



**Shoreline Survey of Boat Ramps and Denaturalized Shorelines
on the Lower Gatineau River
September 2018**

A river is only as healthy as its shorelines. Riverfront bylaws help protect the shoreline and maintain its capacity to provide habitat and prevent erosion. The [Friends of the Gatineau River \(FOG\)](#) a non-profit, volunteer-driven organization working with partners to conserve the Gatineau River by monitoring, educating, advocating and celebrating the Gatineau River. In addition to conducting water testing, we have gathered shoreline information to assist municipalities and others to protect the Gatineau River through enforcement of riverfront bylaws.

On Saturday September 8, 2018, volunteers from the, conducted a shoreline survey of both shores of the Gatineau River from the Wakefield Covered Bridge downstream to the Chelsea Dam. The volunteers surveyed the river by motorboat, took pictures of properties of interest, and recorded descriptive notes with GPS coordinates of these properties. In respect of private property, volunteers did not step onshore to take measurements.

Purpose and Caveat: The intention of the survey was to take a ‘quick look’ at the number of residences that are *perhaps in contravention* of the shoreline regulations mentioned above. Our aim was to provide municipal and MRC environment and by-law inspectors with information to support their own detailed inspections of the river (i.e., not only the properties identified through this survey).

The goal of the survey was to identify shoreline properties that demonstrated one or both of the following characteristics:

- a) **Boat ramp** for personal access of water craft (not permitted under Quebec’s Environment Quality Act – [R.S.Q., c. Q-2, s. 2.1, r. 35](#))
- b) **Denaturalized landscapes along the water’s edge** (MRC des Collines de l’Outaouais Interim Control [By-law No. 137-09](#) requires a five-metre buffer zone of natural/renaturalized landscape).

We detected 40 places where action may be needed to protect the shoreline.

The identification of boat ramps was straightforward, i.e. a site was recorded as having a boat ramp if a ramp was present on the shore by which boats can be moved to and from the water. The identification of properties with shorelines demonstrating less than five metres of buffer zone required a subjective analysis from the boat. Some properties that appeared to have *less than five metre buffer zone* may actually have an acceptable buffer zone. Similarly, there may be properties absent from this document that have a less than five-metre buffer zone and should have been included. Recognizing this situation, only those properties with clearly denaturalized shorelines (e.g., a mowed lawn up to the shoreline) have been recorded in the map, photo and notes section of this document.

Methods:

- On September 8, 2018, FOG volunteers travelled by boat, 20-30 m offshore, and recorded properties with boat ramps or shorelines with buffer/renaturalization zones that **seemed** less than five metres.

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- A photograph, notes and GPS coordinates were recorded for each property that *seemed* to contravene one of the two shoreline regulations.
- In instances where two or more neighbouring properties each had boat ramp or shoreline with less than five metres of buffer/renaturalized zone, only one GPS coordinate and photo were taken for all properties.

Results:

We recorded 40 instances of potential infractions of the by-laws that protect shorelines and limit development of personal access ramps for boats (see map below).

Number of residences with a boat ramp	Number of residences with a buffer zone less than 5 m	Number of residences with a boat ramp <i>and</i> a buffer zone less than 5 m
10	28	2

We encourage the municipalities to demonstrate their concern for river health by enforcing the bylaws before the next shoreline survey and help develop a positive trend next time we undertake the survey.

