



Ottawa River Institute Update – 2017

Greetings of the Season to all our ORI members and friends!

Once again it is time to update members on ORI's activities. We are very grateful for your continuing interest and support, and extend our very best wishes for the holiday season and the coming year! ORI's efforts to organize events and actions to improve our environment continued throughout 2017, thanks to donor support and partnerships with other local organizations.

We again relied exclusively on Individual local donors to keep us going this year. We are very grateful for your continuing interest and your support. Please consider helping us with a financial contribution in 2017.

We are pleased to welcome our newest members; Greg Trendell, Jeff Jones, Kim Emde, Tara Gallagher, Lorraine Fokes, Jen Bennett-Pond, and Sandra Palmer.

Celebrate Our Rivers Paddle Series

ORI, in partnership with the Bonnechere River Watershed Project, organized an expanded series of paddle trips to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday. Most of our new trips featured Renfrew County's little-known provincial waterway parks and conservation reserves. We paddled in the Barron River Provincial Park, the Mud Lake/Mud Creek Conservation Reserve, the Constant Creek Swamp and Fen Conservation Reserve, the Little Mississippi River Conservation Reserve, and the Bonnechere River Provincial Park (a waterway park on the Little Bonnechere that extends upstream from Round Lake to Algonquin Park).

Not all local residents may know that Renfrew County has 25 properties designated under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act* to "permanently protect representative ecosystems, biodiversity and provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage and to manage these areas to ensure that ecological integrity is maintained." Our [Nature Notebook website](#) has maps and descriptions of these areas.

Watershed Research and Planning

ORI continued to be an active participant in the Renfrew County Water Quality Leadership Group - a coalition of agricultural and environmental groups formed at the 2015 Renfrew County Stewardship Forum. This Group continues to work behind the scenes to encourage the development of a County-wide watershed council. This council could facilitate coordinated action between different levels of government, the private sector, and volunteer groups to address the water quality problems affecting our local lakes and rivers.

A new and significant development is a project proposal led by the Bonnechere River Watershed Project (BRWP) entitled "Advancing Freshwater Stewardship in Renfrew County." The Ottawa River Institute - along with the Renfrew County Water Quality Leadership Group, Algonquin College, the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association, the Muskrat Watershed Council, and Sustainable Eastern Ontario - is a supporting organization for this proposal. It was submitted to the Ontario Trillium Foundation as part of their "collective impact" stream. We've received good feedback - stay tuned for a formal announcement.

The new project is intended to allow groups (farmers, tourism operators and other businesses, lake property owners, educational institutions, outdoor recreationists, different levels of government, etc.) to meet individually and collectively to advance the protection and restoration of our watersheds, addressing both water quality and water management issues.

BRWP and ORI decided to move the Renfrew County Stewardship Forum planned for this fall to next spring in order to allow discussions of activities related to the new project.

ORI continues to be an active participant on the Science and Water Quality Committee of the Muskrat Watershed Council. Algonquin College and its students worked with the Muskrat Watershed Council this year to monitor the results of controlled tile drain installations on local farms, and to assist with shoreline surveys and restoration projects on Muskrat Lake.

Renfrew County Trails

Last year's Renfrew County Stewardship Forum featured excellent presentations and discussions on trails in Renfrew County. Recreation directors from Arnprior, Renfrew, McNab/Braeside, and Horton all took part in a panel discussion about how people use trails in their communities. Jason Davis from the County of Renfrew talked about the County's purchase of the 218-km Renfrew County segment of the Canadian Pacific rail corridor, now known as the [Algonquin Trail](#), and also about the County's [Trails Strategy](#).

Jason noted that one of the recommendations in the Trails Strategy is that the County "support the creation of a Trails association... to work on a range of trail interests and management issues including collaboration with stakeholders from trail groups, landowners, local businesses, Renfrew County and District Health Unit, local municipalities, County of Renfrew, provincial associations and other associations of trail users."

ORI has taken the initiative to organize two informal teleconferences (in March and November of this year) between the County and representatives of trail user groups, including the Snow Country Snowmobile Association, the Ottawa Valley Cycling and Active Transportation Alliance, the Renfrew County ATV Club, and the

Algonquin College Outdoor Adventure Program. Participants find these meetings useful in exchanging information about new developments, particularly regarding the Algonquin Trail, segments of which are now open for public use. If you're interested in participating in these phone meetings, or know of other trail interests who'd be interested, please contact us at info@ottawariverinstitute.ca.

Mini-Bioblitz on Big Rock at Lake Clear



On Saturday June 24th, ORI teamed up with the Pembroke Area Field Naturalists to hold a mini-bioblitz on Big Rock at Lake Clear. Big Rock is an impressive natural feature, rising 115 feet above the lake shore. It is one of the County's most iconic cultural landmarks. Its beauty has attracted renowned artists such as A.Y. Jackson, according to ORI board member John Almstedt, a fine artist himself. John organized the mini-bioblitz to help document the environmental values of a [4.5-hectare portion of Big Rock](#) recently acquired by the Lake Clear Conservancy. Participants in the mini-bioblitz were rewarded by excellent views of the magnificent Peregrine Falcon, nationally listed as a species of special concern.

ORI Annual General Meeting

Our June 4th ORI annual general meeting also took place at Lake Clear. John Almstedt acted as our host and led one group in sketching Big Rock. Another group paddled from Buelow Beach a short distance down Hurds Creek into Little Lake Clear. Well-known local artist Kathy Haycock presented a great slide show featuring paintings of the upper Ottawa Valley that she and John have done, plus paintings of an earlier generation of local artists: A.Y. Jackson, Maurice Haycock, Ralph Burton and Charles Comfort.

Energy East Pipeline Event

ORI joined with the Bonnechere River Watershed Project (BRWP) and Pipeline Awareness Renfrew County in an event organized by Environmental Defense to highlight the risks of oil spills to our local waterways. We met under the highway 17 bridge over the Bonnechere River in Renfrew on June 5th and launched a number of pink pieces of plywood ("drift cards") to track where oil from a pipeline break might go. There was good [media coverage](#) of this event. We recovered many of the drift cards at the base of the First Chute on our June 11th BRWP-ORI paddle on the lower Bonnechere.

On October 5th TransCanada announced that it was cancelling its proposed Energy East pipeline, which would have converted the existing Canadian Mainline natural gas pipeline in our area to carry diluted bitumen from the Alberta oil sands to Saint John, New Brunswick for export to overseas markets.

Ottawa River Heritage Designation

ORI President Ole Hendrickson attended the Ottawa River Heritage Designation Event held on October 4, 2017 at the Petawawa Golf Club. It was announced at the event that the County of Renfrew's request to be designated as Managing Body of the Ottawa River as part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Program has been accepted.

The County's Development and Property Committee and the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association will implement program activities related to the Ottawa's Heritage River status. The County will prepare an annual report that could provide an opportunity to highlight events in which ORI is involved, such as the Celebrate our Rivers paddle series.

The designation of the Ottawa as a Heritage River, made in July 2016, was done in recognition of the river's significant cultural values. A plaque celebrating the designation was unveiled at Petawawa Point as part of the October 4th event.

And in closing...

Please visit the [ORI website](#), [ORI Facebook page](#), [Nature Notebook website](#) and [Nature Notebook Facebook Page](#). We're trying to make our web presence as helpful to members as possible and appreciate your feedback.

Congratulations to our new ORI Director Sandra Palmer from Pembroke for joining the team. Sandra's a keen paddler and you may get to meet her on one of our local waterways next year.

We'd like to say a big "THANK YOU" to all ORI members and supporters as we mark our 16th year; from ORI Directors John Almstedt, Ole Hendrickson, Lynn Jones, Sandra Palmer and Craig Robinson; and from ORI Coordinator Cheryl Keetch.