



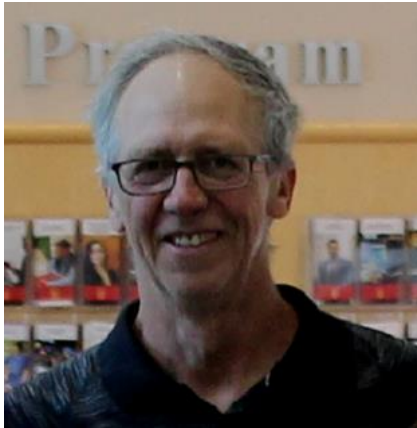
# Annual Report

## 2022-2023

**"A healthy watershed that provides balance between environmental, social, and economic benefits."**



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



This was the year we emerged from Covid protocols to find a new way to do business. As we transitioned to in-person events over the spring and summer, we looked forward to more in person meeting opportunities. The resulting hybrid formats have been a welcome change.

For SEAWA, planning for the future means understanding the increasing demands and risks to our precious water supplies here in the South East. Thanks to Marilou Montemayor and Karen Saffran for guiding one of our key projects, from inception to successful completion. The study - Characterization of the Drinking Water Source Area for the City of Medicine Hat and the Town of Redcliff, will help guide future work in this area.

Post-pandemic, finding qualified staff has been a challenge

and we have been fortunate to have some terrific summer staff to help ease the work load of the riparian restoration projects. It has been encouraging to see these projects help us transition to public education using the information and experience gained at the sites.

I would like to thank the board for their support over the past year and welcome several new and returning members to our group. We look forward to the energy and expertise they bring to SEAWA.

The upcoming year will have some challenges. We have to come to grips with the fact that our Executive Director, Marilou will be moving on from SEAWA later this year. I can't thank her enough for her many years of hard work and resolute dedication to SEAWA's cause. As a result, and to her credit, SEAWA is now well prepared to fulfill its future mandate. It is with heartfelt gratitude that on behalf of myself, the board and our membership, we wish her the very best in the future.

Ryan Davison

Chair, SEAWA Board

## SEVEN YEARS' HIGHLIGHTS

This is my final annual report sharing this year's accomplishments with the membership, watershed stakeholders, funders, partners, donors, volunteers, supporters, friends, and the public. This year also completes seven years of my career serving SEAWA since April 2016. It has been a professionally rewarding and personally fulfilling experience. Working with the board and committees, together we have successfully reactivated SEAWA from its organizational challenges in 2015, and carried it through a four-year (2019-2023) period of substantial reduction in SEAWA's key source of revenue, the Government of Alberta's (GOA) operational grant. These constraints triggered resourcefulness, frugality, and prioritization of expenditures. We were fortunate to get support through wage subsidies (Canada Summer Jobs program & EcoCanada) and project grants from other sources. As SEAWA's projects gradually became recognized, key stakeholders including industry, school children, and individuals, pitched in and helped SEAWA financially. Gradually, SEAWA was able to save for a reserve fund that enables continued operation through waiting periods prior to grant release. The good news—requests to GOA for increased funding finally came to fruition, resulting in \$320,000/year for the next four years (2023-2027). SEAWA is now well-funded and able to fulfill its various roles—state of the watershed assessments and reporting, planning, literacy and education, and convener and collaborator.

Our earliest endeavours focused on governance. SEAWA's purpose (objects) under the Societies Act was updated to emphasize its educational role with the view of qualifying to apply for a charitable status. This change is reflected on SEAWA's updated [Mission Statement](#). SEAWA's set of [bylaws](#) has been amended six times to correct errors and

to add or delete articles. Three-year strategic plans have evolved; [Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#) was developed most recently. Board and Committee Terms of References, the organizational chart and other [policies](#) were updated. [Respectful Workplace Policy](#) and [Health and Safety Program](#) were new additions.

SEAWA's [riparian restoration projects](#) and [applied research](#) helped gain stakeholder trust and support and encouraged the involvement of volunteers, as illustrated by the [community engagement model](#) that naturally developed. These projects were funded through GOA's Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (2017-2021) and Government of Canada's Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program (2018). Four [riparian revegetation sites](#) (in partnership with David Yeast, a landowner, St. Mary River Irrigation District, and the City of Medicine Hat) have served as areas for local knowledge development on riparian revegetation using native shrubs and trees, riparian ecology, [non-chemical invasive plant suppression](#), pollinator habitat, and overall biodiversity. To ensure native plant diversity, we developed [native plant propagation](#) methods for species that are not commercially available. We also participated in citizen science by reporting [online](#) sightings of the locally invasive Russian olive tree.

Ecosystem restoration takes decades to get established. The riparian revegetation sites are being maintained for the long-term as demonstration sites for educational purposes and continued local knowledge development. [Riparian tours](#) are held annually. Since 2018, these sites have also provided work experience directly relevant to the academic programs of 14 summer and coop students, and interns. Some of them worked for more than one summer.



## SEVEN YEARS' HIGHLIGHTS continued

The COVID 19 pandemic did not affect the employment of summer students because their work with projects and outreach activities were outdoors.

With three seasons of local riparian knowledge gained, Ben White and I had sufficient information to write contents for a new [website](#). Working with a web designer, it was launched in December 2020. A wealth of knowledge about SEAWA, the watershed, projects and applied research, educational and outreach activities, and publications have been documented and shared through our various communication tools: website, [newsletters](#), [publications](#) (derived from our own scientific studies and observations, and project reports), [field tours](#), SEAWA booth at [community events](#), presentations to various organizations, and social media posts.

SEAWA has also contributed to the scientific understanding of conditions in our watershed through a number of major projects. A [Riparian Health Assessment of Seven Persons Creek](#), based on satellite imagery, was completed through funding from the Watershed Resilience and Restoration Program (WRRP). A [water quality study](#) funded by Plains Midstream Canada was conducted at two restoration sites on the Seven Persons Creek. Our recently completed project report [Characterization of drinking water source area for the City of Medicine Hat and the Town of Redcliff](#) provides information to guide the future development of a source water protection plan. This project was funded by the Alberta Real Estate Foundation.

My education in both environmental and agricultural sciences, and other relevant skills gained through training and years of experience and self-learning, have been

applied to the fullest extent. I invested a lot of personal time and resources, performing duties and responsibilities beyond those of the Executive Director, to keep SEAWA in full operation despite periods of staff capacity constraints.

I am proud and happy with where SEAWA stands now: a source of credible local watershed knowledge, a recognized stakeholder, an organization to volunteer and get involved with, and most of all, a properly funded organization able to fulfill its roles as a WPAC.

I thank the board, committee chairs and members, volunteers, friends, summer students, interns, staff, and service providers that made SEAWA a viable and relevant organization for the watershed community.

I wish SEAWA continued success now and in the future.

Marilou Montemayor, P. Ag.  
Executive Director



## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

### Governance

The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on June 27, 2022. The Board consisted of new directors, directors that were re-elected, and those who continued their term. During the year, there were changes to the board composition as a result of new appointments. As of March 2023, the total number of active directors was 14 out of a total of 17 board seats. The officers were: Ryan Davison (Declared open and available seat) – Chair, Ron Linowski (Outdoor recreation and eco-tourism)– Vice-Chair, Amber Zary (Provincial government) – Secretary, and Chris Howells (Member-at-large) - Treasurer. Other directors were Jean Beriault (Industry), Stuart Murray (Agriculture), Greg Paxman (Municipal government—urban), Mike Zmurchyk (Licensee—irrigator), Tina Regehr (Environmental non-government organization), Clayton Bos (Educational institution), and Martha Munz Gue (Member-at-large). Appointed directors were Larry Liepert (Municipal government—urban), Anita Carswell (Declared open and available seat), and Amy Moores (Federal government).

The board held a total of eleven meetings and the AGM. Three of the eleven board meetings included strategic planning sessions during which the [Three Year Strategic Plan \(2023-2026\)](#) was developed.

The Technical Committee consisted of 14 members – Karen Saffran as the Chair. Communications Committee consisted of 6 members – Martha Munz Gue as the Chair. The Bylaw and Policy Committee had 5 members with Audrey Goodwin as the Chair.

SEAWA had a total of 82 members.

Governance was guided by the SEAWA Bylaws, Board and Committee Terms of References, Policies, Vision and Mission Statements, business plans and strategies, and conditions of grant agreements.

### Cash Funding Sources

SEAWA's operations were mainly funded by the Government of Alberta, through Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) core operational grant. This grant was provided to SEAWA as a Watershed Planning & Advisory Council (WPAC). Donations from St. Mary River Irrigation District, Methanex, Dr. Roy Wilson Learning Centre Grade 5, and individuals supplemented the AEP core operational grant. Summer Student wages were subsidized through the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program. Riparian restoration educational sites maintenance and applied research were funded through the AEP core operational grant, CSJ, and donations.

### In-kind Contribution

In addition to cash grants, wage subsidies, and donations, volunteer services enabled SEAWA to function effectively and achieve its objectives for the year. These in-kind contributions include time spent by the board of directors, committee members, and community volunteers.

### Staff capacity

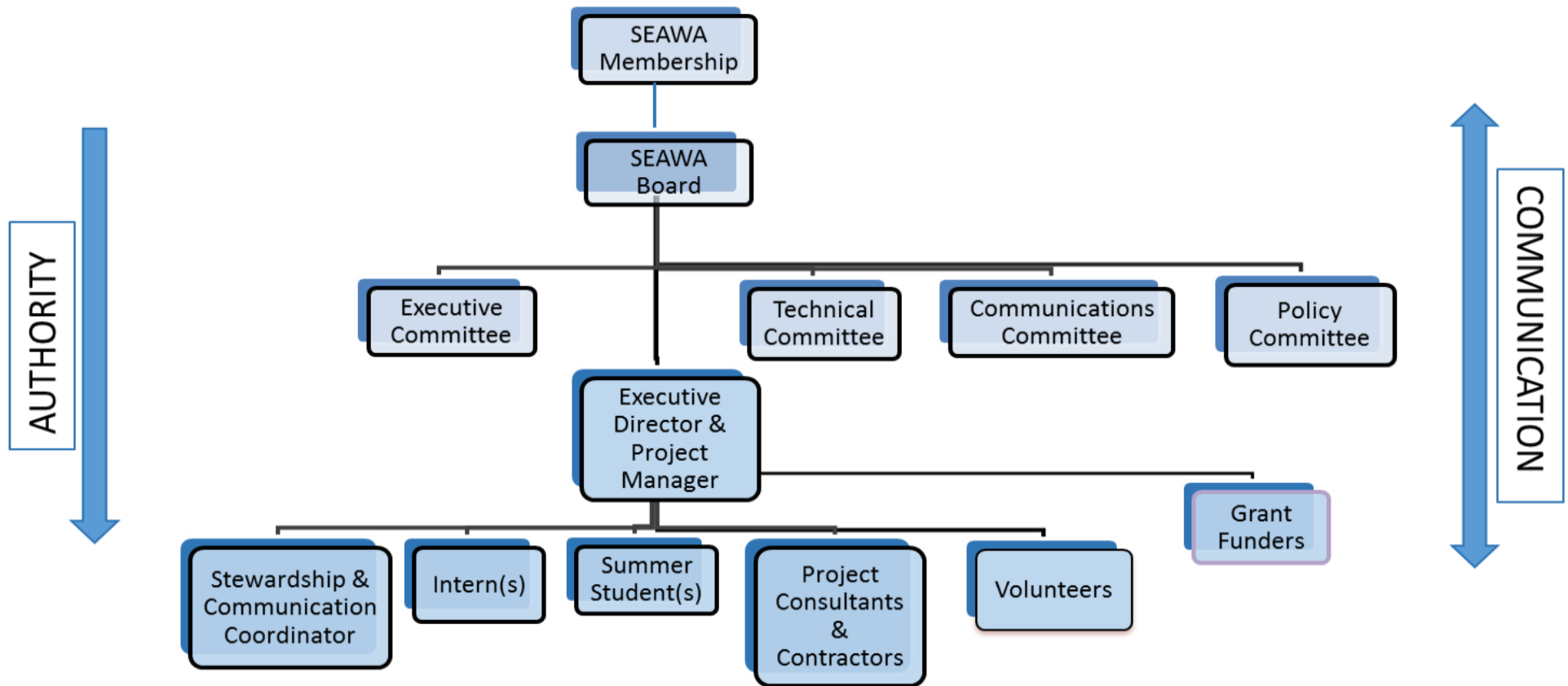
The Executive Director was the lone full-time staff for the majority of the year. Three summer students worked at the riparian educational sites and assisted in applied research, community outreach, and website posting. In addition, the summer students wrote content for the May and August 2022 issues of the newsletter. No application was received for the Stewardship and Communications intern position. The Executive Director took on additional duties of being the project manager, science coordinator, and communications coordinator.

### Organizational Structure

SEAWA functions effectively as a volunteer-based organization and performs its role as a WPAC through its membership (82), board, committees, volunteers and hired staff. The organizational structure is illustrated on the next page.



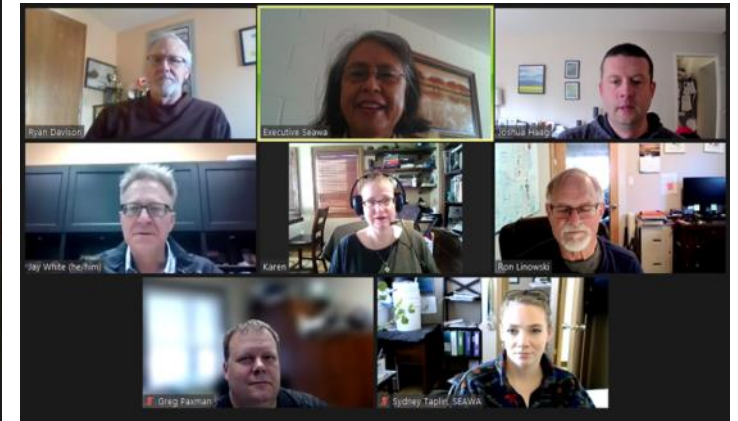
# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



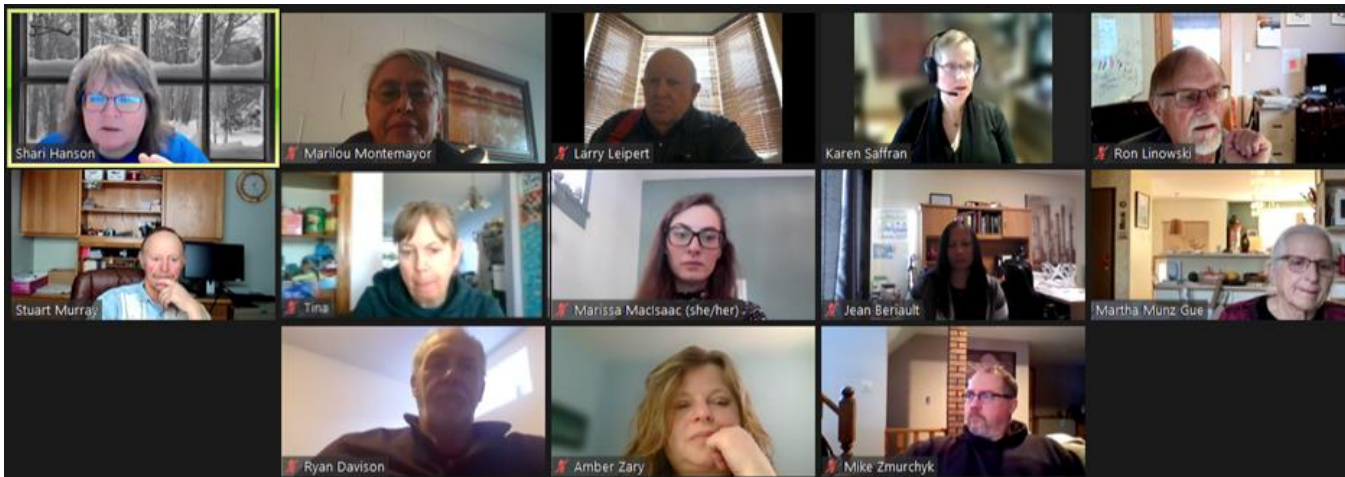
## THE BOARD AND COMMITTEES



One of the 11 board meetings, October 12, 2022: Ron Linowski, Marilou Montemayor, Amber Zary, Karen Saffran, Ryan Davison, Tina Regehr, Greg Paxman, Audrey Goodwin, Stuart Murray, Mike Zmurchyk, Martha



Project kickoff meeting, April 11, 2022, between SEAWA's Technical Committee and Aquality Environmental Consulting Ltd. Ryan Davison, Marilou Montemayor, Joshua Haag, Jay White, Karen Saffran, Ron Linowski, Greg Paxman, and Sydney Taplin.



Strategic Planning session 2, December 12, 2022, of 3 sessions. Shari Hanson, Community Development Unit (CDU), Ministry of Culture, Government of Alberta (facilitator), Marilou Montemayor, Larry Leipert, Karen Saffran, Ron Linowski, Stuart Murray, Tina Regehr, Marissa MacIsaac (CDU), Jean Beriault, Martha Munz Gue, Ryan Davison, Amber Zary, Mike Zmurchyk.



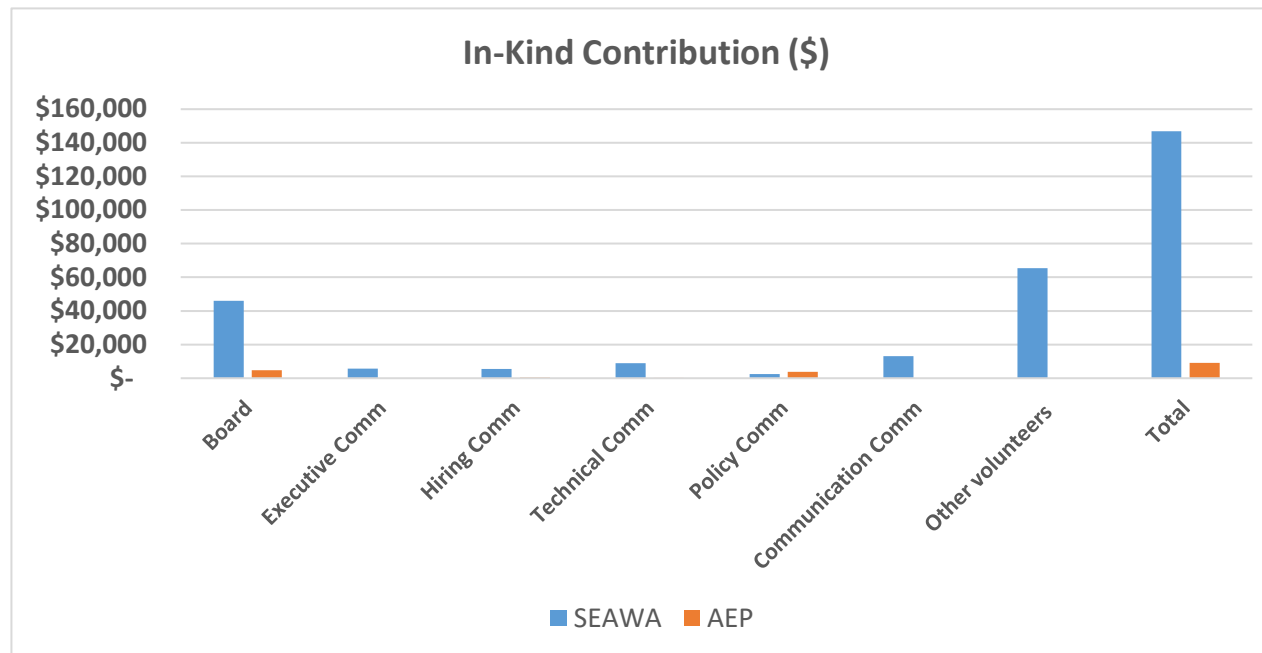
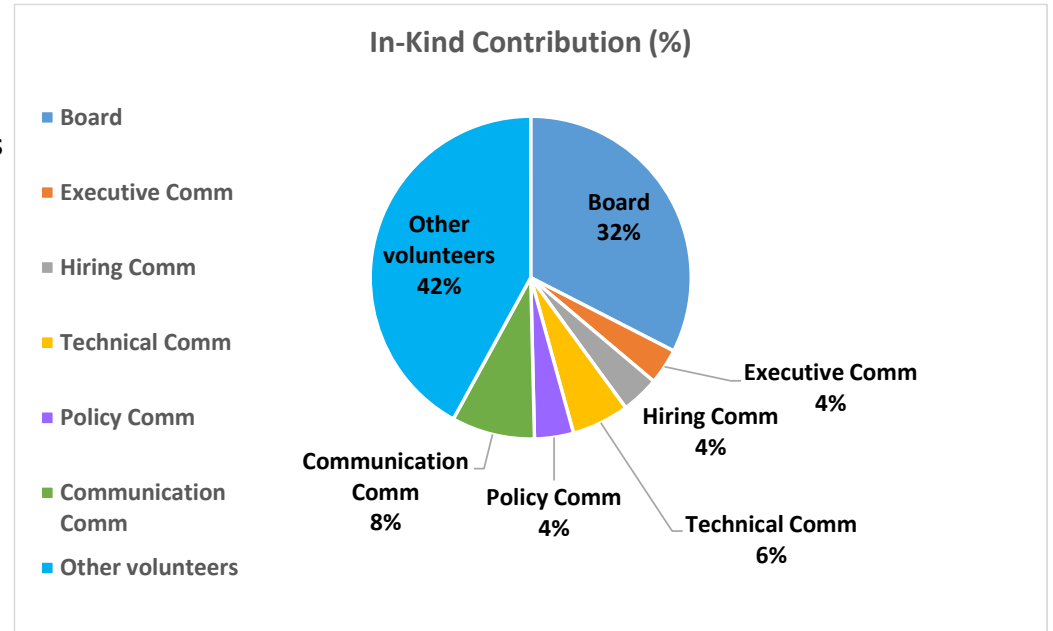
Hiring Committee meeting, January 10, 2023: Ron Linowski, Marilou Montemayor, Karen Saffran, Amber Zary, Ryan Davison, Mike Zmurchyk.

## IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION

The total in-kind contribution for the year was \$155,860 out of which \$9,010 came from AEP staff participation in the Board, Executive Committee, Technical Committee and Policy Committee. A huge portion (42%) came from 'Other volunteers' category. This consisted of regular clean-ups around the City of Medicine Hat through the [Adopt-a-Pond or Path initiative](#) and during the celebration of events such as Earth Day, Environment Week, and World Water Day; fall activities with students; AGM speaker time; and the contributions of many other individuals who have provided services to SEAWA free of charge.

The ratio of in-kind contribution to cash was 0.725. The breakdown of in-kind contribution from the board, committees, and other volunteers is shown below.

**The total in-kind contribution for the year was  
\$155,860**





## FINANCIAL REPORT

	March 31, 2023 (Unaudited)	March 31, 2022 (Unaudited)
<b>STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION</b>		
ASSETS	<u>\$213,194</u>	<u>\$209,504</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES	17,662	29,811
NET ASSETS	<u>195,532</u>	<u>179,693</u>
	<u>\$213,194</u>	<u>\$209,504</u>
<b>STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS</b>		
REVENUES	<u>\$233,520</u>	<u>\$238,494</u>
EXPENDITURES - AEP	200,003	202,936
EXPENDITURES - AREF	<u>17,678</u>	-
EXPENDITURES - WRRP	-	<u>27,233</u>
	<u>217,681</u>	<u>230,169</u>
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER OPERATIONS	<u>\$15,839</u>	<u>\$8,325</u>
<b>STATEMENT OF CHANGE IN ASSETS</b>		
BALANCE – BEGINNING OF PERIOD	\$179,693	\$171,368
BALANCE – END OF PERIOD	<u>\$195,532</u>	<u>\$179,693</u>
<b>STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS</b>		
CASH – BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$206,489	\$194,700
CASH – END OF YEAR	<u>\$202,624</u>	<u>\$206,489</u>



## MAINTENANCE OF RIPARIAN EDUCATIONAL SITES

A wealth of local knowledge has been gained from SEAWA's riparian restoration work since the first planting of native shrubs and trees in 2018. Knowledge gained from these sites over the years provided the basis for SEAWA's **educational campaigns** on riparian and aquatic ecosystem health, and stewardship. Site maintenance after revegetation such as watering, basin rebuilding, weed, rodent and browsing management, application of mulch, building or repairing terraces, and replanting are critical to riparian restoration success. We took care of 1,300 thriving native shrubs and trees spread over

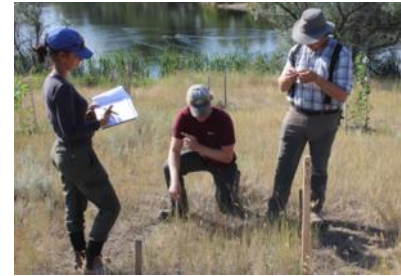
four sites, Yeast site (TWP Rd. 104) and Saratoga Park by Seven Persons Creek, Sauder reservoir, and Connaught Pond, Medicine Hat. Only native species were planted, and our methods are pesticide-free. Our great summer 2022 team consisted of Ben White, Andrea Perez, Matt Hoffart, Marilou Montemayor, and Saratoga Park volunteers Terry and Rob Lawson and Paula Dumonceaux. The fieldwork was concluded with our fall team, Nick Regehr and Ryan Davison, with help from Ellen Lewall.





## LOCAL WATERSHED KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

Applied research was started in 2018 when our riparian restoration projects were confronted with invasive plants and bank stability issues. SEAWA's advice on riparian stewardship practices has a strong scientific foundation of locally tested methods and techniques. Studies focused on the suppression of invasive plants in riparian areas as their presence degrades riparian health. Studies are concluded after data of 2-3 seasons have been collected. Riparian ecology was also studied for better beaver management. Three experiments have been concluded this year and their info sheets have been written: [Non-chemical control of Russian olive trees](#), [The effect of mowing on the growth of leafy spurge](#), and [Cottonwoods, beavers, and deer](#). Suppression of leafy spurge by planting wolf willows has been concluded; its info sheet is still to be written. There are three other ongoing experiments that need 1-2 more seasons to be concluded: suppression of leafy spurge by weeding and planting sagebrush, conservation of native western wheatgrass by weeding out alien crested wheatgrass, and Russian olive fruit/seed emergence in the field. In addition, demonstration plots have been maintained: replacing reed canary grass with golden currants (front cover of this report), replacing downy brome with a combination of sagebrush and western wheatgrass, and top bank stabilization by planting plains silver sagebrush on terraces. As in the previous season, we propagated native species (cottonwoods, silver sagebrush) that are not commercially available for planting at riparian educational sites. We participated in citizen science by reporting [online](#) sightings of the locally invasive Russian olive tree.





## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Developing and sharing knowledge that is useful for the management or stewardship of land and water resources is key to SEAWA's [community engagement](#). Education is one of the main roles of SEAWA as a WPAC. We develop local knowledge as well as identify transferrable knowledge from other sources. We also promote global and national initiatives associated with sustainability, pollution prevention, water conservation, ecosystems and nature conservation, climate change adaptation, and biodiversity and invasive species awareness.

Our communication tools for community engagement include, [riparian educational sites](#), [website](#), quarterly [newsletters](#), educational forums, [info sheets](#), field tours, invasive plants removal events, booths at [community events](#), social media (Facebook and Twitter), and presentations to collaborative partners and other organizations. All activities have been documented in the SEAWA newsletters and social media.

In addition, we maintain a small urban pollinator garden of native flowers, at the edge of a parking lot, as a demonstration plot in downtown Medicine Hat. This is to support world-wide awareness campaigns on bees and other pollinators (e.g., [World Bee Day | United Nations](#)), create awareness about the noxious weed downy brome in the city, as well as add aesthetic value.

It is important to provide a variety of opportunities to those who want to do something for the environment. Within the City of Medicine Hat, the [Adopt-a-Pond or Path](#) initiative, started in 2021 and led by Martha Munz Gue, has been successful in engaging volunteer urban residents in picking-up trash regularly. SEAWA's riparian educational sites have provided volunteers with opportunities to help care for shrubs and trees without needing to be a landowner.





## NEXT STEPS

The generous grant funding from the GOA for the next four years allows for an enhanced staff capacity of two full-time staff - the Executive Director and a Stewardship and Communication Coordinator. For credibility, permanent staff should have professional designations. In addition, two summer students should be hired annually (with wage subsidies from other sources) to help with the maintenance of riparian educational sites and delivery of outreach activities during the field season.

The grant agreement with the GOA emphasizes the fulfillment of the following mandate and roles: state of the watershed assessments and reporting, planning, literacy and education, and convener and collaborator.

The following activities are being planned in alignment with these mandate and roles:

- 1) Hire a consultant to produce two State of the Watershed reports - one report for the South Saskatchewan River Basin (within Alberta) and another for the Pakowki Lake watershed. The target date of completion is April 2024. The GOA guiding document for this project is, [Handbook for state of the watershed reporting: a guide for developing a state of the watershed report in Alberta](#).
- 2) With the completion the project, [Characterization of Drinking Water Source Area for the City of Medicine Hat and the Town of Redcliff](#), SEAWA can now proceed with next phases of planning to produce a Source Water Protection Plan (SWPP) for the two municipalities. The target for date for completion of the plan is March 2027. The GOA guiding document for this project is, [Guide to drinking water protection planning: protection drinking water sources in Alberta](#).
- 3) Continue the maintenance of riparian educational sites for continued learning and knowledge development. Knowledge developed provides a sound basis for ecological change management practices and provides credibility to volunteer campaigns. Continue the promotion of relevant national and international events—World Water Day, Earth Day, Environment Week, Pollinator Week, Rivers Day, etc. Continue the dissemination of SEAWA-developed knowledge and information on SEAWA activities using all available communication tools (see page 11).
- 4) Collaborate to achieve the above three activities. Collaborate with upstream WPACs (Bow River Basin Council and Oldman Watershed Council ) and municipalities for the development of the SWPP. Network with other water and watershed organizations and identify potential areas for collaboration. Support efforts that address the current climate change and biodiversity loss issues.

## SEAWA MISSION

SEAWA brings together diverse partners to educate the public, to support knowledge development, and to develop and facilitate the implementation of management plans for the sustainable use of the South Saskatchewan River Basin and the Pakowki Lake watershed.

## THANK YOU TO ALL SUPPORTERS



**THANK YOU TO A FANTASTIC SUMMER 2022 FIELD TEAM!**

*Andrea Perez, Matt Hoffart, & Ben White*

Photo credits in this whole report: Ben White, Marilou Montemayor, Andrea Perez, Matt Hoffart, Tina Regehr, and Alex Gavey

Alberta Environment and Parks  
Alberta Irrigation Districts Association  
Alberta Real Estate Foundation  
Canadian Fertilizers Industries  
City of Medicine Hat  
Cypress County  
Dr. Roy Wilson Learning Centre Grade 5  
Government of Canada  
Grasslands Naturalists  
Medicine Hat Interpretive Program  
Medicine Hat College  
Methanex  
Praxis Science Outreach Society  
St. Mary River Irrigation District  
Town of Redcliff  
Arcade Plaza, Medicine Hat  
Cathy Linowski  
David Gue  
Paula Dumonceaux  
Terry & Rob Lawson  
Trevor Regehr  
Cathy Linowski  
All participants of the Adopt-a-Pond initiative  
All volunteers at SEAWA events  
All those who gave donations to SEAWA

Thank you for their excellent communication support:

Maggie Romuld—for newsletters  
Dave Cruickshank—for the website

### **South East Alberta Watershed Alliance Society**

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