



*Triple Falls, Quanhoe River  
Oil on Canvas by Aleta Karstad*

# **ONTARIO RIVERS ALLIANCE**

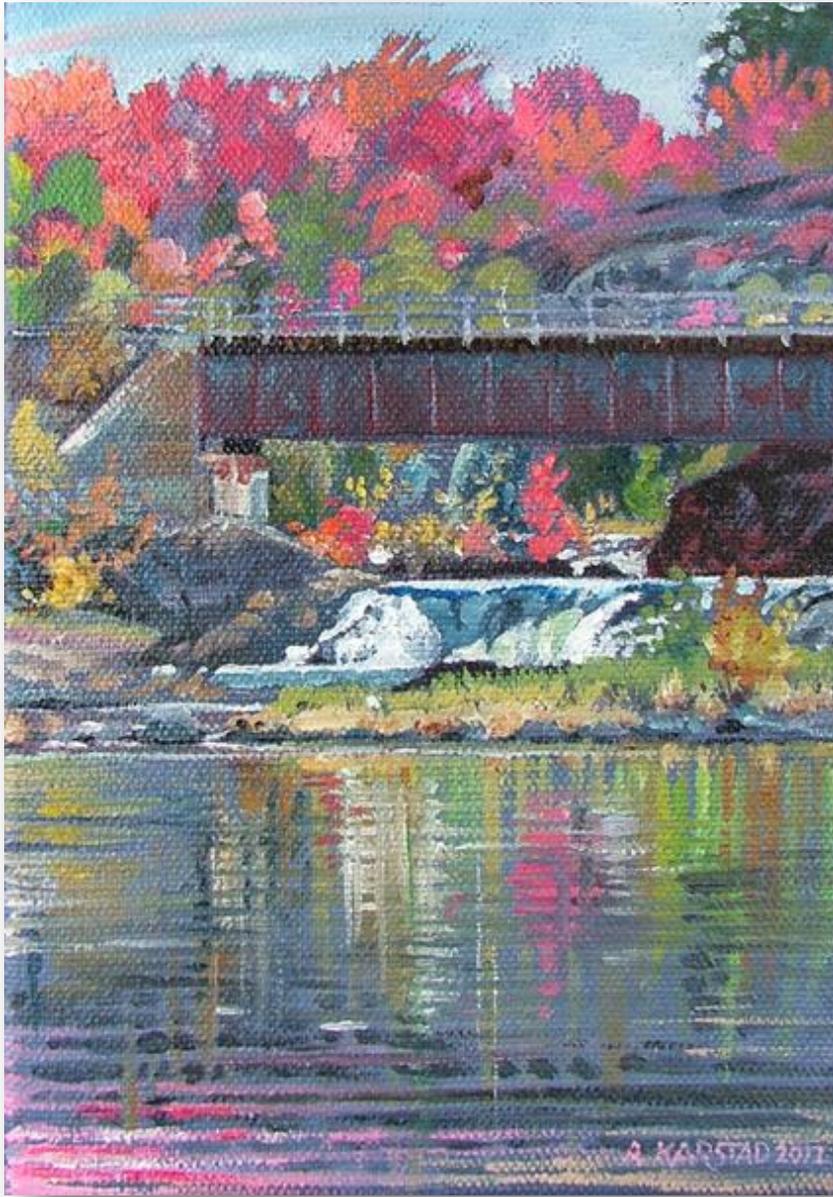
**2013 – 2014 ANNUAL REPORT**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**1 November 2014**

**Prepared by:**

**Linda Heron, Chair**



*At Soo Crossing, Vermilion River  
Oil on Canvas, by Aleta Karstad*



## **About ORA:**

Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization with a focus on healthy river ecosystems all across Ontario. ORA is a voice for a number of member and partner organizations, stewardships and associations, as well as many other private and First Nations citizens. We have come together to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems, and to ensure that development affecting Ontario rivers is environmentally and socially sustainable and responsible.

ORA has a broad overarching perspective in our approach to conserving and protecting Ontario's freshwater resources. We collaborate with other organizations, individuals and First Nation citizens throughout the province to share, communicate, assist, and join our voices, experience and strengths in a coordinated effort to address risky or threatening developments and unhealthy river ecosystems. ORA's success and accomplishments are entirely the result of the efforts of dedicated volunteers.

Since our beginnings early in 2011, ORA has worked tirelessly to address risky developments, influence policy, process and legislation, to improve the environmental assessment and approvals process, to increase public awareness of the impacts development is imposing, and the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring riverine ecosystems.

ORA works to raise awareness through our website, E-newsletter, Action Alerts, public speaking engagements, and other communication and outreach initiatives and campaigns in order to build a strong engaged network of like-minded individuals and organizations.

ORA has assisted numerous individuals and groups in advocating for river protection and conservation, often through our network of volunteers providing scientific and technical expertise and advice.

ORA has a solid track record of providing evidence-based and reasoned advice on policy and development that affects Ontario rivers.

## **Challenges to Ontario Rivers:**

ORA is concerned with all issues affecting Ontario rivers and lakes, including the cumulative and ongoing negative effects of hydroelectric, and the numerous waste water treatment facilities, mining and industry releasing effluent into our waterways, diminished water quality and water quantity, forestry impacts, blue-green algae, invasive species, overdevelopment of our shorelines, endangered species, threatened fisheries, old dams no longer serving any useful purpose that block our waterways, and the most daunting challenge of all, climate change.

Healthy rivers provide drinking water, food, flood protection, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, and economic benefits to local and First Nation communities. They are a vital part of our heritage and are sources of community identity and pride. In an era of global warming, effective long-term protection for rivers must begin at the headwaters and encompass the entire watershed.

For an overview of what ORA has achieved since our inception in 2011, you can check out our previous Annual Reports located on our website here.

For more information on issues related to Ontario's river ecosystems and the threats to specific Ontario rivers, visit our ORA website at: [OntarioRiversAlliance.ca](http://OntarioRiversAlliance.ca).

## **ORA Activities - November 2013 to November 2014 - A Year in Review:**

### **1. Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) Grant:**

In December of 2013, ORA received a \$34,871 capacity building grant from MEC. This grant was to help in the creation of a strategic plan, branding, website development, and strategies to help ORA increase its capacity to protect, conserve and restore healthy Ontario river ecosystems.

- Interim Report to MEC, May 2014
- Final Report due on 1 December 2014

### **2. Our New Look:**

Our MEC grant has allowed ORA to complete several key initiatives designed to project a more professional profile, increase public awareness of the work we do, and to provide opportunities for the public to get involved. These initiatives also helped ORA to better understand how we can best serve the needs of our membership, and continue to build our organization.

ORA now has a new look - a new logo, website, brochure, quarterly E-Newsletter, and a 5-year Strategic Plan to provide a strong foundation and direction for our organization into the future:

#### **1. ORA Branding – New Logo**



#### **2. ORA 5-year Strategic Plan – 2014 – 2019**

ORA's Strategic Plan was developed in consultation with the Social Planning Council Sudbury, as well as ORA members and supporters. The foundation of this plan was generated from two on-line surveys, as well as a Strategic Planning Session.

The plan will guide ORA in the transformation of our organization to better engage, support and encourage local freshwater stewardship actions throughout the province, and to improve our capacity to influence policy and legislation that helps protect, conserve and restore Ontario rivers.

Our focus over the next 5 years will be to:

- Actively engage a growing and diverse network of players;
- Make comprehensive contributions into legislation, policy and development proposals;
- Ensure citizens understand the risks to Ontario rivers and the value in protecting and restoring them; and to
- Support local action to protect, conserve and restore riverine ecosystems.

Check out our Strategic Plan [here](#).

### **3. ORA Updated Website**

ORA engaged the services of Studio 123 to create a very interactive and informative website and blog. The Rivers at Risk map is a great addition that informs the public of some of the developments proposed for many Ontario rivers.

### **4. River Run - E-Newsletter**

In October, ORA sent out its 3<sup>rd</sup> quarterly E-Newsletter. We have had great feedback from our membership, and it has brought several new subscribers to our mailing list. Check out our latest River Run E-Newsletter [here](#).

### **5. ORA Brochure**

ORA's Brochure was designed by Studio 123. Check it out [here](#).

## **3. ORA Publication:**

### **Hydro Impacts 101**

Hydroelectric is often described as “clean” and “green”, and hence a preferred alternative to “dirty” energy produced by other means such as coal-fired plants. In this report, we describe the many negative environmental and socioeconomic costs of hydroelectric facilities, whether large or small, and demonstrate that waterpower cannot be viewed as a source of “clean” or “green” energy. This report dispels that myth. Check it out [here](#).

## **4. ORA Comments on EBR Postings:**

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has continued its modernizing and streamlining measures, and erosion of environmental protection has continued through several legislative and policy revisions. These changes have taken us deeper into a proponent led process with more self-monitoring and self-reporting, more decision making powers, and less oversight by Ministry staff. It will take several years to fully realize the consequences of these changes; however, the proponent led process has already clearly demonstrated that the quest for profits drive many key decisions when left up to developers. These decisions can ultimately be very costly for government ministries and taxpayers when it is necessary to rehabilitate damaged riverine ecosystems and fisheries, and could have devastating consequences for public health and safety.

It has been another very busy and challenging year, but ORA commented on all water related EBR postings as follows:

- EBR 012-0290: Coordinated Policy Guidance for Waterpower Projects, Dec 2013
- EBR 012-0405: GRS - American Eel Recovery Strategy, Dec 2013
  - Public Campaign, Dec 2013
- EBR 011-9596: Permit to Take Water - DeBeers – Victor Mine, Dec 2013
- EBR 012-0562: LRIA – Technical Bulletins for Waterpower, Jan 2014
- EBR 012-1120: Invasive Species Act, Apr 2014
- EBR 012-0291: Provincial Fish Strategy, May 2014
- EBR Review: Sewage Bypass Alerts, Oct 2014

## 5. Proposed Waterpower Projects:

An important aspect of ORA's work is to keep abreast of new and ongoing developments of concern and, when appropriate, to strategize and collaborate with members looking for assistance.

ORA has engaged in the Environmental Assessment (EA) process of several proposed waterpower developments moving through the environmental screening and approvals process to determine the potential impacts and risks to the environment, as well as public health and safety.

ORA has taken the following actions in addressing proposals of concern:

### 1. Wabagishik Rapids Waterpower Project – Vermilion River

Xeneca Power Development Inc. proposes to construct a 3.4 MW modified run-of-river hydroelectric power generation station at Wabagishik Rapids, on the Vermilion River. Wabagishik Rapids is the site of a significant walleye spawning habitat, and Lake Sturgeon were discovered immediately below the proposed dam location.

ORA and 21 others made Part II Order requests to the Minister of Environment (MOE) asking the Minister to elevate the ER to an Individual EA. MOECC public file reveals **ER did not meet requirements of Class EA for waterpower.**

Awaiting MOECC disposition.

- ORA to Xeneca – Comments on ER, Oct 2013.
- ORA to MOECC – Part II Order request, Nov 2013
- ORA to MOECC – Follow-up, Feb 2014
- ORA to MOECC – Request for Meeting, Jun 2014
- MOECC to ORA - Response, Jun 2014
- Met with MOECC staff and made presentation – Wabagishik Rapids Heavy Metal Contamination, and discussed merits of the ER, Jul 2014

### 2. Marter Township GS ER – Blanche River

Xeneca Power Development Inc. is proposing to construct a 2.1 MW hydroelectric generating station on the Blanche River in Marter Township. The project site is located on the Blanche River at the Krugerdorf Chutes, approximately 9 km north of the Town of Englehart, upstream of the Misema and Englehart Rivers. An important set of rapids, known as Stuart's Rapids, is located approximately 3.7 km downstream of the proposed dam site, as it contains one of the few gravel/sandbar habitats in this portion of the Blanche River, and downstream of the rapids is a confirmed spawning habitat for Lake Sturgeon and possibly Walleye. Awaiting MOECC disposition.

ORA made a part II Order request to the Minister of Environment. A visit to the MOECC public file reveals the **ER did not meet the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower.**

- ORA Comments on Environmental Report, Mar 2014
- ORA Part II Order Request, Mar 2014

### 3. Ivanhoe River GS ER – The Chute and Third Falls

Xeneca Power Development Inc. is proposing to build two hydroelectric generating stations at The Chute and Third Falls sites located 44.2 km apart along the Ivanhoe River. The proposed "Modified Run-of-River" Project would

have a total Installed Capacity of 2.9 MW at The Chute and 3.8 MW at Third Falls.

ORA initially made a Part II Order request on the proposed Ivanhoe River - The Chute ER in 2011, asking the MOECC to elevate the ER to an Individual EA. The MOECC ruled that the ER did not meet the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower, and sent the proponent back to do additional studies. 2 ½ years later the ER was again issued for comment. A visit to the MOECC public file revealed the proponent has **still not met the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower**. Awaiting MOECC disposition.

- ORA Comments on ER, Sep 2011
- ORA Part II Order Request, Sep 2011
- MOECC to Xeneca - Decision - ER did not meet requirements of Class EA, Mar 2012
- ORA Comments on Final ER, May 2014
- ORA Part II Order Request on Final ER, May 2014

#### **4. Frederick House GS ER – Wanatango Falls**

Xeneca Power Development Inc. proposes to construct a 3.7 MW hydroelectric power generating station at the site known as “Wanatango Falls” on the Frederick House River, located in Mann Township, approximately 26 kilometres (km) northwest of the Town of Iroquois Falls and 22 km south of the Town of Cochrane.

In 2011 ORA commented on the proposed Frederick House River Generating Station ER, and made a Part II Order request to the MOECC to elevate the ER to an Individual EA. The proponent withdrew the ER when the Ivanhoe River ER was rejected by MOECC.

The proponent has again issued the ER for comment and ORA has made another Part II Order request as in our opinion the ER still does not meet the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower. Awaiting MOECC disposition.

- ORA Comments on ER, Nov 2011
- ORA Part II Order Request, Nov 2011
- MOECC to ORA – Xeneca withdraws ER, Apr 2012
- ORA Comments on Final ER, Aug 2014
- ORA Part II Order Request on Final ER, Aug 2014

#### **5. Serpent River GS**

Xeneca Power Development Inc. proposed to build the Four Slide Falls GS, a modified run-of-river hydroelectric generating station, with a total installed capacity of 7.3 MW. The project would be located on the Serpent River, approximately 15 km east of Elliot Lake, 7 km downstream of Pecors Lake and 4 km upstream of McCarthy Lake.

This ER and Notice of Completion, along with the Frederick House River GS, were withdrawn by the proponent in 2011 when the Ivanhoe Project was rejected by MOECC because it did not meet the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower. The developer was sent back to complete additional studies. There has been no activity on this proposal, and assume it has been dropped.

- ORA Comments on ER, Sep 2011
- Part II Order Request, Sep 2011
- MOECC to ORA – Xeneca withdraws ER, Apr 2012
- A visit to the public file revealed **no activity**, Oct 2014

## 6. Trout Lake River GS – Big Falls

Horizon Hydro Operations Ltd. proposed a 3 to 4 MW run-of-river waterpower facility at Big Falls on the Trout Lake River. Kiishik Community Association requested ORA's assistance.

ORA and Kiishik Community Association made Part II Order requests to the MOECC. The MOECC has not yet made a decision.

- ORA Comments on Notice of Inspection, Dec 2012.
- ORA Comments on Environmental Report, May 2013
- ORA Part II Order request, May 2013
- A visit to the MOECC public file revealed **no activity**, Oct 2014

## 7. Kabinakagami River Hydroelectric Proposal

A joint venture partnership of Constance Lake First Nation and Northland Power Inc., proposed to jointly construct, own and operate four strict run-of-river hydroelectric facilities on the Kabinakagami River, with a combined generating capacity of 26 MW. Wahpeestan, Wapoose, Neeskah and Peeshoo would have a total of 200 hectares of headponds. A Fort Albany First Nation citizens' group requested ORA's assistance.

ORA made a Part II Order request on this ER, and almost 2 years later no decision has yet been made on our request.

- ORA Comments on Notice of Inspection, May 2012
- ORA Comments on Environmental Report, Feb 2013
- Part II Order request, Feb 2013
- A visit to the MOECC public file revealed **no activity**, Oct 2014

## 8. Enerdu Generating Station Expansion & Redevelopment, Mississippi River

Enerdu Power Systems Inc. proposed to expand and redevelop its existing run-of-river hydroelectric waterpower facility to increase capacity from 300 kW to approximately 0.95 MW. This expansion was being operated as a peaking facility, and yet they were referring to it as a run-of-river.

Mississippi RiverWatchers requested ORA's assistance, and consequently ORA and Mississippi Riverwatchers made Part II Order requests to the MOECC to elevate this ER to an Individual EA – a much more rigorous EA.

The MOECC denied our requests to elevate, and approved the proposal with conditions that the proponent must address before permits and approvals are issued.

- ORA Comments on Environmental Report, Jan 2013
- ORA Part II Order request, Feb 2013
- MOECC to Enerdu – Part II Order requests denied, Nov 2013

## 9. Bala Falls

Swift River Energy Limited proposed a 3 to 5 MW “run of river” hydroelectric facility near the south end of Bala's existing north dam, located in the Town of Bala, Township of Muskoka Lakes, Ontario.

ORA, Save Bala Falls, and others made Part II Order requests to the MOECC in 2011. We and others appealed the Director's decision in 2012. The appeal was denied and the Statement of Completion issued in 2013. The project is now being contested by First Nations on the grounds that duty to consult was not

properly fulfilled. There is ongoing and strong advocacy by Save Bala Falls.

- Part II Order request, May 2011
- Comments to Muskoka Lakes, Aug 2011
- Comments to MOECC, Apr 2012
- ORA to MOECC, Re Addendum, Jun 2012
- Request to Review Director's Decision, Oct 2012
- Request denied by MOECC, Jan 2013

## **6. ORA Comments on Legislation and Policy:**

1. Proposed Amendments to the Class EA for Waterpower – ORA made a formal request to the Ontario Waterpower Association to propose amendments to the Class EA for Waterpower. This was timely because the Class EA for Waterpower was due for its 5 year review, July 2013.

**Note:** ORA just received notification from the MOECC that our request for amendments to the Class EA for Waterpower has been granted – in part. ORA is very pleased to have had the opportunity to make a significant contribution towards bringing more integrity and clarity to the process. See details here.

2. Response on OWA request for input on Ecological Flows, Feb 2014
3. Draft Request for Qualifications on the OPA Large Energy Procurement Process, May 2014
4. OPA – LRP-RFP Framework, Sep 2014
5. Fisheries and Oceans Canada - Regulations Establishing Conditions for Making Regulations under Subsection 36(5.2) of the Fisheries Act, Mar 2014
6. Fisheries and Oceans Canada - Proposed Aquaculture Activities Regulations published in the Canada Gazette, Part I, Vol. 148, No. 34, Oct 2014

## **7. Miscellaneous:**

1. Comments on Energy East Pipeline to Ontario Energy Board, April 2014
2. ORA All Candidates Questionnaire to Party Leaders, May 2014
3. Visited MOECC public file on all outstanding Part II Order requests, Apr, Jul & Oct 2014
4. City of Ottawa - Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments – 3 and 4 Booth Street (Chaudière and Albert Island), Oct 2014

## **8. Key ORA Meetings/Events:**

1. Chair - Attended OEB Public Consultation for Energy East Pipeline, North Bay, Apr 2014
2. Chair – Workshop on Engagement Tools and Techniques, ReThink Green, Apr

2014

3. ORA – Attended Hell or High Water event in Petawawa, May 2014
4. ORA invited by MNRF to participate in consultation on Provincial Fish Strategy, Toronto, May 2014
5. Chair - Visited Public File at MOECC Toronto office in April, July & Oct. 2014
6. ORA met with Paul Norris, OWA – Discussed issues & concerns, 16 Jul 2014

## 9. Presentations and Interviews:

1. Green Prosperity Alliance – included Ontario Clean Air Alliance, CPAWS Wildlands League, Environmental Defence, Ontario Nature, and Wildlife Conservation Society of Canada – Jun 2014
2. Wahnapiatae Lake Stewardship, Skead – Feb 2014
3. MOECC Approvals Staff – Wabagishik Heavy Metal Contamination – Jul 2014
4. Laurentian University - Giigdownin - Having a Talk, Oct 2014

## 10. Joint Submissions

1. Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study – Preventing spread of Asian Carp and other Invasive Species, Mar 2014
2. Draft Canada – Ontario Agreement on Great lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health, 2014 – Joint letters with CELA, Ecojustice and several other organizations, Jul 2014
3. 8<sup>th</sup> Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health - Joint letter with CELA, Ecojustice and several other organizations, Jul 2014

## ORA Successes:

ORA's advocacy work has reaped some significant returns:

1. **The Long Term Energy Plan** called for 300 MW of hydroelectric over the next 10 years – OWA was pushing for much more – upwards of 2,000 MW.
2. **FIT Program** – no longer applies to waterpower above 500 kwh.
3. **Large Renewable Procurement** – Replaces Feed-in-Tariff for waterpower over 500 kwh. Procurement through a bidding process; and power generation is dispatchable - can be told to stand down.
4. **Part II Order Requests** – Out of 11 Part II Order requests made by ORA – only 2 have been denied; 2 have had no action in over 1 ½ years; 1 has no disposition yet; and the remainder have not met the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower. In all, 2 were withdrawn by proponent, 1 rejected by MOECC, 2 moving forward to permitting, and 6 awaiting MOECC disposition.
5. **Active Projects** – A proponent with 18 proposals now shows only 8 active sites on their

project map. The other 10 have been placed on the back burner with no activity.

- 6. Amendments to the Class EA for Waterpower** - The recent decision by the MOECC to approve ORA's recommendations for amendments to the Class EA for Waterpower marks an important milestone for this organization. ORA initiated real and significant change to a piece of legislation that was not meeting the public's needs. While not all of our proposed amendments were incorporated, there were some very important gains.

For instance, we now have definitions for “Run-of-River”, “Run-of-River with Modified Peaking” and “Kinetic Hydro”. This was an important ask for ORA as many hydroelectric facilities refer to their operations as “Run-of-River” when in fact they are not – this results in some waterpower proposals going under the radar with little fuss from the public until it's too late.

We also now have a definition for “sustainable development”, additional guidance on notifying the public via the internet for a more transparent listing of active waterpower proposals, and a strengthening of the principles of transparency and trust. Ultimately these minor amendments all serve to improve the public consultation process.

## **In Conclusion:**

Over the past year ORA has addressed numerous development proposals, EBR postings, legislative amendments, policy, environmental reports, permitting and approvals.

ORA has had a productive and encouraging year. Our organization now has a very clean and professional logo and website, and our Strategic Plan will guide ORA far into the future.

ORA will continue to build on its successes, and explore innovative ways to increase our capacity to better serve our membership and Ontario Rivers.

A special thank you to those people and organizations that have assisted ORA by way of dollars and volunteer time contributed. Whatever success we can claim has been made possible through the help of our very generous and supportive members! Your help has been crucial and very welcomed!

Yours in sustainability,



Linda Heron  
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