



File #: AR-21-040, **Version:** 1

TAMRMS#: B06

Letter of Support Request - North Saskatchewan River Heritage Designation

Presented by: Christian Benson, Manager, Environment Branch

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Community Living Standing Committee recommend that Council provide a letter of support to Smokey Lake County in their application for the designation of the North Saskatchewan River as a heritage river under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System project.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

Administration is seeking a Council resolution to formally support Smokey Lake County in their application to designate the North Saskatchewan River as a heritage river under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System project.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Strategic Priority #6: Environmental Stewardship: Explore innovative environmental and conservation opportunities.

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

N/A

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

NA

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) project is a partnership between the Provincial and Federal Governments. There are 40 heritage rivers across Canada that are recognized nationally as heritage rivers due to their outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational heritage. Heritage Rivers offer Canadians and visitors a chance to experience great waterways, learn about their history, and share in their stewardship. Designation under the CHRS does not impose new restrictions on a municipality, nor does it affect a municipality's right to exercise its traditional responsibilities. Similarly, the rights of property owners and other stakeholders do not change, nor are municipalities that lie along a River corridor required to implement additional development considerations.

From the CHRS Charter, 2013: *“Participation in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System is voluntary. ... Participants retain their jurisdictional powers over rivers in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, including ownership of land.”*

Being a part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System means an opportunity to:

- foster cooperative river management that unites communities;
- celebrate and support the cultural connections of Indigenous Peoples with rivers;
- tell the stories of our nation, building sense of identity and pride;
- stimulate adventure travel and sustainable tourism;
- help Canadians connect to history, nature and cultural traditions;
- promote stewardship and citizen engagement;
- engage new Canadians and youth in river education, conservation, and recreation;
- encourage the protection of water resources to improve public health, well-being, and quality of life.

To-date, Smoky Lake County has obtained more than 47 letters of support from communities and community groups along the North Saskatchewan, and Alberta Minister of Environment Jason Nixon has committed to supporting the Nomination.

The City of St. Albert is situated within the North Saskatchewan Watershed, and is an active contributor to the Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance. Administration is recommending that City Council would provide a letter of support to Smoky Lake County for this project.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

Administration contacted the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) to ensure this letter of support is in alignment with strategic vision and received no objection to providing a letter of support.

The CHRS designation was also discussed at the January 28, 2021 Environmental Advisory Committee meeting and received general acceptance from the committee.

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Financial:

None at this time

Legal / Risk:

None at this time

Program or Service:

None at this time

Organizational:

None at this time

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

None at this time.

Report Date: February 8, 2021
Author: Christian Benson
Committee/Department: Utilities and Environment
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer: Kerry Hilts
Chief Administrative Officer: Kevin Scoble

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