

Section I – Items for the Action of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of the Regional Watershed Alliance
Meeting #2/19, Wednesday, May 22, 2019

FROM: Chandra Sharma, Director, Community Engagement and Outreach

RE: **WORLD RIVERS DAY ACTIVITIES**

KEY ISSUE

To seek Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) input on proposed TRCA World River's Day outreach and engagement campaign focused at raising awareness and communicating TRCA's accomplishments related to watershed management.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS World Rivers Day is a celebration of the world's waterways and is observed by over 60 countries;

AND WHEREAS TRCA's jurisdiction spans nine rivers and watersheds across the region and contains a population of over 3.5 million people;

AND WHEREAS TRCA has undertaken multiple initiatives over its history to improve the health of the watersheds within its jurisdiction and to connect the public with these rivers and creeks, and in 2019 TRCA is engaged in a year-long celebration to recognize the 20th anniversary of the Humber River's Heritage Designation;

THEREFORE let it be proposed that a TRCA outreach and engagement campaign for World Rivers Day 2019 be received for Regional Watershed Alliance members' input;

THAT the final plan for proposed World River Day activities be shared with members of the RWA and based on any input received be finalized and presented to the TRCA Board of Directors;

AND FURTHER THAT Regional Watershed Alliance members consider ways in which they can support TRCA's World Rivers Day campaign through their organizations and networks and through the TRCF Look After Where You Live Program.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

On September 22nd, 2019, people from over 60 countries around the world will celebrate World Rivers Day, an international event with the goal of creating greater awareness around caring for our water resources and celebrating the many values of our waterways. World Rivers Day originated in British Columbia, where BC Rivers Day has been celebrated since 1980. The first World Rivers Day event was held in 2005 as a part of the UN Water For Life Decade (2005-2015) and the event has been growing steadily each year. Other World Rivers Day events from past years include a family-friendly river celebration event at Burnaby Village Museum in

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Burnaby BC, a volunteer clean-up of the River Freshney in Grimsby, England, and a "March for the River" in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

This year is the 15th annual World Rivers Day and an ideal opportunity for TRCA and the Regional Watershed Alliance to join the celebration. For many years TRCA has delivered a variety of events across its jurisdiction. Events have included workshops and a speaking series, conservation area events and large-scale signature watershed and waterfront events that help TRCA increase its presence in watershed communities, raise support, and help implement TRCA strategic priorities and objectives. TRCA events also provide an excellent opportunity to engage communities and build awareness and appreciation for the watersheds in our jurisdiction.

This year also marks the twentieth anniversary of the Humber River's designation as a Heritage River by the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. As a result, TRCA is developing a year-long celebration plan for this anniversary, with the signature event, Humber by Canoe, being one component of it. This is one example of an opportunity to combine this significant feature's celebration into World Rivers Day activities.

In addition to watershed and waterfront events, TRCA has also conducted decades of work improving the health of its watersheds and the waterfront. These include monitoring and restoring the rivers and creeks in its jurisdiction, building trails, steering major projects through to completion, and developing education and engagement initiatives for residents, businesses, schools, municipalities and other audiences, all of which are achievements worthy of celebration. Furthermore, through visits to conservation areas, recreation or other forms of participation in TRCA initiatives, residents and visitors have been given an opportunity to learn about and experience the rivers and creeks within TRCA's jurisdiction.

PRELIMINARY DETAILS

Staff are proposing to develop an outreach and engagement campaign to celebrate the 15th annual World Rivers Day, with a focus on highlighting the stories of our nine rivers and creeks. World Rivers Day also presents an opportunity to:

- a) commemorate the work that TRCA has done, and continues to do, to improve the health of our watersheds and waterfront, as well as the connection that residents, visitors and other audiences have with them;
- b) promote major accomplishments highlighted in TRCA 2018 Annual Report to be published in 2019;
- c) create opportunities for individual and corporate donations towards TRCA watershed protection and enhancement activities.

Activities:

In addition to leveraging existing TRCA events listed below, staff are proposing an online campaign leveraging TRCA's Your Say page (<https://yoursay.ca/>), a social media campaign, a series of news articles and/or other approaches to solicit and share stories about TRCA's nine rivers and creeks. Some key activities may include:

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1. Compile existing content on TRCA rivers and creeks and craft key messages. Ensure the Humber River continues to be profiled as a Canadian Heritage River;
2. Solicit local stories from the public about their rivers and creeks via the TRCA engagement platform Yoursay.ca
3. Develop a series of blog, newsletters, social media postings and other stories;
4. Use the TRCA 2018 annual report to craft short river accomplishment messages;
5. Promote stories and key messages via TRCA and partner channels and existing events throughout TRCA's jurisdiction;
6. Enhance watersheds/waterfront newsletters with special river content;
7. Utilize the World River Day social media network to promote TRCA nationally and internationally;
8. Work with the Toronto Region Conservation Foundation to plan targeted outreach for fundraising.

Promotions through existing events:

As TRCA already has multiple community, watershed and waterfront events planned, including celebrations connected to the 20th anniversary of the Humber River's designation as a Canadian Heritage River, staff is seeking opportunities to align these festivities with World Rivers Day. TRCA's scheduled 2019 signature watershed and waterfront events can be reviewed in the agenda for the February 13, 2019 meeting (#1/19) of the Regional Watershed Alliance (See "8.2 2019 TRCA Planned Events that Celebrate Our Watersheds and Waterfront").

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 5 – Foster sustainable citizenship

Strategy 6 – Tell the story of the Toronto region

FINANCIAL DETAILS

It is anticipated that TRCA's 2019 World Rivers Day campaign will utilize previously funded events, online resources and staff time so that no new funding will be required.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Pending any input received by RWA members to TRCA's proposed World Rivers Day campaign activities, staff will work on a plan in consultation with Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation on their Look After Where You Live Program. Also, staff will report to TRCA Board of Directors on World Rivers Day campaign while sharing the final plan with Regional Watershed Alliance.

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Date: May 13, 2019