



Bow River Basin Council

**2000 - 2020
RETROSPECTIVE**

Celebrating 20 years of working together!

Executive Director's Message

The Bow River Basin Council (BRBC) has a rich history, spanning over 20 years and evolving with each of those years to help ensure the Bow Basin continues to be one of the best-managed watersheds in the world.

As 2021 unfolds, the BRBC is as busy as ever building on its greatest strengths: its members and partnerships, and the projects the Council leads and supports. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, however, it is to take the time for gratitude and reflection. Having joined the BRBC in 2003, and now as Executive Director, I am humbled more than ever by the dedicated individuals, organizations and governments that, while representing an incredible diversity of interests, are united by the Council's vision:

The Bow River will be conserved and protected as a fragile and unique resource and recognized as our lifeline. Multiple uses will be balanced, ensuring the needs of all stakeholders are met while recognizing that a healthy ecosystem is paramount.

It is a vision I am proud to contribute to. And it is a vision that is given life through the work of many talented, energetic and knowledgeable people. The pages that follow are a celebration of this work - a celebration of what you, our members, have made possible.

Special thanks goes to the Council's past chairs, Bill Berzins and Mike Kelly, and our current chair Erwin Braun. Leading by example, each have shown the power of fixing the problem and not the blame. It has been under their leadership that the Council has gained its reputation as a truly collaborative organization. In these challenging times, we as individuals need to be as diligent as ever to foster the values of inclusion and fairness that underlie this collaboration.

Over the years, an incredible 52 Board members have served on the BRBC Board of Directors. These members have filled the Council's 13 Board positions, in many cases as young professionals who have gone on to share their experiences and knowledge to the benefit of the broader basin community.

As with all organizations, success also depends on the effective day-to-day operations delivered by very capable and tireless staff both past and present. Thank you Medini Prasai, Andrea Czarnecki, Claudette Lacombe, Sarah Hamza, Kelsey Envik, Jennifer Rowell, Maureen Lynch, Susan Pendray and Edie Smith.

I am very honoured to give heartfelt thanks and acknowledgement to Mark Bennett (Executive Director, 2000 – 2020). The BRBC has been around for over two decades because it embodies leadership and adaptability. It is axiomatic that these traits can easily be applied to Mark. He has shown all of us that if there is a will, there is a way. Thank you, Mark, for incalculable contribution to this organization and the welfare of the Bow Basin.

Finally, I know you will enjoy reading about our impressive history of partnerships and projects - collaborations that, as you will see, cross all sectors, scales and jurisdictions. Together we have accomplished far more than we could apart.

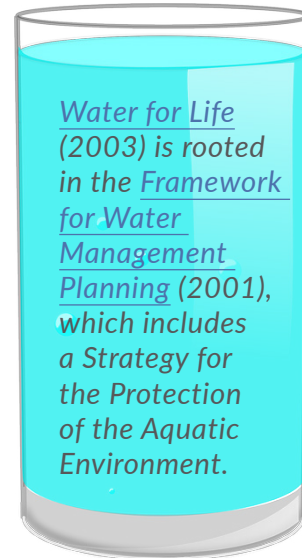
- Mike Murray, Executive Director
Bow River Basin Council

The Early Years



1980s

In the mid- to late 1980s a number of basin residents and water users, in particular some living downstream of Calgary, were becoming increasingly concerned about the deteriorating state of water quality in the Bow River. In response to these concerns, the Minister of Environment struck a Task Force to investigate the situation and prepare a report. The Task Force was, by any reasonable measure, a typical “Blue Ribbon” panel of stakeholders (including academics, researchers and water users).



1990s

The Task Force Report, published in 1991, listed 33 broad recommendations on how to improve the situation - the first of which was to create an agency that reports directly to the Minister of Environment. That agency (or Council) would specifically focus on issues identified in the Task Force Report, with an overarching purpose of promoting watershed awareness, and improving and protecting Bow River water quality. Thus the first Bow River Water Quality Council, with appointed members, was created by Ministerial Order (Environment).

In 1994, this Council published a [State of the River Report](#). It was around that time, with mounting concerns about water allocations, that the Council’s mandate was expanded to include consideration of water quantity. The reformatted group became the Bow River Basin Water Council (BRBWC).



2000s

In 2000 the BRBWC formally amalgamated with a separate independent charity: the Bow River Water Quality Foundation. The new group was moved to “arms-length” from Government, and hence opened membership to all interested parties (no longer requiring Ministerial appointment). This group was named the [Bow River Basin Council](#) (BRBC).

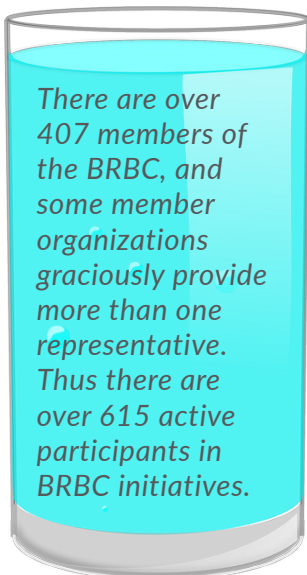
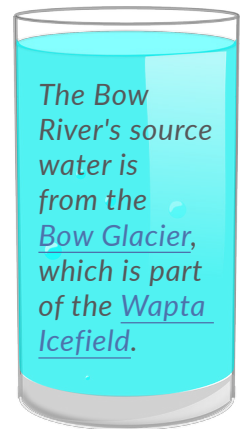
The BRBC went on to form a new partnership with the Province of Alberta by becoming a Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC), as authorized under the [2003 Water for Life: Alberta’s Strategy for Sustainability](#) (aka *Water for Life*). The BRBC is one of 11 [WPACs in Alberta](#).

The BRBC Today

The BRBC is celebrating 20 years as an independent charity seeking to ensure that multiple water uses are balanced and the needs of all stakeholders are met. It has a broad mandate of encouraging cooperative and effective strategies for water use management and environmental stewardship.



Wapta Icefield and Bow Lake seen from Cirque Peak. Photo: Lena Groeger ([Wikipedia](#)).



The BRBC comprises individuals and organizations that share a common vision that the water resources within the Bow Basin represent our lifeline and are to be conserved and protected. Representatives on the Council include urban and rural municipalities; irrigation agriculture; commercial and industrial companies; educational, recreational and ecological interests; Indigenous Peoples; the provincial and federal governments; and the general public.

The Council's ultimate goal is to participate in and promote activities that will help the Bow River Basin be one of the best-managed watersheds in the world.

20 Years - by the Numbers

6

Standing Committees

- [Legislation and Policy](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Stakeholder Engagement](#)
- [Watershed Stewardship](#)
- [Young Professionals](#)
- Governance

11

Science Forums

Organized by the BRBC Science Committee, these annual forums disseminate leading-edge research, spark thought-provoking conversations, and advance real-world solutions.

702

News & Events Bulletins

These weekly emails are a core service to all BRBC members, delivering concise listings of water-related events, news, job postings, funding opportunities and more!

76

Newsletters

The quarterly [Preserving Our Lifeline](#) newsletters, with articles written by BRBC members, celebrate on-the-ground watershed stewardship and research.

16

Legislation & Policy Workshops

Organized by the BRBC Legislation & Policy Committee, these annual workshops utilize stakeholders' diverse knowledge and skills to address current watershed policy issues.

75

Educational and Networking Forums

These quarterly forums are the BRBC's flagship events, bringing forward wide-ranging (and sometimes contentious!) topics within a collaborative and inclusive context.

BRBC at a Glance

The BRBC's greatest strengths come from its members and partnerships - and the projects the Council leads and supports.



Members

Partnerships



Projects

Effective Water Use Management

Environmental Stewardship

Best Managed Watershed



Projects

As a Watershed Planning and Advisory Council, the BRBC takes on many roles in support of the *Water For Life* strategy. These roles, outlined in the Government of Alberta's [Enabling Partnerships](#) framework, encompass planning, program and project implementation, stakeholder engagement, education and outreach, reporting and more!

With such a broad mandate, the past 20 years have seen the BRBC lead major projects, leverage resources through partnerships and collaboration, and provide direct financial support for on-the-ground stewardship activities. The projects are necessarily diverse in both subject matter and timeframe.

BRBC members willingly commit 1000s of hours to the many important projects implemented, led and supported by the Council. The number of projects can vary each year, but has increased over time as funding increases and as more watershed groups become active.



Over the last 10 years, the BRBC has generated an estimated \$5M in total in-kind membership contributions, giving the Council an annual in-kind average of approximately \$500,000!



The Cochrane Branches and Banks initiative promotes environmental stewardship through the planting of trees and environmental enhancement activities. The BRBC was an early contributor to this initiative, and since 2013 this stewardship event has become fully sponsored and organized by the Cochrane Environmental Action Committee. Photo: Mike Murray, 2007.

BRBC - A Project Supporter

Examples in Excellence

The BRBC has supported over 30 stewardship and environmental groups with approximately \$2.3M in direct funding.

"The BRBC has had our backs right from the beginning and helped us form into a society in 2004. A few years later we developed the [Elbow River Basin Water Management Plan](#) together. Over the years, we have leveraged the BRBC's funds and in-kind support to secure new contributions and help on projects such as the Elbow State of the Watershed Report. The BRBC continues to be invaluable and showcases the power of working together to meet our shared goals."

*- Flora Giesbrecht, Coordinator
[Elbow River Watershed Partnership](#)*



"Congrats, BRBC! Looking back over the twenty years gone by, RiverWatch appreciates benefiting from partnering with the BRBC as a charity sponsor in our early years, and we've always enjoyed the sense of community shared by everyone attending Quarterly Forums. We've certainly availed of numerous opportunities in newsletters and in person to update BRBC members regarding our award-winning programs for School Afloat, CreekWatch Citizen Science and River Ambassador Outreach, and we've now amassed quite the collection of speaker-gifted "water measuring devices." Happy Anniversary, BRBC, and many more!"

*- Cal Kullman, Founder
[RiverWatch Institute of Alberta](#)*





“The Alberta Low Impact Development Partnership (ALIDP) is grateful that the BRBC has been part of the ALIDP since before its formalization as a society in 2008. The BRBC’s consistent support of the ALIDP as a partner has contributed to our ability to offer locally relevant resources for the management of urban stormwater. These include developing and facilitating educational events, conducting ground-breaking research, and monitoring and implementing demonstration projects to prove the feasibility of progressive landscaping practices. We look forward to continuing the journey.”

- *Leta van Duin, Executive Director*
[Alberta Low Impact Development Partnership](#)

“We are grateful to the Bow River Basin Council for their support through funding, without which we would not have completed two phases of the Bighill Creek surface water and sediment quality study. The BRBC also supports us in many other ways such as through networking during their quarterly forums, spreading the word on the Bighill Creek Valley and our organization through their newsletter and bulletins, and facilitating supportive partnerships between watershed groups within the Bow River Valley.”

Dr. Ken Stevenson, Board Member
[Bighill Creek Preservation Society](#)





“BRBC funding has supported early-career water science researchers in the University of Calgary’s Geoscience and Environmental Science programs, from undergraduate summer interns to PhD candidates. These students have the rich opportunity to conduct place-based research and then present it to multiple stakeholders at the quarterly forums. Some of this work has also been published, expanding scientific understanding.”

- *Dr. Cathryn Ryan, Professor
University of Calgary
[Department of Geoscience](#)
[B.Sc. Environmental Science Program](#)*

“Ever since the Ghost Watershed Alliance Society (GWAS) started out in 2002, the BRBC has been lending its support to our organization. The BRBC has championed a collaborative approach to watershed management in the Bow River Basin. We are grateful to be working in partnership with the BRBC towards achieving our goal of maintaining the integrity of the Ghost Watershed, an important source watershed in the Bow River Basin. Whether it was through project grants, offering opportunities to showcase our projects, providing advice or in-kind support, GWAS wouldn’t be what it is today if it hadn’t been for the BRBC’s support.”

- *Marina Krainer, Executive Director
[Ghost Watershed Alliance Society](#)*



BRBC - A Project Partner

Examples in Excellence

The BRBC has contributed \$750,000 to over 35 partnership projects.

"The Town of Okotoks truly appreciates the opportunity that the BRBC provided to create a regionally-collaborative research and education centre through the [Living Soils Filtration](#) project. In 2018, the project was nationally recognized when it won the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) Sustainable Communities Award in the category of Water. This successful partnership between the Town and the BRBC also led to an additional nature-based stormwater pilot project at a new elementary school in Okotoks. These projects, which will benefit the entire region, would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the BRBC."

- Bill Robertson, Mayor
[Town of Okotoks](#)



"In 2008 a group of like-minded conservationists launched the [Upper Bow Basin Cumulative Effects Study](#). The Study looked at land use impacts on the upper Bow, considering 'Business as Usual' and 'Best Management Practices' scenarios. Near the beginning of this Study, the BRBC was there to help. Initially aiding with access to data, the Council quickly morphed into a Managing Partner assisting with fund development, financial management, reporting, and hosting meetings. Over \$280,000 was raised for this eight-year study. Moreover, after its completion, BRBC forums provided an excellent venue to present results and facilitate further discussion. I wish to thank the BRBC for its encouragement and support!"

- Eric Lloyd, Facilitator
Upper Bow Basin Cumulative Effects Study

“The Nose Creek Watershed Partnership (NCWP) congratulates the Bow River Basin Council on their 20th anniversary as a designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council in Alberta. As a founding partner of the NCWP, the BRBC has contributed unique and important watershed perspectives that have helped to shape recommendations detailed in the [Nose Creek Watershed Water Management Plan](#). The BRBC’s leadership and willingness to collaborate at all levels are appreciated; these qualities continue to be an asset for the implementation of priority actions needed to manage land and water resources in the watershed. The BRBC’s inclusive approach has facilitated conversations that support strong collaborations and bring forward perspectives of all.”

- Clint Goodman, Co-chair
[Nose Creek Watershed Partnership](#)



“The Bow River Basin Council is an important partner in watershed management for the Jumpingpound Creek Watershed Partnership (JCWP). The BRBC has hosted numerous watershed stewardship forums through the years, giving JCWP an opportunity to share information, explore ideas and connect with other watershed stewardship groups in the basin. The BRBC’s ongoing inspiration and support has helped JCWP to reach their goals. The BRBC is not only a strong partner for JCWP, but also an advocate for watershed groups across the province. The BRBC is always willing to collaborate and provide a helping hand if the need arises. Congratulations on 20 years BRBC!”

- Kendra Tippe, Co-chair
[Jumpingpound Creek Watershed Partnership](#)

BRBC - A Project Leader

Examples in Excellence

The BRBC has led over 10 projects with more than \$1.8M in financing.

"Congratulations to the BRBC on their 20th anniversary and on the successful completion of the [Bow Basin Watershed Management Plan: Water Quality](#) in 2008 and the [Bow Basin Watershed Management Plan: Land Use, Headwaters, Wetlands, Riparian Lands, Water Quality](#) in 2012. The ability of the BRBC to bring together a wide spectrum of participants from various sectors and to find areas of common agreement among these diverse participants were instrumental in the overall success of both plans."



- Rob Wolfe, Environmental Specialist
[Alberta Environment and Parks](#)



"The BRBC was instrumental to having Alberta Environment and Parks agree to participate with the four WPAC's in the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB) to undertake the [10-year review of the implementation of the SSRB Approved Water Management Plan](#). The review provided an opportunity to increase the awareness of the complexities and issues with water management in the basin, identify some of the successes of the Plan's implementation, and highlight some areas where further work is needed."

- Brian Hills, Resource Manager
[Alberta Environment and Parks](#)

Awards

The BRBC is proud to have received recognition for its many achievements.

- 2008 - Alberta Minister of Environment Award for Contributions to *Water For Life* (5 years)
- 2008 - North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) Technical Excellence Award
- 2009 - Alberta Emerald Foundation, Emerald Award Nominee
- 2009 - Calgary Award for Environmental Achievement
- 2010 - Alberta Emerald Award
- 2010 - Alberta Stewardship Network, Grassroots Environmental Stewardship Award (Supporting Agency)
- 2018 - Okotoks Bioretention Project, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Sustainable Communities for Water



Acknowledgements

The BRBC has 13 elected Board positions, each supported by dedicated alternates. Over the past 20 years, 52 individuals have volunteered their time and energy to fill these elected positions.

Special thanks to all BRBC Board members, past and present!

Marie-Hélène
Beauchemin
Maureen Bell
Bill Berzins
François Bouchart
Carolyn Bowen
Liliana Bozic
Erwin Braun
Alan Breakey
Harvey Buckley
Rick Butler
Norm Carlson
Robert C. Chief
Brian de Jong
Monique Dietrich
Elizabeth Dixon
Danielle Droitsch
Roger Drury

Barry Erskine
Jon Fennell
Lisa Fox
Sarah Fulton
Dave Guichon
Gerry Guy
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Colleen Shepherd
Martin Shields
Heather Sinton
Lindsay Stephens
Judy Stewart
Tracy Tarves
Scott Taylor
Chris Vermeeren
Jim Webber
Dennis Westhoff
Jay White
Gloria Wilkinson
Earl Wilson
Rob Wolfe
Zennon Zalusky



Get Involved!

The BRBC's greatest strengths come from its members.
Here's how you can get involved:

- Become a BRBC member
- Volunteer on a BRBC committee
- Attend a BRBC forum or workshop
- Contribute to the Preserving Our Lifeline newsletter
- [Donate](#)
- Spread the word!

Learn more at <https://brbc.ab.ca/>

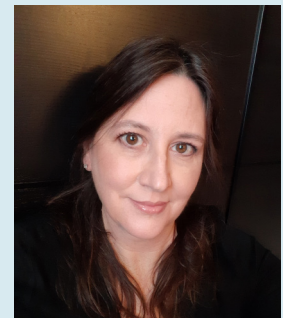
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