



# ANNUAL REPORT

RIVERWATCH  
INSTITUTE  
OF ALBERTA 2016



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[www.riverwatch.ab.ca](http://www.riverwatch.ab.ca)  
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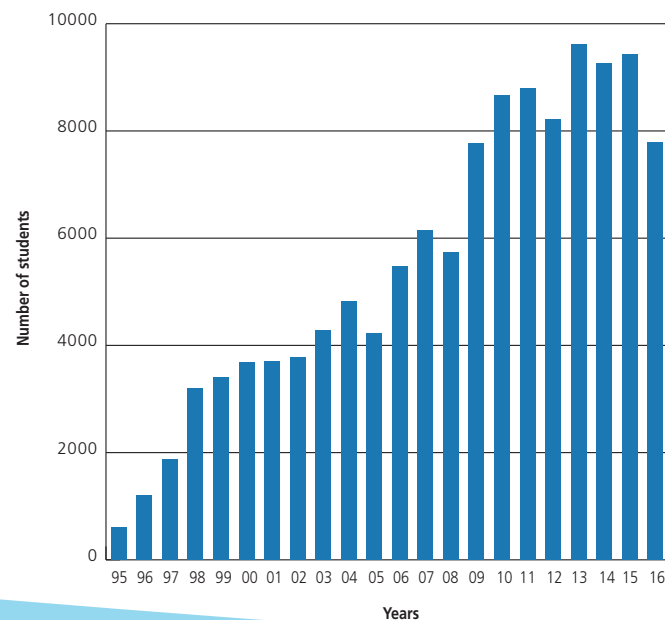
## SUMMARY

RiverWatch is the most-used environmental field study available to Alberta secondary science students, and since 1995, more than 120,000 participants have spent a 5-hour school day aboard our giant rafts equipped with portable water quality laboratories. RiverWatch marked its 22<sup>nd</sup> year highlighted by:

- first-half financial concerns alleviated with new second-half donors
- no accidental swimmers, no near-misses and no emergency calls to 911
- fully-staffed operations (32 seasonal guides)
- fully operational equipment inventory (2 buses, 14 rafts)
- maximized scheduling with almost all rafts utilized on nearly 60 operational days
- positive teacher and guide feedback
- some weather impact with the loss of one Calgary spring day and eight Edmonton fall days

## BY THE NUMBERS

Nearly 7800 students participated in approximately a 60/40 split between Calgary and Edmonton. School program participation dropped by 17% in both cities largely through reduced student participation within many booked schools. The current economic downturn may be a factor in this.



EDMONTON STUDENTS TOUR THEIR WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

## STUDENT NUMBERS

EDMONTON	CALGARY	TOTAL	
1622	2163	3785	SPRING
1559	2448	4204	FALL
<b>3181</b>	<b>4611</b>	<b>7792</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

## BASE OF OPERATIONS

RiverWatch has two long-standing and valuable partnerships to house equipment and deliver tours at both the EPCOR Gold Bar Wastewater Treatment Plant and the City of Calgary Wastewater Treatment Plant.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

In addition to our regular school programs, RiverWatch participated in a number of special events:

- Presentations to the Bow River Basin Council Forum; North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance; HSBC Global Webinar; City of Calgary Water Resources Meeting; and the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association (AIPA) Water Conference.
- Thirteen days of shoreline clean-up were undertaken in Calgary to remediate an industrial spill of plastic pellets.
- Two eco-float trips were conducted in Edmonton and Calgary for HSBC employees interested in CreekWatch monitoring
- One eco-float trip was offered in Edmonton for EPCOR Helping Hands employees undertaking invasive weed removal.
- Discussion meetings were held with Earth Force; Calgary Board of Ed Sustainability Specialist; Edmonton Public Science Specialist; and Alberta Environment and Parks Monitoring and Science Division Public Engagement.
- Two media events were held at Fish Creek with CTV News on World Water Day, and at the Bonnybrook Wastewater Treatment Plant in conjunction with our donor CH2M.

## CREEKWATCH

The RiverWatch Institute operates two separate programs – one for secondary science students and another for adult volunteers. The adult CreekWatch program allows corporate and community volunteers to work as a team and answer the question “How healthy are our stormwater creeks?” Since inception in 2015 and with major funding through HSBC, the program expanded to add eight additional sampling sites in 2016, bringing the total to 18 sites across Alberta and requiring an additional 4 portable science labs, bringing our total to 12 labs to support our volunteers. The number of site visits doubled in our first two years, along with the number of hosted training sessions. In 2016, between the months of March and October, there were 68 trained volunteers and two science technicians in Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary whose work combined for 338 site visits, over 3,100 collected data points, and an estimated 350 hours total time spent monitoring ten urban creeks. The accumulated thousands of data points and hundreds of volunteer hours is used to generate an annual report card on creek health published each year mid-March on World Water Day.

**“ I FEEL THAT YOUR AIPA PRESENTATION WENT VERY WELL, THEY ALL KNOW WHAT RIVERWATCH IS ABOUT AND THE HUGE BENEFITS THAT THE PROGRAM PROVIDES.”**

**BOB CHRUMKA, DIRECTOR,  
EASTERN IRRIGATION DISTRICT**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board operated with nine Shareholder/Directors with quarterly meetings held in Red Deer. Jim Gendron continued as chairman into a third year. Director Stacie Smith retired after six years of service, with new Directors Kathy Barnhart and Al Borkent joining the Board.

**“ I LEAVE VERY PLEASED WITH MY TIME ON THE BOARD AND REMAIN A HUGE SUPPORTER AND ADVOCATE FOR THE WORK OF RIVERWATCH. JASON AND I WILL CONTINUE TO PERSONALLY SUPPORT AND CHAMPION RIVERWATCH AS WE ALWAYS HAVE. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE SUCH AN IMPORTANT AND IMPACTFUL PROGRAM.”**

**STACIE SMITH**

## STAFFING

For the fulltime Management Team, it remained unchanged with Executive Director Cal Kullman, Business Manager Andrea Myers and Citizen Science Coordinator Reed Froklage. The spring program employed 18 seasonal staff, the fall program slightly fewer at 15 staff.

## OPERATIONS

All access points, river routes and compounds remained unchanged in both cities but tours of the Calgary Bonnybrook Wastewater Treatment Plant were again limited by construction. Basic student fees remained subsidized at \$38/student (representing 50% of the total delivery cost), with specially-sponsored school fees set at a lower \$25/student. Calgary's fall program ran for the first time with an increase to eight rafts (from the previous seven) loaded onto just one bus as an efficiency measure.

## SAFETY

Well-trained staff and pre-float safety briefings ensured not a single student safety incident requiring an emergency 911 call. Similarly, there were no student overboard incidents.

**“IT HAS BEEN A STRONG ELEVEN YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP AND WE WISH RIVERWATCH THE VERY BEST GOING FORWARD.”**

**DANI DEBOICE, SR. ADVISOR, SUNCOR ENERGY FOUNDATION & COMMUNITY INVESTMENT**

## FUND DEVELOPMENT

RiverWatch had twenty-two funders this year, three of which increased their support over the previous year — HSBC, Imperial Oil and the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association. Marking their final and 11th year supporting RiverWatch, the Suncor Energy Foundation sees the company moving to a new community investment focus. One new funder joining this list of donors was Landmark Homes. Overall, however, the drop in oil prices and the ensuing economic downturn made this a second year of funding concern.

FUNDERS	2016
HSBC	75,000
Suncor Energy Foundation	75,000
Imperial Oil	30,000
EPCOR	20,000
NOVA Chemicals	20,000
Anonymous Donor	20,000
NSERC PromoScience	16,800
Environmental Damages Fund	14,750
GE	12,500
CH2M	10,000
City of Calgary	10,000
Edmonton Community Foundation	10,000
Canada Summer Jobs	7,707
Alberta Irrigation Projects	5,000
Bow River Irrigation District	5,000
Eastern Irrigation District	5,000
GM	5,000
Step	1,974
LTG Consulting	1,000
MEGlobal	1,000
Salmo Consulting	1,000
Stacie and Jason Smith	1,000
Matrix Solutions	500
Landmark Homes	500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>348,731</b>

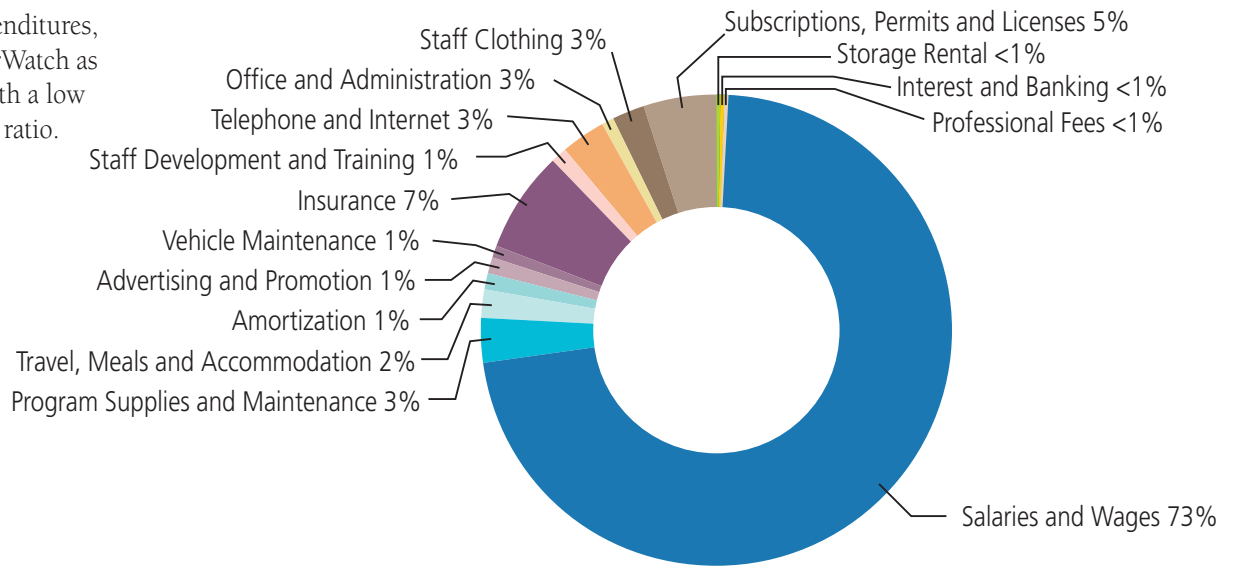
## FINANCES

RiverWatch experienced a first-half revenue shortfall but the year finished with retained earnings due to unexpected donation increases in the second-half, notably those of HSBC, Imperial Oil and Alberta Irrigations Projects Association. Expense controls this year — including fully-booked rafts each operational day — mitigated the impact of reduced revenues and grants.

FINANCES	2015	2016	% DIFF
Revenue	736,309	580,891	-21
Grants	378,517	269,446	-29
School Fees	353,742	306,770	-13
Expenses	623,468	555,273	-11

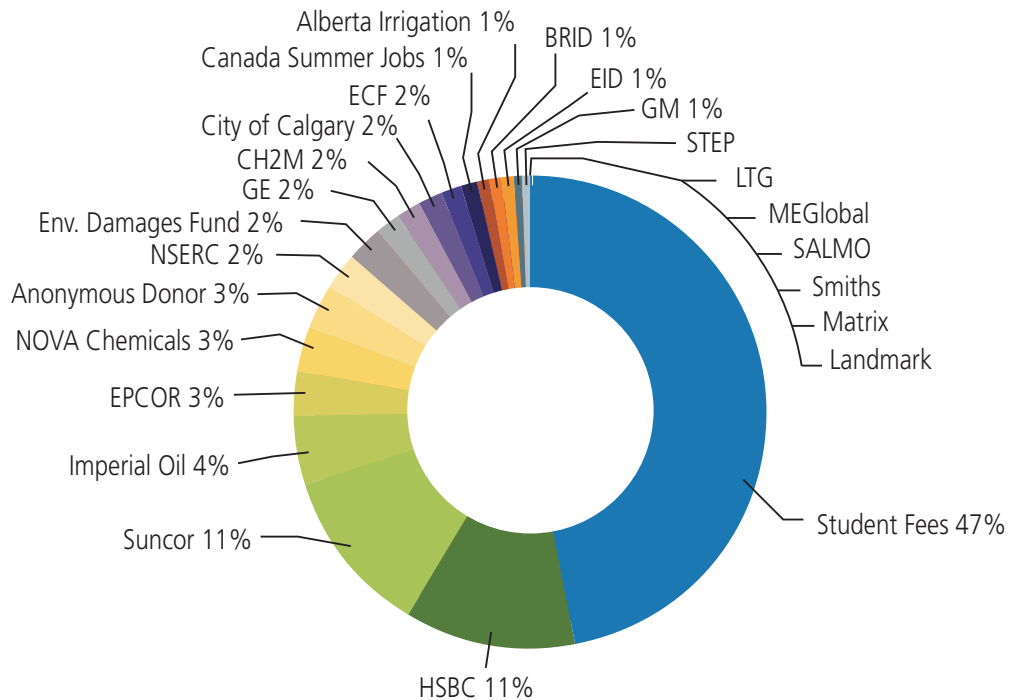
## EXPENDITURES

Salaries and wages continue to be the largest expenditures, consistent with RiverWatch as a service provider with a low instructor to student ratio.



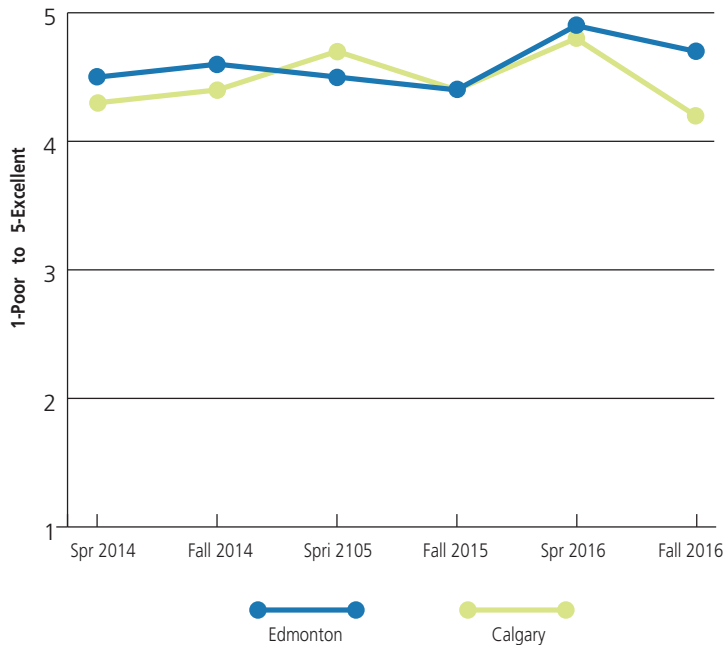
## REVENUE

RiverWatch strives to keep student fees affordable by constantly seeking out corporate or third-party donors. The ratio of student fee revenue to corporate donations continued to be approximately an even split. Donor contributions continued to be spread over a broad investor base with two large donors.



## TEACHER FEEDBACK

Teacher feedback continues to rate the RiverWatch experience as excellent. Positive teacher feedback is an important guidepost; those that give excellent ratings invariably re-book for the following year and, equally important, recommend RiverWatch to their colleagues.



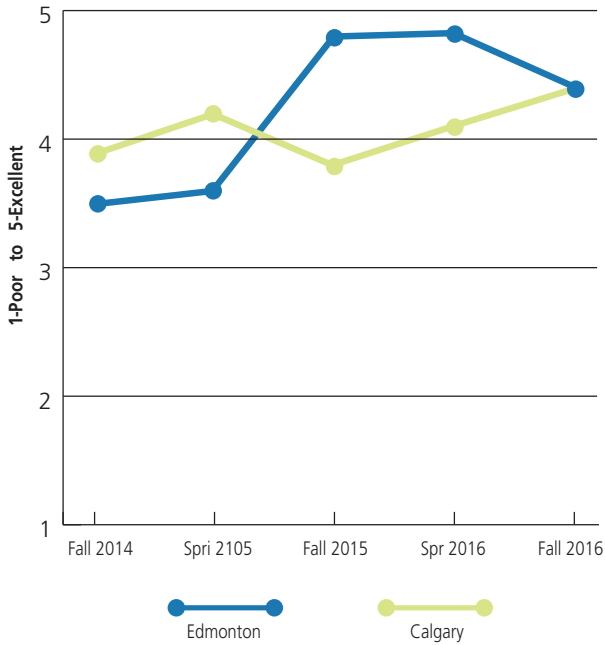
A CLASS OF STUDENTS COLLECTS WATER QUALITY DATA AT CALGARY'S SECOND TEST SITE.

“EVERYTHING WAS GREAT AS USUAL! IT'S A TRADITION IN OUR SCHOOL NOW THAT MOST STUDENTS CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THEY ARE IN GRADE 9 TO GO ON THE FIELD TRIP! WE GET NEARLY 100% ATTENDANCE NOW. IT REMAINS AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR SCIENCE 9 PROGRAM. EVERY STUDENT IN GRADE 9 IN ALBERTA SHOULD BE LEARNING THESE OUTCOMES AT RIVERWATCH !! NOT FEASIBLE, BUT TRUE! LOL THANKS AGAIN!”

TODD SOMMERFIELD, HW PICKUP SCHOOL,  
DRAYTON VALLEY

## GUIDE FEEDBACK

Guide feedback continues to rate the RiverWatch experience as excellent. Their feedback, like those of teachers, is important as it spreads a positive message about the program that encourages new, high-quality applicants the following year.



“GREAT AND EXCITING. LOTS OF COOL WILDLIFE AND I GOT TO PERFECT MY SKILLS. IT WAS LOTS OF FUN AND I LOVED WORKING WITH ALL THE OTHER RAFT GUIDES — THEY MADE THIS JOB GREAT!”

## THANK YOU!

RiverWatch extends a big thank you to people just like you for supporting watershed science and wastewater studies with 120,000 students during our 23 years of operation. Our program graduates are better equipped as citizens to be aware of watershed issues, stewardship opportunities and career pathways. We couldn't do it without you!



CALGARY STUDENTS FINISH THEIR DAY WITH RIVERWATCH



Science. Education. Adventure