

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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with the Youth
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How you're helping
us get closer to
finding the answer!*

*Working together
to keep the river
clean, even when
we're apart*



Ottawa RIVERKEEPER®
GARDE-RIVIÈRE des Outaouais

Welcome!

Dear Water Lovers,

For so many of us, this has been a big year of adaptation, transition, reflection and planning for the future, and I sincerely hope this letter finds you doing well. If you are reading this, it most certainly means that you are part of our diverse and incredible Ottawa Riverkeeper family and I am thrilled to share our 2021 Annual Report with you.

Ottawa Riverkeeper is excited and ready to tackle the many opportunities and challenges facing our watershed in the weeks, months and year ahead. This includes bold new steps, some of which you will hear about in this report and others which are soon to be announced.

2021 marked the 20th Anniversary of the founding of Ottawa Riverkeeper, so it has been a time to celebrate our many stories, people, actions, and achievements over these past two decades. We marked the first year of a renewed strategic plan and ambitious vision for the organization's goals and impacts. We continued to educate, inspire, connect, and conduct research. We also saw a transition in leadership as we welcomed Laura Reinsborough as our new Riverkeeper & CEO! We are absolutely thrilled to have Laura take the helm of the organization and help guide the incredible Ottawa Riverkeeper team on the journey ahead. I hope you will all have a chance to meet Laura soon!

What hasn't changed is the passion, talent, and commitment of Ottawa Riverkeeper to protect our watershed. I am always inspired and proud of the work that we accomplish when this community comes together. There has never been a more important and urgent time to scale our collective action on biodiversity, conservation, and climate initiatives.

In the report that follows, you will find examples of action, adaptation, new initiatives and newfound passion for the work of protecting the watershed that we all value and love. Your continued support and involvement is absolutely critical to our shared success.

Thank you! Miigwetch! Merci!

In the River Spirit,



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



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Celebrating 20 years of Ottawa Riverkeeper!

In the year 2000, a small group of river enthusiasts came together around the common concern that the ecological health of the Ottawa River was being overlooked by existing organizations and legislation. This small, but dedicated group rallied around the Waterkeeper Stewardship Model and started gathering support for implementing an “Ottawa River Waterkeeper”. Then, 20 years ago, on April 28th, 2001, they hosted a community meeting at Lakeside Gardens Britannia, expecting 20 people, hoping for as many as 50. To their surprise, and delight, over 100 concerned citizens showed up in support of their initiative! By the end of that meeting, Ottawa Riverkeeper had become more than just an idea.

While not the official legal beginning of Ottawa Riverkeeper, April 28th, in our minds, is the date that Ottawa Riverkeeper was founded. The overwhelming community support and passion demonstrated that day remains one of the driving forces behind everything we do!! Without you, our amazing, compassionate, and generous volunteers, donors, and supporters, some of our greatest successes would not have been possible. Our microplastics sampling program from 2016-2019 was the largest citizen science monitoring program in freshwater in the world, and your support has also helped influence policy-makers to make changes in the interest of the River’s ecological health. You helped reduce Combined Sewer Overflows in the City of Ottawa by 80% over the last 15 years, increased water quality testing at municipal beaches by the City of Gatineau, contributed to the banning of microplastics in cosmetic products, and much more!



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We celebrated this milestone with a special 20th anniversary version of our logo that you may have seen in our newsletters, recent publications, and some limited edition swag!

In honour of Ottawa Riverkeeper’s 20th anniversary, we are very proud to present this year’s Water Leader Award to the primary founders of Ottawa Riverkeeper, John Almstedt, George Brown, Dan Brunton, and Parham Momtahan. The Water Leader Award recognizes groups or individuals who do amazing work for the stewardship and protection of the Ottawa River watershed and water in general. Thank you John, George, Dan and Parham for everything you’ve done for the river. Without your vision and dedication to the river, there would be no Ottawa Riverkeeper.

A special thank you to Riverwatcher, Cathy Rogers, for researching the formation and history of Ottawa Riverkeeper.

New Chapter... New Riverkeeper!

“I’m so thrilled to be joining Ottawa Riverkeeper and to introduce myself to you, the community of dedicated river lovers at the heart of this organization!”



This year we welcomed Laura Reinsborough as our new Riverkeeper! She steps into the role at a very exciting time, and, with a strong track record of driving NGOs and charities through crucial moments of growth, is perfectly positioned to lead Ottawa Riverkeeper as we chart a new and exciting course.

Laura is a community organizer and changemaker, focused on delivering positive environmental and social change. She has worked in gardens, galleries, and along river banks to connect people with a strong sense of place.

A newcomer to the watershed, Laura now lives near the Ottawa River in Orléans with her partner and their two children. Laura grew up very connected to water in New Brunswick: canoeing on the lake in her backyard, swimming on the beaches of the Northumberland Strait, and mudsliding on the Bay of Fundy mudflats.





RIVER HOUSE

At home on the river

Over the last year, we've been excited to continue the work of bringing River House to life, and we are very thankful for the early donors who have supported the project to date.

If you haven't heard, River House is our vision for a national beacon for clean water advocacy, a hub for scientific innovation, experiential education, inspiration and action to help protect the incredible gift of our watershed.

It will also be a new home for Ottawa Riverkeeper, on the Ottawa River, in the NCC owned heritage boathouse, previously known as the Ottawa River Boat-house. As you flip through the pages of this annual report, you'll read about the many successes we've had in our twenty year history - all accomplished from offices far removed from the river's edge. Imagine what we can do on the river together.

River House offers an unprecedented opportunity for Ottawa Riverkeeper to come home to the river.

Longtime Ottawa Riverkeeper supporters and lead donors to the River House project shared this:

We have thought a lot about how this historical building will be an ideal and functional space for the Ottawa Riverkeeper organization to educate, serve as a base for monitoring and research, and connect members of our community and visitors to the region to the Ottawa River. It is truly a gem on the Ottawa River!
~ Lead donors to River House

With River House, we envision the incredible opportunities that will come with being right on the water.

It will be a unique and inviting public space. A fantastic place to swim, row, paddle, sail or just relax. A hub for collaboration right on the river where our network of watershed allies, citizen scientists and partners can meet, share information and initiate restoration, reconciliation and stewardship projects.

For years, we've dreamed of a River School that provides experiential learning opportunities and on-water educational programming. We know children and youth thrive with this type of creative and hands-on environmental education. At River House this potential will be unlocked! Imagine river classrooms and studio spaces where school groups, community groups and the general public can come to learn about aquatic ecosystems and river health.

Now, River House is moving from dream to reality. We are in the early phase of a campaign that would see River House come to life. This is the most ambitious and exciting endeavour in Ottawa Riverkeeper's history and we embark on it with enthusiasm, vision and careful planning. Stay tuned for more updates in 2022!

Youth Leadership and Learning

For the Future of Water

Becoming the future leaders of water protection is hard work, but our Youth Water Leaders this year were up to the task. They participated in workshops, explored the river, and worked hard on their own projects designed to help them learn about and protect the river, and inspire others to do the same.

One of their first activities was a highlight for many of the youth. In this year of uncovering difficult truths, reading Treaty Words with Dr. Craft and learning about Indigenous water governance was an important way to begin the process of decolonizing water. The youth were inspired by Dr. Craft's parting words of advice, which they collaboratively wove into a beautiful design in French, English, and Algonquin.



Later in the summer, the youth had an opportunity to connect with the river and each other in person rather than virtually. Led by Boreal River Adventures, the youth participated in a 2.5 day rafting adventure on the Ottawa River, right in the heart of downtown. Starting the weekend with a campfire conversation with Awema Tendesi from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg the youth were presented with different perspectives that really allowed for a deeper understanding of the issues of land and water governance. While wilderness experiences are important, experiencing the river locally in an urban setting was very accessible for the Youth Water Leaders who live primarily in the national capital region.



The Youth Water Leaders Program is funded by the Government of Canada under the Canada Service Corps.



Ottawa Riverkeeper is also committed to expanding the reach of our educational programming through River School. River School is an exciting opportunity to re-imagine our educational programs, build partnerships, and listen to a wide range of Indigenous rights holders and community stakeholders to collaboratively develop future River School programming. River School can mean so many different things for different people, and we really want to take the time to hear all these perspectives as we move forward with this project. We invite interested educators and community leaders to connect with us to share your ideas for River School.

The youth were also encouraged to find their voices and develop communications skills they'll need to become effective leaders and advocates for the river. They learned about digital storytelling with Susan Johnston, producer and host of The Friday Blend on CKCU FM, voice with Christine Hecker from Christine Hecker Voice Studio, and design with our very own Mark Bernards. These were important skills to hone as the youth implemented their community service projects and shared their love for the watershed through a wide-range of inspiring activities (see photos).



Some of the youth joined forces with Skelton Key Theatre, Ottawa Riverkeeper's Company-in-Residence, to be kayakers in their Grand Act of Theatre performance about climate change, flooding, and refugees called Deluge. This activity was important in another important goal of the program, which is to build a sense of community in the face of devastating environmental crises.



Assessing and Monitoring the Health of the Watershed

The Watershed Health Assessment and Monitoring initiative had a number of successes this year. As we build a stronger understanding of the health of the watershed, we are excited and inspired by the commitment of many individuals who have assisted this effort. The result of this support is evident not only in the growth of our citizen science initiatives, but the growing network of volunteers that are interested in participating directly in our initiatives. It has also provided opportunities to continue engagement and relationship building with Algonquin communities: Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Kebaowek First Nation and Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation.



Community Based Monitoring (CBM) has become a critical component that provides multiple opportunities for the public to engage in our projects and participate directly in data collections and scientific study. This spring, we wanted to expand participation in our CBM projects, and through a call out for new participants we received over 150 applicants interested in participating. As a result, we were able to successfully launch three new monitoring programs for Total Phosphorus, Chlorophyll-a, and Invasive Species. We were also able to expand our Algal Bloom monitoring. The support of our expanding CBM projects highlights both the interest the public has in understanding what impacts the ecological health of the river and a desire to contribute directly to this research.

Through engagement with academic researchers and volunteers, we were able to expand the work we were doing. We completed collecting samples for environmental DNA this year. The over 500 samples collected will provide data about the fish species present in each reach of the Ottawa River from Lake of Two Mountains to Lake Temiskaming. Our Watershed Research Intern, Meghan, has also been busy installing a total of 42 water temperature loggers and collecting chemistry data from locations throughout the watershed. In addition, her research has included building a finer resolution land use map to help assist with analysis at the subwatershed and local level.

In order to share this data with decision makers, communities and individuals throughout the entire watershed, we launched our Data Portal in February. This site provides an opportunity for researchers and the public to easily access both data and reports about the Ottawa River and its watershed. We are excited to be adding our community based monitoring data alongside other groups' data, reports, and studies about the watershed. In addition, we have been working with the Gordon Foundation to ensure Ottawa Riverkeeper's CBM data will be available on their new Great Lakes DataStream in advance of its release.



Members of our Science team participating alongside Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Kebaowek First Nation and Water First in a training workshop led by WWF-Canada and Living Lakes Canada to learn how to assess freshwater benthic invertebrate communities, one of our watershed health indicators.

This project is made possible by the generous support from these funders



Presenting Sponsor

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Mosaic

iCleanup

OTTAWA RIVERKEEPER

Your all-in-one shoreline cleanup app!

Shorelines are vital to a river. Not only do they mark a necessary part of a riparian ecosystem, they are also important in how we interact with the river. Whether it is a beach, a forest trail, or a cozy fishing spot, the shoreline acts as a link between us and the river we love. That's why one of Ottawa Riverkeeper's favourite things to do is to bring people together around shorelines to protect them. Through shoreline cleanups, we are able to gather a diverse community to all take direct, measurable action towards the common goal of a healthy river.

But what to do in a year where we can't gather in person? We decided to build a tool for residents of the watershed to continue to do shoreline cleanups, while still maintaining that common purpose, measurable result, and diverse community. So we did! In April of this year we launched our very own application, called iCleanup. The app allows users to record the collection totals from the cleanups they have performed, whether by themselves or in a group, and tabulates all the results together to a grand community total.



We were overjoyed by the results! So far over 250 people have signed up for iCleanup, and together we have collected over 780 kg (1700 lbs) of garbage from our shorelines. This coming together at a time of separation really inspires us, but we hope that iCleanup will go beyond that. The app is easily accessible, and can be used across the entire Ottawa River watershed, in both French and English. In the coming years we plan to continue support for the app, so that we can truly come together as a watershed wide community.

This principle of uniting people for river protection is inspired by our major partners on iCleanup. Support for the development of the app came from the members of the Pacte d'Amitié, three regions from both sides of our river that decided to come together to protect their river, despite the provincial border between them. The MRC d'Argenteuil, the MRC de Papineau, and the United Counties of Prescott-Russell embody the idea that it takes a community to protect a river.



iCleanup was made possible by the generous support from these funders



This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Recreational Water Quality Monitoring

With temperatures high across the watershed, it's no surprise that many were looking for ways to beat the heat this summer. Luckily the Ottawa River provides the perfect solution: a quick dip in it's cool, refreshing waters.

The 2021 swim season started out on a high note for Ottawa Riverkeeper's Recreational Water Quality Monitoring and Swim Guide program. After years of pushing for more frequent recreational water quality testing at Gatineau beaches, we were thrilled to see the City of Gatineau increase their testing schedule from twice a week to daily testing this summer!

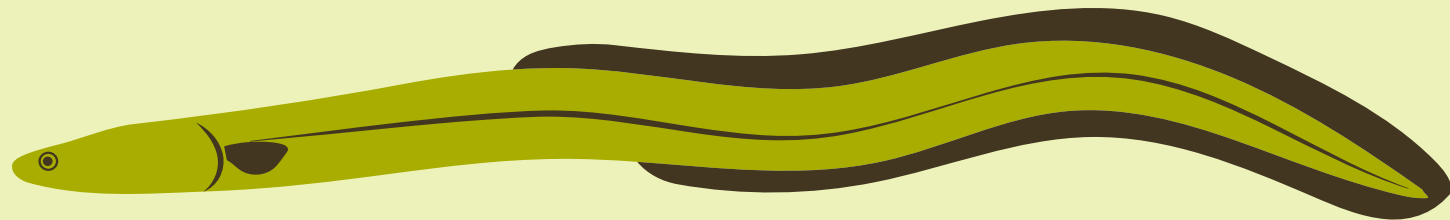
Frequent monitoring is essential at urban beaches which are known to experience more fluctuations in water quality due to increased amounts of runoff (due to population size) and the possibility of combined sewer overflows. This year's increased testing at Gatineau beaches ensured that closures were made based on the most up-to-date results. In other words, the beaches weren't closed when they could have been open, and not open when they should have been closed! A big thanks to the City of Gatineau for working with us this past year, and taking action to provide more water quality information to its residents.

Ottawa Riverkeeper also continued to work on water quality outside of the National Capital Region. In our search for more locations to monitor, we were struck by how few beaches actually were open to the public! While the COVID19 pandemic saw some jurisdictions impose restrictions on access this year, we also noted that large stretches of the river lack public swimming areas. So while many would agree that a dip in the river on a hot summer day is a fantastic way to beat the heat, for many in the watershed, access to the river is just not available. Another issue is that regular water

quality information is not readily accessible, leaving people uncertain if it's safe to swim. In preparation for next year's swim season, Ottawa Riverkeeper has begun auditing beaches throughout the watershed to better understand how water quality information is shared, and to promote water access for all residents of the Ottawa River watershed.

A big thank you to our Summer Water Quality intern Chloe Michaud, as well as volunteers Dan Wilcock, Sandra Milton and Brett Painter for all their hard work to make this program possible this year!





Helping the American Eel Find its Way

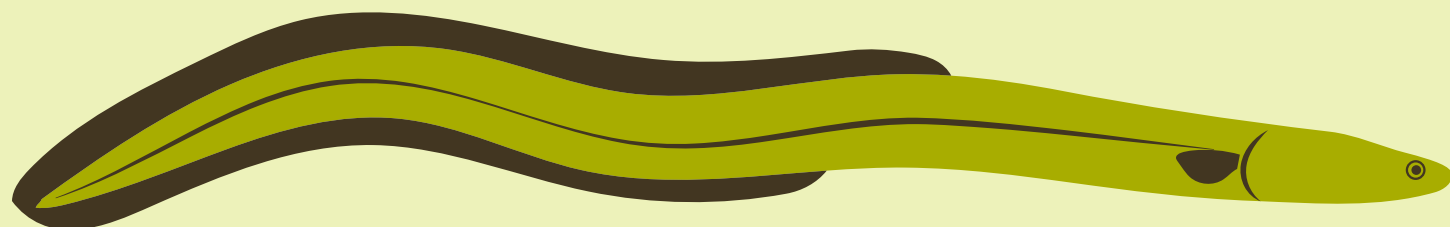
For many years now, Ottawa Riverkeeper has been deeply concerned by the plight of the American eel. This culturally and ecologically important species has seen a massive 99% decline in population within the Ottawa River watershed. Why? One reason is that about 60 years ago dams were constructed that block the migration routes for the American eel, including the Carillon Dam right near the mouth of our river. The Carillon Dam is the greatest obstacle in the path of the American eels entering the Ottawa River watershed, following their migration upriver from the Sargasso Sea.

At the end of 2020, we learned that the Carillon Dam was preparing to undergo significant upgrades, to the tune of 750 million dollars. We saw this as an opportunity to fulfill a dream that had always been on our minds: to construct an eel ladder at the Carillon Dam. Eel ladders allow migrating American eels upstream access over a dam, by providing a specially designed “ladder” for them to climb. While eel ladders have been installed and are effective at other locations, including the upstream Chaudière generating station in Ottawa, there is no passage of this sort at Carillon. The dam effectively blocks off access to the Ottawa River and its tributaries. Dams are also a threat to eels as they try to migrate out of the Ottawa River.

We immediately sprang into action, informing you and beginning to build support. In January of 2020, we launched an initial petition, where many of you indicated your support for the construction of an eel ladder. The response was fantastic, and so we began to plan even bigger. We turned to you for help in making this campaign happen, and the response was humbling, with nearly 100 individual donors raising over \$13,500 for the initiative.

From there we got creative. Because the issues eels face are complex, we developed a video to explain their situation, and act as a call to action. We asked the public to send letters in support of an eel ladder at Carillon to their provincial representatives, and to Fisheries and Oceans Canada. And when we released the video this July, you acted! Over 900 letters have been sent out in support of this campaign so far, and you are still keeping the momentum going.

With the buzz generated by the campaign, we were able to start to find partners to support in this work. Plus, we are meeting with important stakeholders on the issue for high level discussions about the problem, and how we can make this ladder happen. Now we are taking this amazing response from our community, and strategizing how to turn it into tangible solutions. Look for more updates to come in the next year as we continue to build upon this success!



Carillon Dam



209

Active volunteers

6300+

Volunteer hours

796

Individual donors



12

In-person cleanups

250+

iCleanup users

1700+

lbs of collected garbage
reported on iCleanup



18

Youth Water Leaders

1189

Service hours

YEARS OF WATERSHED ADVOCACY

20

Our 20th year by the numbers



11500+

Facebook followers



7

Community-based monitoring projects

387

Samples collected

42

Citizen scientists

62

Monitoring locations

406

Observations or reports

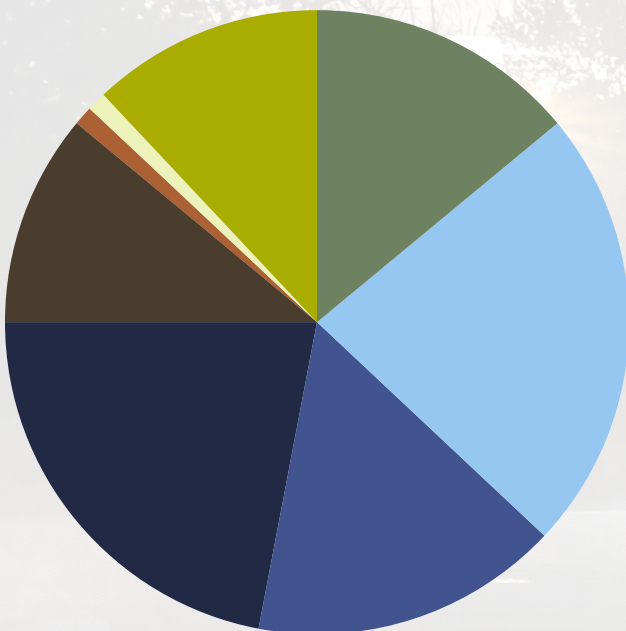
539

Recreational water
quality samples
analyzed

Our Financials

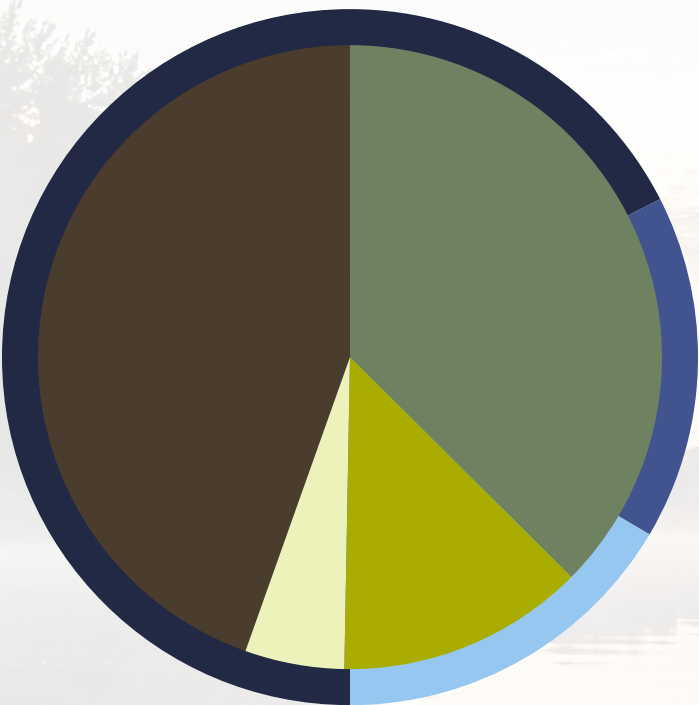
For the fiscal year ending March 31 2021

Income: \$ 1 481 696



Governments	22%
Gala	16%
Foundations	23%
Individual Gifts	14%
Corporate	12%
Events	1%
Other	1%
Government Subsidies for COVID Relief	11%

Expenses: \$1 375 705



Inner Circle	
Watershed Research and Citizen Science	45%
Education and Outreach	37%
Issues and Advocacy	13%
Riverwatch and Pollution Monitoring	5%
Outer Circle	
Programs	68%
Fundraising	16%
Administration	16%

Your Support

For the fiscal year ending March 31 2021

\$ 100 000 +

Government of Canada
RBC Foundation

\$ 25 000 - \$ 49 999

Adobe Foundation
Anonymous (2)
Echo Foundation
Evolugen
Gary and Cornelia Duck
Government of Canada - Environment & Climate Change Canada
Government of Canada - Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Leacross Foundation
MakeWay Foundation
Ontario Power Generation

\$ 10 000 - \$ 24 999

Anonymous
Bayne Family
The Crabtree Foundation
Dentons Canada LLP
Fogo Clay Studio (Tracey Clarke & Sarah Fulford)
The Opinicon
Ottawa Community Foundation
Telus Friendly Future Foundation
Thyme & Again
United Nations Association in Canada - Green Spaces

\$ 5 000 - \$ 9 999

Algonquin College
Anonymous (2)
The Barwick Family Foundation
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Macadamian
MRC de Papineau
Taggart-Parkes Foundation
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

\$ 50 000 - \$ 99 999

Anonymous
Government of Canada - Employment & Social Development Canada
Insurance Bureau of Canada
The Mosaic Company
The Ontario Trillium Foundation
Ottawa Community Foundation via Community Foundations of Canada/ESDC

\$ 1 000 - \$ 4 999

Anonymous (3)
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Boreal River Adventures
Caduceon Environmental Laboratories
Canon
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MRC D'Argenteuil
Nicole Allen
Patrick Nadeau
Paul Krayne
Peter Colbert
Peter van Roon & family
Prescott Russell United Counties
Star Motors
Steve Bews
Tim & Michele Hayman
Top Shelf Distillers
United Way Centraide Canada
Whitewater Village

< \$ 1 000

We recognize and thank the over 700 donors who contributed at this level

Our People

Staff & Interns

- Riverkeeper and CEO*
Laura Reinsborough
- Director of Operations*
Dave Rayner
- Director of Philanthropy*
Chloe Hillier
- Director of Science and Policy*
Larissa Holman
- Director of River School and Youth Leadership*
Julia Ostertag
- Communications Manager*
Matthew Brocklehurst
- Biologist*
Katy Alambo
- Digital Content Creator and Graphic Designer*
Mark Bernards
- Translator*
Pier-Antoine Lacombe
- Database and Fundraising Coordinator*
Ian Atwell
- Executive Assistant*
Melinda Gilhen-Baker
- Scientist*
Matt Fyfe
- Donor Stewardship Coordinator*
Maddie Perrault
- Interns*
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Renée Davies
Jeffrey Hamilton
Caedmon Heron
Meghan Jolley
Amanda MacCarthy
Chloe Michaud
Stefan Ssozi
- Outgoing Staff Members*
Elizabeth Logue
Patrick Nadeau
Jorge Negrin Dastis
Alejandro Prescott-Cornejo



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River Surf Ottawa-Gatineau
Autumn Peltier
Paul Dewar
de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation
Jim Watson
Gord Nixon

We want to acknowledge and thank everyone who has been a part of the Ottawa Riverkeeper team this year. We have waved goodbye and watched proudly as some members of our team have gone on to face new opportunities and challenges, all while excitedly welcoming fresh faces to the organization. Most notably, we witnessed the end of an era when our fearless leaders Patrick Nadeau (Executive Director) and Elizabeth Logue (Riverkeeper) embarked on new adventures, and we are now at the beginning of a new chapter with Laura Reinsborough stepping in as Riverkeeper & CEO. Whether you made your departure, recently joined, or are paddling on with us for another year, thank you for everything you've done for the watershed this year!



Our Partners

This year was a challenging year for many, and we want to thank our partners for their steadfast support of our work. Our Gala sponsors were incredibly kind to maintain their sponsorships even after it became clear that an in-person event would not be possible, and in so doing help to fund perennial programs such as our Pollution Hotline, Riverwatch Network, and our advocacy work. We want to especially recognize the contributions of the Insurance Bureau of Canada, Mosaic and the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, as well as all the partners listed below.

Presenting Sponsor



Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors



Bronze Sponsors



Special Thanks



As part of celebrating our 20th Anniversary, we created a brand new peer-to-peer fundraising initiative which raised over 10,000\$ for our work. This 20 for 20 challenge was only possible thanks to presenting sponsor Alterna, and we thank them for their support this year.





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Cover photo by Martin Lipman

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