

## Canadian Wilderness Stewardship Program

(2022-2023)

*Empowering Youth to be Leaders in Conservation*

The Canadian Wilderness Stewardship Program is a Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) initiative funded by the Government of Canada under the [Canada Service Corps](#). Canadian youth between 18-30 years old will connect with Canada's wild spaces through guided expeditions of regional ecosystems and by performing community service projects.

### Program Goals

- To enable participants to experience the benefits of performing meaningful volunteer community service in their regions;
- To build participants' confidence, leadership ability, and critical thinking skills; and
- To empower participants to become ambassadors for regional wild spaces within their communities and create a culture of conservation engagement.

### Program Activities

As part of the Canadian Wilderness Stewardship Program, youth will participate in a wilderness expedition of a regional watercourse or other area of conservation value and will be asked to design and execute, with the support of CPAWS program coordinators, a volunteer community service project. Projects will aim to educate participants' local communities on the importance of their region of interest. In between trips and project work, participants will have an opportunity to explore conservation issues and protected areas management in their province as part of regular meetings and hands on stewardship activities with their host CPAWS chapter. The final event of the program is a summit where participants come together to share their experiences and gain skills related to career building, civic duty, and community service. In total, participants should plan to commit to 120 hours of activity July 2022 – February 2023.

### Program Regions

CPAWS, along with registered wilderness guides and invited experts, will lead program participants on expeditions in New Brunswick, the National Capital Region, Manitoba, and southern Alberta. <sup>1</sup> These wilderness experiences will educate participants about the ecological, economic, social, and cultural importance of these regions, providing tools and opportunities to conserve these important landscapes.

<sup>1</sup> The final expedition sites will be determined by CPAWS program staff, taking into account restrictions that may be imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## ***Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick***

*Expedition Dates: August 25-26*

The Bay of Fundy, located between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in the Atlantic Ocean, has the world's highest tides and an abundance of wildlife. Over 12 species of whales are drawn to the Bay's rich upwelling zones, including humpback, fin, and the endangered North Atlantic right whale. Millions of shorebirds flock to the salt marshes and mudflats on the Bay of Fundy shores each year during their long migrations to fatten up on mud shrimp. This magnificent wild expanse supports numerous fishing communities and tourism businesses. The addition of new marine protected areas (MPAs) in the internationally important Bay of Fundy would help to conserve the most ecologically significant areas of the Bay and ensure protection, into the future, for this wild ocean treasure.



Photo: Marcel LeBlanc

## ***Madawaska River, Ontario***

*Expedition Dates: September 16-18*

The Madawaska River lies in the Madawaska Highlands, a vast geographic area in southeastern Ontario. The area is part of the unceded, traditional territory of the Algonquin Peoples whose presence in the region goes back over 5000 years. The Madawaska River flows from deep in Algonquin Park to the Ottawa River. The river collects water from hundreds of smaller lakes and rivers. The topography of the Highlands is rugged, with well forested hills

rising sharply from the shores of the Madawaska River. The forest is a mixture of mostly middle-aged conifer and deciduous trees, regenerated following the cutting and fires of the late 1800's to early 1900's. Wildlife diversity reflects the mix of forest types with deer being the most abundant large vertebrate. Some of the vulnerable threatened or endangered species are: Red-shouldered hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Southern Flying Squirrel, Eastern Bluebird, Ginseng, Bald Eagle, Eastern Cougar, Golden Eagle, and Peregrine Falcon.



Photo: Eagle's Nest Lookout trail, from Ottawa Valley Travel

## ***Fisher Bay, Manitoba***

*Expedition Dates: August 8 -12*

The land surrounding Fisher Bay is remarkably undisturbed despite its relatively short distance from urban, industrial, and agricultural development. Every shoreline provides glimpses of the thriving biological diversity found as Fisher Bay. Expansive beaches line both the mainland and islands. Fresh tracks are left in the sand by wolves, moose, foxes, and bears passing in and out of old-growth forests. Water birds continually wing by, traveling from nesting colonies to feeding grounds, while songbirds bring the forest canopy to life with their calls. The lands and waters offer habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species, including the little brown bat, piping plover, golden-winged warbler, shortjaw cisco, swamp pink, and round-leaved bog orchid. Our partners in Fisher River Cree Nation play a strong role in promoting stewardship and conservation of the region's natural landscapes, and traditional knowledge will be prominent in many of the learning opportunities.



Photo: Trevor @ BUILD Films

## Red Deer River, Badlands Alberta

Expedition Dates: September 2 ,3, 4 and 5th inclusive (Labour Day weekend)

CPAWS Southern Alberta will lead a canoeing expedition into the most endangered natural region of Alberta. You will travel by gentle and majestic water highways along the riparian corridor to some of the last remaining grassland wilderness areas. The prairies are incredibly rich in both biodiversity and cultural heritage, and provide a range of essential ecosystem services, including carbon storage, soil nutrient preservation and freshwater filtration. Currently only 1 percent of Alberta's natural grasslands are protected, even though these endangered ecosystems contain about 75 percent of the province's species at risk! Furthermore, these rich landscapes have profound cultural and sacred value to the Nitsitapii, Piikani, Siksika, and Kainaiwa First Nations. By immersing participants in these unique, diverse and endangered landscapes they will learn how crucial it is to protect the remaining dry and mixed grass Subregions.



Photo: Uplift Adventures

## 2022-23 Program Syllabus

Below you will find a list of planned activities for the 2022-2023 program year designed to supplement the core program activities previously described, and further support participants with their projects. In addition to the activities listed below, you can expect to attend the occasional in-person stewardship event and meetings (both group and one-on-one, depending on your preference) with your host chapter.

All program activities, trips, events, meetings, and project development time count towards the 120 hours of community service. Outside of the two trips (wilderness and summit) this translates to approximately 10 hours of volunteer time per month.

*Please note, virtual events will be recorded. Participants who cannot make a virtual event live, will have an opportunity to watch the session at a later date.*

## **Orientations**

July 19<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm EST - National Welcome Webinar (virtual, approx. 1 hour): Introduction to CPAWS, CWSP, regional coordinators, and general description of the volunteer commitments including progress tracking.

July (TBD) - Regional Orientation (in-person, approx. 2 hours): Introduction to your host chapter, the region you will be focusing on for the program, and what to expect during your wilderness expedition.

## **Learning Workshops**

October, November, January – Three Nationally hosted workshops (virtual, approx. 1 hour each). Topics to include: Community Engagement, Nature-based Solutions to Climate Change, and the Importance of Indigenous Led Conservation. *Order of topics to be confirmed based on guest speaker availability.*

Two Regionally hosted workshops (in-person, approx. 2 hours each, dates to be determined based on regional cohorts). Topics to include Protected Areas Creation and Management in your host province, and Support for Community Service Projects.

## **End of Program Summits**

Weekend of February 11 & 12 - End of Program Summits. The virtual National summit will take place on the second day of the in-person regional summits. The virtual component will be approximately 4 hours, the in-person summits will range from 1-2 days, depending on the host chapter.

