



# lake windermere ambassadors

healthy water for healthy communities



## 2025 Annual Report

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# Thank you to our funders!



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*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 volunteer-based society made up of community members 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.

LWA grew out of the strong foundation established by the highly successful Lake Windermere Project, delivered through Wildsight Invermere from 2005 to 2010. Since 2010, the organization has led annual water quality monitoring, community education initiatives, and collaborative efforts with watershed stakeholders in pursuit of our shared vision for a healthy Lake Windermere.

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 that benefit the ecological health of Lake Windermere.”

The Lake Windermere Ambassadors are designated as the Lake Management Committee by the Regional District of East Kootenay and the District of Invermere. In this role, LWA supports both districts by assisting with the implementation of the Lake Windermere Management Plan and by providing input on development referrals.

From January to December 2025, the Lake Windermere Ambassadors experienced another successful year of programming. Key activities included the continuation of our annual monitoring program; community outreach and education initiatives; collaboration with First Nations, local governments, and stewardship partners; and progress on our five-year strategic plan. This report highlights the activities of 2025 and offers a look ahead to priorities and opportunities in 2026.

*Healthy water for healthy communities*



## MESSAGE FROM THE STAFF

2025 was both busy and productive. Having additional staff allowed for a more balanced distribution of work and created space to strengthen our education efforts, expand event outreach, and deliver more presentations. We were successful in building and maintaining partnerships with a variety of businesses and organizations to improve both our programming and assist in theirs.

While the year brought on some challenges including weather-related interruptions and collecting early-season samples, our staff were able to adapt and persevere. We successfully expanded our monitoring efforts to include Abel Creek and strengthened our connection with the community by increasing our presence at events throughout the year. As seasons ebb and flow, we remain committed to understanding changes in Lake Windermere, sharing its importance with our community, and providing guidance on how to keep the lake healthy.

We continue to build relationships with the community, Indigenous organizations, government agencies, and other stewardship groups. We see these connections as part of our strategy to increase knowledge, passion and education for citizens.

As we move into 2026, we anticipate a year shaped by evolving priorities, new projects, and meaningful opportunities to strengthen our work. We will continue to build and deepen partnerships that support Lake Windermere's ecological health, shoreline stewardship, and the protection of clean, safe drinking and recreational waters. We look forward to working alongside both long-standing and new community members as we advance these shared goals.

*Lake Windermere Ambassadors*



# THE TEAM

## Executive Committee



Taoya Schaefer  
BOARD CHAIR



Shannon Nickerson  
VICE-CHAIR



Jennifer Beverley  
SECRETARY



Victoria Lang  
TREASURER

## Board Members



Gurmeet Brar



Max Fanderl



Ryan Watmough



Shawn Ridsdale



Candis Dear



Victoria Paige



Heather Rennebohm



Richard Spenrath

## Staff



**Pam Saunders**  
PROGRAM MANAGER



**Marie-Jeanne Reid**  
PROGRAM ASSISTANT



**Julia Jovanovic**  
SUMMER INTERN

## Government Advisors



**Nathan Medinski-**  
Intermediate Fisheries  
Biologist  
*Shuswap Band*



**Allan Nicholas**  
*Akisq'nuk First Nation*



**Susan Clovechok**  
*Regional District of East  
Kootenay*



**Grant Kelly**  
*District of Invermere*

# HIGHLIGHTS



## Water monitoring

**15**

Lake  
sampling  
days



**15**

Creek sampling trips



**20**

Citizen scientists  
trained



**1**

Aquatic  
Plant  
Survey



**0**

Invasive  
Species  
found

**10**

Beach  
Sampling  
Days

**3**

Bank  
Swallow  
Monitoring  
days



## Organization

**15**

Years of  
Monitoring



**12**

Board  
Members



**23**

Funders &  
Supporters



**2**

Fundraising Partner  
TRU Earth & Kicking Horse Cafe

**1**

Nomination for the Non  
Profit Association of the  
Year Award

## Education & Outreach

**>1500**

Interactions



**17**

Articles  
Published



**70**

Kids  
attended  
day camp



**10**

Outreach  
Booths



**3**

Events  
hosted



**2**

New  
brochures  
produced



## **PROJECT WORK**

We advance our mission through three interconnected areas of work: Water Monitoring, Outreach and Education, and Organizational Sustainability. Each plays a critical role in bringing our vision to life and ensuring long-term success.

### **Water Monitoring**



**2025 marked the fifteenth year of sampling for the Lake Windermere Ambassadors, with baseline data collected for four years prior during the Lake Windermere Project. Our excursions occurred weekly from April to October on the lake, tributaries and public beaches. We also conducted an aquatic plant survey. An annual monitoring report will be made available and posted on our website following this report. All raw data will be uploaded to the Columbia Basin Water Hub hosted by Living Lakes Canada.**

#### ***Lake Windermere Monitoring***

Our 2025 sampling season began with collecting data at ice-off (lake completely free of ice) on April 8, 2025. We then continued our weekly Lake Monitoring starting on May 28, 2025 through to October 9, 2025. During this time we completed 15 excursions, trained 20 citizen scientists, who gave a total

of 36 volunteer hours. Our standard sampling regime was conducted in accordance with recommendations from the Ministry of Environment in the updated Water Quality Objectives for Lake Windermere, released November 2010. Water quality laboratory analysis is completed by CARO Analytical (Kelowna, BC). Weekly measurements are taken of specific conductivity, pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity. Weekly field observations for air temperature, water depth, water clarity, wind speed and direction, and cloud cover were also recorded. Water samples were submitted monthly for laboratory analysis of chloride, nitrogen, and nitrate + nitrite. In addition, weekly water samples were collected for the Ministry of Environment to monitor phosphorus and chlorophyll as part of the BC Lake Stewardship and Monitoring Program (Level 3).



Sampling methods and equipment were audited by the BC Lake Stewardship Society and Provincial Government Water Quality Science Specialist to ensure proper sampling protocols and methods were followed.



### **Tributary Monitoring**

This year, LWA conducted weekly monitoring of two tributaries flowing into Lake Windermere. Windermere Creek was sampled on nine occasions, while Abel Creek was sampled on six. Monitoring took place from June 17 to August 26, 2025, with Windermere Creek monitored beginning June 17 and Abel Creek beginning July 23. Our sampling protocol followed the Columbia Basin Water Quality Monitoring Project’s protocols, which are closely aligned to the Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network’s sampling methodology. Weekly measurements taken include streamflow, specific conductivity, pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity. Weekly field observations for air temperature, wind speed and direction, and cloud cover were also recorded.

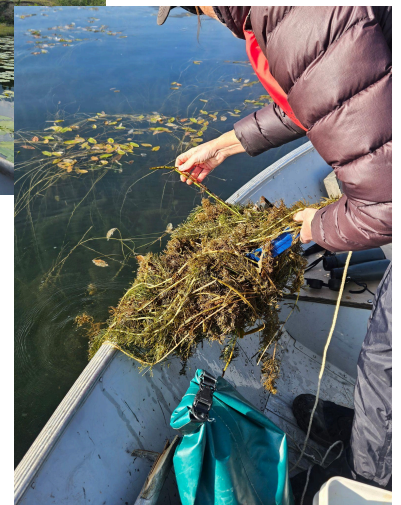
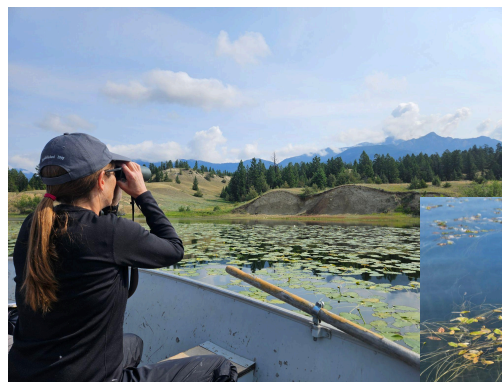
### **Public Beach Monitoring**

In collaboration with the Interior Health Authority, we collected weekly beach water quality samples from Kinsmen, James Chabot, and Windermere Beach May 26, 2025 to August 25, 2025, completing a total of 10 sampling days.. 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 and results will be summarized in our Annual Water Quality Monitoring Report.



### **Species Survey**

In partnership with Goldeneye Ecological Services, we conducted one aquatic plant monitoring survey and participated in Bank Swallow monitoring through three field excursions during the summer. Attempts at the annual aquatic bird survey were made in the fall but due to weather and lake conditions we were not able to complete the survey during the prime window.



## Outreach and Education

Without education and outreach, our water monitoring work cannot reach its full potential; without monitoring, we lack the evidence needed to meaningfully educate others. Our aim is to connect with people from all walks of life—residents, visitors, seasonal homeowners, volunteers, and all who care about Lake Windermere—while also inspiring curiosity and appreciation in those still discovering the value and beauty of our lake and river. In 2025, we connected with more than 1,500 individuals on issues related to the health of Lake Windermere.



## Events, Presentations and Workshops



In 2025, we shared our work at a range of events. Highlights included presenting findings from the Recreational Carrying Capacity Study at the *Flowing It Forward* event, as well as delivering presentations to the Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS), the CWSP Annual General Meeting, and the DOI Service Committee. We also hosted a paddle-based water sampling demonstration for funders. This year we released a Lake Windermere–specific Aquatic Plant Brochure to raise awareness of the native plant species found within the lake, as well as a “Balancing Lake Recreation & Conservation” brochure to help educate boaters and lake users on the ecological effects of recreational boating and encourage sustainable practices. We also continued to offer free access to our events, presentations, and educational programs to help remove barriers to participation in water stewardship.



In the spring we attended the 2025 Job Fair and Volunteer Expo, held our 14th Annual General Meeting, presented and attended with our booth at the Flowing it Forward: Navigating water-based recreation & aquatic health in the Columbia Valley event. At Flowing it Forward, our Program Coordinator shared a summary of findings from the Lake Windermere Recreational Carrying Capacity Study, and the

event featured engaging, up-to-date information about our local waters and ecology. Additionally, we co-hosted an Earth Day Invermere Community Clean up in collaboration with Wildsight, Kootenay Savings Credit Union, and the District of Invermere, who each hosted information tables. An educator from the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) shared insights on the waste system, and another table offered practical tips on reducing food waste through proper storage and creative repurposing. We also participated in Wings Over the Rockies guiding two short walks by the shores of Columbia Lake; explored the Source of the Columbia River Trail in the Village of Canal Flats in the morning and the shores of the lake in Columbia Lake Provincial Park in the afternoon.



In the summer we attended stewardship partner meetings and gave presentations to the local communities. We also participated in the Valley Appreciation Day, and hosted free kids camps.

In the Fall we co-hosted a paddle for BC Rivers Day from Athalmer to Radium, celebrating the river we reside by and to spread awareness on how stewards are tracking its health. We were also excited to be nominated for Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards in 2025: Non-Profit/Association of the Year Award.

Our Junior Water Stewards Kids Camps continued to be offered this summer. We offered three-hour camps on Thursday mornings for kids aged 6-10, alternating between Invermere and Canal Flats each week. We also collaborated with Little Badgers Early Learning in Windermere to host a water stewardship kids camp day for their group. Our camps covered a variety of topics all related to the Lake Windermere watershed and water monitoring. This program has proven to be popular in the community and spots filled up quickly. We had ~70 kids participate over the whole summer. Providing we continue to have the capacity, we will continue to run these camps for the community.



## *Out in the Community*

In addition to hosting and attending community events we continued to connect with the community through on-going outreach initiatives. We set up outreach booths at the Invermere Farmers Markets, and Athalmer boat launch. We went out into the community and hosted 10-outreach booths, connecting with around 600 people, in addition to the events previously mentioned. As part of our outreach efforts, we promoted a program that encourages Green & Safe Boating practices. Guides are made available for everyone, which provides recommendations and precautions to take to keep people and the lake safe. Key outreach messages focused on Clean, Drain, Dry practices; invasive species prevention; fish species in Lake Windermere; aquatic plants; green boating practices; monitoring activities; and public access to the lake. Overall, the public was receptive to the education provided and frequently expressed interest in learning more about lake health, changes observed in recent years, public access opportunities, enforcement related to zoning and shoreline structures, and aquatic plant growth. To further engage youth, we offered Fish Habitat and Invasive Species activity booklets at our outreach booth.



## *Educational Articles and Publications*

Our final major avenue for connection with the community is through publications and features on many platforms. One of these is The Columbia Valley Pioneer, a valued community newspaper that gives us the opportunity to contribute weekly Lake Pulse Check updates throughout the summer, as well as publish educational articles written by LWA staff. These articles ranged in topics but aimed to provide the community with information related to Lake Windermere and watershed health.

Our online publications reach thousands of people across Facebook, Instagram, X, Newsletters and our website. We keep our followers engaged by offering series like "What the Data Means", "Fun Fact Fridays" and current news relevant to our lake and area. The table below outlines events and articles published in 2025. The table below outlines articles published and topics covered:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
March 6, 2025	Columbia Valley Centre: 2025 Job Fair and Volunteer Expo	Columbia Valley Centre
March 27, 2025	LWA Annual General Meeting	Columbia Valley Centre
March 30, 2025	Flowing it Forward: Navigating water-based recreation & aquatic health in the Columbia Valley	Radium Hot Springs Centre
April 26, 2025	Invermere Annual Spring Cleanup	Kinsmen Beach
May 5, 2025	Wings Over the Rockies: 2 walks	Columbia Lake: (1) Source of the Columbia Trail. (2) Columbia Lake Provincial Park
July 19, 2025	Valley Appreciation Day	Invermere Market
September 26, 2025	BC Rivers Day Paddle	Invermere to Radium
<b>Date</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Title</b>
December 26, 2024	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Ambassadors Dedicated
March 13, 2025	Columbia Valley Pioneer	AGM notice
June 9, 2025	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Beavers: a solution for drought resilience
July 1, 2025	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Understanding redds in valley watershed
July 21, 2025	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Riparian areas of the Columbia Valley
August 14, 2025	Columbia Valley Pioneer	LWA Supports Buoy Action
August 28	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Not for Profits of the Columbia Valley
Sept 18, 2025	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Smoke on the Water: the effects of wildfires
October 2, 2025	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Freshwater mussels unsung filters of rivers
December 25, 2025	Columbia Valley Pioneer	Algae blooms get undeserving bad rap

In addition to these articles, we published weekly “Pulse Checks” from April to September highlighting the findings from that week's water monitoring and providing education on water monitoring parameters. This year, we also included data from Columbia Lake and provided context on what these values mean in relation to the guidelines. This addition was met with positive feedback from the public, who appreciated the expanded information and clearer interpretation of the results.



### Organization Sustainability

**The Lake Windermere Ambassadors remain committed to strengthening the long-term sustainability of our organization to support the continued success of our water monitoring and education programs. We recognize that organizational sustainability is essential to fulfilling our vision of healthy waters and healthy communities.**

### *Collaborators & 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 25 unique organizations and numerous local businesses listed on the last page.

### *Strategic Priorities*

Throughout our fifteen years of operation, we have continued to adapt our priorities to reflect the changing needs and interests of the communities. Our five- year strategic plan, developed in 2021, serves as the foundation for the following four key goals:

1. Create a Sustainable Organization
2. Enhance Education and Communication to the Community

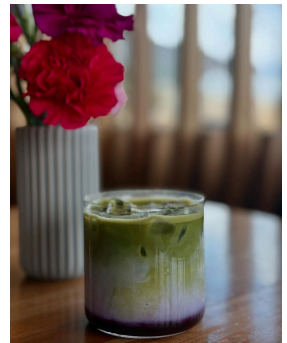
3. Maintain and Increase Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and Community Stakeholders
4. Improve and Preserve the Health of the Lake

### *Innovative Funding Solutions*

As is the ongoing challenge for many non-profits, the Ambassadors continued to seek new 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 fifteen 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 six fundraising platforms this year to support our operations.

1. Kicking Horse Cafe Drink Feature Fundraiser:

In April, Kicking Horse Café marked Earth Day with a month-long feature of a special Blueberry Matcha Latte, with all proceeds donated to the Lake Windermere Ambassadors. The initiative was a great success, and we are grateful for the generous support from Kicking Horse Café.



2. Vacation Silent Auction:

In November, Victoria Page, LWA director- at-large, generously donated two vacation packages to the silent auction at the Wild & Scenic Film Festival. With all proceeds from these packages going directly to LWA.

3. Annual Giving Membership Program:

We have continued with the 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.

4. Endowment Fund:

Lake Windermere remains a vital asset to our community, providing environmental, recreational, and economic benefits. In recognition of its long-term importance, the Lake Windermere Ambassadors continue to build the Lake Windermere Endowment Fund, established to support the protection of the lake in perpetuity. The fund is administered by the Columbia Valley Community Foundation on behalf of the Lake Windermere Ambassadors, with a target of \$10,000 by 2026.

## 5. Fundraising with Tru Earth

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 and lake.



## 6. Donations:

Supporters have the option to make a monthly or one time donation. This avenue supports our water stewardship events and programs, water quality monitoring, interpretive signage, information booths, community workshops, stewardship guides and allows for funds to be distributed where needed.

## CONCLUSIONS

Community support remains at the heart of everything we do, inspiring our efforts and shaping our direction. In 2026, we look forward to continuing our monitoring and outreach initiatives, advancing key projects such as public access improvements and a native mussel study, and expanding our knowledge of Lake Windermere's overall health. We encourage you to reach out with any questions or ideas and to stay connected as we move forward together.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

- Allan Nicholas, ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation
- Amy Baxter, BCLSS
- Amy Fletcher, RDEK
- Bavin Studios
- Black Star Studios
- Board of directors, LWA
- Circle Market
- Coffee Works
- Columbia Lake Stewardship Society
- Columbia Valley Pioneer
- Dr. Rick Nordin, BCLSS
- Fire Vixen Tattoos
- Gavin Jacobs
- Georgia Peck, Living Lakes Canada
- Gordon Orr
- Grant Kelly, DOI
- Hopkins Harvest
- Interior Health Authority
- Jayne
- Jessica Clark, Kootenay Savings
- Jesse Graham, CLSS
- Julia Jovanovic, LWA Water stewardship Intern
- Kelsey Adele Photography
- Kicking Horse Cafe
- Nathan Medinski, Shuswap Band
- Om Organics
- Pat Bavin
- Rachel Darvill, Goldeneye Ecological Services
- Rachel Milner, CLSS
- Radius Retreat
- RE-Fresh Family Consignment
- Roi's Resale
- Susan Clovechok, RDEK
- Treasures in the Wind
- Verena Shaw, Goldeneye Ecological Services
- Victoria Page, LWA
- Village Arts
- Wildsight Invermere
- Wildsight Youth Climate Corp
- Winderberry and Edibles Farm+Cafe+Catering

