

Twinning our Capital Rivers:

# Declaration

By the REPRESENTATIVES of

*OTTAWA RIVERKEEPER* and *POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER*

The Capital Rivers of Canada (the Ottawa, at the confluence of the Gatineau and Rideau Rivers) and the United States (the Potomac, at the confluence of the Anacostia River) are integral to our past, present, and future: abundant clean freshwater underpins our health, prosperity, security, and survival. In twinning the Capital Rivers of our nations, we celebrate our shared blessing of abundant freshwater and we honour our responsibility to safeguard this invaluable and irreplaceable resource. Through twinning, we aspire to model sustainable stewardship of healthy rivers in which we can safely swim, drink, and fish.

Twinning our Capital Rivers is a grassroots diplomatic endeavour. Participation is voluntary, inclusive, and collaborative. As freshwater is invaluable and shared, we solicit the support and active contribution of all sectors of society: every level of government, public organizations, institutions, and communities, private citizens and private enterprise. All participants can make distinct contributions based on specific ability and opportunity. To ensure all contributions support our common goal, participants are guided by the considerations elaborated below.

## Considerations

We acknowledge the importance of water:

Water is an essential element that sustains and connects all life.

Water is our most valuable resource.

Abundant clean freshwater has been instrumental to our past and is vital to our future—our ongoing health, prosperity, security, and survival.

Water should be considered as a public trust and effectively managed for the use and enjoyment of all citizens.

Further, we acknowledge the importance of our Capital Rivers:

Our Capital Rivers are formally recognized for outstanding natural, cultural, and economic heritage. The Ottawa River is designated as Canadian Heritage River in Ontario and as Lieu Historique in Québec. The Potomac River is designated as an American Heritage River.

Our Capital Rivers and their watersheds are home to hundreds of species of fish, birds and marine mammals, and

they support millions of people across a diverse landscape of urban and rural communities. Our Rivers support agriculture and industry, and inspire spiritual and cultural practices and waterborne recreation.

Finally, we acknowledge the importance of stewardship:

We recognize and learn from the long-term rights, interests, roles, and knowledge of Canadian First Nations and Native Americans in the management, use, and conservation of water and river health.

The ecological integrity and health of our rivers and their watersheds are critical to providing the diverse environmental, social, and economic benefits that residents depend upon.

Science is the basis for objective, evidence-based decisions. While continuing to develop the scientific insight required to understand, protect, and sustain our rivers, we seek the opportunity to exchange data, knowledge, experience, and ongoing research. We also invoke best practices, innovation, and adaptive management.

River stewardship is a shared responsibility that requires the support and active engagement of all sectors of society: municipal, provincial/state, and federal governments, public institutions and organizations, private enterprise, and private citizens. Notably, stakeholders can make unique contributions based on specific ability, knowledge and opportunity.

To transcend the jurisdictional barriers within watersheds and across nations, we will strive to establish strategic collaboration among analogous and distinct organizations to facilitate integration, sharing, and discussion of data, knowledge, experience, research, and best practices.

Outreach and education are essential to enhance public awareness about the significance of our Capital Rivers and the implications of human activities on their health.

Personal experience, exploration, and enjoyment create and enhance the appreciation of our Capital Rivers. Such engagement is facilitated by physical infrastructure that enables public access and by river-based events that entice participation.

Representing Potomac Riverkeeper: Philip Musegaas

Representing Ottawa Riverkeeper: Meredith Brown

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Signature

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Signature

Signed in Gatineau, CANADA, on this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the month of September, 2017.