



Press Release

For immediate publication

4th Forum national sur les lacs : we have the power to act to preserve these biodiversity jewels, symbols of our identity

Mont-Tremblant, June 7, 2023 – On the occasion of the beginning of the lake season and Water Month, the Conseil régional de l'environnement des Laurentides launches the 4th National Lakes Forum. This event of two days, which brings together more than 250 participants from different backgrounds, aims to inform, raise awareness and equip stakeholders on the health of our lakes.

Under the theme “Dive in to better understand them”, the National Lakes Forum is the place for exchange par excellence in Quebec to enable the scientific community to share the most valuable knowledge and discuss between land managers, government and municipal decision-makers, associative and community sector, users and specialists in concrete actions already undertaken and put in place to protect our lakes.

Experts warn of the fragility of the health of Quebec's lakes

The finding is alarming: in Quebec, 10% of inhabited lakes south of the 47th parallel are aging prematurely. The causes of this deterioration are multiple, including some unsustainable activities agriculture, forestry and resorts, pesticide use, climate change and the introduction of invasive alien species. In fact, about 200 lakes and streams are affected through the spread of Eurasian Watermilfoil, an invasive alien species that directly affects the Health of lakes and their accessibility by citizens.

To monitor the situation, the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs lists 875 lakes that are members of the Réseau de surveillance volontaire des lacs (RSVL). The partnership between the State and citizens, which was created in 2004, makes it possible to acquire data on a large number of lakes and follow their evolution over time, to detect lakes showing signs degradation, raise awareness and equip local residents.

"In Mont-Tremblant, Lake Maskinongé is the first known eutrophic lake in the Laurentians. This is the lake of my childhood. When I go back and see what state it is in, it breaks my heart. Especially since more than this situation could have been avoided. Solutions exist to prevent the deterioration of our lakes," says Anne Léger, Executive Director of CRE Laurentides.

Different groups take action

The Forum will be a unique opportunity to showcase solutions put in place by protection of lakes.

This is the case of the municipality of Saint-Donat, which adopted a by-law 15 years ago on the protection of water bodies from invasive alien species. Thanks to the measures taken since then, Saint-

Donat has managed to avoid the introduction of Eurasian watermilfoil into its lakes and this is despite the presence of this invasive species in a dozen lakes within a radius of 50 kilometers of the city. Mayor Joé Deslauriers and Saint-Donat Director General Mickaël Tuilier will discuss the Prevention tools used and the lake access control system.

During this workshop at the Forum national sur les lacs, they will be accompanied by representatives of the Association of the Owners of Lac Chaud. This is another example in preventing the introduction of alien species invasive demonstrates that the leadership of local actors is essential to protect and manage our lakes in a sustainable way. These citizens are invested and take action to protect the lakes and to participate in the proper functioning of government plans by monitoring their implementation on the ground.

Local residents, vacationers, municipalities, governments, businesses: we have the power to act to turning the situation around

The Forum makes us aware that concrete measures are available to all actors involved to protect and reverse the health of our lakes, including:

- **For municipalities:** design better land use planning by limiting or prohibiting development around water bodies; better control erosion, monitor septic systems and compliance with riparian strip regulations;
- **For governments:** dedicate more funding to the Réseau de surveillance volontaire des lacs thanks to the new [Fonds Bleu](#) set up by the Government of Quebec; offer better guidance and financial support to municipalities to better protect lakes, in particular by developing tools to act more coherent in planning and urban planning;
- **For economic players:** enforce the regulations on the sustainable development of forests in the domain of the State as well as the regulation on the 3 meters of riparian strips of agricultural land to avoid runoff of contaminants and nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen;
- **For local residents and vacationers:** be cautious with regard to so-called solutions "miracles", such as the new herbicides against Eurasian watermilfoil, which are not yet approved by Health Canada; Always use boat washing stations during access to a body of water to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. An [accessible government map](#) allows you to find service points in your area

About CRE Laurentides

The mission of the Conseil régional de l'environnement des Laurentides (CRE Laurentides) is to promote sustainable development, to protect and enhance the environment and to promote improving the democratic process. It is part of the Regroupement national des conseils régionaux of Quebec's Environment (RNCREQ), which is a network of actors committed to the protection of the environment and in the promotion of sustainable development throughout Québec.