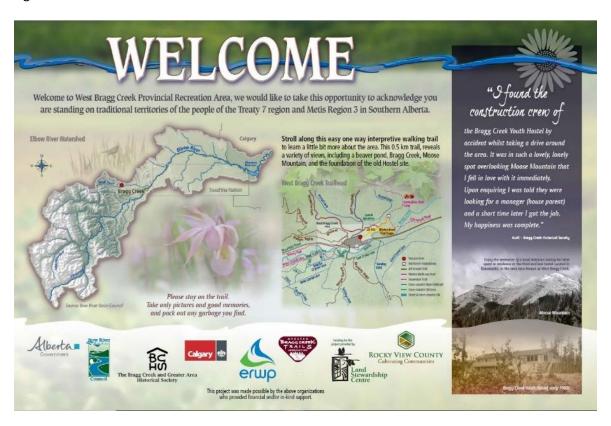


Watershed Heritage Trail

The Elbow River Watershed Partnership (ERWP) is a watershed stewardship group based in Calgary, but we do a great deal of our work out of the office in locations such as West Bragg Creek. Our areas of interest include: Kananaskis Country, Rocky View County, the city of Calgary and Tsuut'ina Nation land. (All of our work takes place on Treaty 7 land.)

The Watershed Heritage interpretive trail, designed just for walkers and hikers, is a great addition to this world-class trail system. It packs a wide range of outdoor pleasures into a relatively short length. Trail users might see beavers cutting willows along a pond edge in July or watch a chattering squirrel jump between towering poplar, spruce and pine trees. Birders can hear and see a variety of species, from tiny songbirds to woodpeckers and raptors. August brings the smell of junipers, with their dark blue berries, while the crunch of fallen leaves is a satisfying sound in the fall. On a cloudless winter day, walkers can enjoy the sun's warmth on the south-facing section of the trail, while trails across the valley are snowy and shaded.

Look for the Watershed Heritage trailhead at the east end of the parking lot, marked by this Welcome sign.





The trails heads southeast from the parking lot, immediately opening up to overlook a lovely beaver pond. Continue along a bench cut to a custom-built cedar bridge over an ephemeral stream. Here you'll find a sign about building a trail while minimizing erosion and using best management practices.



The trail continues approximately 500 metres (one way) and includes six interpretive signs in total.

Some other highlights on the trail include a sign about the history of the Bragg Creek Youth Hostel and a lookout framed by aspen trees that reveals sparkling Bragg Creek to the left. (Make sure you take a photo from this location and send it in to the Bow River Basin Council!). Local favourite Moose Mountain can also be seen from the lookout.

Like all great projects, the Watershed Heritage interpretive trail would not have become a reality without the help of multiple partners and funders. We would like to acknowledge our in-kind supporters such as the hardworking trail volunteers from the BCT. We extend many thanks to the Bow River Basin Council Stakeholder Engagement Committee for the invaluable help in the sign messaging. Thank you also to Avril Derbyshire from Bragg Creek for the heritage information and to Alberta Environment and Parks for their advice and input along the way.

We would also like to express many thanks to the financial supporters for this project. Funding for this project was provided by: the Bow River Basin Council, The City of Calgary, Elbow River Watershed Partnership (casino volunteers), Land Stewardship Centre and Rocky View County.





Enjoying the view from the cedar bridge. Photo by Mark Giesbrecht

Together with Bragg Creek Trails, the local MP, Alberta Parks, Alberta TrailNet, The Great Trail, the ERWP and trail users, the Watershed Heritage trail was officially opened in November of 2018. About 100 people were in attendance to celebrate the opening of the trail and several other milestones:

- Expansion of the Great Trail in West Bragg Creek, connected to the Great Trail, a 24,000-kilometre national trail network;
- Alberta Parks' \$2.5-million investment in redevelopment of the West Bragg Creek Provincial Recreation Area, including expansion of the parking lot from 190 spaces to 485 and a permanent location for the trail centre;
- The extensive volunteer efforts of the BCT in trail design, building and trail maintenance.

We see the Watershed Heritage trail as a pilot for more great watershed-heritage-themed trails to come in the Elbow watershed.

To find out more about the Elbow River Watershed Partnership and their projects, including the Watershed Heritage Trail, please check out our <u>website</u> or contact Flora by email coordinator@erwp.org