



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

25TH ANNIVERSARY

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NSERC National Award Winner for Science Promotion

Drone images: Matt Windle

SH photo credit: Stephany Hildebrand

Layout and design: Katie Verhoeven

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WALTER OEGGERLI

Board of Directors Chair

25 years and still going strong!

It would be hard to write this report and not speak to the new realities of 2020, certainly not what we expected. Yet amazingly, the River Institute is vibrant with energy, ideas, and innovation, the very things that have sustained us to this point. As we enter our 26th year, it is a year like no other. However, we cannot let the stress of today minimize our accomplishments from 2019. Under the steady hand and leadership of our senior staff, these challenges too will be met and overcome.

Research, Education, Community Outreach, and Financial Sustainability: these are the 4 priorities of our strategic plan, which has guided us over the past five years. Because of the guiding principles from the strategic plan, we are

in a good position to weather the storm. The bridges that have been built over the past many years lead to new opportunities. The contacts and partnerships our staff have established lead to greater exposure, greater knowledge, and innovative partnerships. The trust the community places in us is hard won and valued as we forge ahead with continuing opportunities to educate our community, share our knowledge, and listen to your concerns. The financial support from our donors, sponsors, and River Champions provides critical support for new projects and research.

We are grateful to all of our partners, donors, volunteers, Board members, and staff, and we look forward to the challenges and accomplishments that 2020 will bring.

Board of Directors:

Chair - Walter Oeggerli, *St. Lawrence River Restoration Council Chair, Local Farmer*
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PAT FINUCAN

Foundation Board Chair

The River Institute Foundation coordinates the River Champion Program, manages the River Institute's endowment fund, and assists with special fundraising events. In 2019, we were thrilled to be named as the beneficiary charity for the Seaway International Wine Festival, which resulted in a contribution of \$12,500. We are grateful to the Ramada Inn organizers for this contribution.

River Champions are individuals or organizations that contribute annually to the River Institute. Since the program began in 2016, River Champions have contributed over \$260,000 to advance local science in innovative ways. We are fortunate to have top scientists here in our community to do the research and

teach us to be good stewards of the ecosystem.

As a non-profit charitable organization, the River Institute raises its own funds for all essential costs, including salaries, administration, overhead, and operations. Grants, sponsorships, and donations provide specific funding for research and special projects, together with unrestricted contributions from individual donors and River Champions.

As people are connecting with nature and finding renewed appreciation for the outdoors, ecosystem health is more important than ever. I encourage everyone to consider a gift to the River Institute: www.riverinstitute.ca/donate.



Foundation Board:

Chair – Pat Finucan
Vice-Chair – Walter Oeggerli
Treasurer – Maureen Adams
Secretary – John McDonald
Director – Paul DeYoung

Ask Team:

Paul DeYoung John McDonald
Pat Finucan Tim Mills
Bill Kaneb Roy Perkins
Scott Lecky and staff
Luc Marion

JEFF RIDAL, PHD

Executive Director / Chief Research Scientist

The year 2019 marked the River Institute's 25th Anniversary, and celebrate we did! We used every opportunity to showcase how far we have come in 25 years, including a wonderful evening event with a large tent packed full of friends, staff, and supporters of the River Institute. We also honoured Christina Collard for her 25th anniversary working for the River Institute.

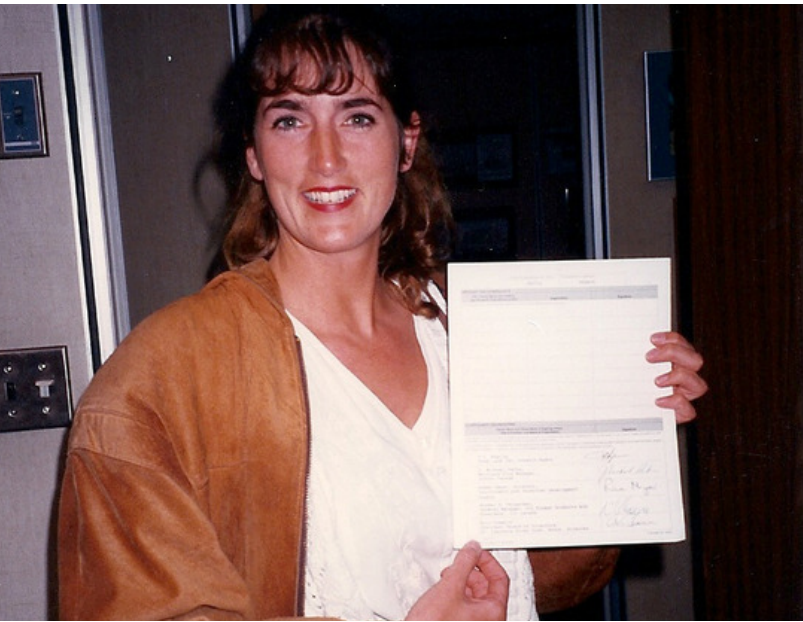
The River Institute achieved some significant honours in 2019. We were awarded the NSERC Award for Science Promotion, a national award that is given to one Canadian organization each year. We achieved certification by the Canadian Council on Animal Care, thanks to the hard work of our Animal

Care Committee. Matt Windle's trip to China helped enhance our partnership with Queen's University, Tongji University, and WWF China, and develop an exciting project to apply new e-DNA methods to examine biodiversity of large rivers, both in Canada and China.

As always, I am extremely proud of our staff who deliver all of the River Institute programs. It is remarkable to reflect over 25 years and consider our accomplishments in research, education, outreach, and technical services. We are grateful for the support and partnership of our donors, sponsors, and River Champions who have encouraged us for the past 25 years, and continue to support our efforts to improve the environment locally and globally.

2019 STAFF: Angela Flipsen – Intern Lab Technician // Bailey Bedard – Biologist, Summer Student // Brian Hickey – Program Leader Education & Research Scientist // Christina Collard – Program Leader Administration & Fundraising // Cristina Charette – PhD Candidate // Crystal Martell – Lab Technician // El-Amine Mimouni, Ph.D – Research Scientist // Emilie DeRochie – Summer Camp Programmer & Educator // Jason Szvec – Part Time Teaching Assistant // Jeff Ridal, Ph.D – Executive Director & Chief Research Scientist // Jennifer Lauzon – Assistant Administrator // Jesse St John – Biologist, Summer Student // Josh Filion – Educator & Biologist // Karen Cooper – Communications & RAP Transition Coordinator // Kate Schwartz – Field Technician, Summer Student // Katie Verhoeven – Communications and Fund Development Officer // Lacey MacDonald – Educator & Biologist // Leigh McGaughey, Ph.D – Research Scientist // Lexy Harquail – Educator & Biologist // Louis Savard – Program Leader RiverLabs // Luc St-Pierre – Lab Technician // MacKenzie Waller – Biologist // Mark MacDougall – Biologist // Mathieu St-Hilaire – Summer Camp Programmer // Matt Watson – Biologist // Matt Windle – Research Scientist // Meagan Mitchell – Research Assistant // Natasha Pozega – Project Development Officer & St. Lawrence River (Cornwall) RAP Coordinator // Neil Dempster – Lab Technician // Pam Maloney – Fund Development Consultant // Samantha Villeneuve – Administrative Assistant // Sarah Lafleur – Jr. Lab Technician, Summer Student // Stéphanie Guernon – Educator & Biologist // Stephany Hildebrand – Jr. Field Research Assistant // Ted Wright, Ph.D – Professor // Yanik Rozon – Jr. Field Technician & Educator





Christina Collard was hired in 1994 as the River Institute's first employee. She has helped guide the organization through 25 years of growth and impact.

Congratulations and thank you, Christina!

2019 was a year of celebration as the River Institute marked its 25th Anniversary. The River Institute began as a grass roots concept that grew into the scientific organization we have today thanks to the hard work and vision of concerned citizens, community and business partnerships.

2019 River Award recipient:
Melanie Baker Brown





In 2019, the Great River Rapport project connected with communities to gather feedback, concerns, and input about the river. Public presentations, workshops, and an online survey collected feedback from hundreds of people. At the same time, partnerships were formed with scientists, and a Science and Data workshop was held to identify a selection process for a suite of ecological indicators that will provide the environmental health information that fits the public interest.

The project continues to expand its original partnerships with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the Great River Network to include members of the Francophone community and Citizen Science interest groups. The Great River Rapport team of scientists, contributors, research assistants, and artists continues to expand, thanks to contributions from a variety of funding sources.



The FINS Project is a long-term initiative that began in 2015 under lead Research Scientist Matt Windle and in partnership with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) to provide information, monitoring, and indicator modelling for the nearshore aquatic communities of the Upper St. Lawrence River. This project has created one of the largest and most unique baseline datasets for the region, which has been of great value to the MCA, government agencies, and collaborative partners. To date the project has surveyed over 112,000 fish from 62 species, and habitat from over 190 sites on the St. Lawrence River from Kingston to Montreal.

This work has resulted in several peer-reviewed publications, and other collaborative projects with Clarkson University, Queen's University, and Université du Québec à Montréal.

Moving forward, the team will investigate exciting new technologies using environmental DNA (eDNA) combined with traditional survey methods to track the biodiversity of the river. The project will also work with the MCA to collect and analyze contaminant loadings of sportfish in the Akwesasne territory, in response to recent developments at the Grasse River Superfund Site.







Cristina Charette is a PhD candidate at the Université du Québec à Montréal in partnership with the River Institute. Her research project, *'The influence of environmental gradients in moderating exotic invasion impacts on aquatic food webs'* focuses on the impacts of the invasive round goby on the nutritive quality and contaminant loading of the nearshore food web in the Upper St. Lawrence River.

This project utilizes different types of food web analyses including stable isotopes, fatty acids, and stomach contents to establish the trophic role of the round goby and assess its nutritive value to sportfish like smallmouth bass and yellow perch. This work will also develop an ecosystem model of Lake St. Francis to understand how the introduction of the round goby impacts the ecosystem structure and function.



A long-term bat rehabilitation project led by Dr. Brian Hickey has deployed over 150 artificial bat houses throughout Eastern Ontario in an attempt to restore at-risk species of bats in the region. Ongoing monitoring and radiotracking of bats shows that Little Brown Bats are inhabiting the structures and some are successfully reproducing.

In 2019, nine colonies of Little Brown Myotis were documented. Some of these were large colonies with more than 100 individuals and three colonies were in bat

houses deployed as part of recovery efforts undertaken by the River Institute over the past several years. In addition, opportunities have been created for many citizen science volunteers who help monitor bat populations.

This project is providing valuable information for the M.Sc. thesis of University of Ottawa graduate student Bailey Bedard. Her work focuses on determining the sources of mercury for bats and understanding the details of its accumulation in different species.

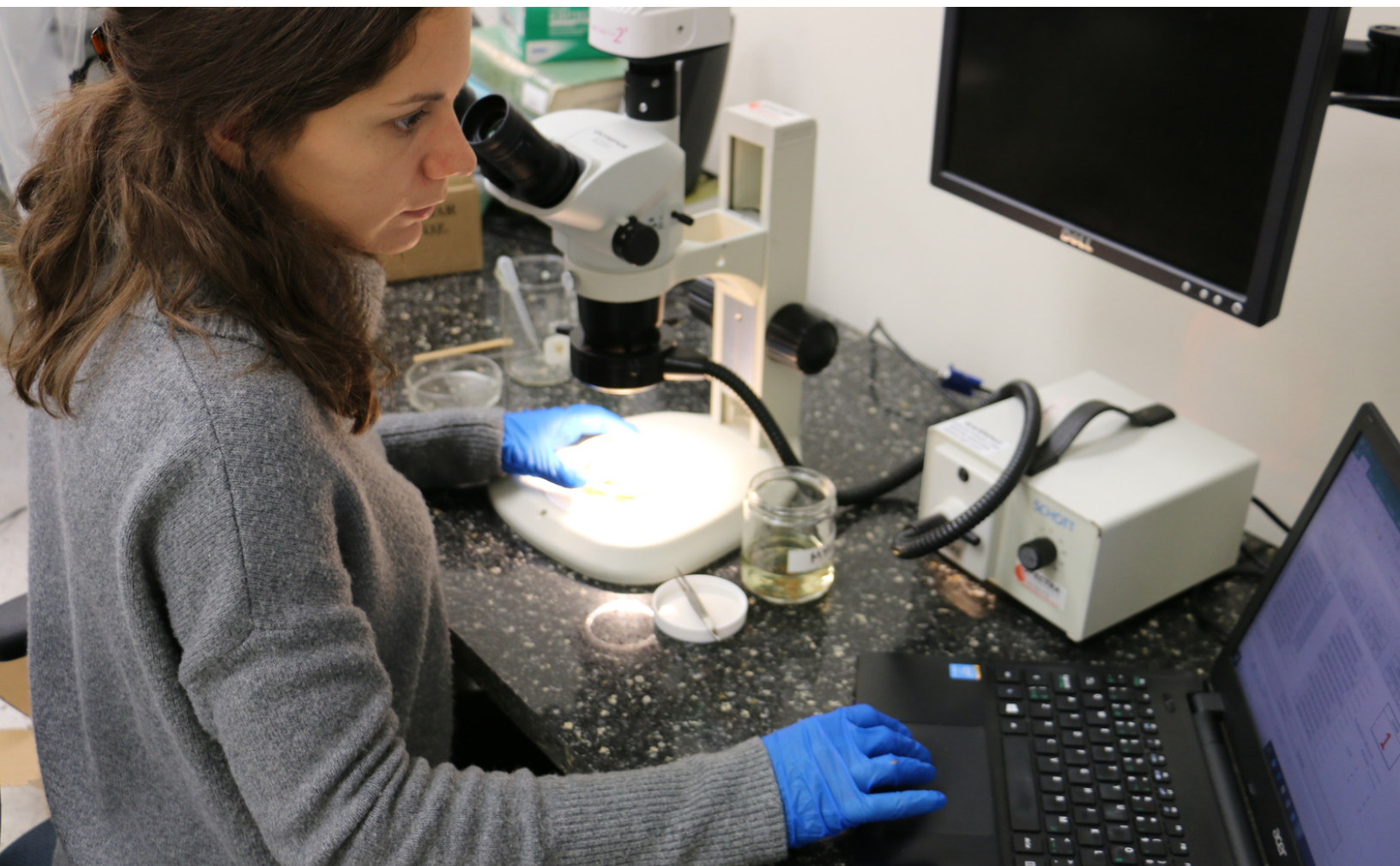






RiverLabs was created with the mandate to leverage the River Institute's expertise to assist industry with environmental problem solving. In 2019, RiverLabs delivered 19 unique projects and processed over 1000 samples through the River Institute's analytical laboratory. Highlights in 2019 included working with Food Cycle Science and Farm Boy to assess the environmental impact of processing organic waste for the consumer food industry; and working with Indigenous partners to assess flood potential and impacts.

RiverLabs continues to build a strong portfolio of partners, technical capabilities, and expertise, particularly in the area of UAV (drone) skills and spatial services. In 2019, we acquired a DJI Matrice 210 RTK drone with visual, thermal and near infrared optics, allowing for even more advanced survey and mapping options. RiverLabs also provides UAV pilot certificate training courses, and has recently revamped the course to make it available as an online, self-paced course.



The River Institute provides students of all ages with opportunities to learn about environmental science through school programs, water festivals, and camps. Last year, approximately 5750 students participated in these programs, and 81% stated that their interest in science increased after a River Institute experience.

The concept of 'learning science from scientists' provides students with hands-on interactions with scientists, and offers motivation, encouragement, and inspiration to consider a future in science. 100 school programs were offered in 2019, reaching 21 different schools from Eastern Ontario, Akwesasne, and Ottawa.





In 2019, the River Institute was awarded the NSERC Award for Science Promotion. The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) honours individuals and groups who make an outstanding contribution to the promotion of science in Canada through activities encouraging popular interest in science or developing science abilities. One organization is chosen each year based on nominations received from the public and/or scientific community. What an honour to be chosen in our 25th Anniversary year!



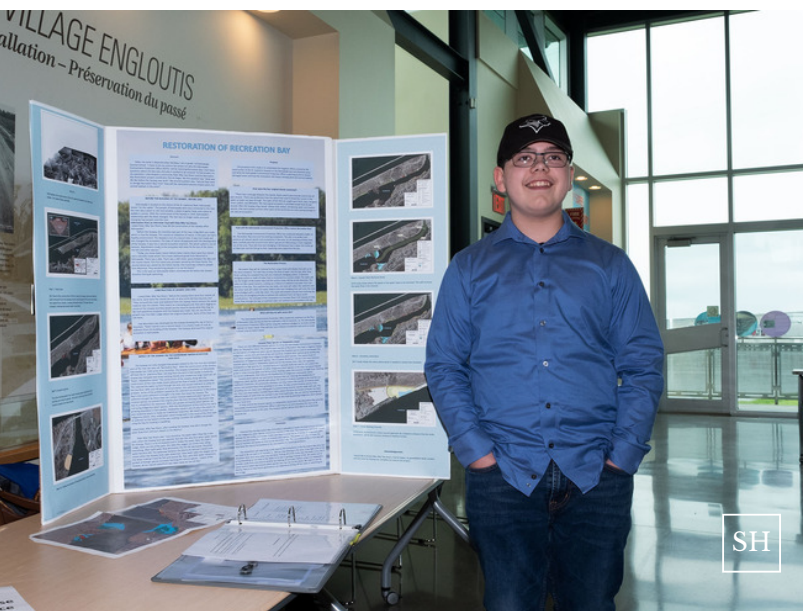


In partnership with Ontario Power Generation, the River Institute hosts March Break and summer family workshops at the St. Lawrence Power Development Visitor Centre in Cornwall. These workshops feature guest speakers, science and nature interactive displays, crafts, and activities.

In 2019, approximately 1800 people took part in these highly popular events.



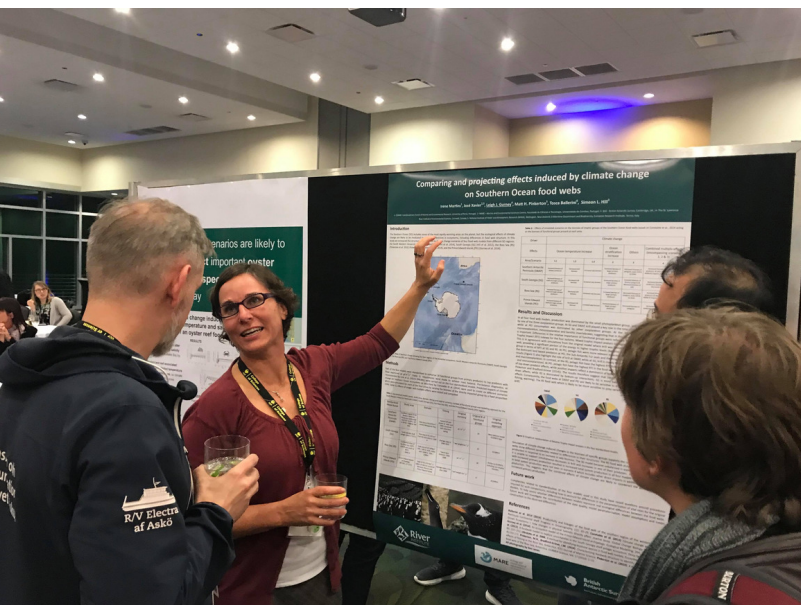
'Watersheds, Water Levels, and Wetlands' convened scientists, students, and citizens for two days of discussion, workshops, and scientific presentations. Community day attracted 140 high school students to hear the keynote address and visit the exhibits. Science Day involved a panel discussion and scientific presentations. Keynote speakers Elizabeth Hendriks, World Wildlife Fund and Henry Lickers, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, reminded us of our collective responsibility to restore and protect ecological health.



Science + Nature On Tap is a monthly speaker series presented at a local restaurant in downtown Cornwall. In 2019, Science + Nature topics ranged from water levels to Ottawa River stories to invasive species to animal rehabilitation in the Amazon! Over 300 attendees enjoyed fascinating presentations by guest speakers from the River Institute, Water Rangers, University faculties, and Canadian Geographic.



The River Institute is known for its community outreach and knowledge-sharing through public presentations. In 2019, presentations included World Wetlands Day, BlueFish Radio, Great River Rapport workshops, Cornwall Lunker Club, Day of the Girl, River Symposium, Queen's University, Science Odyssey Week, EcoPath 35 Years Conference, International Association for Great Lakes Research (IAGLR) Conference, Clarkson University, and more!



The 2-day annual 'Women in Science' conference is hosted by Ontario Power Generation in Cornwall to allow high school girls to meet, learn, and ask questions from women who work in scientific fields. Representatives from the River Institute proudly attend each year to share their experiences and provide inspiration. Our female scientists, technicians, students, volunteers, interns, office administrators, and Board members are a fundamental part of our team and integral to every aspect of the work we do.

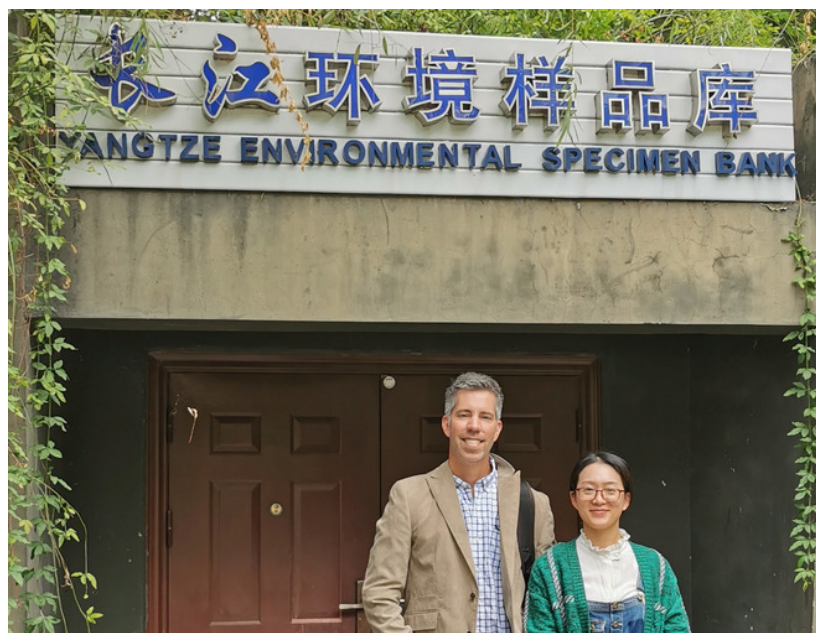


The River Institute is an active participant in the St. Lawrence River (Cornwall) Remedial Action Plan and hosts the local RAP office. The ultimate goal of the program is to redesignate the local Area of Concern from Impaired to Not-Impaired.

In 2019, the Cornwall RAP office launched a new website and mailing list to extend its reach within the community. Find out more at stlawrenceriverRAP.ca.

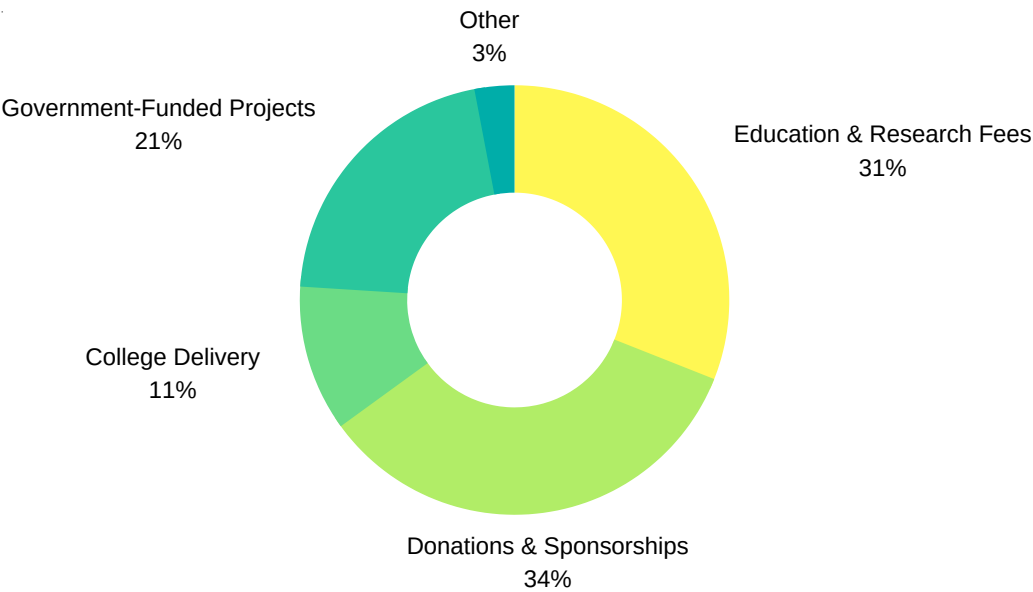


Research Scientist Matt Windle travelled to China in October to meet with partners from the Sino-Canada Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development. He was the keynote speaker at the 5th Shanghai International Nature Conservation Festival, and presented at the Yangtze Environmental Specimen Bank, WWF China, and Tongji University. This amazing trip further developed partnerships and has led to an exciting new project using eDNA to examine river biodiversity in Canada and China.



This image is from a drone video shot in 1080 resolution from high altitude. While eye-catching, these images are also important to help map out aquatic vegetation beds that anchor contaminated sediment. This information is used to build models that track the movement of these contaminants.



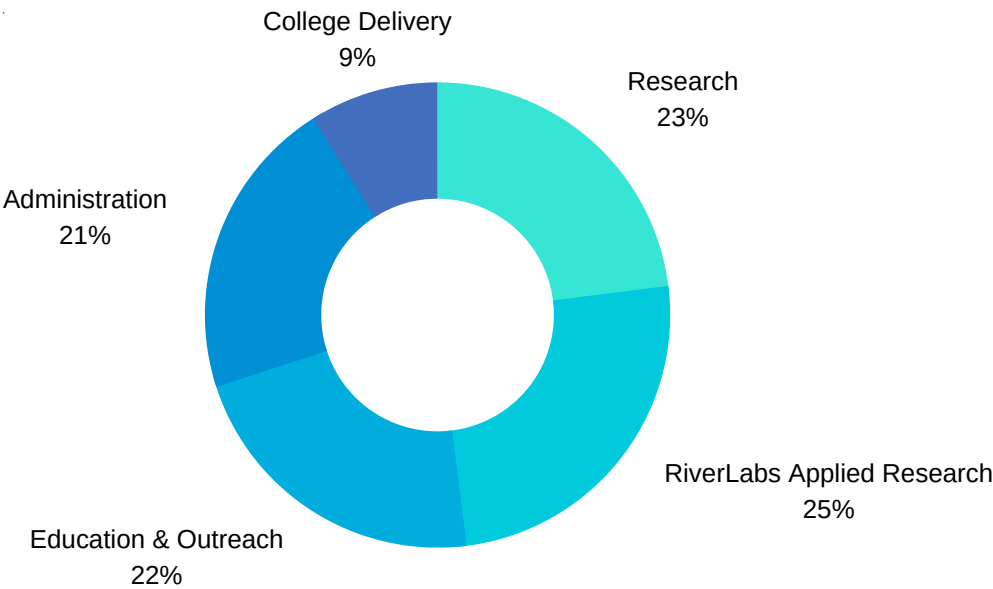


1,432,616

TOTAL REVENUE

1,401,672

TOTAL EXPENSES



River Champions is a donor circle of individuals and organizations that contribute annually to the River Institute. Not only do these donations contribute to the advancement of local science, they also help leverage additional grants to support new scientists and innovative research.

Since it began in 2016, River Champions have contributed over \$260,000 to River Institute programs. These donations have enabled considerable growth and helped the River Institute establish national and international recognition. We are extremely grateful to this group of local donors.

Kerry & Katherine Adams	Luc & Cindy Lacelle
Maureen & Drew Adams	Lafleche Foundation
Sean Adams	Pierre Lefebvre, Marleau Bros Limited
Artisan Kitchen & Bath	Longevity Acrylics Inc.
Kevin & Susan Baird	Ed & Pat Lumley
BASF Canada Inc.	Jamie & Brenda MacDonald
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Tim Bertrand	Marleau Mechanical
Carole & Tasso Boubalos	John & Valerie McDonald
Melanie & Jason Brown	Randy McDonald
Neil Burke	Gib McIntee, St. Lawrence Testing
Dr. Louis & Jennifer Cardinal	Karen McMillan & Lloyd Lalonde, St. Hubert Restaurant
Marcel & Lori Caron	Tim Mills
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Linda & Larry Eamer	Paul Davis Cornwall
Fay & Rick Eamon	Roy & Muriel Perkins & Family
Chris & Lea Emard	Susan & Dale Phippen
Patrick Finucan & Martine Ménard	Place St. Laurent Developments
Marc Genier, Fantastic Cleaners	Ramada Inn by Wyndam, Cornwall
Grant-Marion Construction Limited	Rozon Insurance Brokers Ltd.
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Brian Hickey, Ann Surch, Elizabeth & Sean Hickey	John & Margaret St. Marseille
Patricia (Tish) & Ralph Humphries	Louis & Sheila Tremblay
Brendan & Karen Hunt	Dr. Roger Tremblay
The Tom & Gail Kaneb Foundation	United Counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry
William Kaneb	Vis-Marty Family
Elaine Kennedy	Kirk & Sandra Wrinn
	...many anonymous donors

Aqueduct Foundation	Port of Johnstown
Architecture 49	R Howard Webster Foundation
Calabogie Breweries	Ramada Inn by Wyndam, Cornwall
Calco Soils	RBC Foundation
Caneau	S.M. Blair Foundation
Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario	Scotiabank
Cornwall Door Systems	South Nation Conservation Authority
Cornwall Electric	St. Lawrence College
Cornwall Rotary Club	St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corp.
Cowbell Breweries	St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp.
Crabtree Foundation	Sunrise Rotary Club of Cornwall
Echo Foundation	TD Friends of the Environment
Enbridge Inc.	Telus
Government of Canada, Department of Environment and Climate Change	The Catherine and Maxwell Meighan Foundation
GFL Environmental Inc.	The Commonwell Mutual Insurance Group
Green Jobs	The Five B Family Foundation
Greenfield Ethanol – Johnstown Plant	The Ontario Trillium Foundation
Grenville Mutual Insurance Company	The Tom and Gail Kaneb Foundation
Ingredion Canada	The Trottier Family Foundation
International Joint Commission	Tim Hortons
Maurice Price Foundation	Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal
Moulure Alexandria Moulding	TransCanada Pipeline Ltd.
National Research Council of Canada	Union Gas Ltd.
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)	United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry
Ottawa Community Foundation	Uplands Charitable Foundation
Ontario Power Generation-Ottawa/St. Lawrence Plant Group	Upper Canada District School Board
	WSP Canada Inc.

VOLUNTEERS

The River Institute is supported and encouraged by a dedicated volunteer base. Year after year, our programs, projects, research and administration are assisted by volunteers who donate their time, energy and expertise to help our organization thrive. Without this group of generous people, the River Institute wouldn't be able to do all it does. We are truly grateful!

Regional:

Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education
L'Association canadienne-française de
l'Ontario - Stormont, Dundas et Glengarry
(ACFOSDG)
Catholic District School Board of Eastern
Ontario
City of Cornwall
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de
l'Ontario
Conseil scolaire de district catholique de
l'Est ontarien
Cooper Marsh Conservators Inc.
Cornwall and Area Chamber of Commerce
Cornwall Dive Club
Cornwall Lunker Club
Cornwall Public Library
Cornwall Seaway News
Eastern Ontario Health Unit
Eastern Ontario Water Resources
Committee
Great River Network
Job Zone d'emploi, Cornwall
Laflèche Leblanc Soil Recycling
McDonald Duncan Law Office
Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
Ontario Power Generation
Parks of the St. Lawrence
Raisin Region Conservation Authority
Resource Stewardship Stormont, Dundas,
and Glengarry Council
Service Canada
South Nation Conservation Authority
Standard Freeholder
Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Science
Fair
Stormont Yacht Club
St. Lawrence College
St. Lawrence Parks Commission
St. Lawrence River Restoration Council
Thompson Island Cultural Center

Township of South Stormont
United Counties of Prescott-Russell
United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and
Glengarry
Upper Canada District School Board

Provincial, National, International:

Aquarium
Bay of Quinte Restoration Council
Blue Fish Canada
Carleton University
Colleges & Institutes Canada
Community Futures Development
Corporation
Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Canada
Earth Concerns Environmental Contracting
Inc.
Encounters With Canada
Environment Canada: Ontario Region and
Quebec Region
Great Rivers Center at Clarkson University
International Joint Commission
Lower Trent Conservation Authority
Ontario Ministry of Environment,
Conservation and Parks
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and
Forestry
Ontario Ministry of Research and
Innovation
Ontario Ministry of Transportation
Queen's University
SINO Canada
Trent University
Université du Québec à Montréal
University of Ottawa
University of Waterloo
University of Windsor
WWF China
WWF Ottawa Chapter

Peer reviewed publications:

Goretzke, J.A., Windle, M.J.S., and J.M. Farrell. Range Expansion of the Western Tubenose Goby (*Proterorhinus semilunaris* Heckel, 1837) in eastern Lake Ontario and the upper St. Lawrence River. *BioInvasions Records* 8(3): 684-698 (2019).

Lapointe, D., Ridal, J.J. Mercury Concentrations in Sentinel Fish Exposed to Contaminated Sediments under a Natural Recovery Strategy within the St. Lawrence River Area of Concern at Cornwall, Ontario, Canada. *Arch Environ Contam Toxicol* 76, 216–230 (2019).

Reports:

MacDougall, M.J. 2019. Thousand Islands National Park: Satellite Based Habitat Assessment – User Guide. Technical Guide prepared for Parks Canada, May, 2019.

MacDougall, M.J. and Drouillard, K.G. 2019. Detroit River Area of Concern: Assessment of the Degradation of Benthos Beneficial Use Impairment in Canadian Waters. Report prepared for Environment Canada. March 2019.

MacDougall, M.J., Savard, L.S., Pozega, N.K. 2019. Ingleside WWTP Influent Investigation. Final Report prepared for the Township of South Stormont. February 2019.

MacDougall, M.J. and Watson, M. 2019. Food Cycle Science Commercial Clean Tech Demonstration. Final Report prepared for Food Cycle Science and BLOOM. May 2019.

MacDougall, M.J. and Windle, M.J.S. 2019. Thousand Islands National Park: An Assessment of Habitat Area using Satellite Imagery. Final Report prepared for Parks Canada. May, 2019.

Ridal, J.J. and Windle, M.S. 2019. Status of Restrictions on the Consumption of Fish and Wildlife in the Bay of Quinte Area of Concern. Report prepared for the Bay of Quinte Restoration Council in support of the Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan and the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health. 25 pp.

Windle, M.J.S., and Ridal, J.J. 2019. Cornwall Sediment Strategy Long Term Monitoring Program: Establishing baseline concentrations for nearshore surface sediments. Final report prepared for Environment and Climate Change Canada in support of the St. Lawrence River (Cornwall) Remedial Action Plan. June 2019.

Windle, M.J.S. 2019. Assessing ecosystem indicators in the St. Lawrence River. Final report prepared for the Loblaw Water Fund and WWF Canada. April 2019.

Windle, M.J.S. 2019. Pugnose shiner and other minnows in the Upper St. Lawrence River. Final report prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) Species at Risk Stewardship Fund (SARSF). Project SARSF_68_17_SLRIES2. March 2019.

Presentations:

MacDougall, M. Global Challenges, Local Concerns. Water Canada. November/December 2019: 12 – 13. https://cdn.watercanada.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/11103642/WC109_NovDec2019_WEB.pdf

McGaughey, L. Taking the pulse of the St Lawrence River. Presentation for Science and Nature Speaker Series, Cornwall, ON, March 2019.

McGaughey, L. A finger on the pulse of the St Lawrence River. Invited presentation at Queen's University, Kingston, ON, April 2019.

McGaughey, L., Using Ecological Indicators to Capture the State of the St. Lawrence River. Invited presentation at Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY. September 2019. <https://www.clarkson.edu/news/clarkson-university-hosting-dr-leigh-mcgaughey-talk-upper-st-lawrence-river>

McGaughey, L., and Ridal, J.J. An Ecosystem health report of the Upper St Lawrence River – communicating science to our community. IAGLR Annual Conference, Brockport, NY. June, 2019.

Pozega, N. Water Stewardship in the Supply Chain. Panelist at the 10th Canadian Water Summit, Collingwood, ON. 2019.

Windle, M.J.S. Water levels and ecosystem health of the St. Lawrence River. Oral presentation at the 25th Annual International Symposium on the St. Lawrence / Great Lakes ecosystems, Cornwall, ON, May 30, 2019.

Windle, M.S., Schwartz, K., Ridal, J.J. Effects of season, habitat characteristics, and water levels on fish assemblages in coastal wetlands. Oral presentation at the International Association for Great Lakes Research (IAGLR) 62nd Annual Conference on Great Lakes Research, Brockport, NY, June 12, 2019.



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