



# Annual Report 2020



# Your Rideau Valley Conservation Authority

RVCA is one of Ontario's 36 conservation authorities and a member of Conservation Ontario. We work closely with municipal, provincial and federal government partners, landowners and community groups to maintain and improve natural resources in the Rideau watershed. The RVCA looks to build resilient communities by promoting an integrated watershed approach — one that balances human, environmental and economic needs. Our success is based on partnerships that accomplish local initiatives at the watershed scale.

**Our Vision:** A thriving watershed with clean abundant water, natural shorelines, rich forests and wetlands, diverse habitat and sustainable land use that is valued and protected by all.

**Our Mission:** To understand, manage, protect, restore and enhance the Rideau watershed through science, stewardship, education, policy and leadership.

## 2020 RVCA Board of Directors

Pieter Leenhouts, Chair	Ottawa
Judy Brown, Vice Chair	Perth
Andy Jozefowicz	Athens
Dale McLenaghan	Augusta
Brian Dowdall	Beckwith
Victor Heese	Central Frontenac
Jamie Crawford	Ottawa
George Darouze	Ottawa
Julie Graveline	Ottawa
Scott Moffatt	Ottawa
Anne Robinson	Ottawa
Guy Desjardins	Clarence-Rockland
George Sachs	Drummond/North Elmsley
Rob Rothgeb	Elizabethtown-Kitley
Don Halpenny	Merrickville-Wolford
Vince Carroll	Montague
Gerry Boyce	North Dundas
Barclay Cormack	North Grenville
Carolyn Bresee	Rideau Lakes
Shawn Pankow	Smiths Falls
Pat Barr	South Frontenac
Gene Richardson	Tay Valley
Melissa Sullivan	Westport



# Message from the Chair & General Manager

The year 2020 was like no other. It required resilience as families, businesses, and government responded to the global pandemic. We are pleased with how quickly and effectively RVCA staff were able to pivot, continuing to serve the watershed while keeping staff, clients, and visitors safe.

Staff faced these new challenges head on, without a reduction in service. In fact, we were busier than ever! Development review services processed a record number of development files in 2020, while continuing to meet deadlines and provide efficient, streamlined approvals.

Our stewardship programs were delivered as planned under modified protocols, planting 261,000 trees, continuing to naturalize shorelines, providing clean water grants and reinspecting waterfront septic systems.

More than 300,000 residents turned to local conservation areas in 2020 to access the many mental and physical benefits of being outdoors, an increase of 50%.

Our education programs were quickly reinvented. Online resources for teachers and parents were developed and promoted during the school closure and our outdoor educators provided Forest School at both Baxter and Foley Mountain conservation areas in the fall in lieu of school field trips.

Our science and engineering work continued with modifications in place, monitoring flood and drought conditions, completing new or updated floodplain mapping, and monitoring water quality and aquatic health across the watershed.

But the pandemic wasn't the only challenge we faced last year. Significant changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* were introduced in late 2020, and the RVCA worked hard to raise awareness about how these changes could impact those we serve. The strong show of support for conservation authorities resulted in improved amendments and encouraged the province to create a working group to work more collaboratively with conservation authorities and municipalities moving forward. This was a very positive outcome, and we are grateful for your support.

In a year like 2020, it is especially important to recognize the many partners that help us achieve our goals. For the RVCA, that includes our municipalities as well as countless individuals, organizations and businesses who live and work across the watershed. We also benefit greatly from the work of the Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation, which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020!

As we head into 2021, the RVCA will continue to adapt to the changing realities of the pandemic and will work closely with member municipalities to implement legislative changes in a way that continues to provide the programs and services that municipalities and residents want from their local conservation authority.

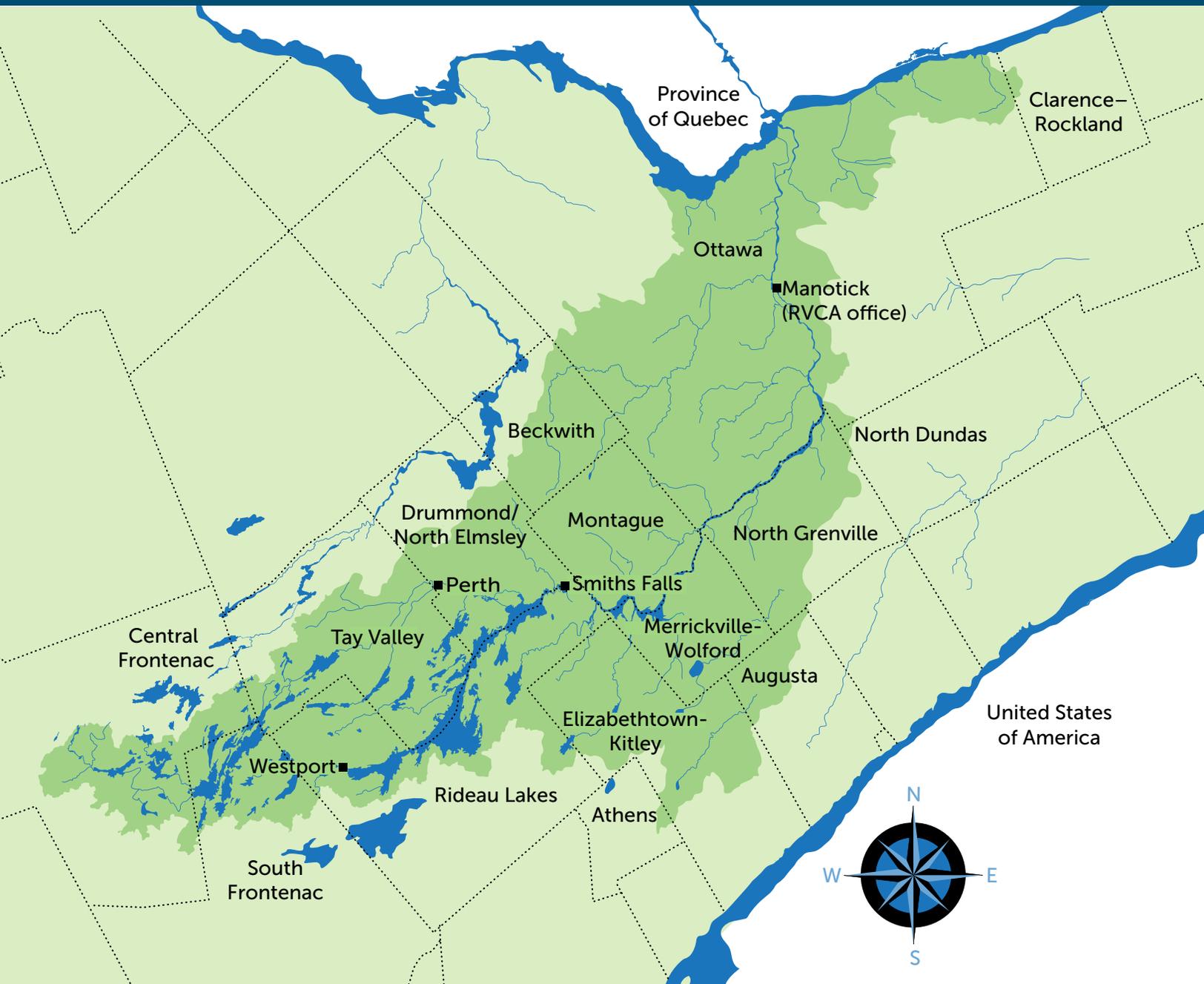
Yours in conservation,

Pieter Leenhouts,  
Chair

Sommer Casgrain-Robertson,  
General Manager/Secretary-  
Treasurer



# The Rideau Valley Watershed



4 RVCA Baseline sampling at Fish Creek near Parham



Storybook Trail Adventure at Foley Mountain Conservation Area

# Corporate Services

Corporate Services supports the whole authority, enabling it to perform its functions and deliver programs in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The department is responsible for strategic planning, budgeting, financial reporting, business improvement, human resources, communications, GIS, member services, foundation support and administration.

## Corporate Services

- **\$10.74** million budget
- **70** staff plus **8** summer students
- **23** board members representing **18** member municipalities

- Municipal Engagement Session hosted in January for Council members and municipal staff
- Managed RVCA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (policies, procedures, budget impacts, remote working, virtual Board meetings)
- Responded to provincial changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* (municipal and public awareness, presentations, press releases, media interviews, written comments to the province)
- General Manager appointed to Minister Yurek's Conservation Authorities Working Group



Virtual staff meeting



# Conservation Land Management Services

The RVCA manages more than 3,000 hectares of conservation land for the strategic protection of vulnerable habitats and valuable natural resources. This land includes 11 developed conservation areas that are available for public use and enjoyment – two of which offer outdoor education programs. Conservation areas provide affordable recreation, education and tourism opportunities to watershed communities.

## Land Management

- Own **2,210** hectares of conservation land across the watershed; **0.6** hectares donated in 2020
- Manage **3,000+** hectares of conservation land (inspected and assessed annually)
- **52** nest boxes monitored at nine conservation areas
- **23** Species at Risk monitoring and/or habitat feature projects completed at six conservation areas (in support of bobolink, butternut and barn swallow)
- **3** memorial benches installed at Baxter and W.A. Taylor Conservation Areas

## Conservation Areas

- **11** developed conservation areas
- **300,000** visitors in 2020 (up from 200,000 annually)
- **42** kilometres of trails maintained for public use

- **1,200** people enjoyed rental facilities at Foley Mountain and Baxter Conservation Areas in 2020 (interpretive centres, group camping areas and the Baxter river cabin)
- Completed public consultations for Foley Mountain Conservation Area's Management Plan
- Continued successful partnership with Cabinscape to host a tiny cabin at Mica Mines Conservation Area to give visitors a special opportunity to experience nature

## Outdoor Education

- **1,844** students participated in curriculum-based outdoor education programs at Baxter and Foley Mountain Conservation Areas in 2020 (down from 11,000 annually due to the pandemic)
- **78** students participated in the new fall Forest School Program at Baxter Conservation Area
- Installed a self-directed "Storybook Trail Adventure" featuring "The Gruffalo" by Julia Donaldson at Foley Mountain
- Developed the online "#FreshAirFun" activity series to encourage families to embrace the outdoors



# RVCA's Developed Conservation Areas



Baxter Marsh



# Planning & Regulatory Services

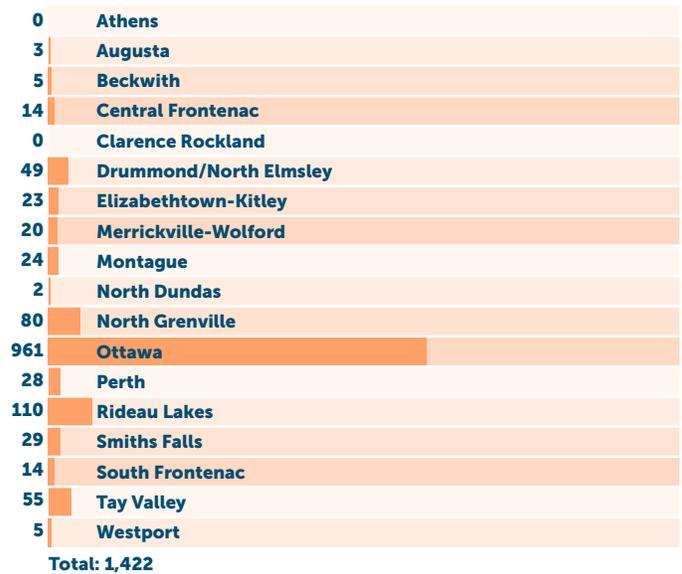
The RVCA brings watershed science, provincial policies and individual municipal needs together to meaningfully assist municipal decision-makers in building and sustaining local communities. The RVCA is also the approval authority for development on hazard lands affected by flooding, steep slopes or unstable soil and in environmentally-sensitive areas like wetlands, shorelines and watercourses. Staff also approve the construction, enlargement or alteration of septic systems in the City of Ottawa and Tay Valley Township and provide septic re-inspection services in several other municipalities.

## Planning Advisory Reviews

- **438** severances
- **355** minor variances
- **245** pre-consultation meetings
- **152** site plan control
- **156** zoning by-law amendments
- **25** Official Plan amendments
- **18** subdivision reviews
- **10** condominium applications
- **7** Part Lot Control
- **5** *Environmental Assessment Act* reviews
- **5** lifting of Holding By-law

- **5** lifting of 30 cm reserve
- **1** Aggregate Resource Reviews
- Participated in a Technical Advisory Committee for wetland compensation projects in Stillwater Creek catchment for transportation projects within the City of Ottawa

## 2020 Planning Activities by Municipality



# Planning & Regulatory Services

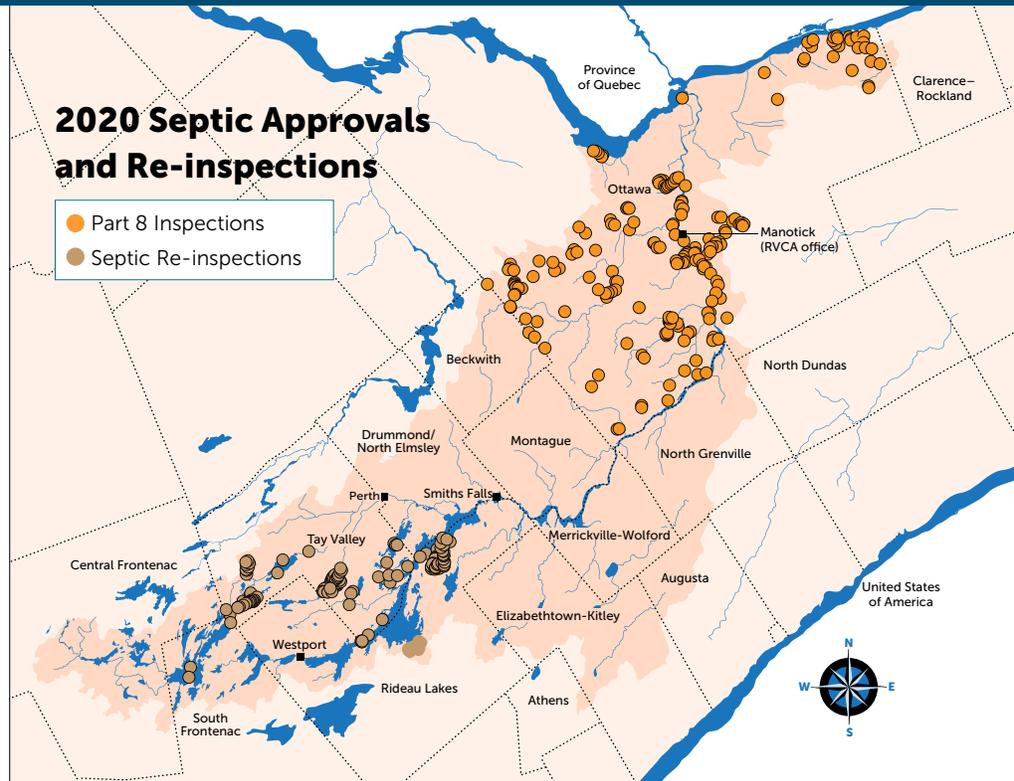
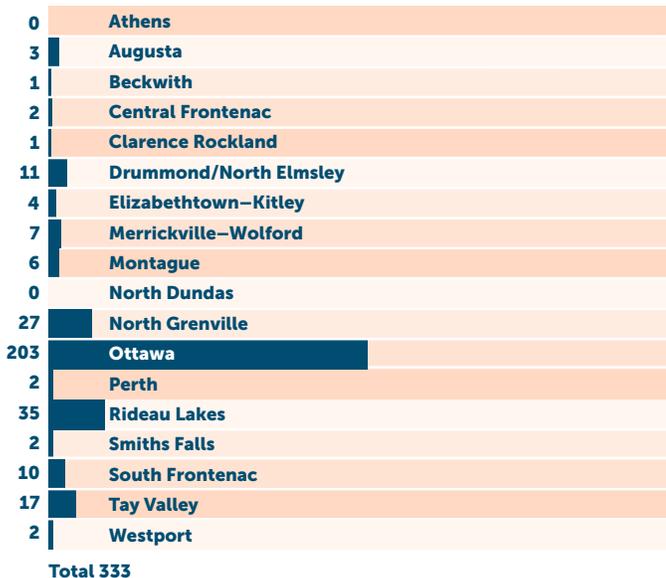
## Septic System Approvals and Re-inspections

- **216** file search requests (Ottawa)
- **724** applications for new or replacement septic systems (**644** in Ottawa and **80** in Tay Valley)
- **431** septic re-inspections completed (**299** in Rideau Lakes, **124** in Tay Valley and **8** in North Frontenac)
- **77** applications for septic renovations or alterations (**68** in Ottawa and **9** in Tay Valley)
- **27** complaints (Ottawa)
- Distributed educational material to landowners about the care and maintenance of their septic systems
- Prepared to deliver *Ontario Building Code Part 8 Installers Course* online in 2021

## Section 28 Conservation Authorities Act Approvals

- **1,099** property inquiries
- **333** applications
- **125** clearance letters
- **118** complaints/occurrences
- **90%** of permits issued
- **10%** of applications on hold or withdrawn
- **15** violations

## 2020 Section 28 Applications by Municipality



## Source Water Protection Approvals

- Newly trained and appointed Risk Management Inspector/Official
- Renegotiated Part IV Risk Management Agreements with Partner Municipalities
- Renewed contract with the City of Ottawa to assist with Risk Management work



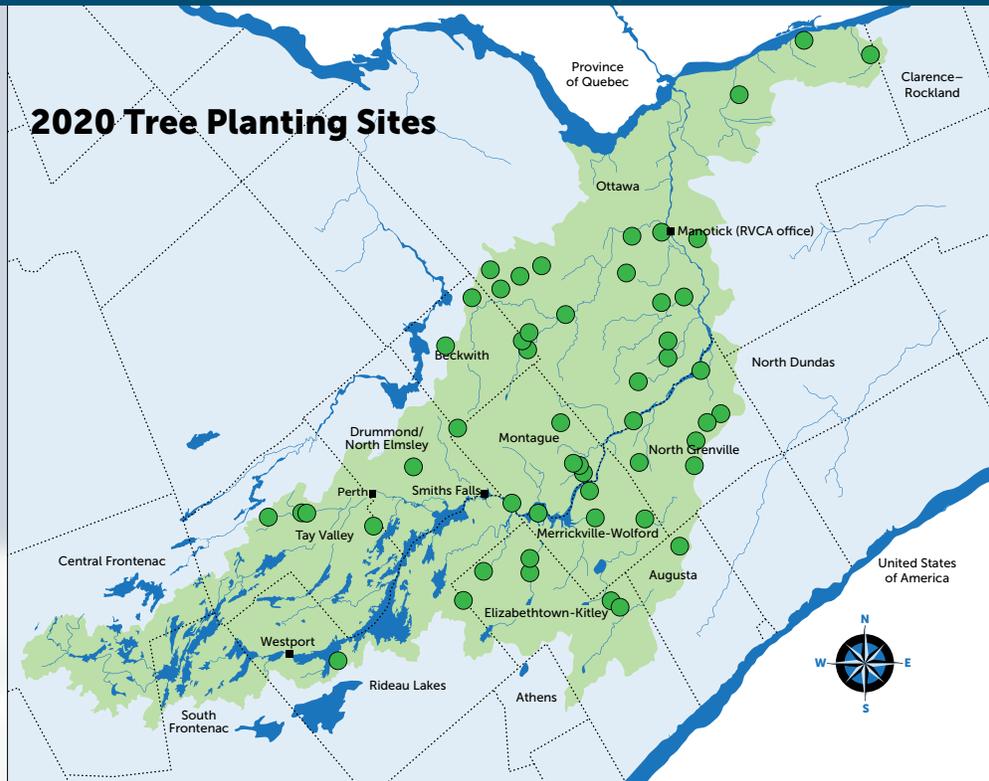
New septic system installation

# Stewardship Services

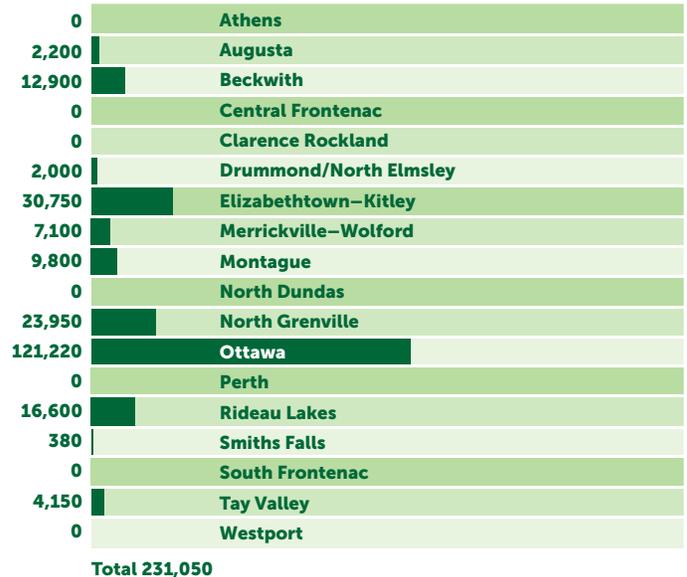
The RVCA works with landowners, farmers, lake associations, NGOs, businesses, government agencies and the public to undertake on-the-ground projects that directly improve the health of the watershed. Programs such as reforestation, landowner incentive programs, shoreline restoration, wetland enhancement and Species At Risk habitat creation help protect and enhance the watershed's natural resources.

## Tree Planting

- **6.6** million trees planted since 1984
- **231,050** trees planted in the Rideau Valley watershed 2020
- **33,200** trees planted in Mississippi Valley watershed in support of Ottawa's Green Acres Tree Planting Program
- **\$369,097** fundraised to offset landowner costs
- More than **1,000** trees underplanted in Baxter Conservation Area to offset the loss of ash trees



## 2020 Tree Planting by Municipality

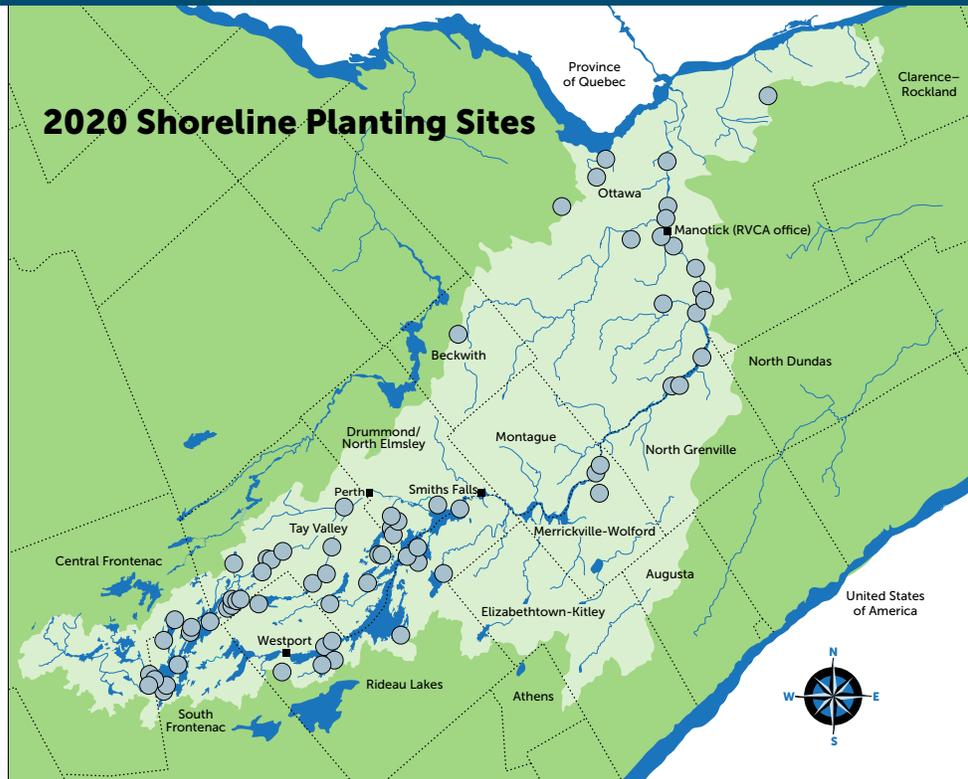




# Stewardship Services

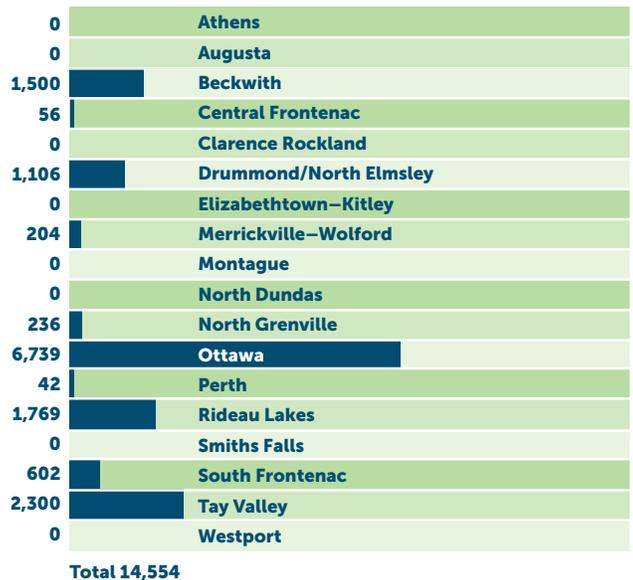
## Shoreline Naturalization

- **100,000<sup>th</sup>** shoreline plant installed at Chapman Mills Conservation Area
- **14,554** trees and shrubs planted on **92** properties
- **3.1** km of shoreline naturalized
- **2,750** potted trees planted in partnership with the City of Ottawa and Hydro Ottawa
- **1,500** trees distributed to landowners through partnership with Lanark County
- **17** projects completed on Farren Lake thanks to outreach partnership with the Farren Lake Association
- **3** lake associations worked with us to distribute **948** trees, shrubs and wildflowers to lake residents through an over-the-counter plant sale (Upper Rideau Lake Association, Oty Lake Association and Otter Lake Association)
- Free shoreline planting projects provided to Bobs and Crow Lake residents thanks to top-up partnerships with Bobs and Crow Lake Association Foundation



Naturalizing Rideau River shoreline

## 2020 Shoreline Plantings by Municipality

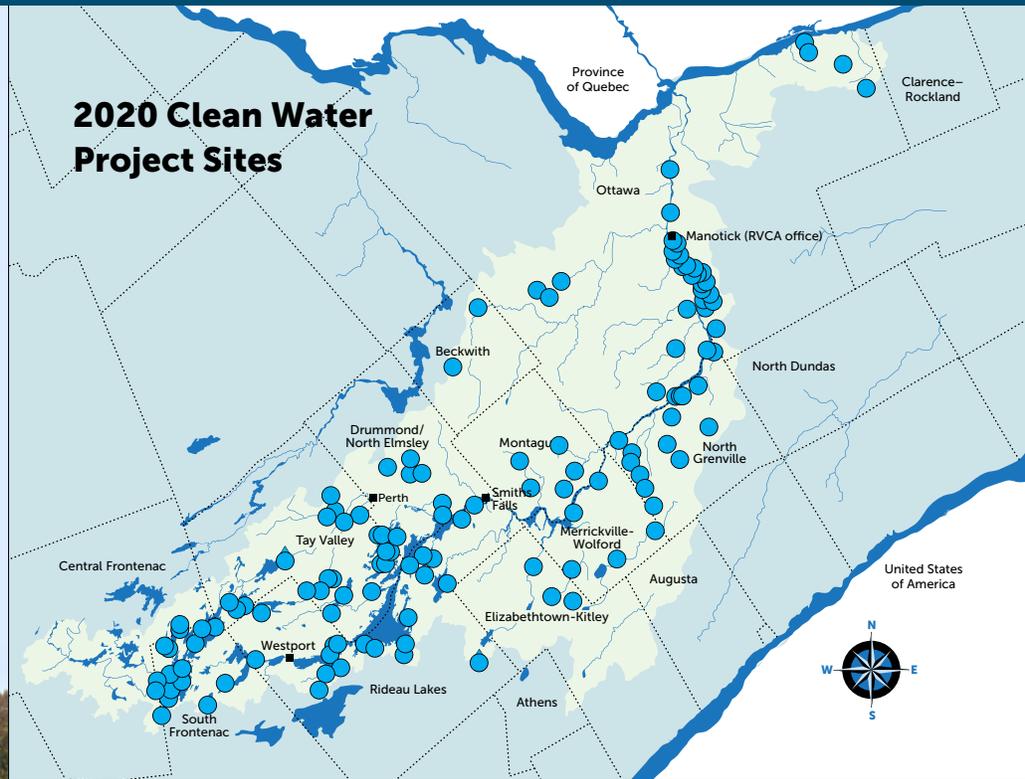




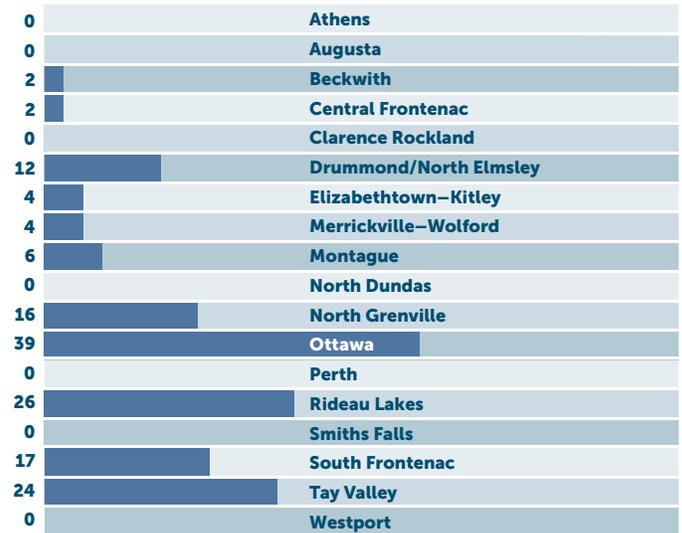
# Stewardship Services

## Clean Water Projects

- **113** projects were approved through the Rideau Valley Rural Clean Water Program, allocating **\$200,665** in grants; these grants will support a total project value of **\$669,657**
- **39** projects were approved through the Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program, allocating **\$195,823** in grants; these grants will support a total project value of **\$642,370**
- RVCA also delivered the Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program in the Mississippi watershed in partnership with Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority



## 2020 Clean Water Projects by Municipality



Total 152



# Stewardship Services

## Lake Planning

- Participated in the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Lake Links Workshop, which went online for 2020 and was attended by **150** local lake stewards and residents

## Butternut Stewardship

- **1,385** free butternut seedlings distributed in spring 2020 to help replace dead and dying butternut trees in Eastern Ontario
- **15,850** seeds collected from healthy butternut trees to grow seedlings for future planting

- Continued effort to locate and assess healthy trees and track survival and health of planted butternut

## Habitat Enhancement

- **1,000** pollinator-friendly perennials distributed through over-the-counter plant sale
- Fish Creek walleye spawning bed enhancement project proposal was drafted for implementation in 2021 with the Bobs and Crow Lake Association



Butternut site inspection



Swallow boxes at Brewer Park Pond



Benthic sampling in Grants Creek

The RVCA collects, monitors and analyses watershed information to understand our watershed and help us better manage and protect its resources and the people who live in it. Failure to adequately recognize and incorporate the value of natural areas into decisions about the use and management of land and water will reduce the net benefits that societies receive from watersheds.

### Source Water Protection

- Sixth year implementing the *Mississippi Rideau Source Protection Plan*
- Continued support provided to municipalities including policy interpretation and implementation tools

- Completed our third annual Source Protection Annual Report
- Continued work on an update to our Source Protection Plan and Assessment Reports

### Flood Forecasting and Warning

- **8** flood messages for Rideau River
- **3** flood messages for Ottawa River
- **5** low water messages
- **23** sites monitored for water levels
- **10** sites monitored for precipitation
- **6** sites monitored for snowpack

# Science & Engineering Services

## Stream Characterization Monitoring

- **44** sites sampled throughout the watershed in the spring and fall for the Ontario Benthic Biomonitoring Network (OBBN)
- Stream thermal data was inputted into RVCA's WISKI data management tool for easy sharing with internal and external partners
- Staff prepared OBBN and fish community data sets and complete data analysis in support of the Integrated Watershed Monitoring Program review

## Surface Water Quality Monitoring

- **117** sites sampled for RVCA Baseline Monitoring Program, City Baseline Monitoring Program and Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Program, which monitors the water chemistry of major rivers and tributaries
- **51** water quality parameters monitored annually
- **39** lakes sampled from June to November to monitor levels of nutrients, *E. coli* and other

chemical parameters through the Watershed Watch Program

- **22** participants facilitated lake sampling by offering lake access from their properties
- Volunteer participation in sampling was limited due to COVID-19
- Through partnership with Township of Rideau Lakes and Upper Rideau Lake Association (URLA) additional monitoring was carried out in Adrains Creek to examine poor water quality ratings. Two volunteers from URLA provided support including sample collection and observational data.

## Watershed Reporting

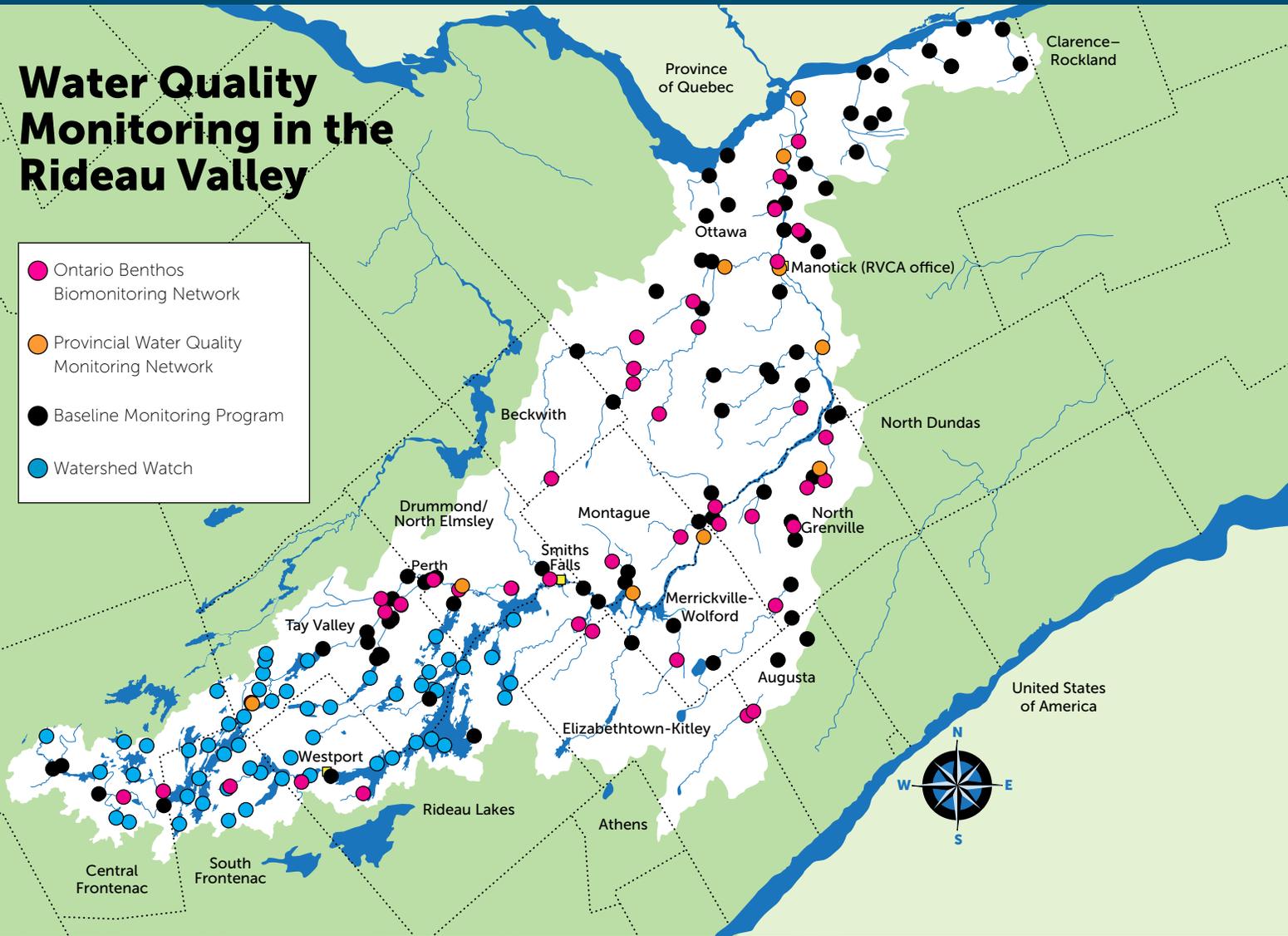
- Monitoring and reporting results for **6** subwatershed and **66** catchment reports are available online at [watersheds.rvca.ca](http://watersheds.rvca.ca)
- Ongoing review of monitoring and reporting programs to guide future activity





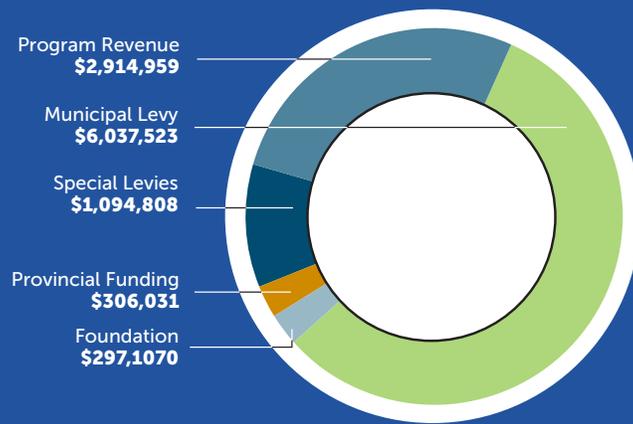
## Water Quality Monitoring in the Rideau Valley

- Ontario Benthos Biomonitoring Network
- Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network
- Baseline Monitoring Program
- Watershed Watch

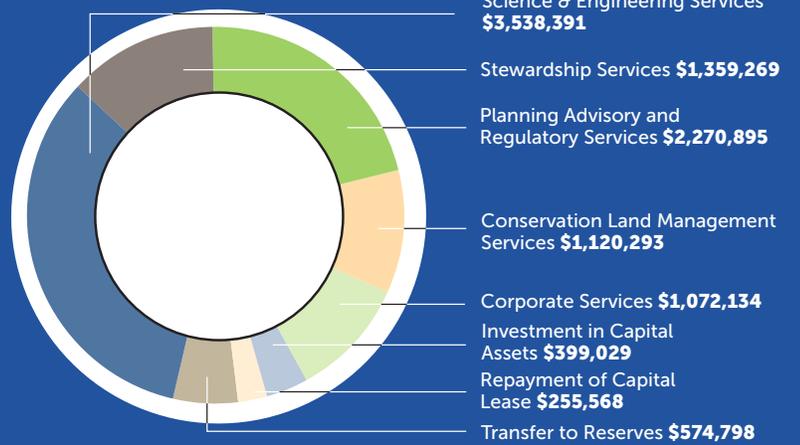


# Financing Conservation

## 2020 Revenues \$10,650,428



## 2020 Expenditures \$10,590,377



2020 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for our small but industrious foundation. We had big plans to celebrate this momentous milestone, but instead we were met with a global pandemic. It's been a tough year for everyone, but if we've learned anything from the pandemic, it's that the health and resiliency of our watershed communities matter – to people, to businesses and to the planet. Investing in clean water, healthy habitats, accessible open-air spaces and outdoor learning is critical to our collective well-being.

And so, our conservation work continues – with more drive and purpose than ever!

I thank our generous, like-minded donors who continue to invest in practical and sustainable programs that protect our local environment. With your support, we will continue to plant trees, naturalize shorelines, conserve natural spaces, protect species at risk, educate our youth and so much more. A thank you, as well, to the staff and board of directors at the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority for their dedication and support.

We are pleased to share this snapshot of our accomplishments. With 50 years behind us, we are more excited than ever about the future of conservation in our beautiful watershed. Thank you for making your local natural environment a priority. Together we can make it our legacy.

Yours in conservation,  
Jason W. M. Kelly, RVCF Chair

## Board of Directors

Jason W. M. Kelly, Chair  
Andrew Harkness, Vice Chair  
Kathy Dallaire, Secretary-Treasurer  
Allison Brown  
Matthew Frye  
Allison Gibbons  
Gary Howard  
Bob Ryerson  
Tom Scott  
Anne Simmering  
R.E. (Bob) Smith  
Kathy Thomas  
Cynthia Wagner  
Richmond Wilson



# 2020 Highlights



**24 hectares**  
donated for  
conservation



**276,550**  
trees and  
shrubs planted



**935 metres**  
of shoreline  
publically protected



**484 tonnes**  
of carbon offset  
through agreements



**79**  
ongoing species  
at risk restoration/  
enhancement projects



**6.8 million**  
dollars raised for  
conservation since 1970

- Celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> year as the watershed's best little environmental charity
- Continued our 2020 Conservation Campaign to protect our conservation lands through the Steve Simmering Conservation Land Endowment Fund and gratefully accepted donations from our valued private donors.
- Raised more than \$10,000 on Giving Tuesday for the Steve Simmering Fund thanks to private donors and matching funds from Enbridge Gas.
- Celebrated and acknowledged the continuing support of more than 330 watershed businesses and private donors who are recognized on our "Partners in Conservation" wall at our office in Manotick.
- Raised funds to reduce or eliminate bus and registration fees for students attending outdoor education programs at Foley and Baxter Conservation Areas. Thank you to the Ottawa Community Tree Foundation Community Grants Program, The North Face Canada Explore Fund, Starbucks Foundation Green Apron Grant and BOGS<sup>®</sup> Outdoor Fund for their support
- Partnered with One Tree Planted to plant 70,000 tree seedlings in spring 2020, with a continued partnership for planting in 2021
- Planted trees thanks to Hulse, Playfair and McGarry who have supported tree planting in the watershed since 2003
- Welcomed new and returning Carbon Neutral individuals, businesses and events including LIVE 88.5, CIBC Wood Gundy - McCooeye Financial Group, Evergreen Window Solutions and vélofix
- Completed phase 1 of the restoration of Hutton Marsh thanks to a dedicated group of local stakeholders and funders who made this project possible, including Ducks Unlimited Canada, Leeds and

- Grenville Stewardship Council, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Zone F, the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville (UCLG), Wildlife Habitat Canada and the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority
- Participated in the Nature for All Committee as we look to increase accessibility features at Baxter Conservation Area
  - Enjoyed the continued confidence of several land development companies who use the Foundation's Species at Risk Compensation Program to compensate for unavoidable loss of butternut, barn swallow habitat or bobolink habitat during their business activities. We are currently managing 78 projects
  - Continued delivery of Special Occasion Trees, Memorial Tree and Memorial Bench Programs
  - Supported the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 314 Manotick by accepting donations directed to maintaining Remembrance Park's Memory Gardens
  - Accepted two new land donations of ecologically sensitive lands from willing landowners, adding another 24 hectares (including 935 metres of shoreline) to the Foundation's current complement of conservation lands
  - Remained a proud and practicing member of both the Ontario and Canada Land Trust Alliances
  - Supported donors through CanadaHelps.com for safe and easy acceptance of donations to RVCF's special programs and services
  - Maintained accreditation from Imagine Canada's Standards Program – providing public confidence in the RVCF that has demonstrated excellence in board governance, financial accountability and transparency, ethical fundraising, staff management and volunteer involvement.

## Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation

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3889 Rideau Valley Drive  
Manotick, ON K4M 1A8

613-692-3571 ext. 1126  
info@rvcf.ca  
www.rvcf.ca

The RVCF is proudly accredited under Imagine Canada's Standards Program having demonstrated excellence in board governance, financial accountability and transparency, ethical fundraising, staff management and volunteer involvement.





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[www.rvca.ca](http://www.rvca.ca)



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