

Item 9.2.

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Meeting #6/19, Friday, June 21, 2019

FROM: Chandra Sharma, Director, Community Engagement and Outreach

RE: **WORLD RIVERS DAY ACTIVITIES**

KEY ISSUE

To inform and engage the Board of Directors on a proposed TRCA celebration of World Rivers Day through outreach and engagement activities focusing on raising awareness about the creeks and rivers in TRCA's jurisdiction and communicating TRCA's accomplishments related to watershed management.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS the Regional Watershed Alliance resolved (RES.#R7/19) to commemorate and celebrate World Rivers Day through a campaign to raise awareness about our rivers and creeks and communicate TRCA accomplishments related to watershed management;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board of Directors receive the staff report on the proposed activities;

AND FURTHER THAT TRCA reach out to Conservation Ontario, the Ontario Ministries of Environment Conservation and Parks and Natural Resources and Forestry, TRCA partner municipalities and the Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation to inform them of the activities TRCA is planning in celebration of World Rivers Day and explore potential collaboration opportunities.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

On September 22, 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 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 utilize existing events and platforms to deliver activities in celebration of World Rivers Day over the weeks leading up to September 22, 2019.

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For many years TRCA has implemented a variety of events across its jurisdiction. Events have included workshops and 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 implementing a year-long celebration plan for this anniversary, culminating in the signature event, Humber by Canoe, on September 8, 2019. This is one example of an opportunity to combine existing TRCA events with World Rivers Day activities. TRCA also undertakes community engagement and outreach utilizing other approaches, such as interactive online platforms, social media, displays, exhibits and newsletters.

TRCA has also conducted decades of work improving the health of its watersheds and the waterfront, all achievements worthy of highlighting as part of World Rivers Day celebrations. This work has included monitoring and restoring the rivers and creeks in TRCA's jurisdiction, building trails, steering major projects through to completion, and developing education and engagement initiatives for residents, businesses, schools, municipalities and other audiences. Furthermore, through visits to conservation areas, recreation and 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.

A proposed series of activities for TRCA's celebration of World Rivers Day was presented at the Regional Watershed Alliance meeting on May 22, 2019 (Meeting #2/19). The Regional Watershed Alliance provided their input to the proposed activities and the following motion (RES.#R7/19) was carried:

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

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they can support TRCA's World Rivers Day campaign through their organizations and networks and through the TRCF Look After Where You Live Program.

PRELIMINARY DETAILS

Staff are proposing to develop a series of outreach and engagement activities 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 engagement activities using online platforms and other media leading up to World Rivers Day. These activities include 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:

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 (natural heritage and Indigenous history)
3. Explore a photo display that can be exhibited at malls, community centres, local museums and other community hubs that utilizes both TRCA images and those of watershed residents and stakeholders to tell the story of our creeks and rivers;
4. Develop a series of blog, newsletters, social media postings and other stories;
5. Profile the accomplishments from TRCA's 2018 annual report, which is expected to be released shortly, to craft short river messages;
6. Promote stories and key messages via TRCA and partner channels and existing events throughout TRCA's jurisdiction;
7. Enhance watersheds/waterfront newsletters with special river content;
8. Utilize the World River Day social media network to promote TRCA work and best practices nationally and internationally;
9. 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.

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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 existing funds for planned events, online resources and staff time so that no new funding will be required.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Staff will develop content and activities for World Rivers Day celebrations in consultation with Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation in order to incorporate their Look After Where You Live Program. Staff will also work with the Watershed Engagement Working Group of the Regional Watershed Alliance to develop and carry out the World Rivers Day campaign.

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