

Confluence

Working Together to Preserve Alberta's River Heritage

Volume 1

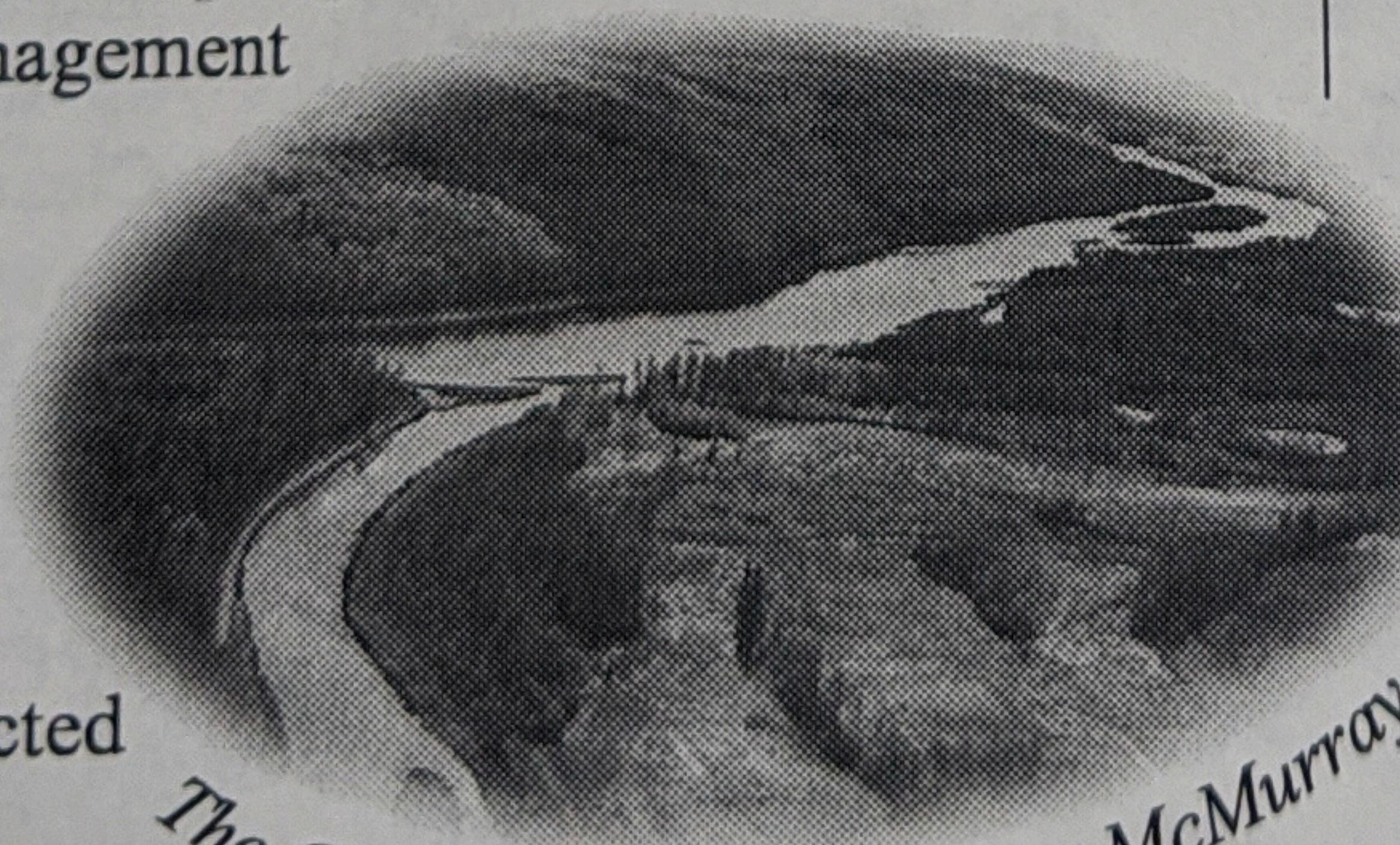
November 1996

Welcome to "Confluence," the newsletter for Alberta's portion of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) Program. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep people with an interest in Alberta's rivers updated on the progress of the CHRS program. Please feel free to make copies and share this newsletter with others.

THE CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System was established in 1984 as a cooperative venture among the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Its primary purpose is to provide national and international recognition to our country's outstanding rivers, and to ensure long-term management that will conserve their natural, cultural/historical, and recreational values.

The CHRS program is a national, not federal, program administered by the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board. The Board consists of one member from each province and territory and two federal representatives. It meets to review and approve nominations to the system, set the guidelines for the program and prepare promotional material. One of the fundamental principles of the CHRS is that the nomination and management of Canadian Heritage Rivers remain with the responsible government. In Alberta, this means municipal governments are key in the nomination and management of each river. Alberta's representative, and this year's Canadian Heritage Rivers Board Chairperson, is Bruce Duffin, Director of Recreation and Protected Areas Division, Natural Resources Service, Alberta Environmental Protection.



The Clearwater River at Fort McMurray

ALBERTA'S PARTICIPATION

In April 1991, the Honourable Ralph Klein, then Minister of the Environment, announced at the Flowing to the Future Conference in Edmonton that he was appointing an advisory committee, representing nine sectors, including the irrigation, forest and chemical industries, environmental and recreation groups, to investigate Alberta's potential participation in the CHRS. The Advisory Committee submitted its report to Mr. Klein on May 15, 1992. It unanimously recommended that Alberta participate in the CHRS Program. Following extensive discussions with local authorities, Alberta announced it had agreed to participate in the program on February 2, 1994. The Recreation and Protected Areas Division, Natural Resources Service, Alberta Environmental Protection was designated as the lead agency for implementing the CHRS.

Municipal governments play a key role in the CHRS process. They serve as the lead agencies in putting a river forward for nomination. They work very closely with local stakeholders in initiating a Background Study to evaluate the river as a potential candidate for CHRS status. Alberta Environmental Protection staff will assist stakeholders in convening a committee to lead in the nomination and designation process. Since there are numerous management issues associated with every river, stakeholder committees are encouraged to use a collaborative consensus-based model to facilitate the decision-making process. Ultimately, however, the municipal and provincial governments must approve each document before it is submitted to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board.

To assist municipalities in identifying whether or not a river in their region is a potential Canadian Heritage River, the province conducted a System Study of the natural, cultural/historical heritage and recreation values of Alberta's rivers. This study, which had input from municipalities, industry and special groups, identified a short-list of rivers with the best potential of becoming a Heritage River. These rivers are noted on page 3.

Canadian
Heritage
Rivers
System



Le Réseau
des rivières
du patrimoine
canadien

Alberta
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



ALBERTA'S PARTICIPATION (cont'd)

CHRS program manager—Ted Dykstra, and Bruce Milne of Alberta Environmental Protection are available to meet with municipalities, businesses, or interest groups who want to explore the potentials of the program. Call Ted at 427-7009 or Bruce at 427-4858. They can also arrange to place you on the CHRS mailing list for Alberta.

Clearwater River Registered Trappers Cabin →

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVER STATUS

One benefit derived from the CHRS designation process is the creation of a collective vision for each selected river among all the stakeholders. This collective vision and the management plan resulting from it, will be created by and for those who live, work and recreate on the river. Other benefits could include improved business opportunities, preservation of historical/cultural sites, enhancement of recreation activities and facilities, clarification of shared environmental values, and partnerships formed across sectors to enhance your river. The CHRS program does not create a new level of legislation. The implementation of a river's management plan is based on existing legislation and the guidelines, objectives and recommendations set forth by all the stakeholders who develop the management plan. These guidelines, objectives and recommendations will be implemented through existing regulatory bodies/processes where these already exist.

Signing Ceremony for the Clearwater River Nomination Document - Mayor Boutilier, Chief Cree, May 27, 1996 →

THE CLEARWATER RIVER

The Clearwater/Christina Rivers, in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, are the first rivers to be nominated in Alberta outside the national parks. The Canadian Heritage Rivers Board approved the nomination on September 17, 1996. Board members were impressed by the collaborative process used by the Clearwater River Committee.

In 1994, the three local authorities, the City of Fort McMurray, Improvement District #18 (now the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo) and Fort McMurray #468 First Nation, requested further study of the Clearwater as a potential Canadian Heritage River. Knowing that the Clearwater was a prime candidate for Canadian Heritage



River status—the Saskatchewan portion of the Clearwater was designated as a Heritage River in 1986—the province chose to work with the local authority and the stakeholders on the river as a pilot project before the system study was complete.

Alberta Environmental Protection staff worked with the municipalities to help local stakeholders determine if their interests could be met by participating in the CHRS. Through open houses, and meetings with interest groups and concerned individuals, the stakeholders formed the Clearwater River Committee (CRC) in March of 1995.

The CRC chose a collaborative consensus-based model to structure their committee. Their first major agreement was a Process and Procedures Agreement, which outlines the expectations or procedures necessary for each group to participate. A consultant was hired to work with the



committee in preparing a Background Study that documents the natural, cultural and recreational resources, land uses and management issues associated with the Clearwater and Christina Rivers. This study was summarized in a Nomination Document which was approved by the CRC, the Regional

Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Fort McMurray #468 First Nation and the Provincial Cabinet before going to the CHRS Board in September. Following these approvals, the CRC is now working to resolve the issues identified in the Background Study through its management-planning process.

Ted Dykstra sits as the provincial government representative on the Clearwater River Committee. If you want to learn more about this process, Ted can put you in touch with the sector representative who shares your interest.



*Signing Ceremony for the Clearwater River Nomination Document
Includes: Mayor Boutilier, Chief Cree and delegation and representatives of the Clearwater River Committee*

ALBERTA RIVERS WITH CHRS POTENTIAL

All or part of the following rivers are potential candidates for CHRS status:

Athabasca

Battle

Beaver

Belly

Bow

*Castle

*Clearwater (Athabasca)

(Nominated September 1996)

Clearwater (North Saskatchewan)

Crowsnest

*Highwood

Little Smoky

*Milk

North Saskatchewan

*Oldman

*Peace

Red Deer

Sheep

Slave

Smoky

*South Saskatchewan

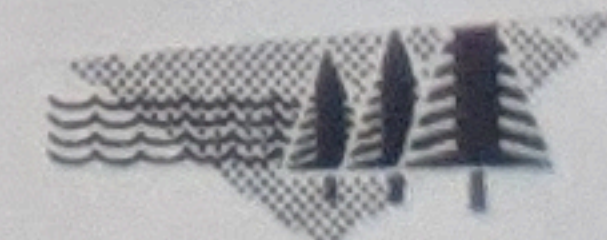
** Notation means the entire length of the river is an exceptional potential candidate.*

CURRENT STATUS

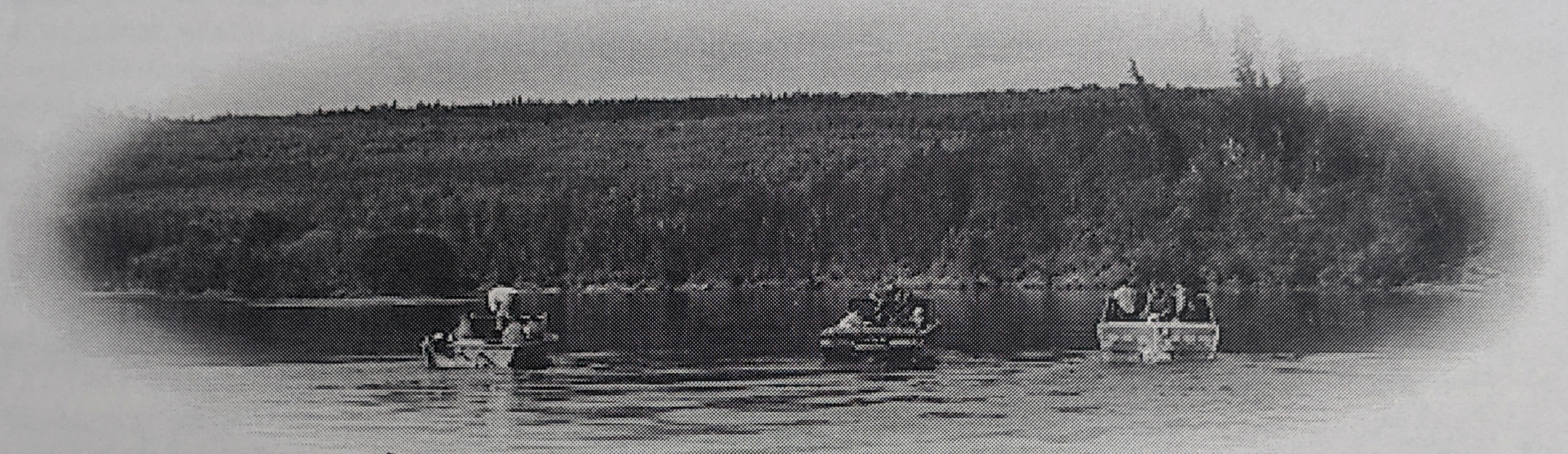
Alberta Environmental Protection staff are currently discussing several rivers as potential candidates with the local authorities along those rivers. If your local authority (urban, rural, special areas, irrigation districts, aboriginal band councils, etc.), industry or special interest group would like to undertake a Background Study along your river or specified reach, or even if you would like more information about the CHRS program you are encouraged to contact CHRS Program Manager Ted Dykstra (427-7009) or Bruce Milne (427-4858). Both Ted and Bruce are available to meet with local authorities industry, business or special interest groups who wish to explore the potentials of the CHRS Program.



The Lower Clearwater River (Example of meandering stream)



Working Together to Preserve Alberta's River Heritage



Boating Recreation on the Clearwater River

Another Alberta First—Clearwater/Christina Nominated as Canadian Heritage Rivers

Mr. Lund stated, "I am particularly pleased to announce the approval of the nomination of Clearwater/Christina because of the grassroots support involved in the process. The Clearwater River Committee, representing landowners, special interest groups, industry, the aboriginal community, and the municipal and provincial governments, is to be commended for its dedicated and focused approach to bringing the nomination to this stage."