

Our File/N/Réf. **50 05-98-0838-DD**
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DATE 23 February 1998

TO/DEST. The Chair and Members of Council

FROM/EXP. Director Water Environment Protection Division
 Environment and Transportation Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **BIODIVERSITY IN THE RIDEAU RIVER ECOSYSTEM**

INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared for information purposes, will outline the Canadian Museum of Nature's programme to study biodiversity in the Rideau system and the programme's interaction with the RMOC's Surface Water Quality Programme.

BACKGROUND

The Canadian Museum of Nature (CMN) has received private funding to conduct a three-year study of biodiversity in the Rideau River ecosystem. The CMN has partnered with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) to conduct community consultations. The community input will be used to set study priorities, to identify the public's areas of concern in the Rideau system and to draw on local knowledge of the plant and animal species and populations. The study's geographic area extends from Rideau Falls, south beyond RMOC borders, to Smiths Falls. The geographic extent of the study makes the CMN-RVCA partnership ideal.

The RMOC has worked in partnership with the CMN over the past few years on specific study topics in the Rideau system. Two major subjects of study have been zebra mussel population surveys and study of phytoplankton (microscopic plants) in the Rideau within RMOC boundaries. The CMN study will draw on information collected by the RMOC-CMN past studies and add to the database and geographic area covered.

Another component of this three-year study is an assessment of fish populations. Since 1995, the RMOC has been conducting fisheries population and habitat assessments in the Rideau River in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). RMOC staff are meeting

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Committee Agenda of 10 March 1998

with the CMN staff to ensure that the information collected on fish populations and habitat is compatible with that collected to date by RMOC-MNR. The data collected to date has used methods which meet MNR standards. This ensures that the data collected for the Rideau River can be compared to other water bodies within the Province.

Other components of the CMN three-year study include population surveys of animals such as frogs and salamanders and water quality chemistry analysis. The RMOC has a database of water chemistry data and will be co-operating with the CMN study to provide relevant historic information from the database.

CONSULTATION

The public consultation sessions by the CMN-RVCA are scheduled to begin at the end of February. RMOC and the local municipalities of Ottawa, Nepean and Gloucester are in the process of collecting information to prepare public consultation sessions at the end of 1998. The scope of the RMOC-local municipal consultation is to assist in setting policy with the Ontario Ministry of Environment with respect to stormwater management facility discharge criteria. RMOC staff plan to discuss co-ordination of this consultation exercise with that of the CMN so that the efforts will build on information obtained rather than duplicate efforts.

In addition, in order to ensure ongoing communications, the Water Quality Committee has invited a member of the CMN Study Team to attend Water Quality Committee meetings for the duration of the study.

*Approved by
Nancy B. Schepers, P. Eng.*

MT/mlb