



Canadian  
Heritage Rivers  
System

Réseau des  
rivières du patrimoine  
canadien

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# 2023 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORTS SUMMARY

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Summary of Canadian Heritage River Annual Monitoring Reports



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023 Annual Monitoring Reports Summary is a culmination of the key information and updates from Canadian Heritage Rivers across Canada. The information in this summary was extracted from the individual Annual Monitoring Reports compiled by River Managers and River Stewardship Groups and reviewed by their jurisdictional representative prior to submission.

A few common themes were found across the 2023 annual monitoring reports. These themes included:

- New / increased collaborations with First Nation, Métis and or Inuit partners and stakeholders
- Ongoing Indigenous trapping, hunting, fishing / rebuilding connections to the land
- New / increased focus on preventing and or managing aquatic invasive species
- Changes in water levels related to climate change (flooding, droughts, heavy rainfall)

Common threats across several annual reports included changing water levels, Aquatic Invasive Species, and over-visitation. While these threats do not currently indicate a need to change any CHR nominations or designations, impacts from them should continue to be monitored and mitigated, where possible, in the years to come.

*\*Not every heritage river submitted their annual report for 2023. This report contains information from those who completed and submitted their report.*

## ALSEK

Post- covid pandemic partnerships with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations have resumed. Plans for future river management meetings and river trips are being discussed and will tentatively occur in the 2024 operational season. There is funding in place and strong desire from Partner First Nations to have a river trip with the purpose of reconnection CAFN Land Guardians, citizens and staff with this region of CAFN Traditional Territory.

## ATHABASCA

Jasper’s Visitor Experience and Resource Conservation teams launched the aquatic invasive species prevention program in 2023 in key areas around the Athabasca watershed in Jasper National Park. Actions include 1) Inspection and decontamination station: operated by Parks Canada staff and dedicated to inspecting, cleaning, and decontaminating non-motorized and electric propelled watercraft; 2) Permitting: permitting options available for different watercraft types, including self-certification and seasonal permits; and 3) Roving screening and education: Parks Canada staff located at high-use waterbodies and access locations educated visitors on prevention measures and the potential impacts of AIS. In total, staff engaged with more than 3,000 visitors and residents at the cleaning station and during interpretive and outreach activities.

## BAY DU NORD

The Bay du Nord Canadian Heritage River remains in a condition that reflects the natural values for which the river was designated.

## BLOODVEIN (ON)

Another slow fire season in 2023 has allowed the Bloodvein to regenerate from the historic 2021 wildland fires. Parks crews took advantage of this opportunity and cleared a majority of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park's (WCPP) portage routes, increasing the accessibility of the area to backcountry canoeist and Indigenous communities. A major focus on updating the guiding documents of the WCPP occurred this season. The process of reviewing and amending the WCPP's Management Plan was initiated. Work continued on incorporating the Paishk Lake recommended park addition. And after an aerial Caribou study found a struggling population, an interim decision to limit the amount of fire in the Park was implemented.

## BOUNDARY WATERS-VOYAGEUR WATERWAY

2023 saw a return to normal recreational use levels along the waterway. The Canada Border Services Agency's remote area border crossing program was re-instated, post covid, in late summer of 2022. By the summer of 2023, American canoeists (who are the primary users of the waterway) could cross into the waterway again at normal pre-covid levels. Environmental conditions drier than average throughout the year and the waterway and surrounding region was under a fire ban for a large portion of the summer.

## CLEARWATER (AB)

No report submitted.

## CLEARWATER (SK)

No activity, lack of staff and low budget.

## DES NEDHÈ | SEAL

There were no major changes on the Seal River in 2023. Various wildlife surveys and studies were conducted in the river corridor and surrounding area by the governments of Manitoba and Canada, as well as other organizations and researchers. The Seal River Watershed Alliance received federal funding in support of its work towards the creation of an Indigenous Protected Area in the Seal River Watershed and conducted numerous monitoring activities and other events.

## DETROIT

2023 was another successful year in conserving, interpreting, enhancing, and appreciating the values of the Detroit River. Monitoring was conducted at the largest wetland habitat restoration project in the Detroit River and a new approach to management of invasive plant, *Phragmites australis* was released in a Detroit River wetland. Continued progress was made towards creating the proposed Ojibway National Urban Park, bordering the Detroit River.

## FRASER

The Fraser Landslides and Salmon Research Project continued its research and engagement activities, culminating in a workshop where participants discussed the latest research findings about landslide impacts on flow dynamics, fish migration and the genetics of Fraser River Salmon. The Raincoast Conservation Foundation is constructing three 30-metre-wide breaches in the north arm jetty in the Fraser River estuary to restore natural migration pathways for juvenile salmon and other fish species and to restore the natural movement of freshwater and fine sediments. The Province of British Columbia, Government of Canada and Fraser Basin Council are coordinating floodplain mapping projects in the upper and lower Fraser River to support the community resilience of 15 First Nations and 8 local governments in relation to Fraser River flood hazards.

## FRENCH

Ontario Parks added a Park Interpreter to their staff this year at the French River Visitor Centre who led public outreach and programming about the cultural, historical, and ecological significance of the French River Delta. This interpreter was able to support Indigenous-led programming in partnership with Ontario Parks.

## GRAND

Many organizations, agencies and individuals continue to celebrate the cultural, recreational and natural heritage of the Grand River and its tributaries through a diverse range of studies, plans, events and activities.

## HARVAQTUUQ | ᑲᑭᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ | KAZAN

Traditional Inuit use; harvesting, fishing, trapping and camping etc. throughout the year continues on the length of Harvaqtuuq/Kazan river, watershed and beyond by Inuit of Baker Lake and Arviat in 2023. Traditionally Harvaqtuurmiut, Aharmiut and Pallirmiut occupied the Harvaqtuuq/Kazan river watershed. Today Inuit groups who now call the hamlets/communities in Nunavut home, are there because the federal government had different policies that brought Inuit off the Land to bring them to modern-day hamlet/community life starting in the mid-1950s or earlier in some places.

## HILLSBOROUGH

The combined work crews of the Hillsborough River Association (HRA) and its partner, the Pisquid River Enhancement Project (PREP) opened 5.85 km of stream enhancement worker trails /tertiary roads and removed 919 in-stream blowdowns damaged by post-tropical storm Fiona. These trails and tertiary roads and the blowdown removals were critical in allowing Atlantic salmon electrofishing surveys and many of the redd surveys to be conducted. Thanks to provincial and federal funding, blowdowns were also cleared on Hillsborough Canadian Heritage River access roads and recreation trails and Foundation for Conservation of Atlantic Salmon funding assisted with the monitoring of Atlantic salmon populations and finfish stream access. A variety of school and other events were utilized to enhance public knowledge on watershed ecology and these efforts are documented in the Hillsborough Tidings newsletter and social media.



## HUMBER

TRCA, alongside our partners and watershed communities continued to protect, restore, and celebrate the Humber River as a Canadian Heritage in new and innovative ways. A major highlight for 2023 was 604,311 visitors were recorded TRCA conservation parks and lands. TRCA also engaged thousands of people through cultural heritage programs and events. In addition, updates to TRCA continues to the Humber River Watershed Plan are well underway. 6.59 acres were also acquired in the Humber in 2023 as part of TRCA's Greenspace Acquisition Project.

## KANGIRJUAP | ᐱᓐᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴ | THELON

Traditional Inuit use; harvesting, fishing, trapping and camping etc. throughout the year continues on the length of Kangirjuap/Thelon river, watershed and beyond by Inuit of Baker Lake in 2023. Traditionally Akilinirmiut and Qainirmiut lived within the Kangirjuap/Thelon river watershed. Today Inuit groups who now call the hamlets/communities in Nunavut home, are there because the federal government had different policies that brought Inuit off the Land to bring them to modern-day hamlet/community life starting in the mid-1950s or earlier in some places.

## KICKING HORSE

Park visitation continues to rise to new levels within the Kicking Horse watershed. Impacts are most prevalent at Takakkaw Falls and Emerald Lake day use areas, noted by ongoing observations of overflowing parking lots, garbage, and pronounced vegetation trampling from off trail hikers. Significant vegetation degradation is apparent along the Emerald north lakeshore as a result of recreationalists using a wide array of small floatation devices to enter or exit the lake.

## MAIN

The Main River Canadian Heritage River remains in a condition that reflects the natural and recreational values for which the river was designated.

## MARGAREE

No report submitted.



## KISIPIKAMAWI SIPI | APIHT SIPI | HAYES

There were no major changes in the Hayes River corridor in 2023 but the detection of zebra mussel veligers in the Echimamish River indicates the Hayes corridor as a whole is at risk of being invaded by zebra mussels. Visitation at York Factory National Historic Site returned to pre-pandemic levels. Various wildlife monitoring and studies were conducted in the river corridor and surrounding area by the Manitoba government and other partners.

## KUGLUKTUK | ᓄᓗᓗᓗᓗᓗ | COPPERMINE (NOMINATED)

Traditional Inuit use; harvesting, fishing, trapping and camping etc. throughout the year continues on the length of Kugluktuk/Coppermine river, watershed and beyond by Inuit of Kugluktuk in 2023. Inuit of Kugluktuk speak Inuinnaqtun a form of Inuktitut that is spoken in the western arctic which includes Nunavut and Northwest Territories. Inuit from Kugluktuk are known as Copper Inuit for the copper that was utilized for tools and was found along the Kugluktuk-Coppermine River. The community of Kugluktuk is the western most community in Nunavut and is located north of the Arctic circle at the mouth of the Kugluktuk-Coppermine River which empties into the Coronation Gulf.

## KUUJJUAQ | ᓄᓗᓗᓗᓗᓗ | SOPER

Traditional Inuit use; harvesting, fishing, trapping and camping etc. throughout the year continues on the length of the Kuujjuaq/Soper river and watershed by Inuit of Kimmirut and continues in 2023; along with residents of Kimmirut and Iqaluit travelling and harvesting on the river and the surrounding valley. Today Inuit groups who now call the hamlets/communities in Nunavut home, are there because the federal government had different policies that brought Inuit off the Land to bring them to modern-day hamlet/community life starting in the mid-1950s or earlier in some places.

## LISTUGUJ | UPPER RESTIGOUCHE

With high precipitation in the second part of the season, it facilitated navigation and consequently it was a good year on the Restigouche for recreation activities. Trends of climate change observed over the past decade which indicate increased heat wave during summer were not that bad those two past years. But with a soft winter, let's be hopeful that precipitation will be high again this year as it may prove to be useful act as a buffer on water temperature fluctuations. The amount of garbage to pick up on

campsites was not monitored this year. Fishing activities were also relatively good this season. Flyers were transmitted during the summer to users of recreational activities.

## MATTAWA

Mattawa River connects the Ottawa River and Lake Nipissing. The river historically provided an important western link in the commercial fur trade network and for exploration further into the North American continent. The designated section of the river is mostly within the boundaries of Mattawa River and Samuel de Champlain provincial parks, which are managed by Ontario Parks. The La Vase Portages were added to the CHRS designation in the early 2000s and is managed by the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority.

## MISKWEWESIBI | MISKWEYAABIZIIBEE | BLOODVEIN (MB)

There were no major changes in the Bloodvein River corridor in 2023. The Bloodvein continued to be a popular destination for whitewater paddling, and the Pimachiowin Aki Assembly of Partners continued and initiated work on a variety of projects related to the area's UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.

## MISSINAIBI

On-going management of the Missinaibi River as a significant whitewater canoe route tracing the traditional routes of First Nations and the historic European fur trade from Lake Superior to Hudson's Bay.

## NAH?A DEHÉ | SOUTH NAHANNI

The South Nahanni River (Nah?á Dehé) forms the backbone of Nahanni and Nááts'j'ch'oh National Park Reserves. Visitor and park operations were significantly impacted by wildfires during the 2023 season. Visitation decreased by roughly 35% compared to 2022, largely because of flight and trip cancellations due to smoke conditions and a late-season park closure due to the worsening wildfire crisis across the NWT. Similarly, multiple staff monitoring and facility maintenance trips were cancelled or rescheduled with a reduced scope later on in the season once smoke conditions improved and the Yellowknife evacuation order was lifted.

## NORTH SASKATCHEWAN (BANFF NATIONAL PARK)

The Parks Canada Agency (Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay National Park), reports to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board annually on the condition of the cultural, natural, and recreational heritage values within a 48.5 km section of the North Saskatchewan River as part of a long-term management commitment to ensure the integrity of the designated watershed is managed sustainably. Previous CHRS strategic direction laid the ground to build the program, while the CHRS 2020 to 2030 strategic plan focuses on formalizing a collaborative monitoring program to conserve the integrity of nomination values into the future. There has been a steady incline to visitation within the North Saskatchewan watershed to pre-covid pandemic numbers.

## OTTAWA

No report submitted.

## QUW'UTSUN | COWICHAN

The Quw'utsun Sta'lo' or Cowichan River continues to be impacted by warming water and changing climate conditions along its 47-kilometre channel, which have led to low water in-stream and in some areas, degraded water conditions with low oxygen and increased pH levels that have had negative impacts on salmon and trout species.

## RED

There were no major changes in the Red River corridor in 2023, and a variety of fish studies, wildlife monitoring and water quality monitoring work continued. Notable improvements were made in municipalities and provincial parks along the river corridor to improve access and recreation facilities for Manitoba residents and visitors.

## RIDEAU

In December 2022, the *Rideau Canal and Merrickville Blockhouse National Historic Sites of Canada Management Plan* was tabled in Parliament by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and will serve as the strategic guiding document for the waterway for the next 10 years. Over the course of 2022-2023, work continued to conserve cultural resources including masonry locks, a timber swing bridge, and the commencement of cultural landscape studies; protect the freshwater ecosystem through NSERC research, a

multi-species action plan, and shoreline assessments; and welcome visitors to the site through visitor experiences in historic accommodations, Otentiks, and learning to paddle.

## SHELBURNE

No report submitted.

## ST. CROIX

2023 marked the beginning of the Milltown Dam removal project, as well as increased awareness surrounding ongoing sea-run fish restoration led by the Passamaquoddy Tribe alongside State and Federal agencies from the US and Canada in a joint effort. Efforts were made to improve recreational access within the CHRS designation corridor and to cement the St. Croix as one of the best areas along the eastern seaboard for water-based outdoor recreation.

## ST. JOHN

Access to the River continued to be the primary goal of the St. John River Society during 2023. Four wharves in the Valley Waters provincial entity are almost completely repaired using funds from the Federal and Provincial governments known as the Canada Community Building Fund. SJRS successfully negotiated an extension to use the granted funds the funds until 2025. The remaining \$850,000 in funding will be put to appropriate use in 2024 season.

## ST. MARYS

The St. Marys River is a 125 kilometre stretch of water that separates the twin cities of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario and Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. The river supports a diverse community of fish and wildlife and is a popular area for recreational activities. In 2023, Algoma University completed their Tributary Enhancement Project and Community Fish Consumption Survey, a Beneficial Use Impairment was redesignated to “not impaired” status, and Algoma Steel embarked on a 4-year site greening project.



## TÄGÀ SHÄW | THIRTY MILE

According to the contractor who maintains the campsites on Thirty Mile, paddlers and boaters were plentiful on Thirty Mile in 2022. During their weekly or biweekly site visits, they encountered between one and ten groups of paddlers. Numbers peaked around long weekends and during the hunting season. Between July 15 and September 26, there were 2-4 boats with 4-10 people on the river per maintenance trip. Besides the regular maintenance of the campsite facilities, the contractor also supplied free firewood at the sites that greatly reduced damage to the sites by wood scavengers.

## TATSHENSHINI | SHÄWSHE CHÚ

Overall, the Tatshenshini River's Yukon portion retained its natural, cultural and heritage values for which the river was designated. No industrial land use permits were issued, and the existing mineral claim is static with no new developments. The most recent Backcountry Recreation Impact Monitoring (BRIM) survey of the campsites on the upper Tatshenshini was conducted in August 2019. Among the sites surveyed, there were no discernible changes to sites and impacts are minimal. There are no significant threats to the heritage values on the river.

## THAMES

The Thames River's heritage values continue to be supported by the river managers and a range of others including local First Nations, individuals, committees, clubs, agencies, and municipalities. As river managers, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) and Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (LTVCA) have a strong mandate to provide environmental and recreational programming. Cultural heritage preservation and interpretation are provided by numerous First Nations, museums, sites, plaques, reenactment societies, heritage committees and others across this large watershed.

## THREE RIVERS

No report submitted.



## TSAIH TL'AK NJIK | BONNET PLUME

Very little activity occurred in the Bonnet Plume watershed in 2023. The extent of recreational activity is not well understood but given the very challenging paddling conditions and three portages, recreational use is typically no more than two or three parties per year.