

Significant support for a 115,000 ha protected area project in the Outaouais region



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Gatineau, June 5th, 2020 – On this World Environment Day, the *Conseil régional de l'environnement et du développement durable de l'Outaouais* (CREDDO) and the Ottawa Valley Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-OV) are grateful to the Government of Canada for encouraging conservation efforts in the Outaouais region by granting \$ 300,000 in financial support. This support will enable the two organisations to carry out planning activities for the creation of a 115,000 hectares protected area in the Noire and Coulonge rivers' watershed (MRC Pontiac), as part of a Quebec government initiative.

"We are delighted with this announcement because this project will reduce our regional deficit in preserving wilderness while helping the governments achieve their commitments regarding protected areas" responded the **CREDDO Executive Director Benoit Delage**. "This is a significant step towards the target of protecting 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas by 2020 that the governments of Quebec and Canada have set for themselves.

The amount of land and freshwater protected areas in Quebec only reaches 10.70%, while the Outaouais is even lower at 6.62%. For the region, the creation of this protected area would represent an increase of 3.37%, thus bringing the total cover of protected areas to 9.99%. "By accepting our proposal, the governments are demonstrating their will to respect their commitments to protect our wilderness," continued Mr Delage.

"The Outaouais is entitled to its 17% of preserved lands. Protected areas must represent the diversity of Quebec's ecosystems, and several valuable natural environments are found in our region, including species at risk habitats and old-growth forests" added **Geneviève Le Blanc, Conservation Director at CPAWS-OV.**

An essential project for the environment, the economy and the well-being of communities

In addition to preserving the lush wilderness of the MRC Pontiac, this project will contribute to diversifying the economy of the region by promoting recreational activities and tourism in the Noire and Coulonge rivers' watershed. This sector of the Outaouais, less known to the general public, is ideal for whitewater paddling and is distinguished by the beauty of its landscapes. It is also the perfect backdrop for activities such as hunting, fishing and cottaging.

An expert-led impact assessment will be conducted as part of the planning process for the creation of the protected area. The objective of this study is to evaluate its implication for all stakeholders.

"Proper planning of protected areas is essential for maintaining the rich local biodiversity, but it must also be done in collaboration with local stakeholders to contribute to a development that is sustainable for the region," said **Jérôme Dupras, professor at the Université du Québec en Outaouais and one of the researchers mandated to conduct the impact assessment.**

In addition to the contribution from the Government of Canada, this project is made possible thanks to the support of the Schad, Consecon and Echo foundations, CREDDO, Evolgen, Université du Québec en Outaouais, Eco2Urb and CPAWS-OV.

Quotes of elected officials

"This funding announcement is great news for the Pontiac! The Coulonge and Noire Rivers are part of our heritage and are enjoyed today by many tourists, outfitters and residents of the Pontiac. It is important to protect these waterways and their natural ecosystems, as well as our magnificent forests. We are proud of our beautiful wilderness and it is important to protect it.

We look forward to working with CREDDO on this study." - **Jane Toller, Warden of MRC de Pontiac.**

"I am proud that the Government of Canada is providing significant and precedent-setting financial support to enable this provincial conservation initiative. Furthermore, I am glad that the impact-assessment study will ensure that all points of view are incorporated in the planning process, including those of the Algonquin Nation, the forestry sector, the tourism sector, and our municipalities" - **Will Amos, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science) and Member of Parliament for Pontiac**

"I am delighted by this collaboration involving several partners, which will make it possible to protect areas of great richness. Québec has more than 40,000 plant and wildlife species. Creating and soundly managing protected areas is essential to maintaining this highly varied biodiversity. " - **Benoit Charette, Minister of the Environment and the Fight against Climate Change of Quebec**

"By working with organizations across the country like CREDDO and their partners, we will continue to protect more of our nature. Our shared resources will ensure we have a healthy environment for wildlife and for future generations of Canadians." - **The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change**

-30-

The opinions expressed in this document are those of CREDDO and CPAWS-OV.

About CPAWS-OV

CPAWS-OV is a charitable organisation and a major advocate for the conservation of wilderness in the region. Our mission is to protect the biodiversity on public lands in and around the Ottawa River watershed through environmental policy recommendations, awareness and education activities and by working with various regional stakeholders.

About CREDDO

The CREDDO is a major partner for environmental, political and economic stakeholders in the Outaouais. Its mission is to protect the environment in collaboration with others while promoting sustainable development.

Information :

Benoit Delage, Executive Director

Conseil régional en environnement et développement durable de l’Outaouais (CREDDO)

514-692-1273

dg@creddo.ca

Geneviève Le Blanc, Conservation Director

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Ottawa Valley Chapter (CPAWS-OV)

438-777-3293

gleblanc@cpaws.org

Jane Toller, Warden

MRC de Pontiac

819-648-5689 ext. 245

prefete@mrcpontiac.qc.ca

Jérôme Dupras, Professor

Université du Québec en Outaouais

514-692-1273

dg@creddo.ca