

PROTECTING THE  
OTTAWA RIVER  
AND ITS TRIBUTARIES



Ottawa RIVERKEEPER®  
SENTINELLE *Outaouais*



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**PROTECTING THE  
OTTAWA RIVER  
AND ITS TRIBUTARIES**

**OTTAWA RIVERKEEPER - ANNUAL REPORT 2010**



## INTRODUCTION

Ottawa Riverkeeper is a local grassroots charity dedicated to protecting the health and future of the Ottawa River and its tributaries. Since 2001, we have worked with individuals, community groups and all levels of government to promote increased water stewardship and collective action on issues that affect our ability to safely swim, drink and fish from our local waterways. Ottawa Riverkeeper is a member of Waterkeeper Alliance, an international grassroots organization founded by Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

### **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.

### **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.



*Summit delegates gather on the shore of the Ottawa River as they prepare for a day of learning, information sharing and relationship building.*



Alexandra Cousteau, granddaughter of famous explorer Jacques Cousteau, joins Meredith Brown and Geoff Green to talk to the local community about why protecting and conserving our water resources is so important.



Ottawa Riverkeeper staff join Jim Coffey, founder and Director of Esprit Rafting, for a day of whitewater rafting down the Ottawa River.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

### Board

- Geoff Green (Chair)  
*Founder and Executive Director, Students on Ice*
- John Booth (Vice Chair)  
*Partner, Conservation Finance International*
- Mark Patry (Treasurer)  
*Partner, Welch & Company*
- Regan Morris (Secretary)  
*Legal Counsel, Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission*
- David Spence (Past President)  
*Co-founder, Wetlands Preservation Group*

- Barry Stemshorn  
*Senior Fellow, Jarislowsky Chair, University of Ottawa*
- Timothy Kluge  
*President & CEO, Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health*
- Marc Smith  
*Director, Canada Post*
- Carrie Wallace  
*Managing Partner, Common Ground Chelsea*
- Laurel Rosene  
*Advisor, Scouts Canada & Volunteer, YMCA/YWCA Canoe Club*

Lara Van Loon  
*Former Riverkeeper*

### Staff

- Meredith Brown  
*Riverkeeper*
- Natasha Wilson  
*Executive Director*
- Jessie Corey  
*Stewardship Coordinator  
Program Manager,  
Pollution Hotline*
- Sabrina Bowman  
*Project Manager*
- David Gick  
*Campaign & Events  
Coordinator  
(Summer Intern)*





## “A YEAR ON THE RIVER”

### *MESSAGE FROM THE RIVERKEEPER AND THE CHAIR*



Dear Friends,

It's been an exciting and ambitious year at Ottawa Riverkeeper. This year marks our 10th anniversary, an important milestone for the organization and our community as a whole. Formed in 2001 by dedicated volunteers, Ottawa Riverkeeper has grown into a lively grassroots charity with full-time staff, strong partners and collaborators, a dedicated and experienced board of directors, and tremendous support from volunteers and the community at large.

Together, over the past decade, we have made significant strides towards better protection for our magnificent river and all that it offers us.

Water knows no boundaries. The need to take collective action and assume a shared sense of responsibility for the entire Ottawa River watershed has intensified. Our river is continuously receiving significant quantities of pollution and alterations have been made throughout the watershed that have serious long-term consequences. Protective regulations are weakening, painfully absent or inconsistently enforced. This is an important time for us to unite and act as a strong voice for our rivers, lakes and streams. Together we can defend our rights to swim, drink, paddle and fish in clean waterways.

In 2010, Ottawa Riverkeeper dedicated its efforts in three primary areas; encouraging water stewardship and inspiring individuals to take action; researching, investigating and following up on issues and threats; and increasing cooperation between communities, regulators and agencies. It was a tremendously busy year, as we worked diligently to carry out programs and projects, while maintaining the flexibility needed to respond to urgent issues and immediate threats.



With increased responsibility and a rising number of concerns, we identified the need to strengthen the core of our organization and set a clear direction for the future. In 2010, the Board of Directors appointed Natasha Wilson as Executive Director, responsible for carrying out a focused 3-year strategic plan. Having two strong leaders in separate Riverkeeper and Executive Director positions allows our organization to do what it does best, to focus on identifying important and emerging issues, proposing realistic solutions, and maintaining our role as a trusted and respected community watchdog.

As we chart a course through 2011, launching innovative programs and strengthening our ability to proactively work on issues, we'd like to thank our many volunteers, partners and donors. Your generous and passionate support makes it possible for us to realize our collective vision for a clean and healthy river.

Thank you for being such an important part of this exciting and inspirational 10-year journey. We invite new and existing members to continue on this journey with us, contact us, and learn more about our work, the issues and future plans.

*We need you and the river needs you...*

Sincerely,

Meredith Brown  
*Riverkeeper  
Chair, Advisory Committee,  
Ottawa River Summit*

Geoff Green  
*Chair, Ottawa Riverkeeper  
Founder, Students on Ice*



# 2010 ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

## Ottawa River Summit

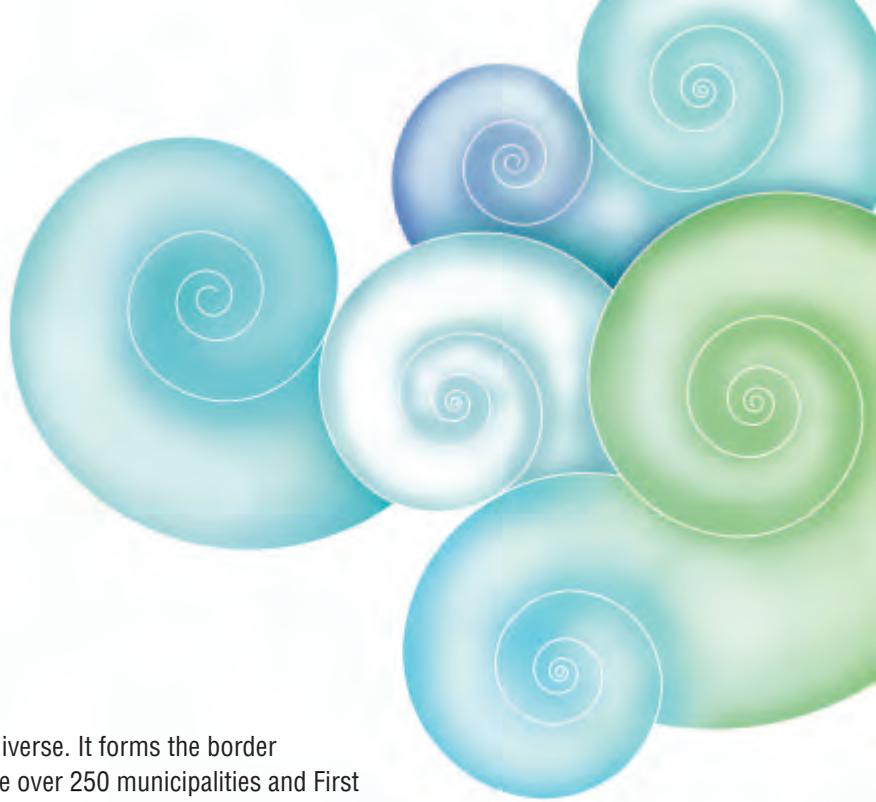
The Ottawa River Watershed is vast and diverse. It forms the border between Quebec and Ontario and there are over 250 municipalities and First Nation communities throughout the watershed. Communities across the landscape vary in size, wealth and capacity. Different languages are spoken and different laws, policies and cultures exist from place to place. Issues of water management are complicated; there are overlapping jurisdictions and general confusion about roles, responsibilities and rights when it comes to managing water. In the watershed there are two provincial governments with multiple agencies working to protect water, several federal agencies are involved and each municipality and First Nation community have their own laws and policies to guide action. Unfortunately there is no government agency that is tasked with managing the overall health of the river and there is no management plan or conservation strategy to guide our collective actions.

Ottawa Riverkeeper became increasingly frustrated by the lack of awareness, information sharing and coordination throughout the watershed. We decided to take a leadership role to address the ongoing governance and coordination challenges in the watershed. Our belief is simple: collective action is necessary to protect our great river. With excellent partners and support from the National Capital Commission and Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ottawa Riverkeeper set out to organize the first Ottawa River Summit.

On August 27th, 2010 an exceptional mix of invited guests convened on the banks of the Ottawa River, beside the Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec. Elder Peter Decontie, Fire Keeper of the Anishinabe Algonquin First Nation and Verna McGregor travelled from Maniwaki to perform an opening blessing that included smudging, an Algonquin prayer and a water blessing.

Algonquin Chiefs Kirby Whiteduck (Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn) and Gilbert Whiteduck (Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg) welcomed everyone to their traditional territory. Chief Kirby reminded us that when the Algonquin people first invited Champlain to Morris Island in the Kitchissippi River, Champlain wrote in his journal that he drank fine, clear water from the river; something few people dare to do today.

Marie Lemay, CEO of the National Capital Commission emphasized the importance of First Nations in water governance and acknowledged that we have much to learn. Mme Lemay's ability to facilitate municipal, provincial and federal governments working in the National Capital Region is admirable and her understanding of the importance of the Ottawa River to the region indis-





putable. The NCC was an important partner to help make the Ottawa River Summit a success. The cities of Ottawa and Gatineau were also vital partners who generously supported the Ottawa River Summit and have a very important role to play in protecting the health of the Ottawa River.

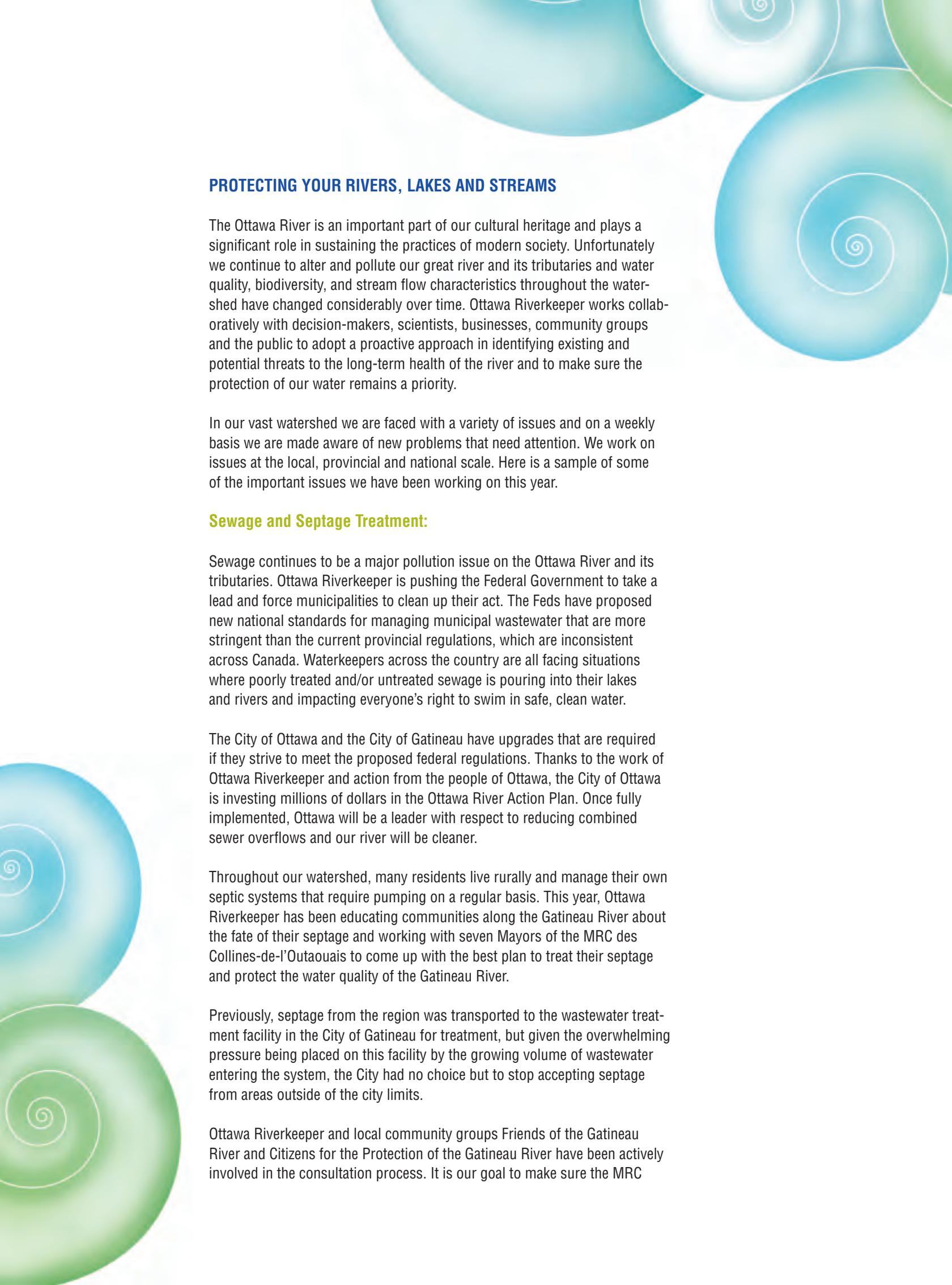
The level of participation for the first Summit exceeded our expectations; the room was bursting with well over 100 delegates from every corner of the watershed. There were 25 municipalities represented (many represented by mayors), 6 First Nation Chiefs, including the Grand Chief of the Algonquin First Nation, seven watershed councils from Quebec, three conservation authorities from Ontario as well as key agency players from the federal government and the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. We were also graced by the presence of Algonquin Elder William Commanda, who is internationally known for his work in promoting interracial and multicultural harmony, justice and respect for the earth.

An integral component to the Summit was the opportunity to have significant water-related projects and initiatives presented and discussed amongst attendees. Presentations were made by Meredith Brown (Ottawa Riverkeeper), Larry McDermot (Plenty Canada), Mary Trudeau (Marbek Consultants), Nicola Crawhall (Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Cities Initiative), Philippe Morel (St. Lawrence Action Plan), Frédéric Tremblay (City of Gatineau), Isabelle Pitre (Municipality of Chelsea), Mayor Al Lunney (Municipality of Mississippi Mills), Dixon Weir (City of Ottawa), Mayor Jeanne Charlebois (Town of Hawkesbury), and Jim Fraser (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources).

Summit attendees participated in small group discussions to share their own experiences with water resource management, highlight any challenges that they face, identify tools and resources needed to better protect their region's water assets, and suggest next steps for a more collaborative approach in the Ottawa River Watershed. One of the key outcomes of group discussion was the consensus that we can no longer consider water quality and quantity issues on a case-by-case basis across the watershed region; we must change how we manage and value water. There was also a loud and consistent message from delegates that we have a need for some kind of "organizing body" that can bring jurisdictions together and be a central repository for information and knowledge.

The Ottawa River Summit was a significant milestone in the history of watershed management for the Ottawa River, and served as a first step towards opening the lines of communication between decision-makers from all corners of the watershed. We are very proud to have been a part of this historic event, and we look forward to strengthening the relationships built at the Summit and continuing our pursuit of integrated watershed management and true collaboration on the issues threatening our precious water resources.





## PROTECTING YOUR RIVERS, LAKES AND STREAMS

The Ottawa River is an important part of our cultural heritage and plays a significant role in sustaining the practices of modern society. Unfortunately we continue to alter and pollute our great river and its tributaries and water quality, biodiversity, and stream flow characteristics throughout the watershed have changed considerably over time. Ottawa Riverkeeper works collaboratively with decision-makers, scientists, businesses, community groups and the public to adopt a proactive approach in identifying existing and potential threats to the long-term health of the river and to make sure the protection of our water remains a priority.

In our vast watershed we are faced with a variety of issues and on a weekly basis we are made aware of new problems that need attention. We work on issues at the local, provincial and national scale. Here is a sample of some of the important issues we have been working on this year.

### **Sewage and Septage Treatment:**

Sewage continues to be a major pollution issue on the Ottawa River and its tributaries. Ottawa Riverkeeper is pushing the Federal Government to take a lead and force municipalities to clean up their act. The Feds have proposed new national standards for managing municipal wastewater that are more stringent than the current provincial regulations, which are inconsistent across Canada. Waterkeepers across the country are all facing situations where poorly treated and/or untreated sewage is pouring into their lakes and rivers and impacting everyone's right to swim in safe, clean water.

The City of Ottawa and the City of Gatineau have upgrades that are required if they strive to meet the proposed federal regulations. Thanks to the work of Ottawa Riverkeeper and action from the people of Ottawa, the City of Ottawa is investing millions of dollars in the Ottawa River Action Plan. Once fully implemented, Ottawa will be a leader with respect to reducing combined sewer overflows and our river will be cleaner.

Throughout our watershed, many residents live rurally and manage their own septic systems that require pumping on a regular basis. This year, Ottawa Riverkeeper has been educating communities along the Gatineau River about the fate of their septage and working with seven Mayors of the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais to come up with the best plan to treat their septage and protect the water quality of the Gatineau River.

Previously, septage from the region was transported to the wastewater treatment facility in the City of Gatineau for treatment, but given the overwhelming pressure being placed on this facility by the growing volume of wastewater entering the system, the City had no choice but to stop accepting septage from areas outside of the city limits.

Ottawa Riverkeeper and local community groups Friends of the Gatineau River and Citizens for the Protection of the Gatineau River have been actively involved in the consultation process. It is our goal to make sure the MRC



council has all of the information necessary to make an informed and responsible decision regarding the proposed regional septage treatment facility. We have already had a positive influence and the Mayors have agreed to at least meet the proposed federal standards. Communities along the river have been rallying and marching to get an important message across to the decision-makers in the region: Let's do all we can to ensure the Gatineau River is protected for its priceless recreation, tourism and heritage values. We want to continue to have swimmable, drinkable, fishable water!

### **Recovery Strategy for the American Eel:**

The Ottawa River was once teeming with American Eel and during migration, the eels were known to jam turbines and water wheels in the river. Downstream of hydroelectric facilities it was common to see thousands of dead eels cut up by the turbines. Today researchers struggle to catch them; they are desperately trying to estimate the declining population. In early 2011, the province of Ontario released a draft Recovery Strategy for the American Eel, which is now classified as an endangered species both provincially and federally. Ottawa Riverkeeper has put forth several recommendations to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in implementing the recovery strategy.

Clearly we have a global responsibility to recover this important species, but more importantly we have a responsibility to re-establish the American Eel throughout its native Ontario range, at population levels that restore the full cultural relationship with eels in Aboriginal communities and for Ontario residents. To do this will require collective efforts among provincial and federal governments, owners of waterpower facilities, and Aboriginal people. As the authors of the recovery strategy eloquently wrote: "to recover this species will not only aid in the restoration of lost ecological services, and restore biodiversity, cultural and natural heritage values, but will be a significant milestone in recovering and strengthening relationships among our cultures". If we succeed to bring back the American eel we will all benefit in many ways.

### **Proposed Dams on the Petawawa River:**

Since early 2009, Xeneca Power Developments Inc. has been moving forward with plans to build two new hydroelectric facility on the Petawawa River at the Big Eddy rapids and Half Mile Rapids that threaten local fisheries, biodiversity and navigability of the river. In late 2010, Xeneca published an official Project Description for the proposed Big Eddy project. The official Project Description has numerous shortcomings. They made no attempt to address changes to instream flow conditions of the river, did not stipulate provisions for the safe passage of migratory fish species such as the American Eel and Lake Sturgeon in the river, largely ignored public concern over the loss of navigability of the river, and have yet to adequately address the scope of the potential cumulative impacts of the proposed project.

Ottawa Riverkeeper is involved in ongoing consultation and has formally submitted comments to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environmental Commissioner. We do not think the small-scale hydro project should be approved and we have documented how the costs associated with building the two dams on the river far outweigh the benefits. Before any dams are approved on the Petawawa River, we are recommending that a Watershed Management Plan be developed with the support of all local interests and stakeholders, and we remain committed to ensuring that all decisions related to this project are in the best interest of the river and the communities it supports. The Petawawa and Dumoine Rivers are the only two tributaries of the Ottawa River that are not dammed. The headwaters of the Petawawa River are in Algonquin Park and the habitat this river provides is critical for many fish populations, including the endangered American Eel and Lake Sturgeon; we must not dam it and isolate it from the Ottawa River.

### **Pollution Hotline Program:**

The tangled web of jurisdictional authority over our water resources can often be frustrating and presents a significant challenge to reporting and following up on pollution issues throughout the watershed. Not knowing which government agency is responsible for enforcing the number of different acts, regulations and by-laws that govern our water can be highly discouraging, and in some cases can prevent serious issues from being reported to the appropriate regulators.

Ottawa Riverkeeper's Pollution Hotline Program is an important way for the public to bring attention to threats that may otherwise go unreported. Issues reported through the Pollution Hotline have included problematic shoreline work, fish kills, illegal dumping of refuse in rivers and streams, sewage leaks, and illegal channel alterations, among many others. We dedicate a significant amount of time and resources to ensuring that these issues are documented and investigated by the appropriate regulators so that future generations can safely swim, drink, and fish from our cherished waterways.

### **INSPIRING OTHERS TO TAKE ACTION**

Water is a shared resource and we have a collective responsibility to protect it, respect it and conserve it for this generation and the next. The role that the public plays in the work that Ottawa Riverkeeper does and in decision making processes that govern our water resources is not to be underestimated. In recognizing the incredible value of public involvement, one of our priorities for 2010 was focusing our efforts on public education and community engagement to mobilize a strong and diverse community of water stewards.

### **Road Salts Awareness Campaign:**

The benefits of reducing individual, commercial and municipal use of road salts are numerous; reduced number of toxins entering local waterways, reduced damage to public infrastructure, and more. Salt never goes away, it only accumulates. It can pollute groundwater and make well water unsafe to drink. Through a variety of tools and channels we worked on educating the public about the detrimental effects that road salt can have on the local environment, habitat and ecosystems, and encouraging the use of safe alternatives.



*Over 400 community members gathered to show their support for a clean and healthy Gatineau River in response to the proposed septage treatment facility in the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais.*

*Photo credit:  
Mike Beedell Photography*



*Gatineau River Protest*

### **Protecting the South March Highlands:**

This year we became involved in the issue of KNL Developments moving forward with development activities in a highly ecologically sensitive area in the South March Highlands (Beaver Pond Forest). We worked with community groups to oppose the development, promoted a campaign to bring the issue to the attention of municipal and provincial decision-makers, and provided recommendations for reducing damage to natural water features and improving stormwater management capabilities.

### **Bottled Water Free Events**

Tap water is free, more heavily regulated than bottled water, does not needlessly consume water in production and delivery, and doesn't contribute to the growing problem of plastic waste. We are working to promote the advantages of "drinking tap, drinking local" and encouraging events to go bottled water free. We like to remind others that protecting the river means protecting a drinking water supply for over 2,000,000 people in the region. This year we helped the following festivals reduce bottled water consumption: Ottawa Folkfest, Dragon Boat Festival and Canada Day Celebrations on Parliament Hill.

### **Riverwatch**

One of our longest-standing outreach programs, Riverwatch, has been gaining momentum and volunteer support. Our network of dedicated Riverwatchers are an extension of our eyes and ears on the river throughout the vast watershed region. This program builds capacity among individuals and fosters the development of community stewardship groups along the Ottawa River and its tributaries. We work with our Riverwatchers to further establish our presence outside of the National Capital Region, and to track pollution and development issues threatening the water resources in these communities.

### **Public & Group Presentations**

Throughout the year, we have had the pleasure of speaking to numerous audiences and community groups about local, regional and national water issues. Our goals are to share knowledge about important issues and inspire individuals to take action, which creates a stronger collective voice and promotes community water stewardship beyond the reach of our staff, members and volunteers.



# THANK YOU

Ottawa Riverkeeper would like to thank all of the individuals and organizations who generously supported our work between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011. 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  
YMCA – *Eco Internship Program*

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

Community Foundation of Ottawa  
Mountain Equipment Co-op  
Ville de Gatineau

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

Centraide United Way  
Character Creative  
Ottawa Triathlon Club  
Patagonia Environmental Grants  
Shell Environmental Fund  
Stratos, Inc.  
Norcross Wildlife Foundation  
Public Safety Canada Green Stewardship Committee  
Communityworks, Inc.

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

Mountain Equipment Co-op – Ottawa Store  
OWL Rafting  
Somersault Promotions  
Alterna Savings  
Trailhead-Rideau Outfitters  
Marbek Resource Consultants

### Community Support Circle (\$250 - \$499)

Blend Creations  
Capital Junk  
Logs End Inc.  
Rainbow Natural Foods  
Green Door Restaurant

### 1% For The Planet Members

[www.onepercentfortheplanet.org](http://www.onepercentfortheplanet.org)

Blend Creations  
Character Creative  
Level Six  
Ottawa Triathlon Club

## INDIVIDUAL DONORS

### Patrons

David Spence and Helen Hirsh  
Spence  
Barry Stemshorn  
Jean and Richard Van Loon  
John Booth

### Guardian

Dan Tait  
Regan Morris  
Ole Hendrickson  
Mark Patry  
Debbie Ferrigan  
Parham Momtahan  
Barry Sims  
Lara Van Loon  
Mark Scriver

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

*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, 2010 – March 31, 2011)

## Revenue

Foundation Grants	\$ 79,673
Individual Donations	\$ 27,683
Corporate Donations	\$ 68,464
Government	\$ 46,258
Special Projects	\$ 22,360
Events/Presentations	\$ 7,973
Sale of Merchandise	\$ 150
Miscellaneous	\$ 4,271

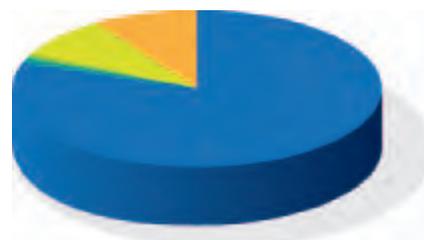


**Total** **\$ 256,832**

## Expenses

### Program Costs

Salaries & Benefits	\$ 172,122
Contracted Services	\$ 2,000
Travel	\$ 2,556
Program Materials	\$ 18,113
Events	\$ 19,583



**Total Program Costs** **\$ 214,374**

## Administrative Costs

Rent, Utilities & Communications	\$ 25,783
Bank Fees	\$ 1,024
Membership & Conference Fees	\$ 2,562
Insurance	\$ 1,254
Amortization of Capital Assets	\$ 2,207
Audit	\$ 2,453

**Total Administrative Costs** **\$ 35,283**

**Total** **\$ 249,657**

**Net Income** **\$ 7,177**

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 (BN: 862697059RR0001)



The design and layout for this report was generously provided by Earthlore Communications

[www.earthlore.ca](http://www.earthlore.ca)



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*Defending the Ottawa River,  
protecting our communities.*

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