ONTARIO RIVERS ALLIANCE

Allan's Dam, Allan's [Pedestrian] Bridge, Macdonell [Vehicle] Bridge and the Metrolinx GO Train Rail Line above it on the Speed River in Guelph

2025 – 2026 ANNUAL REPORT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

20 October 2026

Linda Heron, Chair and CAO

Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA)

Board of Directors

Linda Heron, Chair & CAO

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Terry Little, Secretary-Treasurer

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A BIG thank you to ORA's Board of Directors for your dedicated service!

ORA has two openings on its Board of Directors. If you would like to help protect Ontario rivers, please contact us at info@ontarioriversalliance.ca.

Letter from the Chair

Greetings everyone,

This was ORA's busiest year yet. Between October 2025 and October 2026, ORA wrote 103 submissions and letters, more than three times last year's total. Governments at both levels spent the year rolling back laws that protect Ontario's rivers, and nearly every rollback came with a short public-comment deadline.

There was good news too. After a successful delegation by ORA and the Vermilion River Stewardship, Greater Sudbury's Planning Committee voted to reject new hydroelectric development and spelled it out in the City's Official Plan. City Council confirmed it unanimously. The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority is moving ahead with removing the Embro Dam, as ORA recommended. That brings the number of dam removals ORA has successfully engaged in, to 9. With our partners in the Coalition for the West Credit River, we are standing firm that the Town of Erin's new sewage plant must not start up until its effluent cooling system is operating.

The cover photo shows Allan's Dam on the Speed River in Guelph. Look closely, and you can count the layers of road, walkways and rail built above this 155-year-old dam. ORA commented on the environmental assessment and asked the Province to take a closer look through a Section 16 Order request. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is still considering it.

The rollbacks were relentless. Ontario's Bill 5, Bill 98 and Bill 105, and the federal Bill C-5 speed up approvals and weaken environmental assessment. "Permit-by-rule" is replacing many permits, so a company can simply register online and start digging. Conservation authorities are being merged into large regional bodies. On each of the 41 Environmental Registry postings ORA answered, we asked the same question: who will be watching the river?

The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) is procuring new hydroelectric power through its Long Lead-Time and Long-Term 2 procurement processes. ORA filed 27 submissions to the IESO and pushed hard on behalf of ratepayers. We asked it to keep price limits under its Board's control. We asked it to stop locking ratepayers into very long contracts for new dams when wind, solar and storage are cheaper and faster to build. And we asked it to show the public what every contract will cost before it is signed. These questions matter even more now. The IESO Board Chair, Ken Hartwick, is a former President and CEO of Ontario Power Generation (OPG). The new IESO President and CEO, Jason Fitzsimmons, is a former executive of both Hydro One and OPG. ORA will keep asking whether the IESO is truly independent.

Reservoirs are not climate neutral. Flooded land releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. This year ORA took that message to the United Nations, where the rules for a new global carbon market are being written, and to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), which counts reservoir emissions in Canada's national greenhouse gas inventory. ECCC has been writing back. Its 2026 report now counts methane from 251 reservoirs, going back to 1832, as ORA asked Minister Guilbeault to do in 2023.

A big thank you to our Board of Directors, and our best wishes to Tareq AlSaleh, who has stepped down. We now have two openings on our Board. If you care about Ontario rivers, we would love to hear from you.

Yours in Conservation,

ORA Chair & Chief Administrative Officer

ORA at a Glance:

A quick look at what ORA and partners have achieved since 2011, and what we did this year.

251 Reservoirs

Canada's 2026 National Inventory Report now counts methane from 251 reservoirs, some flooded as far back as 1832, and tracks their emissions for 100 years instead of 10. National reporting runs about two years behind, so this edition covers emissions up to 2024.

ORA asked Minister Guilbeault for this in 2023.

15 Years

Protecting, conserving & restoring Ontario rivers since 2011

28

Hydroelectric proposals stopped

13

Ontario rivers protected from hydropower development

9

Dam removals ORA has engaged in through advocacy, monetary support and/or collaboration

103

Submissions and comment letters this year

27

Submissions to the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO)

41

Submissions on the Environmental Registry of Ontario

100%

Volunteer-run

$25

Become an ORA member for a year

Sudbury

New Hydroelectric officially excluded in the City's Official Plan

Embro Dam

Removal and naturalization moving forward

Erin

Effluent temperature limit and cooling system won for West Credit River Brook Trout

About ORA:

The Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) is a not-for-profit grassroots volunteer organization with a mission to protect, conserve, and restore Ontario riverine ecosystems. ORA also works to ensure that development affecting Ontario rivers is environmentally and socially sustainable.

ORA has a broad overarching perspective in our approach to protecting, conserving, and restoring Ontario's freshwater resources. We collaborate with other organizations, agencies, municipalities, individuals and Indigenous 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 a dedicated team of volunteers and members.

Since our beginnings, ORA has worked tirelessly to address concerning developments, influence policy, process and legislation, improve the environmental assessment and approvals process, increase public awareness of the impacts development may impose, and the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring riverine ecosystems.

ORA raises awareness through its website, E-newsletter, Action Alerts, public speaking engagements, and other communication and outreach initiatives. We also work to build a strong and engaged network of like-minded individuals and organizations.

ORA has assisted numerous individuals and groups in advocating for river protection, conservation and restoration. This wouldn't be possible without the assistance of our network of volunteers and partners, who provide scientific and technical expertise.

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, wastewater 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 that no longer serve any useful purpose and block our waterways, and the most daunting challenge of all, climate change.

Over the past two years, the provincial and federal governments have rolled back many laws that protect rivers and have cut back public and Indigenous consultation. Ontario's Bill 5, Bill 98, Bill 105, and the federal Bill C-5 speed up approvals and weaken the environmental assessment process. At the same time, new hydroelectric dams, transmission lines, mines and data centres are being pushed forward. Each rollback leaves Ontario rivers less protected, just as climate change makes them more vulnerable.

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 and its dedicated volunteers have achieved since its inception in 2011, you can check out our previous Annual Reports and website Blog, which can be found here.
What follows is a list of ORA's Activities since the fall of 2025 up to this date. You can click on the live links embedded in the text of each item to access those documents on our website Blog, where you will find more detailed information.

ORA Activities – October 2025 to October 2026:

1. Electricity and Energy:

Energy Procurement:

- 1 October 2025: Long Lead-Time Request for Proposals (RFP)
- 5 November 2025: Long Lead-Time RFP
- 20 November 2025: Repowering Existing Hydroelectric Facilities
- 3 December 2025: Long Lead-Time RFP
- 15 January 2026: Long Lead-Time RFP–18 December 2025
- 6 February 2026: Northern Hydro Program
- 11 February 2026: Long Lead-Time RFP–January 28, 2026
- 11 March 2026: Long Lead-Time RFP–26 February 2026
- 12 March 2026: Long-Term 2 RFP–24 February 2026
- 15 April 2026: Long Lead-Time RFP–26 March 2026
- 30 April 2026: Long Lead-Time RFP–23 April 2026
- 7 May 2026: Long-Term 2 RFP–21 April 2026
- 30 June 2026: Changes to the Establishment and Publication of Market Parameters–June 18, 2026
- 3 July 2026: Long-Term 2 RFP–June 16, 2026
- 10 July 2026: Long Lead-Time RFP: Questions and Comments
- 31 August 2026: Long-Term 2 RFP, August 20, 2026
- 1 October 2026: Capacity Accreditation for IESO Procurements—17 September 2026

Energy Planning:

- 31 October 2025: Bulk Planning for Sudbury North and Eastern Ontario
- 2 December 2025: Annual Planning Outlook Demand Forecast and Demand Scenarios
- 12 January 2026: Sudbury/Algoma Regional Electricity Planning, Scoping Assessment
- 23 January 2026: Bulk Planning Webinar (Eastern Ontario Bulk Plan) December 12, 2025
- 28 January 2026: East Lake Superior Regional Electricity Planning, 11 December 2025
- 5 May 2026: Annual Planning Outlook–21 April 2026
- 21 May 2026: South & Central Bulk Planning Update Webinar–April 30, 2026
- 26 May 2026: North of Sudbury Bulk Planning Update
- 25 June 2026: Regional Electricity Planning, East Lake Superior–June 4, 2026
- 1 July 2026: Regional Electricity Planning in Northwest Region–June 11, 2026

Energy Policy:

- 18 January 2026: ERO-025-1367–Amending the Renewable Energy Approval regulation to remove certain project types from the process and streamline the review of Natural Heritage Assessments
- 6 August 2026: ERO-026-0670–Proposal to Update the Statement of Environmental Values for the Ministry of Energy and Mines
- 10 September 2026: ERO-026-0853–Economic and Strategic Assessment Framework for Data Centres

2. Transmission Lines:

- 13 December 2025: ERO-025-1212–Enhancing Transmission Capacity North of Dryden: The Red Lake Transmission Project

- 17 December 2025: Request for Designation under Section 9 of the Impact Assessment Act: Enhancing Transmission Capacity North of Dryden: The Red Lake Transmission Project
- 18 February 2026: Hydro One: Northeast Power Line Project (Sudbury to Thessalon)– Draft Environmental Report
- 11 June 2026: Hydro One: North Shore Link Project (Mississagi TS to Third Line TS) Draft Environmental Study Report

3. Reservoir GHG Emissions & Climate Change (UN, IPCC and ECCC):

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):

- 12 July 2026: UNFCCC: Call for Input Comments for Article 6.4-MEP-014-A03
- 13 July 2026: UNFCCC Article 6.4-MEP-014-A03-Draft Mechanism Methodology-Electricity generation from renewable sources. Rivers for Climate joint submission
- 27 July 2026: UNFCCC Call for Input Comments for Article 6.4-SBM021-AA-A03-Sustainable Development Tool. Rivers for Climate joint submission

Canada (ECCC and OPG):

- 23 July 2026: ORA follow-up to Heather Brown, OPG, requesting results of the NSERC reservoir greenhouse gas study
- 29 July 2026: Canada's National Inventory Report for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, flooded lands and reservoirs: ORA to ECCC
- 29 July 2026: Canada's National Inventory Report for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, flooded lands and reservoirs: ECCC response to ORA
- 30 July 2026: Canada's National Inventory Report for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, flooded lands and reservoirs: ORA to ECCC
- 20 August 2026: Canada's National Inventory Report for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, flooded lands and reservoirs: ECCC response to ORA
- 24 August 2026: Canada's National Inventory Report for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, flooded lands and reservoirs: ORA to ECCC
- 10 September 2026: Canada's National Inventory Report for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, flooded lands and reservoirs: ECCC response to ORA
- 13 October 2026: Canada's National Inventory Report for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, flooded lands and reservoirs: ORA to ECCC

4. Water and Sewage:

- 20 November 2025: ERO-025-0900–Proposal to Amend the Ontario Water Resources Act to Enable the Regulation of Additional Sewage Systems
- 20 November 2025: Laurentian River, A Highly Valued Aquifer at Risk in High Park, TO
- 4 December 2025: ERO-025-1104–Regulatory changes for accelerating and improving protections for Ontario's drinking water source
- 7 December 2025: ERO-025-0872–Streamlining environmental protections for sewage works servicing on-farm worker housing
- 7 December 2025: ERO-025-0899–Policy proposal to regulate additional sewage systems under the Building Code to support construction of on-farm worker housing
- 20 January 2026: ERO-025-1387–Proposed administrative changes to Ontario's Building Code related to the transfer of enforcement authority of on-site sewage systems and a proposed technical clarification
- 9 August 2026: ERO-026-0329–Technical Guide, River and Stream Systems: Flooding Hazard Limit, and Technical Bulletin, Special Flooding Hazard Conditions in River and Stream Systems

- 11 August 2026: ERO-026-0419–Invitation to Municipalities to Register Potential Interest in Implementing a Water and Wastewater Public Corporation Model
- 11 August 2026: ERO-019-2487–Supporting Guide to Calculate the Design Sewage Flow for Subsurface Sewage Works Subject to Section 53 of the Ontario Water Resources Act, and ERO-026-0643–Replacing Table 5-3 in the Design Guidelines for Sewage Works (2008)

5. Land Use Planning:

- 4 November 2025: ORA & VRS Delegation to Sudbury Planning Committee to Exclude New Hydroelectric in its Official Plan
- 20 November 2025: ERO-025-1097–Proposed Changes to the Planning Act
- 9 February 2026: Success: Delegation to Sudbury Planning Committee to exclude new hydroelectric in its Official Plan
- 24 April 2026: ERO-026-0315–Consultation on Upper-Tier Official Plans, Secondary Plans, and Site-and Area-Specific Policies (Bill 98)
- 14 May 2026: ERO-026-0313–Streamlining the Information and Material that Planning Authorities Can Require as Part of a Complete Application (Bill 98)
- 14 May 2026: ERO-026-0312–Proposed Changes to Support Standardizing of Parkland Requirements Under the Planning Act (Bill 98)
- 14 May 2026: ERO-026-0304–Draft Projection Methodology Guideline (PMG), 2026 to Support Implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (Bill 98)
- 14 May 2026: ERO-026-0301 and ERO-026-0302–Proposed Amendments to the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 Respecting Communal Drinking Water and Wastewater System Municipal Consent Requirements (Schedule 4 of Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Act, 2026)
- 14 May 2026: ERO-026-0300–Proposed Planning Act, City of Toronto Act, 2006, Building Code Act, 1992 and Municipal Act, 2001 Changes (Schedules 1, 2 and 7 of Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Act, 2026)

6. Environmental Assessment and Permits:

- 29 January 2026: ERO-019-7891–New regulation to focus municipal environmental assessment
- 2 February 2026: ERO-025-1361–Exempting Low-risk Activities from Requiring Environmental Permissions
- 20 May 2026: ERO-026-0415–Proposed Amendments to the Environmental Assessment Act (Comprehensive Environmental Assessment Process), as proposed by Bill 105, Provincial Opportunity and Worker Empowerment Rights Act, 2026
- 8 June 2026: ERO-026-0414–Streamlining Requirements for Waste Disposal Site Service Area and Fill Rate Changes
- 23 September 2026: ERO-026-0089–Proposing a Project Evaluation Policy that would replace the Class Environmental Assessment for MNR Resource Stewardship and Facility Development Projects; ERO-026-0563–Revoking the Class Environmental Assessment for Resource Stewardship and Facility Development Projects

7. Mining and Major Projects (Impact Assessment Act):

- 2 February 2026: ERO-025-1363–Streamlining Environmental Permissions for Mineral Exploration
- 6 April 2026: Ontario Pumped Storage Hydropower Project
- 14 April 2026: Interim Regional Assessment for the Ring of Fire
- 29 May 2026: Great Bear Gold Project–Impact Statement Summary, No. 85832

- 10 June 2026: Crawford Nickel Project, Draft Impact Assessment Report, No. 83857
- 16 June 2026: ERO-026-0427–Fortifying Ontario's Economy, A vision for protecting Ontario, strengthening economic sovereignty, and securing global leadership in critical minerals

8. Natural Resources and Forests:

- 21 December 2025: ERO-025-1134–Natural Resources Regulatory and Permit Reform Initiative: Improving forest legislation, regulations, processes and forest management policy
- 21 December 2025: ERO-025-1141–Natural Resources Regulatory and Permit Reform Initiative: Unlocking Ontario's Economic Potential
- 21 December 2025: ERO-025-1078–Natural Resources Regulatory and Permit Reform Initiative: Proposing changes to streamline certain approvals under the Public Lands Act
- 21 December 2025: ERO-025-1145–Natural Resources Regulatory and Permit Reform Initiative: Proposing changes to the Renewable Energy on Crown Land policy
- 18 January 2026: ERO-025-1146–Natural Resources Regulatory and Permit Reform Initiative: Updates to natural heritage technical guidance for renewable energy projects
- 5 June 2026: ERO-026-0109–Revisions to the Forest Manuals Regulated under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act
- 21 September 2026: ERO-026-0539–Changes to Streamline Natural Resource Permits: Fish and Wildlife Modernization
- 21 September 2026: ERO-026-0696–Changes to Streamline Natural Resource Permits: Removal of Forest Resources (Trees) for Non-Forestry Activities; ERO-026-0698–Changes to Streamline Natural Resource Permits: Modernizing Forest Resource Licence Renewals
- 21 September 2026: ERO-026-0693–Proposing changes to streamline approvals under the Public Lands Act and modernize compliance provisions; ERO-026-0676–Proposed regulation under the Public Lands Act to allow for travel on closed roads on public lands; ERO-026-0692–Allow dry hydrants on public lands, MNR letters of 5 August 2026 on the Public Lands Act and the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994
- 25 September 2026: ERO-026-0696–Changes to Streamline Natural Resource Permits: Removal of Forest Resources (Trees) for Non-Forestry Activities; Proposed addition of the Environmental Protection Act, 1990 to the listed Acts—Follow-up

9. Conservation Authorities:

- 21 December 2025: ERO-025-1257–Proposed boundaries for regional consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities
- 7 September 2026: ERO-026-0740–Proposed Governance Regulations for Regional Conservation Authorities and the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency

10. Protected Areas and Species:

- 20 November 2025: ERO-019-9306–Expanding Protected Areas in Ontario—Additional Sites Proposed
- 21 February 2026: ERO-025-1334–Renewed Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan
- 5 April 2026: ERO-019-8972–Protected Area Expansions for Missinaibi Provincial Park and Woodland Caribou Provincial Park
- 14 May 2026: ERO-026-0364–Proposed Amendment to Ontario Regulation 316/07 to Remove Selected Lands from Beekahncheekahmeeng Deebahncheekayweehn Eenahohnahnuhn in Support of Pikangikum First Nation

11. Federal Postings:

- 7 November 2025: One Project One Review: Cooperation Agreements for the Assessment of Major Projects
- 4 February 2026: ECCC Discussion Paper: Driving Effective Carbon Markets in Canada
- 4 June 2026: Getting Major Projects Built in Canada–Discussion Paper on Reg. Reform
- 16 September 2026: Consultation on the Proposed Critical Habitat Protection Regulations made under section 59 of the Species at Risk Act–Joint

12. Dam Removals and Mitigation:

- 28 October 2025: Macdonell and Allan's Structures Municipal Class EA
- 28 November 2025: Section 16 Order Request: Allan's Dam, Spillway and Sluiceway, City of Guelph, Speed River
- 7 April 2026: Teeterville Dam Class EA–Final Report
- 26 May 2026: Upper Thames River Conservation Authority–Success: Embro Dam Removal and Naturalization is Moving Forward

Macdonell Bridge and reservoir, Speed River, Guelph, looking downstream

13. Joint Submissions:

- 26 September 2025: Call for Action on American Eel & Response dated from The Honourable Joanne Thompson, PC, M.P., Minister of Fisheries
- 6 November 2025: ERO-025-0909–Proposed legislative and regulatory amendments to enable the Species Conservation Act, 2025
- 6 November 2025: ERO-025-0908–Developing guidance on section 16 activities under the Species Conservation Act, 2025
- 10 November 2025: ERO-025-1077–Proposed Special Economic Zones Criteria
- 24 November 2025: ERO-019-9306–Expanding Protected Areas in Ontario: Additional Sites Proposed to be Regulated under the Provincial Parks and Conservation Act, 2006
- 17 December 2025: ERO-025-1257–Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities
- 19 January 2026: 2026 Budget Recommendations to Protect and Restore Nature
- 16 September 2026: Proposed Critical Habitat Protection Regulations made under section 59 of the Species at Risk Act

14. ORA Articles/Interviews:

- 28 January 2026: Ontario fast-tracks major transmission line to power Ring of Fire mining projects, Canada's National Observer
- 11 February 2026: City council says no to hydroelectric power, Sudbury.com
- 15 June 2026: Mining Loads Shape IESO's Northwest Ontario Forecast, RTO Insider

15. Petitions:

- Petition: Hydroelectric is not a "Pathway to Decarbonization"
- Petition: Dam Decommissioning

16. Coalitions:

- **Coalition for the West Credit River:** ORA is one of six partners who work to protect an at-risk Brook Trout population in the West Credit River. The Coalition successfully pushed for an effluent temperature limit and an effluent cooling system included in the Environmental Compliance Approval for the Town of Erin's new wastewater treatment plant. The cooling equipment has been slow to arrive, and the Town is now asking the MECP to let the plant start operating without it. The Coalition says NO!
- **Water Drop-Great Lakes Coalition:** Run by the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA). Environmental organizations meet monthly to share issues and events and solve problems together.
- **Rivers for Climate:** A global coalition of advocates for free-flowing rivers, dam removal and river restoration as critical, science-backed climate solutions.
- **Upper Beaver Gold Mine Coalition:** ORA and other organizations and individuals have come together to help a lake community living below the Project fight for effective mitigation of the negative environmental effects.
- **Ontario Salt Pollution Coalition:** ORA was an early supporter of this group of individuals, community groups and environmental non-profits working for provincial action on salt pollution to protect water. ORA continues to lend its support and logo.
- **American Eel Conservation Coalition:** ORA was a member until the coalition wound down in March 2026, after the federal Minister of Fisheries failed to act.

17. Subscribe to ORA's online news sources:

- ORA Website: https://ontarioriversalliance.ca/blog/
- Contact Email: info@ontarioriversalliance.ca
- E-newsletter: https://www.ontarioriversalliance.ca/take-action/ - join-our-newsletter
- LinkedIn: https://linkedin-ontarioriversalliance.ca
- Blue Sky: https://bsky.app/profile/ontariorivers.bsky.social
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/OntarioRivers
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/OntarioRivers
- Threads: https://www.threads.net/@OntarioRivers

West Credit River Brook Trout, Photo by Steve Noakes

In Conclusion:

We will continue to build on our successes and explore innovative ways to better serve our membership and Ontario Rivers.

Thank you to everyone who has supported ORA through membership dues, donations, and volunteer work! We couldn't do what we do without your continued support!

Yours in Conservation,

Linda Heron, Chair & CAO
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Annual Memberships and Donations help support our work. More information here.