

Elbow Partnership News

Elbow River Watershed Partnership (ERWP) Newsletter
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Elbow River Water Management Plan

The Elbow River Watershed Partnership (ERWP) has embarked on a planning initiative to develop recommendations to protect the integrity of the Elbow River. The initial step, the drafting of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Elbow River Water Management Plan (ERWMP), has now been completed. The TOR document, which can be viewed online at [www.erwp.org/pdf/18August2006 Draft Elbow TOR.pdf](http://www.erwp.org/pdf/18August2006%20Draft%20Elbow%20TOR.pdf), was prepared with input from all the jurisdictions and municipalities in the watershed, as well as the public. It is ready for formal endorsement by the agencies with the ability to implement the resulting recommendations. The next step is the actual development of the Elbow River Water Management Plan, to be completed by Fall 2007. The plan will help guide decision makers when making decisions that could impact the protection, restoration, and/or maintenance of the Elbow River watershed. Recommendations in the plan will address water quality objectives in areas such as

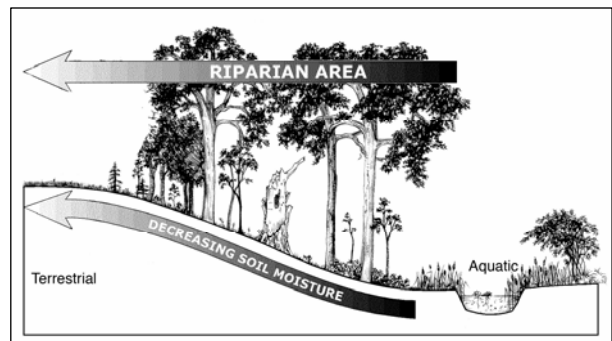
- point and non-point source pollution,
- discharges into the river/released in the watershed,
- stormwater quality/quantity,
- impacts that may arise from oil/gas and forestry industries,
- off-stream storage, and
- riparian management.

Managing and protecting the aquatic environment within a watershed are complex, multi-jurisdictional tasks. We encourage you to get involved now, particularly if you are a decision maker in the watershed, so that you can help develop a practical water management plan and provide the means to implement the resulting recommendations. Please contact Gloria Wilkinson, ERWMP Steering Committee Chair, by email at Chair@erwp.org or by phone at 246-3916 to participate in this planning initiative.

Environmental Reserve Setback Guidelines

Environmental Reserve (ER) Setback Guidelines have been drafted for the City of Calgary. Chris Manderson from the city's Parks Department presented them to the ERWP's Coordinating Committee on September 14. The development of ER setback guidelines and related policy stem from the city's Wetland Conservation Plan and recognition that 6-metre minimum environmental setbacks as per the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)*

may not be sufficient to adequately protect adjacent waterbodies from pollution. The proposed guidelines are in accordance with the *MGA* and only deal with new subdivisions. The policy adopts a reasonable and precautionary approach and recommends a base setback width according to stream order, with adjustments based on slope, cover type, and hydraulic conductivity. The Environmental Reserve Setback Guidelines will be going before the City Standing Policy Committee on Utilities and Environment on October 18. If you would like to review the guidelines, please contact the ERWP coordinator by phone at (403) 685-5580 or by email at coordinator@erwp.org. For general information on the legal tools available for municipalities to conserve environmentally sensitive areas, visit [www.erwp.org/pdf/legal tools.pdf](http://www.erwp.org/pdf/legal%20tools.pdf).



Source: Minnesota Forest Resources Council. 1999. *Sustaining Minnesota Forest Resources: Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for Landowners, Loggers and Resource Managers*. St. Paul, Minnesota.

Bow Basin Watershed Management Plan

The Bow River Basin Council (BRBC) is leading the development of the Bow Basin Watershed Management Plan (BBWMP). In December 2004, the BRBC was officially recognized by the provincial government as the Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) for the Bow Basin. Phase One of the BBWMP will focus largely on issues of surface water quality and has the following objectives:

- Recommend site-specific water quality objectives (WQOs) for key parameters for the
 - Bow River mainstem,
 - Nose Creek and West Nose Creek mainstems, and
 - Elbow River mainstem from Glenmore Dam upstream.
- Recommend an action plan and implementation plan to help meet the desired outcomes and the recommended WQO thresholds and targets.

Draft Terms of Reference are currently being circulated. They can be viewed online at www.brbc.ab.ca/Bow%20Basin%20Watershed%20Management%20Plan.asp. Comments on any aspect of the planning process are welcome at any time. Please send comments directly to Mark Bennett, Executive Director, BRBC, at Mark.Bennett@brbc.ab.ca or call (403) 254-3353.

Elbow Lake

The following is an excerpt from Jamie Dixon's June 22nd presentation en route to the source waters of the Elbow River.

Today we'll be visiting the headwaters of the Elbow River watershed, Elbow Lake, and from there be able to view the river's ultimate source, Rae Glacier.

You'll be struck of course by the gorgeous scenery, but also by the landscape that this portion of the watershed occupies, the alpine zone, which many people don't get to experience. Most people are familiar with the river as it passes through the parkland and foothills regions from Calgary up past Bragg Creek, and even into the sub-alpine that extends about as far upriver as you can drive (i.e., Little Elbow campground). But almost a third of the entire watershed is above that point, extending from there to the headwaters.

At over 1,200 km², the Elbow River watershed is fairly large in area. The river drops more than a kilometre in its relatively short 120 km length, from a little over 2000 m above sea level at Elbow Lake to just over 1000 m, where it enters the Bow River. That's close to a 1% average slope. In contrast, the Bow drops about 2½ km over its 645 km length, which is about a 0.4% slope.

The consequence of having such a short and steep river system is that any impacts are readily transmitted downstream; there's not a lot of opportunity for assimilation or attenuation. When a problem occurs, we realize the effects in short order.

First a little bit about our access point. We're actually hiking to the Elbow watershed from the Kananaskis watershed. It's by good fortune that we have this easily accessible trail to get us to watershed; in effect, entering from the back door.

As we hike up, you'll notice we'll be between two mountain ranges. To the north is the Opal Range and its southern anchor Elpoca Mountain, and to the south is the Misty Range with its northern anchor, Mount Rae.

Those two mountains dominate the Elbow Lake landscape. Elpoca Mountain is named for two of its streams: the "El" is for the Elbow River, which drains to the east, and the "Poca" is for Pocaterra Creek, which flows west into the Kananaskis River. Pocaterra Creek is named after George Pocaterra, who was a colourful

character who lived and explored this region in the early-1900s.

Mount Rae and the Rae Glacier, on the other hand, are named after a famous Arctic explorer, Dr. John Rae, who was renowned for conducting major expeditions in Canada's Arctic. He was the one who reported back on the fate of the Franklin expedition, a report that wasn't all that well received back in England, especially when he noted that the men may have had to resort to cannibalism at the end. John Rae wasn't the discoverer of this mountain, but it was named in his honour in the late 1850s, either, as some claim, by James Hector or, more likely, by John Palliser; the debate continues.

These two mountains form the immediate backdrop for Elbow Lake. But you'll also see Tombstone Mountain to the east and possibly even Cougar Mountain even farther downstream.

A big Thank You goes out to our sponsors of the Elbow Lake Tour: Rick Sukovieff and the Bow River Basin Council.



ERWP's very own intrepid explorers at the Elbow Lake's trailhead

AENV Launches New Website

In order to have meaningful public and stakeholder involvement, Alberta Environment has launched a new website called, Getting Involved: Initiatives. This site provides a one-stop location where information on past, current, and future stakeholder involvement initiatives are listed. Visit the site at www.environment.gov.ab.ca/stakeholder/.

Submitted by Nora Mortomore

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