



**PUBLIC  
RESPONSE  
REPORT**

2021



**RESTIGOUCHE**  
WILDERNESS WATERWAY

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER TOURISM, HERITAGE AND CULTURE



When New Brunswickers are called upon to become engaged in public consultation they continue to demonstrate their interest in making our province a better place to live. I want to sincerely thank the people who provided their thoughts and ideas as part of our effort to ensure the conservation and protection of the Restigouche watershed.

The passion New Brunswickers express for our green space is evident in the number of responses received and in the demonstrated conviction that protected areas must continue to be preserved as natural habitats to be enjoyed through various forms of recreation.

This report summarizes the public input to the future conservation and protection of the Restigouche watershed. The Department held, well attended stakeholder roundtables at Mactaquac and Sugarloaf Provincial Parks. The Department has also started to engage with First Nations representatives and will continue to formally consult as the project evolves. In addition, almost 150 people attended one of four Open Houses and 270 people completed the online survey.

The government remains committed to the conservation and protection of the Restigouche watershed. Input from the consultation process will help us in the decision-making process in order to develop a plan for the Restigouche watershed.

Hon. Tammy Scott-Wallace  
Minister

# RESTIGOUCHE WILDERNESS WATERWAY

# BACKGROUND

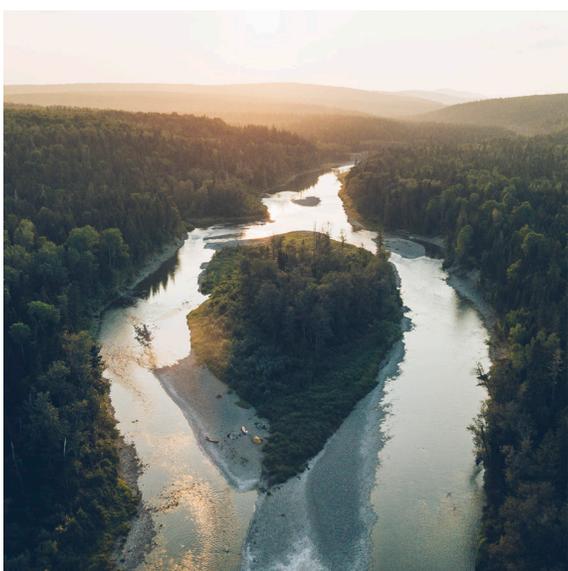
THE RESTIGOUCHE RIVER SYSTEM ATTRACTS THOUSANDS OF VISITORS EVERY YEAR TO EXPERIENCE A MULTITUDE OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURES, INCLUDING SALMON FISHING THAT IS WORLD RENOWNED.

For several years, advocates from the Restigouche area have been promoting the creation of a protected area in their region to be called the Restigouche Wilderness Waterway. A feasibility study of this concept was conducted in 2012 by the Restigouche River Watershed Management Council (RRWMC), a committee comprised of representatives from local municipalities, First Nation communities, and ecotourism groups; as well as, representatives of the forest industry.



In recognition of the conservation benefits, combined with the opportunities for eco-tourism, the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture provided funding to further explore the idea and in 2017 a conceptual plan of the proposed protected area was developed. With a total area of 235km of exceptional watercourse and approximately 20,000 ha of land, the main objective of this conservation concept is to ensure that the intrinsic values of the Restigouche watershed are protected for the benefit of present and future generations.

The 2019 Provincial Capital budget allocated funding to allow the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture to proceed with preliminary works, including an extensive consultation process with the public and stakeholders. Consultations with Aboriginal leaders have begun and is continuing.



# RESTIGOUCHE WILDERNESS WATERWAY



Distances from / à partir:  
**Pont Montgomery Bridge**

**Rivière Kedgwick River**

Falls Brook	9.5 km	2 hr.
Clearwater	17 km	3.5 hr.
15 miles	24 km	5 hr.
Rapid's Depot	32 km	6.5 hr.
Kedgwick Forks	52 km	10.5 hr.

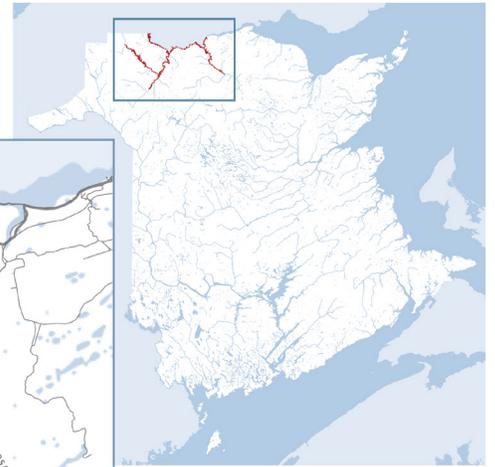
**Rivière Restigouche River**

Larry's Gulch	8.2 km	1.5 hr.
Down's Gulch	14.6 km	3 hr.
Halford Camping	21 km	4 hr.
Red Bank	30 km	6 hr.
White Brook Island	34.4 km	7 hr.
Gilmores Camping	55 km	11 hr.
Two Brooks	57 km	11 hr.
Jardin Brook	68.2 km	13.5 hr.
Rafting Ground	90 km	18 hr.

- Highway Autoroute
- Principal Road Route principale
- Park Boundary Limite du parc
- Municipal Boundary Territoire municipal
- NB Trails Sentier NB
- Snowmobile Trails Sentiers de motoneige
- Fishing Camp Camp de pêche
- Camping (Provincial)
- Camping (Private / Municipal)
- Landing Débarcadère
- Warden Camp Camp de gardien
- Crown Reserve Eau de la couronne
- Warning Attention
- Proposed Shelters Abris proposés
- View Points Points de Vue
- Protected Natural Areas Zones naturelles protégées
- Viewsheds Vuesheds
- Crown Land Terre de la couronne



## CONTEXT MAPPING



# EXPERIENCE

**WHAT IS THE PREFERRED TOURISM EXPERIENCE ALONG THE RESTIGOUCHE WILDERNESS WATERWAY?**

**WHAT DOES CONSERVATION OF THE WATERSHED OF THE RESTIGOUCHE WILDERNESS WATERWAY ENTAIL?**

**WHAT MODEL OF GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS WILL BEST SERVE THE RESTIGOUCHE WILDERNESS WATERWAY?**

The concern over the future of the Restigouche river watershed has been growing for many years. Issues regarding the disturbance of sensitive natural environments, damage to infrastructure, littering, etc. have led to a desire to find solutions that can sustain this wilderness area.

The public consultation process took place in the fall of 2019. It included:

- Two stakeholder round table sessions with the Minister (Mactaquac Provincial Park and the Sugarloaf Provincial Park),
- Four open houses conducted by Department officials (Saint-Quentin, Kedgwick, Robbinsonville and Atholville), and
- An on-line survey regarding activities for the watershed and potential fees was promoted through the media to the general public.

The consultations were well received with excellent attendance of stakeholders at the roundtable sessions, over 150 people attending the Open Houses and 270 responses to the survey.

Consultations with Aboriginal leaders have begun and is continuing. The Department is awaiting the completion of Indigenous knowledge studies by both the Wolastoqey and the Mi'gmaq before initiating discussions around potential for mitigation measures or accommodation agreements.

Information sessions were held with Listuguj First Nation in January 2020. These included meetings with Chief and Council, with administrative staff, a town hall with fishers and hunters, and with staff from the Listuguj Department of Natural Resources.

The consultation process has been built around questions related to the tourism experience, conservation and management of the area.



# TOURISM

The overwhelming response was support for a wilderness experience. Enjoying the natural environment through canoeing, hiking, fishing, snowmobiling, viewing wildlife, camping or some other form of recreation was the primary focus.

Protecting the watershed and its views was considered essential to the experience and therefore it has been suggested that all plans for activities and development to keep this top of mind.



**Data collection dates:**  
November 6 - December 7, 2019



**Online open-link survey with residents**



**270 surveys completed**



At the Open Houses, candid one on one public feedback was received, generally guided by information panels that were presented.



The on-line questionnaire asked people to rate activities from 'prohibited' to 'encouraged' and to assess various fees from 'definitely charge' to 'definitely don't charge'.

**WHAT IS THE PREFERRED TOURISM EXPERIENCE ALONG THE WATERWAY?**

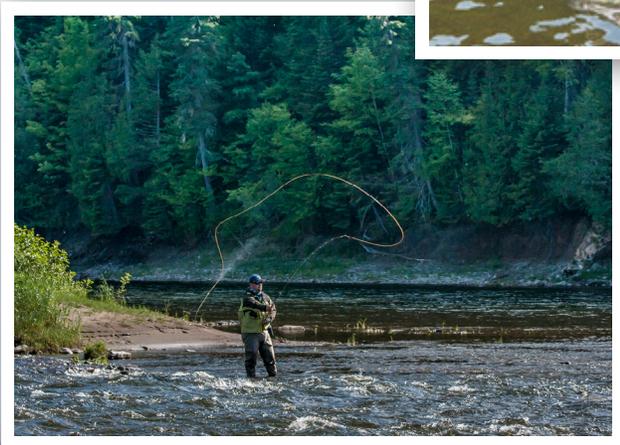


# CONSERVATION

## WHAT DOES THE CONSERVATION OF THE WATERSHED MEAN?

Certain activities were identified as needing regulation. These included cutting wood, use of fireworks, flying drones, use of firearms, hunting, trapping, boating with motors of 20 hp or more and the use of snowmobiles and ATVs. The number of recreational users on some days was also seen as a challenge to the wilderness experience. It was reported that enforcement officers counted over 600 water crafts on one section of the river in a single day.

To sustain a wilderness experience, the environment needs to be maintained in its natural state. During the consultation process, attendees were asked ‘What does the conservation of the watershed of the Restigouche Wilderness Waterway mean?’ Many measures were proposed including; posting ‘no wake’ zones, extending buffer zones in strategic places, regulating road building and allowing only the use of 4 stroke engines.



There was a strong consensus around sustaining the watershed using a combination of scientific, Indigenous and local knowledge. Along with this, appropriate regulations with strong enforcement were considered critical.



# CONSERVATION



Efforts to establish and sustain the Waterway need to include protection from agricultural and forestry practices that would negatively impact the watershed. It requires the coordination of efforts with Quebec and First Nations Rights' Holders. Regulations should also consider items such as motor boat usage, number of camping permits available, trail access and infrastructure.

An increase in education aimed at users was also suggested. A code of conduct could be developed and promoted to help maintain a culture of respect for the environment.



# GOVERNANCE

## WHAT MODEL OF GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS WOULD BEST SERVE THE RESTIGOUCHE WILDERNESS WATERWAY?

To realise the preferred tourism experience and conserve the watershed, people were asked ‘what model of governance and operations would best serve the Restigouche Wilderness Waterway?’

It was clear that participants felt that the provincial government should play a central role in managing the Waterway, however, there was also a strong call for local involvement in decision making. First Nations, the Restigouche River Watershed Management Council (RRWMC) and others were identified as potential partners.

There was a general acknowledgement that fees would need to be introduced to support the preservation of this wilderness area, particularly if infrastructure improvements are to be made and enforcement efforts are enhanced. The majority of respondents felt that there should be a fee system for services; however, fees for access, parking and boat launching were not supported by the majority.



## NEXT STEPS

The next steps are to:

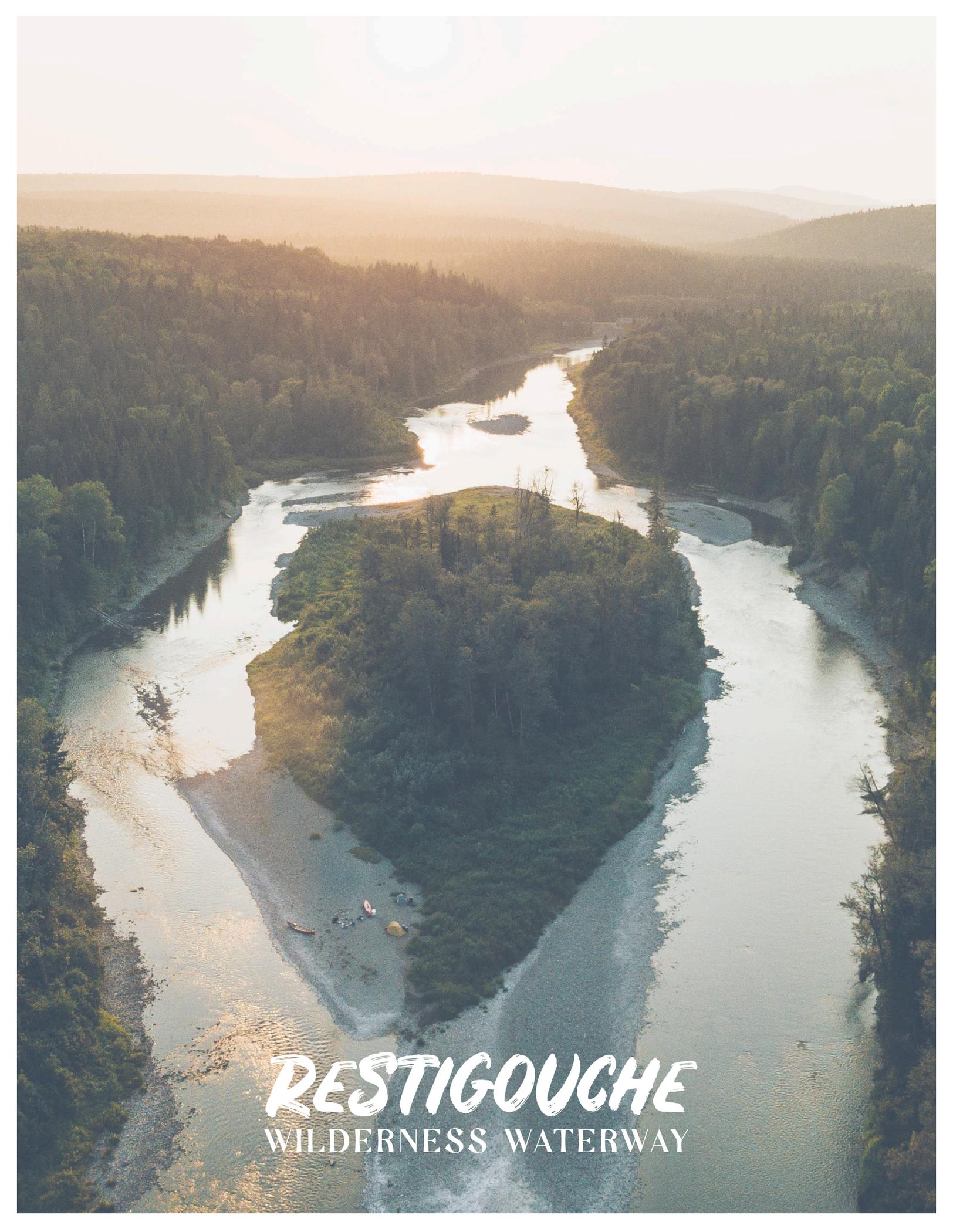
1. Incorporate the public feedback to determine how best to protect this wilderness area using a combination of existing and proposed regulation and enforcement policies.
2. Continue to engage with First Nations to identify potential opportunities and address any potentially adverse impacts to Aboriginal and treaty rights.
3. Continue the Environmental Impact Assessment review, and complete an analysis of legislative and regulatory requirements.
4. Provide government with clear recommendations for the future of the Restigouche river watershed.



This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada.  
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Canada





*RESTIGOUCHE*  
WILDERNESS WATERWAY