GREEN CORRIDORS FOR A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE
IN THE VALLÉE-DU-HAUT-SAINT-LAURENT

A SHARED VISION FOR ESTABLISHING GREEN CORRIDORS

A collaborative process

In 2011, the Conférence régionale des élus of the Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent began planning green corridors on its territory. This process is coordinated by Nature-Action Québec (NAQ) and the Châteauguay Watershed Agency (known by its French acronym, SCABRIC).

The objectives

To bring together local and regional stakeholders from different sectors, such as municipal, agricultural, forestry, governmental and environmental.

To propose green corridor paths that:

- Contribute to **maintaining biodiversity and connectivity**

- Integrate and provide **additional benefits** (financial, ecological, quality of life, landscape aesthetic, etc.)

- Take into account the facts and **realities**, **constraints** and **opportunities** of the territory

- Take into account stakeholders' **interests and values**

Identifying potential green corridors

The analysis began with a map, recently produced by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and GéoMont, which identified forested and wetlands sites of high ecological value. The regional stakeholders committee adopted 10 criteria that guided the identification of potential green corridor paths, based on the overall quality of habitats and compatibility with human activities. Here are the most important criteria:

- **Current land-uses**, so that green corridors pass through natural areas, abandoned fields and unused spaces

- **Proximity to a river or stream**, their banks being important corridors for many species

- Major **land-use zoning categories**, wildlife habitats and obstacles
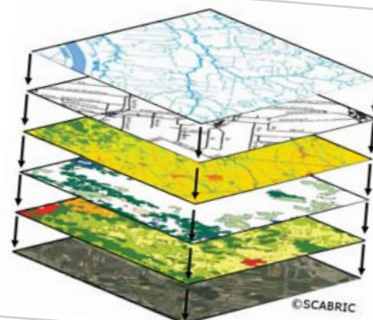
The territory was divided into 10 m x 10 m squares and, in order to identify potential green corridor paths, a "favorability" index was calculated for each square.

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WHAT DO GREEN CORRIDORS LOOK LIKE?

A green corridor can include different landscape elements, which allow many species of wildlife to move about safely. There is no pre-defined recipe for green corridors. The optimal width and their elements depend on the landscape context, the planning scale and the targeted species.

Windbreaks

Stream and river-edge buffers

© Julien Fortier

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Woodlots

© NAQ

Abandoned fields

© NAQ

Wildlife passages

© SCABRIC

© AIRIMEX - Claude Duchaîne

Wetland

Continuous corridor

Stepping stones

Forest

WHY GREEN CORRIDORS?

Green corridors contribute to maintaining healthy ecosystems. They allow many different species of animals to move between the habitats they need for feeding, reproducing and overwintering. A green corridors network also contributes to people's quality of life, by adding interest to the landscape, improving water quality and creating opportunities for nature trails or bike paths. People can profit by harvesting timber, nuts or fruit, and from the reduction of soil erosion in agricultural areas. Green corridors contribute to our landscape heritage and to tourism development.
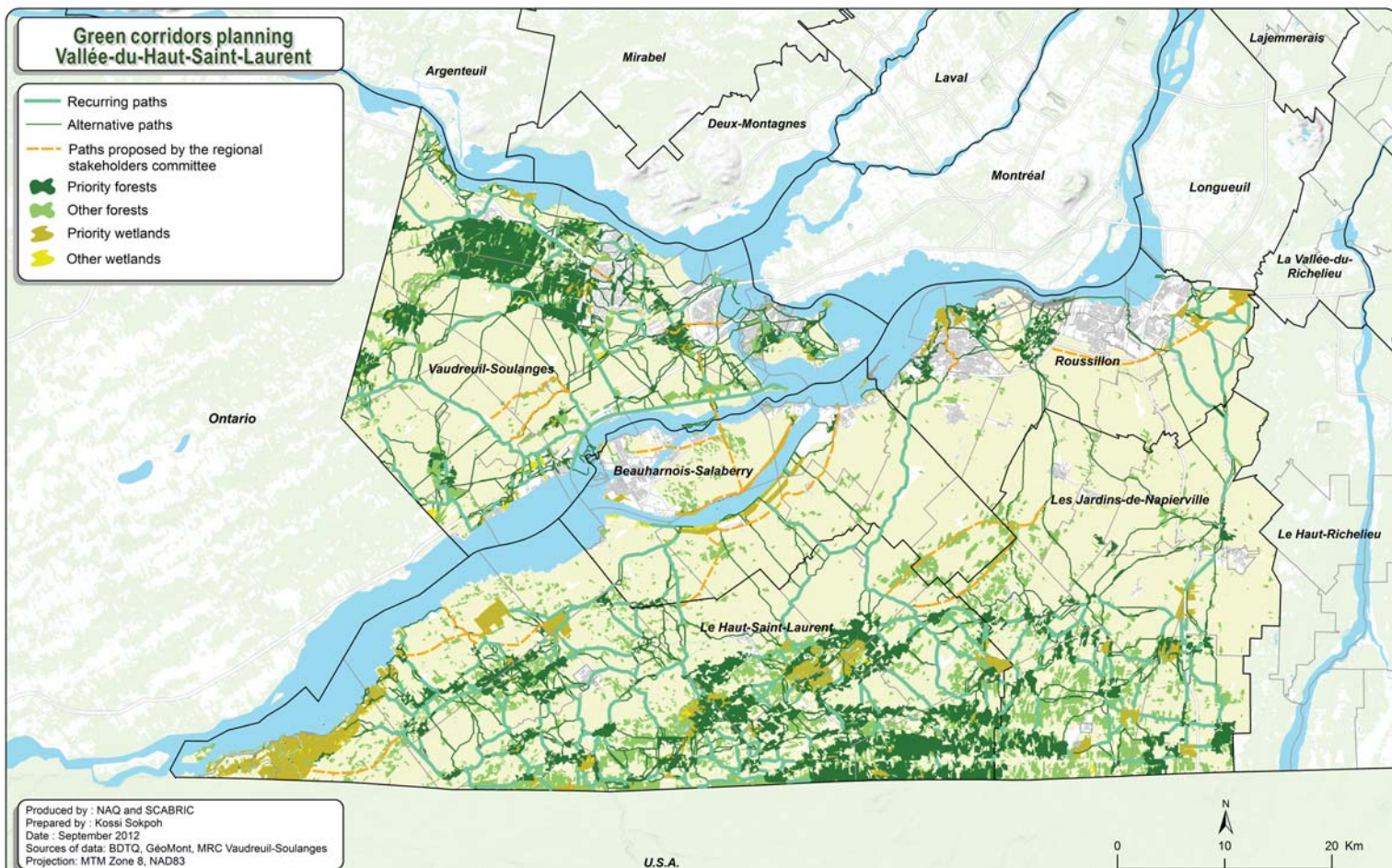
A MAP UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Following the analysis of the territory, here is a proposed map of the most favourable paths along which green corridors could be established. These paths may be modified following the integration of new data and the consultation of local stakeholders and landowners.

Green corridors planning
Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent

— Recurring paths
— Alternative paths
- - - Paths proposed by the regional stakeholders committee
▓▓ Priority forests
▓▓ Other forests
▓▓ Priority wetlands
▓▓ Other wetlands

Argenteuil
Mirabel
Lajemmerais
Deux-Montagnes
Laval
Montréal
Longueuil
La Vallée-du-Richelieu
Vaudreuil-Soulanges
Roussillon
Ontario
Beauharnois-Salaberry
Les Jardins-de-Napierville
Le Haut-Richelieu
Le Haut-Saint-Laurent

Produced by : NAQ and SCABRIC
Prepared by : Kossi Sokpoh
Date : September 2012
Sources of data: BDTQ, GéoMont, MRC Vaudreuil-Soulanges
Projection: MTM Zone 8, NAD83

U.S.A.

N

0   10   20 Km

GREEN CORRIDORS INTEGRATE INTO OUR TERRITORY

The regional stakeholders committee has identified key planning principles:

- **Work with landowners:** advice and support; compensation and development programs

- Integrate green corridors into the **land-use schemes of regional county** municipalities

- Adapt green corridors to the landscape

- **Make use of opportunities**: reforestation projects, bike path projects, space unsuitable for other uses

- Consider using already existing natural areas and complete the corridors with new plantings as needed
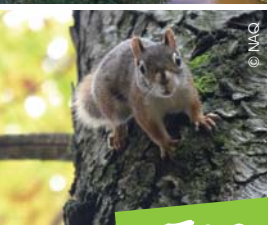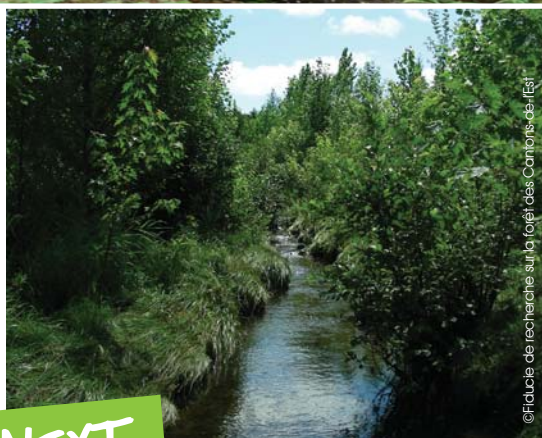
THE NEXT STEPS

- Devise a **regional action plan**

- **Implement pilot projects** through collaboration between organizations and landowners

- **Acquire additional knowledge** (e.g., quality of riparian buffers, sociological and economic elements and wildlife behaviour)

For more information, please contact us:

Kathleen Boothroyd
k.boothroyd@scabric.ca
450 699-1771

Marie-Pier Prairie
marie-pier.prairie@nature-action.qc.ca
450 536-0422 poste 409

Sébastien Rémillard
s.remillard@scabric.ca
450 699-1771

SCABRIC
Société de Conservation et d'Aménagement du Bassin de la Rivière Châteauguay

CRÉ Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent

Nature-Action QUÉBEC