

# THE CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM CHARTER

**WHEREAS** freshwater is essential to life on earth and Canada is blessed with a vast supply of freshwater, approximately one-fifth of the world's total; and

**WHEREAS** rivers are a priceless and enduring part of Canada's national heritage and identity; and

**WHEREAS** rivers are central to the overall health and well-being of Canadians; and

**WHEREAS** participating governments on the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board have agreed to renew and strengthen their participation in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System by administering the program through a strategic plan, which serves as the principal operating document for the Board;

**THEREFORE, IT IS UNDERSTOOD** that the federal, provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, do, by this Charter, reaffirm their governments' commitment to the System, and, by this Charter, describe its main principles of operation, vision, and governance, as follows:

## I VISION

This Charter affirms the vision of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board that:

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System is a model of stewardship, cooperation and participation; one that engages society in valuing the natural and cultural heritage of rivers and river communities as essential to the identity, health and quality of life of Canadians.

## II PURPOSE OF THE CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM CHARTER

This Charter sets out a framework for cooperation between Canada and the participating Provinces and Territories (hereinafter together referred to as "the Participants") to recognize, conserve and manage, in a sustainable manner, Canada's designated heritage rivers and their natural qualities, cultural/historical heritage, and recreational values. The Charter provides a tangible public expression by governments in Canada of their support for and participation in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System and acknowledges the operation of the program through a strategic plan.

## III PRINCIPLES OF THE CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM

This Charter serves to emphasize the following principles, which form part of a strategic plan of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board:

- i) Participation in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System is voluntary.
- ii) The Participants retain their jurisdictional powers over rivers in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, including ownership of land, the choice to nominate a river, and the right to continue to operate and manage designated rivers in accordance with the goals of the System.
- iii) The Canadian Heritage Rivers System respects Aboriginal peoples, community, landowner and individual rights and interests in the nomination, designation and management of heritage rivers.

iv) Rivers, or sections of rivers, included in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System will meet the spirit of the heritage and recreational value selection guidelines as set out by the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board.

v) River nominations and designations will be jointly approved, on the recommendation of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, by the Minister(s) of the nominating jurisdiction(s) and the Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency.

vi) The Parks Canada Agency will continue to be the lead federal agency for the Canadian Heritage Rivers System and will, through a secretariat operated on behalf of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, provide technical and financial support for the nomination and designation of rivers to the System, for promotion of the System both nationally and internationally, and for co-ordination of the ongoing monitoring of designated rivers.

vii) River nominations and designations in Northwest Territories and Nunavut must be jointly approved by the Minister responsible for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the responsible territorial minister. This approval is to be obtained by the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board prior to a final recommendation going forward to the Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency.

viii) Should territorial devolution occur in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, as it has in Yukon, the federal authorities for the management of land, waters, and natural resources would be transferred to territorial governments. This Charter recognizes final devolution agreements between Canada and the territorial governments.

ix) Provincial and territorial governments will continue their commitment to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, assuming the long-term operations and management of rivers within their jurisdictions designated to the System.

## IV THE CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS BOARD

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System is administered by the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, which is composed of members from the government, public, not for profit or private sector who are appointed by the Participants. The Board administers the Canadian Heritage Rivers System for the benefit of the people of Canada and is accountable to the signatories of the Charter for the effective management of resources and processes that conserve and present heritage rivers.

## V DURATION OF TERM

Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the Participants, the cooperation contemplated in this Charter shall be for a period of twenty years, commencing on April 1, 2011, and ending on April 1, 2031.

## VI SCOPE OF THIS CHARTER

- i) Nothing in this Charter is to be interpreted as establishing a partnership, joint venture, agency relationship or commercial association between the Participants.
- ii) Each Participant shall retain exclusive responsibility for its undertakings.
- iii) This Charter shall not be interpreted to create any legal right or obligation between the Participants.

## VII MODIFICATIONS

It is understood that this Charter may be modified at any time by written agreement of all Participants.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF** the Participants hereto have executed this Charter by their Ministers' signatures, signed in counterpart, as of the day and year written below.

**December 24, 2013**

The Canadian  
Heritage Rivers  
System

