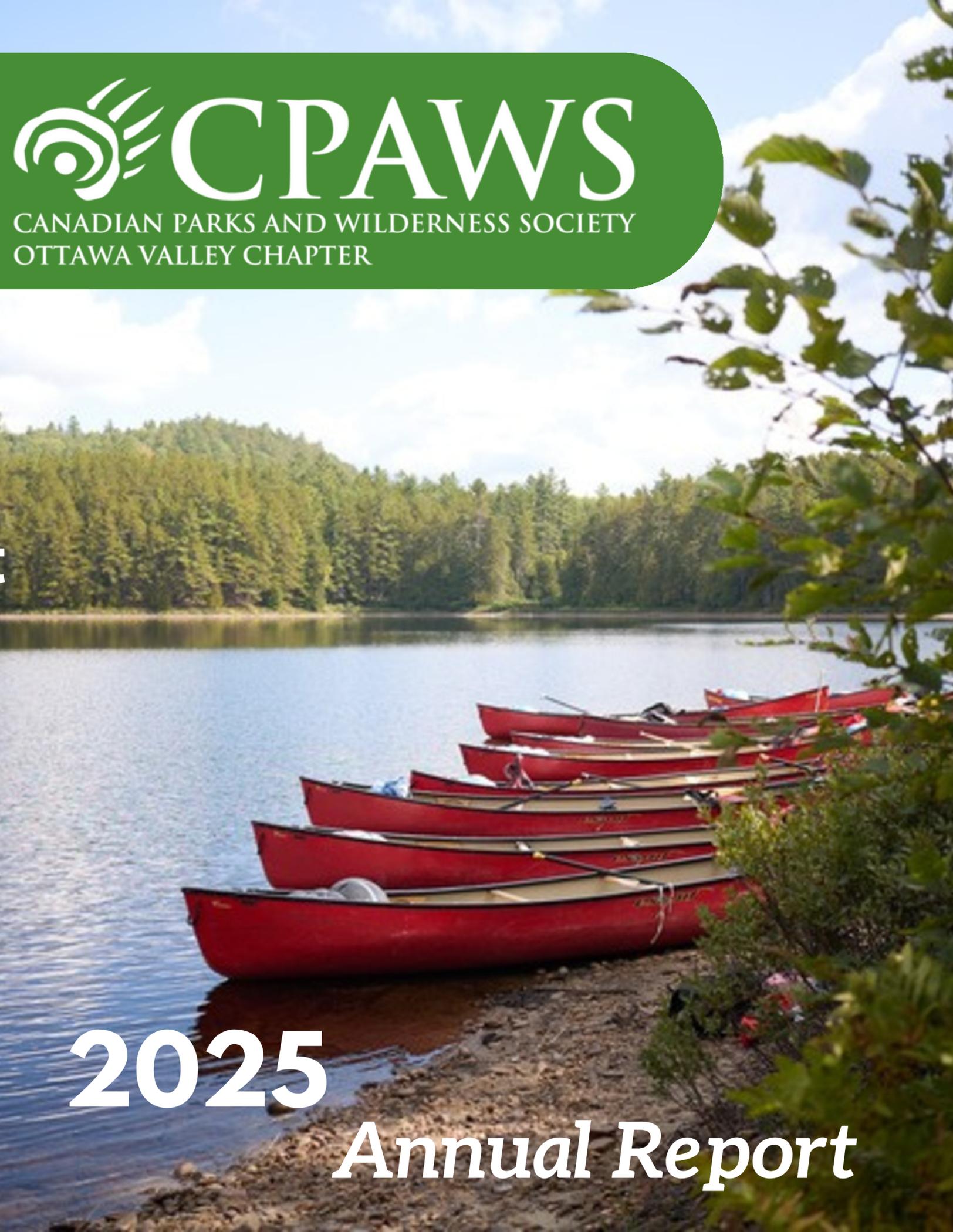




CPAWS

CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY
OTTAWA VALLEY CHAPTER



2025

Annual Report

Our Mission...

"To protect AT LEAST 30% of land and water in the Ottawa Valley region by 2030 while creating a network of connected and restored greenspaces for nature and people"



Our Vision...

"A world where nature and communities thrive together."



Our Values...

Environmental Stewardship: A voice for the voiceless

Community Engagement: Nature for everyone

Indigenous Collaboration: Honouring ancestral knowledge

Sustainability: For a brighter, greener future

Transparency and Accountability: Rooted in trust



Welcome!



John McDonnell

Executive Director

“What a year it has been! 2025 was marked by numerous new projects and significant progress toward our goal of protecting at least 30% of the Ottawa River watershed and adjoining areas by 2030.

We launched many new programs and projects but I am most proud of our new youth program Nature for everyone, everywhere! Funded by the Canada Service Corps program, which aims to connect new Canadian youth to nature through a wilderness trip on the Dumoine River and environmental stewardship projects.

As a result of new funding, we launched an ambitious nature restoration program, as simply conserving and protecting intact areas is no longer enough to address the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Our staff team grew in 2025, we welcomed our first Communications Manager to CPAWS-OV with a mandate to help us tell our stories and engage the public in conservation at this critical moment in our history.

While we have much to celebrate in 2025, we also saw serious threats to the environment from new government policies in Ontario, Quebec and at the federal level aimed at fast-tracking industrial development by removing protections for species at risk and by streamlining approval processes, often at the expense of true Indigenous and public consultation. Rest assured, CPAWS-OV will continue to advocate for nature on your behalf.

In closing, I would like to thank our team for their dedication to the organization in 2025, we look forward even more successes in 2026. “

“Thank you to all CPAWS-OV supporters and volunteers for your continued dedication. This past year has been an especially busy and productive one. We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to Monique for her tremendous hard work and wish her every success in her future endeavours.

We are pleased to welcome a strong group of new board members, and I look forward to working with them. Our strategic plan has received valuable feedback and will be shared in the new year.

With the 30% by 2030 goal in sight, together we can make it happen! “



Paul Wernick

President

Protect



The NCR Greenbelt

The NCR Greenbelt is an incredible asset to the people who live here and yet it lacks any real protection. In May of 2025, we hired Maggie to take on the task of coordinating this campaign. Despite the hold on the Greenbelt being made into a National Urban Park, we have continued to move forward. Our Greenbelt Committee now holds 12 members and we planning our first ever Greenbelt Forum which will be taking place in February at the Museum of nature with the theme to Protect, Connect Restore this precious resource. Our Stakeholder analysis has allowed us to connect with 18 Community Associations and 8 NGOs. We are also organising Lobby Days to take place in 2026 Momentum is growing and we are confident we will be successful in making sure the Greenbelt is not only protected but connected and restored for the future. At over 200 square kilometers, the Greenbelt is one of the largest urban greenspaces in the world and provides innumerable benefits to the region. It cannot be allowed to be forever lost through development.

Gatineau Park

We worked closely with Pontiac Kitigan Zibi Member of Parliament Sophie Chatel and Senator Rosa Galvez to have a bill drafted and tabled in the Senate to protect Gatineau Park. As we continue to collect signatures and speak with local officials, Senate Bill S-229 has been making it's way through parliament and we are hoping a decision will be made in 2026. When passed, the Bill will recognize the boundaries of the park in an act of Parliament and will ensure that the maintenance and restoration of ecological integrity are the overriding management priorities for the park.



Protect

Noire and Coulonge rivers protected areas

A new Management Committee is born:

With 852,6 km² of the Noire and Coulonge river watershed protected since August 2023, the next step for the project was to ensure local management and engagement. With our guidance, a group of local stakeholders who are passionate about protecting this area have been meeting regularly since December 2024 to discuss issues related to the management of the protected area, to develop a shared vision for the future of the territory, and to create useful tools for its management.

In 2025, with our help, these members developed the following documents:

- Guidelines protocol for canoeing, snowmobiling, and ATV use;
- Master plan;
- Implementation plan.

We look forward to seeing plans grow and enthusiasm spread as the local population steps up for nature here.



Tourism and Biodiversity Cohort

Our hard work in the Noire and Coulonge was rewarded this year when our team was selected to take part in the Tourism & Biodiversity Cohort. The Ministry of Tourism, in partnership with the MELCCFP, has launched this pilot project aimed at showcasing biodiversity reserves in order to promote responsible and sustainable tourism. The project seeks to achieve the following objectives that will guide the actions of SNAP-VO and local partners:

- Develop tourism that respects ecosystems
- Document and share best practices in visitor management
- Raise awareness and mobilize stakeholders and users of the territory.
- Encourage the broader adoption of good practices across the protected areas network
- Make sustainable tourism a lever contributing to Québec's conservation objectives.

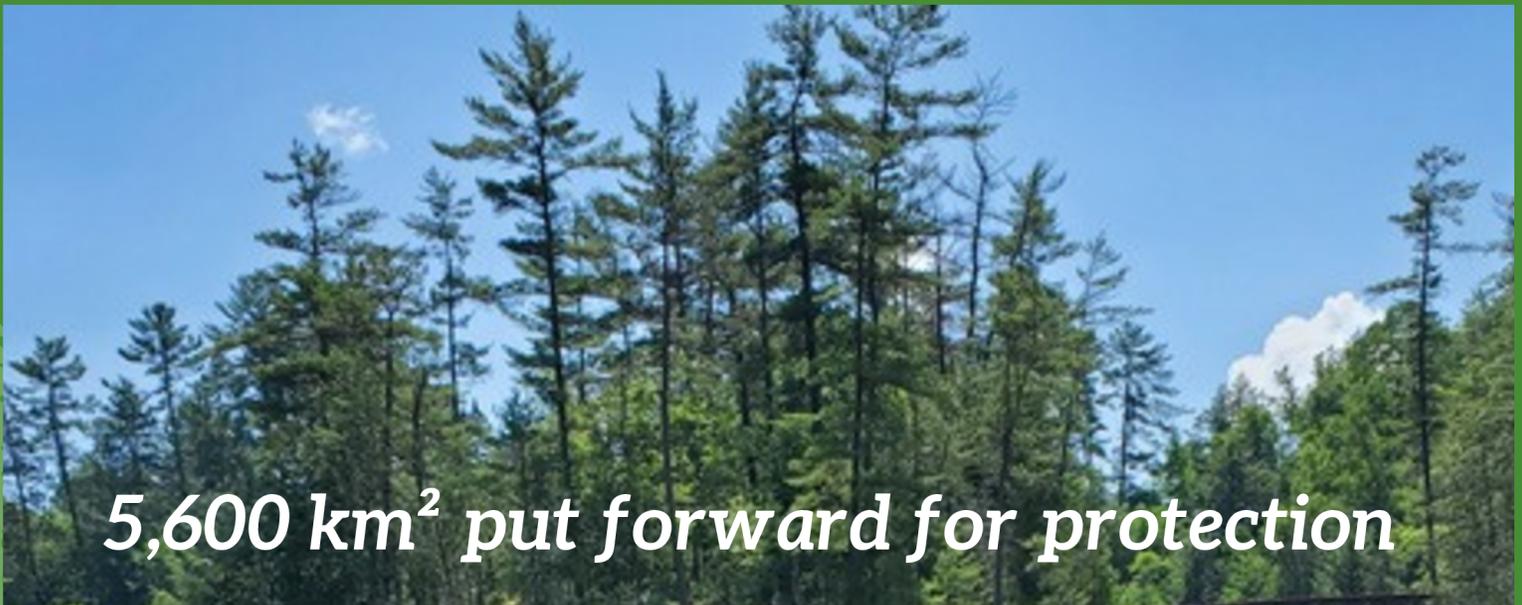


Protect

Contribution to 30 x 30 Targets in Québec

In June 2024, the MELCCFP launched a call for projects to gather proposals from citizens and organizations in order to meet the objective of protecting 30% of Québec's territory by 2030. We participated actively by consulting with numerous users of the Ottawa River watershed and by conducting field visits. We submitted 14 proposals totaling more than 5,600 km², one of the largest single sets of proposals by any organization in the province, aimed at creating a network of connected protected areas, including major ecological corridors.

The MRCs of Pontiac, Vallée-de-l'Or, and des Collines supported the analysis of all the projects we submitted, whereas all proposals and the majority of those submitted by other organisations were rejected by the MRCs of Vallée-de-la-Gatineau and Témiscamingue. Ultimately, 2,643 km² were retained for consultation, leading to a government decision expected in 2027. Until then, we will take part in local consultation tables across the Outaouais to discuss the submitted projects and to ensure that nature has a voice in the process.



5,600 km² put forward for protection

ORV Trails:

At the request of local stakeholders and with funding from the Fondation de la Faune, CPAWS-OV produced a map showing the unofficial trails located within and around the Noire and Coulonge protected area. We initiated the first steps for Quad clubs to propose the addition of a federated trail to the Fédération Québécoise des Clubs Quads, which would help limit the impact of these vehicles on the habitats of various species while also making the activity safer. We also prepared informational panels on the history, best practices, and biodiversity of the territory, which could eventually be installed along these trails.

Discover

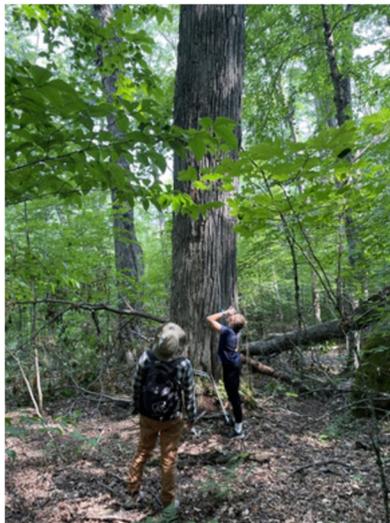
Road Ecology Project

As part of our efforts towards an Algonquin-Dumoine corridor, in 2025 we started our road ecology project on Highway 17 to try and map out problem areas for wildlife mortality. We completed 4 surveys of our study area, covering a total distance of about 300km with the help of our volunteers. In total, we noted over 230 wildlife on road (specifically vertebrate) observations, including 128 dead-on-road observations, 15 alive- and injured-on-road observations, and 89 "other signs of wildlife" (e.g. bird calls, tracks, and scat). One of the biggest surprises from the field season was the impact of roads on birds with 40 observations noted.



The largest mammals we found included an American black bear and several coyotes. We will continue our study next year while working on solutions to help wildlife cross this barrier safely, whether by strategically placed culverts, fencing etc. It is increasingly important that our wildlife has safe passage through our landscape to find food and escape the rising effects of climate change which is why we are determined to create a connected mosaic of protected habitats.

230 observations noted on highway 17



Old Growth Forests

In 2025, CPAWS-OV launched a new initiative to identify and safeguard the last remaining old-growth forests of the Outaouais Hills and southwestern Laurentian mountains. Using a field-based approach, we began aligning our work with provincial criteria for old-growth designation. Getting this file off the ground required both technical groundwork and early partnerships with land managers, researchers, and community members committed to protecting these rare ecosystems. As fieldwork progressed, we uncovered forest tracts that represent some of the region's last fragments of pre-industrial forest. These stands now hold exceptional ecological value. Documenting them in 2025 allowed us to begin mapping where old-growth characteristics persist and where conservation action is most urgent. The ecological richness of these forests is striking. Walking through these stands in 2025 reinforced why this work matters: they are living archives of biodiversity, natural climate refuges, and places of deep cultural significance.

A key achievement of 2025 was laying the partnership foundations needed to launch this file effectively. As we began identifying candidate old-growth stands, we opened discussions with a wide range of organizations and institutions. Each conversation has helped shape the scientific, educational, and policy dimensions of the project. These early relationships are already strengthening our field methods, expanding our access to expertise, and positioning the program within a broader network of regional collaborators who share a commitment to safeguarding the last remaining old-growth forests here.

Restore

Launching a new restoration program

In 2025, CPAWSOV embarked on a new chapter: the launch of an ecological restoration program to complement our efforts to protect the region's remaining large, intact natural areas. We are targeting sites of high ecological value, places where well planned interventions can rebuild the integrity of natural habitats, improve essential services, and return to local communities vibrant, resilient, and inspiring natural spaces. In our search, the Grandes Baies Wildlife Refuge Project stood out. Stretching over nearly 29 km² from Gatineau to Thurso, it forms an ecological corridor of major importance, yet these lands bear the scars of the emerald ash borer and historical agricultural or industrial use. During the summer months, we began ecological inventories in the Grandes Baies sector in preparation for future shoreline revitalization work. We made good headway into our floristic inventory, working with local farmers and the Parc national de plaine. Strong relationships with farmers and other members of the community will be key to the success of this project as well as collaboration with other organisations. We look forward to continuing our inventories and discussions in 2026 to better understand the current state of the wetland, the needs of the people who live near them and how best to move forward with a concrete restoration plan.

Beyond this particular project, our program aims to follow the watershed's streams and rivers to restore shorelines and strengthen ecological corridors. Revegetating riverbanks improves water quality, provides continuous habitat for wildlife, and protects aquatic environments from the impacts of climate change. We are also exploring tree planting projects along tributaries in the Rocher Fendu area near Beachburg, on the Ontario side, with the goal of transforming these agricultural landscapes into havens of biodiversity.



Black Ash restoration

At the heart of our concerns for wetlands is the disappearance of the black ash, a species now listed as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. This tree plays a vital role in biodiversity, water quality, and the cultural traditions of First Nations. We are collaborating with specialized organizations, such as the Forest Gene Conservation Association, to assess opportunities for planting black ash trees that show resistance to the emerald ash borer. In Gatineau, we are conducting work in the Boucher Forest which stands as a stark reminder of the losses already suffered and of the urgency to act before these habitats are overtaken by invasive species such as glossy buckthorn. In 2025, we started the groundwork in exploring key sites and establishing relationships to hopefully start planting saplings in 2026.

Engage



**Over \$12k récolté
pour la nature!**

Launching our first ever Ottawa Outdoor Film Festival

This year we put together our first ever Ottawa Outdoor Film Festival and we couldn't be more pleased with the outcome. We wanted to connect with more nature lovers in the Ottawa Valley and bring them together to celebrate the amazing landscape we have here in Canada. With help from our fantastic volunteers, sponsors (Patagonia, Sail, Arct'eryx)and the 500 people who filled the Bytown theater, we raised over 12k dollars and collected hundreds of signatures for our Gatineau Park and Greenbelt campaigns.

The evening included 3 thought provoking films by Canadian film makers all focusing on connecting with nature through adventure, culture and a concern for the environment and it's future. There were also some great prizes to be won from our sponsors and supporters with raffle tickets selling like hot cakes.

This was a great occasion to raise awareness on some of the campaigns we are fighting for with John giving a brief talk about our mission and volunteers gathering signatures at our outreach table.

We had an amazing time and look forward to putting on this event again in 2026 with films from more talented film makers across Canada.



With a little hope and some hard work, we hope to engage even more people in the upcoming year to help make sure our green spaces stay green!

Engage

Nature for Everyone, Everywhere!

We were very excited to launch our Youth Program in 2025 to help a new generation of concerned locals on their path to a career in the environmental sector. Funded by the Canada Service Corps, this program is aimed at newcomers to Canada as well as members of the indigenous community and includes an inspiring 3 day canoe trip on the Dumoine River to connect with nature, make friends and gain important skills.

In the summer months, we hosted 3 separate trips for our first two cohorts and each weekend was a great success. Participants took part in educational sessions with specialists in their field and learned to paddle, navigate and set up camp all while discussing ideas for their community project. Participants also got the chance to take part in an autumn bioblitz in the Madawaska highlands, learning about fungi and their role in the ecosystem.

During the course of the 1 year program, each participant is creating their own conservation / sustainability project for their communities while receiving 1 on 1 mentorship and attending workshops with the team. Some examples of projects so far include: the removal of invasive phragmites species, creating a composting program, creating bird-safe windows around their university campus, creating their own workshops to deliver to the community or to schools on various environmental topics, creating educational panels on various species to be installed in the Dumoine River Aquatic Reserve and many more!

We will soon be welcoming our 3rd cohort and hope to continue the program for years to come.



63 Youth Engaged!

Engage

DRAW

This year's Dumoine River Art for Wilderness trip was a big success with old friends and new artists joining us for what has become a highlight of the summer. From July 29th to August 5th 22 artists, our largest group yet, packed their supplies and joined us for a week of canoeing, hiking, environmental talks and plenty of time to relax and be inspired on the shores of the Dumoine River.



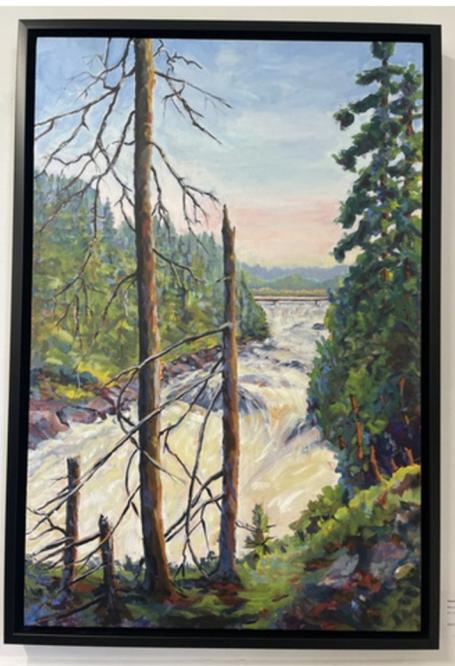
As always, we were blown away by the art pieces which came out of these sessions which were also very well received by the public. Art is a fantastic way to express the appreciation we feel for a subject and it's great to see people fall in love with the Dumoine through the DRAW artwork exhibits where the public can purchase a little piece of the river to take home.

To reach a greater number of people across the watershed and share our knowledge of the Dumoine, we took part in several events and exhibits in both Quebec and Ontario. Notably, at La Fab in Chelsea, Quebec, John was keynote speaker at a special weekend long celebration in honor of the Dumoine and it's history. Including music and talks from specialists in the area, the event brought more locals in to see the month long DRAW exhibit at the venue while learning a bit more about the Dumoine and why we are continuing our work to ensure it is cared for.

All together, \$4500 was raised, with more pieces still up for sale, to help us continue our work to protect and restore nature in the Dumoine river watershed.

\$4500 raised

22 artists involved



Our Team



John McDonnell
Executive Director



Yanny Richot
Conservation Director



Sasha Huybregts
Conservation Project Manager
for Eastern Ontario



Melinda Gilhen-Baker
Communications and
Outreach Manager



Andrew Gibson
Project Manager for Conservation
and Ecological Restoration



Maggie Hanna
Greenbelt Campaign
Coordinator



Jennifer Haughton
Education Coordinator

Board of Directors

President
Paul Wernick

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Lauren Whyte,

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Kris Nanda

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Ellie Haine

Vice-President
Arto Keklikian

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Alison Sidney

Director
Michael Wong

Director
Julia Stockdale-Otárola

Treasurer
Varvara Lobonova

Director
Soren Antosz

Director
Fiona Anthes

Tracy Shaw,
Director

Our impact in 2025

- Donors gave over \$400,000 to support our work
- 63 people taking part in our youth program
- 2500 km² under consideration for protection
- 60 volunteers contributed a total of 1200 hours
- more than 600 attendees took part in our events
- 3500 signatures collected on our Gatineau Park and Greenbelt petitions
- over 1000 supporters (individuals who donated in 2025)
- Approximately 7000 people connecting to us through our digital community
- 6000 newsletter subscribers

**Over 8754 km² protected since 1969 thanks to
CPAWS-OV**