

Annual Report

2019



Ottawa RIVERKEEPER®
GARDE-RIVIÈRE *des Outaouais*

A New Riverkeeper!



**We are excited to welcome
Elizabeth Logue as our new
Riverkeeper!**

Elizabeth grew up on the banks of the Gatineau River swimming, fishing and paddling on the many lakes and rivers in the watershed. She is of Algonquin/Irish descent, speaks English and French, and has two decades of experience in the federal government and with community involvement. As a strong believer in collective creation and collaborative approaches to sustainable development, she is already impressing river lovers and supporters in her first few months.

Dear Water Lovers,

It is with great pride and immense gratitude that we present our 2019 Annual Report. The stories that follow highlight the many accomplishments and the strategic progress at Ottawa Riverkeeper this year. We have advanced the work on important issues that will help keep the watershed healthy for generations to come!

The growing strength of our team, as well as our impressive roster of loyal volunteers and continued support from generous donors and funders, all put us on a path to success that few Canadian Environmental NGOs can match.

This year, around the world, the issues of climate change, biodiversity and conservation have marched inexorably to the forefront of our collective consciousness. From students to urban commuters, farmers, Indigenous peoples, corporations, and politicians, there is a growing momentum and passion to tackle the environmental challenges facing the land, air, oceans, and rivers of our beautiful planet.

We believe that it is with creative initiatives, ambitious programs, and new partnerships that we can achieve our vision of healthy and accessible waterways. This approach will help to ensure the health of the watershed in light of the many stressors that affect plants and animals that live in the lakes and rivers by altering their habitat. Collectively we need to be prepared for more frequent extreme events such as the flooding we saw this year. We need to do this as a team to ensure protections are in place for families, paddlers, swimmers, sailors, and to conserve biodiversity throughout the watershed.

We firmly believe that the key to ensuring lasting protection for our most precious resource lies in collaboration: across borders, between stakeholders, and above partisanship. Beyond a sense of urgency, lasting impact will require strategic decisions, education, science-based action plans, tangible measures, and most importantly, boundless energy and passion.

That is exactly what you will find in these pages! We look forward to continuing our work together in the weeks and months ahead.

In the flowing river spirit,



Geoff Green, C.M., C.Q.,
Chair of the Board of Directors



Elizabeth Logue,
Riverkeeper



Patrick Nadeau,
Executive Director

Know Your River

We believe that the best decisions for our watershed are those based on facts. That's why an important part of Ottawa Riverkeeper's work is to ensure that decision-makers and the public have access to the best available data on the issues that matter. We gather this data through innovative research projects and collaboration with a wide range of partners.



Photo: Martin Lipman

Watershed Health Assessment

After more than a year of research and consultations with experts, peer organizations, First Nations, and government agencies, we published *Ottawa River Health Assessment: Phase One*. For the first time, we present a list of consensus indicators - that is, what we should be collectively measuring to assess the ecological health of the Ottawa River watershed. Prior to this work, data sharing and analysis had been a difficult undertaking because different agencies and jurisdictions measured different parameters. The report identifies data sources and gaps, offers a preliminary analysis of available data, and summarizes important insight from Algonquin Nation representatives.

We are thrilled to be embarking on Phase II of this work, whereby we are gathering, analyzing, and sharing new data for each of the indicators we have identified. This work includes a number of exciting initiatives including building on community-based monitoring initiatives, co-designing projects with Kebaowek First Nation and Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, and deploying a number of strategies to address data gaps within the watershed. We will also develop tools to share available data and communicate what it means so that we all have a greater understanding of the Ottawa River and its tributaries.



Benthic Invertebrates



Fish Diversity



Flow



Total Phosphorus



Dissolved Oxygen



Water Temperature



Chlorophyll-a



Water Mercury



Combined Sewer Outflow



Algal Blooms



Riparian Connectivity



Invasive Species



Land Use Change



Ice On/Off



Photo: Martin Lipman

Citizen Science in Action

Have you heard about our new Citizen Science Lab? It was bustling all year with dedicated Riverwatchers, interns, and local volunteers bringing in water samples they collected in various waterways. Samples were analyzed with our new equipment, the IDEXX Colilert system, which provides highly accurate E. Coli counts. Water quality results were shared with the public and decision-makers, including through our Swim Guide app, to enable timely fact-based decisions on swimming and beach closures.



After processing nearly 500 samples thanks to this community of citizen scientists, we are pleased to observe that our local waterways remain, by and large, a safe destination for recreational activities such as swimming, paddling, and surfing. We were also pleased to see municipalities increasingly aware of water quality issues, such as the City of Gatineau which upped the frequency of its testing at beaches.

Endangered Species

The fate of endangered species tells a compelling story about changes to our watershed's health. We work to better understand and recover these species, because doing so also means restoring healthy and resilient ecosystems. The Ottawa River is home to Canada's largest known population of Hickorynut mussel, a freshwater invertebrate that was declared endangered this year by the federal government.

In collaboration with the Canadian Museum of Nature, we launched a new, multi-year project to study this species whose survival depends on deep, clean rivers and healthy populations of its presumed host species, the lake sturgeon. These ancient fish are negatively impacted by the presence of dams in our watershed - much like the American eel, another endangered species we are working to recover, whose populations have collapsed by 99%.

This year we continued to press provincial governments for urgent action, filing access to information (ATIP) requests and meeting repeatedly with officials in both provinces. Jointly with hundreds of river lovers, we helped lead a campaign to vehemently oppose the passing of Bill 108 in Ontario, which adversely impacts endangered species and their habitats.



2019 in Photos



Photo: Martin Lipman



Photo: Couvrette Photography



Photo: Martin Lipman



Photo: Martin Lipman



Photo: Martin Lipman



Photo: Martin Lipman



Photo: Mary Paquet



Photo: Martin Lipman

Love Your River

We firmly believe that people protect what they love! That's why we spend a lot of time encouraging communities to think about their special connection to the water. It's also why you'll find us throughout the watershed in school gyms, community halls, and of course, on the water, listening to your questions and concerns and sharing our love and knowledge of our rivers!



In the Community

Our vision is to build a critical mass of watershed supporters - a river constituency - that will always be there to help protect, promote and improve the health of the watershed.

With the help of hundreds of resourceful and creative volunteers, we attended more than 90 events in the watershed where we interacted with thousands of concerned citizens. We put up info booths, gave Riverkeeper Talks, and shared interactive materials. We significantly expanded our online presence to reach thousands of new people in the four corners of the watershed. We also organized 18 shoreline cleanups, including one in the dead of winter on the Rideau Canal, and retrieved over 2,000 pounds of trash and debris. Bravo and thanks!



Photo: Michel Gosselin



Annual 4K Swim

More than 300 participants swam, paddled and supported a healthy Ottawa River watershed at the 6th annual Riverkeeper 4K, presented by Alterna Savings. The epic swim across the Ottawa River, from Ontario to Québec, as well as the shorter distances attract a mix of competitive and recreational swimmers, all of them ready for a good time in the water.

Elected officials from both sides of the river took part. What better way to show that the river has no boundaries! Thanks to Ottawa City Councillor Theresa Kavanagh and Gatineau City Councillor Audrey Bureau, representing the wards of our starting and finishing lines respectively! Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada Catherine McKenna and Pontiac MP Will Amos completed the long distance, as did Patrick, our Executive Director! Special thanks to the Lac Deschênes Sailing Club and Club de Voile Grande Rivière for their collaboration, as well as the City of Gatineau and our race director, Nadine Bennett.



Photo: Mary Paquet



Photo: Mary Paquet

Youth Water Leaders

This year, we launched an exciting new program that mobilizes youth aged 17 to 25 to propose solutions to environmental issues affecting the Ottawa River watershed. Using a mentorship approach, the program offers opportunities to learn and practice outdoor skills, to develop leadership abilities, and to engage with experts. Each cohort also goes on an accompanied rafting and camping adventure that serves as an excellent team-building exercise and a close-up look at the many issues impacting the watershed. Behold, water stewards of today and tomorrow!



Photo: Martin Lipman

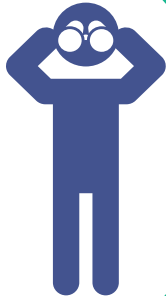


Photo: Boreal River Adventures

2019 by the numbers

96

Riverwatchers
throughout
the watershed



875

individual donors



514

active
volunteers gave

6000+

hours



300+

participants at

17

shoreline cleanups

removed

2000+ lbs

of trash from our
watershed



Microplastics
sampled at

64

locations

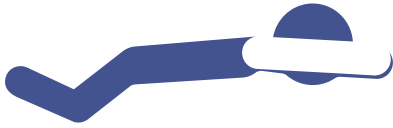


493

water samples processed



336



people participated in the
Riverkeeper 4k

126



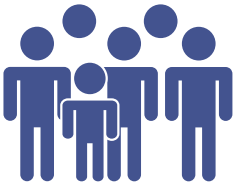
responses and
investigations
following
questions or
concerns
from the public

8000

Facebook followers



Up **43%** since
last year

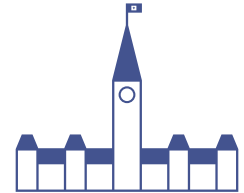


Connected with river-lovers at

92

events in the community

19



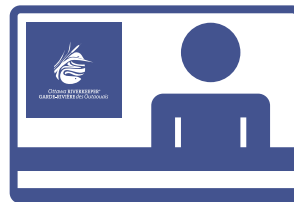
official submissions to
government agencies

4

days scuba diving for
hickorynut mussel research



Mentioned in the
media



90+ times

Stewards Together

The Ottawa River watershed is the traditional territory of the Algonquin people, and now home to many. Its size is larger than many countries, and spans many jurisdictions, including ten Algonquin First Nations, two provinces, and over 200 municipalities. This makes solving water issues even more complex! Ottawa Riverkeeper is uniquely positioned to bring stakeholders together to address these enduring issues and to find sustainable solutions.



Pollution Hotline: Collaboration at Work

We are grateful to the vigilant citizens who take the time each year to contact our Pollution Hotline with their observations from across the watershed. From abandoned structures, to oil spills, to large numbers of dead fish, to sinking ice huts, to reports of invasive species, we answered and investigated more than one hundred calls and online requests. Many of these calls involved ensuring that the appropriate authorities actually did their jobs!



Our Pollution Hotline experienced a drastic surge of activity in July and August, a period that saw four fish kill episodes in the lower section of the Lièvre River, a tributary of the Ottawa River. Thousands of fish were found dead. From the very start of these events, we were on the case: answering calls, fielding Pollution Hotline reports from concerned members of the public, sharing information we collected with authorities, and holding the Québec, Ontario, and the federal governments accountable. We also took our patrol boat to the site on four occasions.

While these episodes have long since faded from the media spotlight, we are actively working to ensure that the authorities improve their protocols, coordination, and communications in the future, and that adequate mitigation measures are put in place.



Flooding

For the second time in three years, the Ottawa River burst its banks and flooded communities from Témiscamingue all the way to the Island of Montreal. The water reached record levels in many areas, forcing some residents to evacuate and municipalities to organize countless sandbagging blitzes.

Unfortunately, a changing climate and our continued occupation of the floodplain mean that these won't be the last floods. Our decision-makers need to learn from these events, and to take courageous, fact-based decisions where necessary. Ottawa Riverkeeper will continue to press partners and authorities, including dam operators, to ensure a cohesive and science-based response. We will continue to echo calls for a public investigation into the flooding, and to encourage the Ontario, Québec and federal governments to coordinate their responses.



We want to acknowledge the generosity of friends, neighbours, and strangers who showed up in huge numbers to help during this very challenging time. The river spirit is alive and well.



Photo: Martin Lipman

Pacte de l'Amitié: United by Water

Three regions in our watershed have partnered with Ottawa Riverkeeper in a joint pledge to protect the Ottawa River that runs through their territory and brings them together. Under the name Pacte de l'Amitié, the 41 municipalities of the MRC d'Argenteuil and MRC de Papineau on the Québec

side of the river, and the United Counties of Prescott and Russell on the Ontario side have launched several community-based initiatives. These will include shoreline cleanups, as well as opportunities for youth to develop new skills and get involved in stewardship activities.



Photo: Martin Lipman

Nuclear Waste and Water Don't Mix

The controversial near-surface nuclear waste disposal site at Chalk River, 200 kilometres upstream from the National Capital Region, continues to be a cause for concern for area residents and beyond. Ottawa Riverkeeper is closely tracking this file, including sitting on a number of technical committees, while collaborating with other concerned organizations. While timelines for the project's environmental evaluation have slipped, we are hard at work preparing our expert recommendations and informing the public of the latest developments. We are also pressing the federal government to adopt a policy to manage the disposal of non-fuel nuclear waste, a glaring policy gap that is contributing to the concerns seen at Chalk River.



Photo: Martin Lipman

Riverwatchers: Water Stewards Extraordinaire

Riverwatchers are outstanding volunteers who devote their time and energy to understanding and advocating for their local waterway - in many cases, a specific reach of the Ottawa River itself. Together, they form a network that spans over 40 communities and nearly 100 members in the watershed. We are humbled by these dedicated volunteers who keep coming back, several for over a decade!

This year, we conducted a review of the water quality data they've collected over the past 5 years. Once again, we are working with Dr. Jesse Vermaire and Ph.D candidate Shaun Forrest to introduce a new protocol to extend testing for microplastic pollution. Our Riverwatchers are already the largest group of citizen scientists working to measure microplastic pollution in freshwater in the world!



Riverkeeper Gala: Celebrating

The Riverkeeper Gala, presented by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, was a magical night of vibrant colours, upbeat music, designer food, and cool cocktails. On the bank of the Ottawa River, with the Gatineau River in the distance and the Rideau Falls almost under their feet, more than 450 guests were treated to a powerful performance by JP Longboat, Josee Bourgeois, and youth dancers from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation.



Photo: Couvrette Photography



Photo: Martin Lipman



You & the River

Welcoming The Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, former Chief Justice of Canada, into the circle of Honorary Riverkeepers was one of the evening's highlights. We also gave out two Water Leader awards. Mission 100 Tonnes, a volunteer-driven initiative, was recognized for its removal of more than 30 tonnes of trash from Québec waterways. Co-founder Jimmy Vigneux accepted the award. River Surf Ottawa-Gatineau, a group that mobilized the Ottawa and Gatineau surfing communities to help local residents combat the effects of this spring's flooding, was also acknowledged for their tireless work. Surfer (and Riverwatcher) Trevor Cunningham accepted the award.

We thank Tania Kratt, Penny Schroeder, Lara Van Loon, and the outstanding members of the Gala Committee for helping to make this beautiful River-Chic evening a reality.



Photo: Martin Lipman



Photo: Couvrette Photography

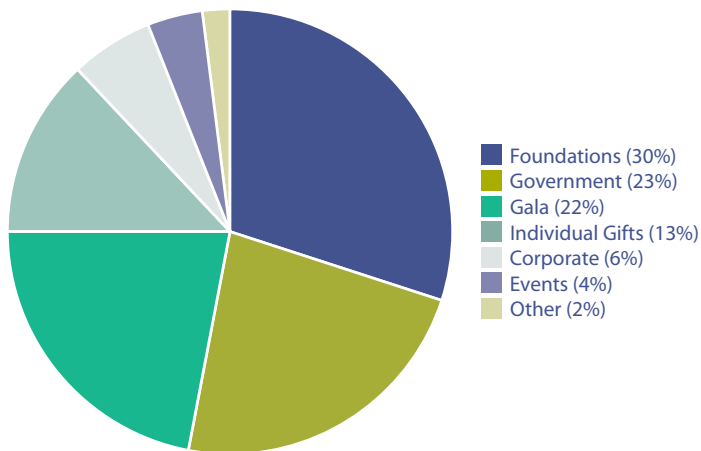


Photo: Couvrette Photography

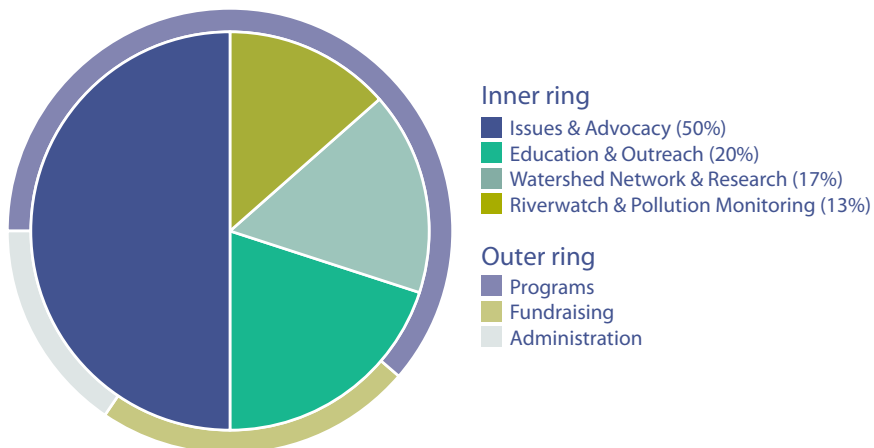
Financials

For fiscal year 2018-2019

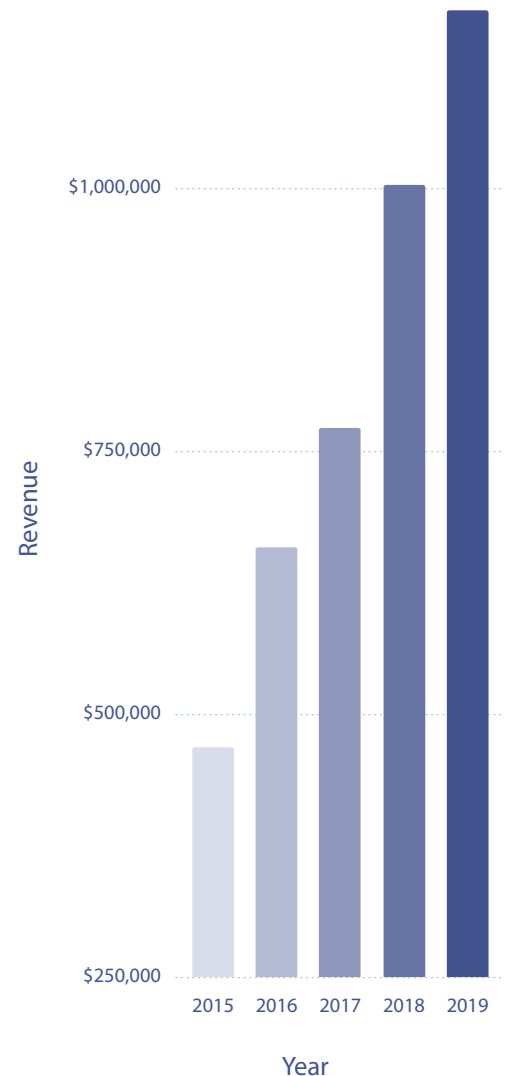
Income: \$1,153,743



Expenses: \$1,096,512



Growing our Impact



Your Support

For fiscal year 2018-2019

\$50 000+

Government of Canada - Environment and
Climate Change Canada
Insurance Bureau of Canada
The Ontario Trillium Foundation
The Salamander Foundation

\$25 000 - \$49 999

Adventure Canada
Anonymous
Canada Goose
CN
Government of Canada - Employment &
Social Development Canada
Leacross Foundation
RBC Foundation
T-Gear Foundation

\$10 000 - \$24 999

Anonymous (2)*
Bayne Family
Cement Association of Canada
Chawkers Foundation
City of Gatineau
Crafted Stories
Dentons Canada LLP
Derek & Michaela Tokarski
HEXO
Labarge Charitable Foundation
Ottawa Community Foundation
Patagonia
The Opinicon
Thyme & Again



Photo: Couvrette Photography

\$5 000 - \$9 999

Alterna Savings
Anonymous
Aquaforum
BDD Canada srl/LLP
Boreal River Adventures
Brookfield
Cabela's Canada Outdoor Fund
Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
Charles Frederick Fell Foundation
Fiona McKean & Tobi Lütke
Government of Canada - Job Training Grants
Hydro Ottawa
Muskoka Brewery & Evergreen Brickworks
Ontario Power Generation
Star Motors
Students on Ice
Tania Kratt Interior Architecture & Design
Taggart Parkes Foundation
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
The Barwick Family Foundation
The McLean Foundation
The Royal Canadian Geographical Society
Unifor
United Way Ottawa
Zibi

\$1 000 - \$4 999

Adobe
AGF Management Limited
Andrew King
Anonymous (3)
Ashbury College
Barry Sims
Beau's All Natural Brewing
Bill & Margaret Dean Perpetual Motion
Brandon McVittie
Cameron & Karen Metcalfe
Colleen and Jeff Westeinde
Couvrette Studio
David Lidbetter
Event Design
Fonds Nadine Martel et Jean-Michel
Lemieux*
Forest Products Association of Canada
Frankton-Coffin Family Foundation
GGFL Chartered Professional Accountants
Helen & David Spence
iPolitics
Jean & Richard van Loon
Jerome Photographer
Kratt Brothers Company
Level Six Incorporated
Madawaska Kanu Centre
The Mining Association of Canada
Ottawa City Rafting
Patrick Nadeau
Peter Colbert
Rabobank Canada
Tim Hayman
Top Shelf
United States Embassy
Wall Space Gallery
Woodbridge

<\$1 000

We recognize and thank the over 800 donors
who contributed at this level



Photo: Martin Lipman

*Fund established at the Ottawa Community Foundation

River Community

THE TEAM

Riverkeeper

Elizabeth Logue

Executive Director

Patrick Nadeau

Biologist

Katy Alambo

Graphic Designer & Digital Storyteller

Mark Bernards

Digital Communications Coordinator

Matthew Brocklehurst

Director of Donor Relations

Chloe Hillier

Director of Science & Policy

Larissa Holman

Biologist

Caroline Keddy

Administrative Assistant

Sharmila Mahamuni

Communications & Community Outreach Coordinator

Alejandro Prescott-Cornejo

Director, Watershed Network

MJ Proulx

Operations Manager

Dave Rayner

Senior Manager, Youth & Education Programs

Naomi Sarazin

Events & Volunteer Coordinator

Katie Shafley

Interns

Taylor Bailey-Hopkins

Jordan Jason-Byerley

Erin Mackey

Willa Mason

Eric Parizeau

Megan Williamson



BOARD OF DIRECTORS & OFFICERS

Chair

Geoff Green, C.M., C.Q.

Vice Chair

Jean Perras

Treasurer

Mark Patry

Secretary

Megan Conway (outgoing)

Directors

Frédéric Boulanger

Tracey Clark

Alexandra M. McGee

Fiona McKean

Philip Rimer

Bob Slater, C.M.

Peter van Roon

Colleen Westeinde (incoming secretary)

Celine Whiteduck

Officers

Meredith Brown

Elizabeth Logue

Patrick Nadeau

HONOREES

Honorary Riverkeepers

Henry Burris

Mark Carney

Beverley McLachlin

Stephen Poloz

Murray Sinclair

Sophie Gregoire Trudeau

Kevin Vickers

Ottawa Riverkeeper Ambassadors

Claudette Commanda

Kathleen Edwards

Water Leaders

Paul Dewar

Gord Nixon

Autumn Peltier

Jim Watson

de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation

Mission 100 Tonnes

River Surf Ottawa-Gatineau



Photo: Martin Lipman



Photo: Martin Lipman



Stay in the know:
Sign up for our newsletter at
www.ottawariverkeeper.ca

Follow us on



275 Bay Street, #301
Ottawa, ON
K1R 5Z5
613-321-1120