




*Ottawa* RIVERKEEPER®  
SENTINELLE *Otaouais*

2009 ANNUAL REPORT

## Our Mission.



Ottawa Riverkeeper is an independent voice for the Ottawa River, providing leadership and inspiration to protect, promote and improve its ecological health and future.

## We work collaboratively to:

- ~ Distribute reliable and independent science-based information;
- ~ Promote compliance with standards and protective regulations;
- ~ Raise awareness, educate, empower and inspire action;
- ~ Encourage responsible use of the river for the enjoyment and benefit of all.

## Our vision.

We envision an Ottawa River that is clean and healthy, provides safe drinking water, supports a diverse range of species, invites world-class recreation and enables sustainable economic activity. The river is appreciated and recognized for its natural capital and is diligently protected for the well-being of all. Future generations are proud to inherit the Ottawa River, and are motivated and inspired to respect and protect it in perpetuity.



# “A YEAR ON THE RIVER”:

## MESSAGE FROM THE RIVERKEEPER AND THE PRESIDENT

Ottawa Riverkeeper has truly become the go-to organization when it comes to all things river related. We seem to have a problem on our hands, albeit a good one... we are so much in demand that we are barely skimming the surface of what needs to be done for this amazing river of ours.

Increasingly we are getting calls on our Pollution Hotline to bring our attention to poor practices and concerning conditions on the river. Annually, we get hundreds of requests to attend meetings, sit on advisory committees, give presentations and inform community groups, municipal councils, schools and workplaces about the health of our river. We've met with the provincial and federal environment commissioners to bring our stories and concerns forward.

In the fall of this past year, our dedicated directors and staff met to review and update our strategic plan. The result is a clear vision and clear direction for leadership and action to protect the health and future of the Ottawa River and its tributaries. Our number one priority is to safeguard and improve the health of the river. We walked away from our retreat with four clear strategic directions and a swelled feeling of pride that we are taking leadership and making progress to protect our shared resource.

Our shorelines are being altered, our government agencies are approving projects to use lakes as tailing ponds, fill significant wetlands and floodplains, apply pesticides to aquatic environments and we continue to produce wastes in our communities that are polluting our river and our groundwater. Sometimes it feels like we are the American eels, fighting against the current to do what feels right.

However, there is hope. This year brings forward incredible collaborations and collective actions that will make a difference. We have partnered with Canadian musicians and artists to help promote our vision for a Canada where you can swim, drink and fish in your local waters. We are bringing Municipal and First Nation leaders from throughout the vast and diverse Ottawa River Watershed together to encourage collaboration on issues and projects that affect the health and future of the Ottawa River.

The future of our river is in our collective hands. We are working tirelessly so that future generations will be proud to inherit the Ottawa River, and will be motivated and inspired to respect and protect it in perpetuity. We all need clean water.

Sincerely,



**Meredith Brown**  
Executive Director & Riverkeeper



**David Spence**  
President



# 2009 ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

## Increasing collaboration.

The Ottawa River watershed is vast. Water from over 140,000 square kilometers – greater than the area of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark combined – eventually drains into the Ottawa River. It is home to over 1.6 million people in 250 communities, across two provinces. Coordinating efforts to protect the river is very difficult, given jurisdictional complexities across the watershed. Despite the size and importance of this basin, no single government agency exists with the mandate to preserve the health of the river.



Ottawa Riverkeeper began in 2001, with a challenging goal to increase communication and collaboration among jurisdictions. We are happy to report that significant strides have been made in this respect. Since working closely with the National Capital Commission on the Ottawa River Integrated Development Plan, a Tripartite Capital Planning Committee has been struck and now the Cities of Ottawa and Gatineau are meeting regularly to discuss the health of the Ottawa River and share information and data. At the provincial level, Ottawa Riverkeeper was the lead to bring to the attention of the Ontario government the need for interprovincial collaboration with respect to protecting drinking water for Ottawa and other communities on the Ottawa River. This spring both provinces met in Ottawa to discuss source water protection and the need for interprovincial collaboration.



On August 27, 2010, Ottawa Riverkeeper and the National Capital Commission will host the first ever Ottawa River Summit - bringing together staff, elected officials and Chiefs from across the watershed to discuss issues related to the health and wellbeing of the river. This will be a historic opportunity to overcome some of the challenges we face in managing our watershed. This type of large-scale collaboration is the best way to ensure that the concerns of all stakeholders in the Ottawa River watershed are heard at one table. It is also the only way to implement an effective plan to ensure the long-term health of the river. Though they rarely appear on maps, watersheds are important, interconnected communities. The efforts of the Ottawa River Summit will be a historic first step in recognizing that.



## Reducing local sewage spills.

In 2009, Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec experienced record amounts of precipitation and sadly, record numbers of untreated sewage overflows into the Ottawa River. Ottawa Riverkeeper has worked on the municipal wastewater file since 2006, when national team kayakers approached Ottawa Riverkeeper about the raw sewage in the river where they train. Later that year, the City of Ottawa spilled 760 million litres of untreated sewage into the river and failed to report the spill to the regulators. In 2009, the City of Ottawa reported releasing a cumulative total of over one billion litres of wastewater (storm and sewer waste) from combined sewer overflows and accidental spills. Public outrage ensued after beaches were closed, health advisories were issued and the sewage issue was exposed for what it truly is... harmful, unacceptable and most importantly, preventable. Ottawa Riverkeeper worked to educate, inform and inspire individuals to get involved in this important local issue and to submit their comments and concerns to their local representatives. We continued to work collaboratively with municipal

## Improving our federal wastewater regulations.

Municipal sewage dumping is one of the primary sources of water pollution in Canada. Even after primary and secondary treatment, municipal wastewater can include pathogens, hormone disruptors, toxic chemicals, and excess nutrients, which are detrimental to human health and natural ecosystems. The Federal government recognizes the need to take action and for the past several years they have been working on a strategy to better regulate wastewater effluent from municipalities. Ottawa Riverkeeper has been researching, attending workshops and providing feedback on the topic for several years.

Finally, in 2010 Environment Canada proposed the enactment of a Wastewater Systems Effluent Regulation to address the ongoing and serious problems caused by sewage pollution in Canadian waters. The most significant aspect of the proposed change is that the regulation would decriminalize sewage discharges that are currently illegal under the Fisheries Act. The regulation would allow wastewater systems to discharge substances in quantities

**“We all share the same river and it’s time for the communities in this region to stop polluting it with their harmful waste.”**

officials by proposing solutions to reduce the amount of sewage dumped into the river, encouraging low impact development and calling for cities to take responsibility for their own waste. Finally, in 2010, it was announced that the City of Ottawa would embark on a \$200 million dollar “Ottawa River Action Plan” to significantly reduce the amount of untreated sewage that is dumped into the river. This groundbreaking project is worth celebrating. Now, we are turning our attention to the dozens of other municipalities along the banks of the river. We all share the same river and it’s time for the communities in this region to stop polluting it with their harmful waste.

and locations that would otherwise violate s.36(3), one of the main pollution prevention provisions of that Act, and one of the strongest sources of environmental protection in Canada.

Ottawa Riverkeeper and other Canadian Waterkeepers (with considerable experience with sewage policy and law) reviewed the proposed regulation and made 16 specific recommendations to Environment Canada. We emphasized the importance of enforcing Canada’s environmental laws while achieving real solutions to sewage pollution. We submit that Environment Canada can achieve these dual purposes by preserving the applicability of section 36(3) of the Fisheries Act, while also providing detailed requirements for wastewater systems operators that focus on transparency, access to information, enforcement, and solutions for the full array of pollutants found in sewage.



## Fighting to save Canada's environmental laws.

Strong regulations are essential to the protection and conservation of our local environment. Under the banners of economic stimulus, budget reform and “streamlining”, some of Canada’s most important environmental regulations were stripped away or completely gutted in 2009. Ottawa Riverkeeper has partnered with Canadian Waterkeepers and other environmental organizations to uphold the important protective regulations that safeguard our fish, our drinking water, our access to Canadian waters, our recreation, and our environment. In 2009, Ottawa Riverkeeper worked actively on the following files; Navigable Waters Protection Act, Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and Fisheries Act. Our work on the Navigable Waters Protection Act (NWPA) included engaging citizens in the heated public debate to de-classify waterways that were otherwise deemed “navigable”, thereby reducing the protection afforded to the waterway and its ecosystems. We partnered with Canadian Waterkeepers and other organizations to submit comments, to present to House of Commons and Senate committees and to campaign for the right to free and unrestricted access Canadian waterways. We took a similarly strong position when amendments were proposed to the Canadian Environmental Assessment act that allow a shocking number of projects to move forward without federal environmental assessments. It’s now estimated that thousands of large infrastructure projects are underway, without the necessary assessments to study the current and future threats to our environment.

Although the amended Navigable Waters Protection Act and Canadian Environmental Assessment Act were eventually passed as part of federal budget bills, we’ve echoed the voice of hundreds of other organizations that claim that this type of environmental deregulation is unlawful. Environmental protection measures have no business in a budget bill, especially when there is no opportunity for the public to participate in the reform of laws that shape our future. The legal debate continues today and a related lawsuit against the Canadian federal government is pending.

## Uniting artists and activists.

Ottawa Riverkeeper, in partnership with other Canadian Waterkeepers, is working tirelessly to promote swimmable, drinkable and fishable water for everyone in our regions. The Swim Drink Fish Music club is a fresh and exciting new project to unite artists and activists to raise awareness about local water issues. Artists such as Gord Downie, Sarah Harmer, Bruce Cockburn, Great Lake Swimmers and other Canadian legends are generously sharing their music and speaking up about the need to protect our local waterways to ensure clean and safe water for future generations. We look forward to working with this inspiring group of activists in the year ahead. Thanks to our partners Lake Ontario Waterkeeper and Fraser Riverkeeper for all of their hard work on this important national project... one that has the power to reach millions of people across Canada. To become a member of the Swim Drink Fish Music club and to download tracks from participating artists, please visit: [www.swimdrinkfishmusic.com](http://www.swimdrinkfishmusic.com)



## Helping regional events go bottled water free.

Bottled water is one of the most needlessly wasteful products of our time. It costs a thousand times more than tap water, takes three times as much water to produce, creates tons of plastic waste, and encourages the private for-profit taking of a public good. Our “Drink Tap, Drink Local” campaign is spreading rapidly throughout the region and we’re encouraged and excited by the results so far. In 2009 we partnered with Ottawa Folk Festival to organize the City of Ottawa’s first “bottled water free” festival. We staffed hydration stations for festival goers to refill their own reusable water containers with safe, clean and tasty municipal tap water. The initiative diverted an estimated 10,000 plastic bottles from area landfills. Ottawa Folk Festival’s leadership has since inspired other area festivals to go green (or “blue”, as we like to say). We remain committed to this campaign in 2010. We have already worked to promote a tap water station at the Ottawa Dragonboat Festival and we are collaborating with Canada Day organizers to drastically reduce the consumption of bottled water at official Canada Day celebrations in the National Capital Region. Promoting municipal tap water is an important way to protect our local water source, the Ottawa River. Please consider going bottled water free and keep water services in public hands. For more information, please download our newly produced guide: *10 Reasons to Say No To Bottled Water*.

## Inspiring others to take action.

Our vision is for a clean and healthy Ottawa River that provides safe drinking water, supports a diverse range of species, invites world-class recreation and enables sustainable economic activity. We can’t do this alone. Ottawa Riverkeeper directs a substantial portion of its energy and resources towards engaging the public and inspiring individuals to take action. Healthy river systems make for healthy communities, and healthy communities sustain life and support future generations. In 2009, Ottawa Riverkeeper engaged tens of thousands of individuals through a number of outreach programs including; River Friends (our youth initiative), River Watch (our volunteer network on the water), speaking engagements and community events. We also produced a series of educational materials called *10 Things You Can Do For Your River* and *10 Reasons to Say No To Bottled Water* to help individuals better understand the small actions they can take to protect and preserve their local waterways. Our organization stands proud with hundreds of volunteers and thousands of citizens who want to make a difference. Together, we are a strong voice for our river.

Left: A local Riverwatcher paddles the Gatineau River, the largest tributary of the Ottawa River.

Right: Hon. Peter Milliken (Speaker of the House of Commons), Meredith Brown




# SPOTLIGHT


In June 2009, Ottawa Riverkeeper hosted the first local Swim Drink Fish Music Party, featuring Juno-award winning artist Sarah Harmer. Over 200 guests joined us for an inspiring and thought provoking evening of music and spoken word. Thank you to everyone who helped make this event a huge success.



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The strength of Ottawa Riverkeeper is in people... our volunteers and supporters. Ottawa Riverkeeper's annual appreciation night is a small gesture of our deep appreciation and gratitude for the hundreds of people who support our work and share our vision. Without you, our work would not be possible. Thanks to all for participating and to CUBE Gallery for hosting the event. 



In July, Ottawa Riverkeeper's dedicated River Watchers met in Fitzroy Harbour to share successes, concerns and ideas. Our River Watchers are our eyes and ears on the river and in communities spread around the watershed. We all share the same passion... protecting the health of the Ottawa River. 



For the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, Ottawa Riverkeeper was named the title charity for the 2009 Ottawa Riverkeeper Triathlon/Duathlon. The event draws 900+ participants to the shores of the Ottawa River at Britannia Beach, and reminds us that the river is here for our enjoyment. Thank you to Somersault Promotions for organizing this event, to the volunteers who made it possible, and to the participants who raised pledges to support Ottawa Riverkeeper's projects and programs.





## THANK YOU

Ottawa Riverkeeper would like to thank all of the individuals and organizations who generously supported our work between April 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010. All donations, small-to-large, help us reach our goals for a clean and healthy river system. **We sincerely appreciate your contribution.**

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT & FOUNDATIONS

#### Stewards (\$50,000 and above)

The Ontario Trillium Foundation

#### Benefactors (\$10,000 - \$49,000)

Adobe Corporation  
Community Foundation of Ottawa  
TD Friends of the Environment Fund  
YMCA Eco Internship Program

#### Protectors (\$1,000 - \$9,999)

Character Creative  
Environment Canada  
Lassonde, Inc.  
Mountain Equipment Co-op  
Shell Environmental Fund  
Somersault Promotions  
Ottawa Triathlon Club  
United Way  
Ville de Gatineau

#### Defenders (\$500 - \$999)

Bell Canada  
Bridgehead  
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Rainbow Natural Foods  
TD Bank Financial Group  
Trailhead-Rideau Outfitters Inc.  
Windhorse Yoga

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Ole Hendrickson  
Paul Krayne  
David Lazzarato  
Parham Momtahan  
Barry Sims  
Barry Stemshorn

A special thank you to all of our individual members and donors, and the dedicated group of individuals who provide ongoing monthly support.

## OUR TEAM STAFF & BOARD

### Staff

Meredith Brown,  
*Executive Director & Riverkeeper*  
Natasha Wilson, *Director,  
Operations & Public Relations*  
Karen Maw,  
*Outreach Coordinator (Intern)*  
Jessie Corey,  
*Project Coordinator (Intern)*  
David Gick, *Campaign/Event  
Coordinator (Summer Student)*

### Board of Directors

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Marc Smith  
Carrie Wallace

**And our deepest, most sincere thanks to the hundreds of individuals who volunteer and donate their time to support our work. We could not function without these passionate and dedicated individuals who share our vision for a clean and healthy Ottawa River. Thank you.**





# FINANCIAL REPORT

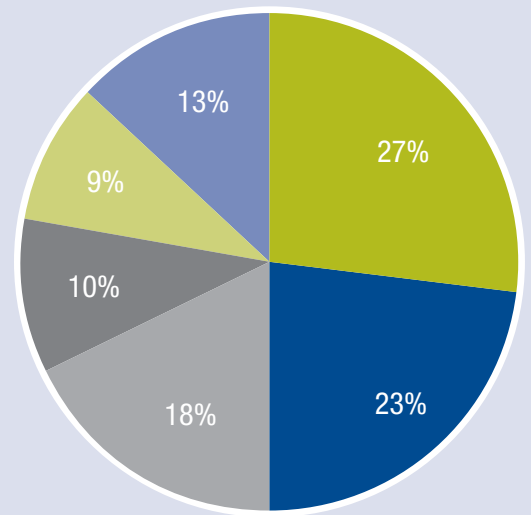
(April 1, 2009 – March 31, 2010)

## Revenue

Foundation Grants	\$51,337
Individual Donations	\$42,396
Corporate Donations	\$33,190
Government	\$19,447
Special Projects	\$17,666
Events/Presentations	\$15,969
Sale of Merchandise	\$3,349
Miscellaneous	\$3,377
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$186,731</b>

## Expenses

Salary, Benefits & Professional fees	\$172,479
Office lease & Administration	\$26,453
Outreach materials & Promotion	\$19,443
Communications	\$4,047
Travel	\$2,058
Conference & Membership fees	\$2,881
Bank charges	\$974
Amortization of capital assets	\$2,931
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$231,266</b>



- Foundation Grants
- Individual Donations
- Corporate Donations
- Government
- Events
- Other

Our complete audited statements are available on request. For more information, please contact [info@ottawariverkeeper.ca](mailto:info@ottawariverkeeper.ca)

Ottawa Riverkeeper is a registered Canadian charity  
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- ~ The report was printed on Rolland Enviro100, 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper, made in Canada
- ~ The white margins around every page mean no paper trimming occurred and waste was avoided.
- ~ All inks in the report are Saphira Bio Inks - ultra low volatile organic compound (VOC) content made from renewable raw materials, and were used instead of water based inks to achieved zero chemical disposal and save litres of water in the clean-up process
- ~ The staples are made from recycled metal

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**Defending the Ottawa River,  
Protecting our communities.**