

Chapter 4

Recreational Values

The following section describes the outstanding recreational values that the Ottawa River will contribute to the CHRS. The section will be organized according to the following categories: boating, swimming, fishing, water related activities, winter activities, and natural and cultural heritage appreciation.

4.1 Description of Recreational Values

4.1.1 Boating

The Ottawa River offers excellent opportunities for a wide range of boating activities, enabling travel, nature appreciation and sport. The river boasts world-class white water kayaking and rafting on its

Figure 4.1 Rafting in Big Waters



Source: Benoit Chailfour

Rocher Fendu section near Beachburg, Ontario. Its combination of warm water and high-volume, safe rapids attracts paddlers from around the world. Canoeing and recreational kayaking are also possible on the river's calm upper stretches and long lakes, and backcountry canoe tripping is highly popular in the adjacent Réserve faunique de la Vérendrye and Algonquin Provincial Park. Pleasure craft, including power boats and sail boats, offer another way to experience the Ottawa River. The Ottawa River Waterway, a recreational boating route, stretches from Arnprior to Notre-Dame-du-Nord. Its unique system of hydraulic trailers that

move powerboats of all sizes around obstacles permits a linked waterway for scenic cruising. The boating sector on the Ottawa River is considered to be a major contributor to the regional tourism economy.

4.1.2 Swimming

The water quality of the Ottawa River has improved significantly over the past few decades, and swimming is increasing in popularity along the waterway. Numerous beaches along the river's upper and lower sections are regularly monitored to ensure suitable water quality. Beaches near urban areas along the river are suitable for swimming.

4.1.3 Fishing

The Ottawa River has earned its reputation of being an excellent fishing destination, offering a great diversity of fish species, surroundings, and types of fishing. The variety and quantity of fish attract some 50,000 fishers each year to the Upper Ottawa River - particularly to Lake Timiskaming due to its accessibility. The Lower Ottawa River is also a popular fishing destination, centering around Petrie Island, McLaurin Bay and Clément Bay, and Lake Deschênes. Trophy-sized fish such as Largemouth Bass are present in the river.

4.1.4 Water Related Activities

The Ottawa River supports land-based recreational trails and access points that allow residents and visitors to enjoy the river.

Riverside trails and corridors provide opportunities to appreciate the Ottawa River valley environment. Numerous converted railways, cycling paths, and trails within parks are exemplified by the Emerald Necklace Trail System in Petawawa, the Greenbelt in the National Capital Region and the Cycloparc PPJ cycling trail in Pontiac County.

Parks such as the Gatineau Park and Algonquin Provincial Park offer extensive opportunities for hiking. Parks along the Ottawa River aim to conserve, educate and provide sustainable recreational opportunities. Some of the most popular recreation parks in Ontario and Quebec line the Ottawa River. Both municipal and provincial parks provide riverside camping. Please refer to the map of Ottawa River Natural Heritage Values and the map of Ottawa River Communities and Recreational Values for recreational opportunities and protected areas along the river.

In the past decade, communities have experienced a dramatic change in approach toward waterfront development, which has taken on much more importance and is undertaken with the river in mind. Examples of riverside and river access improvement are numerous. Hawkesbury has reclaimed a former shoreline, cluttered with saw and pulp mills, as parkland and housing with scenic views. The National Capital Commission conserves and develops waterfront land, with an explicit goal to promote river access and renaturalization. Shorelines have been renaturalized at former mill sites in Arnprior. Pembroke has reclaimed former industrial lands, and has developed a seniors' complex facing the river. Haileybury has major new developments along the waterfront, featuring a new marina, revitalizing the downtown area and replacing run-down buildings. New Liskeard's recent waterfront complex provides complete facilities for the community, recreation and tourism.

Hunting for game by rifle and bow is popular in the Ottawa River Valley. A regulated annual harvest is open for small game, black bear, moose and white-tailed deer. Trapping of fur-bearing species such as beaver and muskrat is also significant in some areas.

Figure 4.2 Snowmobile Excursion



Source : Benoit Chalifour

4.1.5 Winter Activities

During the winter, the Ottawa River provides significant opportunities for outdoor recreation. Ice fishing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, downhill skiing and skating are popular along the river. Cross-country skiing in the Gatineau Park overlooking the frozen river is highly popular. Winter festivals and carnivals occur in communities along the river, the largest of which is Winterlude on the frozen Rideau Canal.

4.1.6 Natural Heritage Appreciation

The many natural environments along the Ottawa River provide excellent opportunities for nature appreciation, including viewing and interpreting the natural characteristics of the river. Provincially-classified wetlands at Petrie Island and conservation areas such as Stony Swamp are just a few examples. Bird-watching is popular along the river, and migratory birds are a highlight.

4.1.7 Cultural Heritage Appreciation

The extraordinary history and cultural heritage of the Ottawa River is reflected in numerous events, festivals, museums, plaques and heritage corridors along the river. Communities along the river are actively highlighting and interpreting Ottawa River heritage. Ottawa River Living Legacy Kiosks in particular provide interpretation of both natural and cultural features. Please refer to the map of Ottawa River Natural Heritage Values to see the locations of the kiosks. National Historic Sites line the river from Carillon Canal to Fort

Témiscamingue, interpreting sites of Canada-wide significance. Along the Ottawa, several regional museums, heritage houses and pioneer villages further celebrate the cultural heritage of the river valley, including the Macdonell-Williamson House in East Hawkesbury, the Musée de l'Auberge Symmes in Aylmer, the Champlain Trail Museum and Pioneer Village in Pembroke, and the Voyageur Heritage Centre in Mattawa. Significant festivals along the river include the Hot-Air Balloon Festival in Gatineau, the Canadian Tulip Festival and Winterlude in Ottawa, L'Écho d'un peuple in Casselman, Voyageur Days in Mattawa, and the Fiddling and Step-Dancing Championships in Pembroke.

Figure 4.3 Pembroke Heritage Murals: The Timber Raft



Source: Adrienne Blatte