



The length of Canada's rivers could circle the globe 400 times. The extensive undammed rivers of Canada's boreal are the last refuge for many of the world's ocean-going migratory fish, including half the remaining population of Canada's Atlantic salmon.

While the rivers and lakes of Northern Canada are mostly healthy, 9 in 10 Canadians live in the south and it is here that our waters are most threatened. While Canada has an abundance of clean fresh water, most of it is in the north and is inaccessible to us.

The threats to southern Ontario's rivers and lakes include:

- Non-point-source pollution, such as agricultural run-off, pesticides, and urban stormwater runoff.
- Loss of freshwater habitat and species.
- Changes to the natural flow of rivers, as well as dams and barriers that impede fish migration.
- Invasive Species.

Humans have been very successful at moving water off the landscape quickly via ditches and drains, but now we're learning to re-shape the land so that it can hold water again - the exact opposite of what we've been doing for the past 200 years.

If this past summer's drought is a sign of things to come, we have to find solutions to hold water upstream longer to withstand summer droughts. Nature's solution, wetlands, hold approximately 2.5 million litres of water per hectare, and perhaps this will inspire a new-found love of the iconic Canadian Beaver, who builds wetlands for free.

{With thanks to Dan Kraus, Freshwater Conservation Scientist for the Nature Conservancy of Canada. In this article I have borrowed liberally from his presentation at the Ontario Land Trust Alliance Gather this past October. – Dorthea.}