



2023

ANNUAL REPORT



info@lakeambassadors.ca

(250) 341-6868

625 4th Street, PO Box 601

Invermere, BC V0A 1K0

Thank you to our funders and supporters!



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



BRITISH COLUMBIA CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

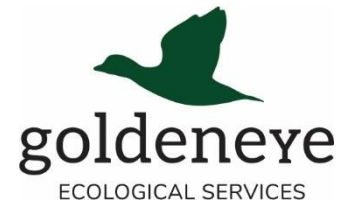


Funded by the Government of Canada
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada



BCLSS

We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia



columbia basin environmental education network



wildsight



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
MESSAGE FROM THE STAFF	4
THE TEAM	5
HIGHLIGHTS	6
PROJECT WORK	7
Water Monitoring	7
Lake Monitoring	7
Tributary Monitoring	7
Public Beach Monitoring	8
Species Surveys	8
CABIN Monitoring	8
Outreach and Education	8
Events, Presentations and Workshops	9
Out in the Community	10
Educational Articles and Publications	10
Organization Sustainability	11
Collaborators and Supporters	12
Strategic Priorities	12
Innovative Funding Solutions	12
CONCLUSIONS	13
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	14



Photo by Pat Morrow

The Lake Windermere Ambassadors Society respectfully acknowledges that our water stewardship work is conducted on the traditional lands of the Secwépemc and Ktunaxa First Nations and the chosen home of the Columbia Valley Métis. We recognize these communities as the original and ongoing stewards of the lakes and surrounding land.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lake Windermere Ambassadors (LWA) 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 2023 was another successful year of programming for the Lake Windermere Ambassadors. We saw the continuation of our annual monitoring program; community outreach and education campaigns; collaboration with First Nations, local government, and stewardship groups; continuation of our five-year strategic plan. This report will highlight successes and challenges of 2023 and peek at what is coming for 2024.

Healthy waters for healthy communities

MESSAGE FROM THE STAFF

2023 delivered excitement, challenges, and opportunities as we completed our 13th year of water monitoring and community outreach. Exciting projects included the continuation of our annual citizen science-based Water Quality/Quantity Monitoring program, a successful Education and Outreach program, and an eye-opening, second year of our Carrying Capacity study. Designed to investigate the recreational impact on the lake and to provide the information needed to protect Lake Windermere's sensitive habitats and water quality.

Some challenges faced by the Ambassadors this year included staffing difficulties and low water levels towards the end of the summer, making it difficult to reach our south sampling sites later in the season. Ongoing challenges, such as climate change and heightened human impact, continue to pose threats to Lake Windermere. Despite these, we aim to develop creative solutions to mitigate them, with the understanding that Lake Windermere holds cultural, economic, and historic significance for our valley and contributes to a place of identity and promotes a sense of belonging and pride amongst the community.

Opportunities created out of 2023 included relationship building within the community including local businesses, government agencies, other not-for profit groups and Indigenous organizations. These relationships are important to LWA to leverage resources and expertise as well as promote a sense of community and shared responsibility. We continued work towards engaging with citizens, increasing capacity in knowledge and passion through education, outreach and providing volunteer and job opportunities for valley residence and visitors.

Looking ahead to 2024, we will strive to meet new goals, responsibilities and challenges, work in collaboration to promote clean and safe drinking and recreational water for the community, continue our Public Access and Shoreline Stewardship Initiatives and our Water Quality Monitoring programs. We are eager to start our Native Mussel study in 2024 and to collaborate and build relationships with volunteers and the community, and to find out what further accomplishments and opportunities await us in the upcoming year.

Lake Windermere Ambassadors

THE TEAM

			
Shannon McGinty Treasurer	Shawn Ridsdale Board Chair	Taoya Schaefer Board Vice-Chair	Jennifer Beverley Secretary
			
Max Fanderl Director at Large	Victoria Lang Director at Large	Gurmeet Brar Director at Large	Reid Morrison Director at Large
			
This Could Be You Join Our Board!	Buzz Harmsworth Director at Large	Richard Spenrath Director at Large	This Could Be You Join Our Board!
Vacant Director at Large			Vacant Director at Large
			
Photo Coming Soon	Photo Coming Soon	Photo Coming Soon	Amy Project Consultant
Pam Staff	Emma Staff	Jacob Staff	

Government Advisors



Susan Clovechok
Regional District of East Kootenay



Grant Kelly
District of Invermere



Braydi Rice
Shuswap Indian Band



Vacant
Akisq'nuk First Nation

HIGHLIGHTS

Water Monitoring Highlights



Education & Outreach Highlights



Organization Highlights



PROJECT WORK

Our three main categories of work in 2023 were 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. Additional special project work in 2023 included the second year of our Carrying Capacity study and some work on public lake access and stewardship.

Water Monitoring



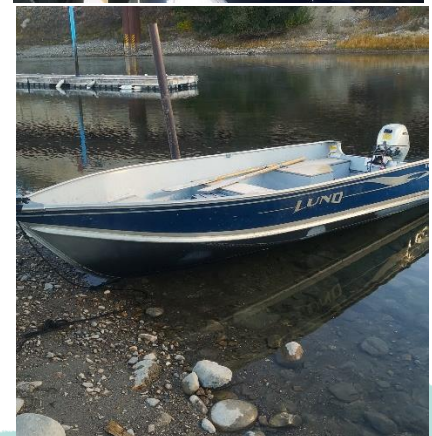
2023 marked the 13th year of water monitoring by the Ambassadors. Our excursions occurred weekly from April to September on the Lake, Tributaries, and Public Beaches, with focused species surveys throughout. An annual monitoring report will be available and posted to our [website](#) following publication of this report, all raw data will be uploaded to the [Columbia Basin Water Hub](#) hosted by Living Lakes Canada.

Lake Monitoring

After our Water Stewardship Intern joined the team, we began our lake monitoring on April 18th following the ice melt and were able to complete a total of 12 excursions, wrapping up our sampling on September 19th. Through our lake monitoring we trained 25 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 and equipment were audited by the BC Lake Stewardship Society and Provincial Government Water Quality Science Specialist to ensure proper sampling protocol and method were being met.

Tributary Monitoring

This year we continued weekly monitoring on Windermere and Abel Creek for water chemistry and quantity. We were able to install a submerged continuous flow logger in Windermere Creek on April 26th to track temperature changes over the season until its removal on October 18th. In total, we conducted 7 water quality monitoring excursions on the creeks.



Public Beach Monitoring

In collaboration with the Interior Health Authority, we collected weekly water samples from Kinsmen, James Chabot, and Windermere Beach from May to the end of August (excluding long weekends). Samples were analyzed for *E. coli* through the Interior Health Authority laboratories. All public beaches met Ministry of Environment objectives for total *E. coli* counts throughout the summer season, data can be found on [Interior Health's Water Samples site](#).



Species Surveys

In addition to our standard sampling regime, we completed two monitoring surveys. One, a Water Bird survey and additional Bank Swallow Monitoring and the second, an Invasive Aquatic Plant survey. Both were conducted in collaboration with Goldeneye Ecological Services. Through this sampling, no invasive species were found to be present in Lake Windermere. Check out our website for the final reports.

CABIN Monitoring

We were unable to complete our annual fall [Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network \(CABIN\)](#) monitoring this season, however, over the course of the year, two LWA staff members became [field certified](#), and one became certified at the Project Manager level. We are looking forward to completing CABIN sampling in 2024.

[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. Over the winter months we had outreach staff out at the Whiteway. In July we welcomed an Education and Outreach Assistant to the team and

directly engaged with >1000 individuals on matters relating to the health of Lake Windermere. We hope that by providing education and hands on citizen science opportunities we can raise awareness, generate interest, and build knowledge that will allow citizens to make informed decisions about their own environmental impact and the protection of the community's most important resource.

Events, Presentations and Workshops

Every year we look for opportunities to engage with our community. This initiative brings residents together, strengthen social bonds and create a shared sense of responsibility in the community. We continued to offer free attendance to our events, presentations, and workshops to reduce barriers for participation in water stewardship. This year we were able to host various events and kids' camps.

Our summer camp programming has become popular and filled up early this year. We partnered with Columbia Lake Stewardship Society to provide free kids camps for 12 children on Thursdays throughout the summer. Camps were 3 hours in duration and covered a variety of lake related topics. We plan to offer this shared program again in 2024. Our lesson themes included:

- Our Wonderful Watershed @ James Chabot
- Junior Ambassadors @ James Chabot
- Junior Water Stewards @ Columere Park
- Aliens in our Lake @ Tilley Memorial Park
- Wild Wetlands @ James Chabot
- Little Badgers Become Water Stewards @ Columbia Lake Provincial Park
- Fishing for Fun & the Fisherman @ Tilley Memorial Park
- Making Waves
- A Bug's Life
- Water Superheroes
- Birds of our Sky
- Life in a Drop of Water



We hosted or participated in several events this year. We kicked off the season with a free REEF Canada sponsored Pancake Breakfast and Shoreline Clean Up which saw over 100 community members come out. We held our 12th Annual General Meeting on March 16th, 2023, participated in the Valley Appreciation Day in July, Wings Over the Rockies in spring and the Invermere Light Up holiday event in December. LWA was nominated for 3 Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards in 2023: Environmental Stewardship Award,

Community Builder Award, and Non-Profit/Association of the Year Award. As our staff capacity increases, we will be looking at new and exciting event opportunities.



Out in the Community

In addition to hosting and co-hosting events we continued to find ways to connect with the community through ongoing events; in 2023 this included presenting a [virtual webinar](#) on Sustainable Lake Recreational, attending community Farmers Markets, and setting up informative booths at popular boat launches. We were able to get out into the community and host 32 outreach booth events connecting with 600+ individuals on the issues that matter to them. 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 enough to be provided the opportunity to contribute weekly Lake Pulse Check updates during the sampling season and educational articles under our Watershed Wanderings column. Our social media platforms saw a reach of over 2626 followers. The table below outlines events and articles published in 2023:

Date	Event	Location
Mar 5, 2023	Whiteway winter challenge wrap up	Kinsmen Beach
Apr 5, 2023	Meeting/presentation to the Shuswap Band	Shuswap Band office
Apr 13, 2023	Presentation to the RDEK	Online - RDEK Committee meeting
Apr 28, 2023	Spring Beach Party cleanup	Columbia Valley centre
May 1, 2023	Redi grants project presentation to public and decision committee	CVC
May 9, 2023	Presentation to the DOI	DOI Chambers
May 21, 2023	Presentation to Trethewey	Windermere Community Hall
July 22, 2023	Valley Appreciation Day	Invermere
Sept 28, 2023	Webinar with Living Lakes	Online YouTube
Nov 25, 2023	Invermere Light Up	Invermere
Date	Publisher	Title & Link
Jan 5, 2023	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Lake Windermere Ambassadors: A Successful Year
January, 2023	Columbia Valley Community Foundation	Columbia Valleys' Vital Signs Report
March 20, 2023	e.know	Lake Ambassadors Get Funding to Conduct Mussel Study
May 17, 2023	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Lake Report Raises Concerns About Cyanobacteria
Feb 25, 2023	Blog	Lake Windermere Recreational Impact and Sediment Quality Assessment
Aug 15, 2023	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	Watch Your Wake!
Aug 21, 2023	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	Two Minutes for Lake Health
Aug 31, 2023	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	What is flowing into our lake?
Sept 12, 2023	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	Cyanobacteria in Lakes: A Closer Look
Sept 29, 2023	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	Falling into a new season – What this means for Lake Windermere.
Nov 6, 2023	Columbia Valley Pioneer & Blog	Whirling Disease

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 success of our organization and longevity of Lake Windermere.



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 the organizations and businesses identified on page one.

Strategic Priorities

Over our thirteen years of operation our priorities have changed and adapted to the needs and interests of the communities. We followed our five-year strategic plan into 2023, with the continuation of four strategic goals:



1. Create a Sustainable Organization
2. Enhance Education and Communication to the Community
3. Maintain and Increase Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and Community Stakeholders
4. Improve and Preserve the Health of the Lake

Innovative Funding Solutions

As is the ongoing challenge for many non-profits, the Ambassadors continued to seek new and ground-breaking funding solutions. We have been fortunate enough to serve as the Lake Management Committee for the Regional District of East Kootenay and District of Invermere for the past thirteen years, which comes with some supportive funds; at the same time, we have seen considerable organizational growth. With these factors in mind, we continue to offer fundraising platforms to support our operations.



1. [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, and that we needed to adjust our membership policies 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.

2. [Endowment Fund](#)

Lake Windermere continues to be a lifeline for our community providing environmental, recreational, and economic value; for this reason, the Ambassadors decided to embark on the development of an Endowment Fund that sees the protection of Lake Windermere in perpetuity. This fund is facilitated by the Columbia Valley Community Foundation for the Lake Windermere Ambassadors, we have a goal of \$10,000 by 2026 – help us protect Lake Windermere and reach this goal by donating today.



3. [TRU EARTH Fundraising](#)



We have partnered with TRU Earth to offer eco-friendly cleaning products that are safer for you and the water! When you order a product using [our specific link](#), 20% of the total sales value will go directly to our organization to support our work. You can feel good knowing you are helping our organization, and purchasing products that protect the environment.

CONCLUSIONS

We are continually motivated by the incredible support we receive from the community for our ongoing programming and initiatives. We look forward to continuing our annual monitoring and outreach in 2024, along with increased awareness of public access sites, a Native Mussel study, and sustained 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
- Back Alley Grill
- BC Hydro
- BC Lakes Stewardship Society
- BC Parks
- Beginnings Breakfast and Brunch
- Blue Dog Café
- Café Allium
- Cardiff Cove Marina
- Canadian Freshwater Alliance
- Circle Market and Café
- Columbia Basin Trust
- Columbia Basin Watershed Network
- Columbia Lake Stewardship Society
- Columbia River Paddle
- Columbia Valley Community Foundation
- Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners
- Community Donors
- District of Invermere
- Eagle Ranch Resort
- East Kootenay Invasive Species Council
- Edible Acres
- Emma Bowins
- Fuze
- Golden Eye Ecological Services, Rachel Darvill
- Hungry Rooster Food Truck
- Invermere Bakery
- Jacob Moody, Intern
- Kootenay Conservation Program
- Kootenay River Runners
- Lakeview Meadows
- Leo Burrito
- Living Lakes Canada
- Our Committed Board of Directors
- Our Waters BC
- Real Estate Foundation of BC
- Regional District of East Kootenay
- Shady Brook Resort
- Sign Artist
- Shuswap Indian Band
- Station Pub
- Stolen Church Coffee and Gelati
- Sweet Mountain Shave Ice
- Syndicate Board Shop
- Terra Vista Community Association
- Toby Creek Nordic Ski Club
- Ullr Bar
- Wildsight Invermere
- Windermere Community Association

