

# Ecosystem Enhancement Program

## Elk Valley Sub-Region Ecological Priorities

The following ecosystem priorities were identified through a review of regional plans and research and by seeking input from community groups, First Nations representatives, government agencies, and subject matter experts. Priorities are listed in random order; no ranking is intended. Species, habitats, and processes are not limited to those listed below.

<b>Aquatic</b>		
<b>Conservation, restoration, and enhancement of aquatic habitat</b>		
<i>Priority Habitat</i>	<i>Priority Species</i>	<i>Priority Processes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elk River and Flathead River tributary streams that support rearing, spawning, overwintering, foraging from valley bottom to upper basin headwaters</li> <li>• cold water refugia</li> <li>• alluvial fans/creek mouths</li> <li>• lakes and ponds</li> <li>• lake foreshore</li> <li>• groundwater-surface water interface (warm water spring; mineral springs; cold water source)</li> <li>• fisheries sensitive watersheds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• native fish (Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Bull Trout, Rocky Mountain Sculpin)</li> <li>• waterbirds (Harlequin Duck, Western Grebe, American Dipper, Cliff Swallow, Black Swift, Spotted Sandpiper)</li> <li>• freshwater mussels</li> <li>• invertebrates</li> <li>• species at risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fish passage</li> <li>• connectivity</li> <li>• water quality</li> <li>• productivity</li> <li>• geomorphological function (erosion, sedimentation, large woody debris, gravel recruitment)</li> <li>• biodiversity</li> <li>• resiliency</li> </ul>
<b>Wetland/Riparian</b>		
<b>Conservation, restoration and enhancement of wetlands and riparian areas</b>		
<i>Priority Habitat</i>	<i>Priority Habitat</i>	<i>Priority Processes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wetlands</li> <li>• floodplain ecosystems</li> <li>• mature cottonwood forests</li> <li>• riparian habitats along rivers and tributaries</li> <li>• breeding and nesting areas for birds</li> <li>• rare ecosystems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• western toad</li> <li>• western painted turtle</li> <li>• Rocky Mountain tailed frog</li> <li>• Columbia spotted frog</li> <li>• migratory birds and waterfowl (Great Blue Heron, Western Screech-Owl, Swallows (all), American Bittern, Sandhill Crane)</li> <li>• bats</li> <li>• American beaver</li> <li>• culturally important plants</li> <li>• species at risk</li> <li>• macroinvertebrates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• landscape connectivity, valley bottom to mountain top</li> <li>• hydrologic processes (filtering, recharge, flooding, storage)</li> <li>• geomorphic processes (erosion, levees, gravel, sedimentation, woody debris)</li> <li>• productivity</li> <li>• wildlife movement and migration</li> <li>• breeding and nesting</li> <li>• biodiversity</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• resiliency</li> </ul>
<b>Terrestrial</b>		
<b>Protection, enhancement and identification of corridors and linkage areas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• East Flathead, West Elk, Corbin Alexander, Alexander-Michel, Fording, Hwy 3 corridor, Cabin Ram, Eastern and Western slopes of Elk Valley between Sparwood and Elko.</li> <li>• Key Biodiversity Area: Flathead West.</li> </ul>		
<b>Conservation and restoration of upland habitats that support species at risk and species of conservation concern</b>		
<i>Priority Habitat</i>	<i>Priority Species</i>	<i>Priority Processes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low elevation grassland, brushland, open forest</li> <li>• mid and upper elevation grassland</li> <li>• old growth forest</li> <li>• ungulate winter range</li> <li>• broadleaf stands</li> <li>• alpine meadows and tundra</li> <li>• rare plant communities</li> <li>• nesting and/or roosting sites</li> <li>• burrows or denning areas</li> <li>• steep-sided slopes</li> <li>• hibernacula</li> <li>• wildlife trees and snags</li> <li>• mineral licks</li> <li>• huckleberry patches</li> <li>• calcareous rock/soils</li> <li>• rocky outcrops, rock caves</li> <li>• avalanche chutes</li> <li>• wildlife habitat areas (WHAs) and features (WHFs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grizzly bear</li> <li>• moose, mule deer, elk</li> <li>• bighorn sheep</li> <li>• mountain goat</li> <li>• wolf</li> <li>• bats</li> <li>• American badger</li> <li>• American martin</li> <li>• Canada Lynx, cougar</li> <li>• wolverine</li> <li>• Lewis' Woodpecker</li> <li>• Goshawk</li> <li>• Peregrin Falcon</li> <li>• Clark's Nutcracker</li> <li>• whitebark pine</li> <li>• limber pine</li> <li>• western white pine</li> <li>• huckleberry</li> <li>• culturally important plants</li> <li>• pollinators and other invertebrates (Gillette's Checkerspot)</li> <li>• fungi</li> <li>• species at risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wildlife movement and migration</li> <li>• connectivity</li> <li>• food web interactions (predator-prey, seed dispersal, pollination)</li> <li>• natural fire regime</li> <li>• climate refugia</li> <li>• deciduous regeneration</li> <li>• genetic and structural diversity</li> <li>• resiliency</li> <li>• biodiversity</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural</b>		
<b>Supporting Indigenous stewardship through:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous-led conservation</li> <li>• Incorporating Indigenous knowledge, values and approaches</li> </ul>		

## Elk Valley Subregion Emerging Issues

- Climate Change
- Invasive Species
- Emergent and persistent diseases/pests
- Imminent species/habitat decline
- Wildfire and Fire suppression
- Cumulative effects (mining, forestry, agriculture and range management, recreation and access management, rural/urban development)
- Decline in open canopy forest
- Human wildlife conflicts

### **Key References (Priorities and Emerging Issues):**

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