivering a presentation on our Healthy Shorelines Initiative.

### 5 Years of the Healthy Shorelines Initiative

- Over 5000 kms of shoreline assessed
- 37 riparian projects
- 50 participating landowners
- 575 acres conserved or restored
- 1,511 community members engaged through workshops, presentations, meetings, and webinars

Working across multiple sub-basins, we've completed:

- 59 water quality site visits: looking at water quality in a number of locations, including the Pembina River and some of its tributaries, as well as the Tawatinaw River
- 8 benthic site visits in the McLeod River watershed, Hardisty Creek watershed, Upper Athabasca watershed, and Pembina watershed
- 7 data loggers and 2 cameras deployed
- 34 watercourse crossing assessments completed: the Tawatinaw Watershed Working Group, with staff and volunteer efforts, assessed so many sites a member of the watercourse crossing team with the GoA reached out to us!



We completed another year of CABIN sampling in the headwaters of the McLeod River (top, right). Installing data loggers and completing water testing at Helliwell lake (headwaters of the Tawatinaw River)(bottom).



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# ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS

We are expanding as an organization with strong partnerships and broad support.



Staff enjoyed driving up to Fort MacKay (and making a few stops along the way!) after our June 2024 AGM in Fort McMurray.

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STAFF AND INTERNS

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## 5

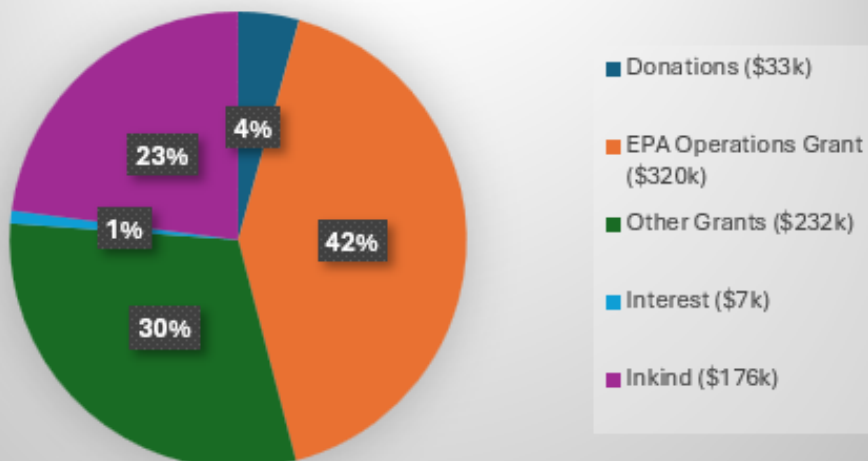
BOARD MEETINGS



The AWC celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary last November.

Our board of directors continues to work on policy advice, and providing operational guidance to staff.

### 2024-25 Funding Sources



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GRANTS



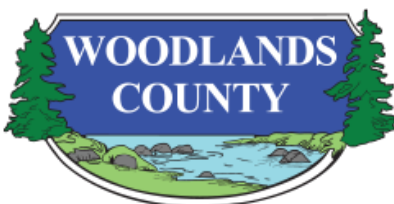
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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As a not-for-profit organization, our work would not be possible without the support of a number of funders and collaborators. In particular, we are grateful to Alberta Environment and Parks for their continued core operational support. In addition to several foundation and industry supporters, we also received a number of donations in 2024-25. Our sincere thanks to Kim Sturgess, Lac Ste Anne County, Barrhead County and Woodlands County. Finally, it is extremely rewarding to work with other individuals and organizations with similar goals – our heartfelt gratitude to all our partners operating in the Athabasca watershed and elsewhere.



LAC STE. ANNE COUNTY



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



# SUPPORTERS

Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS)

ALUS Barrhead-Westlock-Athabasca

ALUS Lac Ste. Anne

Athabasca Headwaters Working Group

Barrhead County

Cows and Fish Riparian Management Society

East Slopes Biomonitoring Collaborative

Inside Education

Lac La Biche County / Lac La Biche Watershed Management Plan Implementation Committee

Lesser Slave Watershed Council

Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance

Pembina River Watershed Technical Advisory Committee

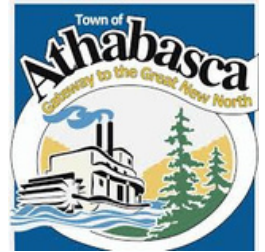
SAIT Integrated Water Management Capstone program

Spirit North

Tawatinaw Watershed Working Group

University of Alberta Sustainability Council (Adaptation and Resiliency Training internship)

Water Rangers volunteers



**Crooked Creek Conservancy  
Society of Athabasca**



Alberta  
Forest  
Products  
Association



**SPIRIT NORTH**



**Mighty Peace  
Watershed Alliance**  
Diverse, Responsible, Connected



**Lac La Biche County**  
welcoming by nature.



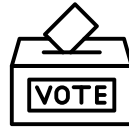
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# GET INVOLVED

Our success depends on your active participation! Become a member. Members can vote at the AGM, be nominated for the Board, or participate in AWC committees and projects. Members are also kept up to date on Council activities via our e-newsletter and other publications. Membership forms are available on our website or by request. For more details, see our website at [www.athabascawatershed.ca](http://www.athabascawatershed.ca)



Sign up for our newsletter



Become an active AWC member and vote in our AGM



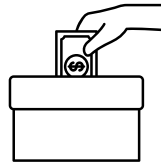
Attend some of our events



Become a board member



Volunteer on an AWC committee



Donate

Contact Information:

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