

COMPASS

WINTER 2025-2026

QUEBEC-LABRADOR FOUNDATION

With its roots in the Atlantic Region of North America, QLF engages environmental leaders worldwide to advance community-based and larger-scale conservation and stewardship of natural resources and cultural heritage.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF QLF

We live in an era that can test an organization's mettle. Uncertainties abound regarding funding, program security, and commitments in general. While concerned, we at QLF are heartened by the strength and resolve we derive from our partnerships.

In this issue of *Compass*, you'll learn about three of our exemplary partnerships: Phil Huffman's work promoting ecological connectivity across Northeast North America with 80+ partners of the Staying Connected Initiative; Alexa Schubak's multi-year partnership with land trusts in the Maritime provinces, which join together to advance stewardship of the regions protected areas; and a 30-year partnership with the late Helen Hays of the American Museum of Natural History, prominent for leading the longest longitudinal study of Common and Roseate Terns in the Western Hemisphere.

I am pleased that this issue also contains a reflection by longtime QLF associate Kathleen Blanchard on the 50th Anniversary of the QLF's pioneering Living Rivers Program. Its launch in 1975, under the direction of Larry Morris, President *Emeritus*, heralded the expansion of QLF into the nascent world of natural resource conservation.

As always, I invite you to share your thoughts and ideas with me.

Best wishes,

Elizabeth Alling
President

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QLF PROVIDING VITAL LEADERSHIP TO REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY PARTNERSHIP

Since aligning itself with the Staying Connected Initiative (SCI) over three years ago, the Quebec-Labrador Foundation has provided increasingly important leadership in support of advancing ecological connectivity to benefit the well-being of wildlife and people in Northeastern North America.

QLF's engagement is led by Phil Huffman, Senior Vice President, Regional and Global Programs and Alexa Schubak, Special Projects Director. The ambitious nature and scale of the initiative – to conserve, restore, and enhance ecological connectivity across borders in the Northern Appalachian to Acadian region and beyond – means that no one organization can get the job done on its own. Rather the work is undertaken through a large partnership network of more than 80 entities, including various levels of government, nonprofit organizations and academic institutions in both the United States and Canada

To date, QLF's efforts have focused primarily on expanding SCI's capacity and leadership at the region-wide, transboundary level. Priority activities include: developing strategic relationships with other key entities and initiatives; bringing people together across borders, cultures, and sectors to find common ground and opportunities for collaboration; and identifying and elevating important actions to advance connectivity conservation. Much of this work emphasizes the need for a diverse, well-coordinated network of partners operating synergistically at multiple scales to achieve desired outcomes.

Through these roles, QLF has become a recognized leader in the SCI network – Phil serves on both the executive and steering committees. Working alongside other SCI leaders, he and Alexa help drive key aspects of the organization's regional-scale work, most notably the 2024 Connectivity Summit in Montreal and the ensuing “Pathways” guide, detailed in this summary [Primer](#).

For more on the SCI, go to: <https://stayingconnectedinitiative.org>



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF THE STAYING CONNECTED INITIATIVE

QLF CELEBRATES SEVEN SEASONS SUPPORTING PROTECTED LANDS IN THE MARITIMES

Since its launch in 2017, QLF's Maritimes Program has placed undergraduate and graduate students in the field to help advance the conservation and stewardship of protected lands in the Maritimes region of Atlantic Canada. Over the course of seven summer field seasons, the program has conducted 213 site visits across 131 unique nature preserves and conservation lands.

As demonstrated by its growing reach and impact, the program helps meet a critical regional need for on-the-ground stewardship capacity, while fostering the development of next-generation environmental professionals through immersive, hands-on fieldwork.



The 2025 Maritimes Program Field Team provided critical support to QLF partners in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. Field Team: (left to right) Emile Derbesy-Lanari, River Waterman, Emily MacDonald, and Ella Sloan. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LIV MONCK-WHIPPI

Central to the success of the program is QLF's strong partnerships with regional land trusts. QLF has collaborated with the Nature Trust of New Brunswick on this program since 2017, and in 2022, expanded to include the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and Island Nature Trust (PEI).

At the direction of QLF Maritimes Program Director Alexa Schubak and Field Coordinator Emily MacDonald, the fieldwork currently focuses on three core areas: biodiversity monitoring (collecting species data to assess ecosystem health), habitat management (controlling invasive species and



participating in environmental clean-ups), community engagement (supporting educational workshops and volunteer participation in stewardship initiatives). A key outcome is fostering people's relationship with nature by helping them better connect with their local environments.

The 2025 field season of QLF's Maritimes Program received generous support from the Echo Foundation, the R. Howard Webster Foundation, and the Power Corporation of Canada.

QLF is excited to keep building on the momentum of this work — supporting healthy ecosystems, stronger partnerships, and the next generation of environmental leaders.

QLF LEADERSHIP ON THE GO – BRENT MITCHELL

At times it can be hard to keep up with QLF Senior Vice President Brent Mitchell. This is one of those times.

In mid-October he spoke in or moderated seven conference sessions at the 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi (October 9-15). The event drew more than 10,000 conservationists, on-site or online, to 1,000 events aimed at setting the conservation and sustainable development agenda for decades to come.



Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, site of the 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BRENT MITCHELL

The next week Brent was in Panama City to participate in two technical meetings regarding the [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#), a December 1993 pact committing over 165 nations to promoting sustainable development.



The first meeting addressed the progress on implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022), which contains Target 3, the global “30x30” natural resource protection initiative. For more information click [here](#).

Importantly, the second focused on a work program to fully integrate the rights, contributions and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities into the global biodiversity agenda – an unprecedented step toward greater environmental democracy worldwide. For more information click [here](#).

As a Vice Chair of the IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), Brent leads efforts to grow and support a global network of conservation partners responding to the threats posed by biodiversity loss and climate change, among other challenges. Of current note is the WCPA's ongoing work promoting implementation of the “30x30” target for conserving 30% of the surface of the planet by 2030. To date, the education campaign has yielded a [Guide](#) and [website](#).

QLF RECOGNIZES PASSING OF LONGTIME SOUNDS CONSERVANCY FELLOW

With the passing of Helen Hays in February 2025 at age 94, QLF and The Sounds Conservancy Program lost a valued long-term partner.



A Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) mist netted in Punta Rasa, Argentina, returns to Great Gull Island off Long Island Sound, the largest nesting colony of Common and Roseate Terns in the Western Hemisphere. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF GREIG CRANNA



For over half a century, ornithologist Helen Hays of the American Museum of Natural History (New York) documented, banded, and nurtured endangered Common Terns and Roseate Terns on Great Gull Island in eastern Long Island Sound – now the largest nesting colony of the terns in the Western Hemisphere.

For 30 of those years, Helen directed the Great Gull Island project and received funding in the form of research grants from QLF's Sounds Conservancy Marine Research Program to support the study on Great Gull and its extension of her research to Argentina and Brazil. The longitudinal study of the migratory patterns of terns banded on Great Gull Island and their annual migration to South America is deemed critical for the protection of the colony's nesting grounds and overall restoration of the species. The study is now managed by the American Museum of Natural History with Massachusetts Audubon and the University of Connecticut.

Helen's five-decade quest to save the species is documented in the film, [Full Circle](#).

Founded in 1984 and managed by QLF since 1995, The Sounds Conservancy is a marine research program facilitating the protection and stewardship of the sounds, estuaries, and coastal waters of southern New England and New York.

Each year, The Sounds Conservancy awards research grants to leading practitioners in the fields of Biodiversity Conservation, Marine Research, Environmental Policy, Environmental education and Outreach. In turn, grantees contribute their research findings to a QLF publication, which documents the work of The Sounds Conservancy Fellows over three decades. This publication serves as a reference for current and future grantees.

QLF LIVING RIVERS PROGRAM MARKS 50th ANNIVERSARY

This story ran in the September 2025 issue of Living Rivers (Vol. 8 No.3).

Today we honor the 50th anniversary of the Living Rivers Program, an educational program launched in 1975 by the Quebec-Labrador Foundation and the International Atlantic Salmon Foundation. The program, which continued for 13 years under the direction of QLF, had profound influence on conservation education in the Atlantic Region.

Kathleen Blanchard is President and Founder of Intervale Associates, a former, long-term QLF staff member and now Senior Consultant in Biodiversity Conservation.

Living Rivers Changed Lives, Helped Salmon
by Kathleen Blanchard

Fifty years ago, on the banks of the Tabusintac River in northeastern New Brunswick, a team of graduate students were tasked by two influential CEOs in the salmon conservation world with developing the region's first residential environmental camp for teenagers and adults. The challenge was daunting. In 1975 there were no existing models in the Atlantic Region that focused



on rivers and, furthermore, leaders of the two organizations backing the program had hopes that it would lead to a reduction in salmon poaching.

Years of effort by the International Atlantic Salmon Foundation (IASF) to reduce threats to Atlantic salmon caused by interaction with high seas fisheries had not produced the intended increase in returning salmon populations for rivers of the Maritimes. Turning their attention to in-stream threats, Dr. Wilfred Carter of IASF, which later became the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF), and Rev. Robert A. Bryan, founder of Quebec-Labrador Foundation (QLF), devised a radically different strategy that relied upon experiential education.



Prof. Richard Fischer, guest instructor, teaches participants about aquatic insects, including the giant water bug. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF QLF

Neither CEO could have predicted that over the course of its 13 years of operation, the program would become an incubator for leadership development, not only among the program's teenage participants, but also for the more than 65 young instructors and camp directors, chief among them Larry Morris, the program's first Director. It was Morris who, after hours of early discussions with Carter, gave the program its name: Living Rivers.

Dr. Carter and Reverend Bryan sent the team of instructors to Micmac Lodge, six kilometers upstream on this pristine river known for sea run trout and a fall run of salmon. Inspired by the pioneering task before them, Morris' team rapidly developed an intense curriculum: three weeks for teenage youth, with a focus on hands-on learning about aquatic species, and three weeks for adults, with a focus on issues discussion.

Both sessions included road trips to visit natural areas, fish hatcheries, and industrial areas such as peat mining operations and power plants. The adult session included resource users of all types, from employees of mining and forestry companies to schoolteachers and corporate executives. Participants included representatives from Canadian and US governmental



departments and nonprofit organizations. Regardless of individuals' backgrounds, discussions seemed to converge around shared conservation issues, thus broadening people's perspectives in the search for solutions.

Shortly after that first year, Morris was analyzing what was happening at the Living Rivers Program as the subject of a doctoral dissertation at Cornell University. While no quantitative measures existed for how the salmon populations of New Brunswick rivers had benefited from the program, one can say with certainty that the program gave evidence for a powerful new approach to salmon conservation and resource management.

Many of the program's instructors eventually became leaders in the field of conservation. For Dr. Morris, the experience was life changing. He became the CEO and later President of QLF, where he continues to serve as President Emeritus. Looking back 50 years to that formative experience, Morris is fiercely loyal to the people who helped develop the program and to the cooks and guides who supported its operation. He is quick to share many stories of the river and its people. Some of those stories likely will appear in a forthcoming book, expected to be released in 2026.



Staff, instructors, and participants at Micmac Lodge, 1975. Larry Morris, rear left. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF QLF



The pristine Tabusintac River in New Brunswick was a perfect setting for learning about conservation. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF QLF

QLF WELCOMES NEW DIRECTORS TO U.S. BOARD

The Quebec-Labrador Foundation - U.S. Board of Directors elected the following new members at its annual meeting on October 17, 2025. Christopher Dawson was elected in October 2024.

Christopher (“Topher”) Dawson

In 1989, 17-year-old Topher Dawson spent the summer helping QLF conduct outreach and environmental education in Fortune Harbour, Newfoundland and the Forteau, Labrador region. Like father, like son: QLF Honourary Director Jon Dawson visited the Quebec North Shore with QLF founder Bob Bryan in the 1960s. It was a formative experience for each Dawson.

Topher studied photography at Princeton University and after a brief stint working in the Montana fly-fishing industry, he moved to New York City. For the past 29 years he has worked in many aspects of the photography field, including gallery director, curator, and commercial and fine art photographer. Topher’s photographs are held in multiple permanent collections, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

Topher stays young playing bass and keyboards in the roots-rock band The Bargemen.



COURTESY PHOTOGRAPH



COURTESY PHOTOGRAPH

Ellen Griggs

QLF has known Ellen Griggs for several decades.

Ellen is an Independent Corporate Director and visionary leader who accelerates executional excellence that drives shareholder value. Recognized among the top transformative executives in the field and an expert in global asset management, Ellen delivers a 360-degree perspective to board governance with honed expertise in strategy, investments, and executive compensation. Ellen executes with precision, impact and impeccable integrity, relying on her significant team building talent to achieve consensus.

In the nonprofit arena, Ellen is a member of the Board of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, and Chairs the Investment Committee.



Blažena Hušková

Blažena Hušková is a consultant, trainer and author who implements projects at the intersection of nature, landscape conservation, education, and sustainable development in the North Bohemia region of the Czech Republic. From 1995 to 2002, she co-founded and led the Foundation for the Jizera Mountains (now Ivan Dejmal Foundation for Nature Conservation) to address the critical state of the forest's ecosystems. As a 20+ year board member of the Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation, Blažena supports community-based projects rooted in environmental protection and civil engagement.

Blažena hosted QLF's second Landscape Stewardship Exchange in Europe and presented at both QLF Alumni Congresses, 2006 in Budapest and 2016 in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain.



COURTESY PHOTOGRAPH



COURTESY PHOTOGRAPH

Lina Storm

Lina Storm has known QLF for over 30 years. Her daughter once served as a QLF Intern prior to entering McGill University.

Lina has over 20 years of experience as a marketing professional in the financial services industry. As EVP, Head of Advanced Insurance Solutions at Cetera Financial Group, she specializes in the promotion of advanced planning strategies, helping wealth advisors to position and design optimal insurance solutions for their clients.

Lina's talent for leading development of marketing resources such as marketing software, digital apps and planning tools was honed at MassMutual, Global Atlantic and Prudential. While at John Hancock she produced the industry's first podcast.

Lina is a respected columnist, blogger, author, and speaker in the financial services industry.



QLF ALUMNA RELEASES BOOK ON SEALS

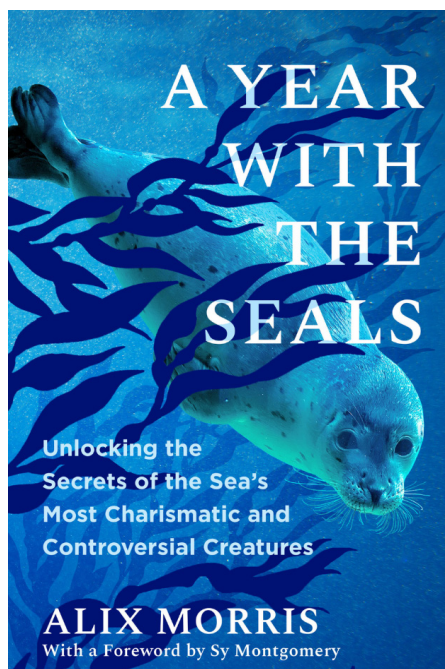
Raised in a family that taught her to be curious and to care, QLF Alumna Alix Morris has long been drawn to stories involving human's relationships with nature. In her recently published book, *A Year with the Seals: Unlocking the Secrets of the Sea's Most Charismatic and Controversial Creatures*, Morris, a science writer in mid-coast Maine, explores this dynamic in the context of the seal's remarkable return from near extinction in New England and beyond.

With their puppy dog eyes and playful demeanor, seals are often portrayed in an exceedingly favorable light. However, as Morris discovers during to her year-long travels through the coastal waters of North America, the overall picture becomes clouded. In sharing her extensive research and exchanges with fishermen, Indigenous peoples, and even surfers and swimmers, it becomes clear to Morris that the re-emerging seal populations can negatively impact the livelihoods, long held customs, and safety of those humans who inhabit the same geography as the seals.

Armed with this understanding, Morris's work gives shape to the scientific conversations regarding the continued role of humans in the protection and stewardship of the world's marine ecosystem.

If the Morris name sounds familiar, its likely due to the fact that her mother, Tina Morris, recently published a book of her own. In *Return to the Sky*, the senior Morris shares her unique story of reintroducing the Bald Eagle into New York state, effectively bringing the nation's emblem back from near extinction.

For more on Alix Morris and *A Year with the Seals* visit www.alixmorris.com.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JILL HOYLE



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