

Canadian Heritage Rivers System STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2018



Committed to Canada's River Heritage

This plan is not simply a working document for the Board or the program's jurisdictional members. It is designed to serve as a catalyst for governments, communities, and local people to take action for their river, their community, and their lives.

This strategic plan was approved at the Canadian Parks Council meeting of Ministers held September 11, 2007 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The ten-year plan will be implemented from April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2018.

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) has evolved into a community-inspired, cooperative program of the federal, provincial and territorial governments of Canada. The program celebrates and honours our shared river heritage and represents an enduring part of our national heritage and identity.

The CHRS is administered by the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board. The Board is made up of members appointed by federal, provincial, and territorial governments. This renewed ten-year strategic plan and its accompanying workplan set the vision and overarching priorities for the program and serve as

the blueprint for the future of the system. This plan is not simply a working document for the Board or the program's jurisdictional members. Rather, it is designed to serve as a catalyst for governments, communities, and local people to take action for their river, their community, and their lives.

This plan is written to engage all Canadians in caring for our rivers. However, as a Board, we recognize that the plan cannot be effectively implemented without strong leadership and sufficient resources. Through the Board, all participating government jurisdictions remain committed to providing that leadership and securing the resources required to move the program forward.

Clear communications are essential to building awareness of the CHRS as a model for river management and sustainable living. We are extending our efforts to spread the word about the CHRS and its benefits locally, nationally and internationally. As we continue to raise the profile of the CHRS and build on its many achievements, we are also working to facilitate a network of "river-people" who are committed to animating and conserving Canadian rivers and their communities.

This strategic plan represents a commitment to work together to fulfill a renewed vision for the Canadian Heritage Rivers program. The Canadian Heritage Rivers Board strongly endorses this strategy, and invites all Canadians to join us at the headwaters of this journey to build the best river conservation program in the world.

The Canadian Heritage Rivers Board



Managing a Water Legacy

A NEW ROLE FOR THE CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM

Canada is blessed with an abundance of freshwater. Annually, Canada's rivers discharge 7% of the world's renewable water supply. But even with such affluence, freshwater is a precious endowment. Our rivers have provided countless generations with a quality of life that uniquely characterizes our history, communities, and land. Rivers are central to our overall health and well-being.

To celebrate the role and value that rivers contribute to Canadians, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments united in 1984 to establish a collaborative program, the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, to provide significant Canadian rivers with a special heritage status. Interest and momentum for the program grew over time as governments, communities, and citizens began to understand and experience the many benefits made possible through river designation.

The main goal of the CHRS for the first ten years of the program was to cooperatively build a system with heritage rivers in each province and territory. For the next decade, as set out in the 1996-2006 strategic plan, the program focused on building value and recognition in the system, and sustaining river heritage.

Totalling almost 11,000 kilometres of waterways across the nation in 41 heritage rivers, the Canadian Heritage Rivers System has matured into a valued nation-wide program, which is recognized around the world as a model for river



conservation and community engagement. Canadian Heritage Rivers include a myriad of renowned national waterscapes, magnificent cultural treasures, and deeply entrenched societal icons that affect how we view the world and ourselves. The Canadian Heritage Rivers System is an expression of our nation's history, our beautiful landscapes, and our way of living.

The CHRS not only enhances the profile of “exceptional Canadian rivers” but also advances river stewardship throughout the country. This role has never been more important as rivers are being affected by unprecedented change and development. Canada's abundant water supply and relatively small population contributes positively to some of these issues, but we know that we are not immune. Health problems related to water pollution in general are estimated to cost Canadians \$300 million per year. Waterpower is currently used to meet 62% of Canada's electrical needs. In-stream water uses and withdrawals are increasing. Settlement, industrial and agricultural uses are increasing competition for a finite water supply. 60% of Canada's freshwater flows north, limiting water access to the 85% of our population that lives within 300 kilometres of our southern border with the United States.

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As our communities grow and evolve, the vital role that rivers play in our lives must be considered and managed out of respect for our traditions, identity, and prosperity. This too is recognized by the United Nations, which declared 2005-2015 as “Water for Life – the International Decade for Action” in recognition of the importance of sustainable water management to food, health, environment, disaster prevention, energy, scarcity, culture, sanitation, pollution and agriculture.

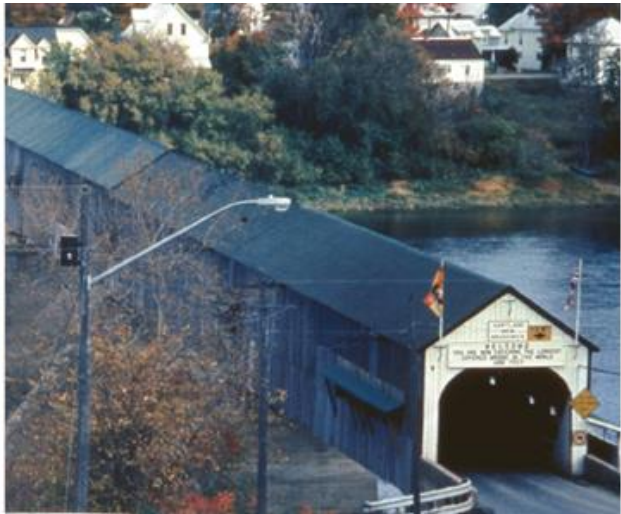
Canada and the CHRS have a role to play in meeting this challenge. People take deep pride in the rivers that immediately touch and reflect their sense of place. This profound ethic of caring, fostered through the Canadian Heritage Rivers

System, will help to ensure that Canada's rivers continue to thrive for generations. More importantly, the CHRS can continue to grow as a model of river stewardship that can be shared with river communities around the world.

CHARTING A COURSE – THE NEXT 10 YEARS

In 2004, the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board confirmed the need for a renewed strategic plan, and began discussions to build a vision to lead the CHRS into its third decade. The Board recognized that the CHRS is more than a commemoration program. It reaches beyond the banks of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System by engaging society in valuing and sustaining rivers and their communities. To move the program forward in its third decade, the strategic plan must reflect that fundamental shift in the program's philosophy.

Building on the success of the 1996-2006 strategic plan, and recognizing the range of new challenges and opportunities, in the following pages, this document identifies four key priority areas, and reaffirms the program's core values and principles. In addition, the strategic plan is complemented by an implementation work plan that prioritizes outcomes, establishes clear targets, and specifies the actions required to meet those targets.



Vision and Principles

PRINCIPLES

At the heart of this strategic plan are seven principles that speak to the spirit of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. These principles are integral to all aspects of the CHRS and are central to implementing this plan.

Recognition: The CHRS celebrates select Canadian rivers by distinguishing them as Canadian Heritage Rivers. River designation has no legislative authority. Jurisdictions retain their traditional powers and management responsibilities.

Respect: The CHRS respects community, landowner, and individual rights and concerns in the nomination, designation and management of Heritage Rivers. The CHRS recognizes Aboriginal rights and interests, and the program honours the special relationship between Aboriginal communities and rivers. All Canadians enjoy the privilege to access and celebrate Canada's river heritage – rivers are for everyone.

Voluntary Participation: The CHRS is a public trust. Local citizens champion the program. Actions taken are grass-roots driven. Governments lend support and guidance.

Leadership: The federal, provincial, and territorial governments are strongly committed to the CHRS. The partners support the promotion of the CHRS and ongoing monitoring of designated rivers, and the long-term operation and management of heritage rivers within their jurisdictions.

Collaboration and Partnership: The CHRS strives to inform, inspire, and involve Canadians to connect with Canada's river heritage and share in its safe-keeping. Education, awareness, and action is critical to successful river stewardship and wise management.

Integrity: Rivers in the system are designated and managed to meet the heritage values and guidelines set out by the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board. The CHRS values scientific and traditional knowledge.

Sustainability: The CHRS recognizes that healthy rivers are essential to life on earth. Successful river management must protect river health in order to deliver

the full range of ecological, economic, and social benefits for present and future generations.

VISION

We envision a system of Canadian Heritage Rivers that serves as a Model of Stewardship – one that engages society in valuing the Heritage of Rivers and River Communities as essential to identity, health and quality of life.

PRIORITIES

1. Build a comprehensive and representative system that recognizes Canada's river heritage
2. Conserve natural, cultural, and recreational values and integrity
3. Engage partners to maximize the full range of benefits associated with the Canadian Heritage Rivers program
4. Foster excellence in river management



Strategic Framework

The goals and outcomes outlined in this framework will be delivered through an implementation work plan that prioritizes outcomes, establishes clear targets and specifies the actions to meet those targets.

GOAL: By 2018, there will be a comprehensive system of Canadian Heritage Rivers representing the full range of natural, cultural and recreational values of importance to Canadians.

OUTCOMES:

- a) Components of a comprehensive and representative system of Canada's outstanding rivers are identified and understood.
- b) Criteria and policies are refined to support the identification of additional rivers for inclusion in the CHRS.
- c) Opportunities to strengthen the CHRS are filled through the nomination of key outstanding rivers of Canadian significance that add value to the system.
- d) CHRS policies and the level and nature of government participation reflect the needs of the system, and support effective program implementation.

PRIORITY 1: BUILD A COMPREHENSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM THAT RECOGNIZES CANADA'S RIVER HERITAGE

Since its beginning in 1984, the primary goal of the CHRS has been to establish and maintain a system of Canadian Heritage Rivers that commemorates the best of Canada's river heritage. The CHRS may never be truly complete, but with 41 rivers already included in the system it is closer to reaching its ideal capacity.

To truly represent Canada's entire river heritage, we need to understand what values are represented by existing Heritage Rivers, and where there are gaps that should be filled. Some of these gaps may be thematic in nature, while others may be geographical. It is also important to consider how to approach individual rivers that are clearly of national importance but do not fall neatly into planning criteria.

The CHRS has limited resources, and is naturally evolving to focus on promoting, monitoring and managing existing designations. Additional nominations to the CHRS will need to focus on the best available additions to the system. This will

require both the consistent use of national theme-based frameworks for natural and cultural heritage values and fair consideration of the interests of the public and each nominating jurisdiction. Of course, the celebration of rivers is not limited to the CHRS. Some of the best examples of river stewardship occur on regionally important rivers that may not be considered for the CHRS. With its broader interests in advancing river conservation, the CHRS can play a role in additional initiatives to recognize these rivers and their managers.

GOAL: By 2018, all designated rivers will be monitored and managed in an active and effective manner.

OUTCOMES:

- a) High quality research and knowledge is applied to inform river management.
- b) River management tools are developed and shared.
- c) All designated rivers have effective management plans.
- d) Rivers are monitored and managed such that the values for which they were nominated are maintained or enhanced.
- e) Jurisdictions report annually on the state of Heritage Rivers, and this information and other performance measures are widely available and used for continued improvement.

PRIORITY 2: CONSERVE THE NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND RECREATIONAL VALUES AND INTEGRITY OF DESIGNATED CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS

Heritage River designation recognizes a set of outstanding heritage values and the commitment of a river community to care for that river. In the context of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, river management reflects an ethic of river stewardship that helps to ensure the continued integrity of the values for which rivers are designated. While Heritage River designation does not impose a new set of rules, it is often accompanied by the expectation of a higher duty of care by formal management agencies and river users. As such, an effective and adaptable approach to river management and monitoring is important for the integrity of the CHRS.

The CHRS approaches the conservation of heritage values at two levels. The first is the national-level policies and instruments aimed at supporting the program. The

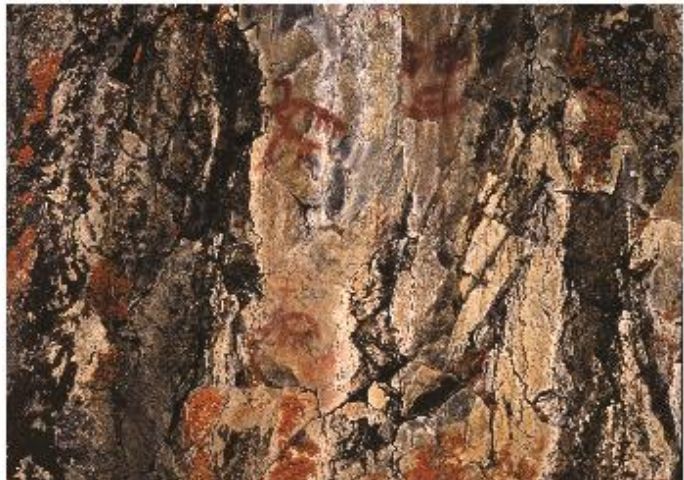
second includes the activities associated with individual rivers that occur in line with an approved designation document. Designation documents (often referred to as management plans) outline a river's heritage values, and speak to how these values will be maintained, consistent with the objectives of the CHRS.

Rivers are constantly changing. With time, the threats, challenges, and opportunities for Heritage Rivers continue to evolve. To remain effective, the CHRS cannot afford to be static with respect to river management and monitoring. Instruments and activities used to conserve a river's heritage must adapt to the needs of the river. Strong decision-making is supported by up-to-date and high quality research. Effective conservation actions are guided by adaptable and practical management plans. Innovative tools emerge from the sharing of knowledge between heritage river communities.

Most importantly, actively managing the CHRS means empowering and supporting community-based organizations along each Heritage River. Monitoring change and measuring and sharing successes, relative to management plans, inspires confidence in river communities and builds enthusiasm for the continued commitment of future generations to maintain the river health and the integrity of heritage values.

Most importantly, actively managing the CHRS means empowering communities along each Heritage River.

The unique and visionary qualities of the CHRS are attractive to many people. Those who work closely with the CHR program come to appreciate the lasting value of its collaborative approach to river stewardship.



PRIORITY 3: ENGAGE COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERS TO MAXIMIZE THE FULL RANGE OF BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS PROGRAM



Speaking of the CHRS, one river advocate was quoted as saying, “I know it is a club that I want to belong to, but I am not sure why.” This view of the CHRS is common, not only by river managers, but also by many people who live near a cherished Canadian river.

The unique and visionary qualities of the CHRS are attractive to many people. Those who work closely with the CHR program come to

appreciate the lasting value of its collaborative approach to river stewardship. However, many Canadians still take rivers for granted and are largely unaware of the depth of Canada’s river heritage and its importance to the continued prosperity of our communities and country.

The Board and the program’s jurisdictional partners play an important part in promoting and advancing the program, but they cannot do it alone. The program relies on the continued engagement of the many individuals, communities and river management organizations who are the foundation of the CHRS. They can become leaders in communicating and fulfilling program goals. Industry can step forward to support program initiatives, benefiting rivers and their corporate position. Other government partners can also work with the CHRS to advance common initiatives.

The CHRS is a compelling program and engagement of citizens and river stewards nation-wide is key to its success. To capitalize on that interest and successfully forge strong partnerships, the CHRS needs to heighten its public profile, and create a positive and lasting impression that attracts participation. But simply creating a positive public image is not enough. Potential partners must

understand the benefits of their participation, and how their actions will lead to success.

GOAL: By 2018, the Canadian Heritage Rivers System will be supported by a range of formal and informal partnerships that advance the CHRS program and deliver broad environmental and societal benefits associated with responsible river management.

OUTCOMES:

- a) Society understands and embraces the CHRS and recognizes that all Canadians benefit from and share responsibility for the sustainable use of rivers.
- b) CHRS and related government policies and programs support key strategic partnerships.
- c) The CHRS is valued by partners and sustained by a diversified funding and resource base.
- d) Heritage River communities and residents have strong positive associations with their river and are engaged in conserving their river heritage.
- e) The CHRS is linked to complementary, high priority initiatives of other agencies and organizations that care for Canada's water and heritage resources, promote health, fitness and quality of life, and advance socio-economic benefits through tourism and other means.

PRIORITY 4: FOSTER EXCELLENCE IN RIVER MANAGEMENT

With more than 25 years of experience, the CHRS is recognized and highly valued as an advocate for heritage recognition and as the builder of a national river constituency. While the rivers that make up the system celebrate the best of Canada's river heritage, they also embody true excellence in river management. Some have been showcased on the world stage, while others have seen the quiet development of innovative solutions to complex local and regional issues.

The Canadian River Heritage Conferences are perhaps the best example of how the CHRS is succeeding in serving all rivers, and the needs of the broader river community. The triennial conference brings together an international group of river managers, advocates, researchers, and government partners in a forum that inspires participants in their work and celebrates the place of rivers in our lives.

As a repository of information and a source of expertise, the CHRS is a powerful resource for all river managers. By reaching out beyond the family of Canadian Heritage Rivers, the CHRS will continue to make a significant contribution to the protection and enjoyment of rivers across Canada and around the world.

GOAL: By 2018, the CHRS will play a significant role in promoting and supporting the effective management of all rivers as an essential component of sustainable living.

OUTCOMES:

- a) The CHRS provides an international model of cooperative conservation and a centre for watershed education.
- b) Additional initiatives exist to recognize and share best practices and success stories in river management, focusing on rivers with outstanding provincial, watershed, or regional heritage values, as well as river communities that demonstrate exceptional conservation stewardship.
- c) An inclusive and accessible information and support network is in place to support river conservation and stewardship.
- d) Interested citizens, communities, and river advocates have the tools, knowledge, and capacity to play a significant role in sustainable river management.
- e) River managers from across Canada support the vision outlined in the CHRS Strategic Plan 2008-2018 and are playing an active role in its realization.





Advancing the CHRS

Committed to providing visionary leadership in an open, effective and accountable manner, the Board oversees the development and operation of the CHRS through a 10-year strategic plan, supported by extensive public involvement.

Administration of the CHRS is the responsibility of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, which is comprised of members appointed by federal, provincial and territorial governments. Committed to providing visionary leadership in an open, effective and accountable manner, the Board oversees the development and operation of the CHRS through a 10-year strategic plan, supported by extensive public involvement. A Board-approved workplan details priorities and actions for implementing the strategic plan directions.

As the lead federal agency in the CHRS, Parks Canada, through a Secretariat operated on behalf of the Board, promotes the system nationally and internationally, advocating responsible river and water stewardship and related conservation, education, recreation, and tourism initiatives. In its national leadership role, Parks Canada also provides important financial and technical support to provinces and territories for the preparation of studies and plans related to the nomination, designation and monitoring of CHRS rivers.

Developing strong, broad-based funding support is vital for the long-term viability of the CHRS. Federal funding leadership, provided through Parks Canada, is essential for program renewal. Provincial and territorial governments continue to make an essential commitment to the CHRS through assuming the long-term

operational and management costs of having rivers within their jurisdictions designated to the System. Opportunities for developing additional innovative revenue generation mechanisms and funding sources also need to be sought.



Designated Rivers	Province/Territory (Park/Protected Area)	Designated	Length (km)
French	Ontario (French River Provincial Park)	February 1986	110
Alsek	Yukon (Kluane National Park)	February 1986	90
South Nahanni	Northwest Territories (Nahanni National Park Reserve)	January 1987	300
Mattawa	Ontario (Mattawa PP and Samuel de Champlain PP)	January 1988	76
Athabasca	Alberta (Jasper National Park)	January 1989	168

North Saskatchewan	Alberta (Banff National Park)	January 1989	49
Kicking Horse	British Columbia (Yoho National Park)	January 1990	67
Kazan	Nunavut	July 1990	615
Thelon	Nunavut (Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary)	July 1990	545
St. Croix	New Brunswick	January 1991	185
Yukon – The Thirty Mile	Yukon	January 1992	48
Seal	Manitoba	June 1992	260
Soper	Nunavut (Katannilik Territorial Park)	June 1992	248
Arctic Red	Northwest Territories	September 1993	450
Grand	Ontario	January 1994	627
Boundary Waters/ Voyageur Waterway	Ontario (La Verendrye/Quetico/Pigeon River Provincial Parks)	September 1996	250
Hillsborough	Prince Edward Island	January 1997	45
Shelburne	Nova Scotia	June 1997	53
Bonnet Plume	Yukon	February 1998	350
Upper Restigouche	New Brunswick	February 1998	55
Bloodvein	Manitoba/Ontario (Atikaki/Woodland Caribou Provincial Parks)	June 1998	306
Margaree	Nova Scotia	June 1998	120
Fraser	British Columbia	June 1998	1,375
Humber	Ontario	February 1999	100
Rideau	Ontario (Rideau Waterway)	February 2000	202
Thames	Ontario	February 2000	273
St. Mary's	Ontario	February 2000	125
Detroit	Ontario	February 2001	51
Main	Newfoundland and Labrador	February 2001	57
Clearwater	Alberta, Saskatchewan (Clearwater Provincial Park)	October 2003	326

Cowichan	British Columbia	October 2003	47
Missinaibi	Ontario (Missinaibi Provincial Park)	May 2004	501
Tatshenshini	Yukon	May 2004	45
The Three Rivers	Prince Edward Island	May 2004	73
Bay du Nord	Newfoundland (Bay du Nord Wilderness Park Reserve)	August 2005	75
Hayes	Manitoba	August 2005	590
Red	Manitoba	June 2007	175
Total 37 Designated Rivers			9,032
Nominated Rivers	Province/Territory (Park/Protected Area)	Nominated	Length (km)
Coppermine	Nunavut	June 2010	450
Ottawa	Ontario	June 2010	590
St. John	New Brunswick	May 2012	400
Churchill	Saskatchewan	June 2014	487
Total 4 Nominated Rivers			1,927
Total 37 Designated and 4 Nominated Rivers			10,959

Canadian
Heritage
Rivers
System



Le Réseau
des rivières
du patrimoine
canadien

Canadian Heritage Rivers System c/o Parks Canada
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0M5 Ph: 819-994-2913 Fax: 819-953-4704
Web: www.chrs.ca