

Greater Kichisipi-Outaouais-Ottawa River region

Posting to list January 28, 2012

Hi Greenspace-alliance friends and colleagues,

I've been reading with interest your recent postings related to the City's "Characterization of Ottawa's Watersheds" data document; and the ever-delayed "Ottawa River Action Plan".

One of the posting by Erwin gave an internet link to an Ottawa Riverkeeper's view on ways to stop polluting the Ottawa River with untreated sewage. This view opens a broader perspective on where we live and what our responsibilities are for taking care with its waters. (see http://ottawariverkeeper.ca/blog/something_stinks_between_watson_and_baird_1)

Meredith Brown, current Ottawa Riverkeeper, notes:

"The Ottawa River traverses dozens of municipalities, two major cities and acts as a border between Ontario and Quebec. It also passes through First Nations land and the National Capital Region. With so many jurisdictions, who is going to take charge? Who will bring all the players together to ensure that no one dumps untreated sewage in the Ottawa River?

"The truth is, no one can do it alone. Only through commitment, cooperation and leadership from all levels of government can we hope to protect the river, and each level of government has a role to play."

If I may add to this, residents in our region need to be play primary roles in initiating this process of working together to open broader perspectives on where we live. Residents can also propose ways of preventing pollution and ensuring healthy waters for fellow inhabitants in our region.

The City's data document cover map of "Ottawa's Watersheds" needs to be broadened in the way Ottawa Riverkeeper Meredith Brown has noted well above. To be a serious "foundation document", the Ottawa River and its tributaries must be shown flowing beyond the dotted lines of the City of Ottawa political boundaries. Such a river basin map would show the sources and mouths of the Ottawa, Gatineau and Rideau rivers

To keep on broadening and deepening this perspective look for and commission the best ecology and natural history studies. Also give attention to well-grounded stories, artwork and studies from people and their communities. There is so much learning already going on among residents in their home places. For example, residents and their associations in South March Highlands are getting to know where they live in ways that go beyond the City's data report. City staff, councillors and mayors need to participate in this broader and deeper learning of people and communities.

Imagine making a “foundation reporting process” for the Greater Kichisipi ~ Outaouais ~ Ottawa River region as a complementary endeavor of residents, communities and their governments learning and working together.

The aim may be: *see closer and further, each of us and all together*. This is the way a river Stonefly or a Monarch Butterfly sees, senses and lives. We human beings can live this way too.

Thanks for considering these responses and thoughts on ways to learn where we live.

Please find below a related river story I wrote with a pdf file of photos. Also posting this story and photos on the GA website Forum, *Living in the Land*. (see

Lorne Peterson

A resident of Kichisipi

River Basin Branching ~ Broader – Deeper – Closer

In mid-January, I went on an Audubon Naturalist Society winter walk along the Potomac River. We walked on the towpath of the C & O Canal, a National Historical Park. As part of our explorations, we stopped at an outdoor array of river basin maps on metal plaques beside a Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission water intake filtration plant.

The display maps include “you are here” markings and each map has an accompanying plaque with informative writings in relief type. (See photos). One map depicts the five States the Potomac flows thru: Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and District of Columbia. Another map shows the six physiographic regions of the Potomac River basin, with concise writings on each region. A third map shows the Potomac River basin and its many branches, with a complementary writing on the history of human habitation from 9,000 years ago to present times.

If there were similar displays along river pathways and streets in the Greater Kichisipi-Outaouais-Ottawa and National Capital Region this would help to remind us of where we are living. (The information and knowledge is available in government departments. For example, see maps, studies and brochures from Geological Survey of Canada.)

As we looked at the display maps and accompanying writings, I spotted a long-winged insect climbing up the concrete backing of a plaque for The Potomac River. Stephanie, our ANS walk leader, noted its rolled wings. She identified it as a Stonefly. Then, she asked us: why is this Stonefly out and active in Winter? The day was sunny with cold temperatures and strong gusting Northwest wind. Winter stonefly nymphs come out of the water and go thru a metamorphosis into adults after Winter Solstice. Their emergence is activated by increasing daylight hours.

Stephanie suggested that stoneflies may come out early to avoid being eaten by fish. This gives stoneflies a better chance of living and laying eggs in river water for the next generations. But

what was this adult Stonefly going to eat in this mid-winter cold weather. Its food is blue-green algae.

I wondered later whether there is something vital we human beings can learn from Stonefly and its way of life. It all seems related to thinking ahead, making strategies, and enacting what we learn to live well for current and future generations.

Lorne Peterson
January 2012
mid-Potomac River region