



International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board

Newsletter - March 2026



Indigenous engagement

This is the first ever Reference to the International Joint Commission that has been developed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. The Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Reference was developed by Canada and the United States in partnership with the Ktunaxa Nation, and the study landscape is entirely encompassed within ?amakis Ktunaxa.



In keeping with the unique nature of the Reference, Indigenous scholars, alongside Indigenous artists, are participating in the study, to ensure integration across the Council of Ksanka ę Ktunaxa Knowledge Holders (CoKKKH), the Technical Working Groups and the Study Board. Ktunaxa scholars and artists will be working with the Technical Working Groups and directly with the CoKKKH and the Study Board to inform, review and revise, throughout the development and finalization of the Study Board report. The Study Board is excited to have received recommended Ktunaxa/Ksanka scholars who will be onboarding into the Study this month, and is looking forward to writing their Final Report and commissioning Ktunaxa/Ksanka artists to integrate additional Ktunaxa/Ksanka language and culture.

On September 29, 2025, the International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board asked the public for any literature, data, and knowledge that may be related to their study.

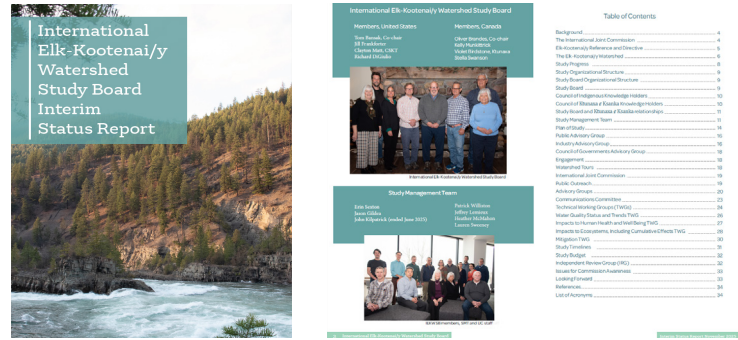


The Study Board and the International Joint Commission would like to thank everyone that took the time to share data and literature that they felt could be useful for the study.

The IEKWSB Interim Status Report

On November 18, 2025, the International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board publicly released its [Interim Status Report](#) sharing all the work they have accomplished in the Study they are conducting on transboundary water pollution in the Elk-Kootenai/y watershed, in the 11 months since it was initiated.

To read more about the work the Study Board has done so far, please check out their Interim Status Report by visiting ijc.org/ekwsb.



Interim Status Report Highlights



In September 2024, Study Board members were appointed by the International Joint Commission and immediately got to work.

They quickly developed their draft Plan of Study (describing how the Study Board planned to accomplish their work) and published a draft on February 11, 2025. On March 26, 2025, their final Plan of Study was publicly released, incorporating the 180 comments, suggestions, and edits received from the public and interested stakeholders during a two-week comment period.



To ensure that they could gather the input and perspectives of the communities across the watershed, the Study Board held three Listening Sessions with the public (two in-person and one virtually), two virtual webinars, and public comment periods on its Plan of Study and Interim Status Report.

The Study Board also visited and toured different sites throughout the watershed, including Kooconusa Reservoir; river and wetland restoration projects on the lower Kootenai/y River; Libby Dam, Montana; Fernie, British Columbia; and Bonners Ferry, Idaho. During those visits, they met with natural resources managers from tribal, federal, provincial, and state agencies. Additionally, the Study Board directly engaged five of the six Ktunaxa communities: ʔakisq̓nuk, Yaq̓it ʔa-knuq̓i'it, yaq̓an nu'ziy, ʔaq̓am, and Ksanka at ʔaq̓anq̓mi. The Study Board plans to meet with the sixth Ktunaxa band, the Ksanka, and additional members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes at Polson, Montana.



Technical Working Groups (TWGs)

To ensure that they have a solid technical foundation for their work, the Study Board established four Technical Working Groups (TWGs):

- Water Quality Status and Trends
- Impacts to Human Health and Well-Being
- Impacts to Ecosystems, Including Cumulative Effects
- Mitigation



The Technical Working Group (TWG) members appointed by the Study Board reflect a diversity of membership to ensure that they can address all relevant dimensions of the work required under the Study Board's Directive. TWG members are from local/provincial/state/federal governments, relevant industry, academia, private consultants and individuals from Indigenous communities.

There will be no new data collection or field sampling during this two-year study. Instead, the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) will gather and review already existing information and data, and then they will report to the Study Board on areas of consensus, divergence and any gaps in understanding.

Per their workplan, each Technical Working Group is expected to submit their final reports to the Study Board in June 2026.

For more in-depth information about the TWGs, visit use this [link](#) to see the IEKWSB's fact sheets. Stay informed on all the activities of the TWGs by going to the ijc.org/ekwsb and signing up to receive email updates.



The Study Board seeks to continue building relationships and gather feedback from the public in the watershed.

If there is a conference, town hall meeting or any other event you feel would benefit from having Study Board members in attendance, please feel free to send an email to elk@ijc.org.

If time and logistics allow, someone from the Study board will try their best to attend.

International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board Timeline Through End of 2025

The governments of the United States and Canada, in partnership with the Ktunaxa Nation, asked the International Joint Commission to undertake certain actions regarding the impact of transboundary water pollution in the Elk-Kootenai/y watershed.

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March 8 2024

The International Joint Commission appointed the Study Board members.



Sept 2024

First in-person Study Board meeting including a tour of Kooacanusa Reservoir and Kootenai River portion of the Elk-Kootenai/y watershed in Montana, US.

Nov 19-21 2024

Feb 11 2025

Published the draft Plan of Study for public review and comment and conducted public consultation.

Feb 19-20 2025

Second in-person Study Board meeting in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.



Formation of the Public Advisory Group, Industry Advisory Group, the Council of Governments Advisory Group, and the Council of Ksanka & Ktunaxa Knowledge Holders (CoKKKH).

Feb 26 2025

The Study Board submitted their final Plan of Study to the International Joint Commission.



Feb 2025

Study Board in-person meeting and tours of upper portion of the basin in St Eugene, Cranbrook and Fernie, British Columbia, Canada.

June 2-5 2025

Members from a diverse range of expertise and representation appointed to four Technical Working Groups (TWG).

June 2025

The Study Board held an in-person Listening Session in Fernie, British Columbia, Canada.

A second Listening Session was held virtually.



June 3 2025



The third Listening Session was held in-person in Bonners Ferry, Idaho, US.

July 8 2025

Study Board in-person meeting with TWG Co-Leads in Bonners Ferry, Idaho, US and toured the lower Kootenai/y watershed in both Canada and US..

Aug 5-7 2025

The draft Interim Status Report was published, and the Study Board conducted public consultation during this time.

Aug 6 2025



Aug 27- Sept 14 2025



Sept 26 2025

The Study Board delivered the final Interim Status Report to the International Joint Commission after reviewing and addressing public comments.

Nov 28 2025

The Interim Status Report was published on the IJC website.

→ 2026