



EAST KOOTENAY
INVASIVE SPECIES
COUNCIL

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2023

ANNUAL REPORT



As spring approaches and we gear up for yet another exhilarating EKISC field season, I am so happy with what EKISC has been able to do and am so proud to be at the helm as EKISC's Program Director. This year was full of incredible moments as well as some big transitions, setting the stage for continued growth, innovation, and community impact.

March rolled in with Emma de Groot rocking the scene as our new Field Operations Manager. Seriously, she was born for this role – cool, collected, and the captain of all things contract administration and treatment monitoring. Plus, she's the go-to person for our bigger projects and collaborations. Emma, you're a rockstar! Around the same time, Nicola Herman joined us as the Field Operations Coordinator, taking the baton from Emma. Nicola's been killing it, keeping an eye on our summer students, Megan Stewart and Khalil Shivji, and diving into in-house projects. Nicola is such an asset to the team with her native grass ID and passion for invasive species management - so happy to have you Nicola! And three cheers to the field team for everything they are able to cram into a short season, that was even more challenging due to wildfires and drought. It always amazes me seeing their stats at the end of the year, they put down some serious kms! One other note - big shoutout to Khalil for sticking around into the fall, helping out with reports, and even kickstarting an invasive species projection model. Stay tuned for that!

It was so lovely to see some of you at our in-person AGM in May - that was a blast! It was fantastic to finally see everyone face-to-face and soak in the collective vibes. Nothing beats that personal connection, right? After the AGM it feels like the season finally started! The AGM was first of many events that the education team spearheaded. The team, led again by Megan MacPhee, grew this season! After Megan's successful first year on the team re-energizing the education department and seeing what she could do, I quickly realized she needs a bigger team to carry out her big plans! So, we had an addition summer student, bumping the team up to 3 - Megan, Jessie Johnson and Zoe Dancer were EVERYWHERE in the East Kootenays, spreading our message like wildfire (too soon?). The rental car was a huge asset this year, and the new swag and resources were a hit! Make sure to reach out to get some wildflower seeds or a shirt, wink wink. Oh! And if you haven't already, check out our social media. The gang put out some seriously hilarious and informative social media content during the summer. You guys made learning about invasive species a party!

August brought a bittersweet goodbye to Gabriela Halas, our Program Assistant extraordinaire. She left after welcoming a baby girl, and we wish her and her fam all the best in their new adventure. Gabriela, you've been a superhero for us since 2020, and you'll be missed big time.

Now, here's a plot twist. Megan MacPhee, our Education and Communication Manager, took on the role of Program Assistant, embracing the dual responsibilities of both Program Assistant and Communications duties. This seamless integration aligns with Megan's existing organizational prowess, and she has been our go-to EKISC representative for community events since she started in 2022. This shift not only streamlined our operations but also facilitated Morag Turnbull's smooth transition into her role as the new Education and Outreach Coordinator, joining our team in October. We eagerly anticipate the valuable contributions Morag will bring to our continually evolving education department!

Closing out the year feels fantastic. We're fully staffed, armed with upgraded equipment, and even have a bigger storage unit! With lots of projects and ideas brewing and the support pouring in from the community, the future looks pretty darn bright for EKISC. Virtual high-fives to each and every one of you for making 2023 a year to remember. Here's to more adventures and successes in 2024!

KATIE REID
EKISC PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Our last year was tumultuous for wildfires, drought and storms, but thankfully it has been relatively calm in EKISC.

Gabriela Halas our Program Assistant left our team this last August after giving birth to a baby girl. She, her partner and daughter have gone onto new challenges in Smithers and we wish her and her family all the best in their new adventures. Gabriela had been with EKISC since February 2020 when we hired her as the acting Field Operations Manager. She proved herself very versatile in a variety of roles and projects and pulled EKISC out of several great challenges. We will miss her.

To replace the sudden gap in our ranks, EKISC staff came up with a genius idea - our Education and Communication Manager, Megan MacPhee, stepped up to the role of Program Assistant while keeping her old role in Communications. The Education and Outreach was passed onto a new role and hire. This action has a lot of value for EKISC. Allowing our staff to bid into new jobs within our operation allows our staff to develop new skills, increase staff retention and improves our cross-program integration by staff gaining better understanding of the other programs. As well this allows an overlap between a new Education and Outreach hire and our existing Education Manager; it improves the hand over and continuity of the program.

So, to facilitate this transition we hired Morag Turnbull from Parks Canada as the new Education and Outreach Coordinator. Morag is a native of Australia with very interesting experience in Australia and New Zealand. We are looking forward to her first field season delivering our messaging at campsites, farmers' markets, and schools this year. We are hoping to expand our outreach and we are glad that Morag is there to lead.

We are proud to point out that in March 2023 this principle our growing our existing staff was reinforced when we confirmed Emma de Groot, former summer student and Field Operations Coordinator, into the much higher responsibilities of Field Operations Manager, where contract administration and treatment monitoring are primary duties. As we still need someone to oversee our summer staff and in house projects, we recruited Nicola Herman from the BC Ministry of Forests Range Branch, and a recent graduate of Thompson Rivers University. She has had a very successful first season and we hope to complete even more work with her in her second year.

We have been informed that one of our long-term Directors, Shawna Larade, who represented the Ministry of Forests Range Branch on our Board will be retiring this spring. Shawna has accepted a new position with Range Branch and will continue to live in the Rocky Mountain Trench. We are sorry to see Shawna go, and we will have to look for a new person to take her place on the Board. Good luck in your new ventures Shawna!

The Board of Directors and staff is in the process of reviewing our strategic direction with a consultant provided by the Columbia Basin Trust. The topics are wide ranging and makes us reconsider board recruitment, areas of focus and committee structure and purpose. The Board will need to digest the report and agree to final action points, but we are agreed on expanded education and outreach and increased board participation in the EKISC mission.

We will present the actions at the 2024 EKISC Annual General Meeting and report out over 2024 on our progress.

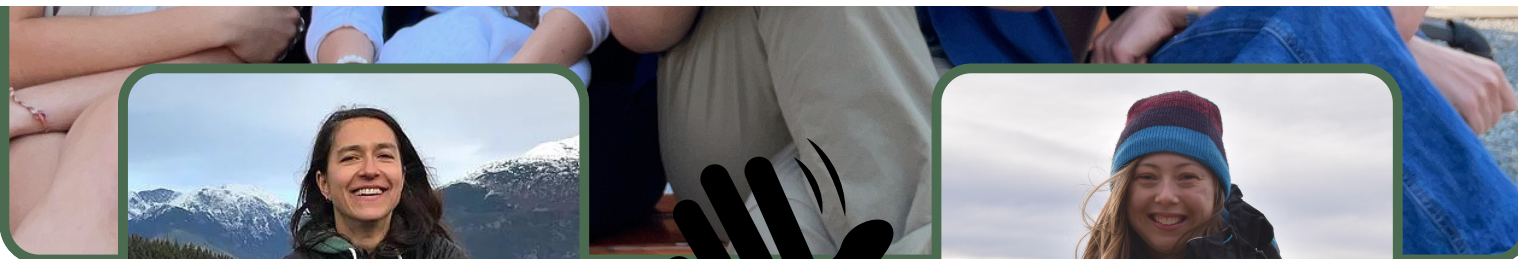
RANDY HARRIS
EKISC BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHAIR



THE TEAM



Top left: Khalil Shivji (Field Assistant), Nicola Herman (Field Operations Coordinator), Katie Reid (Program Director) and Megan MacPhee (Program Assistant + Communications) **Bottom left:** Zoe Dancer + Jessie Johnson (Education + Outreach Coordinators), Megan Stewart (Field Assistant) and Emma de Groot (Field Operations Manager)



Farewell, **Gabriela Halas!** Our Program Assistant (*aka our unsung hero*) is embarking on the epic adventure of motherhood. In her versatile role, she anticipated the needs of our Program Director and was an invaluable member of the Field Team. She will be greatly missed but we wish her all the best in her new chapter.

Welcome **Morag Turnbull**, our new Education and Outreach Coordinator! With a passion for the natural environment, Morag brings a strong background in invasive species management, gained through her work in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Reach out, book a workshop or weed pull, and give her a warm welcome!

THE BOARD

EKISC is governed by a Board of Directors who represent stakeholders, land managers, + community members with an interest in protecting the East Kootenay from invasive species. The board members are drawn from provincial + local governments, First Nations, agriculture, non-government environmental organizations + the private sector.

RANDY HARRIS CHAIR **STEPHANIE DANIELS** VICE CHAIR **RICK VAN HORNE** TREASURER **MYRA JUCKERS** SECRETARY

DIRECTORS

SHAWNA LARADE, JAMIE DAVIES, DAVE PICK, RICHARD LARSON, RAELENN BLUMHAGEN + ASHLEIGH HARVISON



TRACY KAISNER 2023 GOLDEN SHOVEL RECIPIENT

Owner of WestFork Resource Management, Tracy is being honored with the Golden Shovel for her exceptional contributions to invasive plant management in the East Kootenays. As a dedicated professional, Tracy has a long-standing commitment to protecting the Elk Valley's beauty, evident in her work with Westfork Resources, where she excels in crafting invasive species management plans. Beyond her professional achievements, Tracy has actively served community groups, showcasing her unwavering dedication to invasive plant management. Her extensive hands-on experience and community involvement have set her apart, making her a true champion in the field.

THE MISSION

Mitigate the negative environmental, social, and economic impacts of invasive species in the Regional District of the East Kootenay. To **coordinate** the management of invasive species on public and private lands in the East Kootenay using an integrated pest management approach. To **educate** about invasive species and their impacts. To **prevent** the introduction and spread of invasive species. To **foster** extended support of invasive species management initiatives in the East Kootenay.





38 INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS TRAINED



2281
public interactions

10 COMMUNITY WEED PULLS

225 VOLUNTEERS

137 BAGS OF INVASIVES



2 INVASIVE SPECIES ART NIGHT WITH 50 PARTICIPANTS



3 BC PARKS BOOTHS REACHING 188 PEOPLE

12 FARMERS MARKETS REACHING 1122 PEOPLE



398 YOUTH REACHED THROUGH CLASSROOMS + CLUBS

EDUCATION + OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS



16 WEEDY WALK N' TALKS, HOUSE CALLS + ID WORKSHOPS

COMMUNICATION HIGHLIGHTS

WEBSITE SUBSCRIBERS
754

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS PROMOTED

3
RADIO
INTERVIEWS

OVER
1000
PRINT
RESOURCES
DISTRIBUTED

89
HANDHELD BOOT
BRUSHES
DISTRIBUTED

f FOLLOWERS REACH
911 53,693

Instagram FOLLOWERS REACH
906 22,853

9
NEWSPAPER
ARTICLES

6
NEW RESOURCES
CREATED



"They're just mussels.."

3186 VIEWS

Invasives in Kimberley right now!

3851 VIEWS

CHECK OUT OUR MOST WATCHED VIDEOS ON TIKTOK!

20
E-NEWSLETTERS

4
WEBINARS



8
NEW BOOT BRUSH
SIGNS INSTALLED



FIELD OPERATIONS HIGHLIGHTS



761 HA OF LAND CHEMICALLY TREATED

2890 CHEMICALLY TREATED SITES



45,128 SEEDS TRYING TO HITCH A RIDE



**5 REGIONAL EDRR SPECIES TREATED
PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE, WILD PARSNIP, YELLOW FLAG IRIS, RUSH SKELETONWEED + FIELD SCABIOUS**



**12 INVASIVE PLANT INVENTORIES
2690 HA LAND INVENTORIED**



55 SITES + 1.04 HA OF LAND MECHANICALLY TREATED



185.5 HOURS SPENT MONITORING HERBICIDE EFFICACY



**130 SAMPLES FOR ZQM
21 WATER BODIES MONITORED**



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