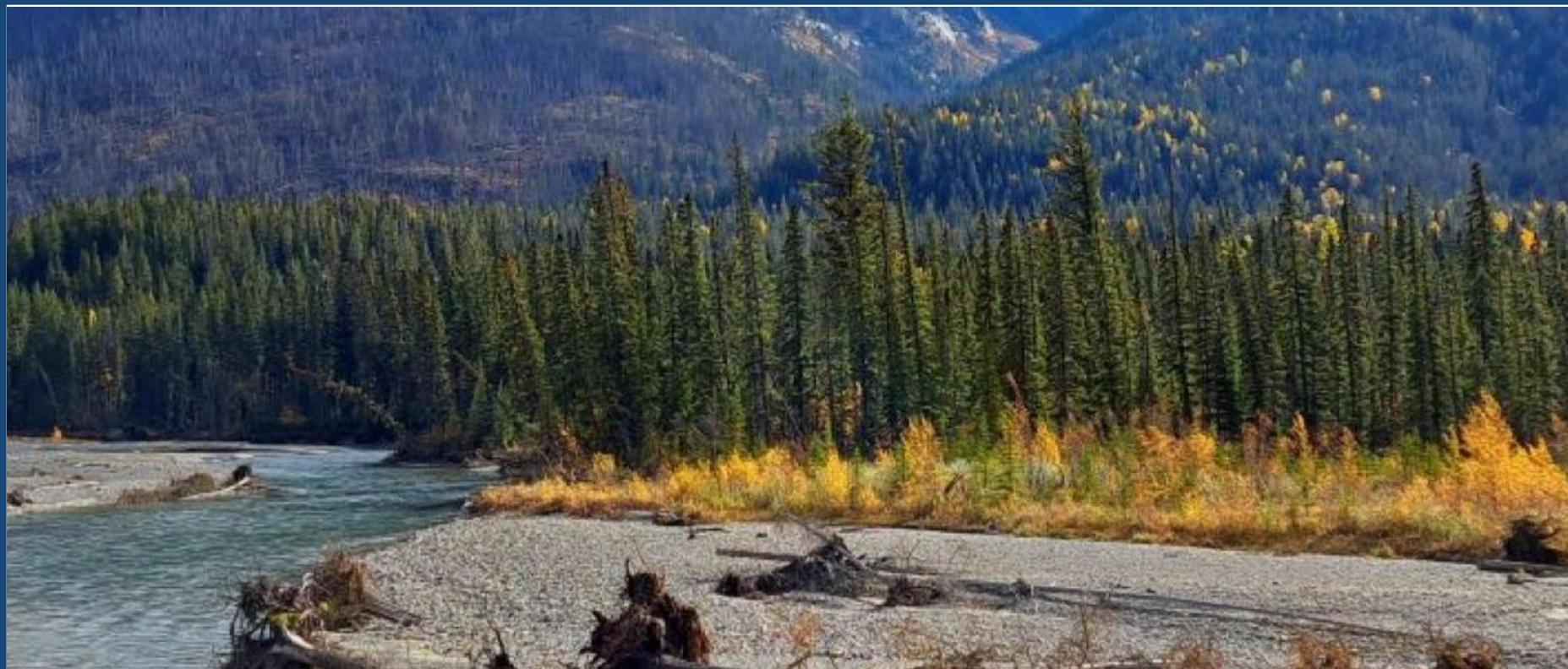


# International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board

## PUBLIC WEBINAR ON THE ELK-KOOTENAI/Y WATER POLLUTION DRAFT PLAN OF STUDY

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February 11, 2025  
6:00pm – 7:30pm MDT  
5:00pm – 6:30pm PDT



Kootenay River, British Columbia

# Welcome & Land Acknowledgements

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# Agenda

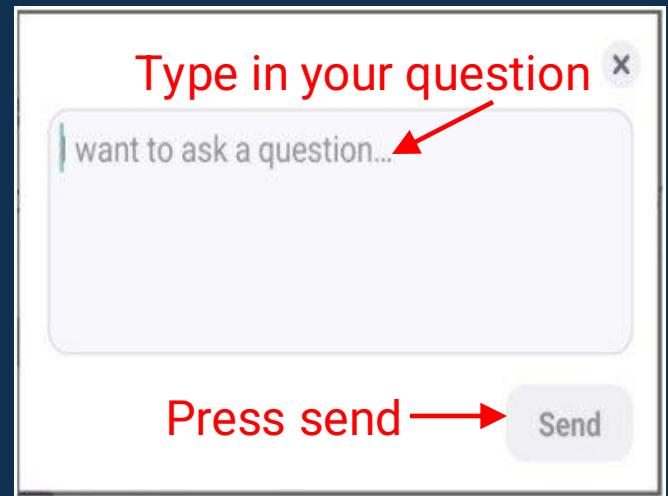
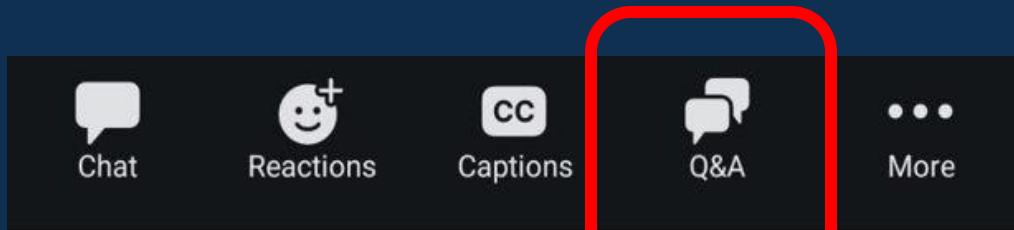
1. Overview of Reference to International Joint Commission
2. Introduction to the International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board
3. IEKWSB Draft Plan of Study
4. Study Board Engagement and Communications
5. Questions and Comments



# Questions & Comments Period

Please enter questions/comments into the Q&A during this Webinar.

We will try to get to as many questions as possible tonight, and all questions and comments will be recorded.



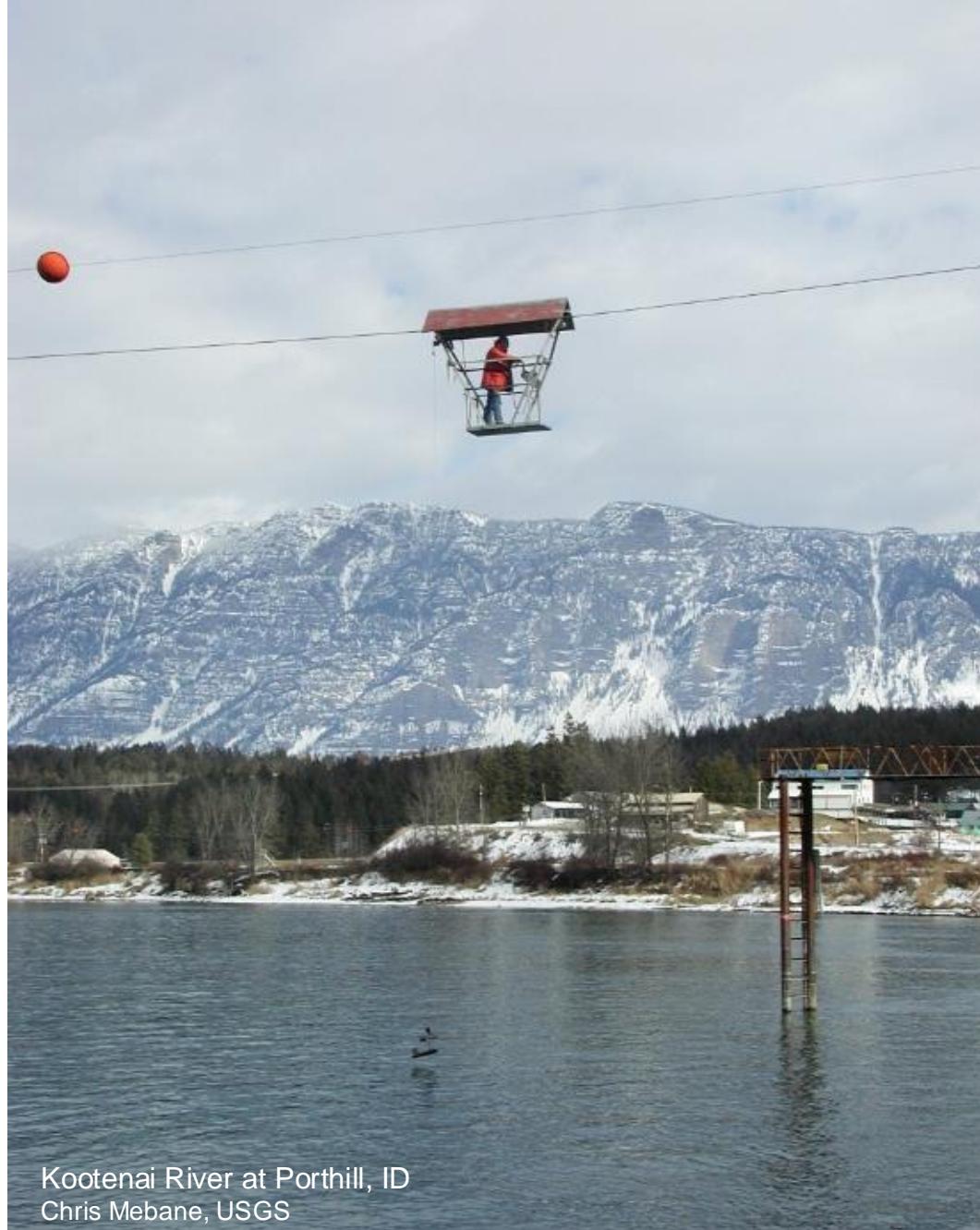
After the event, questions and comments can also be submitted to

[elk@ijc.org](mailto:elk@ijc.org)

# International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board Members



# Overview of the International Joint Commission





# The International Joint Commission

Impartial, independent, binational Canada-United States treaty organization.

Established in 1909 pursuant to the *Boundary Waters Treaty*, which enables the cooperative management and protection of the freshwater lakes and rivers along the shared border.

Employs joint science-based fact-finding as a foundation for building consensus and determining appropriate action.

Fosters public awareness and affords all interested parties a convenient opportunity to be heard.

# The International Joint Commission



Lance Yohe  
United States



Robert Gioia  
United States



Gerald Acker  
U.S. Co-Chair



Pierre Baril  
Canadian Co-Chair



Merrell-Ann Phare  
Canada



Susan Chiblow  
Canada



> 200 interagency and local people working on IJC boards, committees, and advisory groups across the boundary region

## Six Commissioners

\*Appointed by President (U.S.) or Governor-General on advice from Prime Minister (CAN)



Ottawa, ON  
Canadian Section



Washington, DC  
U.S. Section



Windsor, ON  
Great Lakes Regional Office

## Three offices support IJC Commissioners and programs

\*GLRO jointly funded by Governments of Canada and U.S.

# The International Joint Commission

Assists Canada and the United States in preventing and resolving disputes over shared waters, by:

Approving and overseeing projects that use, obstruct or divert boundary waters, or other waters crossing the boundary (called “Applications”)

Responding to joint requests from Canadian and United States Governments to study and report on questions or matters of difference (called “References”)

Often references are time limited, and the IJC, via a study board, investigates and reports back to governments on the elements outlined in joint reference letters

# Introduction to the International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Reference and Study Board



Marble Canyon Trail along the Tokumm Creek in the Kootenay National Park



## March 2024 Reference

Governments of Canada and the United States in partnership with the Ktunaxa Nation send Reference to IJC.

Reference asks IJC to establish a Study Board to convene experts and knowledge holders to:

- Conduct transparent and coordinated transboundary data, information and knowledge sharing.
- Share, synthesize and analyze data and information to support a common understanding of pollution within the watershed and its impacts on people and species.
- A final report and recommendations to the IJC is due in September 2026.

# IJC's responsibilities under the Reference



Governance Body:  
Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed  
Governance Body

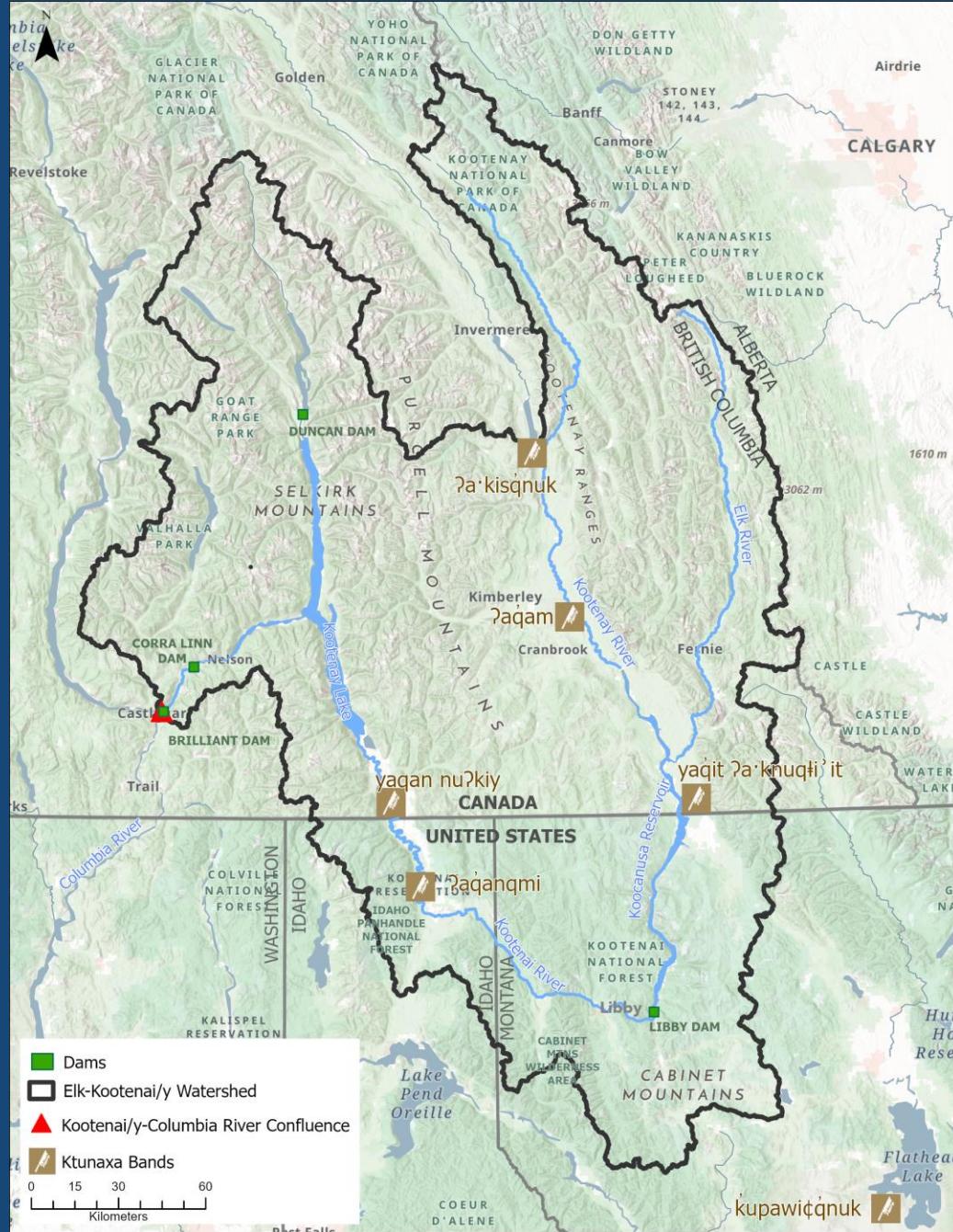


IJC Study Board:  
International Elk-Kootenai/y  
Watershed Study Board (IEKWSB)

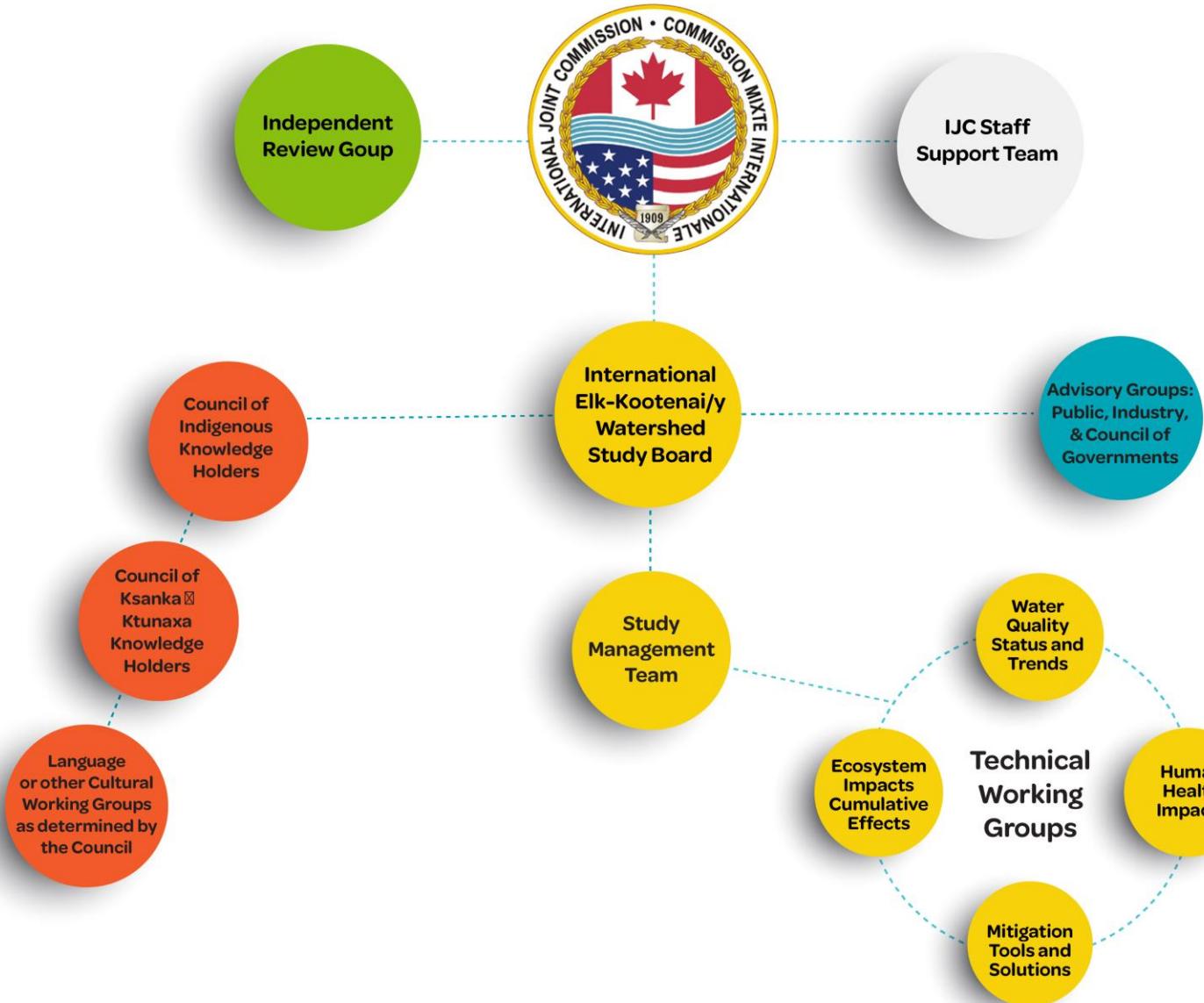
- Proposal attached to the Reference was developed in partnership with officials from the Ktunaxa Nation and has the support of the Nation's leadership
- Proposal describes and contextualizes the roles of the IJC to:
  - Assist in the establishment of a **Governance Body**
  - Convene experts and knowledge holders in a **Study Board** to report and make recommendations to reduce and mitigate the impacts of water pollution in the Kootenai/y watershed

# Study Area

Focus of the Board's work will be the Kootenay River mainstem and the Elk River. Information on other tributaries will be used to assist in the evaluation of cumulative effects.



# Study - Proposed Structure

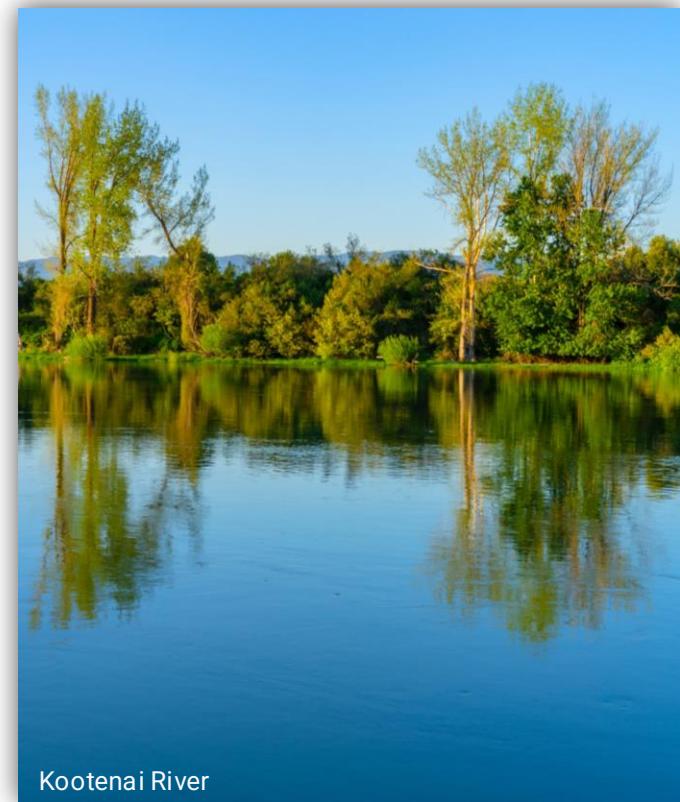


# Duties of the Study Board

**Conduct Broad Engagement** with federal, provincial, state, First Nations, Métis, and Tribal governments, industry, local communities, organizations, the public and others who live, work or have interests in the watershed

**Share, synthesize, and analyze** data and information to support a common understanding of pollution within the Elk-Kootenai/y watershed and the impacts of that pollution on people and species

**Report and recommend** on governance and findings of the analysis of data and information, including the implementation of its recommendations and do so in a transparent and publicly available format



Kootenai River

# Report Content

**The Study Board Report will report and recommend in a transparent and publicly available format on the following matters:**

- 1) The best available observational data, scientific research, and Indigenous knowledge** regarding influences on, sources of, status of, and trends in pollution in water and associated effects on ecosystem health, which could include but is not limited to fish and aquatic life, wildlife, human health, and cultural uses in the Elk-Kootenai/y watershed;
- 2) Data and research gaps, assumptions and uncertainties** including any factors affecting data accessibility and comparability, such as data types and collection and reporting methods relevant to improving understanding, measurement, and monitoring of the matters reviewed by the Study Board;
- 3) A synthesis of the available data and scientific information** and a resulting understanding of the water quality issues in the Elk-Kootenai/y watershed including contaminants of concern, areas, and water and ecological resources affected;
- 4) Recommendations for strengthening, coordinating, and prioritizing** efforts on data sharing and transparency, science, monitoring and research, and inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, and other next steps and recommended actions on the matters reviewed by the Study Board; and
- 5) Methods and procedures for ongoing monitoring and data analyses** to further define the extent of pollution and identify trends in concentrations of contaminants in the watershed.

# Study Board Work Items and Timeline



# IEKWSB Draft Plan of Study

Kootenai River near the confluence with the Moyie River





Koocanusa Reservoir near the U.S.-Canada border

# Study Board Role for Plan of Study

The objective of the IEKWSB is to assist the Commission in completing its study-related duties under the Reference

# What is the Plan of Study?

The Work Plan for conducting a study of water pollution in the Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed



Kootenai River downstream of Libby Dam

# Indigenous Knowledge



The Reference was developed by the U.S. and CA in partnership with the Transboundary Ktunaxa Nation

The Council of Ksanka ¢ Ktunaxa Knowledge Holders (CoKKKH) incorporates Indigenous Knowledge and Language into the IEKWSB

ʔa·kxa'mis ɬapi qapsin – the Ktunaxa belief in *all living things* expresses the interrelatedness of culture, language and knowledge

There will be interaction across the CoKKKH and each of the TWGs and participation from Ktunaxa staff as needed and available within the TWGs

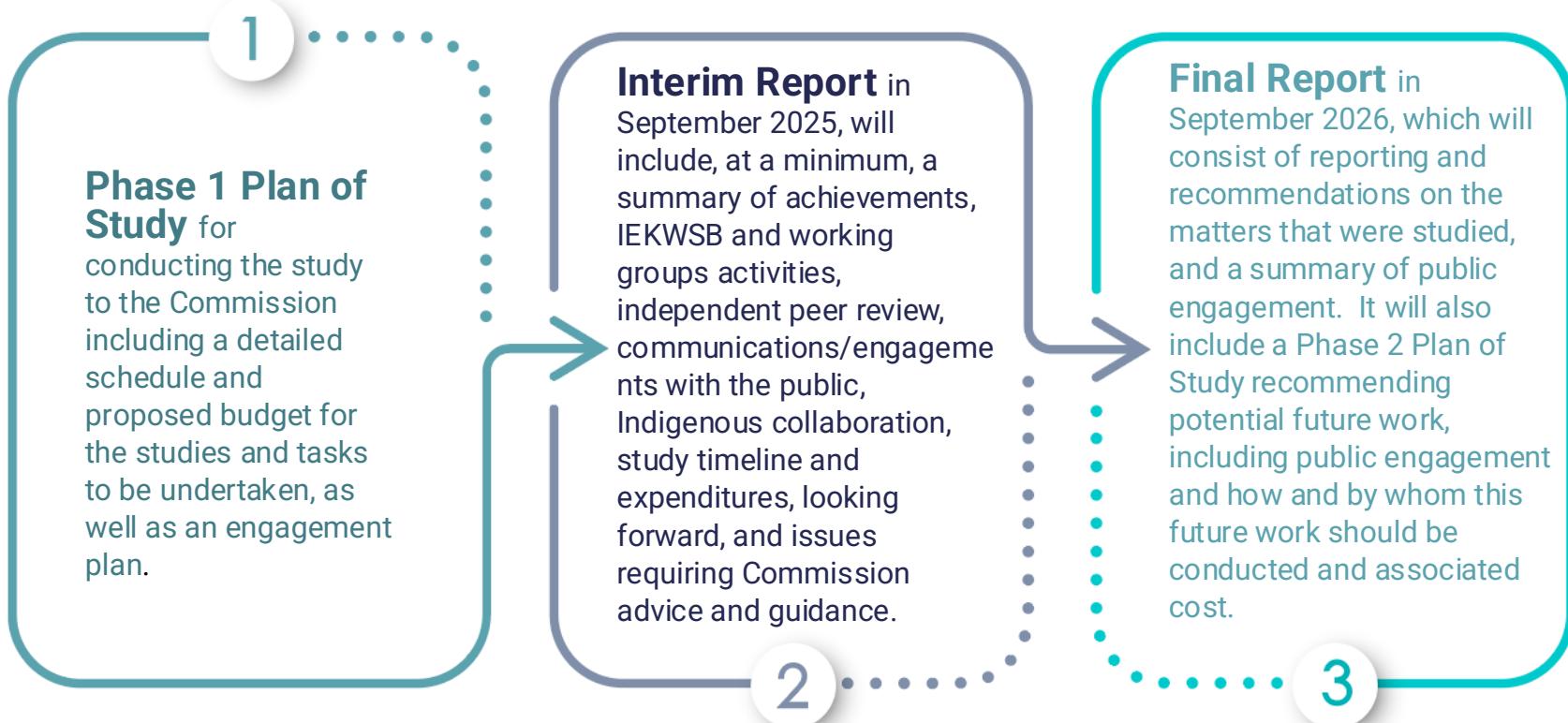
The IEKWSB will ensure that Ktunaxa oversight, voice, and principal values are represented through consistent and iterative engagement with the Council.

# Technical Working Groups

- Water Quality Status & Trends
- Impacts to Human Health & Well-Being
- Impacts to Ecosystems, Including Cumulative Effects
- Mitigation Efforts & Activities & Available Tools

- Will assist the Board in carrying out the work under its Directive within the Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed and the impacts of that pollution on human and ecosystem health
- Will prepare a **workplan** describing the tasks required to fulfill their mission and associated funding, timelines, and products. Upon Board approval, each TWG will implement the **workplan** with the support and oversight of the SMT to ensure their success.
- TWG groups will be responsible for identifying cross-cutting issues relevant to many or all of these themes such as possible roles of climate and climate change.
- Will be appointed by the IEKWSB and reflect a diversity of membership to ensure that they can address all relevant dimensions of the work required under the Directive.

# Deliverables





Libby Dam, Montana

# Study Technical Reviews

Three general levels of study review will be used to assure technical quality of the activities:

**Internal Review** – reviewed by the International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board and Council of Ksanka ꝑ Ktunaxa Knowledge Holders

**Agency Technical Review** - agency technical review of models and reports produced by federal or state/provincial agencies and provided to Technical Working Groups

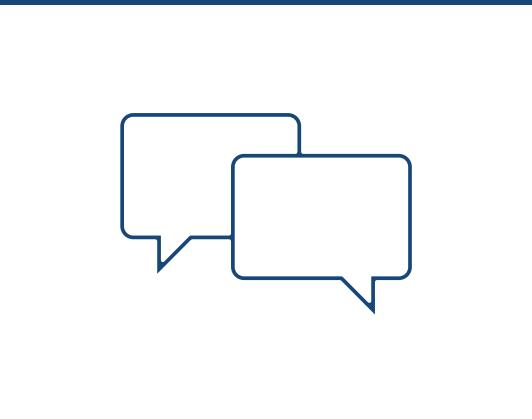
**Independent Review Group** - independent external reviews conducted

# Study Board Engagement and Communications

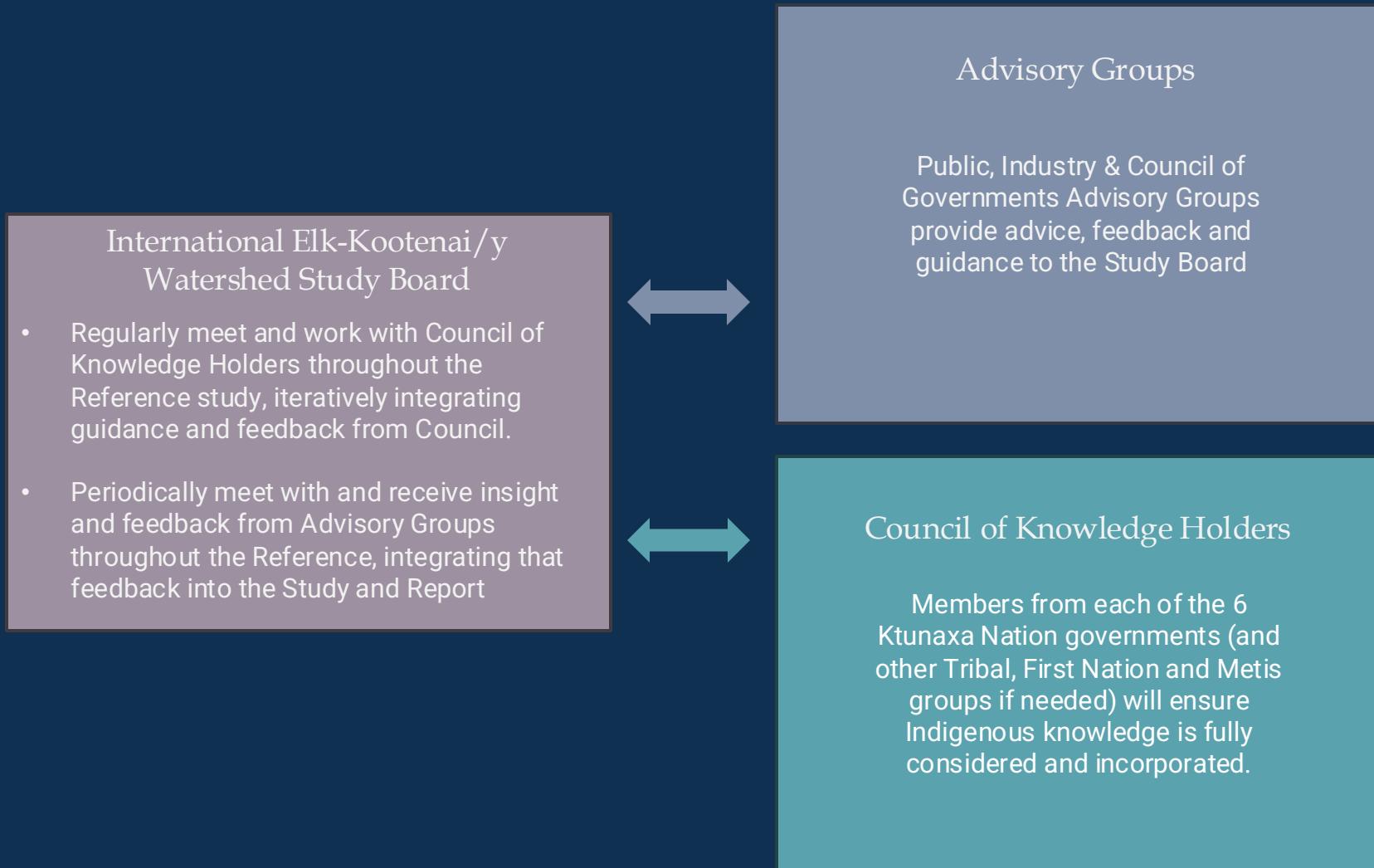


## Communication

- Communication with IJC and Study Board Members
- SharePoint- information sharing and collaborative work hub
- Collaboration and facilitated connections with subject matter experts
- MS Teams virtual meetings
- In person meetings
- Webinars
- Emails
- Communication with media



# Relationships Between IEKWSB, Council of Indigenous Knowledge Holders, and Advisory Groups



# Engagement & Communications Methods



## INFORM

Press  
Releases  
Webinars  
Newsletter



## ENGAGE

Public  
Meetings  
Social  
Media



## VALIDATE

Evaluation  
Report  
Listening  
Sessions

# Public Comment Period

Feb. 3 to Feb. 17, 2025



Email: [elk@ijc.org](mailto:elk@ijc.org)

Public Comment Period:

[www.ijc.org/ekwsb/public-consultation-draft-plan-study](http://www.ijc.org/ekwsb/public-consultation-draft-plan-study)

The International Joint Commission (IJC) invites comments on the International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board draft Plan of Study from Feb. 3 - Feb. 17, 2025.

The IJC would appreciate receiving your comments on the following questions:

- Are there aspects you consider central to the principal issues that you would like to be considered for inclusion?
- Are there specific questions related to the Study Board's directed task that you would like to be considered as the Technical Working Groups develop their approach?
- Is there any information you would like to share with the board for their consideration (e.g., historical data, anecdotal information, knowledge of past/current/upcoming projects that could have a bearing on water quality in the watershed)?

# Questions and Comments

Email us at [elk@ijc.org](mailto:elk@ijc.org)

Use the link or scan the QR Code below to visit our web page

[www.ijc.org/elk](http://www.ijc.org/elk)



Elk River near Elkford, BC