

## Environmental Talking Points for the Northvolt development project

1. The Northvolt development is taking place on a site with a high diversity of habitats and wildlife within a region that is primarily agricultural and urban.
  - Habitat in the region is severely fragmented, resulting in islands of habitat (like the proposed Northvolt site) with hotspots of biodiversity.
  - The former industrial use of the site does not mean that the site cannot be an important area for biodiversity<sup>1</sup>.
2. The site contains some of the highest quality wetlands in the region. Wetlands are essential ecosystems, serving as critical habitat for fauna and flora, and providing multiple ecosystem services such as cleaning water, storing carbon, and holding water during big storms.
  - Multiple species at risk which depend on wetlands have been observed at the Northvolt site, including the federally endangered Spiny Softshell turtle and Least Bittern, and special concern Snapping turtle.
  - The Northvolt site is also home to the Shagbark Hickory, a provincially at-risk species that also supports traditional harvesting activities.
3. Wetlands in the region are severely threatened.
  - It is estimated that 40-80% of the wetlands in the region have been destroyed since colonization. Wetlands now make up less than 10% of the area<sup>2</sup> of the MRC of Vallée-du-Richelieu.
  - While the wetlands at Northvolt are not considered “high quality”, the cumulative loss of wetlands in the region necessitates the protection and restoration of remaining wetlands.
4. The tools used by the provincial Environment Ministry (MELCCFP) for preventing wetland losses and impacts to the environment are failing.
  - The Ministry has issued a permit to Northvolt that includes filling wetlands. The time period for filling (August 1<sup>st</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>) will result in hibernating turtles being buried alive as no turtle rescue or exclusion efforts were completed this fall.
  - The government requires money be paid by Northvolt to fill the wetlands with the funds to be used to create offsetting wetlands. However, this approach does not work. For example, 72 Regional Municipal Councils that destroyed wetlands between June 16<sup>th</sup> 2017 and December 31<sup>st</sup> 2018 did not submit a restoration or creation project during the first call for wetland project proposals (June 16<sup>th</sup> 2019 to June 16<sup>th</sup> 2022) and the MELCCFP has been criticized for failing to evaluate the impacts of restoration and creation projects on the environment<sup>3</sup>.
5. The Richelieu River (formerly Iroquois River) is home to multiple aquatic species at risk.
  - Critical habitat for the Eastern Sand Darter and Copper Redhorse can be found directly adjacent to the Northvolt site. The Richelieu River is the only body of water where reproductivity has been confirmed<sup>4</sup>.
  - The Bridle Shiner, River Redhorse, Channel Darter, and Hickorynut freshwater mussel can also be found in the Richelieu River.
  - Wetlands and other natural features play an essential role in maintaining the health of critical habitat in the Richelieu River.

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<sup>1</sup> The aim of restoration is to create biodiversity in an area where human actions have previously eliminated habitat.

<sup>2</sup> In “How much habitat is Enough” edition 3, Environment and Climate Change Canada recommends a minimum of 10% of each major watershed or 40% of the historic wetland coverage be protected and restored.

<sup>3</sup> Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2022-2023

<sup>4</sup> DFO. 2012. Recovery Strategy for the Copper Redhorse (*Moxostoma hubbsi*) in Canada. Species at Risk Act Recovery Strategy Series. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ottawa. xi+60 pp.