



**Canadian
Heritage Rivers
System**

2002 -2022 20-Year Monitoring Report for the Kuujjuaq/Soper Canadian Heritage River

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Photo Credit: Government of
Nunavut commissioned photographer
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed along the South Baffin Coast, Nunavut, was designated as a Canadian Heritage River in 1992 due to its unique natural heritage, specifically its geological landscape and microclimate, connection to human heritage, and recreational uses and heritage. Established in 1984, the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) is Canada's national program for recognizing, celebrating, and conserving the natural, cultural, and recreational heritage of over 11,000 km of rivers across Canada. The Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River designation includes the entire 2,500 sq. km drainage basin of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River and its two major tributaries, the Livingstone and Joy rivers. Subsequent to the designation as a heritage river, a territorial park was established (Katannilik Territorial Park) and a trail was designated as part of the Trans Canada Trail within the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River designated area.

In order to monitor the role of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River within the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, a review policy is required to assess the heritage values by which the Kuujjuaq/Soper River was designated for the program. Accordingly, the 20-Year Monitoring Report for the Kuujjuaq/Soper Canadian Heritage River was prepared to determine if there have been changes to the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River and if those changes affect these heritage values, as well as validating information from previous monitoring reports.

The previous decadal report was completed in 2004, and as a result, there has been a gap that is addressed with this twenty-year report. This gap was in part due to the negotiation of the Umbrella Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) for the Canadian Heritage Rivers in Nunavut, which was a condition of the Nunavut



Photo 1: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

Agreement. The IIBA was negotiated between Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated with Regional Inuit Organizations (Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Kivalliq Inuit Association and Qikiqtani Inuit Association), the Government of Canada, and the Government of Nunavut.

An independent evaluation of potential changes to the Kuujjuaq/Soper River heritage values and integrity was conducted by consultants who reviewed academic literature, government publications, and public media, as well as conducted interviews with local residents who routinely interact with the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River. In general, there are relatively few changes in the condition of the heritage values since designation.

Considering its rich biodiversity and microclimate unique to the Arctic region, its important relationship with peoples using the watershed

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1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System is a joint federal, provincial, and territorial government initiative for the purpose of recognizing, celebrating, and conserving the natural, cultural, and recreational values of 41 rivers across Canada¹. The Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed (Kuujjuaq²) along the South Baffin Coast, Nunavut, was designated as a Canadian Heritage River in 1992 due to its unique natural heritage, specifically its geological landscape and microclimate, connection to human heritage, and recreational uses and heritage.

The 1991 Kuujjuaq/Soper River nomination document outlines the role of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) as the following³:



Photo 3: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

- to provide, within a river environment, excellent representation of the natural and cultural heritage of Canada's Arctic islands and the first representation of those islands in the system;
- to protect and highlight a river environment that provides outstanding representation of major geological periods and examples of a complex geological structure that are more readily observed here than in southern Canada;
- to highlight an outstanding river environment which exemplifies the natural ecosystem and geological history of the southern Baffin region;
- to represent an area important for historic themes in the development of the Canadian Arctic and for cultural activity potentially dating back to Pre-Dorset times;

¹ About the CHRS. Canadian Heritage Rivers System. Accessed February 22, 2023. <https://chrs.ca/en/about-chrs>

² Kuujjuaq is the Inuktitut name for the Soper River. This is the name most commonly used by residents in Kimmirut and both names will be used throughout this report.

³ Government of Northwest Territories, Economic Development & Tourism. (1991). Canadian Heritage Rivers Systems, Nomination Document for Soper River, Northwest Territories. Retrieved from Nunavut Parks, 2022.

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- to encourage protection, future scientific research, and public understanding of the full range of natural and cultural heritage values of this northern region with a focus on the Kuujjuaq/Soper River; and
 - to provide outstanding recreational opportunities for river travel (by raft, kayak, canoe, and motorboat) and associated upland hiking, camping, viewing and nature study in a remote, eastern arctic wilderness setting.

In order to monitor these nomination criteria and assess the role of rivers within the Canadian Heritage Rivers framework, a review policy is required as part of the CHRS designation. The review policy involves a 10-year review of the river values that were considered when the river was nominated and designated. Additionally, the review policy requires the inclusion of potential changes to the river as compared to its state at the time of designation, which involves the assessment of the river nomination values, the attitudes of stakeholders in affected communities, and the progress of management plan objectives. The purpose of this review policy is to determine possible trends or developments that may affect the integrity of the river nomination criteria in future.

Since the inception of the CHRS programme in 1984, the methods and values by which the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board designates a heritage river have undergone several revisions to generate a common framework to assess the potential benefits of river inclusion in the CHRS network. By the early 2000s, the Canadian Heritage Rivers System designation framework was updated with modified and new values (specifically, natural heritage and cultural values), which were embedded into the monitoring report for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River conducted in 2004 as part of the CHRS review policy requirement⁴. As part of the mandate of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board to periodically review the procedures and guidelines for the operation of the CHRS, it is likely that the designation and review policy frameworks will

undergo revisions over time, which reflects the evolutionary nature of the relationships between river environments and the people interacting with them.

Preparation of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River 20-year Monitoring Report (2023) is part of the review policy requirement for the Canadian Heritage Rivers System designation. This review is undertaken to determine if there have been changes to the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River and if those changes affect the designation criteria, as well as validating information from previous monitoring reports. The previous decadal report was completed in 2004, and as a result, there has been a gap that is addressed with this twenty-year report. This gap was due in part to the negotiation of the Umbrella Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement (IIBA) for the Canadian Heritage Rivers in Nunavut, which was a condition of the Nunavut Agreement. The IIBA was negotiated between Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated with Regional Inuit Organizations (Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Kivalliq Inuit Association and Qikiqtani Inuit Association), Government of Canada, and Government of Nunavut.

The formatting for this report follows the most recent update to the CHRS review policy framework prepared in 2023⁵. It is understood that there has been evolution in the CHRS designation system since inception and this report addresses the most current reporting requirements, as well as provides cross-reference to previous monitoring requirements.

⁴ Laird & Associates. (2004, April). *Ten Year Monitoring Review of the Soper Heritage River*. Prepared for the Department of the Environment, Government of Nunavut. Available from: <https://chrs.ca/en/resources>

⁵ Canadian Heritage Rivers System Principles, Procedures and Operational Guidelines, 2023. Available from: <https://chrs.ca/en/resources>

2 BACKGROUND

The Kuujjuaq/Soper River is located in the south of Baffin Island, Nunavut. The waterway is 248km long and empties into Tasiujarjuaq (formerly Soper Lake), located on the southern coast of the island near the Hamlet of Kimmirut. The community of Kimmirut (“heel” in Inuktitut) was previously named Lake Harbour until early 1996, just prior to the formation of Nunavut in 1999.

The region containing the Kuujjuaq/Soper River and Kimmirut was named Meta Incognita, the Unknown Place, by Queen Elizabeth I in 1576. Repeated Ice Age glaciations greatly affected the Meta Incognita Peninsula, resulting in largely exposed bedrock and barren plateaus that are seen at higher elevations, including Mount Joy and Mount Moore along the Kuujjuaq/Soper River valley. Shallow basins resulting from this glaciation drain melting snow in the summer into numerous small and large waterways, which form the Kuujjuaq/Soper River.

The Kuujjuaq/Soper River is part of an ancient Inuit travel corridor and continues to be an important pathway for the migration of goods and services between communities on the southern coast of Baffin Island and the interior, particularly Iqaluit. Furthermore, the warm microclimate of the river and surrounding valley serve as an ecologically important habitat for several wildlife and plant species, including the Arctic willow. In addition to travel and hunting, the picturesque landscape and 50km of river navigable by canoe, kayak, and rafting have made the area an attractive recreational destination. These features have led to three key designations for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River and its surrounding area, including a territorial park, the Trans Canada Trail, and the focus of this report, the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS).

In order to assess the status of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River as part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, an understanding of the environmental, socio-economic, and cultural



Photo 4: Shannon Wood, NEXUS

uses of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River and associated waterways, surrounding communities, and the current conservation and management measures for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River and surrounding area is necessary. Furthermore, understanding the context in which the governance of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area has changed over time is necessary to understand the potential benefits and gaps in the current management regime. Specifically, since the inception of the CHRS designation of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River, the eastern portion of the Northwest Territories was recognized as a separate territory through the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act (NLCA Act)* and the *Nunavut Act*. As a result, the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River flows through areas of management jurisdiction that include the Government of Nunavut and the Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (through the district level Qikiqtani Inuit Association).

2.1 Current and Historical Kuujjuaq/Soper River Communities

Nunavut and the area surrounding the Kuujjuaq/Soper River have been occupied by the Inuit for thousands of years. The Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed has long been the focus of activity for the Inuit inhabiting the central southern coast of Baffin Island, including resource harvesting, hunting, and long trips overland. Archeological evidence suggests the area was historically occupied by the Pre-Dorset, Dorset, and Thule people, predating the Inuit by over 4000 years⁶.

Inuit in the southern Baffin Island region lived in different areas seasonally depending on what was harvested or gathered. Family groups were spread out over the landscape and camped and moved with the seasons depending on season or species of animal to be harvested (seasonal *ilagit nunagivaktangit*, which is a place regularly used for hunting, harvesting, and gathering activities). The Inuit in this area were some of the earliest to have contact with Europeans, with significant events including the arrival of the Anglican Church, the Hudson Bay Company, and the RCMP during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of these significant events includes the establishment of the trading post in Kimmirut in 1900 at the southern mouth of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed. The Kuujjuaq/Soper River flows southwest into Tasiujarjuaq, a lake located just north of Kimmirut. The English name of the river comes from biologist J. Dewey Soper, who studied the taxonomy of the watershed throughout the early-mid 20th century.

The Hamlet of Kimmirut is located only 120 km from Iqaluit (see Figure 1). Kimmirut (formerly Lake Harbour) was officially incorporated as a hamlet in 1982. Kimmirut derives its name from a large limestone foundation that resembles a human heel at the entrance of the inlet (the Inuktitut word for “the heel” is Kimmirut). The community was named Lake Harbour by the Europeans but was officially changed to Kimmirut in 1996.

The community of Kimmirut was predominately used as a summer whaling station and a base of operations for several other

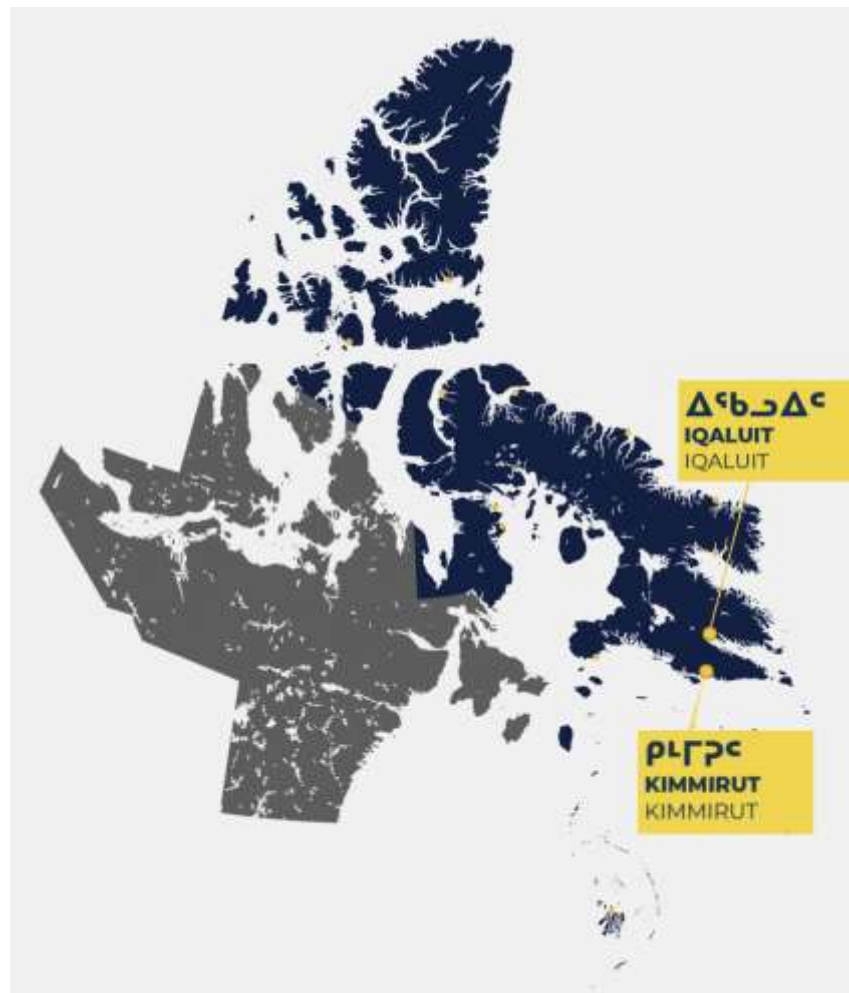


Figure 1: Map of Nunavut (Source: QIA Website)

⁶ Woodley, S. B. (1999). Community Based Tourism in Kimmirut, Baffin Island, Nunavut: Regional Versus Local Attitudes. Department of Geography, Thesis: McGill University, Montreal.

resource harvesting activities, including mining. It is because of the abundant resources and strategic location on the island that the community became the focus of operations for the Hudson Bay Company, and as a result, became the largest community on Baffin Island. The majority of Inuit in the region continued to live in ilagit nunagivaktangit (family seasonal camps) well into the 1950s; however, many families made regular seasonal visits to Kimmirut (then Lake Harbour) for trade, medical care, or seasonal employment opportunities⁷.

As the centre of economic activity on Baffin Island, Kimmirut and Kimmirut-area residents regularly traversed the Kuujjuaq/Soper River by dog team to deliver goods and mail to Frobisher Bay and surrounding communities. More recently, snow machines (e.g., snowmobile, ATV) have displaced the use of dog teams and reduced the travel time between Iqaluit and Kimmirut to

~6 hours from the several days it would take using a dog team. The economic centralization in Kimmirut began to shift when the military occupations in Iqaluit began during World War II, particularly due to the construction of the American military airport, which is now the Iqaluit airport.

Since World War II, Iqaluit has replaced Kimmirut as the largest community in Nunavut (~20% of the population). Today, Kimmirut has approximately 400 residents, approximately 90% of whom are Inuit. Similar to many communities throughout Baffin Island, Kimmirut is serviced by airplane and by annual supply sealift, as there are no roads between communities on Baffin Island. However, travel up the Kuujjuaq/Soper River by snow machine still occurs, and the river trail continues to be an important route from Kimmirut to Iqaluit.

2.2 Kuujjuaq/Soper River Environmental Use

The Kuujjuaq/Soper River is a culturally, naturally, and recreationally important river in Baffin Island, Nunavut. With a length of 248 km, 50 km of which is navigable by qajaq (kayak) and canoe, the Kuujjuaq/Soper River has been used by Inuit for thousands of years as an important harvesting area and travel corridor. The river's English name comes from the northern biologist J. Dewey Soper, while its Inuktitut name is Kuujjuaq, meaning "the Great River"⁸.

The Kuujjuaq/Soper River and its source waters run through tundra-covered hills, and its valley is sheltered from harsh winds. The microclimate in this area is 5°C warmer than surrounding areas, with its highest and lowest elevations being 670 metres and sea level, respectively. Accordingly, there is a range in habitats from the highest uplands to the coast, which contributes to the biological richness of the area.

Numerous species make their home in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area due to this unique environment, including caribou, arctic wolves, arctic foxes, arctic hares, lemmings, peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons, rough-legged hawks, loons, terns, plovers, murres, guillemots, horned larks, snow buntings, and ptarmigan. Arctic char are found in the river, and Greenland cod are found in Tasiujarjuaq, located on the southern coast of Baffin Island. Vegetation is also plentiful in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River valley, with several species of wildflowers, berries, and the culturally significant Arctic willows that can grow up to 3.6m high⁹. Many of these species are regularly harvested by residents in surrounding communities, particularly Kimmirut.

The Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed also possesses several unique physiographic and geological features. A key example of this is the

⁷ Qikiqtani Inuit Association. (2013). *Kimmirut*. Qikiqtani Truth Commission: Community Histories 1950-1975. Available from https://www.qtcommission.ca/sites/default/files/community/community_histories_kimmirut.pdf

⁸ Mirnguiqsirviit – Nunavut Parks. (2006). Creating 'Place'. Nunavut Parks & Special Places.

⁹ Mirnguiqsirviit – Nunavut Parks. (2006). Creating 'Place'. Nunavut Parks & Special Places.

‘meromictic’ Tasiujarjuaq, meaning “Big Lake-like Lake” in Inuktitut, where the force of its reversing falls creates a mixture of fresh water and salt water. Additionally, extensive geological processes (mineralization) have resulted in several mica, graphite, garnet, marble, and

soapstone deposits throughout the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed. These are key features of the long evolutionary history dating back 1.7 billion years, which make the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed a deeply significant and important environment.

2.3 Conservation and Use Programmes and Mechanisms for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River Area

The Kuujjuaq/Soper River and surrounding area have three unique designations: as a Canadian Heritage River, as a territorial park, and as part of the Trans Canada Trail System. These three designations have different purposes, conservation and recreation-related management objectives, and management tools; however, the designations are often used interchangeably when discussing conservation and protection measures for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River.

2.3.1 Canadian Heritage Rivers System

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) is Canada’s national program for recognizing, celebrating, and conserving the natural, cultural, and recreational heritage of 41 rivers across Canada (see Figure 2). Established in 1984, the program has Canada’s federal, provincial, and territorial governments working in conjunction with local communities and stewardship groups to give recognition to over 11,000 km of rivers across the nation. The CHRS operates on a program policy basis, rather than through legislation, meaning that territorial, provincial, and federal governments retain their traditional jurisdictional powers and management responsibilities for the designated river.

Being a part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System means an opportunity to:

- Foster cooperative river management that unites communities;
- Celebrate and support the cultural connections of Indigenous Peoples with rivers;
- Tell the stories of our nation, building sense of identity and pride;
- Stimulate adventure travel and sustainable tourism;
- Help Canadians connect to history, nature, and cultural traditions;
- Promote stewardship and citizen engagement;
- Engage new Canadians and youth in river education, conservation, and recreation; and,
- Encourage the protection of water resources to improve public health, well-being, and quality of life.



Figure 2: Map of Designated and Nominated Rivers within the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (Source: Canadian Heritage Rivers System Website)

The CHRS works towards the long-term management of Canada's rivers for the benefit and enjoyment of Canadians. As of 2023, there are 41 nominated or designated rivers, the majority of which were designated in the 1990s and the early 2000s.

The Kuujuaq/Soper River was designated as a Canadian Heritage River in 1992 due to its unique natural heritage, particularly the exceptional landscape. The designation includes the entire 2,500 sq. km drainage basin of the Kuujuaq/Soper River and its two major

tributaries, the Livingstone and Joy rivers (see Figure 3).

Discussions about the CHRS designation were initiated by the Lake Harbour Tourism Committee in 1985¹⁰; the CHRS designation was viewed as a way to support the local economy through tourism efforts while enhancing the protection of the river's natural and cultural heritage. Despite changes in governance, global environmental changes, and economic shifts within the territory, the importance of designation and the values through which the designation was obtained have remained constant.

¹⁰ The community of Kimmirut was previously named Lake Harbour. This name change occurred in 1996.



Figure 3: Map of Kuujjuaq/Soper River Management Area (1992)

2.3.2 Katannilik Territorial Park

The Katannilik Territorial Park was designated in 1993 as the largest territorial park in Nunavut, covering more than 1,500 sq. km. Katannilik Territorial Park encompasses much of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed (Figure 4). The park's boundaries follow a series of rivers, lakes, and hills throughout the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed. The three regions of the park include the south shore of Frobisher Bay (the highest point of the park, ~670 metres above sea level), the plateau of the Meta Incognita Peninsula, and the Kuujjuaq/Soper River valley.

Katannilik Park is most easily accessed by taking a scheduled flight into Kimmirut, where a 3-hour hike around Tasiujarjuaq, can be completed to enter the park. Alternatively, there are air charter services available that will fly visitors into one of two landing strips in the Kuujjuaq/Soper Valley.

Those looking to hike the Itijjagiq Trail are chartered into the strip at Mount Joy, while those looking for water-based activities are chartered into either Mount Joy or the strip at Livingstone River.

The proposal to establish a territorial park was described in the CHRS nomination document based on a 1989/90 feasibility study conducted by the Government of the Northwest Territories on the potential for territorial park, CHRS, and trail development to achieve conservation, recreation, and natural heritage protection for the area. While Katannilik Park does not cover the entire Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed, as the CHRS designation does, approximately half of the Kuujjuaq/Soper drainage basin is situated within the park's boundaries. Prior to the territorial park's designation, its potential coverage was

described in the 1992 Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River Management Plan: while the entire Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed was designated

as a part of the CHRS, the lower two-thirds of the watershed would be established as a territorial park¹¹.



Figure 4: Map of Kuujjuaq/Soper River Management Area and Katannilik Territorial Park Boundary (1993)

2.3.3 Trans Canada Trail

As previously mentioned, the CHRS nomination document and 1989/90 feasibility study on recreational and conservation opportunities for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area discuss the potential contribution of the Itijjagiq Trail to tourism development. While the trail has predated all the designations described in this report, it was only included as part of the Trans Canada Trail network in 2016.

The Trans Canada Trail network is the longest recreational, multi-use trail network in the world, with over 24,000 km across the country. It was

established in 1992 with the purpose to connect Canadians and visitors to nature and to one another across Canada through accessible and inclusive outdoor activities. Trails in the network are set in both urban and rural environments. The Trans Canada Trail is represented by provincial and territorial organizations across the country. These organizations work at the regional and local levels to ensure the Trail is planned and built according to the needs and desires of local communities.

¹¹ It was described in the Soper River, NWT, Canadian Heritage Rivers System Management Plan (March, 1992) that the Canadian Heritage River land selections were made by the community of

Kimmirut (then Lake Harbour) in 1990 with the expectation that the territorial park designation would soon follow the CHRS designation.

The Itijjagial Trail is 177 km long and begins on the south shore of Frobisher Bay near Iqaluit (Figure 5). The trail goes through Katannilik Park and ends at the shores of Glasgow Bay at Kimmirut. The trail's name means "over the land" in Inuktitut. The trail is mostly unmarked and

used by hikers in the Arctic summer, and by snowmobiles and dog teams in the winter. Visitors may spend up to several days crossing the trail by rafting or hiking. The Itijjagial Trail is considered one of the most isolated parts of the Trans Canada Trail network.

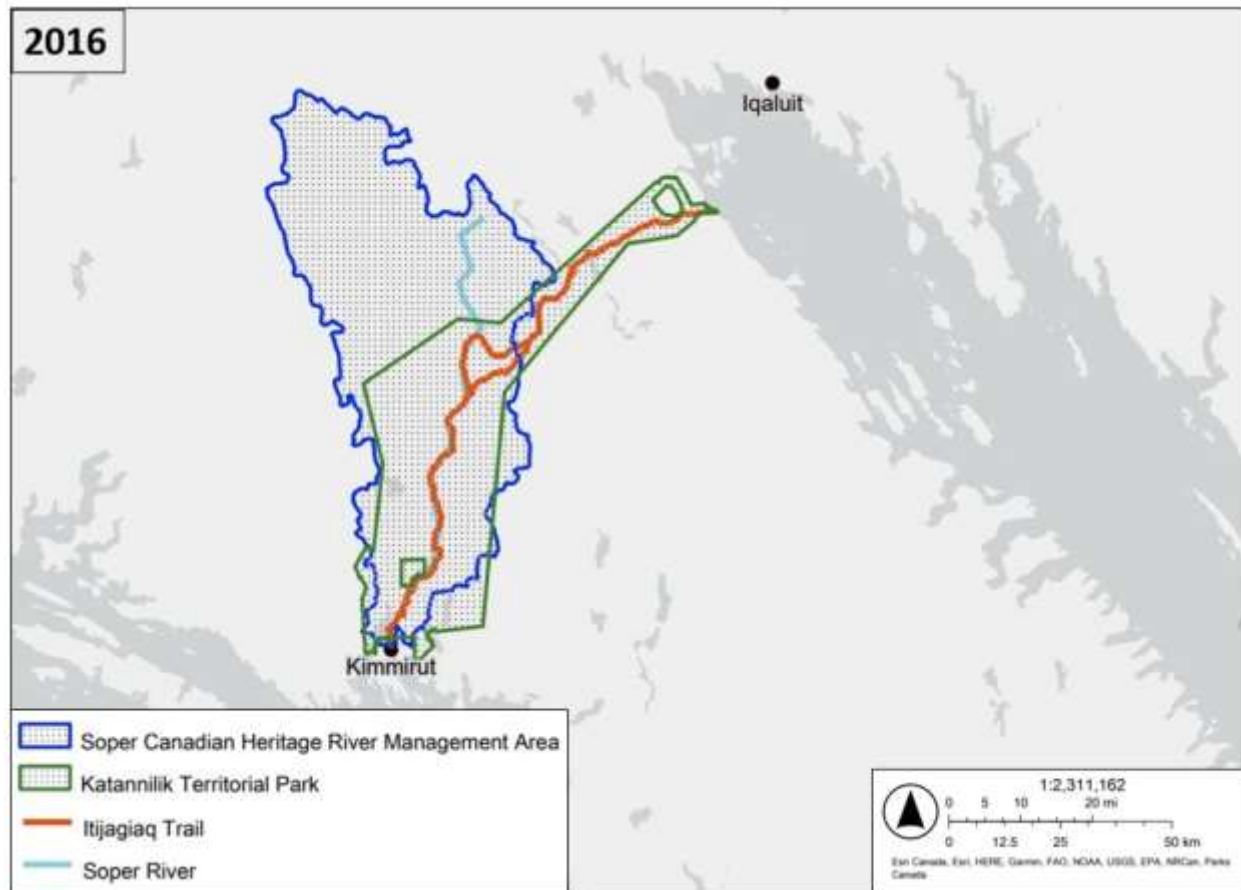


Figure 5: Map of Kuujuaq/Soper River Management Area, Katannilik Territorial Park Boundary and Itijjagial Trail (2016)

3 EVENTS, ACTIONS, RESEARCH & STUDIES

The remoteness of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River relative to other larger population centres in Canada has been a significant factor in the ability to maintain the pristine environmental conditions of the heritage river. However, it also is a reason that the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River has not been the subject of numerous and ongoing research, activities, and large public events. The costs of conducting research in this location are relatively high and, as a result, it is the focus of very specialized research. That said, there have been several local events and a few focused research projects that have been conducted in the watershed. It is noted that the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed's location and protection as a heritage river make it a prime location for climate change impacts research on Arctic environment. The activities occurring from 2003 are detailed in Table 1 with major events highlighted in Figure 6.



Photo 5: Shannon Wood, NEXUS

Table 1: Events, Action, Research & Studies for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River Area (2004-2023)

Year	Event/Action/Research	Description
2003	Opening of the Soper House Gallery	In late 2003, the Soper House in the centre of Kimmirut was reopened as an art gallery run by the Quliruakut Arts and Craft Society ¹² . Local arts and crafts can be viewed and purchased at the gallery, and some work produced by the biologist Dewey Soper is available to view. Previous functions of the Soper House included being a nursing station and visitor's centre. The gallery is open on Saturdays and by private pre-arranged tour.
2012	Plant Diversity Research	Four researchers from the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa spent three weeks collecting Arctic plant samples along

¹² Nunatsiaq News. (Dec 19, 2003). *Art for a community's sake*. https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/art_for_a_communitys_sake/

Year	Event/Action/Research	Description
		the Kuujuaq/Soper River ¹³ . Interest in the site grew due to the unique microclimate of the Kuujuaq/Soper River, resulting in a wide representation of Arctic plants, including willows.
2012	Caribou Population Estimation Report	A caribou survey conducted from March to May 2012 by the Government of Nunavut across the range of South Baffin caribou provided the first population estimate in decades ¹⁴ . The survey determined that the population of caribou in the Baffin region declined by 95% from 1991; the population is estimated to be ~4,600.
2013	Kimmirut Community History	In 2013, the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) prepared a community history for Kimmirut between 1950-1975 ¹⁵ . This was part of a series of reports through the <i>Qikiqtani Truth Commission: Community Histories 1950-1975</i> project, which aimed to represent Inuit experience during this period, as told by Inuit.
2016 ¹⁶	Trans Canada Trail Designation	The Itijjagiq Trail, which runs adjacent to the Kuujuaq/Soper River within Katannilik Territorial Park, was designated as part of the Trans Canada Trail. A celebration took place in Katannilik Territorial Park in November of 2016.
2017	Cultural Landscape Research	In 2017, Nunavut Parks and Special Places was reviewing and revitalizing the parks' Cultural Landscape Resource Inventory (CLRI), Master and Management Plans. This was done in partnership with the Qikiqtaaluk Inuit Association through a Community Joint Planning and Management Committee composed of Kimmirut residents.
2018	Common Eiders Research	Community members in Kimmirut were interviewed regarding their knowledge and observations of avian cholera in Common Eiders ¹⁷ . This research was published in 2018.
2018	Paddling Events	Outfitters that offered guided trips in 2018 included Black Feather, Nahanni River Adventures, and Inukpak Outfitting. The later company offers a popular yoga-paddling retreat annually.

¹³ Gregoire, L. (2012, Jun 29). Collecting plants in the lush Soper River Valley. Nunatsiaq News.

https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674collecting_plants_in_the_lush_soper_river_valley/

¹⁴ Jenkins et al. (2012). *Estimating the abundance of South Baffin Caribou: Summary Report 2012*. Government of Nunavut. Available from https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/estimating_the_abundance_of_south_baffin_caribou_summary_report_2012.pdf

¹⁵ Qikiqtani Inuit Association. (2013). *Kimmirut*. Qikiqtani Truth Commission: Community Histories 1950-1975. Available from https://www.qtcommission.ca/sites/default/files/community_histories_kimmirut.pdf

¹⁶ Information from 2016 to 2022 was largely provided by Nunavut Parks and Special Places in annual monitoring reports for the Kuujuaq/Soper River.

¹⁷ Henri, D. A., Jean-Gagnon, F., and Gilchrist, H. G. (2018). Using Inuit traditional ecological knowledge for detecting and monitoring avian cholera among Common Eiders in the eastern Canadian Arctic. *Ecology and Society*. 23(1), 22. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-09289-210122>

Year	Event/Action/Research	Description
2018	Parks Day Event	Parks Day was held at the Taqaiqsirvik Campground in Kimmirut. 75 people attended the BBQ and game event hosted by Nunavut Parks and Special Places.
2018	Snowmobile Event Race	The annual Snow Challenge Snowmobile Race between Iqaluit and Kimmirut through the Kuujjuaq/Soper River Valley took place in late April.
2018	Nunavut Agreement Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement	Negotiations for an IIBA to guide management of all Canadian Heritage Rivers had been ongoing since 2004; in fall 2018, the Government of Nunavut, Government of Canada, and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. agreed to a draft in principle with intent to sign the final agreement in 2019.
2018	ArcGIS Story Map Research	Beginning in 2018, the CHRS website has featured interactive ArcGIS story maps where important landmarks and uses can be documented through text, photos, videos, and external weblinks. Research for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River map began in 2018, with information being compiled with approvals from the Community Joint Planning and Management Committee for Katannilik Territorial Park.
2019	Parks Day Event	Parks Day was held at the Taqaiqsirvik Campground in Kimmirut. Community members attended the BBQ and game event hosted by Nunavut Parks and Special Places.
2019	Snowmobile and Dogsled Tours	Dogsled and snowmobile tours out of Iqaluit were offered by Inukpak Outfitting during the winter months.
2019	Snowmobile Event Race	The annual Snow Challenge Snowmobile Race between Iqaluit and Kimmirut through the Kuujjuaq/Soper River Valley took place in late April. The top prize was over \$10,000 CAD.
2019	ArcGIS Story Map Research Continued	Work on the CHRS Story Map project continued. A professional photography tour of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River was completed via Jet Boat and ATV. The completed story map is available on the CHRS website ¹⁸ .
2019	Park Planning Process for Katannilik Territorial Park	Research associated with the park planning process of Katannilik Territorial Park, in which the Kuujjuaq/Soper River is located, continued in 2019. Of particular relevance to the Kuujjuaq/Soper River is the cultural landscape resource inventory for Katannilik Territorial Park.
2020	Logo Contest for the Heritage Rivers	Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) as per the Inuit Impact Benefit Agreement (IIBA) for the Canadian Heritage Rivers (CHR)

¹⁸ The Kuujjuaq/Soper River ArcGIS Story Map is available online through the Canadian Heritage Rivers System website: <https://apca.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=971bc409a14c4697bd6259c0554d4087>

Year	Event/Action/Research	Description
		in Nunavut, supported a logo contest for the heritage rivers which was held in the summer/fall of 2020. Youth had the opportunity to provide submissions.
2020	Local Recreation Paddling Trips	Recreational paddling trips down the Kuujjuaq/Soper River continued. The Nunavut Government recommended staycations due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a result, 16 Nunavummiut rafted down the Kuujjuaq/Soper River in 2020.
2020	Parks Day Event	Parks Day was held on July 20, 2020, at the Taqaiqsirvik Campground in Kimmirut. Community members from Kimmirut attended the BBQ and game event hosted by Nunavut Parks and Special Places.
2020	IQ Science Camps	Nunavut Parks, Katannilik Territorial Parks hosted a youth Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) science camp for youth ages 12 to 14 from August 24 to August 28, 2020. The camps took place at the Katannilik Territorial Park and focused on connecting IQ with environmental and technology science. Students learned from Elders and parks staff and had hands-on experience exploring the local environment through several interactive and engaging activities.
2020	CHRS Nunavut Position Change	The position responsible for Nunavut's heritage rivers with the Government of Nunavut; Coordinator, Heritage Rivers Planning & Management moved from Rankin Inlet to Baker Lake Nunavut in the late fall of 2020.
2021	Recreational Paddling Trips	Recreational paddling trips down the Kuujjuaq/Soper River continued, with 36 registered people travelling through Katannilik Territorial Park. 2 outfitting groups river rafted from Mount Joy to Kimmirut.
2023	Research Study on Plant Biodiversity	A research paper was published in early January 2023 that compiled the number of vascular plant species found in the Katannilik Park and Kimmirut vicinity ¹⁹ . This research included the collections made in 2012 (as described previously). 196 taxa were recorded in the Park area, with 145 of these taxa being the first records for the Park. 170 taxa were recorded in the Kimmirut area, with 15 of these being the first records for the area. All species are native to the region except for two types of grass grown in Kimmirut (<i>F. rubra</i> and <i>H. jubatum</i>).

¹⁹ Saarela, J. M. et al. (2023). Vascular plant biodiversity of Katannilik Territorial Park, Kimmirut and vicinity on Baffin Island Nunavut, Canada: An annotated checklist of an Arctic flora. *PhytoKeys*, 217(90573): 1-135. <https://doi.org/10.3897/phytokeys.217.90573>

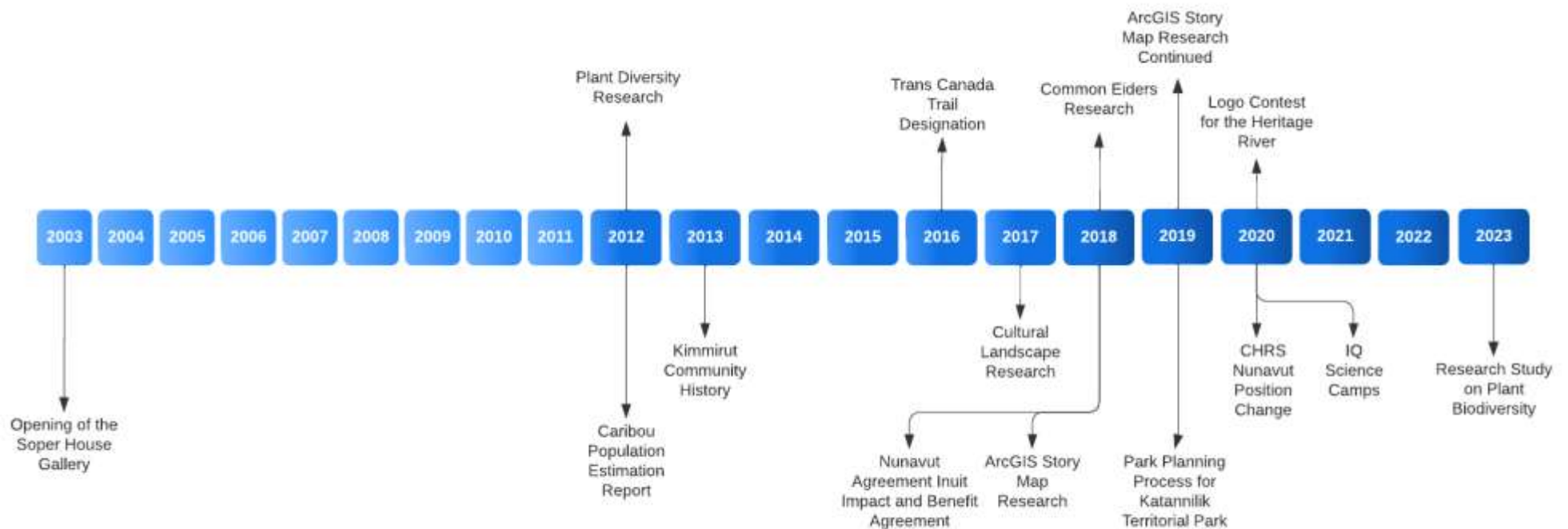


Figure 6: Timeline of Major Events on the Kuujjuaq/Soper River

4 CHANGES AND THREATS TO NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND RECREATIONAL VALUES SINCE DESIGNATION

In the past 30 years since the Kuujjuaq/Soper River was designated as a Canadian Heritage River, several updates to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) selection criteria have occurred. When the Kuujjuaq/Soper River was nominated in 1991, it satisfied the ten value statements used at the time to evaluate the merit of a river and its heritage significance to Canada. The first significant updates to this selection process occurred in 1999 and 2000 when new frameworks for establishing cultural and natural heritage were prepared, respectively. These frameworks were intended to provide a common assessment tool and vocabulary across all CHRS documents and interpretation, a common assessment of nominations against existing river systems, a common assessment of the state of and gaps in the system, the definition of management priorities for designated rivers, and a common structure for monitoring studies.

In addition to the development of a common assessment tool, the Cultural Framework also states that the framework will assist in highlighting values that are unique or rare (including through infrequent representation) in Canada's river heritage, thereby defining them as having greater relative importance in setting nomination and management priorities. This is particularly important for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River, as it possesses many important natural, cultural, and recreational features that are rare throughout the Arctic region. At this time, a dedicated framework for recreational values has not been prepared.



Photo 6: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer Curtis Jones

These frameworks have been used to inform the nomination and designation process in subsequent documents, including the periodically updated Canadian Heritage Rivers System Principles, Procedures and Operational Guidelines. The list of natural, cultural, and recreational heritage values used in this monitoring report is taken directly from the most recent version of these guidelines (2023). These heritage values will be used in the assessment of changes and threats to the Kuujjuaq/Soper River over the past 20 years.

4.1 Natural Heritage Values

Based on the selection guidelines for the CHRS, outstanding Canadian natural heritage value will be recognized when a river and its immediate environment:

- is an outstanding example of river environments as they are affected by the major stages and processes in the earth's evolutionary history as represented in Canada; or
- contains outstanding representations of significant ongoing fluvial, geomorphological, and biological processes; or
- contains along its course unique, rare, or outstanding examples of biotic and abiotic natural phenomena, formations, or features; or
- contains along its course habitats of rare or endangered species of plants and animals, including outstanding concentrations of plants and animals of Canadian interest and significance.

In 1992, the Kuujjuaq/Soper River met all four of the natural heritage selection guidelines due to its unique features. These selection guidelines included the following:

1. *Representation of Earth's History*, which provides an opportunity for field researchers and visitors to appreciate an environment that illustrates evolutionary history dating back approximately 1.7

billion years, including large-scale glacial features and mineral deposits;

2. *Representation of On-going Biophysical Processes*, including glacial, fluvial, and biological processes, for example, the size and scale of the valley development cutting over 305m below the level of the plateau;
3. *Natural Phenomena, Formations, or Areas of Exceptional Natural Beauty*, including the meromictic Tasiujarjuaq, reversing falls at the southern outlet of Tasiujarjuaq and massive tides, Lapis lazuli deposits, river terraces, and outstanding scenery in the region; and,
4. *Rare, Endangered, or Outstanding Concentrations of Plants and Animals*, particularly the Arctic willow that can grow to be 3.6m tall, thus exceeding other examples found in the Arctic, as well as the biological diversity that is unusual for the region.

Since the Kuujjuaq/Soper River's designation, there has been an update of the evaluation criteria as set out in the Natural Heritage Framework. A number of the factors considered under initial heritage criteria have been enhanced in this updated framework. Table 2 provides an overview of the natural heritage framework values that were considered during designation, as well as those of the updated framework that apply today.



Photo 7: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

Table 2: Kuujjuaq/Soper River Natural Heritage Values

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Theme 1: Hydrology				
Drainage Basins			The entrance to the meromictic Soper Lake/ Tasiujarjuaq (mixture of both salt and fresh water) from the ocean has three channels and all are reversing falls due to the high tidal range.	
Seasonal Variation			Water flows in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River are variable seasonally. Snowmelt and other precipitation drive this seasonal variation, resulting in an unusually high volume of flow that makes the river navigable for 50km early in the summer.	
Water Content			Water quality within the Kuujjuaq/Soper River system was noted for its pristine quality and suitability for drinking.	
River Size			The watershed is described is a sufficient size to qualify for the designation, particularly due to it being the longest navigable river system in the region. The large size and scale of the basin compared with others along the south coast of Baffin Island is noted as an outstanding representation of the area.	
Theme 2: Physiography				

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Physiographic Regions			The Kuujjuaq/Soper River is a remarkable example of river development as the longest and deepest river valley along the south coast of Baffin Island.	
Geological Processes			The Kuujjuaq/Soper River Valley area is a northern extension of the Canadian Shield with exposed bedrock older than 1,740 million years. There are Lapis lazuli, mica, limestone outcroppings, garnet, and marble deposits along the river.	
Hydrogeology			The massive river terraces, proliferation and size of waterfalls, and the size and scale of the valley development are considered spectacular examples in a Baffin and national context.	
Topography			The Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed is an unspoiled example of a glaciated rock plateau in the headwaters of the river.	
Theme 3: River Morphology				
Valley Types			The Kuujjuaq/Soper River valley cuts over 305 m below the level of the plateau.	

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Channel Types			The Kuujjuaq/Soper River is navigable by small vessel for 50km, with varying shallow sections creating falls, rapids, and other unique features in the region.	
Channel Profile			Kuujjuaq/Soper River drainage area is 2,500 sq km and flows from the northern Meta Incognita Peninsula to the southern Pleasant Inlet. There are two well developed examples near the confluence of the Livingstone and Kuujjuaq/Soper rivers with elevations of 24 and 34 m, respectively.	
Fluvial Landforms				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Theme 4: Biotic Environments				
Aquatic Ecosystems			There are several unique aquatic ecosystems throughout the Kuujjuaq/Soper Valley, from the river terraces to the meromictic lake.	
Terrestrial Ecosystems			The Kuujjuaq/Soper River valley is an important example of biological richness of the southern Baffin region. The watershed extends from the highest uplands to the coast, providing a range in habitats and biological diversity.	
Theme 5: Vegetation				

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Significant Plant Communities			A relatively warm micro-climate has meant that the vegetation of the Kuujjuaq/Soper Valley is considerably more lush and verdant than that of other valleys nearby and of the Arctic in general. Four distinct plant communities are observed in the Kuujjuaq/Soper Valley: dwarf shrub/heath tundra, grassland tundra, bedrock/hill summit, and snow patch.	
Rare Plant Species			There is an unusual growth of willow bushes along the Kuujjuaq/Soper Valley bottom and side creeks. Dewey Soper recorded willow bushes reaching heights of 3.6m in the valley in 1931.	
Theme 6: Fauna				
Significant Animal Populations			Wildlife in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River valley is an excellent example of the diversity of species typical in the southern Baffin region. Caribou are plentiful, as well as lemmings, arctic hare, and arctic fox. Several species of upland and shorebirds are found in this area. Arctic char and Greenland cod are the major fish species in the area.	
Rare Animal Species			The Kuujjuaq/Soper River Valley provides a habitat for a number of important species. As a result, it has been a refuge for several migratory birds and ungulate populations, particularly the South Baffin Caribou herd.	

Due to its unique location and relative remoteness from significant resource and industrial development activities, the Kuujjuaq/Soper River remains a prime example of rivers that meet the criteria for designation as a Canadian Heritage River.

4.1.1 Condition of Natural Heritage Values Since Nomination

Based on the designation criteria, an independent evaluation of changes was conducted by consultants who reviewed academic literature, government publications, and public media, as well as conducted interviews with local residents who routinely interact with the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River. In general, as illustrated in Table 3, there are relatively few changes in the condition of natural heritage values since designation.

Table 3: Change in Natural Heritage Values since Nomination

Heritage Themes	Heritage Values	Description of Change in Value	Reason for Change	Action Taken in Response
Theme 1: Hydrology	Seasonal Variation	It was noted by residents that there is increasing variation of precipitation seasonally, which could have an effect on the watershed.	Community residents consider this variation to be an effect of climate change.	None.
Theme 4: Biotic Environments	Terrestrial Ecosystem	It was noted that there is an increase in caribou herd size in the upper watershed.	Improved herd management.	None.
Theme 6: Fauna	Significant Animal Populations	In 2014, the Baffin Island caribou herd was estimated to be ~4600, which was a 95% decrease from 1991. This finding was reported in a Government of Nunavut survey of the population.	The government survey indicated climate change, disease, and anthropogenic activities, including mineral development and unrestricted harvest, as possible threats to the herd.	In response to these low numbers, the Government of Nunavut set a total allowable harvest (TAH) of 250 caribou annually. This figure was revised to 350 in 2022, with incremental increases planned in the future. A land-use plan for the territory by the Nunavut Planning Commission is being drafted that

Heritage Themes	Heritage Values	Description of Change in Value	Reason for Change	Action Taken in Response
				would reduce development in caribou habitat.
Theme 6: Fauna	Rare Animal Species	Salmon have been observed by community members in Tasiujarjuaq in recent years.	This has been widely observed throughout the Canadian North and has been attributed to climate change.	None.

The relatively low anthropogenic impact on the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed is likely due to the lack of significant resource development in the region as a result of its CHRS designation, the creation of the territorial park within the watershed, and the location's remoteness from large population centres. While the creation of the Trans Canada Trail could increase human impact, there have been relatively few users of the trail (compared to other trails in Canada) because of its remote location.

There have been some noted variable changes in the CHRS designated area, most notably the size of the South Baffin caribou herd. This population was reported as having significant decline by the Government of Nunavut in 2014, which precipitated a moratorium on

hunting. More recently, Kimmirut residents have observed increased caribou tracks in the watershed, suggesting a rebound of the herd.

Another factor that has been linked to changes in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed is the global issue of climate change. Inuit elders and other members of the Kimmirut community have noticed early melt of lakes and rivers that makes travel on ice routes unpredictable and unsafe in the spring. It was further noted that decreasing water levels in navigable sections of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River have made travelling more difficult in the summer months. More recently, extreme variability in the weather has been reported, which includes torrential rains and at least one tundra fire in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area during drier periods.

4.2 Cultural Heritage Values

Based on the selection guidelines for the CHRS, outstanding Canadian cultural value will be recognized when a river and its immediate environment:

- is of outstanding importance owing to its influence, over a period of time, on the historical development of Canada

through a major impact upon the region in which it is located or beyond; or

- is strongly associated with persons, events, or beliefs of national significance; or
- contains historical or archaeological structures, works or sites which are unique, rare or of great antiquity; or

- contains concentrations of historical or archaeological structures, works or sites which are representative of major themes in Canadian history.

While not a required CHRS nomination theme in 1992, human heritage values²⁰ were included in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River nomination document. This document addressed the following two selection criteria:

1. *Canadian Historical Development*, which included the use of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River as a corridor by Inuit, and possibly by earlier Pre-Dorset and Dorset peoples, and;

2. *People and Events*, which emphasized the activities of biologist Dewey Kuujjuaq/Soper and the presence of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Since the Kuujjuaq/Soper River's designation, there has been an update of the evaluation criteria as set out in the Cultural Heritage Framework. A number of the factors considered under initial heritage criteria have been enhanced in this updated framework. Table 4 provides an overview of all of the cultural heritage framework values that were considered during designation, as well as those of the updated framework that apply today.

Table 4: Kuujjuaq/Soper River Cultural Heritage Values

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Theme 1: Resource Harvesting				
Fishing			Community harvesters fish for arctic char and Greenland cod from the river and lake.	
Shoreline Resource Harvesting			Several animal species, including caribou, ptarmigan, arctic hare, etc. and plants (e.g., berries) are and have traditionally been	

²⁰ Human heritage values, as described in the 1992 Kuujjuaq/Soper River nomination document, were a sub-category of natural heritage values that involved human interaction with the rivers. This category would become independent of natural heritage in accordance with the Cultural Heritage

Framework (1999) and renamed 'cultural heritage values.' Furthermore, human heritage appreciation was integrated into the recreational values in accordance with visitor use of the river and associated environment.

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
			harvested in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River and surrounding area.	
Extraction				Community members extract water from the watershed for personal use. Therefore, this is an applicable matter for the CHRS.
Theme 2: Water Transport				
Commercial Transportation				Historically, the Kuujjuaq/Soper River was used as a transportation corridor between the Kimmirut and Iqaluit area for goods and services, particularly for the Hudson Bay Company.
Transportation Services				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Exploration & Surveying				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Theme 3: Riparian Settlement				

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Siting of Dwellings			It is noted in the document that the Kuujjuaq/Soper River corridor influenced the native people of the region and the historical development of their settlement, activity, and transportation patterns.	
River-based Communities			As a summer camp, the Kuujjuaq/Soper Valley was a critical part of the yearly cycle of life for the Inuit people, as one of the few overland travel corridors known to have significance to the predominantly maritime-focused people.	The use of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River as a travel corridor to the Iqaluit area for the transportation of goods and services encouraged the more permanent settlement of Kimmirut (then known as Lake Harbour).
Theme 4: Culture and Recreation				
Spiritual Associations				There is increasing awareness of the relationship between people and their traditional lands as an expression of spiritual wellbeing.
Cultural Expression				The relationship between traditional harvesting areas and Inuit communities has been recognized as an important part of Inuit cultural identity.
Early Recreation				Children and youth in the community frequently travel with older community members to berry pick, as well as hunt.

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Theme 5: Jurisdictional Uses				
Conflict and Military Associations				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Boundaries				The administration and management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed is the mandate of multiple organizations. This includes the Government of Canada, the Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association.
Environmental Regulations				The Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed is managed in accordance with various environmental regulatory agencies, including GN Department of Environment, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Nunavut Wildlife Management Board.

It is noted that some of the values that were not considered significant with respect to the Kuujjuaq/Soper River designation have become increasingly important to the residents of communities that are in or are in close proximity to the watershed (Kimmirut and Iqaluit).

4.2.1 Condition of Cultural Heritage Values Since Nomination

Based on the designation criteria, an independent evaluation of changes was conducted by consultants who reviewed academic literature, government publications, and public media, as well as conducted interviews with local residents who routinely interact with the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River. The Kuujjuaq/Soper River and surrounding area have significant cultural importance to the residents of Kimmirut, and a few of the specific cultural heritage values have evolved since designation. As Table 5 illustrates, these include fishing, resource harvesting, boundaries, and environmental regulations.

Table 5: Change in Cultural Heritage Values since Nomination

Heritage Themes	Heritage Values	Description of Change in Value	Reason for Change	Action Taken in Response
Theme 1: Resource Harvesting	Fishing	Continued use in the area but there may be some shift in inter-generational use of the area for fishing.	This may be a function of inter-generational cultural shifts.	Enshrined in the Nunavut Agreement and the Inuit Impact Benefit Agreement for Canadian Heritage Rivers in Nunavut - Inuit Right to Harvest.
	Shoreline Resource Harvesting	Continued use in the area but there may be some shift in inter-generational use of the area for shoreline resource harvesting.	This may be a function of inter-generational cultural shifts.	Enshrined in the Nunavut Agreement and the Inuit Impact Benefit Agreement for Canadian Heritage Rivers in Nunavut - Inuit Right to Harvest.
Theme 5: Jurisdictional Uses	Boundaries	Designation of areas within the watershed under different governance regimes.	Creation of the separate territory of Nunavut with demarcated boundaries of Inuit Owned Land under management by QIA.	Increased role of Inuit in management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed.
	Environmental Regulations	New governance systems have been introduced.	Creation of Nunavut, the Government of Nunavut, and Institutions of Public Government under the	Increased role of Nunavummiut in environmental management.

Heritage Themes	Heritage Values	Description of Change in Value	Reason for Change	Action Taken in Response
			<i>Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.</i>	

There have been inter-generational changes in the relationship between community members and the local environment. This shift started in the early 1950s when federal government policy moved Inuit to settlements from their surrounding homelands. Today, Inuit are living in permanent settlements and are not spread out in different hunting or fishing areas. Presently, adults and youth hunt for ptarmigan and rabbit, fish for arctic char and Greenland cod, and berry pick with their families along the Kuujjuaq/Soper River. However, as is the case for many Canadian communities, access to social media and mainstream media are resulting in a shift in cultural perspective amongst children. Furthermore, the increased cost of going out on the land (e.g., fuel costs, costs of snow machines and ATVs) and school time have limited the opportunities for younger community members to experience the land.

4.3 Recreational Heritage Values

The CHRS recognizes the outstanding Canadian recreational value of a river when the river and its immediate environment possess a combination of river-related recreational opportunities and related natural and/or human heritage values that together provide capability for an outstanding recreational experience. Recreational opportunities include water-based activities such as canoeing and other forms of boating, swimming, and angling, and other activities such as camping, hiking, wildlife viewing, and natural and human heritage appreciation that may be part of a river-touring experience. Natural appreciation values include natural visual aesthetics, and physical assets such as sufficient flow, navigability, rapids, accessibility, and suitable shoreline, while human heritage

Another noted change is the development of new governance structures that are applied to the watershed. As previously described, management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed involves recently established territorial boundaries with new governance structures, and their associated agencies, including Inuit representative organizations, the territorial government, and the federal government.

On a larger scale, heritage sites and special places in Nunavut, such as the historical and archaeological sites in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed, are being negatively affected by climate change impacts, particularly permafrost degradation. This remains a concern for Kimmirut residents.

appreciation values include historic sites and cultural landscapes, as well as cultural events and sporting activities.

As previously discussed, there has not been an updated framework applied to the recreational heritage values. However, the recreational value themes that applied at the time of the initial designation have been augmented with additional thematic factors. During the initial nomination process, the recreational heritage values that were considered in the nomination of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River focused predominantly on the possible recreational opportunities that existed at that time, including the major segment of the river that is navigable

by small river boats, as well as the potential tourist attractions that would eventually be a key part of the proposed territorial park.

Another key aspect of recreational heritage presented in the nomination document was the human heritage of the area. It was noted in the nomination document that the continued use of the

valley by local Inuit and their participation in the visitor experience would be enriching to potential tourists.

Since the nomination, numerous specific activities within seven themes have been identified as recreational heritage values. The recreational heritage values for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Kuujjuaq/Soper River Recreational Heritage Values

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Theme 1: Boating				
White-water Canoe, Kayak, & Raft			Rafting is an activity discussed in the nomination document as part of the potential recreational development for the area.	
Extended Canoe Tripping (motor & nonmotor)			Canoe tripping and portaging are described as a potential recreational activity for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area.	
Day Paddling & Rowing			The nomination document noted that boat tours and paddling are possible along parts of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River, particularly to the south of Mount Joy.	
High Speed Boating				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Motorized Pleasure Cruising/ Houseboats				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Commercial Tour Boats				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Sailing				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Theme 2: Angling				
Day Angling				Fishing for char and cod is a traditional activity for the local community.
Weekend Angling				Fishing for char and cod is popular with the local community as a weekend activity.
Extended Angling Vacation				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Fly Fishing				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Ice Fishing			Ice fishing is a common traditional activity for the local community.	
Specific Fish Species				Arctic char and Greenland cod are species of interest for anglers.
Theme 3: Water Contact/Content				
Swimming				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Water Skiing				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Snorkel/Scuba				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Theme 4: Water Associated Activities				
Trail Use (Hiking, Walking, Cycling)			Hiking in the valley and upland area offers diverse and contrasting terrain where scenic vistas, wildlife, and waterfalls can be viewed.	
Camping			Campsites are present along the river, which were used historically and presently.	Some campsites are maintained with formal structures by GN Parks and Special Places.
Hunting				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Theme 5: Winter Activities				
Snowmobiling/ Dog Sledding			Dog team and snow machine (e.g., snowmobile, ATV) are used to travel along the Kuujjuaq/Soper River trail; however, snow machine use is increasingly more common.	The Kuujjuaq/Soper River was historically used to transport goods and services from Kimmirut to the Frobisher Bay area by dog team.
Cross-Country Skiing			Cross-country skiing is described in the nomination document; however, there has been minimal exploration into this activity in subsequent years.	

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Skating				Not applicable to Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Theme 6: Natural Heritage Appreciation				
Wildlife			There are important concentrations of animals (e.g., caribou, ptarmigan, arctic hare) in the Kuujjuaq/Soper Valley that are unusual for the region and the arctic generally.	
Vegetation			Arctic willow, arctic heather, and bearberry are found in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River Valley. Arctic willow is a species of particular importance.	
Vistas/Scenic Quality			The region is noted for its outstanding scenery.	
Geological Features/ Water Features			Tasiujarjuaq is an outstanding, if not rare, example of a meromictic lake, as well as the numerous reversing falls, Lapis lazuli deposits, river terraces, etc.	
Theme 7: Human Heritage Appreciation				

Heritage Values	Initial Selection Criteria	Applicable	Features from Nomination Document	Comments
Historic Sites			The Kuujjuaq/Soper River Valley and Kimmirut area possess several archaeological sites, historic sites, and historic buildings, including the RCMP station, the Anglican church, the Hudson's Bay Company buildings, and scenic Quajarna (formerly McKellar Bay).	The Soper House Gallery is run by the Quliruakut Arts and Craft Society, where local arts and crafts can be viewed and purchased. The house was built by Dewey Soper, and some of his work is available to view in the gallery.
Cultural Landscapes			The community of Kimmirut has traditionally used the valley for cultural practices. Today, the local Inuit community continues these practices and uses the valley to enrich the visitor experience.	
Sporting Events/ Activities			Dog team and sledding events are described throughout the nomination document. There is a well-known annual Iqaluit to Kimmirut snowmobile race.	
Cultural Events/ Activities			Hunting (ptarmigan and caribou) and berry picking are common activities for the residents of Kimmirut.	

4.3.1 Condition of Recreational Heritage Values Since Nomination

Based on the designation criteria, an independent evaluation of changes was conducted by consultants who reviewed academic literature, government publications, and public media, as well as conducted interviews with local residents who routinely interact with the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River.

Table 7: Change in Recreational Heritage Values since Nomination

Heritage Themes	Heritage Values	Description of Change in Value	Reason for Change	Action Taken in Response
Theme 4: Water Associated Activities	Trail Use (Hiking, Walking, Cycling)	The Itijjagial Trail was designated as part of the Trans Canada Trail.	Creation of the Trans Canada Trail Network.	None.

Despite the recreational importance of the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River to the residents of Kimmirut, there have been relatively limited changes in recreational heritage values since the designation, as shown in Table 7. Specifically, the designation of Itijjagial Trail as part of the Trans Canada Trail has augmented the Canadian Heritage River designation. This trail has introduced the Kuujjuaq/Soper River

watershed as a hiking destination to a wider audience in Canada and internationally.

While the numbers of tourists hiking the full trail has been low and was further limited by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is expected that this could increase over time.



Photo 9: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

5 INTEGRITY GUIDELINES SINCE DESIGNATION

In recent years, the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) has updated their procedures and principles in the river system designation process. In order to be considered for the CHRS designation, a river and its immediate environment must meet specific integrity guidelines that align with the natural, cultural, and recreational heritage values identified for the river (these values are detailed in Chapter 4). While nominated rivers are not required to exhibit every heritage value, they are required to meet all of the CHRS Integrity Guidelines in order to be designated as a Canadian Heritage River. As the Kuujjuaq/Soper River was designated prior to the development of the CHRS Integrity Guidelines²¹, the potential changes or threats to the Kuujjuaq/Soper River’s integrity and any actions taken to address these changes will be reviewed in the context of these new guidelines. Table 8 shows that there has been minimal observed change to the river integrity over the past 30 years.



Photo 8: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

Table 8: Kuujjuaq/Soper River Integrity Guidelines

CHRS Principles, Procedures, and Operational Guidelines (2023)	Changes or Threats to River Integrity and Actions Taken
Natural Integrity Values	
The river is of sufficient size to include significant representations of all of the natural processes, features, or other phenomena which give the river its outstanding natural value.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.

²¹ The Integrity Guidelines were derived from Appendix F: Integrity Guidelines. Canadian Heritage Rivers System Principles, Procedures and Operational Guidelines, 2023.

CHRS Principles, Procedures, and Operational Guidelines (2023)	Changes or Threats to River Integrity and Actions Taken
The river includes those ecosystem components which contribute significantly to the provision of habitat for species in need of protection.	In recent years, increasing drought in Nunavut has been attributed to climate change. The effects of the drought in Nunavut are exacerbated by an increasing population and insufficient infrastructure, resulting in water shortages throughout the territory. Climate change will continue to be a significant issue in Nunavut, as the Arctic region is warming nearly four times faster than the rest of the world ²² . While it is unclear how climate change is potentially impacting the Kuujuaq/Soper River area, there have been observed changes in seasonal rainfall, as well as a couple of tundra fires, in the area within the last decade.
There are no human-made impoundments within the river.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.
All key elements and ecosystem components are unaffected by impoundments located outside the river.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.
The water in the nominated section is uncontaminated to the extent that its natural aquatic ecosystem is intact.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.
The natural aesthetic character of the river is free of, or not adversely affected by, human developments.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.
Cultural Integrity Values	
The river is of sufficient size to include significant representations of all of the features, activities or other phenomena which give the river its outstanding cultural value.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.
The visual character of the river enables uninterrupted appreciation of at least one of the periods of the river's historical importance.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.
The key artifacts and sites comprising the cultural values for which the river is nominated are unimpaired by impoundments and human land uses.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.

²² Rantanen et al. (2022). The arctic has warmed nearly four times faster than the globe since 1979. *Communications Earth & Environment*, 3, 168. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-022-00498-3>

CHRS Principles, Procedures, and Operational Guidelines (2023)	Changes or Threats to River Integrity and Actions Taken
The water quality of the river does not detract from the visual character, or the cultural experience provided by its cultural values.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.
Recreational Integrity Values	
The river possesses water of a quality suitable for contact recreational activities, including those recreational opportunities for which it is nominated.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.
The river's visual appearance is capable of providing river travelers with a continuous natural experience, or a combined natural and cultural experience, without significant interruption by modern human intrusions.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.
The river is capable of supporting recreational uses without significant loss of, or impact on, its natural and cultural values or its visual character.	There has been no apparent change since designation for this river value.



Photo 9: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

6 MANAGEMENT DOCUMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND CURRENT STATUS

There are multiple identities for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed, including as a Canadian Heritage River, a territorial park, and as part of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT). The former protection and conservation measures were established in quick succession while the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area fell under the jurisdiction of the Government of the Northwest Territories. In years subsequent to the creation of Nunavut, new authorities have responsibility for the management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed and surrounding areas. Furthermore, the recent 2019 Umbrella Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement for Canadian Heritage Rivers in Nunavut, including the Kuujjuaq/Soper, ensures that the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area, as represented by Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, the Kivalliq Inuit Association, and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, are involved in the planning and management of Heritage Rivers in Nunavut. Consequently, there are several authorities at the federal, territorial, and local government levels that are involved with the management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed.



Photo 10: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer unknown

6.1 Kuujjuaq/Soper River Management

The Kuujjuaq/Soper River and surrounding environment is being managed through different administrative mechanisms. These mechanisms are undertaken by authorities at the federal and territorial level, Institutions of Public Government, as well as national non-governmental organizations and local governance boards. These include the following entities:

Government of Canada – Federal

- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Parks Canada²³

²³ Parks Canada represents the Government of Canada on the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board and provides secretariat services, policy guidance, and financial support for the designation and commemoration of Canadian Heritage Rivers. Parks Canada is also responsible for the national and international promotion of the program.

Government of Nunavut – Territorial

- Department of Environment, Parks and Special Places
- Department of Culture and Heritage

Nunavut Institutions of Public Government

- Nunavut Planning Commission
- Nunavut Impact Review Board
- Nunavut Water Board
- Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal
- Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

Designated Inuit Organizations

- Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
- Qikiqtani Inuit Association

National Non-Governmental Organizations

- Canadian Heritage Rivers Board
- Trans Canada Trail Board

Local Governance

- Hamlet of Kimmirut
- Mayukalik Hunters and Trappers Organization
- Kimmirut Community Joint Planning & Management Committee for Katannilik Territorial Park

These institutions are responsible for the management and administration of mechanisms for the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River as well as other administrative mechanisms for the river and its surrounding area, including the territorial park, Trans Canada Trail, archeological sites, and wildlife management. The national NGOs work at advisory and programme implementation levels for all rivers and trails throughout Canada, not specifically for the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River.

As described in Chapter 2.4, the Kuujjuaq/Soper River has multiple identities as a Canadian Heritage River, as part of the territorial park, and as part of the Trans Canada Trail System. While these three primary identities have some overlap in responsible authorities or administrators, there are different purposes and management objectives related to each identity. Despite these different purposes and objectives related to each management identity, there is generally a higher

level of awareness of the territorial park than that of the Heritage River and TCT²⁴. Nunavut Parks and Special Places has multiple roles in the management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed, including the management of the territorial park, oversight of the heritage river designation, and administration of the TCT. Accordingly, the combined multiple identities of the river and the combined roles of Parks and Special Places may contribute to the lack of clarity in public perception of the heritage river designation.

All this said, there is a lot of attention on the management of the river and the surrounding area. Coordination of these different designations is important and has been effective in maintaining the attributes that make the Kuujjuaq/Soper River a strong representative of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System.

²⁴ In the 2004 Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River Monitoring Report, it was observed in interviews with Kimmirut residents that the territorial park was thought of more frequently than the Heritage River.

6.2 Status of Management Recommendations

As part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) designation, all nominated rivers must have accompanying management plans, objectives, and actions in order to ensure that the described role of the nominated river within the CHRS is fulfilled. In the 1992 Kuujjuaq/Soper River management plan, it was acknowledged that the management document was intended to stand on its own to ensure effective management of the watershed, as well as have management guidelines that are compatible with the

management regime of the proposed territorial park. The objectives and actions in the management plan were prepared to be completed by the Government of the Northwest Territories; however, governance changes in the territory, including the creation of Nunavut, have impacted the completion of these actions according to the timeline outlined in the management plan. The management actions and their completion status are illustrated in Table 9.



Photo 13: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

Table 9: Status of Management Actions

Function	Action	Initial Suggested Timeframe for Completion*	 Ongoing  Incomplete  Completed	Comments
Resource Management	Monitoring of visitor use and impacts	1992-1994		Completion subject to revised management plan.
	Initiation of water quality and quantity surveys	1992-1994		Completion subject to revised management plan.
	Inventory of flora and fauna	1992-1994		Study of flora was conducted by the Canadian Museum of Nature in Katannilik Park in 2012.
	Identification of critical ecological sites/habitats	1992-1994		Completion subject to revised management plan.
	Conducting of archaeological surveys in advance of facility development	1992-1994		Completion subject to revised management plan.

Function	Action	Initial Suggested Timeframe for Completion*	Status	Comments
			 Ongoing  Incomplete  Completed	
	Identification of key points of interest along hiking routes	1994-1997		Itijjagial Trail Guidemap and Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River Guidemap have been produced, identifying key points along the trail and river.
	Development of guidelines concerning siting, design, and materials for facilities and signs	1992-1994		Completion subject to revised management plan.
Visitor Information	Production of informational brochure	1992-1994		CHRS website for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River was established, including an ArcGIS Story Map. Several information brochures exist for the Katannilik Park, which comprises much of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed. This includes the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River Guidemap and Itijjagial Trail Guidemap.
	Establishment of self-registration system	1994-1997		A self-registration system exists for Katannilik Park, but not for the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River.

Function	Action	Initial Suggested Timeframe for Completion*	Status		Comments
			 Ongoing	 Incomplete	
				Completed	
Boating	Development of docks, boat storage	1994-1997			Completion subject to revised management plan.
Hiking	Identification of routes and trail standards for trail network	1992-1994			Includes the Trans Canada Trail designation.
	Identification of stream crossings and systems to be used (bridges, cables, etc.)	1992-1994			
	Identification of requirements for basic trail signs	1992-1994			Completion subject to revised management plan.
	Layout and construction of trails as required	1994-1997			Completion subject to revised management plan.
	Design, production, and installation of trail signs	1994-1997			Completion subject to revised management plan.

Function	Action	Initial Suggested Timeframe for Completion*	Status	Comments
			 Ongoing  Incomplete  Completed	
Camping	Identification of locations for designated campsites	1992-1994		Additional cabins in the watershed area are being planned.
Winter Activities	Identification of off-peak events/ recreational opportunities of interest to visitors	1992-1994		Completion subject to revised management plan.
Interpretation	Identification of requirements for interpretive trails, on-site signs	1992-1994		Completion subject to revised management plan.
	Development/ installation of interpretive trails, on-site signs	1994-1997		Completion subject to revised management plan.
	Preparation of plan for Kuujjuag/Soper House Visitor Centre	1992-1994		The Kuujjuag/Soper River Visitor Centre is now situated in the Nunavut Parks Office

Function	Action	Initial Suggested Timeframe for Completion*	Status	Comments
			 Ongoing  Incomplete  Completed	
	Implementation of Kuujjuaq/Soper House Plan	1994-1997		Currently, Kuujjuaq/Soper House is being used for alternative purposes.
Operations	Preparation of annual operational plans	1992-1994		Operational plans for Katannilik Park have been prepared.
	Establishment of communications system for public safety	1994-1997		Completion subject to revised management plan.
Marketing	Development of marketing strategy	1992-1994		Completion subject to revised management plan.
	Identification of existing tourism services and of potential tourism business opportunities consistent with management plan	1992-1994		Completion subject to revised management plan.

Function	Action	Initial Suggested Timeframe for Completion*	Status		Comments
			 Ongoing	 Incomplete	
	Implementation of marketing strategy	1994-1997			The implementation strategy is dependent on the completion of the marketing strategy, which is subject to the revised management plan.
Facility Development	Preparation of plan for emergency shelters at Tasiujarjuaq, Livingstone River, and Cascade Creek	1992-1994			
	Installation of emergency shelters	1994-1997			
	Preparation of plan for Group Shelter, Cascade Creek	1994-1997			
	Preparation of plan for Cabin Complex, Livingstone River	1994-1997			

Function	Action	Initial Suggested Timeframe for Completion*	Status	Comments
			 Ongoing  Incomplete  Completed	
	Development of Group Shelter, Cascade Creek	1997-Present		
	Development of Cabin Complex, Livingstone River	1997-Present		Completion subject to revised management plan.

*Timeframes were listed in the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River Management Plans according to the following criteria: short term: 1992/93-1993/94; medium term: 1994/95-1996/97; and long term: 1997/98 and beyond.

7 INUIT COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

Community members who were knowledgeable about the Kuujuaq/Soper River environment and the CHRS designation were interviewed in Kimmirut. These semi-structure interviews were conducted to garner information about the community's perspectives and awareness of the CHRS designation, the importance of the designation, familiarity with the Kuujuaq/Soper River area, changes in human use, changes in environmental and natural heritage conditions, causes of change, and what their view were on how the local environment may change in the future and how the community's relationship with the river will change as a result. In keeping with the national priorities for reconciliation and meaningful participation of Indigenous peoples in resource management, this community member input is considered to be important.

Indigenous community input aligns with the 2020-2030 Strategic Direction for the CHRS, which involves the advancement of reconciliation on Canadian Heritage Rivers by comprehensively incorporating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the CHRS activities (Priority 1) and the empowerment of local communities to continue river stewardship activities (Priority 2)²⁵. Community interviews also enable the collection of locally relevant information that is critical to better understand the potential changes, threats, and significance of external (e.g., political, climate change impacts) and internal (e.g., community development, use of the river) factors that may influence the selected natural, cultural, and recreational heritage values.



Photo 11: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

Review of the interview notes revealed three matters that were consistent amongst all participants. These were:

1. Limited environmental change

- a. Interview participants had observed very little widespread or large-scale environmental change throughout the watershed.
- b. Since the designation of the Trans Canada Trail, more tourists from the south have been observed. Community residents, for the most part, are not concerned about the tourists as long as the area continues to be

²⁵ Canadian Heritage Rivers System 2020-2030 Strategic Plan. Available from: <https://chrs.ca/en/resources>

relatively unimpacted and garbage-free. Picking up debris when found has been encouraged in the younger generations.

2. Importance of Kuujuaq/Soper River and the CHRS designation to the local community

- a. As previously described in Chapter 4, there is some intergenerational change in lifestyle in Kimmirut. Younger generations are encouraged to make their livelihood from the river area, but there appears to be less interest in doing so today as compared to previous decades.
- b. The cultural and environmental aspects of the designation were described as equally important to the community.
- c. Overall, the common community goal is to achieve “Protection so that Kuujuaq may continue to be used, rather than protection from use.”

3. Complementary features of the management mechanisms for Kuujuaq/Soper River

- a. Residents perceived that the management actions related to the CHRS designation, and the creation of the territorial park are synonymous; it was stated that future conservation and protection efforts could be better aligned between managing organizations.
- b. While engagement in 2004 found that majority of the perceived benefits from the management mechanisms were linked to the territorial park, the interviews conducted in 2023 revealed that residents viewed the CHRS designation as beneficial to protect both heritage and environmental resources from heavily extractive industries; however, residents believed that there are opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the management objectives and actions for the heritage river and the territorial park.



Photo 12: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

8 SUMMARY OF BENEFITS AND COSTS SINCE DESIGNATION

The purpose of the CHRS program is to recognize, celebrate, and conserve the natural, cultural, and recreational values of nominated rivers across Canada. As such, rivers that have outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values that are representative of regions across Canada are selected for this designation. In order to determine the effect of the CHRS designation on rivers, benefits and potential costs associated with the designation on rivers should be conducted.

It is important to note that the CHRS designation was instrumental in achieving other designations related to environmental and cultural protections, including the Katannilik Territorial Park and Trans Canada Trail. These instruments all contribute to the continued protection, conservation, and sustainable recreational use of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area. For that reason, the benefits of all instruments are considered in the context of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area. A summary of these benefits is provided in Table 10.



Photo 13: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer unknown

Table 10: Summary of CHRS Benefits for the Kuujjuaq/Soper River

Benefits	Description
Environmental	At the time of designation, the Kuujjuaq/Soper River was a pristine habitat and refuge for wildlife in the South Baffin region. The CHRS designation and the territorial park have contributed to the preservation of these features. Furthermore, the IIBA will continue the advancement of Inuit governance and protection of the environment for Kuujjuaq/Soper River.
Cultural	The designation is viewed by the community as being beneficial to the protection of their environment and cultural uses of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River, particularly in relation to inhibiting mineral resource extraction. The IIBA further supports accrual of cultural protection and benefits of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River.

Benefits	Description
Recreational	The combined instruments for recreational, environmental, and cultural use, including the CHRS, territorial park, Trans Canada Trail, and the IIBA, promote the use of the river by tourists. Community members have noted a higher use of the trail by tourists coming from Iqaluit, which has additional economic benefit.
Improved Knowledge	The Kuujjuaq/Soper River is an environment that is largely untouched by major economic development. Furthermore, the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area is unique in the South Baffin region, due in part to its microclimate and habitat for rare and threatened Arctic species. As a result, the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area has and continues to provide a significant opportunity for the study of Arctic taxa, as well as future climate change research in an environment without significant development.
Monetary Benefits	As noted in the recreational section, the designation of the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River has provided economic benefit related to tourism and has provided employment related to environmental management.
Stewardship	Comprising of residents of Kimmirut, the Kimmirut Community Joint Planning and Management Committee has been established for Katannilik Territorial Park. As part of its mandate, the committee has also been involved in discussions regarding the Kuujjuaq/Soper River; discussions mostly pertain to the southern half of the river watershed. As such, Inuit values have been foundational in the management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River. This is an important consideration in the IIBA.
Community Engagement and Collaboration	The Kimmirut Community Joint Planning and Management Committee has been actively involved in the management of the river. Community collaboration in the management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper River is also included in the IIBA.
Education	The CHRS purpose, mandate, and information about the Kuujjuaq/Soper River designation are included in several materials related to the Katannilik Territorial Park. These materials are accessible through Nunavut Parks and Special Places. Science programmes for Kimmirut youth continue in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River area. Cultural camps and youth activities are also advanced through the CHRS IIBA.



Photo 14: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

9 OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River is a pristine example of natural history of Canada. Considering its rich biodiversity and microclimate unique to the Arctic region, its important relationship with peoples using the watershed spanning thousands of years, and the picturesque landscapes and nature-based activities, makes Kuujjuaq/Soper a perfect example of Canadian Heritage Rivers. The continued protection of this rich resource through the Canadian Heritage Rivers System has been a prime example of the advantage of designation. **Accordingly, it is recommended that the Kuujjuaq/Soper River continues to be a designated Canadian Heritage River.**

There are some considerations that should be made for the enhancement of this designation. These include:

Enhancing online visibility of the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River

Presently, the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River has a limited online presence. While the Canadian Heritage Rivers System maintains a general website and social media presence for all Heritage Rivers, additional actions can be taken to separately highlight the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River and enable all Canadians to access specific information about this river. This could be done through an increased presence on various websites (i.e., Nunavut Parks and Special Places, Travel Nunavut, Destination Nunavut) that can provide detailed interactive information about this important place and information on how to access it. This could enhance tourism opportunities for the South Baffin region.

Highlighting the importance of the watershed in maintaining the cultural identity of Kimmirut

The Kuujjuaq/Soper watershed has been influential in the evolution of the social and



Photo 15: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer David Kilabuk

cultural wellbeing of Kimmirut. This should be highlighted in management plans and literature related to the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River.

Promoting the watershed as a site for biodiversity and climate change research

The remoteness of the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River from direct southern development activities, its relative accessibility through Kimmirut, and its unique environment make it a prime location for monitoring climate change impacts in the Arctic. As a result, the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River should be promoted as a site for academic researchers interested in studying climate impacts on biodiversity and Arctic environments.

Using the Kuujjuaq/Soper River as an open-air classroom for schools

While the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River is actively used by youth from Kimmirut as part of their traditional and cultural activities, it is under utilized from an educational point of view. Efforts should be made to promote field classes for students from Kimmirut and Iqaluit. Use as an open-air classroom for science education could be an effective way of blending western science and traditional knowledge education.

Promoting Arctic natural history and cultural education through summer programs and camps

Similarly, Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River could provide sites for summer field camp programs where southern Canadians can learn firsthand about the Arctic natural history and Inuit culture. These activities can enhance general public understanding of the importance of maintaining cultural diversity and reconciliation.

Promoting greater alignment of the management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River, territorial park, and the Trans Canada Trail

The general conflation of the various management initiatives and programs in the Kuujjuaq/Soper River watershed could be resolved through greater alignment of the management of the Kuujjuaq/Soper Heritage River, Katannilik Territorial Park, and the Trans Canada Trail. Understanding the differences and importance of these entities could benefit public understanding of the reasons for the designations and values in maintaining each.

Officially recognize the cultural importance of the river by renaming the river to Kuujjuaq

Finally, the local Inuit name for the river, Kuujjuaq, should be adopted as the official geographical name for the river, as well as for the Canadian Heritage River designation.



Photo 16: Government of Nunavut commissioned photographer, artist unknown.