Bear Brook Watershed Study – Phase 1 – Public Engagement Summary

Public Information Centre (PIC):

- Public Information Centre was held on Thursday, November 13, 2025, at the Bear Brook Community Centre in Ottawa.
- Over 100 participants attended the event.
- Councillors Catherine Kitts and Isabelle Skalski were in attendance.
- PIC provided attendees the opportunity to:
  - Learn about key findings of the study through displayed poster boards
  - Listen/watch a presentation prepared and delivered by SNC staff
  - Review the Characterization Report.
  - Ask questions directly to the study team.
  - Participate in 1-on-1 meetings with project leads

Print Outreach:

- **Bilingual Consultation Notices were placed in the following print publications**
  - Ottawa Citizen
  - Ottawa Sun
  - The Review
  - Vision

Online Outreach:

Project webpage: Published online in September 2025 (1,743 visits as of January 2026)

Social Media: Bilingual Consultation Notices (with links to project webpage, story map and feedback form) posted on October 17 with over 40,000 views and over 350 post engagements.

South Nation Current Newsletter:

- Consultation Notice – October Issue
- Recap and Thank You – November Issue
- Distributed to over 4000 subscribers

Online Story Map:

- Access to the online Story Map – visually highlighted a summary of the studies and key findings.

Characterization Report:

- Link to the full report provided remote access to study findings.

Online feedback form:

- Provided watershed residents unable to attend the PIC an opportunity to submit comments and questions.
- 25 property owners within the study area shared feedback using the online form.
- Feedback collected from the PIC, online submissions, and stakeholder meetings will be incorporated into Phase 2 scenario planning and Phase 3 implementation recommendations.

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Bear Brook Characterization Study

Online Feedback form - Summary

1. **Urban Development and Land Use Change:** Rapid expansion of residential, commercial, and industrial areas is a top concern, as it threatens forests, wetlands, wildlife, and water quality. Residents are particularly concerned about increased runoff from new developments and how it will enter streams and waterways, potentially worsening water quality and increasing flooding.

2. **Water Quality (Nutrients, Chlorides, Pesticides):** Pollution from fertilizers, road salts, and stormwater runoff is affecting water quality in wells, streams, and Bear Brook. Maintaining clean water is critical for both human and ecological health.

3. **Flooding, Drainage, and Watershed Maintenance:** Frequent flooding and poor drainage significantly impact downstream properties, especially farms, and are worsened by debris, blockages, and unmanaged creek channels. Residents emphasize that proper maintenance of creeks and forests—including clearing debris and managing forest litter—is essential to prevent erosion, reduce flood risks, and help the watershed function naturally and safely.

4. **Low Water, Drought, and Stream Flow Reduction:** Many residents report wells running dry and low water levels in Bear Brook, particularly during summer months. Reduced stream flow threatens aquatic life, water availability, and ecosystem health.

5. **Climate Change Impacts:** Residents recognize that extreme weather events, including more frequent floods and droughts, are increasing. Adapting the watershed to climate change is seen as a high priority to protect people and nature.

6. **Wetland Restoration and Protection:** Wetlands are critical for flood control, water filtration, and wildlife habitat. Restoring and protecting these areas is a key opportunity to improve watershed resilience.

7. **Tree Planting, Riparian Buffers, and Reforestation:** Planting native trees along waterways reduces erosion, provides shade, and supports wildlife. Riparian buffers also improve water quality and help stabilize stream banks.

8. **Policy, Low-Impact Development, and Land-Use Guidance:** Strong zoning and development policies can protect floodplains and sensitive areas. Residents see strategic planning as essential to prevent environmental degradation from new development.

9. **Natural Heritage Systems and Connectivity:** Residents are concerned that continued development could disrupt the linkage between Larose Forest and Mer Bleue Bog. They emphasize that these natural spaces are ecologically significant and should be preserved to maintain wildlife corridors, ecosystem function, and the integrity of the watershed.

10. **Community Education and Engagement:** Educating residents, farmers, and planners about watershed health and climate adaptation builds long-term stewardship. Citizen science and public participation enhance monitoring and awareness.