Bighill Creek State of the Watershed Report, Update



Outline of Today's Presentation

Brief description of Bighill Cr watershed

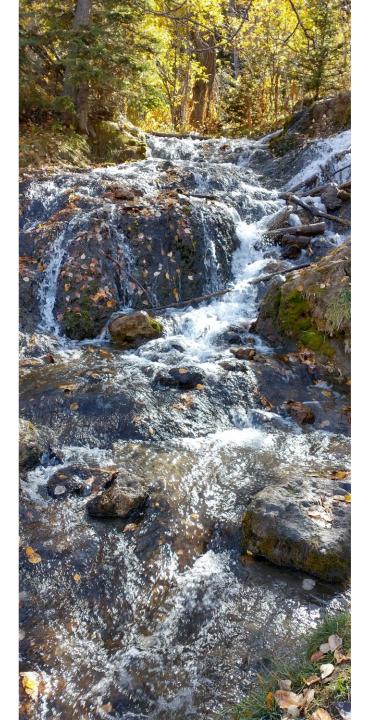
Background to initiation of SOW report

BCPS vision, mission, objectives, SOW report

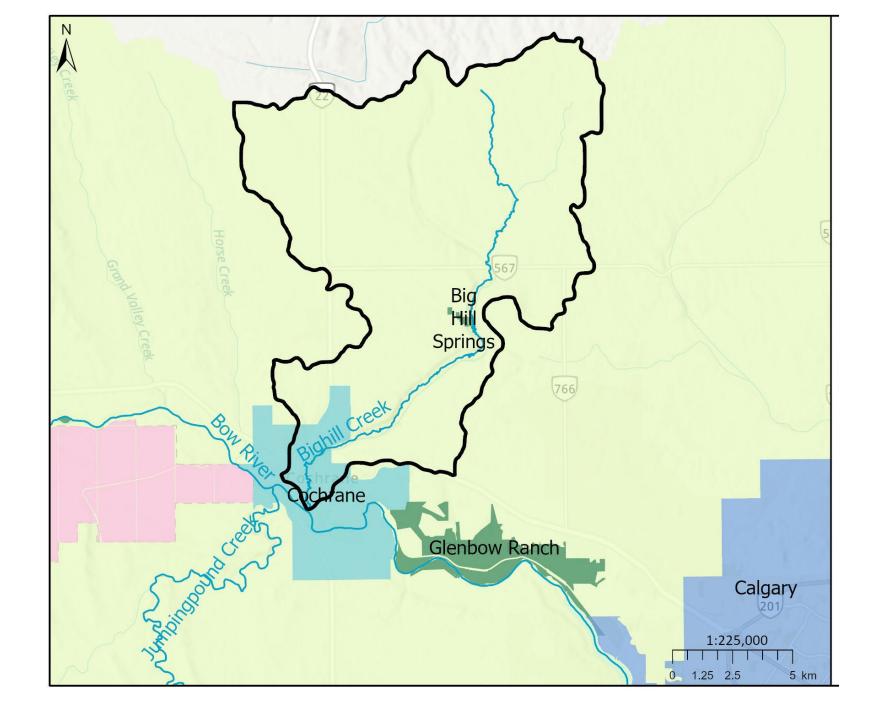
Draft Table of Contents

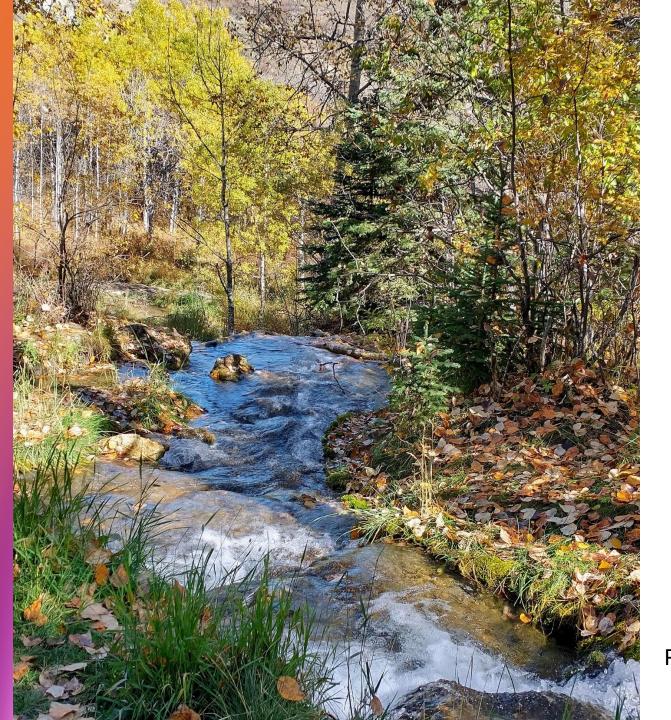
The role of BRBC in creating the Bighill Creek SOW report, working together

SOW Reporting timeline, future steps



Where is Bighill Creek?





Bighill CreekPreservation Society

 Bighill Creek Preservation Society (a registered entity) is a group of local residents who recognize that ongoing development and population pressure from the town of Cochrane and the surrounding Rocky View County have the potential to significantly erode the many beneficial attributes of the watershed.

Photo credit: A. Dinnendahl, Big Hill Springs Creek

BCPS Mission:

"To ensure the natural and historical values of Bighill Creek Watershed are preserved for this and future generations."



Photo credit: BCPS website

BCPS Objectives:

- Maintain and enhance the full range of biodiversity including interconnection to the Bow River valley.
- Identify, maintain or improve watershed health, including springs, riparian aspects and water quality.
- Encourage a system of stewardship throughout the watershed.
- Establish a library of the ecological, geological, archaeological and historical data of the Bighill Creek area.
- Educate the public as to the full range of natural and historical values and of their national, provincial and local significance.
- Undertake development of a State of the Watershed report and Implementation Plan.

NCC Lake, along RR34 north of Hwy 567

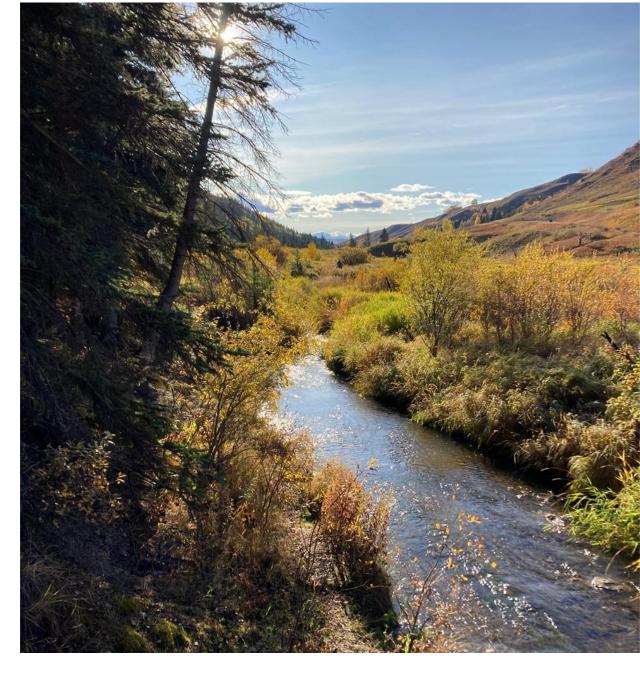


WQ testing, Bighill Cr in winter



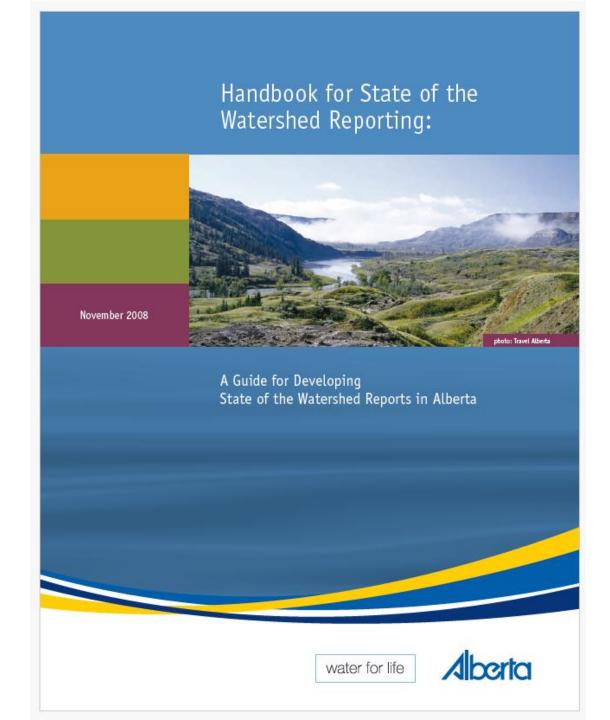
BCPS Actions for Achieving Objectives:

- Plan and institute public access and gateway information in keeping with the Society's mission.
- Initiate a stewardship program for the watershed, beginning with the established Environmental Reserve and lands downstream as far as Cochrane.
- Gather existing baseline data and undertake any necessary studies to support a State of the Watershed Report and Implementation Plan
- Establish partnerships for the planning and development of a State of the Watershed Report *and* its implementation.



Bighill Creek along Ranche Rd. Photo Credit: W. Koning

Handbook for State of the Watershed Reporting: A Guide for Developing State of the Watershed Reports in Alberta. 2008, 89 pp.



1.1 Purpose of the State of the Watershed Reporting

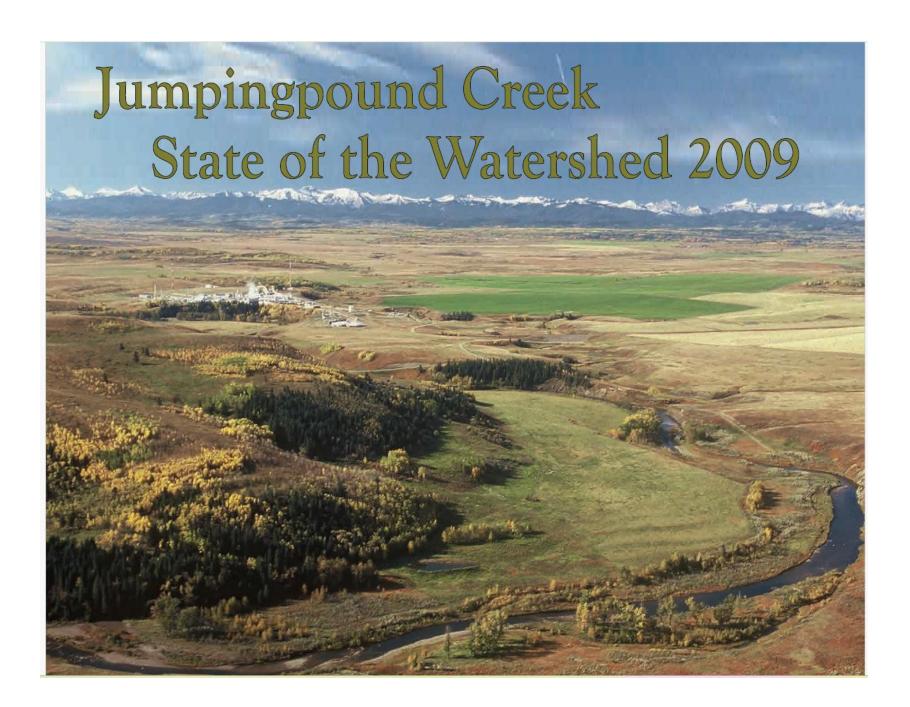
Getting a clear understanding of the current state of our watershed is an important and insightful exercise as it will help to identify potential problems and concerns in a watershed.

Building a SOW report introduces a basic process that can be undertaken at any scale and/or on any landscape to gather and evaluate information to understand past and current watershed conditions and the influencing factors.

1.2 Intended users of State of Watershed Reporting

The information and guidance described in this State of the Watershed report will be useful to government and agency representatives, consultants, researchers and academics, and other stakeholder groups interested in assessing environmental conditions and setting and achieving environmental outcomes within their watershed.

2009, 100 pg



2021, 328 pg

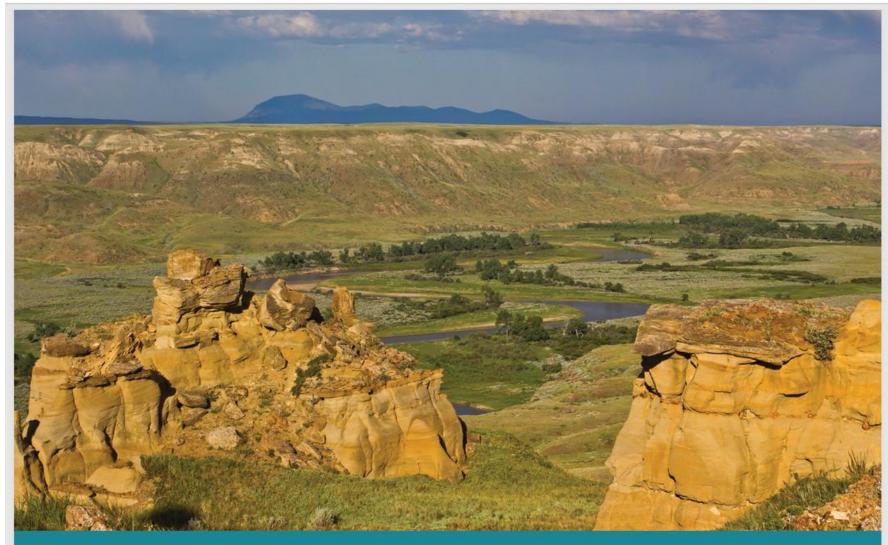


Elbow River State of the Watershed Report 2021

Final Report December 2021



2013, 248 pg



Milk River

2nd Edition

Transboundary State of the Watershed Report

219 pg

GHOST RIVER STATE OF THE WATERSHED REPORT 2018



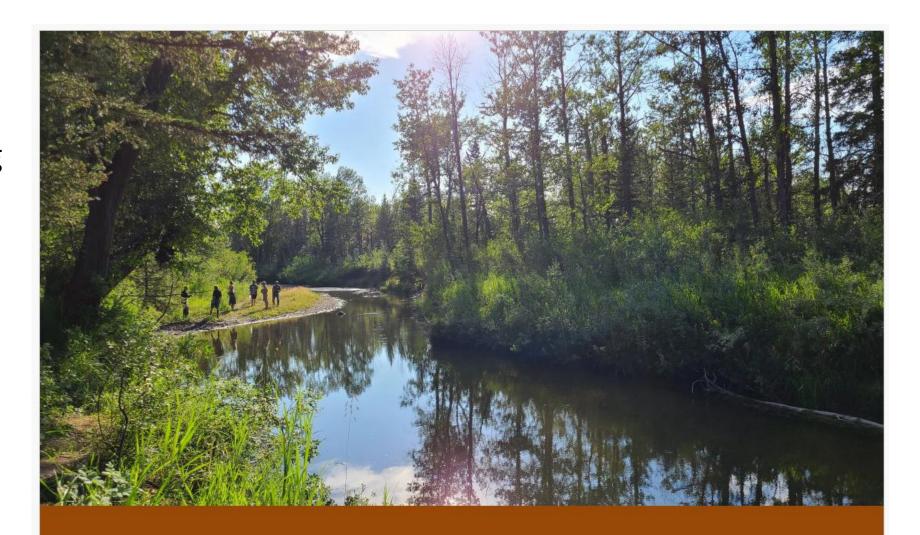
FINAL REPORT

(Revised version December 2018)

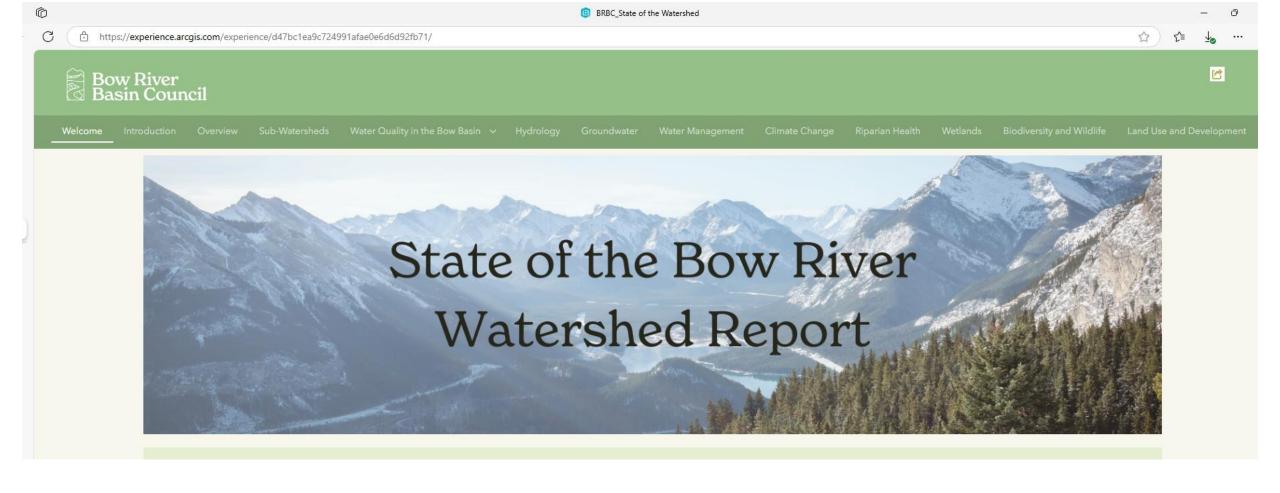




2021, 79 pg



UPPER FISH CREEK STATE OF THE WATERSHED REPORT



BRBC Bow-Basin-wide SOW, 2025 edition

- on-line, interactive, includes Bighill Creek watershed

Go to: Sub-Watersheds | BRBC_State of the Watershed

Sub-Watersheds Scale

20 subwatersheds, included in current BOW SOW report:

Ghost River

Elbow River

Fish Creek

Pine Creek

Jumping Pound Creek

Nose Creek

Bighill Creek

Sheep River, and

Highwood River.



VOL. #25 | ISSUE1 | MARCH 2025

preserving our lifeline

working together to nurture, share, and protect the waters of the Bow River Basin



Stay connected.

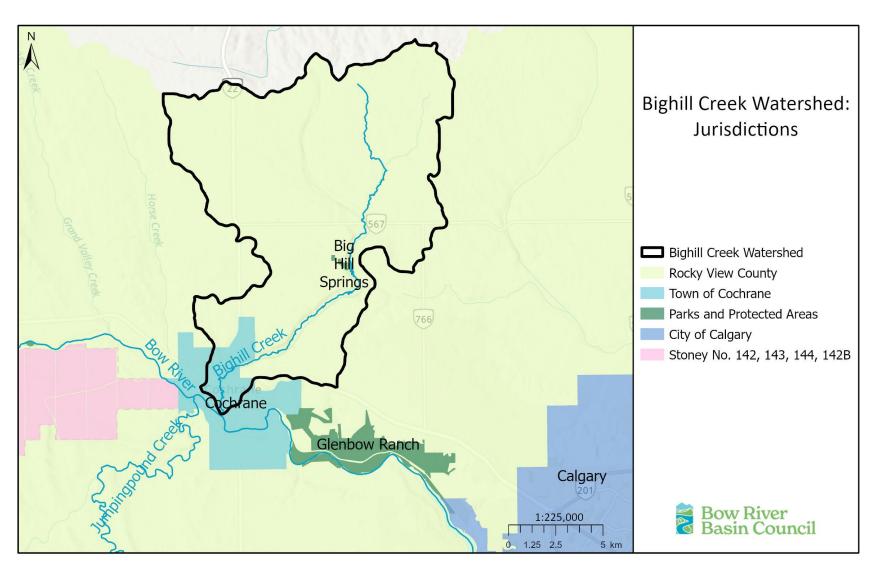
@BowRiverWPAC

facebook.com/BowRiverBasinCou

www.brbc.ab.ca

Bow Basin SOW Subwatershed Exe Summaries Content, example: Bighill Cr.

- 1. Overview
- 2. Landuse Authorities
- 3. (Jurisdictions)
- 4. Water Quantity
- 5. Water Allocation
- 6. Surface Water Quality
- 7. Natural Regions
- 8. Climate
- 9. Land Cover
- 10. Biodiversity
- 11. Human Footprint
- 12. Challenges and Responses



Note, the above topics are addressed at the Executive Summary level with details found in the individual sub-watershed SOW reports

Bighill Creek State of the Watershed Report - TofC

Foreword (L. Fitch)

BCPS mission statement

Acknowledgments (incl funding agencies)

Exe Summary

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Geology: Bedrock and surficial geology, aquifers
- 3. Geography: Topography, climate, ecozones, soils, land cover, Natural Regions
- 4. History: Indigenous /Pre-Settlement; Early European Tenure to present
- 5. Surface Water: quantity and quality
- 6. Ground Water: quantity and quality
- 7. Water Management: Surface and groundwater licenses, allocations, uses
- 8. Riparian Areas and Wetlands: Presence, assessment, protection, improvement
- 9. Biodiversity: Vegetation, wildlife, fish, aquatic insects, and invasive species, BioBlitz results
- 10. Land use: Agriculture, oil&gas, tourism, rec, prov/muni parks, aggregate pits
- 12. Watershed Stewardship: Town of Cochrane, Rocky View County, Gov Alb, NCC lands, CEAC
- 13. Summary and Data Gaps
- 14. Recommendations and Next Steps
- 15. References

Appendices

The work of the Bighill Creek Preservation Society, since 2015

1 Cows and Fish

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society

Riparian Health Summary Report - 2018 Bighill Creek



2. Benthic Macro-Invertebrate Biomonitoring Study

Bighill Springs Creek, Cochrane, Alberta Research Target Area: Environmental – Water







Prepared By: Tobin M. Benedict

Prepared For: Bighill Creek Preservation Society January, 2020

3 Preliminary DNA Data

Bighill Creek (Bow River), AB December 2019



Photos obtained from: https://bighillcreek.ca/photo-gallery/



www.STREAM-DNA.com

Hajibabaei Lab, Centre for Biodiversity Genomics, University of Guelph

Bighill Creek Water Quality Sampling Baseline Study

Ву

Ymène Fouli*, Ph.D., P.Geo. Environmental Soil Scientist Independent Consultant Calgary, Alberta

Prepared For:



Board of Directors:

President: Gerry Bietz

Vice President: Vivian Pharis

Secretary and Treasurer: Lyse Carignan

Director: Dr. Ken Stevenson Director: Dr. David Reid Director: Ed Fedosoff Director: Tara McFadden Director: Dr. Michael Foster

55 pg

Electrofishing Investigations in Bighill Creek, June 2018

Trout Unlimited Canada Technical Report



Prepared for: Bighill Creek Preservation Society

> Prepared by: Haley Tunna Elliot Lindsay

19 pg

June 2018



Truite Illimitée Canada

Bighill Creek Water and Sediment Quality Baseline Study Phase II: 2019-2020

Ву

Ymène Fouli*, Ph.D., P.Geo. Environmental Soil Scientist Independent Consultant Calgary, Alberta

Prepared For:



Board of Directors:

President: Gerry Bietz

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Secretary and Treasurer: Lyse Carignan

Director: Dr. Ken Stevenson Director: Dr. David Reid Director: Ed Fedosoff Director: Dr. Michael Foster

59 pg

August 2020

Bighill Creek Water Temperature Logger Installations, June 2020

Trout Unlimited Canada Technical Report



Prepared for: Bighill Creek Preservation Society

> Prepared by: Elliot Lindsay

17 pg

June 2020 Revised October 2020 to update site names



Truite Illimitée Canada

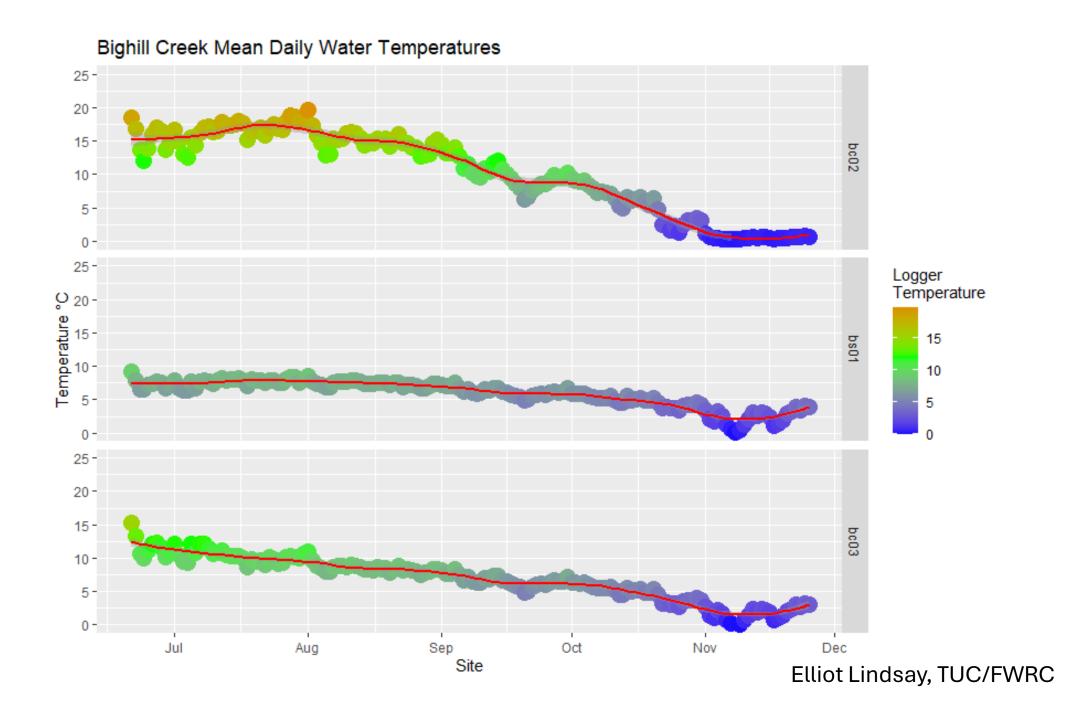
Installation of Temperature Data Loggers

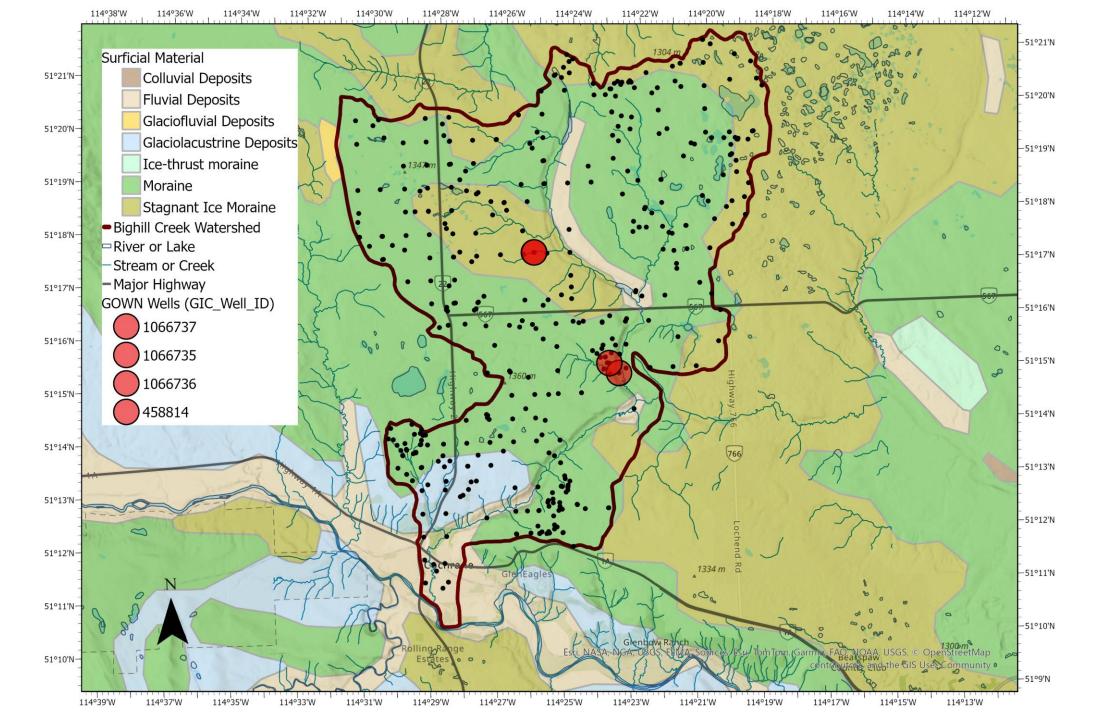




Elliot Lindsay, TUC/FWRC

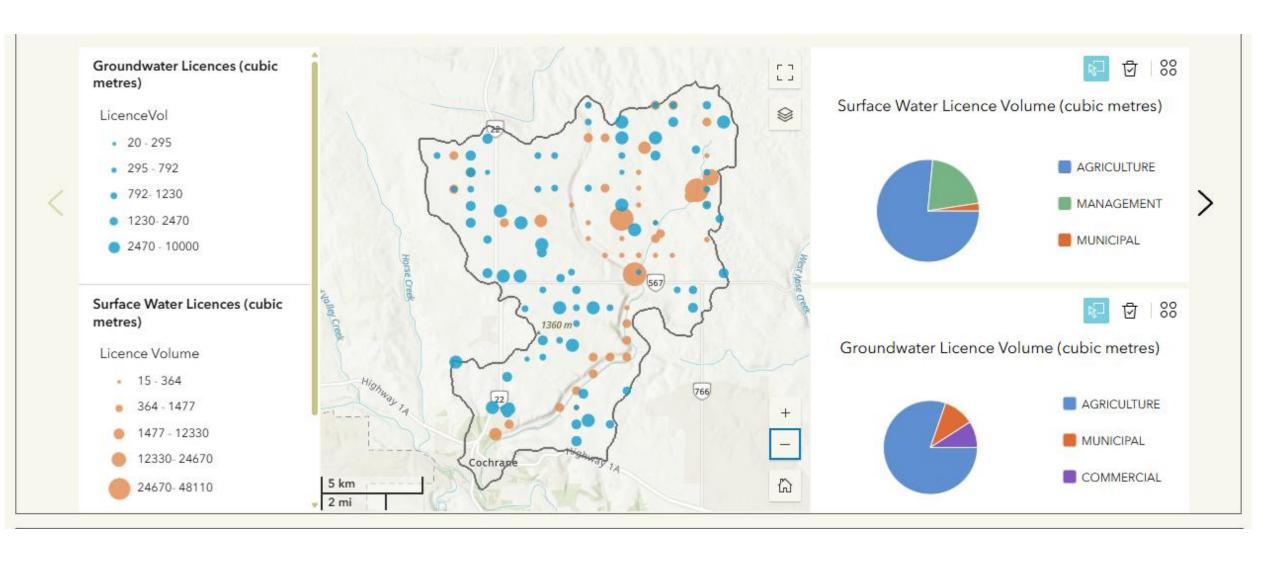






- Citizens of the Bighill Creek watershed can utilize the data coming out of GOWN wells to see if industry or municipal use of groundwater is influencing water levels. The same can be said for drought as the climate gets drier, aquifers will replenish more slowly, so knowledge of the state of the aquifers allow for responsible allocation of groundwater.
- Unfortunately, due to limited chemistry data, the impacts of agriculture, oil and gas, and gravel mining on the chemistry of groundwater are largely unknown in the watershed.
- Having more publicly available data on the water quality of these wells will be crucial for responsible management of activities in the watershed.

Parke Fontaine, UofC, 4th yr, Hydrogeology, March 2025



Water Allocation

Within the Bighill Creek watershed, there are 64 <u>surface water licences</u> and registrations. Agricultural use makes up 76.5% (156,779 m3) of the total surface water licence volume. The largest agricultural surface water licence holder is Circle J Ranches Limited (49,398 m3), or about 32% of the total agricultural surface water licence volume. Municipal use and Management use account for 2.4% (4,933 m3) and 21.1% (43,170m3), respectively.

There are 112 groundwater licences and registrations within the watershed. Of the total groundwater licence volume, 80.3% (120,929 m3) is licenced for agricultural use. The remaining 10.6% (15,966 m3) is allocated for municipal use, and 9% (13,678 m3) for commercial use.

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Hydrogeological Characterization of Springs in the Bighill Creek Watershed

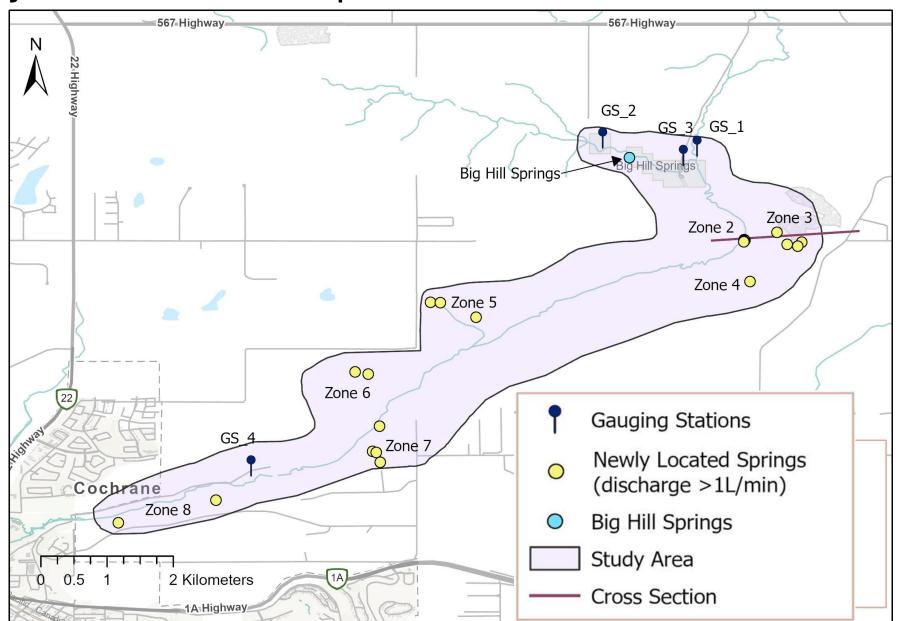
by

Sophie I. Prevost

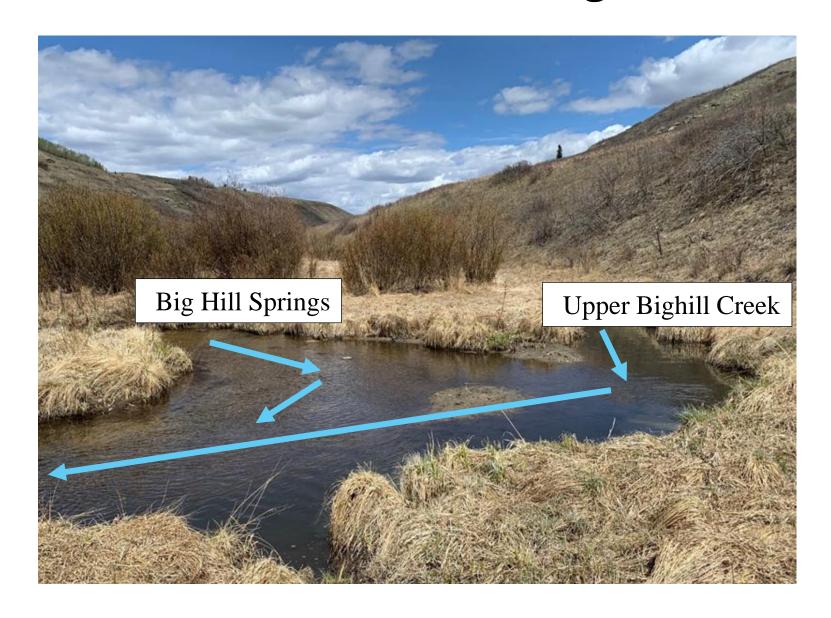
AN INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF SCIENCE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

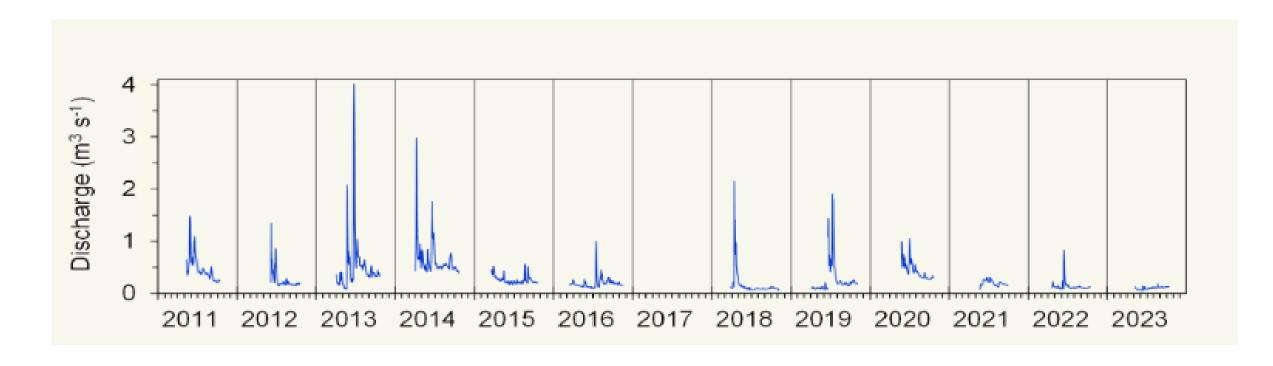
DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCE CALGARY, ALBERTA 2023

Study Site – Context Map



Confluence of BHS with Bighill Creek

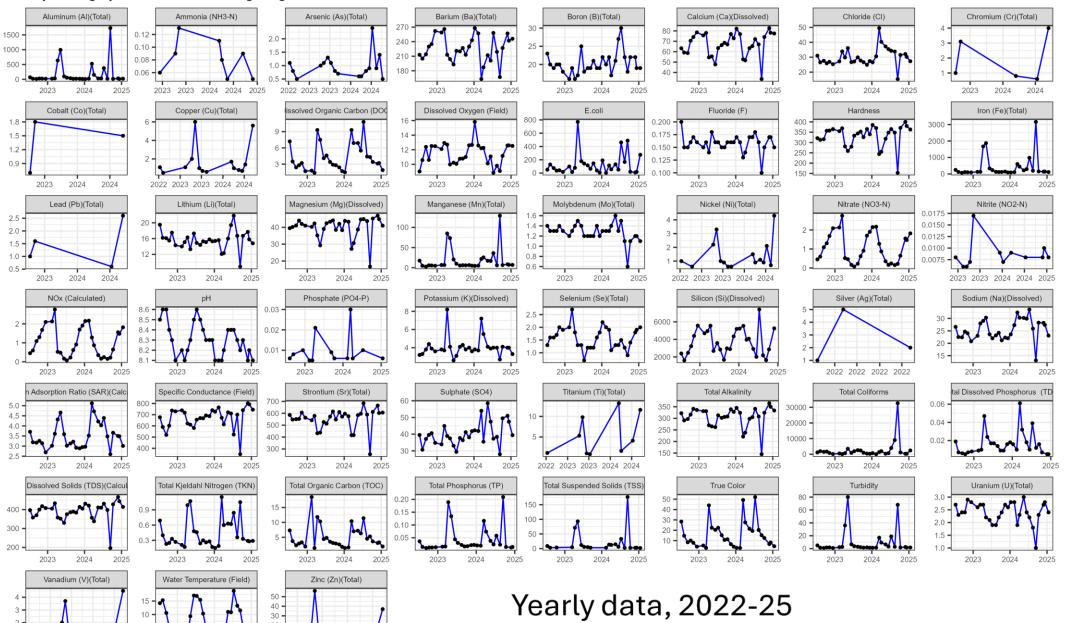




Ave daily discharge, Bighill Creek by upper end, Ranche Rd Dr. Masaki Hayashi, UofC

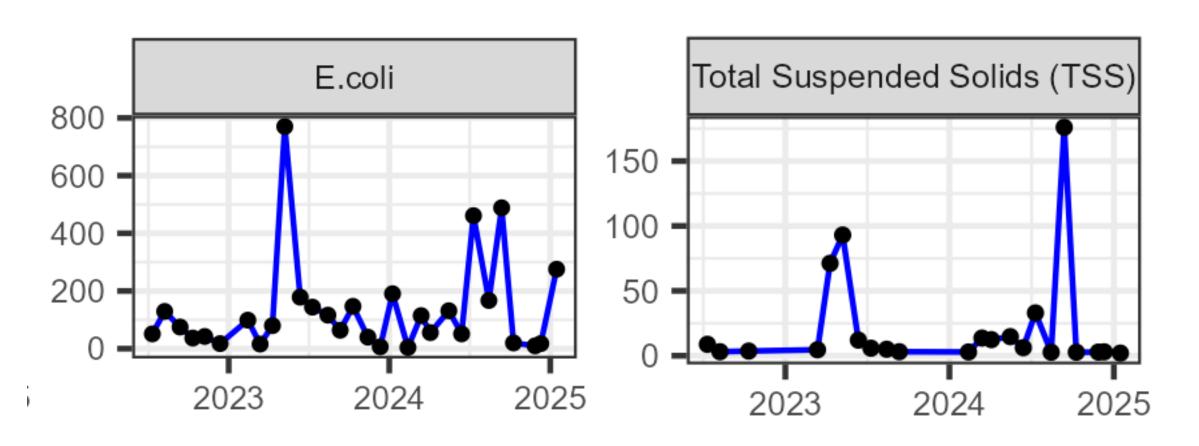
Bighill Creek near Mouth

City of Calgary Watershed Monitoring Program: Jul 2022- Jan 2025

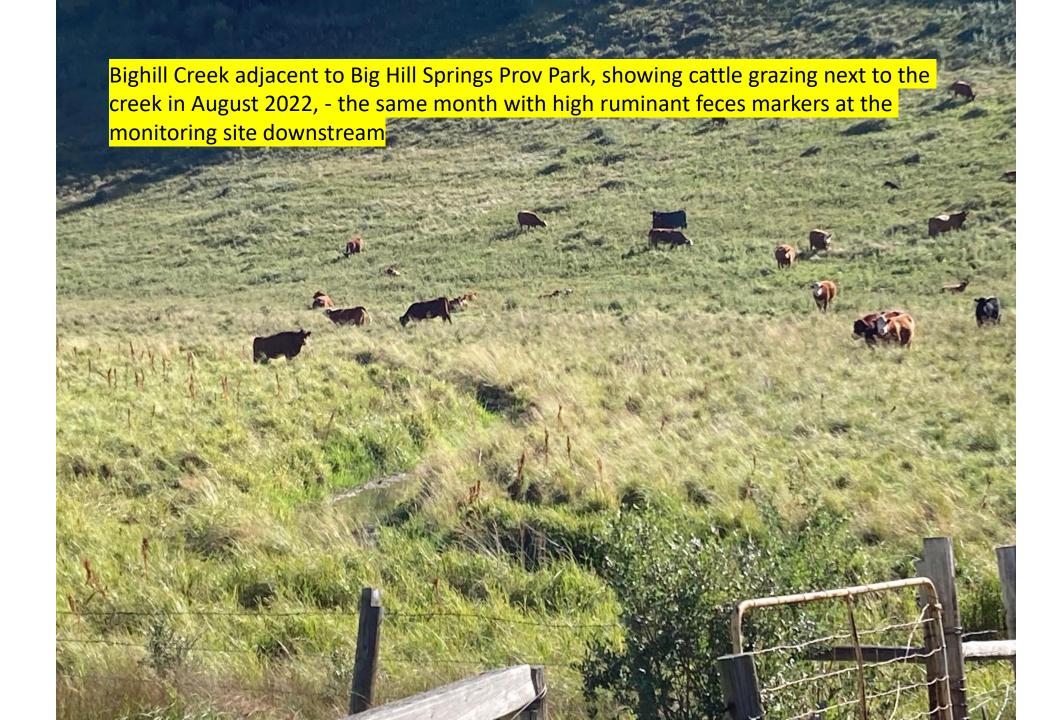


Bighill Creek near Mouth

City of Calgary Watershed Monitoring Program: Jul 2022- Jan 2025



Yearly data, 2022-25





Draft map of all sites

Datastream - Glenpatrick Road

Millenium Creek Creekwatch Wendell - 3 Metal Bridge
U/S Millenium Creek Datastream Creekwatch - 3 Metal Bridge

16 January,2025

Confluence of Bow R and Bighill Cr

Alex and Fabio SAIT Capstone Project Jan-Apr 2025

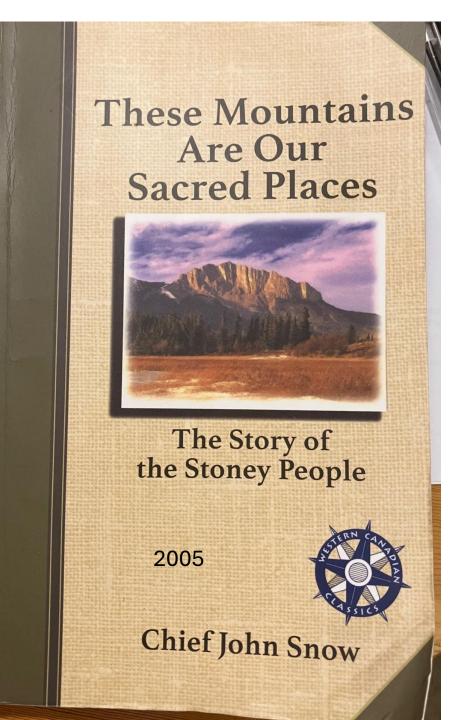


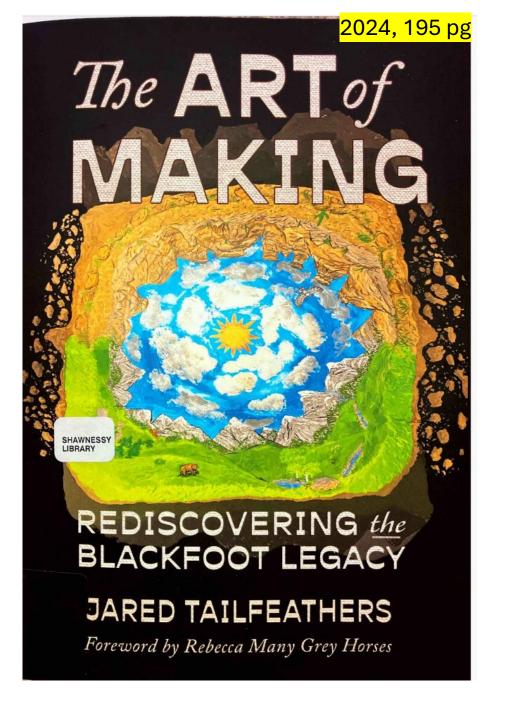
Alex Whale (left) and Fabio Ueda (right), finish their first day in the field, while taking YSI readings at the confluence of Bighill Creek and the Bow.

Archeology, pre-European Contact

Tony Snow lecture on Reconciliation, 17 Jan 2025













Cochrane Petroglyphs and Pictography Site, Alberta

When I went looking Co.

For: Biodiversity chapter



Fish and Wildlife Internet Mapping Tool (FWIMT)

(source database: Fish and Wildlife Management Information System (FWMIS))

Species Summary Report

Missing mammals: black bear, grizzley bear, cougar, elk,

deer, etc

Species present within the current extent

Fish Inventory

BROOK STICKLEBACK
BROOK TROUT
BROWN TROUT

BULL TROUT X BROOK TROUT HYBRID

CUTTHROAT TROUT

LAKE CHUB

LONGNOSE DACE
LONGNOSE SUCKER
MOUNTAIN SUCKER
MOUNTAIN WHITEFISH
RAINBOW TROUT
WHITE SUCKER

Wildlife Inventory

GREAT BLUE HERON
LEAST FLYCATCHER
PRAIRIE FALCON
WANDERING GARTER SNAKE

Stocked Inventory

Report Date:

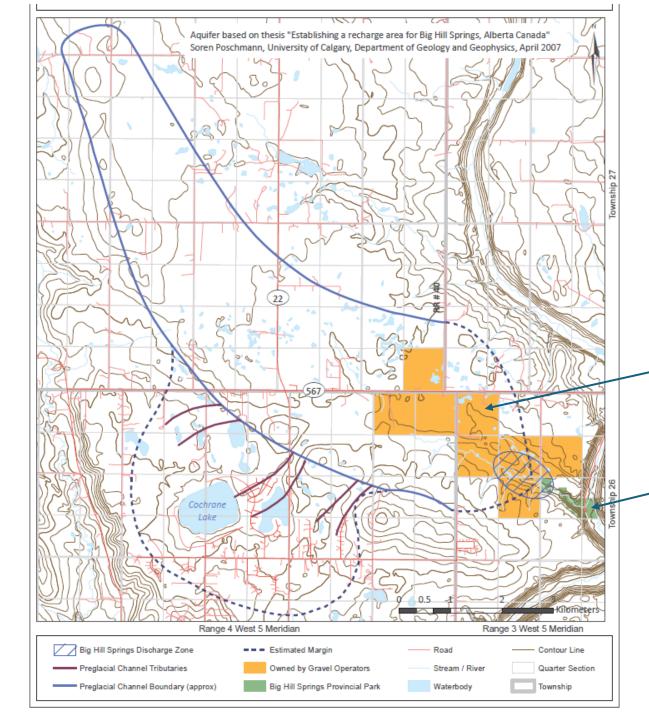
06-Jul-2024 11:33

BROOK TROUT
BROWN TROUT
CUTTHROAT TROUT
RAINBOW TROUT

Part of Fisheries and wildlife management

Fisheries and Wildlife Management Information System FWIMS

Access this government-maintained online fisheries and wildlife database.



Potential impacts and challenges

The Big Hill Springs Aquifer

Orange blocks are owned by Gravel Pit Operators (5)

Big Hill Springs Prov Park

In: Soren Poschmann. 2007. Establishing a recharge area for Big Hill Springs, Alberta, Canada. Thesis in Dept Geol and Geophysics, U of Calgary

Mountain Ash Limited Partnership Summit Gravel Pit

Review of hydrogeology, geochemistry, fish and aquatics, and climate change

Dr Jon Fennell, 2021:

"Review of hydrogeology, geochemistry, fish and aquatics, and climate change"

Re - MALP Summit Gravel Pit 57 pg

Prepared by:

Dr. Jon Fennell, M.Sc., Ph.D., P.Geol. Hydrogeologist and Geochemist Water Security | Climate Resiliency

On behalf of:

Friends of Big Hill Springs Provincial Park and Bighill Creek Preservation Society

For:

Rocky View County Council Re: Bylaw C-8051-2020







June 8, 2024, 12:10-12:35 pm on Hwy
567 by Big Hill Springs Prov. Park:
17 tandem gravel trucks recorded in
25 minutes = 2 trucks per 3 minutes – just
over 40 trucks in one hour. Over a 10 h
operating day = 400 trucks – passing by the
park, from 1 or 2 gravel pits, Hwy 567.







Trucks and "Caution-Wildlife Corridor", Hwy 567, 31 October, 2023



2 gravel trucks / 3 minutes counted on one date, 450 gravel trucks per 10 shift – a danger on a wildlife corridor, this could double, triple with more mines currently in the application process.

Another potential impact and challenge:

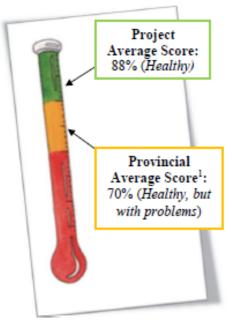
Having both healthy fish and cattle habitat is possible *if* recognized and addressed properly.

Cows and Fish

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society

Riparian Health Summary Report - 2018 Bighill Creek

A Riparian Health Assessment is a tool designed to help individuals and organizations evaluate and understand the health of riparian areas within their landholdings and watersheds. This information is intended to document the current state of riparian health and help direct future efforts to promote important riparian functions, such as improved water quality, forage production, and fish habitat. To assess a trend in riparian health, we recommend that riparian health assessments be repeated every three to five years to track progress and riparian recovery in response to a management change.

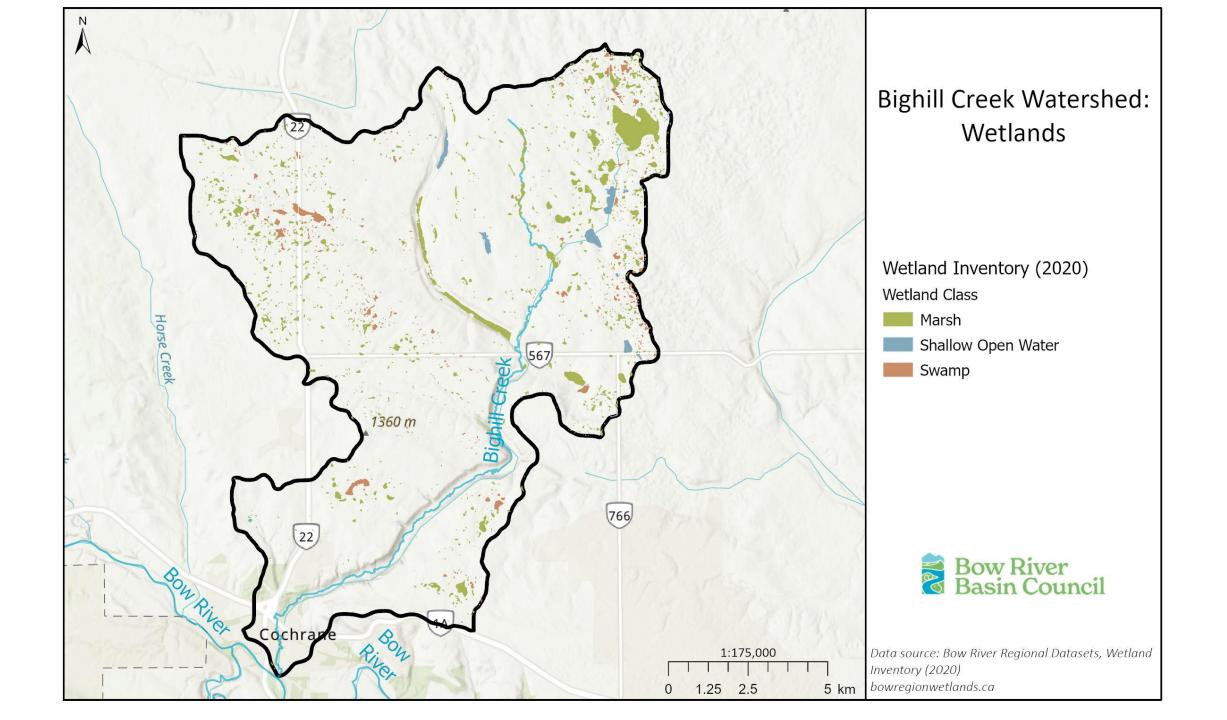


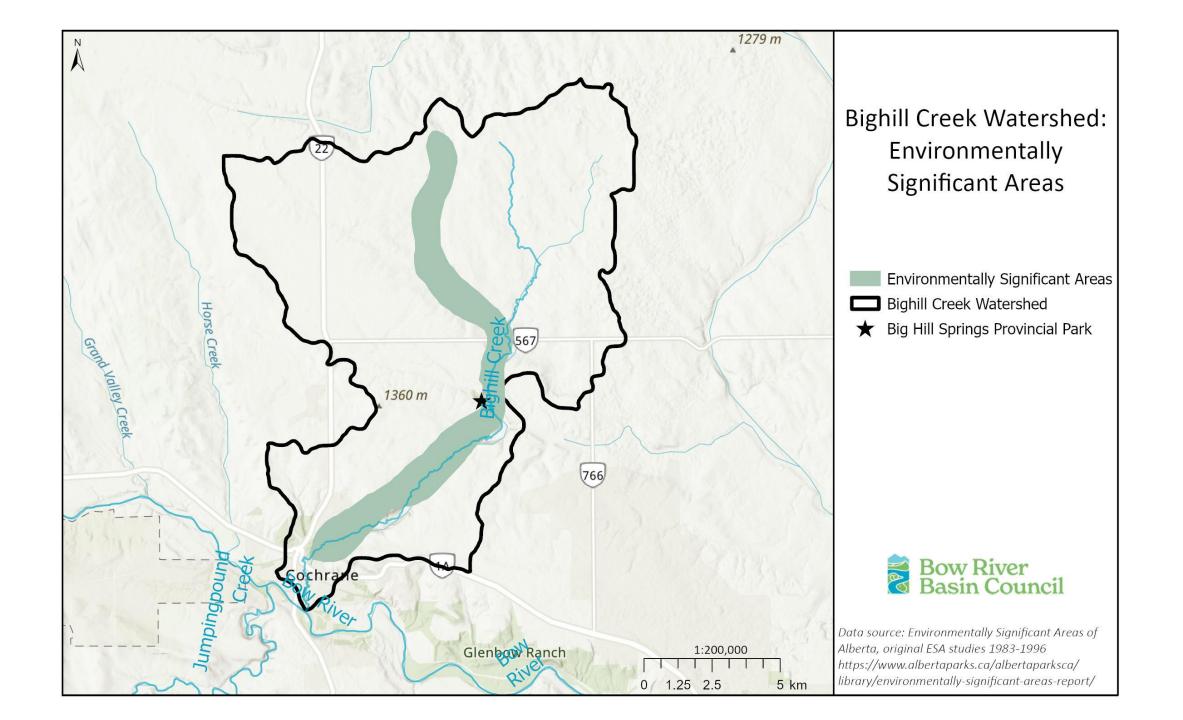
This summary report provides information on the riparian health of 3 sites along Bighill Creek, based on data we collected in July 2018. Information obtained from the assessment of riparian health in the watershed will help to inform and facilitate landscape management planning within the local municipality, and further encourage private landowners to understand and effectively manage riparian areas under their care.

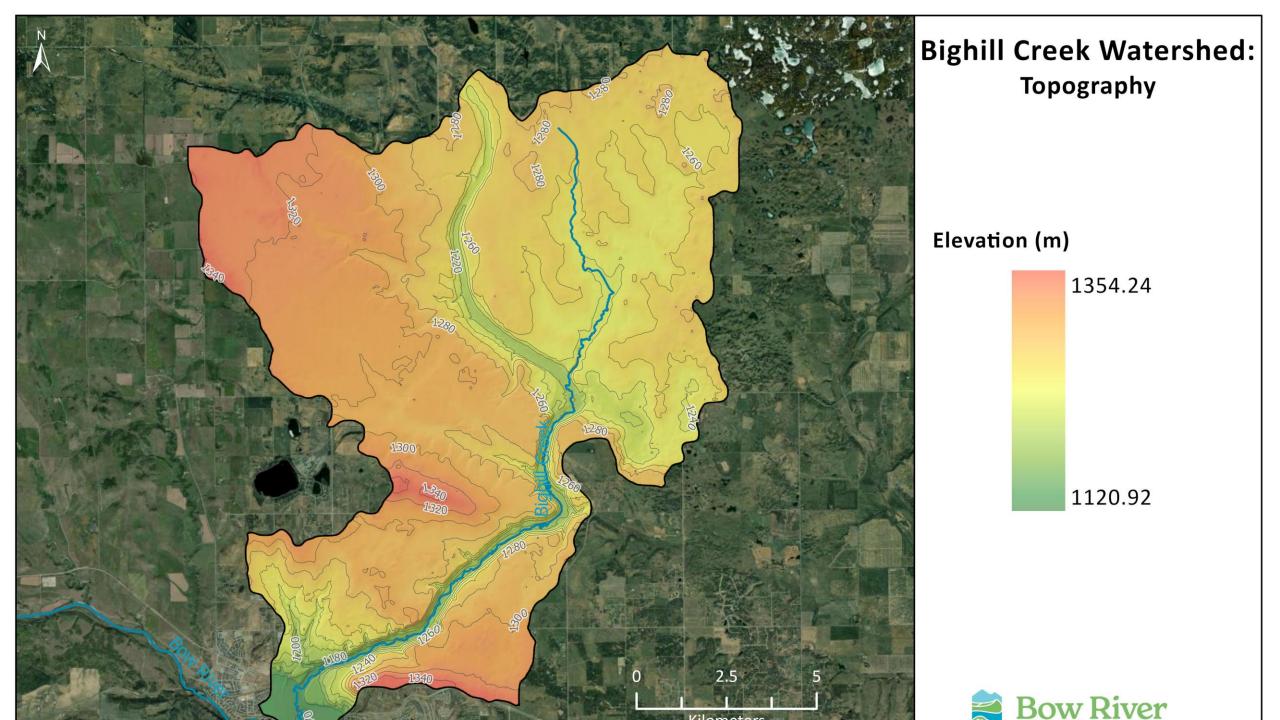
This project was initiated by the Bighill Creek Preservation Society (BCPS) and funded by Alberta Ecotrust with in-kind support from Cows and Fish.

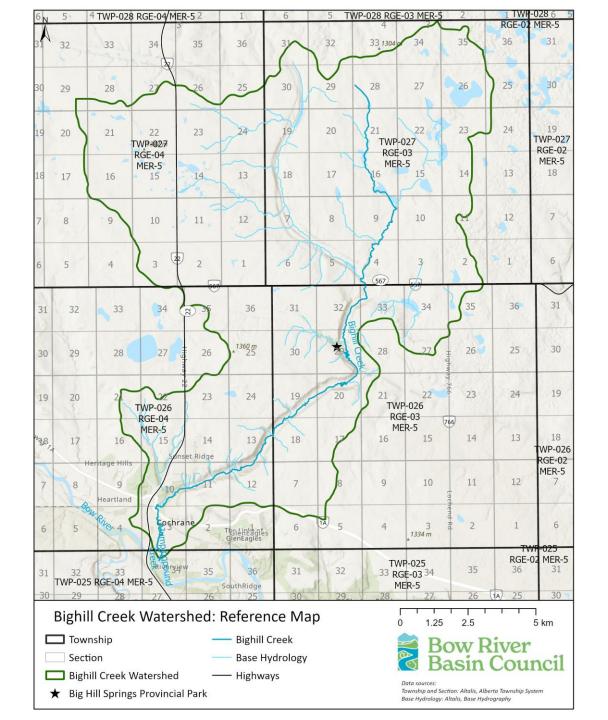
The Bighill Creek watershed and associated riparian areas provide important fish and wildlife habitat, improve water quality, and maintain water quantity on the landscape. The project area encompasses two riparian sites on private landholdings and one site on County owned land along Bighill Creek. The riparian sites were assessed using the Alberta Lotic Health

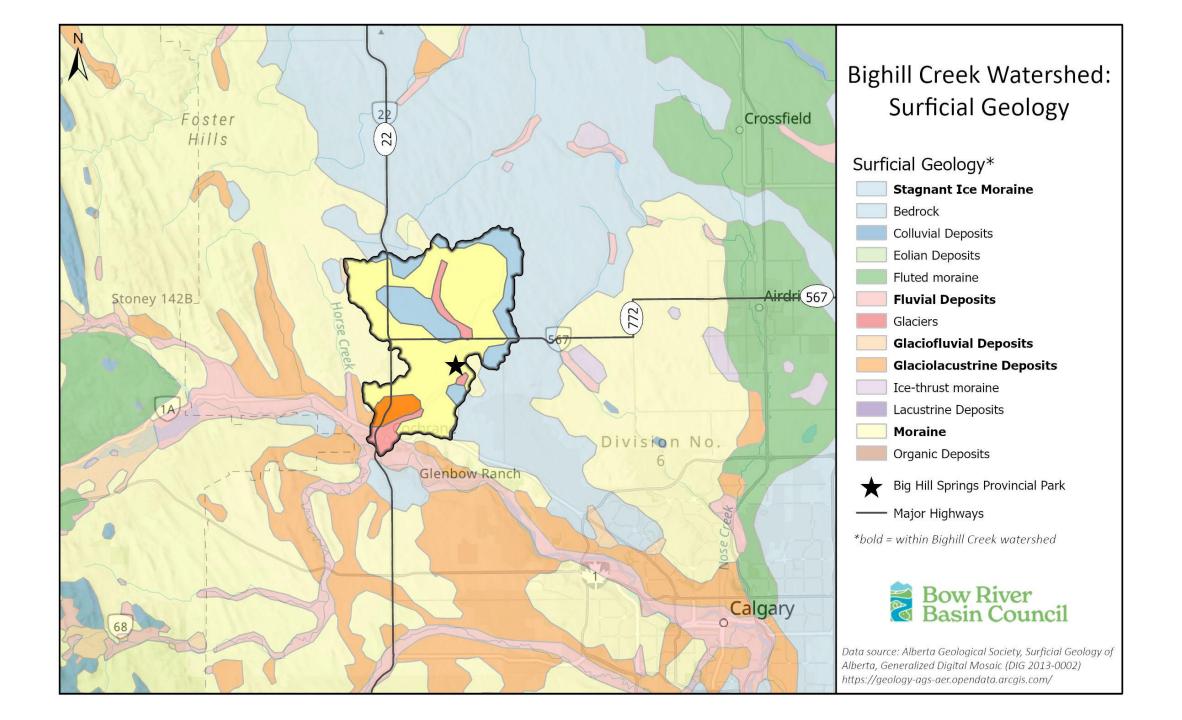
Assessment (Survey). Overall, all sites assessed as part of this project rate healthy, as shown in Table 1. The average riparian health rating for all three sites in the project area is 88% well above the provincial average (70%, healthy, but with problems). The project area includes

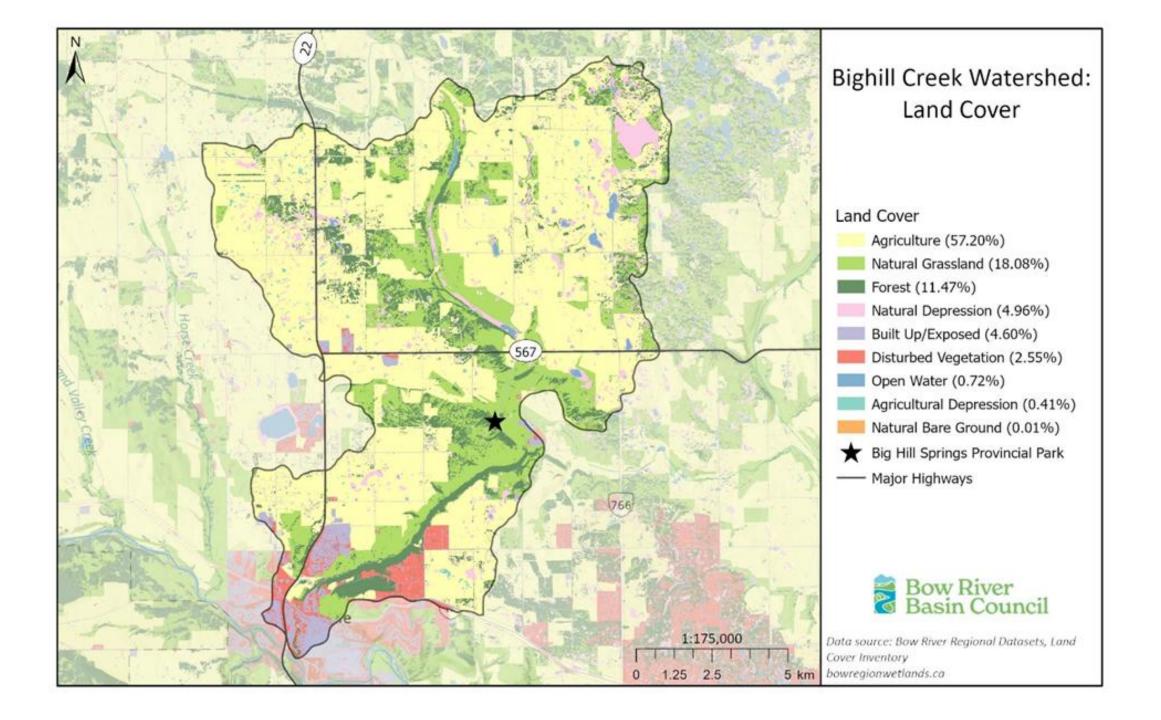


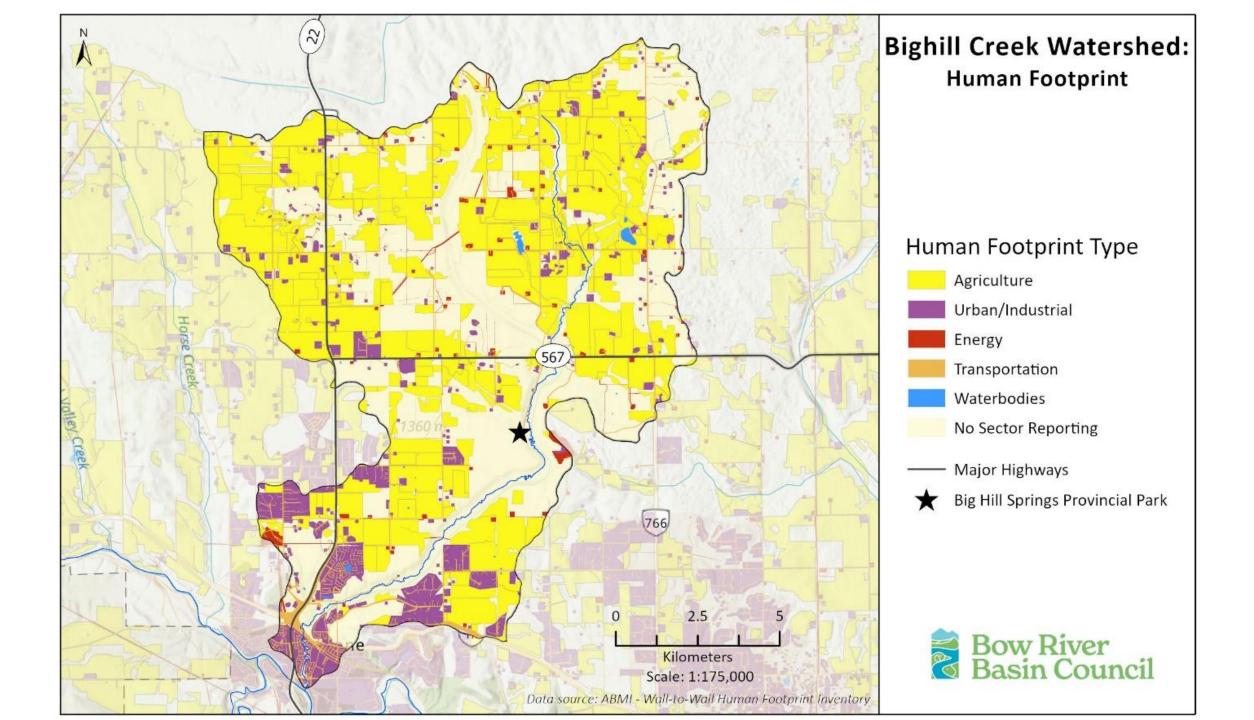


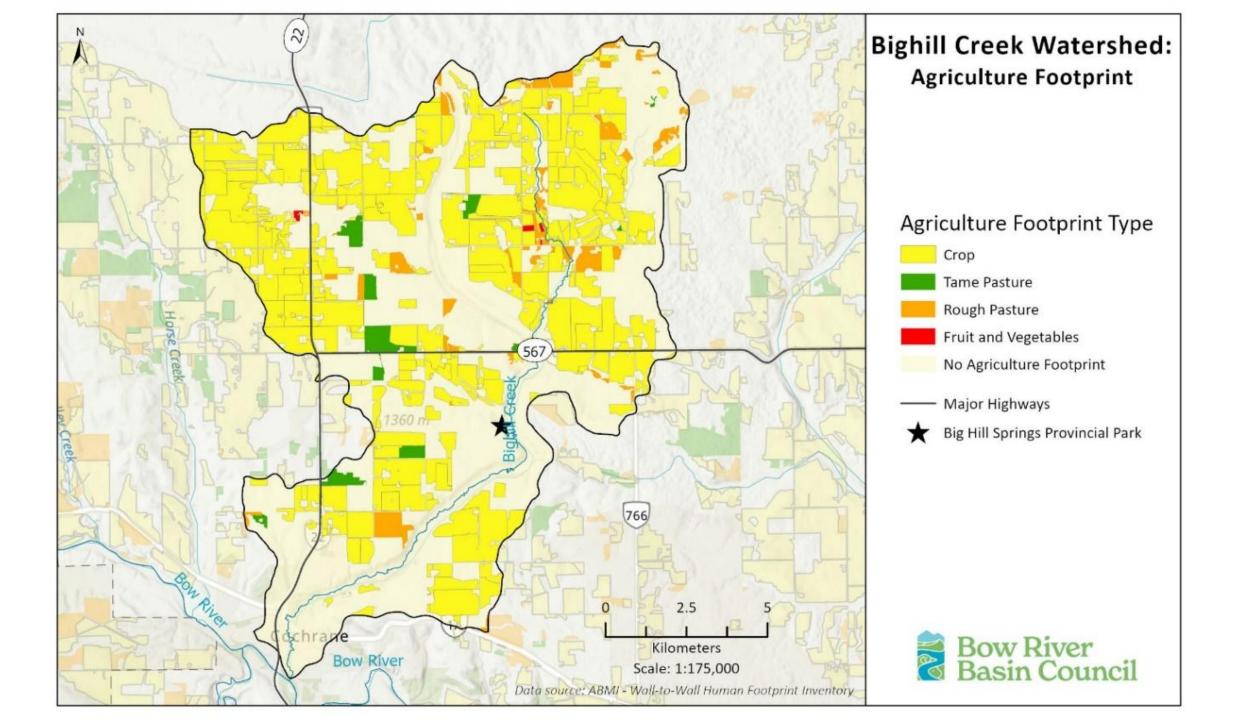


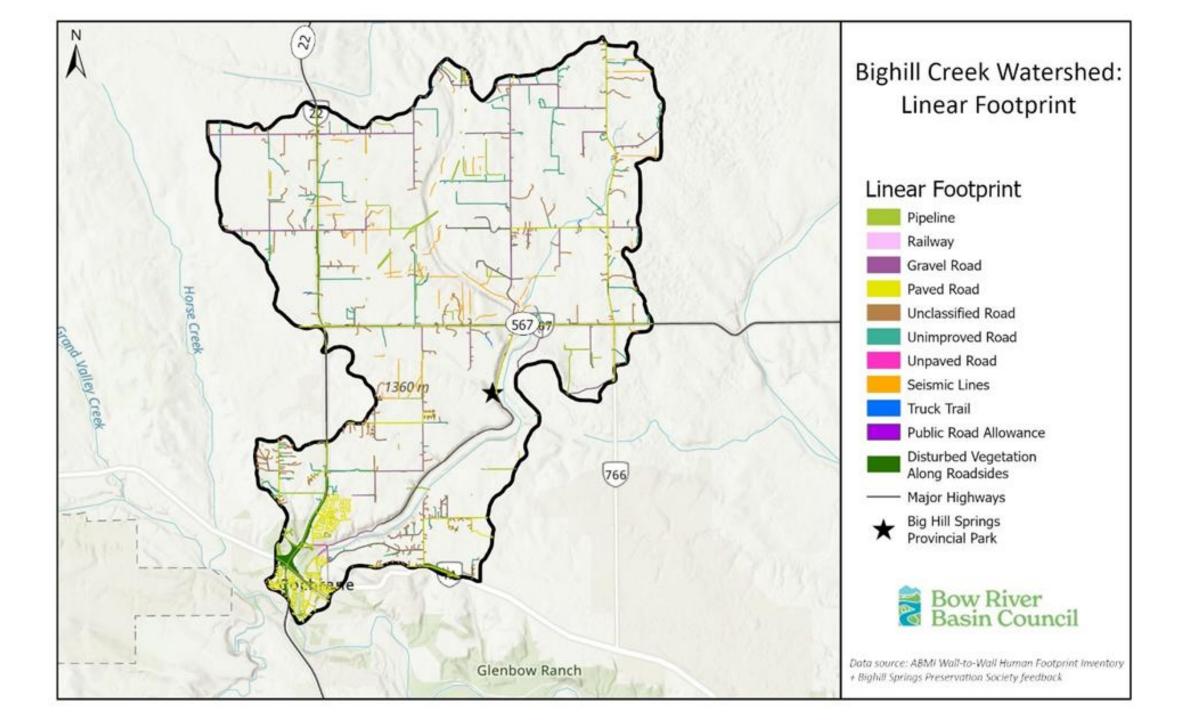


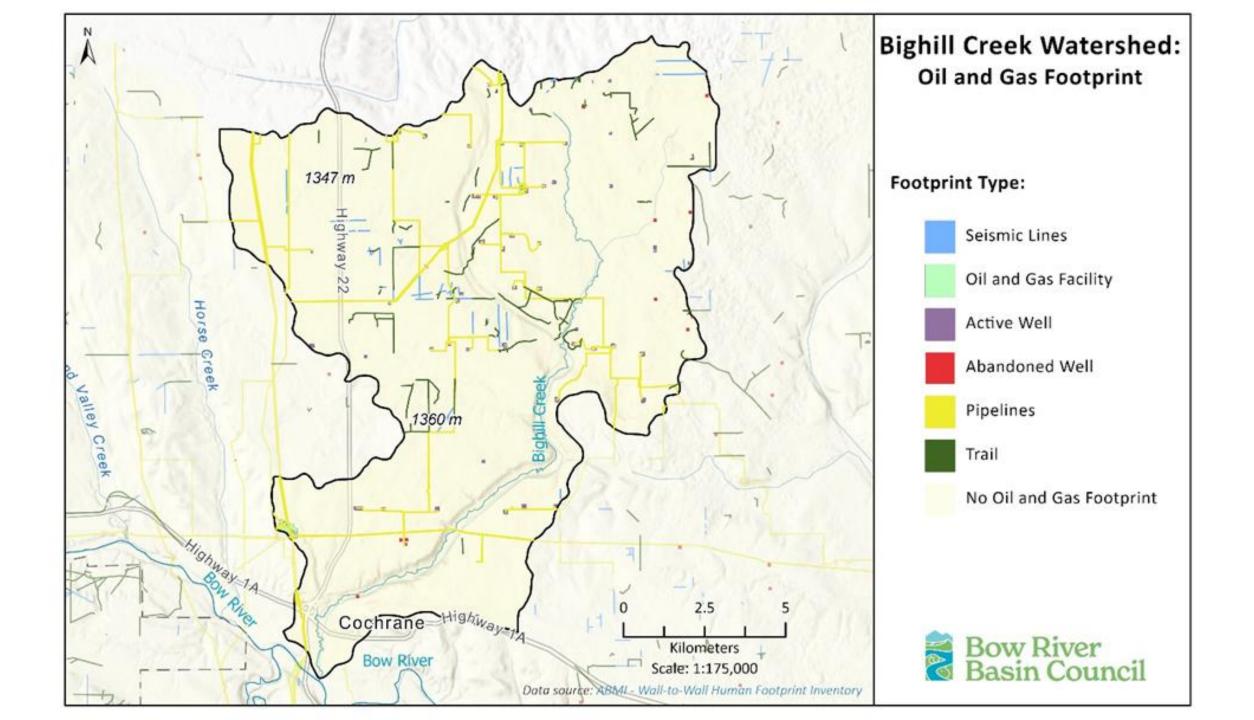












- "Working with the BRBC on the Bighill Creek State of the Watershed report has been a very beneficial experience for the Bighill Creek Preservation Society
- The BRBC contributions of mapping, graphs, diagrams and text has been super-helpful.
- We're so fortunate that the Bighill Creek watershed can be an integral part of the larger Bow Basin SOW report."

Wendell Koning, BCPS SOW Report Coordinator In: Preserving our Lifeline, Vol #25, Issue1, March 2025

THANK YOU, BRBC!

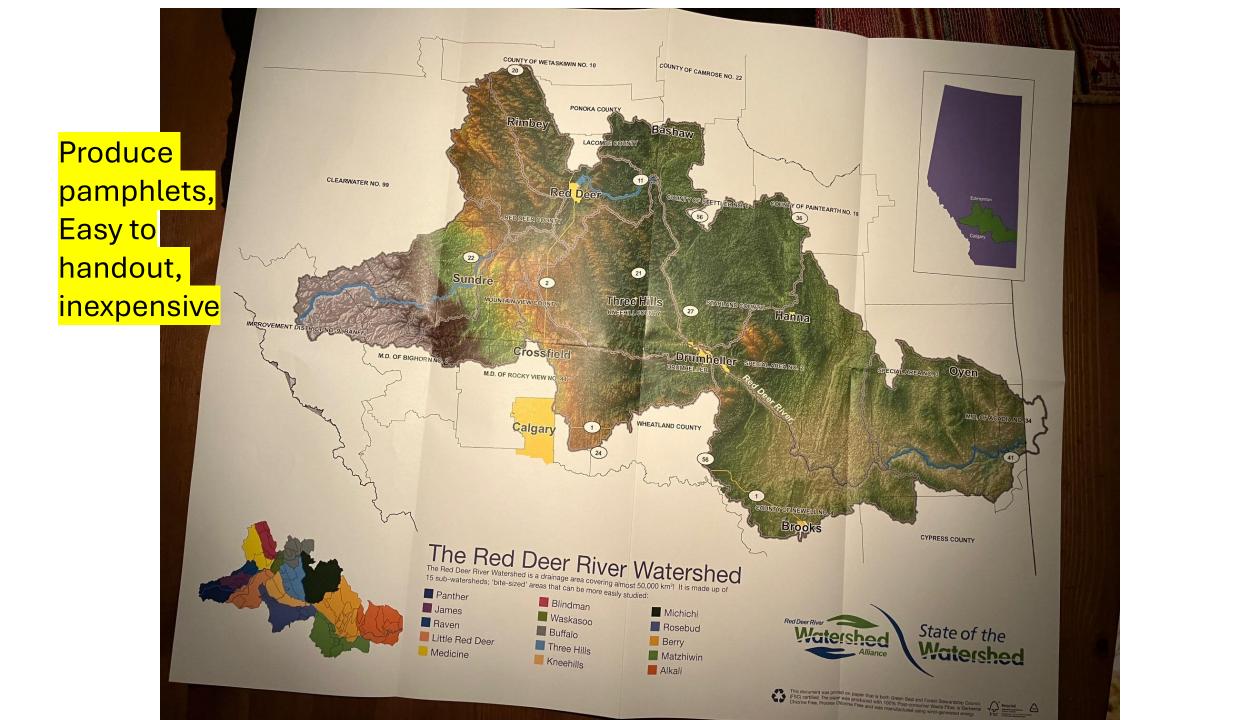


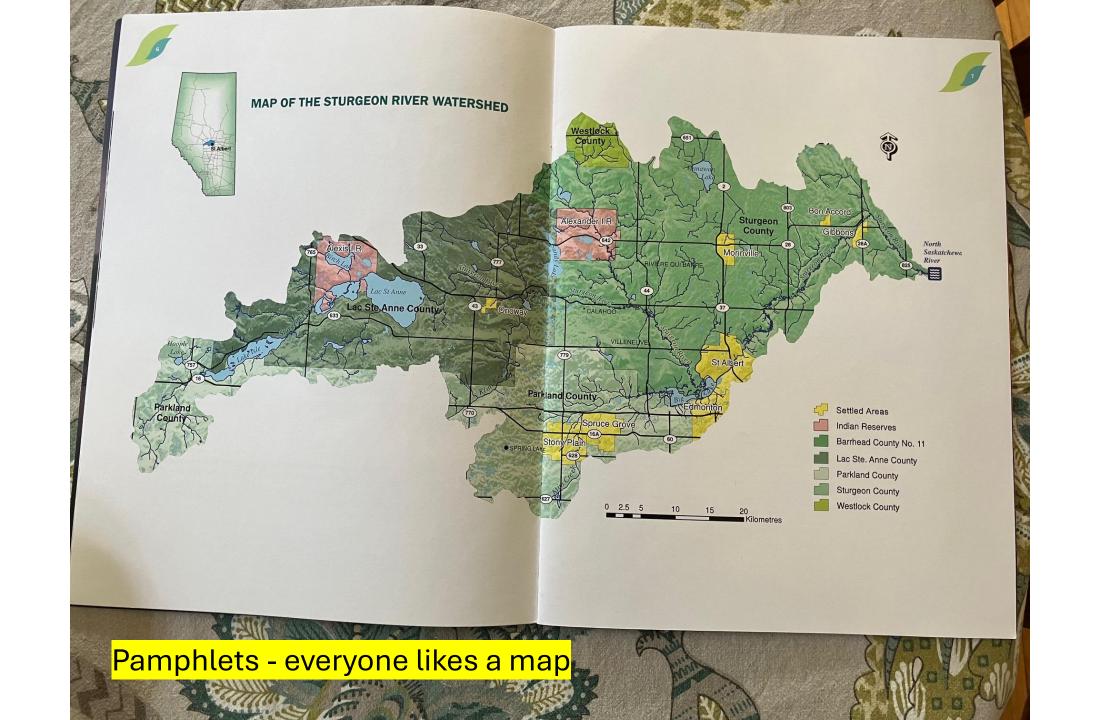
Buffalo jump along Bighill Creek. Photo credit: W. Koning

Next steps

- Finalize the BCPS Bighill Creek full SOW report.
- Construct a communications and roll-out plan, to include limited print copies of the full report, printed brochures with map of watershed and key information.
- Upload full report to the BRBC website with electronic linkages to background reference materials.
- Initiate a roadshow across the watershed to share the report.
- Initiate a multi-stakeholder Integrated Watershed Management Plan
- Ongoing: add material, make changes to the electronic form of the SOW report.







IWMP 2014, 69 pg









Jumpingpound Creek

Integrated Watershed Management Plan

- Final

May 2014

Jumpingpound Creek Watershed Partnership



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Steering Committee

John Buckley, Landowner, Chair
Tom Arnett, Landowner
Rick Butler, Landowner
Tim Dietzler, Rocky View County
Lori-Anne Eklund, Landowner
Kevin France, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Billy Oulton, Landowner Representative

Billy Oulton, Landowner Representative Laura Laing, Landowner Representative Dwight Tannas, MD of Bighorn Gary Wagner, Town of Cochrane Zulfiqar Khowaja, Town of Cochrane Chad Willms, Rocky View County

Technical Advisory Group

Amanda Bogen-Halawell, Cows and Fish
Dr. Masaki Hayashi, University of Calgary
Jon Jorgenson, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Stefan Price, Town of Cochrane
Pat Young, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Financial Sponsors

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration)
Alberta EcoTrust
Alberta Stewardship Network
Bow River Basin Council
EcoAction
Rocky View County
Shell Canada
Town of Cochrane

Cover Photos

S. Riemersma The Buckley Family C. Arnett C. Schaupmeyer





Steering Committee

John Buckley, Landowner, Chair Tom Arnett, Landowner Rick Butler, Landowner Tim Dietzler, Rocky View County Lori-Anne Eklund, Landowner Kevin France, Alberta Environment and Susta Billy Oulton, Landowner Representative Laura Laing, Landowner Representative Dwight Tannas, MD of Bighorn Gary Wagner, Town of Cochrane Zulfiqar Khowaja, Town of Cochrane Chad Willms, Rocky View County

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Financial Sponsors

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Alberta EcoTrust Alberta Stewardship Network Bow River Basin Council EcoAction Rocky View County Shell Canada Town of Cochrane

May 2014

Jumpingpound Creek IWMP

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Stanff At Stanff III . II	- compared the contract of the	and the second section (Section)

Thanks again

Watch

• Small Creek: Lake Chub, Brook Stickleback, and White Sucker

Location : Bighill Creek upstream of the confluence with Big Hill Springs Creek.

Credit: Elliot Lindsay, TUC, 2020