

Elbow Partnership News

Elbow River Watershed Partnership (ERWP) Newsletter
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Message from the Chair

As the newly elected chairman of the ERWP Board (Coordinating Committee), I am pleased to have the opportunity to offer a few personal insights about water quality and watershed management.

For the past 10 years I have spent 1-2 months each year working on a medical education project in Laos, a small impoverished land-locked nation in Southeast Asia. As is the case in much of the developing world, the people of Laos have no access to safe drinking water, and diseases resulting from contaminated water continue to be a major health problem. Each time I return to Calgary and realize that I can actually brush my teeth with tap water, I appreciate how fortunate we are to have a resource like the Elbow River, which provides clean drinking water to one in every six Albertans. I also realize how important it is to protect and preserve this precious resource.

We face a major challenge today to try to balance the inevitable population growth and associated development in southern Alberta with protection of the environment and preservation of water quality. With this in mind, a steering committee of the ERWP has recently completed a Water Management Plan for the Elbow River Basin. We hope that this will provide realistic guidelines for governments and other decision makers.

The ERWP considers public education about watershed protection to be a high priority. For the past several years, in partnership with the Friends of Kananaskis Country, the ERWP has sponsored an educational program on water quality and water monitoring in the Elbow watershed. Several hundred students and teachers have participated.

I first became connected with the ERWP a few years ago when I was pursuing my photographic interests working on a project to produce a series of images documenting a journey along the entire course of the Elbow River. I am still very much of a novice in the science and politics of watershed management, but I am learning quickly and

I look forward to serving with the dedicated stakeholders who are committed to preserving water quality and quantity in the Elbow River watershed.

Robert G. Lee, MD

(Editor's note: Robert (Bob) Lee was elected the new chair at the July 31, 2008, coordinating committee meeting. The Photographic Journey Along the Elbow River was one of the many projects that he has committed his time to over the years. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Friends of Kananaskis Country. If you would like to contact him, send an e-mail to chair@erwp.org).



Figure 1. Bob Lee exchanging awards with Gloria Wilkinson.

Congratulations, Gloria!

Gloria Wilkinson received the Alberta Stewardship Network's (ASN's) 2008 Grassroots Environmental Stewardship Award in the Individual Commitment Category. She generously donated the \$250.00 from ASN to the ERWP. Gloria also received the Thanks a Drop Award from the Bow River Basin Council for her contribution to the BRBC Board of Directors. In recognition of her many contributions, including as past-chair of the ERWP and the current chair of the Implementation Committee for the Elbow River Basin Water Management Plan, the ERWP gave Gloria a framed print.

Elbow River Water Management Plan

On September 8, 2008, the City of Calgary Council passed a motion to approve the plan as a guidance document and planning tool, and Alberta Health Services - Calgary Health Region endorsed the document on October 17.

An implementation committee was struck in September, with representation from all the primary decision-making authorities within the basin. The draft goals of the committee are as follows:

- Ensure water quality data is sufficient and made available in the most efficient manner.
- Enhance watershed stewardship.
- Assist decision-makers with their implementation plans through education and communication.

To contact the ERWP: phone: (403) 268-4520; email: coordinator@erwp.org; web site: www.erwp.org.

- Facilitate the creation of partnerships to undertake appropriate research and carry out implementation strategies.
- Locate technical advice, as required.

Each jurisdiction and agency will be asked to provide the committee with information on the actions that it is taking to implement the plan. This information will be compiled and posted on the ERWP web site.

The Elbow River – A New Channel



On October 2, 2008, Bob Lee and Gus Yaki, a field naturalist active with the Weaselhead Glenmore Park Preservation Society, co-led a walk in Weaselhead to see the meandering ways of an unconstrained Elbow River.

Sam Livingston was the original European Settler to the Elbow River Valley in the region that is now known as the Weaselhead. However, the area is named after Chief Weaselhead who held authority over the Tsuu T'ina people of the river valley at the time of early European contact. Source: Temple, Joey. *History of Weaselhead*.

Following the flood of 2005, the Elbow River began to carve a new channel. By September 2008 this natural rerouting had been



Credit: Robert Lee

completed. About 2 km of the original channel is almost dry and a temporary new island had been created. All that remains are a few isolated pools (see photo below).



Credit: Mike Murray

Comparison of the Price of Water to Other Beverages

| Beverage | Per litre | Per cubic metre |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Coke | \$1.99 | \$1990.00 |
| Skim milk | \$1.71 | \$1710.00 |
| Regular gasoline | \$0.99 | \$990.00 |
| Bottled water | \$1.67 | \$1670.00 |
| Calgary tap water | \$0.00118 | \$1.185 |

Sources: AENV [figures updated by editor to reflect 2008 prices], City of Calgary

For more about the price, cost, and value of water, visit <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/Conservation/value.cfm>.

Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup

On September 20, 2008, twenty people joined the ERWP to clean up Bragg Creek Provincial Park as part of the Great Canadian Cleanup. THANK YOU to all those who participated. This was our fourth year doing the cleanup in the provincial park. Each year, the amount of garbage that we've collected has gone down, which is likely due to park users becoming more responsible. One item, however, that continues to be a problem is cigarette butts. The tally for this year's cleanup came in at over 700 cigarette butts.

According to the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup,

It is estimated that 1 in 3 cigarettes end up as litter, and once littered, they can leach chemicals such as cadmium, lead and arsenic into our environment within an hour of contact with water. Year after year, cigarette butts are the most commonly found item during the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, and last year our participants collected over 214,000 of them.