



lake windermere ambassadors

healthy waters for healthy communities

2022 Annual Report



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Thank you to our funders and supporters!



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2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lake Windermere Ambassadors are a society of community volunteers and cross-sector stakeholders representing local business, recreation, tourism, commercial marinas, water stewardship, ecological conservation, second homeowners, year-round residents, First Nations, local governments, and youth. The Ambassadors evolved from foundations created by the highly successful Lake Windermere Project which ran from 2005-2010 through Wildsight Invermere. Since 2010, our organization has been conducting annual water monitoring, community education, and working with stakeholders in the watershed in pursuit of our vision.

Our mandate is:

“Through collaboration with community sectors and a balanced management approach that supports recreational and traditional uses, high fish and wildlife values, and economic prosperity; the Lake Windermere Ambassadors serve as a resource for projects benefiting the ecological health of Lake Windermere.”

The Lake Windermere Ambassadors have been designated by the Regional District of the East Kootenay and the District of Invermere as the Lake Management Committee. The primary role of the Lake Management Committee is to assist each district in implementing the recommendations in the Lake Windermere Management Plan and providing comment on development referrals.

January to December 2022 was another successful year of programming for the Lake Windermere Ambassadors. We saw the continuation and improvement of our annual monitoring program; community outreach and education campaigns; collaboration with First Nations, local government, and stewardship groups; expanded staff capacity; and successfully completed year one of the Lake Windermere Restoration and Education Project. This report will highlight successes and challenges of 2022 and take a peek at what is coming for 2023.



THE TEAM

Vice Chair		Chair	Treasurer and Secretary	
				
Shawn Ridsdale		Taoya Schaefer	Jennifer Beverley	
				
Gurmeet Brar	Buzz Harmsworth	Directors at Large	Shannon McGinty	Richard Spenrath
				
Victoria Lang	Max Powers	Ryan Watmough	Reid Morrison	
				
Ellen Wilker Program Assistant	Amy Baxter Program Coordinator	Emma Bowins Water Stewardship Assistant		

Government Advisors



Susan Clovechok
Regional District of East Kootenay



Al Miller
District of Invermere



Rhiannon Kirton
Shuswap Band



Advisor Wanted
Akisq'nuk First Nation

HIGHLIGHTS

Water Monitoring



1 Recreational Carrying Capacity Study 18 Lake Sampling Excursions 23 Citizen Science Volunteers Trained 17 Creek Sampling Excursions 3 Species Surveys

Outreach and Education



1,090 Individuals Engaged 13 Events Hosted 12 Community Events Attended 8 Summer Camps 11 Articles and Blogs Published

Organization Sustainability



14 Collaborator and Supporting Organizations Increased Capacity 5 Innovative Funding Solutions 1 New Ongoing Fundraiser

PROJECT WORK

Our work can be broken down into three core areas, Water Monitoring, Outreach and Education, and Organization Sustainability. Each area compliments another, we cannot achieve our vision without implementing all three in concert with each other.

Water Monitoring

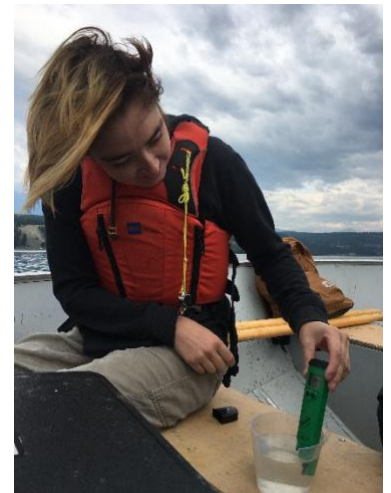


2022 marked the twelfth year of water monitoring by the Ambassadors and our first year undertaking the extremely important Recreational Carrying Capacity Study. Our projects allowed us to continue contributing to long term baseline data as well as begin new data collection and sediment core analysis. Our monitoring occurred weekly from May to September on the Lake, Tributaries, and Public Beaches. When concerned members of the community came together to help fund the Recreational Carrying Capacity Study, we were able to

focus on sediment, algae, sensitive habitat and boat use analysis towards the end of the summer. An annual water monitoring report as well as a memo for phase one findings of the study will be available following publication of this report. All raw water monitoring data will also be uploaded to the [Columbia Basin Water Hub](#) hosted by Living Lakes Canada.

Lake Monitoring

We began our lake monitoring on April 7th following the ice melt on April 2nd, and began weekly sampling when Water Stewardship Assistant, Emma Bowins joined us on May 18th. We were able to complete a total of 18 lake monitoring excursions, wrapping up our sampling on September 14th. During our lake and creek monitoring we trained 23 individuals as citizen scientists, who came from a diverse background including both full time and seasonal residents, local business owners, tourists, youth, and recreation enthusiasts. Sampling methods were audited by the BC Lake Stewardship Society in August to ensure accuracy of data.



Tributary Monitoring

This year we were able to continue weekly monitoring on Windermere and Abel Creek for water chemistry and quantity, with continuous flow logger installed in Windermere Creek. Overall, we conducted 17 excursions on the creeks including our weekly monitoring, and collecting a benthic invertebrate sample using the Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN) protocol.



Public Beach Monitoring

In collaboration with the Interior Health Authority, we collected weekly water samples from Kinsmen, James Chabot, and Windermere Beach June 27, 2022 to August 29, 2022 (excluding long weekends). Samples were analyzed for *E.coli* through the Interior Health Authority laboratories. On July 11, one sample from James Chabot Beach had a high *E.coli* count that exceeded recommendations for public swim beach safety which resulted in a temporary closure of James Chabot Beach. Samples taken the week after showed very low *E.coli* counts and the beach was able to be reopened. The community can monitor *E.coli* levels throughout the summer by visiting [Interior Health's Water Samples site](#).



Species Surveys

In addition to our standard sampling regime, we completed three species surveys, and monitored for invasive mussels in collaboration with East Kootenay Invasive Species Council. The Lake Windermere Ambassadors monitor for invasive mussels with Substrate Samplers installed at six locations on the East side of the lake, Lakeview Meadows, Terra Vista Community Association, Akiskinook Resort, Windermere Public Beach, Indian Beach Estates, and Pete's Marina. Through this sampling, no invasive mussels were found to be present in Lake Windermere. The three species surveys included six surveys of an important breeding colony of bank swallows for the Columbia Valley Swallow Project, an Aquatic Invasive Plant Survey (with the help of Goldeneye Ecological Services), and a Water Bird Survey (with the help of Goldeneye Ecological Services).



Recreational Carrying Capacity Study

As part of the Lake Windermere Restoration and Education Project, The Lake Windermere Ambassadors have hired

Ecoscope Environmental LTD. and Larratt Aquatic Consulting to help conduct a Recreational Carrying Capacity Study on Lake Windermere. The study began in September 2022 and included 6 surveys of boat usage, sediment analysis at nine sites in Lake Windermere, sensitive habitat identification, phytoplankton analysis at 4 sites in Lake Windermere, and the installation of 5 sediment traps. The sediment analysis showed hydrocarbon contamination at 6/9 sample sites, leading to concern for water quality. Funding permitting, we hope to expand testing next year in Phase 2 of the study. Boat usage data will continue to be collected throughout the summer of 2023, with the goal of having the study complete before the start of 2024. We will post a memo on the phase 1 findings of the study to our website once it is complete.

Outreach and Education

Success of our water monitoring is dependent upon effective and impactful outreach and education. We aim to connect with a diverse and inclusive audience that captures all those who love and care about Lake Windermere. In 2022 we directly engaged with 1,090 individuals on matters relating to the health of Lake Windermere.

Events, Presentations and Workshops

Each year we look for opportunities to provide unique educational experiences for the community, this year we were able to host training workshops, events and summer camps. All of our events, presentations, and workshops were free to attend in an effort to reduce barriers for participation in water stewardship. Our summer camp programming has become popular over the past few years, so we continued to seek opportunities to partner with Columbia Lake Stewardship Society on busy weeks to offer bigger group programs. Overall, we saw 98 kids age 7 to 11 through the camps, and focused on eight educational themes, including:

- Birds of our Sky
- Aliens in our Lake
- Our Wonderful Watershed
- Life in a Drop of Water
- Wild Wetlands
- Fishing for Fun
- Making Waves
- A Bug's Life



Green Shores for Homes Level 1 Training

On September 17th, we brought an instructor from the Stewardship Centre for BC to Invermere to provide Green Shores for Homes Level 1 training in our community. The workshop introduced participants to basic shoreline ecosystem principals and shoreline management practices, emphasizing how homeowners can apply the Green Shores approach to protect their properties from erosion while benefiting healthy shoreline habitat. We were excited to have a wonderful group of engaged participants including shoreline homeowners, landscape professionals, an environmental planner from the District of Invermere, developers, youth, golf course representatives, other stewardship groups and more!



We hope to continue the project into next year, using what we have learned to work together as a community to restore pockets of shoreline around Lake Windermere and continue to build our knowledge by taking Green Shores for Homes Level 2.

Events and Presentations

We were also able to host, and collaborate on many events and presentations this year including:

- The Whiteway Winter Challenge with the Toby Creek Nordic Club
- Presentation for the Grade 10 Careers Class on water quality and quantity monitoring
- Lake Windermere Aquathlon collaboration
- Wings over the Rockies – Windermere Creek Sampling Tour
- Annual General Meeting
- Spring Community Clean Up
- Sip & Splash Fundraiser
- Lake keepers workshop presented by BC Lakes Stewardship Society
- Guest presentation for Little Badgers Early Learning
- BC Rivers Day Paddle in partnership with Wildsight and Columbia River Paddle
- Learn About your Lake presentation
- Hydrometric training presented by Living Lakes Canada and the Ministry of Environment



Out in the Community

In addition to hosting and co-hosting many events we continued to find ways to connect with the community, including attending community Farmers Markets and setting up informative booths at popular boat launches and beaches around the lake. We were able to get out into the community at 12 different events connecting with 515 individuals on freshwater issues that matter to them including stewardship, green boating, and aspects of the Lake Windermere Management Plan. We continue to seek opportunities to connect with a variety of community members to ensure we are listening to the many concerns this community has.

Educational Articles and Publications

Our final major avenue for connection with the community is through publications and features on many platforms. The Columbia Valley Pioneer is a well-loved newspaper in our community, and we are fortunate to be provided the opportunity to contribute weekly updates during the sampling season and monthly educational articles under our Watershed Wanderings column. We were also lucky to be featured in, or consulted on quite a few articles this summer. In addition, we encourage water stewardship and education through our social media platforms which have 2,201 followers. The table below outlines the articles we were featured in or published in 2022:

Date	Publisher	Title & Link
March 03, 2022	Kootenay Conservation Program	Lake Windermere Community-Based Water Monitoring Project
April 21, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Shoreline clean-up at Lake Windermere
April 21, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Lake Windermere Ambassadors Warn of Dangers of Wake Boat Damage
May 19, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Through the Looking Glass
June 16, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Award allows Lake Ambassadors to offer local Green Shores for Homes program
June 16, 2022	BC Lake Stewardship Society	2022 Secchi dip-in!
July 7, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Ambassadors caution about effect of wake boats on Lake Windermere
August 4, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Lake Windermere flexes its (lack of) mussels
August 4, 2022	Blog	2021 Annual water quality report
August 4, 2022	Blog	Concerned about your lake?
August 12, 2022	Blog	2022 Mooring Buoy Information Updated
August 18, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Invermere gives support to Lake Windermere carrying capacity study

August 25, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Through the looking water
September 15, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	We're all in this together!
November 3, 2022	Columbia Valley Pioneer	It's of-fish-all!
December 18, 2022	Blog	Let's talk about road salt

Organization Sustainability

Each year the Lake Windermere Ambassadors continue to implement water monitoring and educational programming, we continue to work on our organization sustainability in the background. This is vital to the survival of our organization and the programs we offer.



Collaborators and Supporters

The Ambassadors were borne out of the Lake Windermere Project by Wildsight Invermere, collaboration is in our origins, and continues to provide value to our programming. This year we collaborated with and were supported by 14 unique organizations and 11 local businesses.

Innovative Funding Solutions

As is the ongoing challenge for many non-profits, the Ambassadors continued to seek new funding solutions. We have been fortunate to serve as the Lake Management Committee for the Regional District of East Kootenay and District of Invermere for the past twelve years, which comes with some supportive funds; at the same time, we have seen considerable organizational growth. So, in addition to grant applications we utilized five fundraising platforms this year to support our operations.



1. Sip and Splash

In 2022 we hosted our second Sip and Splash event that raised over \$1,000 to support our programs. This event engaged 8 local businesses to provide a drink feature for weeklong event that contributed a portion of the proceeds back to the Ambassadors, while we encouraged the public to visit and support these businesses.

2. Raffle

Supported by three local businesses the Ambassadors were able to raffle 1) a stand-up

paddle board thanks to Syndicate Board Shop 2) a gift certificate for the Invermere to Radium Float for two people including rentals, thanks to Columbia River Paddle, and 3) a river rafting trip for 2 thanks to Kootenay River Runners! The raffle brought in \$1030 in donations. This event ran from June to August.

3. **[Annual Giving Membership Program](#)**

After connecting with various non-profits with similar missions to our own, we realized that an Annual Giving Membership Program was the market norm, so we adjusted our membership policies in 2021 to reflect that. The board voted in a policy that saw a tiered approach to membership, while still offering a free membership for those that wanted to support but weren't in a financial position to contribute annually. We have seen great support from the community with considerable uptake for this program, raising \$500 this year.



4. **[Endowment Fund](#)**

Lake Windermere continues to be a lifeline for our community providing environmental, recreational, and economic value¹; for this reason, the Ambassadors continued to raise money for our Endowment Fund, with the vision of protecting Lake Windermere in perpetuity. This fund is facilitated by the Columbia Valley Community Foundation for the Lake Windermere Ambassadors. Help us protect Lake Windermere for future generations by donating today!

5. **[Fundraising with Tru Earth](#)**

To contribute to our endowment fund, the Ambassadors began an ongoing fundraiser with one of our favourite brands, Tru Earth! Did you know, many laundry detergents can cause harm to the environment? Detergents often do not entirely biodegrade, which can lead to contamination of our waterways. TruEarth is a Canadian company that offers eco-friendly and biodegradable laundry and cleaning products contained in eco-friendly packaging. For each sale made through our fundraising link, TruEarth will donate 20% of the sale to the Ambassadors, which will help us grow our endowment fund!



¹ https://valleyfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CVCF_vitalsigns_report_2018_WEB.pdf

CONCLUSIONS

We are continually motivated by the incredible support we receive from the community for our programming and initiatives. When we were unable to raise the necessary funds for the Recreational Carrying Capacity Study through grant applications, we were especially moved when concerned members of the community began making large donations to support this essential project. Sound of support from the community echoes across our waters, constantly reassuring us that we are headed in the right direction. We look forward to continuing our annual monitoring and outreach in 2023, along with studying recreational impacts, conducting a shoreline stewardship and restoration program, and encouraging an increased understanding of the health of Lake Windermere. If you have any questions about anything you have read in this report, or any of our programming please don't hesitate to reach out, we would love to connect.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work we do could not happen without our collaborators, partners, and mentors:

- Akiskinook Resort
- Akisq'nuk First Nation
- Arrowhead Brewing Company
- Aspire Professional Corporations
- BC Lake Stewardship Society
- BC Parks
- Canadian Freshwater Alliance
- Circle Market and Café
- Columbia Basin Watershed Network
- Columbia Lake Stewardship Society
- Columbia River Paddle
- Columbia Valley Community Foundation
- Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners
- Community Donors
- District of Invermere
- East Kootenay Invasive Species Council
- Ecoscape Environmental Consultants
- Edible Acres
- Ellen Wilker, Program Assistant
- Emma Bowins, Water Stewardship Assistant
- Toby Creek Nordic Ski Club
- Wildsight Invermere
- Fuze
- Golden Eye Ecological Services, Rachel Darvill
- Kootenay Conservation Program
- Kootenay River Runners
- Lakeview Meadows
- Laratt Aquatic Consulting
- Living Lakes Canada
- Our Committed Board of Directors
- Our Waters BC
- Regional District of East Kootenay
- Shady Brook Resort
- Shuswap Band
- Station Pub
- Stolen Church Coffee and Gelati
- Sweet Mountain Shave Ice
- Syndicate Board Shop
- Terra Vista Community Association

