



WILDSIGHT INVERMERE

ANNUAL REPORT

January 31, 2025



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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

I've stepped into the shoes of giants in my first year as Wildsight Invermere's Board Chair. So many greats have come before me – great individuals leading great projects and achieving great accomplishments. I want to honor both the people and the work that has paved the way for us. I deeply appreciate the solid foundation that has been laid as we continue to move forward.

With the help of a fantastic team, we've achieved a lot in 2024. We successfully wrapped up our multi-year Columbia Lake Bighorn Sheep Population and Habitat Project with the Bighorn Bash — an event that brought together the public and experts to share knowledge and learn from one another. A heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers who participated in the “sheep counts” and “weed pulls.” We couldn't have done it without you!

True to our mission, we organized numerous community and education events throughout the year. The library backpack program and family-friendly hikes have been instrumental in helping kids and their families get outside and engage with the natural world around them. We've also had the pleasure of working in schools and daycares, connecting with children from tots to teens.

Collaboration with community partners and First Nations remains a top priority, as we recognize the importance of uplifting and promoting the meaningful work others are doing. From local recreation groups to food and farming initiatives, we continue to find common ground and shared objectives, supporting one another in our efforts to create a better world.

As our climate changes and uncertainty grows, we remain committed to science-based solutions that reduce our environmental impact. From our electric car share program, Spark, to the Home Retrofit Fair, we are helping valley residents lower their emissions. We also continue to advocate for policies that build resilience as we navigate a future shaped by the consequences of long-term pollution.

Our success would not be possible without the support of our members. Thank you for volunteering at and attending the Wild & Scenic Film Festival — our annual fundraiser that helps cover core expenses, for showing up and assisting with community projects, and for your financial support.

In times of uncertainty, community is what sustains us. I'm grateful to be part of the Wildsight community, alongside you and those who came before us. 2025 promises to be another incredible year!

Tracy Flynn

COMMUNITY, CONSERVATION, CLIMATE

WILD CONNECTIONS

Wildsight Invermere maintains strategic focus on three areas that guide our work: Community, Conservation, and Climate. Wild Connections is our flagship program, incorporating all our activities under two broad themes of Thriving Wild and Sustainable Communities.

Community activities form an integral component of all our work, from large public events to workshops, webinars, and working bees. We are committed to actively engage our members and the broader public in interactive, educational, and celebratory events to promote connection with and understanding of our natural world.



2024 continued to bring forth the challenges that make our work so vital. The effects of climate change become more apparent each year, from more frequent and fierce wildfires in the summer to reduced snowpack in winter. In turn we look to the actions we can take locally to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and as an organisation we encourage and facilitate such actions on the community, household and individual levels.



At the same time, the Columbia Valley is also growing in population, and both residents and visitors come here to explore and enjoy the natural world in greater numbers. Being inspired to protect wilderness often comes from direct experience of its wonders. While we encourage our fellow humans to connect with nature, an increasing area of focus is in promoting responsible recreation, both as individuals and in community and local government decision-making.



Engaged citizens can be the difference that every community needs, to be sustainable, thriving places to live. Wildsight Invermere offers a unique service in the Columbia Valley to not only create a greater connection with the natural world, but also provide opportunities to take action through our programs with hands-on activities, citizen science, and volunteering.

THEME 1: THRIVING WILD

The purpose of this theme is to protect and conserve our local natural environment and species to ensure that thriving resilient ecosystems endure into the future. We do this by conserving and restoring local ecosystems, promoting awareness and mitigating the impact of human activities on wildlife species and wild places. More broadly we provide education and engagement opportunities through volunteering, citizen science, outdoor education, public outreach and informative events.

Bighorn sheep conservation

This year we completed our multi-year Columbia Lake Bighorn Sheep conservation and habitat project. Throughout 2024, a total of 17 monitoring sessions were held on the eastern side of Columbia Lake between Canal Flats and Fairmont. Thirty-seven volunteer citizen scientists participated, walking the trails and using binoculars to record data on the bighorn sheep herd including location, age, sex and health of the animals sighted. Over the summer, two weed pulls in conjunction with East Kootenay Invasive Species Council and an invasive species survey were held within the habitat area, with the help of 18 volunteers.

In May and November, over 60 students at the Canal Flats elementary school and daycare spent a class engaged in educational activities about the sheep, including for some a field trip to local spots where the sheep are often found. We offered similar activities for kids and adults alike at the community festival 'Canal Days'. Additionally, we presented at a Canal Flats Village Council meeting on the topic of *M.ovi* sheep disease and risks to the bighorn herd.





An important component of this project was engagement with Shuswap, ʔakisq̓nuk and Ktunaxa First Nations traditional knowledge keepers and Guardians programs, to ensure that traditional perspectives and understanding of the sheep and their habitat is integrated into this and future conservation efforts. A field trip with Ktunaxa ʔa·knusti (Guardians) in November proved to be a fruitful learning experience for all, as training in the citizen science sheep monitoring methods went hand-in-hand with shared cultural knowledge of the landscape and wildlife.

The Bighorn Bash in November was an opportunity for locals from Canal Flats and surrounding areas to come together with bighorn sheep biologists, hunters, domestic sheep farmers, ecologists and conservation experts and enthusiasts, to learn and ask questions about the local herd and this project, and the challenges and conservation efforts facing bighorn sheep in general. The event included a lively panel discussion and Q&A, and screening of the documentary film *Transmission*.

Provincial specialists were included in the design and implementation of this project, and we are thankful to Cirque Ecological for leading the analysis and final reporting of the monitoring data, and for implementing camera traps for additional data collection. A proposal for a sheep collaring project has been developed in collaboration with local First Nations, in response to the results of this project.

The BC Conservation and Biodiversity Award and the regional district's Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund provided the bulk of funding for this project, along with several smaller grants from BC Hydro's Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, and RDEK and Village of Canal Flats Grants-in-Aid.



Outdoor learning and recreation opportunities

In May 2024 we hosted two interpretive walks for Wings Over the Rockies nature festival, educating attendees about the wildlife corridors around Columbia Lake and the Radium wildlife overpass. Also in May at the 'Ready, Set, Learn' event hosted by the school district, over 70 preschoolers and parents enjoyed our 'mud-dy' outdoor learning activities.

In July our 'Let's Go Outside' program launched youth-focussed backpacks filled with outdoor learning equipment, books and activity folders for loan at Invermere and Radium libraries. Thirty children between 5-12 years old joined in our two outreach sessions on birdwatching and binocular use, held at the libraries. Winter themed backpack kits (animal tracks and hibernation) are being prepared for release in early 2025. This program has been funded with grants from the Panorama Foundation and Village of Radium Hot Springs.

September brought our annual BC Rivers Day paddle on the Columbia River in collaboration with Lake Windermere Ambassadors. Fifteen paddlers braved the early drizzle and were rewarded with a gorgeous day exploring the river between Invermere and Radium.

A grant from the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC is funding a host of activities into 2025 to promote responsible recreation in the Columbia Valley. The first was a family-friendly day hike at Lake Enid in October, which proved overwhelmingly popular with 55 parents and children joining in the fun. More youth hikes are planned, including with a focus on First Nations youth. Other projects will include producing informative brochures and public events to facilitate discussion and collaborative solutions between recreation enthusiasts, local government, First Nations and conservation experts.





Educational community events

To celebrate World Water Day in March, we hosted a cosy evening film screening about the Columbia River, including a panel discussion live-streamed from Victoria, BC.

In August an estimated 180 locals and tourists of all ages attended Bear Day to learn about bears, bear safety, and preventing bear attractants, in a fun open-air festival setting with lots of hands-on activities. WildSafeBC and the Conservation Officer were partners in hosting this event.



The 11th Annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival in November 2024 attracted nearly 350 community members in-person and online, to be inspired and learn from a range of short documentary films about the wild places and wildlife we love. The annual event serves as our primary fundraiser and also provides a forum for conversation and connection, growing our community's passion and capacity to take action on the issues they care about. Another new fundraiser in June, Square Dance for the Wild, gave 155 people an opportunity to learn about and support our work, and have a ton of laughs in the process!

Advocacy

We continue to respond to issues raised within the community and advocate for responsible land use and recreation behaviour. Key board members have been involved in the Columbia Valley Recreation Planning Initiative as well as raising awareness of lake issues, including unlicensed buoys and docks, and boating capacity, on Lake Windermere and Columbia Lake.



THEME 2: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Climate change action is a high priority within this theme, strongly connected with our organisational purpose to raise awareness and engagement on climate change actions, informed by current science and based on best practices. Going beyond this also includes sustainable behaviours around resource use, energy, and waste, within all aspects of community life. We provide education and engagement opportunities on sustainable housing, food, transport, consumption, and more, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage our communities to have a net positive impact on their environment.

Low carbon buildings

The second annual Home Retrofit Fair in November was another successful event hosted in collaboration with the Community Energy Association (CEA) and East Kootenay Climate Hub. The event had 100 attendees and included 6 workshops covering energy assessments, retrofits, heat pumps, trends in solar energy and more. Funding from a BC Hydro Community Grant was used for this event.

As the Retrofit Assist program has been rolled out to the East Kootenay region, we are helping to promote its uptake in collaboration with the CEA.



Resilient communities

Funded by Columbia Basin Trust's ReDi grant, our Rethink Resilience series in spring 2024 included three workshops on food growing and foraging with a total of 42 participants, partnering with local food producers and experts. We also partnered with the local cycling society to expand their gear swap, which attracted approximately 150 attendees browsing and buying second-hand outdoor gear.

The Rethink Resilience project worked with the David Thompson Secondary School (DTSS) Climate Club to host two workshops for students on making zero-waste products. We facilitated a student-led project to promote and petition the local council for improved public transit in the Columbia Valley, involving 25 students learning and discovering what it takes to create positive change in their community. Information about this project was on display at 'The Future Is Now' expo in Kimberley.

We continue to support and mentor the DTSS Climate Club weekly during school term, and again awarded an annual bursary to one graduating high school student pursuing post-secondary environmental studies. The 2024 Wildsight Bursary was received by Landon Dales, to support his studies in Land and Food Systems. Congratulations Landon!



In April we collaborated with Kootenay Savings Credit Union to host a community clean up on Earth Day. Over 60 locals volunteered, collecting 20 full garbage bags and several crates of recyclables from public areas at three locations in Invermere and Windermere. Also in April, our AGM included a screening of 'Beyond Climate', a film showing the effects of climate change across British Columbia.

On behalf of a group of concerned citizens we spoke with representatives from the regional and municipal governments in June regarding the new compost facility in Invermere, to resolve concerns about its construction and to help promote composting to reduce landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.



Electric transportation shows

In September we hosted two electric vehicle shows in Invermere and Cranbrook, partnering with Cleanline Automotive and East Kootenay Climate Hub, with funding from Emotive - BC's GoElectric program. Collectively both shows attracted over 220 attendees and featured electric cars, trucks, scooters and bikes. Over a dozen enthusiastic EV owners and dealerships volunteered to display their vehicles and answer questions from curious attendees.



Spark

Spark is rural Canada's first electric vehicle carshare and now one of two in the Columbia headwaters region (the other is in Golden). Now five years in operation, Spark continues to play an important part in our work promoting the transition to carbon-neutral energy and transport. With 246 members, the electric vehicle carshare - consisting of one Chevrolet Bolt - is booked on average half of all days in each month, with 3-7 new members joining each month. In July, the Spark car was on display at Invermere's Valley Appreciation Day, prompting conversations about electric vehicles with the public, from avid supporters to people seeing an EV up close for the first time.

TRY IT OUT! [GOSPARK.CA](https://gospark.ca)

OUR COMMUNITY

Wildsight Invermere members and volunteers are the backbone of the organization. From those who read our newsletters, attend and help at events, and let us know what's important to you, to those who step up into an active Board role, provide invaluable admin support, or take the lead on one of our myriad of projects. Thank you.

We have been blessed with the support of new and long-term donors who help to keep our roots nourished while we are out on the landscape and in the community. Thank you to our monthly donors and to all who have contributed this year and throughout our 36 year history.

Our members care deeply about the natural world and want a resilient, healthy environment into the future. We thank you for inspiring us with your passion and knowledge, and supporting us with your time, energy and donations!



**TO VOLUNTEER, BECOME A MEMBER, OR MAKE A DONATION
GO TO [WILDSIGHT.CA/INVERMERE](https://wildsight.ca/invermere)**

WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONNECTING WITH YOU!

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

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WILDSIGHT REGIONAL AND THE OTHER 5 WILDSIGHT BRANCHES
WINGS OVER THE ROCKIES

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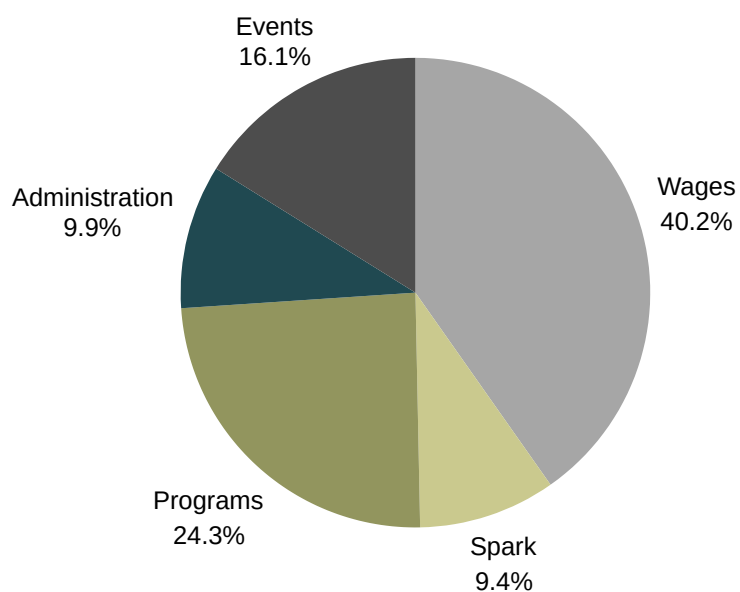
HELENA-GRACE TREADWELL
PROGRAM MANAGER



FINANCIALS - January 31, 2025

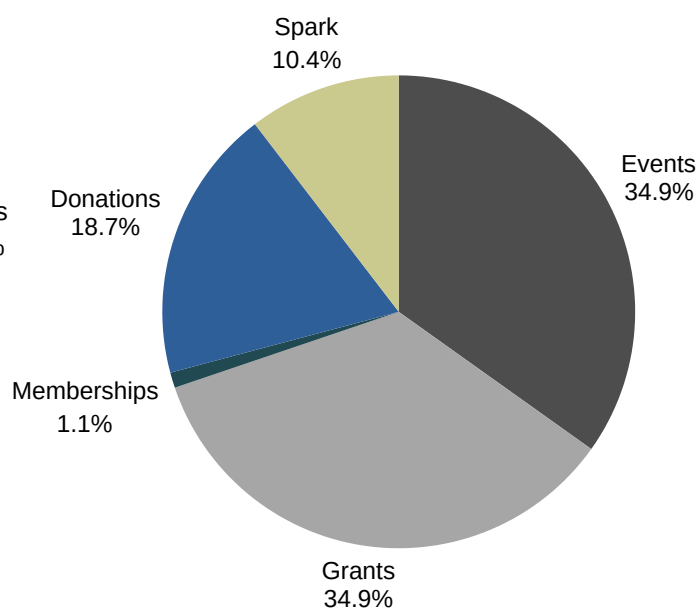
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR COMPLETE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

EXPENSES



\$116,218

REVENUE



\$113,846

WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR 2024 FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS



11th Wild & Scenic Film Festival Sponsors

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CATALYST



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THANK YOU TO ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO SUPPORTED WILDSIGHT INVERMERE IN 2024

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