

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.

Aquatic Conservation, restoration, and enhancement of aquatic habitat			
 Elk River and Flathead River tributary streams that support rearing, spawning, overwintering, foraging from valley bottom to upper basin headwaters cold water refugia alluvial fans/creek mouths lakes and ponds lake foreshore groundwater-surface water interface (warm water spring; mineral springs; cold water source) 	 native fish (Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Bull Trout, Rocky Mountain Sculpin) waterbirds (Harlequin Duck, Western Grebe, American Dipper, Cliff Swallow, Black Swift, Spotted Sandpiper) freshwater mussels invertebrates 	 fish passage connectivity water quality productivity geomorphological function (erosion, sedimentation, large woody debris, gravel recruitment) biodiversity resiliency 	
Wetland/Riparian			
Conservation, restoration and e	nhancement of wetlands and ripa	arian areas	
Priority Habitat	Priority Habitat	Priority Processes	
 wetlands floodplain ecosystems mature cottonwood forests riparian habitats along tributaries breeding and nesting areas for birds rare ecosystems 	 western toad western painted turtle Rocky Mountain tailed frog Columbia spotted frog migratory birds and waterfowl (Great Blue Heron, Western Screech-Owl, Swallows (all), American Bittern, Sandhill Crane) bats American beaver culturally important plants rare plants macroinvertebrates 	 landscape connectivity, valley bottom to mountain top hydrologic processes (filtering, recharge, flooding, storage) geomorphic processes (erosion, levees, gravel, sedimentation, woody debris) productivity wildlife movement and migration breeding and nesting biodiversity resiliency 	

Terrestrial

Protection, enhancement and identification of corridors and linkage areas

• Priority: 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.

Conservation and restoration of upland habitats that support species at risk and species of conservation concern

Priority Habitat	Priority Species	Priority Processes
low elevation grassland, brushland, open forest mid and upper elevation grassland old growth forest ungulate winter range broadleaf stands alpine meadows and tundra rare plant communities nesting and/or roosting sites burrows or denning areas steep-sided slopes hibernacula wildlife trees and snags mineral licks huckleberry patches calcareous rock/soils rocky outcrops, rock caves avalanche chutes	 grizzly bear moose, mule deer, elk bighorn sheep mountain goat wolf bats American badger American martin Canada Lynx, cougar wolverine Lewis' Woodpecker Goshawk Peregrin Falcon Clark's Nutcracker whitebark pine limber pine western white pine huckleberry rare plants pollinators and other invertebrates (Gillette's Checkerspot) fungi 	wildlife movement and migration connectivity food web interactions (predator-prey, seed dispersal, pollination) natural fire regime climate refugia deciduous regeneration genetic and structural diversity resiliency

Cultural

Protection and enhancement of Indigenous cultural values

Priority Habitat	Priority Species	Priority Processes
 cultural use areas riparian areas and wetlands fisheries sensitive watersheds berry habitat old growth grizzly bear habitat and connectivity corridors fire maintained ecosystems species at risk ungulate winter range caribou habitat wildlife habitat areas (WHAs) and features (WHFs) biodiversity 	 culturally significant and medicinal plants furbearers wide ranging carnivores ungulates species at risk traditional fisheries 	 Indigenous knowledge and traditional practices Indigenous-led conservation cultural heritage resources wildlife food resource conservation connectivity bioculture connections (traditional travel and trade routes) maintenance of subsistence networks (hunting, trapping and fishing)

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):

Davidson, A., Tepper, H., Bisset J., Anderson, K., Tschaplinski, P.J., Chirico, A., Waterhouse, A., Franklin, W., Burt, W., MacDonald, R., Chow, E., van Rensen, C., Ayele, T. 2018. <u>Aquatic System Ecosystems Cumulative Effects Assessment Report. Elk Valley Kootenay Boundary Region.</u>

Elk Valley Cumulative Effects Management Framework Working Group. 2018. <u>Elk Valley Cumulative Effects Assessment and Management Report.</u>

Elk Valley Regional Land Trust. 2020. Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Available at: Elk Valley Land Trust – Conservation, Connectivity and Sustainable Use.

Elk River Alliance. Annual Reports. Available at: Elkriveralliance.ca/reports.

Environmental Damages Fund. 2025. Call for Letters of Intent for Qukin ?amak?is (Elk Valley). Application Guide – Letter of Intent.

[FWCP] Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. 2023-2024. <u>FWCP Columbia Region 2023–2024 Project List.</u>

[FWCP] Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. 2019. <u>Updated Columbia Region Action Plans</u>.

[FWCP] Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program 2019. Columbia Region: Upland and Dryland Action Plan.

[FWCP] Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. 2021. <u>Updated Columbia Region Action</u> Plan: Wetland and Riparian Areas.

[IEKWSB] Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board. 2025. Draft Plan of Study to the International Joint Commission, January 31, 2025.

[IUCN]. International Union for Conservation of Nature. 2020. <u>Guidelines for conserving connectivity through ecological networks and corridors.</u>

KNC Forestry. 2022. <u>Ktunaxa Forestry Standards Document For Forestry within ?AMAK?IS KTUNAXA</u>.

Kootenay Connect. 2023. <u>Kootenay Connect: Riparian Wildlife Corridors for Climate Change.</u> <u>Year 4 Summary Report.</u>

Kootenay Conservation Program. 2019. <u>Elk Valley Conservation Action Forum Summary</u> Report.

Mowat, G., Conroy, C., Podrasky, K., Morgan, D., Davies R., MacDonald, R., Chow, E., van Rensen, C., and Ayele, T. 2018. <u>Grizzly Bear Cumulative Effects Assessment Report. Elk Valley, Kootenay Boundary Region</u>.

Nature Conservancy of Canada. 2025. Elk Valley Heritage Conservation Area.

Poole, K., Teske, I., Podrasky, K., Berdusco, J., Conroy, C., MacDonald, R., Davies, R., Schwantje, H., Chow, E., van Rensen, C., Ayele, T. 2020. Big Horn Sheep Cumulative Effects Assessment Report. Elk Valley, Kootenay Boundary Region.

Regional District East Kootenay. 2014. Elk Valley Official Community Plan. Bylaw No. 2532, 2014.

Teck Coal Ltd. 2024. Elk Valley Area Based Management Plan.

Wildsight Website. Available at: Bighorn Conservation & Biodiversity Program – Wildsight.