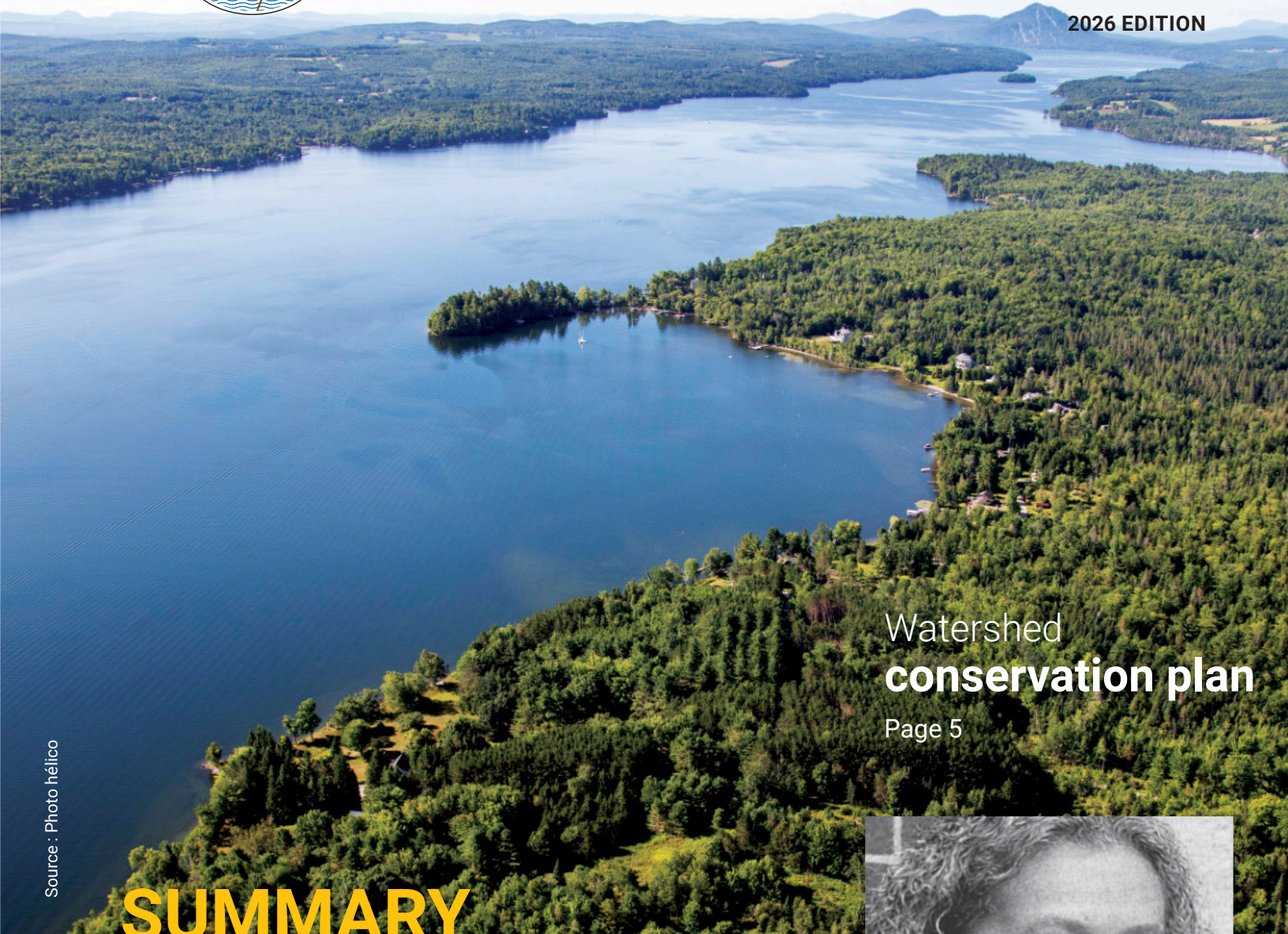


THE MEMPHRÉ



Memphrémagog Conservation

2026 EDITION



Source : Photo hélico

Watershed conservation plan

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A tribute to a great environmentalist Gisèle Lacasse Benoit

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President's message

From the Mountain Tops to Our Lake: Our Collective Responsibility

Dear readers,

Lake Memphremagog and its watershed are our jewel—and it's up to all of us to protect it. In fact, that's what has driven the Memphremagog Conservation (MCI) team since 1967! Our lake is more than a landscape or a postcard. It is the point of convergence for a vast watershed made up of forests, wetlands, rivers, and interconnected lakes that are home to a rich—but fragile—biodiversity.

Did you know that all these natural environments provide unexpected—but essential—ecosystem services? Think of water and air filtration, flow regulation, carbon storage, and habitats for wildlife and plant life. It is this balance that makes the Lake Memphremagog watershed a unique and highly sought-after place to live. From the mountain summits to the lakeshores—through our homes, our fields, and our natural environments—everything is connected. The way we occupy the land, and especially how we take care of it, has a direct impact on the health of the lake and its watershed.

Unfortunately, the destruction and degradation of exceptional and irreplaceable natural environments have occurred in 2025 and put biodiversity at risk. These setbacks for biodiversity are also directly linked—within a broader context—to the climate change crisis, which is as real here as elsewhere.

Climate change, fuelled by human activity, is already well underway in the Lake Memphremagog watershed. Think of extreme fluctuations in water levels, cyanobacteria, diseases affecting certain fish, and the presence of exotic invasive species. These are tangible manifestations amplified by other human pressures on the territory, including the Coventry landfill site at the head of the lake. These impacts remind us that every action matters.

MCI has set itself the goal of better sharing its knowledge and helping everyone who lives around this jewel of the Eastern Townships to understand the value of all its natural environments. We protect what we know!

For nearly three years MCI has been working to develop a conservation plan for the Lake Memphremagog watershed, along with a strategy and an action plan that we will present to you in this newsletter. This is a highly useful tool designed to better understand, prioritize, and conserve the natural environments that are essential to biodiversity and water quality, while also guiding the actions to take in a context of climate change.

However, this strategy will not bear fruit without collective mobilization! Whether governments, municipalities, the agricultural, forestry, real estate, and tourism sectors, environmental organizations, landowners, or citizens—everyone has a role to play. Our challenge over the coming years is to accelerate both the pace and the scale of conservation to preserve resilient and connected natural environments that will enable nature and communities to adapt to climate change.

Balancing land use and conservation is the key to meeting this challenge, and MCI fully intends to contribute. Conserving the lake and its watershed is a shared project: it depends on collaboration, dialogue, and the willingness to act together. Shall we get started?

Come discover even more in our newsletter, written with passion by our team! You will certainly find challenges, but above all solutions and concrete courses of action to better preserve—and live on—our territory.

I sincerely thank our members and our partners. Together, let's continue to take care of our beautiful lake and its watershed—today and for generations to come.

Enjoy your reading!

Johanne Lavoie, Volunteer President



Notice of the Annual General Meeting

MCI members are invited to the annual general meeting which will be held on Saturday, June 13, 2026, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., at Carrefour d'Austin, located at 1 Millington Road, in Austin. The agenda includes an annual review of 2025-2026, a conference, our various projects planned for 2026, as well as our battles and our achievements. Sign up now on our website in the News section.

Conference

Daphné Lisak and Elmira Hassanzadeh of Polytechnique Montréal will present the following at our annual general meeting:

"Assessment of the climatic and anthropic risks for the level of and temperature of Lake Memphremagog."

We hope to see many of you there!



Our Team at the Heart of the Action



**Chanel
Racine-Mineault**

Biology Project Manager

Holder of a bachelor's degree in ecology from the University of Sherbrooke, Chanel has been contributing her expertise to MCI for over three years. Responsible for geomatics, she plays a key role in the development of projects. This summer, she will coordinate the field team and lead several projects, including the revegetation of riparian buffers in residential areas.



**Angélique
Guillemette**

Assistant Patrol Coordinator

A graduate in bioecology techniques with a strong passion for aquatic habitat conservation, Angélique will be starting her third summer with MCI. Her experience and energy make her a cornerstone in the field, where she helps supervise activities and assists with team coordination.

For nearly 60 years, Memphremagog Conservation (MCI) has been working to protect Lake Memphremagog and its watershed. To fulfill its mission, the organization relies on a dedicated, professional team that works all year long to plan and carry out a range of scientific, educational, and field-based initiatives; from water quality sampling to public awareness, including the control of exotic invasive species and the monitoring of natural habitats. We also support shoreline property owners in revegetating their riparian buffers, thereby helping to maintain the quality of Lake Memphremagog's water.

During the summer season, we mobilize our field team and intensify our efforts. This team includes a biology project manager, a communications and scientific outreach project manager, two bioecology technicians, and a university student in ecology, all under the supervision of the Executive Director.

MCI also invites the public to report any observations on the lake during the summer season by phone at 819-620-3939, extension 0, or by email at patrol@memphremagog.org. Thank you for your valuable collaboration!



**Lou
Gagnon**

Communications and Scientific Outreach Project Manager

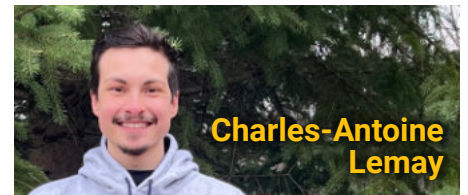
Holding a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Bishop's University, Lou has been working as a communications and scientific outreach project manager at MCI since the fall of 2025. They combine scientific rigour with strong communication skills to raise public awareness. This summer, they will take part in field activities while continuing to manage communications and host outreach booths.



**Kathy
Pilotte-Boulanger**

Field Officer

A bachelor's student in ecology at the University of Sherbrooke, Kathy is joining MCI this summer as a field officer. Eager to put her knowledge into practice, she will be actively involved in fieldwork and outreach activities, making a concrete contribution to MCI projects.



**Charles-Antoine
Lemay**

Field Officer

A bioecology technician, Charles-Antoine is joining MCI this summer as a field officer. Last year, he worked as a boating awareness officer. This year, he will bring his energy and motivation to field interventions and the protection of the lake.

*Chanel Racine-Mineault,
Project Manager*

Ariane Orjikh, Executive Director

A biologist holding a master's degree in biology with a specialization in international ecology, Ariane has been leading MCI with passion and commitment for 12 years. She oversees conservation projects, supervises the field team, and conducts scuba diving activities.

Lake Memphremagog facing climate upheaval

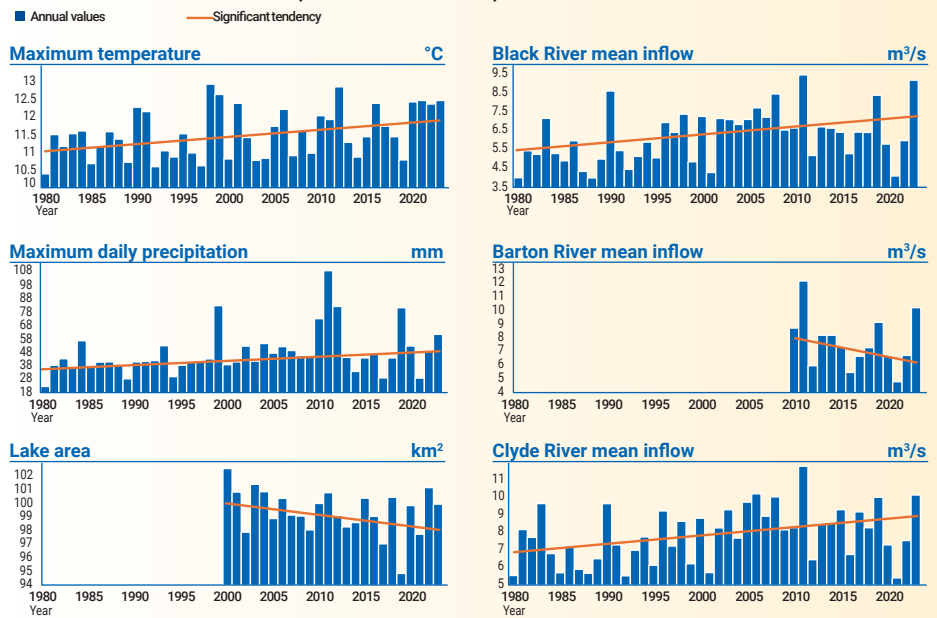
In recent years, Lake Memphremagog has experienced increasingly contrasting conditions: episodes of heavy rainfall, but also periods of heat and drought that lower water levels. The variability and frequency of these extreme events are a cause for concern because, in addition to weakening natural environments, they can speed up the warming of the water and promote the proliferation of algae and cyanobacteria in Lake Memphremagog.

Beyond the impacts on wildlife and plant life, poorer water quality can complicate drinking-water treatment for municipalities that draw their supply from the lake. The article below presents research aimed at better measuring these changes and supporting proactive management of the lake.

Climate change impacts on Lake Memphremagog

The past few years have shown pronounced variations in Lake Memphremagog's level, such as the contrast between the dry summer of 2025 and the floods of 2023. As the climate warms, scientists expect more extreme rainfall events and longer droughts. Understanding how these changes affect the lake is becoming increasingly important. This is what Daphné Lisak, a PhD candidate supervised by Professor Elmira Hassanzadeh in the Department of Civil, Geological and Mining Engineering at Polytechnique Montréal is working on. Her research focuses on modelling lake water storage to evaluate the impacts of climate change and develop water management strategies based on the findings.

Trends in climate variables, inflow to the lake, and lake area



Polytechnique's Memphremagog research group

Research projects in other regions have linked warming air temperatures to perturbations in water cycle processes, including precipitation and evaporation. This supports the need for an analysis of Lake Memphremagog conditions to investigate the hydroclimatic variability observed in recent years. Preliminary results indicate an upward trend in air temperatures, along with an increase in heavy precipitation events. The lake's surface area, on its part, has been gradually shrinking according to the available satellite imagery, while the discharge at the outlets of the Black and Clyde Rivers has been increasing. Along with the Barton River, these rivers situated in Vermont are the only tributaries to Lake Memphremagog with gauges to measure their flow and cover most of the watershed area.

To better characterize the future changes of Lake Memphremagog, Daphné is developing a computational model to simulate watershed inflows to the lake, as well as the lake's water level and temperature. The first part of the model, which simulates the inflow to the lake from rivers Black, Barton and Clyde, has already been built and tested. Once completed, the model will enable the assessment of lake conditions over the short-, mid-, and long-term horizons under several climate scenarios. In the final stage of her project, Daphné will develop a decision support tool based on the lake model. She will therefore seek out stakeholders from diverse backgrounds in the coming years with the goal of tailoring the communication of the project's findings to their needs and supporting an adaptive management of Lake Memphremagog under a changing climate.

Daphné Lisak

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Elmira Hassanzadeh, PhD, ing

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Watershed conservation plan

Working together for Lake Memphremagog!

Why a watershed conservation plan?

In a context marked by climate change and the accelerated loss of biodiversity, conserving the natural environments of the Lake Memphremagog watershed is no longer an option - it is a necessity. Forests, wetlands, streams, and bodies of water play a key role in preserving the area's ecological balance and help limit the impacts of climate change.

These natural environments provide many ecosystem services that benefit us all. Wetlands, for example, act like natural sponges: they absorb water during heavy rainfall and release it gradually during dry periods, thereby reducing flooding. Forest environments, for their part, stabilize soils and shorelines, reduce erosion, and help mitigate heat events by regulating the local climate. Added to this is their ability to capture and store carbon, a key lever for mitigating climate change, while also providing essential habitats for wildlife and plant life.

These approaches—known as nature-based solutions—therefore make it possible to combat climate change, lessen its impacts, and preserve biodiversity. They also enhance the area's attractiveness for both residents and visitors.

An exceptional territory

Did you know that the Lake Memphremagog watershed is part of the Appalachians, recognized for containing some of the most intact deciduous and mixed forests on the planet? This territory also lies at the heart of an important ecological corridor in the Northern Green Mountains, a vital route for species movement and ecosystem resilience. As such, the area is identified by the Government of Canada as a priority for the protection of species at risk.

Lake Memphremagog itself stands out in several ways: as the largest body of water in the region, a biodiversity hotspot, a popular destination for vacationing and outdoor recreation, and renowned for the beauty of its landscapes, it is above all an essential source of drinking water for nearly 185,000 people.

Growing pressures, necessary actions

Despite this richness, the watershed's balance is fragile. Residential development leads to the loss of natural environments and fragments habitats, while climate change increases risks—floods, droughts, and ecosystem disruptions.

This project received financial support from Environment and Climate Change Canada as part of the project "Northern Green Mountains: Toward land-use planning for the protection and recovery of species at risk," coordinated by Appalachian Corridor. This project was carried out as part of the Accelerating Conservation in Southern Quebec (ACSQ) project and the Natural Areas Partnership Project (PPMN), for which Nature Conservancy of Canada received financial assistance from the Government of Quebec.

Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :
This project was undertaken with the financial support of:



Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada

Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Québec



Memphremagog
Conservation



Strategic planning session for the conservation plan, March 2026

To meet these challenges, MCI developed a **Lake Memphremagog watershed conservation plan**. Aligned with the international goal of protecting 30% of terrestrial and aquatic natural environments by 2030, this plan offers a structured and operational vision. It provides a detailed portrait of the wetlands and natural environments, analyzes their ecological value, identifies the main pressures affecting them, and proposes strategies to guide concrete conservation actions across the territory.

Concretely, it is a decision-support tool intended for municipalities, organizations, and land managers to guide effective and sustainable interventions.

Essential mobilization

The development of this plan by MCI is the result of a coordinated effort among various stakeholders. Conservation organizations, experts, municipalities, and government representatives were brought together to identify conservation priorities, to better understand the issues, and to propose strategies adapted to local realities.

Protecting the Lake Memphremagog watershed is based on a simple principle: collective commitment. Citizens, landowners, elected officials, managers - everyone has a role to play. The conservation plan is intended as a guide to taking action and preserving natural environments in order to maintain the exceptional richness of Lake Memphremagog and its watershed now and for future generations.

Preserving natural environments today means protecting an irreplaceable wealth for tomorrow.

To learn more about the watershed conservation plan, write to us at conservation@memphremagog.org or visit our website.

Getting to know it better to better protect it!

Observing, measuring, mapping: better understanding a territory is already beginning to protect it. For the past two years, MCI has been collecting ecological data in a strategic area of the Lake Memphremagog watershed—specifically the Tompkin’s Creek sub-watershed, located in the municipalities of Ogden and Stanstead Township. This area includes a tributary of the lake, Tompkin’s Creek, as well as a multitude of small watercourses associated with it. Wetlands are abundant there—marshes, swamps, peatlands, and wet meadows—often interconnected and essential to ecosystem functioning. Added to this are vast forest tracts, mostly deciduous, where old-growth forests, mature forests, and young stands coexist. This mosaic creates a diversity of habitats particularly favorable to wildlife and plant life.

A rigorous scientific approach

MCI’s team of biologists and technicians surveyed an area of this territory during the summer of 2025 to conduct ecological field surveys of its natural environments as well as local wildlife and plant life. This work follows a first campaign carried out in 2024 and adds to the data already available.

The surveys, conducted using recognized scientific protocols, were integrated into a geomatics database. The result: detailed mapping of the territory’s biophysical components and an in-depth analysis of their condition and interactions. This information served as the basis for producing the conservation plan for this sector, which provides an overview of natural environments, the species present - including those in a precarious situation - and the threats facing them.

In addition to these species, several birds considered priority species by Environment and Climate Change Canada—due to declining populations—were also noted, including the white-throated sparrow, veery, hermit thrush, brown thrasher, ovenbird, and yellow-bellied sapsucker. However, further ecological inventories will be needed to confirm the presence of certain species whose potential habitat exists in the area.

From knowledge to action

This new scientific knowledge will enable MCI and the Memphremagog Nature Foundation (MNF) to better identify natural areas of interest and to guide which actions should be prioritized to ensure their protection. Implementing these actions will rely on a collaborative approach, in partnership with private landowners, municipalities, and local stakeholders—because on the ground, conservation is built first and foremost with the people who live there and are key actors.

A supported project

Getting to know an area better to better protect it: at Tompkin’s Creek, this approach truly comes into its own - and charts the course for conserving Lake Memphremagog and its watershed.

Francine Hone, Biologist

This project received financial support from Nature Conservancy of Canada, through its Accelerating Conservation in Southern Quebec (ACSQ) project, for which the Government of Quebec provided them with financial assistance. This conservation plan was also produced thanks to financial contributions from the Memphremagog Nature Foundation (MNF) and Memphremagog Conservation (MCI).

Remarkable biodiversity, but vulnerable



Angélique Guillemette working in Tompkin's Creek

Tompkin's Creek wetland



39 ha of natural areas protected forever in the Lake Memphremagog watershed



The Memphremagog Nature Foundation (MNF) and MCI are especially proud to add a new protected area of 39.97 ha within the territory of the City of Magog. The Goodwin family approached MCI several years ago to begin a process to realize their dream of preserving their family treasure forever. As of 2025, that dream has become a reality. MNF and MCI are deeply grateful to the Goodwin family for this generous gesture.

“For nearly 90 years, five generations of the Goodwin family have lived along Chemin des Pères, working on farms, hunting in the woods, exploring the fields, and swimming in Lake Memphremagog. The lands surrounding our beloved lake are precious and represent a true privilege. Aware of the importance of this watershed, our parents, Liz and Harvey Goodwin, decided to ensure that their small piece of land remains in its natural state. This reflects our gratitude for all those decades of wonderful memories made on this land, but also the respect we have for this rural heritage that is dear to us. We encourage other landowners to consider making a similar decision.”

- The Goodwin family

Biodiversity conservation and the fight against climate change

This new private protected area will ensure the perpetual protection of a diversity of natural habitats that support the presence of several wild species, some of which are considered threatened or vulnerable. These now-protected natural environments also help mitigate climate change. In this way, each property protected in the Lake Memphremagog watershed contributes locally to addressing the two major global environmental crises: biodiversity loss and climate change.

This project was made possible thanks to the exceptional partnership between MNF and MCI, which work together to conserve the Lake Memphremagog watershed. Appalachian Corridor, as well as many other partners, also played an important role in this initiative.

This project was funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada, through the Community-Nominated Priority Places for Species at Risk program of the Canada Nature Fund and the Natural Heritage Conservation Program – Conservation Organizations Fund. It was also supported by Nature Conservancy of Canada, through the Accelerating Conservation in Southern Quebec (ACSQ) project, for which the government of Quebec granted them financial assistance. The Fondation de la faune du Québec, Habitat Faunique Canada, and the City of Magog also contributed to carrying out the project.



Ecological gifts (donations)

Landowners who donate their property, or a portion of it, may be eligible for tax benefits, which vary depending on their financial situation and the value of the gift. Individuals receive a tax credit for the donation. Ecological gifts make it possible to reduce to zero the tax on capital gains, and there is no limit on the total value of the donation eligible for the credit each year. Finally, donors can claim any unused portion of the donation amount over a maximum period of ten years.



Ce projet est financé en partie par le gouvernement du Canada
This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada



Environnement et
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Climate Change Canada



Riparian Buffer Action: A Grassroots Movement Takes Root

For the past three years, Memphremagog Conservation (MCI) has been supporting waterfront residents of Lake Memphremagog and its watershed in restoring vegetation along their shorelines. The goal: protect the lake, one riparian buffer at a time.

By revegetating shoreline buffer zones, this initiative helps improve water quality, reduce erosion, maintain cooler water temperatures, and support local biodiversity.

Concrete Results in the Field

Since 2023, more than thirty properties have been assessed at the request of landowners. Some shorelines were already vegetated, while others required targeted interventions.

Results:

- More than fifteen landscaping plans completed;
- Fourteen riparian buffers revegetated with the participation of shoreline residents;
- More than 3,000 m² of land restored;
- More than 480 metres of shoreline restored to good health.

In total, more than 1,900 native plants were planted, along with 785 m² seeded to stabilize exposed soils.

Community Mobilization That Makes a Difference

Beyond the plantings themselves, the project has mobilized the broader community. Shoreline residents, volunteers, and even high school students rolled up their sleeves and got their hands in the soil.

MCI also expanded its outreach efforts through conferences, educational tools, digital publications, and media appearances. Resources such as RAPPEL's Shorelines and Nature guide were also widely shared.

Since the launch of the project:

- More than 100 volunteers and shoreline residents have taken part in planting activities;
- More than 100,000 people have been reached through communication and awareness efforts.

Impact at the local level

This initiative is already yielding results: four of the six municipalities surrounding the lake have been involved, helping foster a consistent, sustainable approach to shoreline protection of Lake Memphremagog at the local level.

Interested in Taking Part?

Do you own property along Lake Memphremagog or one of its tributaries? MCI can support you in revegetating your riparian buffer.

Contact us: shoreline@memphremagog.org

Public Awareness in the City of Magog

Thanks to the support of the City of Magog, MCI also intensified its public awareness efforts last summer.

The MCI team hosted seven outreach booths at local events, delivered both theoretical and hands-on training on Aquatic Invasive Alien Species (AIAS) to a shoreline property owners' association, and offered three educational activities for day camp youth to introduce them to environmental protection.

Chanel Racine-Mineault,
Project Manager

The CFER team from La Ruche Secondary School revegetating the shoreline at Place Lestage with support from MCI.



The MCI team, the CFER program of La Ruche Secondary School, the City of Magog, and Place Lestage staff gathered to revegetate the shoreline at Place Lestage on June 4, 2025. Source: Radio-Canada Info

2023

- Project launch
- 8 shoreline characterization projects

2024

- First year of planting
- 6 riparian buffers revegetated
- 2,392 m² vegetated
- 263 m of shoreline vegetated
- 1,476 plants planted
- 734 m² seeded with herbaceous plants
- 12 characterization projects

2025

- 8 riparian buffers revegetated
- 772 m² vegetated
- 220 m of shoreline vegetated
- Over 450 plants planted
- More than 50 m² seeded with herbaceous plants
- 13 riparian buffer characterizations

2026

- The project continues! Support available for shoreline residents wishing to revegetate their shoreline





The process is easy and completely free!
 Join the Flow is a unifying project that brings together citizens, lakeside municipalities (Austin, Bolton-Est, Potton Township, Stanstead Township, Orford Township, Magog, Ogden), and Memphremagog Conservation (MCI).

Join the Flow!



Launched in 2025 by COGESAF, the program aims to reduce runoff, erosion, and the transport of contaminants into waterways, while promoting solutions adapted to local realities and climate change.

The Join the Flow program invites you to take simple, concrete actions to preserve the lake's water quality by improving stormwater management on your property. By joining this movement, you gain access to practical advice and tools to better protect our (your) precious environment.

The 2025 summer season went very well! Here are the results:

Municipalities	Number of voluntary diagnoses completed	Number of honorary signs distributed
Austin	7	4
Potton Township	2	1
Stanstead Township	7	3
Magog	87	9
Ogden	5	3
TOTAL	108	20

Would you like to participate for the first time, or receive a second diagnostic (only when you have made new improvements following our first visit)? Visit the COGESAF website to register. The process is simple:

- Be a Lake Memphremagog lakeside resident.
- Choose a time slot that works for you.
- Welcome a member of our team (COGESAF-MCI) to your home at the selected time.
- Take part in the assessment.
- Afterwards, receive a booklet presenting the assessment and recommendations.



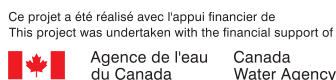
Lakeshore property owner who received the honorary award.



Peter Lépine from MCI and Anne Boswall receiving their honorary award.

* Project that is part of a set of synergistic projects, including Ruissellement Memphremagog, financially supported by Action Climat Quebec.

For a second consecutive year, MCI is proud to be the main partner of the *Join the Flow* project. Our team will continue stormwater management diagnosis on your property and will keep offering you practical advice to optimize your positive impact on Lake Memphremagog.



Volunteers in Action: Protecting the Lake from Exotic Invasive Species

In 2025, Memphremagog Conservation (MCI) stepped up its efforts to curb the spread of exotic invasive species in Lake Memphremagog. Supported by committed volunteers and local partners, the team took concrete action to preserve the lake's rich biodiversity and natural habitats.

Removal of the Chinese Mystery Snail – An Exotic Invasive Snail

On July 18, 2025, for the second consecutive year, the MCI team carried out a large-scale removal operation of the Chinese mystery snail in Greene Bay—the only area of the lake where this species has been observed to date. Accompanied by several volunteers and interns from the Municipality of Austin, the MCI team worked meticulously, snorkeling and scuba diving at two targeted sites. This activity aimed to assess the impact of large-scale removal efforts on the observed colony and, potentially, to slow its spread to other areas of Lake Memphremagog.

Results:

- > 774 Chinese mystery snails removed
- > 4,043 Georgian mystery snails also removed

Compared to 2024 (1,249 Chinese mystery snails), these results point to an encouraging decline in the population.

Beyond the removals themselves, this activity helped raise awareness among participants about the issues related to aquatic exotic invasive species and provided training on how to identify targeted species.

Building on this momentum, a third large-scale removal activity is planned for the summer of 2026, with the goal of continuing to reduce the only known population of Chinese mystery snails in Lake Memphremagog.

This project was made possible thanks to the financial contribution of the Municipality of Austin.

Have You Spotted a Chinese Mystery Snail?

Help us act quickly.

Send a photo to patrol@memphremagog.org

Did you know?

Chinese mystery snail: Large shell (6.5–7 cm), thick, greenish-brown to reddish in color.



Chinese mystery snail

Georgian mystery snail: Smaller shell (3.5–4 cm), thin, yellow to brown with darker spiral bands.



Georgian mystery snail

Another exotic snail species, the Georgian mystery snail, is already well established in Lake Memphremagog, so it is not necessary to report its presence.



The MCI team, interns from the Municipality of Austin, volunteers, and Plongée Magog who took part in the large-scale Chinese mystery snail removal in 2025.

Phragmite Control – An Exotic Invasive Plant

Another on-the-ground battle: phragmites, also known as the common reed, an exotic invasive plant that threatens the wetlands of Fitch Bay. Since 2017, MCI has been working to limit its spread.

In 2025, MCI launched a new phase of its phragmite control project in Fitch Bay thanks to the support of Fondation de la faune du Québec and its financial partner, the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs. This phase makes it possible to intensify control efforts over a three-year period.

In July, the MCI team—joined by volunteers and the Municipality of Stanstead Township—carried out three days of

removal work. In August, two additional days were devoted to pulling regrowth and weakening the colonies.

The work consisted of manually removing the plants down to the root and safely transporting them to a disposal site. In total, 845 kg of phragmites were eliminated—an outcome that demonstrates the effectiveness of the actions and MCI's ability to mobilize both the Municipality of Stanstead Township and volunteers to carry out these interventions.

The project will continue in 2026, using the same sustained approach.

Chanel Racine-Mineault,
Project Manager

Want to Get Involved?

Join us!
info@memphremagog.org

And to stay up to date:

 [memphremagogconservation](https://www.facebook.com/memphremagogconservation)

 [company/memphremagogconservationinc](https://www.linkedin.com/company/memphremagogconservationinc)

 [memphremagog.conservation](https://www.instagram.com/memphremagog.conservation)

 www.memphremagog.org

 [memphrec.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/memphrec.bsky.social)



Numbers to contact for various problems encountered on the lake



The MCI team, the Municipality of Stanstead Township, and volunteers who participated in one of the phragmite control days in Fitch Bay.



Colony in 2017



Colony in 2025

Before/after phragmite colony control in Fitch Bay.

Problem	Territory	Contact
In case of a spill or other environmental situation requiring immediate action	Canadian portion of Lake Memphremagog	Urgence-Environnement 1 866 694-5454
In case of problems relating to dangerous behaviour on the lake, alcohol consumption and noise	Magog and Austin	Memphremagog police 819-843-3334
	Ogden, Stanstead and Potton townships	Surete du Quebec 819-564-1212
Problems regarding infringement of boating regulations	Magog and Austin	Patrouille Memphré-Nord 819 821-0435
	Ogden, Stanstead and Potton townships	Patrouille Memphré-Sud 450 292-3313, ext. 230
For all other questions regarding long-term boat mooring and launching	Canadian portion of Lake Memphremagog	Direction de la gestion du domaine hydrique https://www.quebec.ca/agriculture-environnement-et-ressources-naturelles/eau/gestion-domaine-hydrique-etat/octroi-droit-occupation/permis-occupation
For all questions regarding non-standard buoys	Canadian portion of Lake Memphremagog	Transport Canada, Navigation protection program 877-646-6420 PPNQUE-NPPQUE@tc.gc.ca
In case of illegal work (ex. on the shoreline)	Potton Township	Municipal Inspector environnement@potton.ca
	Austin	Project manager and environmental inspector 819 843-2388, ext. 229 environnement@municipalite.austin.qc.ca
	Magog	Municipal Inspector (email) environnement@ville.magog.qc.ca 819 843-3333 (Service G0)
	Stanstead Township	Municipal Inspector 819 876-2948 ext. 227 inspecteur2@cantonstanstead.ca
	Ogden	Building and environmental inspector (819) 876-7117 urbanisme@munogden.ca
In case of observing an activity that does not appear to comply with the environmental laws applicable in Quebec	Canadian portion of Lake Memphremagog	Quebec environmental control Use the form provided by the MELCCPF to register environmental complaints. https://www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/formulaires/Plainte/form.asp
To report a cyanobacteria bloom or exotic invasive species	Canadian portion of Lake Memphremagog	Memphremagog Conservation (MCI) (819) 620-3939, ext. 0 patrol@memphremagog.org
For any other environmental questions.		

The Coventry File:

A Cross-Border Effort to Protect Our Quebec Drinking Water

Background:

For several years, Memphremagog Conservation (MCI) has been actively monitoring the Coventry landfill site, located at the headwaters of Lake Memphremagog.

Our objective has remained unequivocal: To ensure that leachate generated at this site is never discharged—treated or untreated—into the Lake Memphremagog watershed, the drinking water source for more than 185,000 people in Quebec.

The Coventry landfill, managed by NEWSVT, a subsidiary of Casella, receives the majority of Vermont's waste, as well as waste from other states - up to 600,000 tons annually. Since September 2023, an experimental leachate pretreatment facility has been operating onsite, attempting to filter toxic landfill chemicals, including PFAS, before being transported outside the watershed for disposal, as required by the 2019 Act 250 moratorium on leachate discharge anywhere in the Memphremagog watershed.

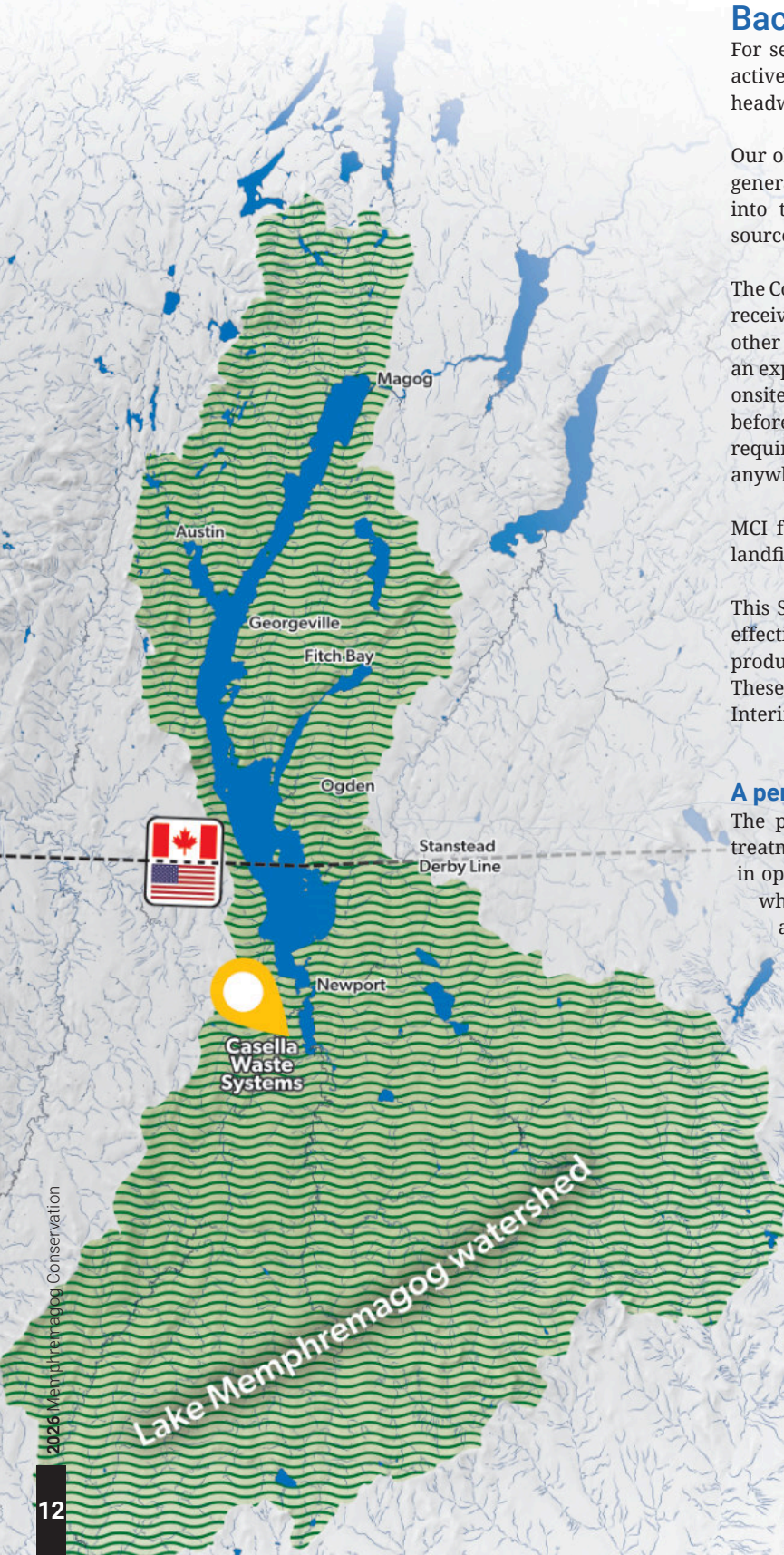
MCI formally opposed the construction of such a facility at the landfill site in December 2023.

This SAFF leachate pretreatment technology, yet to be proven to effectively remove the thousands of PFAS present in leachate, produces residuals that are hyper-concentrated in hazardous PFAS. These are then returned to the landfill, contrary to the EPA's updated Interim Guidance.

A permanent facility—or not?

The pretreatment facility is not yet permitted as a permanent treatment plant, but as a "pilot" even though it has been fully in operation since September 2023. Landfill operators assert that when the pilot is complete it would be permitted to become a permanent leachate treatment facility.

NEWSVT also recently stated that they could "theoretically" build a waste water treatment facility on site, discharging leachate into the South Bay of Lake Memphremagog. The possibility also exists that the facility could import leachate from other landfill sites, substantially increasing the environmental threat to the watershed.





The role of Vermont’s ACT 250:

In Vermont, ACT 250 plays a critical role, comparable to the environmental review requirements overseen by Quebec’s Bureau des Audiences Publiques sur l’Environnement (BAPE).

This question of whether or not an amended ACT 250 permit would be required for the pilot to become permanent was brought before the Vermont Environmental Court by our partners at Don’t Undermine Memphremagog’s Purity (DUMP).

In January 2026, the Court ruled that the current pilot leachate pretreatment project cannot become permanent without a formal permit amendment, requiring a new review process and public participation.

NEWSVT has appealed the decision of the Environmental Court to Vermont’s Supreme Court.

The role of Vermont’s Legislature

Bill H.652, which would prohibit leachate discharge, treated or not, anywhere in the watershed, was referred to the Vermont House Environment Committee in February 2026. While it garnered significant support in the legislature, and strong testimony by DUMP and MCI, it failed to pass out of committee. Undaunted, legislation will be reintroduced in January 2027.

Strong and coordinated political action

MCI has engaged in complex, direct, in-person meetings with elected officials at every level from 2024 to the present.

At the provincial level, in 2021, our Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution making permanent the moratorium on leachate disposal into Lake Memphremagog. At the municipal level, MCI strategically mobilized lakeshore municipalities, and those whose 185,000 citizens draw their drinking water from Lake Memphremagog, to ensure that their voices would be heard.

MCI drafted a model municipal resolution calling for a permanent moratorium on any discharge of leachate throughout the entire Lake Memphremagog watershed. This resolution was subsequently taken up and adapted before ultimately being adopted by the Table des Élus de l’Estrie and by all solicited municipalities, and then forwarded to municipal and governmental authorities in Vermont.

This environmental effort cannot be carried out alone.

We continue to work alongside DUMP, recipients of the 2025 Gordon-Kohl Award, whose dedication continues to inspire us. Our collaboration is both effective and motivating.

Alongside DUMP, MCI maintains ongoing vigilance and a strong and active presence on the NEWSVT technical oversight committee. Representatives closely question monitoring, sampling and analysis, and performance assessment.

MCI and DUMP also closely monitor the evolution of the pretreatment facility, testing of the SAFF pilot treatment process, and ongoing permit applications. To date, concerns are ongoing that environmental risks may be underestimated to facilitate project advancement.

The Bestan landfill example

The history of Magog’s Bestan landfill closure serves as a powerful reminder: closing a landfill is not enough. Leachate must be managed effectively to protect the watershed.

MCI played an active role, mobilizing citizens and municipalities, demanding protection of Lake Memphremagog’s watershed and drinking water. Due to these efforts, the site was permanently closed in 2010 and leachate generated there has been trucked out of the watershed since. This legacy underscores a fundamental truth: prevention is superior to remediation when drinking water is at stake.

Collective action, a shared goal

MCI’s work on the Coventry file is sustained, structured, and largely volunteer-driven, grounded in prevention, accountability, and responsibility to future generations.

In collaboration with DUMP and with growing political support, we remain focused on one clear goal: ensuring Coventry leachate never returns to the Lake Memphremagog watershed.

MCI will continue rigorous oversight and political pressure until this protection is permanently secured.

Johanne Lavoie, B.Sc.A., D.E.S.G.
Volunteer President, MCI

François Bélanger, B.Sc.A., M.Eng. (Environmental)
Volunteer Technical Consultant, MCI

Antonio (Tony) Di Fruscia, Eng., M.Eng.
Board Member and Volunteer Technical Consultant, MCI



Tribute to a Great Environmentalist



June 2006, annual tree distribution

Memphremagog Conservation (MCI) pays tribute to Gisèle Lacasse Benoit for her 40 years of commitment to the conservation of Lake Memphremagog and the surrounding natural areas. Mrs. Lacasse Benoit will step down from her role as an administrator with MCI this summer—an ideal opportunity to celebrate her journey.

Gisèle Lacasse Benoit, a leading figure in the environmental field, has always been guided by her family, social, and political values. Initially self-taught, she later earned a degree in Environmental Sciences from UQAM and a graduate diploma in Environmental Education. She is the fourth in a family of 12 children. Her deep motivation unquestionably comes from her love for the environment. The common good lies at the heart of her work.

At the time, the environment rarely made front-page news. What's more, there were few women working in the environmental field. Strong-willed, Gisèle carved out her place and took on many challenges.

This led her naturally toward youth education in the region's schools, where, starting in 1988, she created and led environmental workshops on a volunteer basis with her mentor, the late Stewart Hopps.

Environmental degradation, rapid urbanization, and declining water quality prompted her to join MCI's Board of Directors from 1990 to 1996, and again from 2002 to the present. As president from 2006 to 2013, her main focus was to spotlight projects with harmful impacts on Lake Memphremagog, while also promoting the conservation of natural areas.

Mrs. Lacasse Benoit championed a wide range of causes.

In the 1990s, she opposed a plan to install 40 rental floating homes on the lake. The project was eventually abandoned. With Mr. Hopps, she fought the construction of a massive hotel on the lakeshore in Magog Bay, as well as the beach sand-filling project in Magog, by submitting a detailed, scientifically grounded brief at BAPE (Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement) hearings. Both projects were abandoned.

In 2005, the planned expansion of the Bestan landfill site in Magog led her to submit another brief to the BAPE. The project's environmental risk was significant given the site's proximity to Lake Lovering, a headwater lake of Lake Memphremagog. The site's closure marked a victory for the lake's protection. At the same time, she fought the expansion of the Coventry landfill site located on the U.S. side of Lake Memphremagog. Unfortunately, that project is still ongoing.

In 2006, Gisèle created the Sentinelles network in response to major outbreaks of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) in certain areas of the lake. Thanks to this network, Lake Memphremagog's water quality is closely monitored—especially since the lake is the most important source of drinking water in the Eastern Townships.

“Water is a vital resource—threatened, coveted, and irreplaceable. That is why we must do everything we can to protect the region's most important drinking water reservoir.”

For Gisèle, conservation must happen at both the local and municipal levels. Her actions still reflect that vision today. Ahead of her time, Gisèle helped advance environmental protection by submitting conservation plans to municipalities and two briefs during consultations on the land-use planning scheme at the Memphremagog MRC.

Over the years, Gisèle's contagious energy has inspired many people to get involved in the environmental cause.



Photo: Martin Laprise

The sale of part of the national park for private purposes, announced by the Government of Quebec in 2006, triggered strong opposition from many citizens and organizations in the region. Gisèle was one of the founding members of the Coalition SOS Parc Orford and became its co-spokesperson. Submitting a brief to the National Assembly launched four years of advocacy that led to 459 hectares of protected land being reintegrated within the boundaries of Mont-Orford National Park and doubled its area. This David-versus-Goliath victory was not only a win for the Coalition and MCI, but also for all citizens who believed in the importance of preserving this natural jewel forever. It was an unprecedented triumph, which now has its place in the history of conservation in Quebec.





July 2006, Gisèle succeeds Donald Fisher as president

August 2007, Gisèle chairs the AGM

June 2008, reforestation of Weir Beach with volunteers

Conservation—top priority!

In 2009, Gisèle created the conservation component, which added to MCI's work, with support from conservation biologist Francine Hone. The approach aims to promote the conservation of natural environments, in collaboration with municipalities and property owners.

According to Gisèle, when you know your territory well, you have a better chance of knowing how to protect it. Today, municipalities continually improve their tools (land-use planning scheme, urban plans, and bylaws) to address environmental challenges.

“Land-use planning is essential to protect natural environments.”

The interconnected crises of biodiversity loss and climate change prompted Gisèle and MCI to accelerate conservation efforts. Since most of the watershed territory is privately owned, partnering with natural-area landowners was an obvious step. Gisèle therefore promotes voluntary conservation and initiated a unique partnership with the Fondation Nature Memphremagog (FNM) to protect ecologically valuable properties in perpetuity.

Once again, Gisèle stands out and leads by example. With her first ally—her husband, Robert Benoit—she secured recognition in 2017 for the Ruisseau-Powell natural reserve (Lacasse-Benoit area), covering 14.7 hectares. This inspired several other landowners to take similar action.

Since 2009, more than 885 hectares have been added to protected areas in the watershed. According to Gisèle, the work is far from finished, since less than 10% of the watershed is protected.

“Conserving large territories will ensure the protection of our ecosystems and, as a result, the quality of Lake Memphremagog’s water.”

Recognition after recognition

In 2013, the Cantons-de-l’Est Environmental Excellence Awards Gala highlighted the 25 years of her environmental involvement. In 2014, she received the MCI Gordon-Kohl Commemorative Award for her commitment and dedication to protecting the environment for the benefit of present and future generations—an apt way to thank her for eight years as MCI president!

Giving back to nature

All Gisèle’s volunteer work over the past 40 years has had a single objective: to restore nature to its rightful place so future generations can enjoy it. This perfectly reflects Gisèle’s great generosity.

Her family, friends, and colleagues recognize her remarkable journey. She has undoubtedly left her mark on MCI’s history—and, above all, on Lake Memphremagog and its watershed. In this regard, MCI will forever be grateful for the work she has accomplished.

Johanne Lavoie, Volunteer President



Promotional articles

MCI’s promotional articles are once again available!

Discover our selection at www.memphremagog.org/en/promotional-articles

To place an order, contact us at patrol@memphremagog.org or at 819-620-3939, extension 0.

Giving to Act or to Give Back

Special edition by Pascale Bédard, MCI Vice-President and Secretary

In this edition, and at a time that is particularly difficult for the planet and for humanity, I felt like giving a voice to people who “give” their time, their money, their knowledge, and their skills. People who care deeply about sharing and about MCI—especially people we rarely talk about, but who do a great deal. I chose three whom I know well and whose commitment is inspiring.

Memphremagog Conservation (MCI) has collected many moving testimonials from collaborators and donors. Our Vice-President and Secretary, Pascale Bédard, offers us an article in which she explores, in her own way, the deeper reasons that motivate people to give.

Several other testimonials have been collected over the past months, and MCI will have the pleasure of gradually sharing them with you on its social media platforms.

Through these shares, the MCI team hopes to spark inspiration and encourage others to get involved in their turn.



Pascale Bédard and Nathalie Marcoux.

Nathalie Marcoux, CPA President, Capinabel inc. A major donor to MCI for several years.

Nathalie, we’ve known each other for more than thirty years, and it was you who encouraged me to get involved in my first nonprofit with you—as a volunteer board member of *Toujours Ensemble* in Verdun (an organization that supports student perseverance and fights poverty).

So, I had a front-row seat to see your volunteer involvement and your generosity—in several ways.

Which boards of directors have you been involved with as a volunteer?

As a CPA, I sat on the boards of nonprofit organizations for several years, including *Toujours Ensemble*, *Anges Quebec* (a network of angel investors), and *Vers le Pacifique* (a conflict-resolution program for elementary and secondary schools).

And now, I still volunteer on the HEC entrepreneurship base committee. I’m also a mentor to entrepreneurs.

What originally inspired you to volunteer?

Throughout my life, I was able to see both of my parents get personally involved and give to the causes that were close to their hearts.

What were the reasons that led you to get personally involved as a volunteer or to give generously?

It is important to me to give back. I know I have been fortunate in life, and I want that kindness to continue. I focus especially on the environment, entrepreneurship, and support for youth.

How do you choose the organizations you support in one way or another?

I give to organizations whose mission matters to me. In addition, I like to give to organizations where I know the board members. That way, I can be confident the organization is managed responsibly.

Why did you choose to give particularly to MCI?

First, because you are involved on the board. Also, my family is settled around the lake, and it is important to preserve its health. I would add that you have a great team of professionals, all volunteers, and very competent, dedicated scientific staff working for the cause. I know my donation will be used well.

I am aware of the deterioration of the environment, and I firmly believe in climate change and the astronomical costs that will follow if we do not respond. I have seen the impact of climate change both during a scientific trip to the North Pole and through many years of scuba diving. I have personally observed a very significant degradation of the seabed in just a few decades, which saddens me greatly.

You’re a rather discreet person who doesn’t seek the spotlight, and I had to convince you to agree to open up on this topic in our newsletter; what would you like people to take away from your testimony?

I think that if each of us keeps doing our small part, we’ll have a better world. What matters to me is to act in that direction according to my means, my values, and my convictions.



**François Bélanger,
Volunteer collaborator
with MCI for several
years.**

François is trained in civil engineering and holds a master's degree in environmental engineering

from Polytechnique Montréal. At MCI's request, he wrote a detailed report on the Coventry landfill site in Vermont, aimed at analyzing and scientifically explaining the direct and indirect implications of discharging leachate ("garbage juice"), even when treated, into the Lake Memphremagog watershed. His report has been—and remains—crucial in this sensitive file concerning the protection of the drinking water of 185,000 people in the Eastern Townships.

We met through meetings of the Quebec-Vermont committee on various topics, including the Coventry landfill site.

? François, in what field did you work to develop this expertise?

I worked at an engineering consulting firm, mainly on design and team leadership for drinking-water treatment facilities and waterworks for several municipalities in the Eastern Townships, including Sherbrooke and Magog.

? When did you start volunteering in your life, and in what way?

I began getting involved as early as university in the field of water protection and then, more concretely, with several organizations—always in that field—throughout my life, alongside my career.

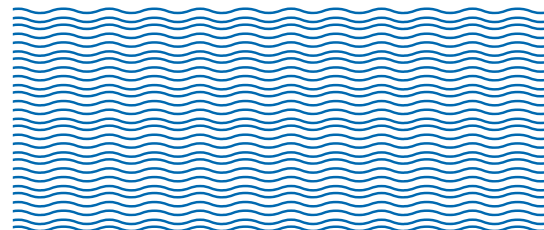
? What motivated you to volunteer?

I have always been interested in preserving water resources for everyone's benefit. Since I understand how important water purity and quality are for health, it was only natural for me to share my knowledge with the community about the real dangers and causes of pollution. In fact, MCI is the only organization that expressed interest at that level in 2007, and since then, it has been through MCI that I have shared my scientific knowledge in the field of water protection.

? What did you do concretely for MCI?

For several years, I collaborated with them and took part in the Quebec-Vermont steering committee and the technical committee for developing the phosphorus control program in the Lake Memphremagog watershed. Then, in recent years, I also produced, defended before various committees, and followed up on seven technical documents in 2023–2024. These documents address, among other things, the environmental injustice resulting from the Coventry landfill site's discharge of leachate into the Lake Memphremagog watershed.

I know you have received several awards for your involvement, but I'm adding my voice to tell you that your path is impressive, as is the work accomplished in collaboration with us. Your testimony should inspire people to share their scientific knowledge for the common good.



**Antonio Di Fruscia,
Eng., M.Eng.
Volunteer collaborator
with MCI and member
of MCI's Board of
Directors since 2023**

An engineer by training, he holds a bachelor's degree in

civil engineering, a master's degree in the same field, and a certificate in applied sustainable development. With more than thirty years of a career devoted entirely to water, he worked successively in consulting engineering, at Quebec's Ministry of Environment, and then at the City of Montréal's wastewater treatment plant. Since 2023, he has worked as an independent consulting engineer in water treatment.

? What did your involvement with MCI consist of?

My involvement has focused on the Coventry landfill (Vermont) file and its impacts on the Lake Memphremagog watershed. After collaborating with François Bélanger to review documents submitted to Vermont authorities, I joined the site's vigilance committee, where I analyzed environmental reports and became involved in the Quebec/Vermont committee as well as with the relevant authorities. I also monitor leachate treatment trials, particularly for PFAS removal. I also represent MCI publicly, whether through legislative testimony in Vermont, media interviews, or meetings with municipal elected officials.

? For what purpose did you decide to work so actively, on a volunteer basis, on this file?

Since my active retirement in 2023, I chose to invest myself actively within MCI—an organization I had heard about with admiration during my years at the Ministry of Environment. For me, this commitment is a natural and meaningful way to stay active, put my technical skills to use, and contribute to protect a body of water I consider a precious collective heritage.

On behalf of everyone—everyone who reads this newsletter, everyone who shares these values—thank you from the bottom of our hearts to these three people, and to all our volunteers and donors who have supported us for 60 years.

“On the cosmic scale, liquid water is rarer than gold.” Hubert Reeves

Let us therefore continue, together, to preserve the common good and to offer our personal support in whatever way suits us best for this noble cause, so that future generations may benefit just as much.



**Pascale Bédard, L.L.B.,
Vice-President and Secretary of MCI**

HERITAGE CIRCLE MEMBERS

📅 2026 Calendar

May 4: Start of patrol activities

Mid May: Start of water sampling and surveillance of shoreline protected areas

May 16 from 10 AM to 3 PM: Free tree distribution at the Marais-de-la-Rivière-aux-Cerises Association (LAMRAC) in Magog

End of May to mid-June: Shoreline plantings for the Action bandes riveraine project

June 6: Kiosk at Rendez-vous vert in Magog

June 13: MCI's Annual General Meeting at the Carrefour d'Austin, in Austin

June: Kiosk at Georgeville's Canada Day celebrations

June to August: Awareness campaign at boat launch sites and in bays

July 2, 3-10 and August 7-12: Phragmite control activities in Fitch Bay

Mid-July to mid-August : Chinese banded snail removal activity in Greene Bay in Austin

July 11 from 11 AM to 3 PM: Kiosk at Potton's beach party

August from 1 PM to 5 PM: Kiosk at Magog's fête de l'eau

August from 10 AM to 4 PM: Kiosk at Magog's public market

October : End of activities on the lake

Contact us for more information about the activities planned this summer at info@memphremagog.org or at 819-620-3939, extension 0.

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 www.memphremagog.org

Tribute to a great volunteer - Paul Arthur Trudel (Pat) 1937 – 2025

We wish to pay tribute to Pat Trudel, who passed away on October 29.

Pat was a dedicated volunteer at Memphremagog Conservation for nearly 20 years. He was an excellent treasurer who kept our organization's finances in perfect order. Pat left a mark on those around him through his generosity, his humour, and his commitment to MCI.

Donations to Memphremagog Conservation (MCI) can be made in his memory.



Abbott, William
Association des
Mouillages de Knowlton
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Jean-François
Benoit, Robert
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Caron, Trevor H.
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Lépine, Peter
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Massicotte, Yves
Mouget, Yves
Noël, Jean-Yves
Oosterwaal, Jan
Pépin, Jean
Perout, Alena & Peck,
Jonathan
Plate, Joerg
Poirier, Germain
Poirier, Vincent
Potten, Stephen R.
Robinson, Robert
Sauriol, Alain
Setlakwe, Robert
Shevelow, Sandra
Sinclair, Yan
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Spencer, Susan & Norman
St-Cyr, Roger
Sullivan, Elsie
Talon, Jean-Denis
Tawil, Marie-Anne
Tremblay, Pascal
Vouloumanos, Nicholas
Wilson, Janet
Yates, Henry B.

*In addition to those mentioned,
certain donations were made
anonymously.*

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Pinsonnault, Maurice
Rivard, François - Pépin,
Isabelle

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Cowan Weber, Janet
Gerretson, Mark
Goodwin, Harvey
Hurney, John
Paine, Em & John
Trudel, Paul Arthur (PAT)

Updated: May 6th, 2026

THANK YOU TO OUR MAIN PARTNERS!

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Conseil de gouvernance de l'eau des bassins versants de la rivière Saint-François (COGESAF)

Nature conservancy of Canada (NCC)

Appalachian Corridor (ACA)

DUMP (Don't Undermine Memphremagog's Purity)

Fondation de la Faune du Quebec (FFQ)

Memphremagog Nature Foundation (FNM)

Fondation de la Faune du Quebec (FFQ)

Memphremagog Watershed Association (MWA)

Regroupement des associations pour la protection de l'environnement des lacs et des bassins versants (RAPPEL)

Regroupement des organismes de conservation du Quebec (ROCCQ)

The municipalities of Austin, Potton Township, Stanstead Township, Ogdén, the cities of Magog and Sherbrooke

The Memphremagog MRC

The government of Quebec

The government of Canada

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