

Confluence

Alberta's River Heritage

September 1998

ALBERTA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
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Volume 4

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.

What's happening in Alberta?

The Clearwater/Christina Rivers

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 Clearwater River Committee, a committee designed by and for all stakeholders, is now working to resolve the issues identified in the Background Study through its management planning process. They hope to take a draft of their action statements back to the sectors they represent and to the public this fall. Given agreement, the committee will then seek municipal, First Nation and provincial approvals. With these approvals and the tabling of the management plan with the Canadian Heritage River Board the Clearwater will be designated a Canadian Heritage River.

The Athabasca River

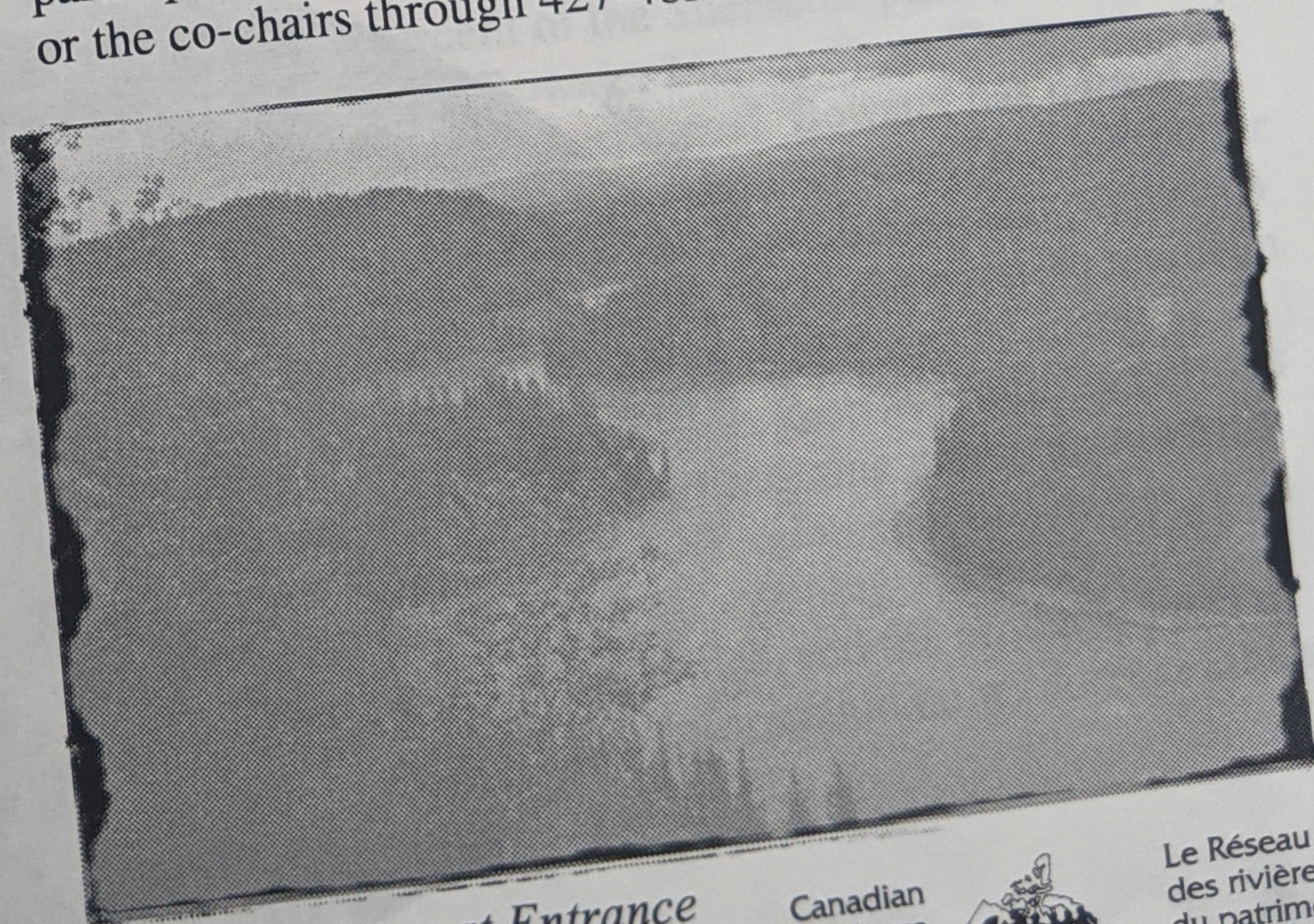
A steering committee has been struck to investigate the possibility of nominating all or part of the Athabasca River as a heritage river. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to involve all local authorities and stakeholders in identifying the values of the Athabasca River, and the related issues. All those concerned will have the opportunity to consider if their interests will be met by nominating the Athabasca, or segments of it, as a Canadian Heritage River.

The Steering Committee is an "Intermunicipal Committee" that strives to include representation from all major sectors. It is led by municipal councillors as co-chairs: Doug Borg from M.D. of Woodlands #15, Arno Birkigt from County of Athabasca, and Winnie Sommer from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

The development of a Background Study and consultation with concerned publics on issues is being directed by the Steering Committee. The Athabasca River was crucial in the exploration and development of northern Alberta and the Mackenzie Basin and the Background Study will identify and document this human history. It will also document the natural history and recreational values of the Athabasca.

The Steering Committee recognizes the variety and diversity of people who live, work and recreate on the Athabasca. The river is a resource that supports numerous industries, livelihoods and lifestyles. Given agreement, the Canadian Heritage River designation would be used as a focal point. The committee will bring all stakeholders together to create a common vision and a strategy to implement it, which recognizes all of the interests in the river. They believe that all needs can be met through cooperation and collaborative partnerships.

If you live, work or recreate on the Athabasca and want to participate in this process, please call your municipality or the co-chairs through 427-4858.



Athabasca River at Entrance

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Canadian
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The Peace River

Peace River Background Study Steering Committee has agreed not to pursue nomination of the Peace River. This press release was created at the last meeting of the committee.

A committee representing municipalities, First Nations, industry, recreation and tourism interests have deliberated for many months about the nomination of the Peace River as a Canadian Heritage River. After due consideration, the majority of municipalities in the Peace Country have decided not to pursue the nomination. Municipal support would have been required for the program to proceed.

Committee spokesperson Bill Neufeld stated, "Committee members feel that the Peace River is a heritage river regardless of any special designation."

Further information can be obtained from your municipal district office.

Bruce Duffin, was Alberta's Canadian Heritage River Board member and a Director with Alberta Environmental Protection while these discussions were taking place. He stated "While this clearly is municipalities decision to make, it must be recognized that the program does work in conjunction with existing and new developments and does not alter the authority of municipalities. It provides all people concerned with the river with an opportunity to work together toward achieving their shared Vision for their river."

The section of the Peace River in BC has been designated a BC Heritage River with the following vision: "a river managed so as to accommodate a balanced variety of resource-based uses while maintaining representative natural qualities and recognizing the strong cultural importance of the river corridor to First Nations and non-aboriginal people"

Canadian Heritage Rivers Across Canada

Recently partners in Canadian Heritage Rivers were surveyed to determine what implications the designation of rivers to the CHRS has had on development opportunities along their river. Here is a sample of responses from the Grand River in Ontario.

"The municipalities felt that the designation of the Grand River would provide an opportunity to market the area and provide a focus for the numerous river amenities that the area has to offer in order to spur economic growth."

Bob Blake, Mayor, Town of Dunville, Ontario

"In the Grand River watershed a sense of ownership and pride has been sparked by the designation. This builds on the fine stewardship efforts already undertaken by landowners and individuals. Municipalities look to the river as a focal point for tourism and economic development."

*Allan R. Holmes,
Chief Administrative Officer,
Grande River Conservation Authority,
Cambridge, Ontario*

"This marked an opportunity for seven municipalities along the Grand and their corresponding jurisdictions to work together in marketing sustainable elements for the river through community agencies responsible for tourism."

Chris Eriel, Mayor, Brantford, Ontario



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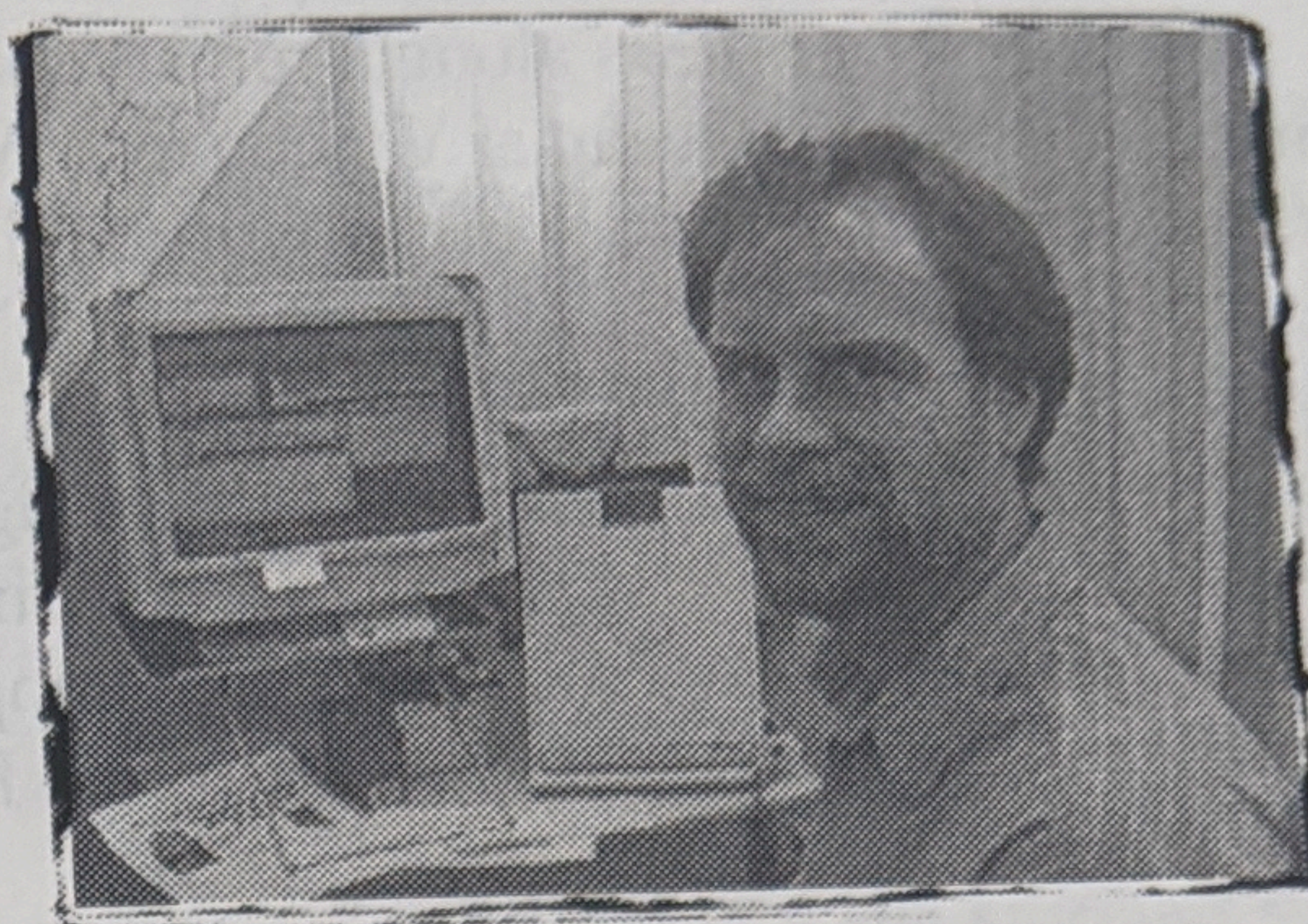
Staff Changes at Alberta Environmental Protection

After 18 years of service to Alberta, **Bruce Duffin** has retired as Director of the Recreation and Protected Areas Division (RPAD) on June 30. Bruce also served as Alberta's representative on the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, including chairing the board. Bruce's leadership and integrity will be missed.

Fred Moffatt has returned from the directorship of the Prairie Region to become the new Director of RPAD. He brings with him extensive experience in the management and planning of parks and protected areas. He will serve as Alberta's representative on the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board.

After 30 years with the provincial government **Ted Dykstra** has retired. He was recently awarded the Canadian Heritage River Board's Award of Merit for his work in bringing Alberta into the CHRS. Ted's enthusiasm and commitment will be missed.

Bruce Milne was selected to coordinate the CHR program in Alberta as part of the Natural Heritage Planning and Evaluation Branch of RPAD. He was previously involved in facilitating the convening of local committees on the Clearwater, Peace and Athabasca rivers.



RPAD is located on the 2nd floor, Oxbridge Place, 9820-106 St., Edmonton T6K 2J6. Bruce Milne can be contacted by phone at 427-4858, fax at 427-5980 and by e-mail at bmilne@env.gov.ab.ca

Status of the Canadian Heritage River System Nominations and Designations since 1996

A total of 31 rivers have been nominated to the CHRS, representing 8125 km. Twenty-two of these have been formally designated, meaning that the management plans detailing how their heritage values will be protected have been lodged with the CHR Board.

Nominations

Little Southwest Miramichi River, New Brunswick

The Little Southwest Miramichi River with a total length of 142 km, is synonymous with Atlantic salmon the world over. Excellent fishing, canoeing, hiking, and nature appreciation are popular on this river. Early Micmac settlement sites, particularly the Oxbow and Augustine Mounds, depict a vivid portrait of life along these rivers thousands of years ago. European settlement brought logging and commercial fishing to the river. The Miramichi is one of the great rivers of Atlantic Canada in lumberjack legend and lore.

Tatshenshini River, Yukon

The Tatshenshini River flows through the traditional territory of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. It continues to be an important element of their spiritual, social and economic well-being. They requested that their river be included in the program.

The Tatshenshini River is located in the Coast and St. Elias Mountains of western south Yukon. Its outstanding historic features include Native peoples' history and culture, trading and travel routes, links to coastal exploration and mapping, and gold rush trails. The exceptional quality of lifestyle and recreational activities make it an international adventure tourism destination for rafting and wilderness travel.

Designations

The Shelburne River, Nova Scotia

The Shelburne River is a wilderness river—one of the last in Nova Scotia. It passes through a remarkable variety of landscapes on its 53-km course to Lake Rossignol—eight shallow lakes, ancient eskers, granite barrens, wetlands, and stands of ancient old-growth white pine and 400-year old hemlock, the oldest in Nova Scotia.

The lower 33 percent of the Shelburne passes through land owned by the Bowater Mersey Paper Company and Nova Scotia Power Incorporated. Bowater has owned and operated this land since the 1920s, and has left buffer strips along the river, providing environmental protection and maintaining the scenic value of the river. To maintain the wilderness recreation values of the river, many current practices will continue, such as requiring permits for backcountry travel and restricting public access on forestry roads. However, new strategies will be implemented, including establishing wilderness campsites with basic facilities, and the producing a backcountry guide with information on wilderness ethics.

Fraser River, British Columbia

From its headwaters on the Pacific slope of the continental divide, the Fraser River flows along a remarkable 1375 km course to the Pacific Ocean at Vancouver. With the most productive salmon fishery in the world, it has sustained comfortable lifestyles for centuries. The entire basin, which accounts for 80% of the provincial and 10% of the national gross domestic product, was designated. Management of the heritage values is just one dimension of the Fraser Basin Council's role in helping people make good decisions that support sustainability of the Fraser Basin.

Traversing a third of the province, it is not surprising that the Fraser River embraces a wide range of ecosystems supporting a high diversity of plants and animals. As with other aspects, the breadth of recreational opportunities is also influenced by the scale of the Fraser basin, its diverse character and accessibility.

Upper Restigouche River, New Brunswick

The Restigouche has long been famous as one of the world's best destinations for catching the elusive Atlantic salmon. The thick spruce and fir forests along the Restigouche are home for lynx, osprey and bald eagles. For the Micmac Indians, the river was a highway to the west and an important source of food. For today's recreational paddler, the Upper Restigouche River is an easily accessible source of wilderness and solitude.

The Upper Restigouche River management plan defines a corridor that is 150 metres on each side of the river's high water mark as an area of relatively undisturbed vegetation between forestry operations and the watercourse.

Bloodvein River, Ontario

The Ontario portion of the Bloodvein River falls almost entirely within Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, a wilderness class park. It flows westward from the Canadian Shield for about 310 km to empty into Manitoba's section, which was designated in 1987.

A traveller on the Bloodvein River can experience a wide range of ecosystems, a high density of undisturbed archaeological sites, numerous pictographs, and a waterway that was used as a transportation route by aboriginal people for thousands of years.

Bonnet Plume River, Yukon

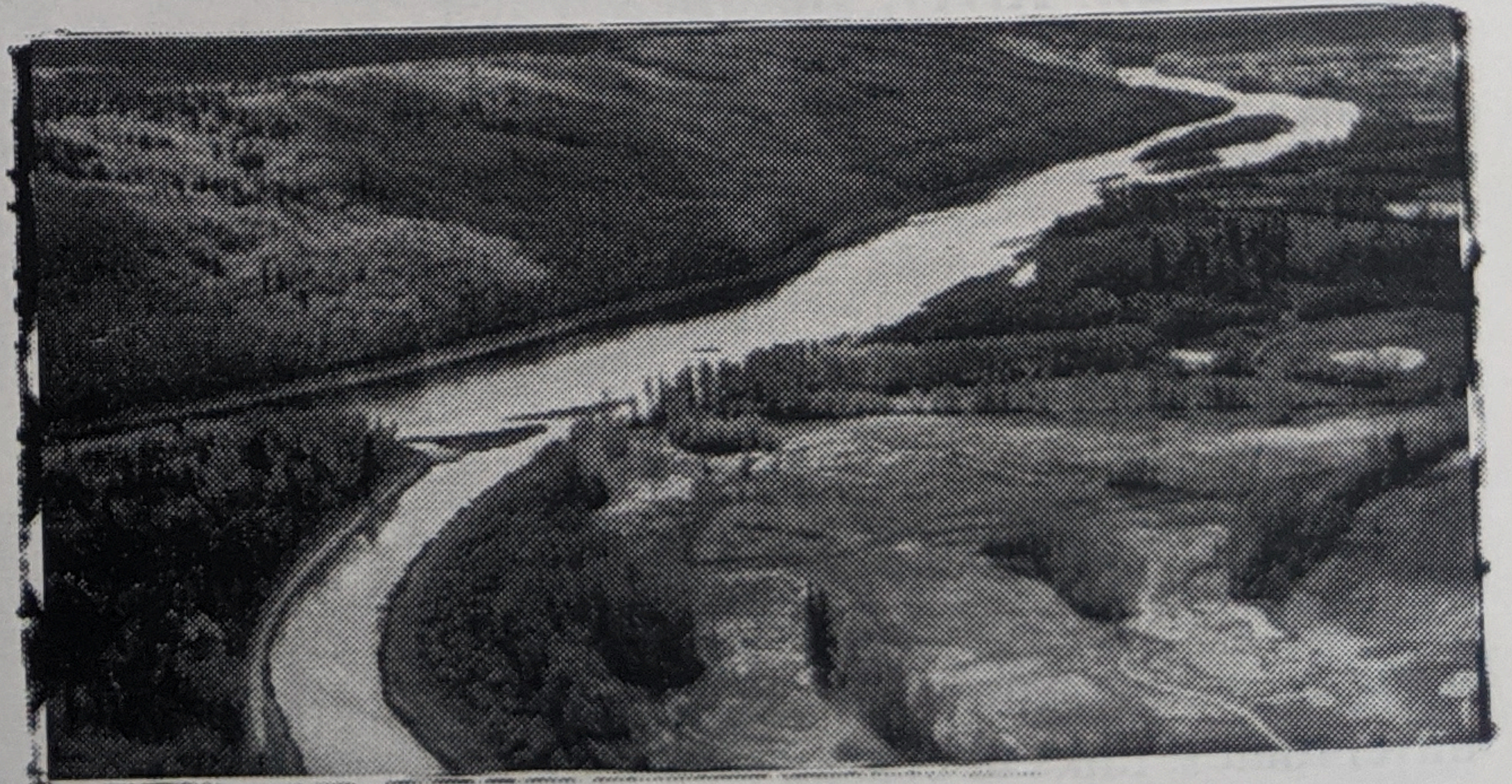
The Bonnet Plume River races out of the Wernecke Mountains in the central Yukon, and cuts through an area of high mountain peaks and canyons. This pristine landscape is home for abundant wildlife, including woodland caribou, grizzly bear (concentrations of denning sites), and a number of rare plants. The valley of the Bonnet Plume River was a traditional hunting and travelling area for the Nacho Nyak Dun First Nation.

Designation was sought for the entire 12 000 km² watershed of the Bonnet Plume by the Government of the Yukon, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Nacho Nyak Dun First Nation. This reflects an ecosystem approach and watershed focus to management of the Bonnet Plume River. The main objective of this management plan is to outline the research actions required to fill information gaps needed for long range land use planning.

Margaree River-Lake Ainslie, Nova Scotia

A mixture of rural residential and agricultural uses, interspersed with many small natural areas dominates the 120 km Margaree-Lake Ainslie River System. Residents and governments have worked together on their "Partnership Strategy." It will coordinate efforts to achieve objectives and benefits that are significant to the community. The local economy is dependent on the river for the Gaspereau fishery, the recreational salmon and trout fisheries, agriculture, forestry and tourism.

The Margaree River-Lake Ainslie area has a rich cultural heritage. The river has sustained human activities from pre-contact Native times to the present. The Margaree is widely recognized as a beautiful river because of its combination of uplands, lowlands, wilderness and a mixture of natural and agricultural landscapes.



Clearwater River at MacDonald Island, Fort McMurray