

I N T U N E

Community Involvement

The ZIP committees are busy with many projects these days

The Rive Nord de l'Estuaire ZIP Committee is planning a workshop for stakeholders interested in protecting, enhancing and managing shoreline habitats in the area from Tadoussac to Baie-Trinité.

The Alma-Jonquière ZIP Committee is undertaking extensive restoration work on the tributaries of the Saguenay River.

The Îles-de-la-Madeleine ZIP Committee encourages users of inland water bodies to take joint action to preserve these habitats by providing support for various conservation projects.

The Rive Nord de l'Estuaire ZIP Committee

Upcoming workshop on the maritime estuary

For the last few months, the Rive Nord de l'Estuaire ZIP Committee (ZIP is short for zone d'intervention prioritaire, or area of prime concern) has been very excited about a new project, a workshop to be held on protecting, enhancing and managing shoreline habitats of ecological interest. The event will take place on October 9-11, 2002 at the Hotel Tadoussac. The purpose is to bring together stakeholders concerned with these issues, at a regional and provincial scale, and to encourage them to act to preserve the natural habitats along the north shore of the St. Lawrence maritime estuary. The renowned astrophysicist Hubert Reeves will be honorary president of the workshop.

"Given our activities in recent years, this workshop on protecting, enhancing and managing shoreline habitats of ecological interest is a logical next step," explains Nicolas Roy, coordinator of the Rive Nord de l'Estuaire ZIP Committee. In 2000, the committee published a guide to protecting and enhancing shoreline habitats on the north shore of the

maritime estuary, *Guide d'intervention en matière de protection et de mise en valeur des habitats littoraux d'intérêt de la rive nord de l'estuaire maritime*. It described 13 shoreline habitats of particular ecological interest in the ZIP committee's territory, which extends from Tadoussac to Baie-Trinité. Regional stakeholders, invited to comment on the document during consultations, made three recommendations: that a network of stakeholders interested in protecting and enhancing shoreline habitats be created, that training be provided on shoreline habitat protection, enhancement and management and that a workshop be held on the same subject.

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Portneuf sandbank

Photo by : Rive Nord de l'Estuaire ZIP Committee

The ZIP committee's decision to press on with the workshop was inspired in part by the success of the training session on shoreline habitat protection, enhancement and management. In fact, participation from the region exceeded the committee's expectations, with roughly 50 people signed up for the session, which was held in the fall of 2001. Additional sessions will be held in the next few months.

Based on the growing interest shown by regional stakeholders in shoreline habitats on the north shore of the estuary, the ZIP committee began preparations for the workshop. Funding was received from the St. Lawrence Vision 2000 Community Interactions Program, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park and several local organizations, including the Centre local de développement de la Haute-Côte-Nord and the Comité côtier Les Escoumins à la rivière Betsiamites. Support was also received from private citizens.

Baie-Laval

Photo by : Rive Nord de l'Estuaire ZIP Committee



A workshop stressing action

The first task of the workshop on shoreline habitat protection, enhancement and management will be to inform participants of the importance of these habitats. Indeed, although the ecological importance and potential of habitats on the north shore of the estuary are now well documented, regional stakeholders are not fully aware of this fact. Certain activities threaten the integrity of wildlife habitats critical for many species of migratory and colonial birds, marine mammals, fish, crustaceans and molluscs. Aside from their ecological value, such habitats are also of great economic importance to the region, both for harvesting (seals, waterfowl, clams, mussels, herring, smelt, sea trout and capelin) and ecotourism.

Participants will then be encouraged to concretely support community projects to protect shoreline habitats, and, hopefully, to participate in new projects to help enhance and protect the region's natural heritage that integrate both concerns. Workshop organizers have enlisted participants to speak about projects that they have managed that have already successfully integrated these two dimensions, such as the Pointe-aux-Outardes Nature Park, the project to develop the Portneuf sandbank, and the integrated management project for the Laval Bay sector, east of Forestville. These examples of citizens taking responsibility for the preservation of shoreline habitats, which also illustrate the benefits of partnership, may encourage other

local stakeholders to initiate their own joint projects. Both ongoing and upcoming projects will benefit from province-wide knowledge and expertise sharing networks.

Lastly, the workshop will allow the ZIP committee to create a regional action plan for the region. The workshop is particularly timely in this respect, since sizeable investments have recently been announced for the Route des Baleines (Whale Trail), a project that will promote the development of a number of natural sites along Highway 138. "We hope that the results of the reflection exercise will benefit future projects for the Route des baleines and promote the sustainable development of coastal resources," Roy explains.

An eagerly awaited speaker

Representatives of the two aboriginal communities, 16 municipalities and the 30 or so community organizations in the region will attend the workshop, as will representatives of federal and provincial departments, educational institutions and the business community.

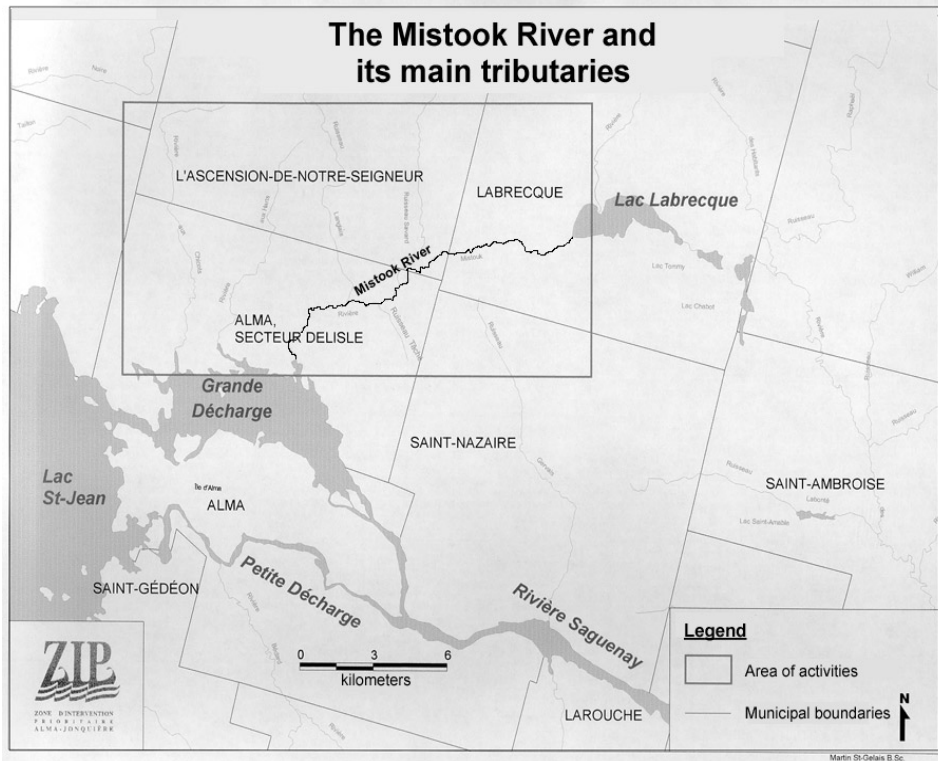
Participants will be asked to take part in a preliminary reflection exercise, using a report that the ZIP committee should have ready by the end of summer. This report describes the results of an inventory and characterization study of public sites, access and views of the coast. This will give each municipality a reliable tool describing the development potential of the shoreline as well as an idea of its ecological fragility.

The ZIP committee has put out a call for speakers who would like to contribute to the event's success. One illustrious guest—Hubert Reeves—has already agreed to address workshop participants. His presence will no doubt inspire participants and encourage them to recognize the importance of the rich, fragile and promising habitats in their region.

For more information:

Nicolas Roy, coordinator
Hans Frédéric Ellefsen, project officer
Rive Nord de l'Estuaire ZIP Committee
Telephone: (418) 296-0404
Fax: (418) 296-8787
Email: zipnord@globetrotter.net ■

The Alma-Jonquière ZIP Committee



New restoration work on Saguenay tributaries

In 2001, the Alma-Jonquière ZIP Committee (ZIP stands for zone d'intervention prioritaire, or area of prime concern) completed a project to restore the Bédard River. The project, which began in 1997, involved five phases, in which the river was tackled section by section. On the strength of the expertise acquired during the project, which has been recognized on a regional scale, and the success of the undertaking, the ZIP committee decided to perform additional river restoration work. Although the focus has shifted to other rivers, the

objectives have remained the same: to restore the ecological qualities of the rivers in the Saguenay watershed, encourage a feeling of responsibility towards these ecosystems and promote volunteerism.

The Alma-Jonquière ZIP Committee is responsible for the area at the confluence of Lac St. Jean and the Saguenay River. The largest tributary of the Saguenay, La Grande Décharge River, is fed in turn by three rivers that are priorities under the ZIP committee's ERAP (Environmental Remedial Action Plan): Mistook, Aux Harts and Aux Chicots rivers.

The three rivers, which traverse mainly agricultural land, drain a watershed of 128 km². Water quality in the rivers

is negatively affected by agricultural pollution and municipal wastewater. In addition, since the soil is mainly clay, bank erosion is very common. "These three rivers are already used for fishing brook trout," Ms. Maude Lecourt, coordinator of the Alma-Jonquière ZIP Committee, explains. "By improving the quality and number of habitats used by the species, the potential catch could be increased, very close to a number of towns and villages. We hope to get young people in our region hooked on sport fishing."

Planning and project work

In 1999, the Alma-Jonquière ZIP Committee undertook a large-scale characterization study of the Mistook, Aux Harts and Aux Chicots rivers to provide a biological and physico-chemical portrait of the rivers. In addition, the study aimed to identify factors (including human activities) responsible for the decreased fisheries productivity and diminished biodiversity found. Based on the study results, a management plan was drawn up, describing economically and environmentally feasible solutions for restoring aquatic habitats and re-establishing the former uses of the rivers.

The actual restoration work began in the summer of 2000, when the ZIP committee undertook a cleanup of the Mistook and Aux Chicots rivers. In addition, culverts were stabilized and riverbanks denuded of vegetation were replanted on the rivers.

The second phase, in 2001, involved the development of a 7.6-km stretch of the Mistook River. In agricultural areas, several types of projects were undertaken, including the installation of 3 km of stock fence, the planting of 1,140 trees and 2,970 shrubs, the stabilization of six culverts using riprap



Building a riffle-pool complex with gravel
Photo by: Ulysse Rodrigue

(rockfill), the construction of six riffle-pool sequences and the removal of four tonnes of garbage and debris from the river. In forested areas, the team worked for several weeks to create brook trout habitat. Activities were varied, including a cleanup of logjams over several kilometres, the creation and restoration of spawning beds, the stabilization of eroding meanders and the construction of nine riffle-pool sequences and ten gravel spawning beds.

The development and enhancement work on the Mistook, Aux Harts and Aux Chicots river watersheds will not stop here, however. The ZIP committee has planned a third phase for 2002, to involve a sizeable stretch of the Mistook River. In this phase, wildlife habitats and potential will be improved and eroding banks stabilized using vegetation engineering techniques.

The Mistook River watershed committee, which met in November 2001 to take stock of activities, has also planned a public awareness campaign for waterfront property owners on the Bleus lakes, at the headwaters of the Mistook River. Residents, noting a decrease in water quality on their lakes, asked the ZIP committee for assistance. The public awareness campaign will focus on the importance of riparian vegetation and the rational use of pesticides and fertilizers on the shoreline of the lakes.

A positive assessment

Lastly, at the end of 2001, the Alma-Jonquière ZIP Committee held public consultations to update the ERAP, inform regional stakeholders of the progress of key projects and determine new priorities. The participants' assessment of the success of activities planned three years ago was very positive.

The direction of upcoming ZIP committee activities was also discussed. It was agreed that public awareness and educational activities should focus on the school population in order to ensure the emergence of a new generation concerned about environmental protection. Participants also encouraged the ZIP committee to offer its expertise to organizations outside the region to promote the use of the watershed approach in river restoration.

For more information:

Maude Lecourt, Coordinator
 Alma-Jonquière ZIP Committee
 Telephone: (418) 668-8181
 Fax: (418) 668-3466
 Email: zipalma@qc.aira.com ■

The Îles-de-la-Madeleine ZIP Committee



Lagune du Havre aux Maisons

Photo by: Îles-de-la-Madeleine ZIP Committee

Inland water body management committees get to work on the Magdalen Islands

ZIP committees (ZIP stands for zone d'intervention prioritaire, or area of prime concern) are convinced of the benefits of joint action and favour this approach when working in their own communities. A project undertaken in 2000 by the Îles-de-la-Madeleine ZIP Committee is no exception: its objectives are to encourage Magdalen Islanders to actively participate in protecting the environment and to improve cooperation between users of inland water bodies. The management committees that have been set up since then have agreed on their missions and operating procedure and have also undertaken, with the help of the ZIP committee, some activities to solve problems in their own areas.

The project, entitled *Comprendre le passé pour mieux gérer l'avenir* (Understand the Past to Better Manage the Future), is described in the April-May 2001 issue of *Le Fleuve*. The goal of the project, which is based on the integrated coastal zone management approach developed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, is to promote the conservation of inland water bodies on the Magdalen Islands. This will be done by encouraging knowledge acquisition on these ecosystems and joint action by ecosystem users to conserve resources and ensure economic development. Since ten months have passed since the

article, it is an opportune time to take stock of what the committees have achieved since then.

The inland water bodies referred to here are formed between narrow sand dunes linking the islands. The five largest water bodies are the Bassin aux Huîtres, Baie du Bassin, Baie du Havre aux Basques, Lagune de la Grande Entrée and Lagune du Havre aux Maisons.

Committees representing local interests

At the initiative of the Îles-de-la-Madeleine ZIP Committee, five inland water body management committees were formed. Users of these environments were invited to join the committees after public meetings in November 2000, at which participants were asked to consult and validate thematic maps designed by the ZIP committee showing the resources and uses of the water bodies.

The management committees, with a dozen members each, are mandated to ensure the harmonization of activities in the lagoons and bays, with sustainable development as a goal. Their membership mirrors the wide variety of uses of the water bodies themselves; members consist of not only municipal officials and citizens, but also representatives of various sectors such as fishing, aquaculture, hunting, shellfish harvesting and pleasure boating. Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Quebec Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have assigned resource persons to provide technical and scientific support for the committees' work, which is done on a volunteer basis.

Concrete action—a breath of fresh air

The management committees received financial support from the Fisheries and Oceans Canada again in 2001-2002. With this support and assistance from the Îles-de-la-Madeleine ZIP Committee, the committees undertook various activities related to the specific features of their local areas.

For example, the priorities set by the Baie du Bassin management committee included increased shoreline protection. Volunteers enlisted help from the ZIP committee in preparing an information sheet dealing with such things as the impact of fill operations and removal of vegetation, which will be used to promote public awareness. Recently approved by the committee, the sheet will be distributed by the committee to residents of the bay's shorelines.

Members of the Lagune du Havre aux Maisons management committee asked for help from the ZIP committee in describing the impact of mariculture on other natural resources in the lagoon. The information obtained seems to be promoting a productive exchange of ideas between the different users of the area.

The Bassin aux Huîtres management committee is concerned with sedimentation in the basin. With help from the ZIP committee, committee volunteers carried out a cartographic inventory of access routes to the water body.

The Baie du Havre aux Basques management committee undertook the cleanup of the bay in the summer of 2001, in partnership with the municipality. Workers laid off after a local factory closing were hired for the project. Given the importance of

waterfowl hunting around the bay, the ZIP committee drafted an information sheet to deal with concerns about this harvesting activity and environmental protection. The management committee will use the sheet in its public awareness activities.

There is no doubt that volunteers on the management committee greatly appreciate the help of the ZIP committee. "Our role involves supporting knowledge acquisition and promoting dialogue between committees and stakeholders likely to support committee projects," Isabelle Hubert, ZIP committee co-ordinator, explains. "Seeing local communities' sense of responsibility towards inland water bodies on the Magdalen Islands grow gives us a great deal of satisfaction," she concludes.

For more information:

Isabelle Hubert, Coordinator
Îles-de-la-Madeleine ZIP Committee
Telephone: (418) 986-6633
Email: zipidlm@duclos.net ■

News *in* BRIEF

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

On May 25, the Les Deux Rives ZIP Committee will hold a second round of public consultations. In the morning, local citizens will validate projects described in the committee's environmental remedial action plan (ERAP). In the afternoon, the ZIP committee will hold its 2001-2002 annual general meeting. The territory of the Les Deux Rives ZIP Committee covers the Pointe-du-lac—Deschambault sector, which extends from the outlet of Lake St. Pierre to the Richelieu Rapids; on the west, the area is bordered by the municipalities of Pointe-du-Lac and Nicolet and on the east, by Deschambault and Lotbinière. Everyone is welcome to attend!

For information:

Jean-François Mathieu
543, boul. Laviolette
Trois-Rivières, Québec – G9A 1V4
Telephone: (819) 375-8699
Fax: (819) 375-8855
Email: ziplesdeuxrives@tr.cgocable.ca

INFORMATION EVENING ON THE STRIPED BASS

The Quebec Wildlife Federation, in cooperation with the Les Deux Rives and Lake St. Pierre ZIP committees, will hold an information evening on the reintroduction of the striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) in the St. Lawrence. The meeting will take place at the Corporation de développement communautaire de Nicolet, 690 Monseigneur Panet, Wednesday, May 1, 2002 at 7:00 pm.

For information:

Jean-François Mathieu, co-ordinator, Les Deux Rives ZIP Committee
543, boul. Laviolette
Trois-Rivières, Québec – G9A 1V4
Telephone: (819) 375-8699
Fax: (819) 375-8855
Email: ziplesdeuxrives@tr.cgocable.ca

Mme Jacinthe Bourgeois, co-ordinator, Lake St. Pierre ZIP Committee
100, avenue St-Jacques
Louiseville, Québec – J5V 1C2
Telephone: (819) 228-1384
Fax: (819) 228-1385
Email: zipfsp@aei.ca ■

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Co-ordination:

Raymonde Goupil, Clément Dugas and
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Gaétane Tardif, Environmental
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