

Gorge Waterway Stewardship Strategy

The Gorge Waterway Initiative (GWI) is a collaborative, community-driven group of organizations dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the natural and cultural features of the Gorge Waterway, Portage Inlet and surrounding watersheds.

The GWI partners developed a stewardship strategy in 2005 to help achieve their vision of a healthy environment for all life in the Gorge Waterway, Portage Inlet and the surrounding watersheds. The following goals, objectives and actions form the strategy.

GOAL 1: Provide and promote education stewardship and awareness programs and encourage responsible land and water uses

Objective 1A. Ensure that interest groups and the public understand the values of the waterway so they can act responsibly

- Compile educational material from all the groups working in the waterway
- Summarize ecological, historical and cultural information
- Provide educational opportunities and forums on subjects related to the waterway
- Organize and promote community educational and awareness-raising events
- Provide information on the waterway to local media
- Act as an information broker connecting the public and media to groups doing specific things in the waterway

Objective 1B. Foster long-term community responsibility for the protection, restoration and enhancement of the waterway

- Encourage member organizations to get involved in both individual group and collaborative GWI activities
- Develop and encourage partnerships with educational institutions and local groups
- Publicize community efforts and promote information sharing via a Gorge Waterway Initiative Web site
- Encourage voluntary actions to prevent pollution and degradation of habitat
- Encourage active community participation and responsibility in improving the environmental quality of the Gorge
- Build links to local groups and schools needing volunteers

Objective 1C. Work collaboratively with First Nations to protect areas and sites of historical and current significance

Objective 1D. Encourage balanced recreation uses that allow public access but respect the privacy of landowners

- Work with boating community to educate them on the protection of wildlife and habitats and the privacy of residents living along the shoreline
- Provide recommendations to municipalities on access issues
- Work with the harbour master to minimize boat wake through enforcement and education measures that ensure protection of migratory birds and habitats

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- Promote an understanding of the need for a balance between recreational, environmental and residential values

GOAL 2: Serve as a hub for information sharing and act as a point of contact for waterway issues

Objective 2A. Establish effective lines of communication and coordinate activities with harbour and waterway interest groups and government agencies

- Serve as a means for organizations to easily disseminate information to groups with an interest in the waterway
- Prepare a contact list of key agencies and individuals involved in regulation or management of the waterway
- Circulate information on key decisions of GWI to boards and members of the GWI member groups
- Prepare and distribute update reports on important waterway and watershed issues
- Invite key individuals to GWI meetings to provide information on relevant topics
- Create opportunities for agencies and groups to provide information about the waterway to the members of GWI at monthly meetings or via e-mail
- Develop and maintain a list of GWI member organization projects and activities planned or undertaken in the waterway
- Circulate the list of waterway and watershed activities to key contacts on a regular basis

Objective 2B. Provide a forum for organizations involved in activities along the waterway so they can share information, collaborate and look for funding opportunities

Objective 2C. Establish a program to communicate with the public about GWI activities and the environmental quality of the waterway

- Promote GWI member organizations
- Create a summary of GWI's strategy for public distribution
- Report regularly to the community on the GWI and environmental quality of the waterway
- Attend community events to promote the GWI and discuss environmental quality with local citizens
- Develop protocols for releasing information on GWI initiatives
- Develop a communications plan for specific GWI initiatives

Objective 2D. Encourage coordination between jurisdictions on the management of the waterway

GOAL 3: Encourage and advocate for the protection, restoration and enhancement of the waterway and its watersheds

Objective 3A. Encourage land use planning and management in adjacent watersheds to protect the waterway

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- Encourage municipalities to coordinate flow management decisions between jurisdictions for the creeks entering the waterway
- Encourage the reduction of impervious surfaces in the watershed
- Establish a public record of GWI activities in the waterway
- Identify priority areas for protection
- Investigate partnerships and funding opportunities for projects

Objective 3B. Preserve, protect and enhance existing natural areas in the waterway, particularly foreshore and riparian areas

- Work with appropriate jurisdictions to identify environmentally significant areas
- Encourage municipalities to improve and expand natural areas and biodiversity in the waterway
- Encourage municipalities to develop land use plans and policies that protect the environmental quality of the waterway

Objective 3C. Promote and demonstrate restoration of natural shorelines and stream banks in the waterway

- Encourage educational opportunities and forums on protection and enhancement of the waterway
- Participate in the annual shoreline cleanup in conjunction with the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup (September) and Pitch-In Canada (April)
- Develop outreach programs designed to keep the waterway free of garbage and pollutants
- Support creek daylighting projects and restoration of natural ecosystems in the waterway
- Encourage the removal of invasive and non-native species along shorelines and stream banks and encourage replanting with native species
- Encourage municipalities to protect and enhance natural features in all new development and redevelopment along the shoreline
- Establish partnerships with other groups to work collaboratively in the waterway

Objective 3D. Achieve and maintain acceptable water quality and flows in the watersheds entering the waterway.

- Ensure that water-quality monitoring that is being done by various organizations is summarized and available for other groups and researchers
- Establish partnerships with local university and community colleges to create long-term, community-monitoring programs
- Encourage best management practices to eliminate or reduce pollutants entering the waterway
- Encourage member organizations to continue working on improving water quality in the waterway
- Work with appropriate jurisdictions to identify water quality problems, causes and solutions