

# RESTIGOUCHE WILDERNESS WATERWAY PROJECT

## ....some facts about it:

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### What is this?

The Restigouche Wilderness Waterway is an initiative for a designated area to protect and conserve the wilderness character of the watercourse and its ecosystems while accommodating compatible recreational activities and industries throughout the year. The benefits are:

- An increase in the quality of the Restigouche River experience as a wilderness waterway, leading to local job growth and up selling of services;
- A river stewardship ethic that protects the ecology of the resource;
- A recognizable river esthetic, both natural elements and built works that promote the world class identity;
- A governance structure that allows for timely and economical intervention to manage issues;
- A self-sufficient operational structure;

### Promoter:



The Restigouche River Watershed Management Council (RRWMC) is promoting this project. It is not a government's request or initiative. The RRWMC is a non-profit organization representing a wide cross-section of the local community and interprovincial interests groups.

### State of the project:

In 2012, a feasibility study was completed as a preliminary evaluation of the existing legislative framework and to gauge public interest. From these positive results, presentations to ministers and local MLAs were completed in the spring of 2013. Funds to develop a business plan were approved in fall 2013 and the mandate was given to a consultant consortium of Gagnon Strategix and OPR consultant. The goal of this work is to develop a self-funding model including a governance structure, personnel and equipment needs, demarcation and description of the land base, and determining potential revenues and expenses. This business plan will be built with stakeholders and public meetings and will include a strong financial analysis. As member of the RRWMC, the Mi'gmaq First Nation will be invited to provide input on the business plan prior to the official government consultations that will follow. The business plan is scheduled to be completed in March 2014. In Quebec, meetings with Government officials are scheduled to evaluate the opportunity to create a «Reserve Faunique» on the boundary waters to match the same objectives as the New Brunswick portion.

### Watercourses targeted:

Main Restigouche from Matapedia Bridge to Kedgwick River, public water on the Little Main Restigouche River, the Kedgwick River up to the Forks, the Upsalquitch River up to the Forks and the Patapedia River. The area covers the water up to the high water mark. For Crown Lands, a buffer zone, (min 200m) is proposed to protect the view shed and riparian habitat.

**Designations actually targeted:**

Legislation that would govern the proposed Restigouche Wilderness Waterway may already exist within the Parks Act, RSNB 2011, c202 in New Brunswick. It also exists in Quebec in the Act Respecting the Conservation and Development of Wildlife, RSQ, c C-61.1, as a «Reserve Faunique» like the Patapedia and Matapedia rivers. In New Brunswick, a transfer of Crown lands along the rivers into the Park Act would be necessary and then the management of this area would be delegated to the RRWMC. Private land owners with riparian rights would be asked to sign agreements similar to those signed by Tobique Salmon Club, Cold Spring Camp and Ristigouche Salmon Club with the Quebec Government to include their private water in the «Reserve Faunique» on the lower Matapedia.

**What could be the changed from actual situation?**

Even though the details of the management structure will be determined in the upcoming business plan, some general elements based on other “best practices” management models are being considered:

- Enforcement officers (park rangers) from different communities would be on the river on a daily basis and linked together with an efficient communication system;
- Boat and canoe users would need to register in some way and this could include fees for some activities;
- New regulations may be introduced to address issues such as noise, speed, and boat wakes;
- In some cases, campsites would be manned and controlled and a few new campsites may be established to offer high-end services (equipped with canvas tents as an example)
- The no cutting buffer zones along the river would be increased to better protect the river and view shed;
- Anglers could pay a daily access fee to fund a joint protection force along the rivers;
- Current employees on the river will not be laid off.
- A training program and capacity building may be required;
- Illegal fishing in the designated area would be dealt with as poaching in a Protected Area instead of only be considered as property trespassing as is the case presently;
- Opportunities to increase fishing opportunities for the public in the «Reserve Faunique» on the boundary waters will be examined;
- Capital investment in a range of 1,5 to 5 million dollars is suggested to upgrade infrastructure and to acquire equipment.
- A license of commerce could be requested from canoe outfitters that would require a Code of Ethics, liability insurance, and trained staff;
- The former Department of Natural Resource office in Kedgwick is a key infrastructure for services;
- All current fishing rights and aboriginal rights will be respected;

**Next steps:**

After completion, the business plan will be presented to government for approval and action. Management plan preparation and a process to amend and/or create supportive legislation will then follow with implementation tentatively scheduled for 2015 or 2016.