

Species at Risk Stewardship Program 2020-2021 Guidelines

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions regarding the Species at Risk Stewardship Program, please contact:

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DEADLINE

Applications must be submitted via email to SAR.stewardship@ontario.ca by **3:00pm EST on Wednesday, March 25, 2020**. You will receive a confirmation email within two business days of submitting your application. If you do not receive this email, please contact us at 705-755-5649. Applications received after the deadline date or not fully completed will not be accepted. All applicants must refer to the Legal Authorizations section of the Guidelines before applying.

OBJECTIVES

The Species at Risk Stewardship Program (SARSP) includes the former Species at Risk Stewardship Fund (SARSF) as well as the Species at Risk Research Fund for Ontario (SARRFO):

The objectives of the SARSP are:

- Improving the status of species at risk and their habitats by supporting stewardship and recovery actions
- Supporting stewardship and multi-partner approaches to species at risk protection and recovery
- Supporting outreach, youth employment opportunities and the provision of related tools and techniques to inspire and enable people to become involved in species at risk stewardship
- Addressing important needs and knowledge gaps related to the protection, recovery and management of species at risk and their habitats in Ontario by supporting scientific research

2020-2021 SPECIES AT RISK STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

For 2020-2021, the SARSP is accepting multi-year applications (spanning 1-3 fiscal years) that support stewardship initiatives and contribute to the protection and recovery of species at risk in Ontario. All project activities must begin no earlier than April 1, 2020 and finish no later than March 1 for each fiscal year of the project.

BACKGROUND FOR APPLICANTS

In Ontario, species are assessed by a team of independent experts known as the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO) and placed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List.

The Species at Risk in Ontario List is a regulation made under the ESA (O. Reg. 230/08). The regulation (including species lists and status) is available on the Province of Ontario's [E-laws website](#) and on the [Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks \(MECP\) website](#).

To be eligible for the SARSP, project proposals must target species listed as extirpated, endangered, threatened, or special concern on the Species at Risk in Ontario List.

Once a species is listed as endangered, threatened or special concern on the Species at Risk in Ontario List, the Ministry seeks science advice on the steps that should be taken towards the species' recovery. The advice is presented in **recovery strategies** for endangered and threatened species and **management plans** for special concern species.

The Ministry responds to the advice in Recovery Strategies and Management Plans by developing a species-specific policy known as a **government response statements (GRS)**. These statements identify the provincial recovery goal and summarize the actions the government intends to take or support to help protect and recover each species.

Within the time specified in the species' GRS or no later than 5 years after the GRS is published (if no time is specified) the Ministry will publish a review of progress that summarizes the progress made towards the protection and recovery of a SAR.

All SARSP project proposals must demonstrate how they consider the most current and relevant recovery documents. If a species has a government response statement, proposals need to address the actions identified in the GRS (not the recovery strategy or management plan). Also, if a review of progress exists for the target species, applicants may find additional information and advice on what actions have already been accomplished or what actions could use more attention. It is important that applicants review and reference the most current documents.

SPECIES RECOVERY DOCUMENTS

To access the following provincial recovery documents, please refer to the [Species at Risk in Ontario List](#) and select the appropriate species:

- COSSARO assessment report
- Recovery strategy
- Management plan
- Government response statement
- Review of progress

To access federal recovery documents, please refer to the following websites:

- [Federal draft or final Recovery Strategies](#)
- [Federal draft or final Management Plans](#)
- [Federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada \(COSEWIC\) Status Reports](#)

2020-2021 PRIORITIES

Although all project proposals that target species listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List are eligible for consideration, targeted priorities have been established for the 2020-2021 funding year.

Please review the following priorities in detail. Applications that fail to address any of the 2020-2021 priorities will be considered for funding after applications that address priorities.

For 2020-2021, where possible and feasible, we are encouraging applicants, to submit broad, strategic, consolidated multi-partner project proposals. For more information on this recommendation please contact sar.stewardship@ontario.ca or 705-755-5649.

1. SPECIES SPECIFIC PRIORITIES

High priority actions as outlined in the relevant draft or final Government Response Statements (GRS) for the species listed below:

- American Chestnut
- American Eel
- American Ginseng
- American Water-willow
- Bird's-foot Violet
- Blue Racer
- Bogbean Buckmoth

- Gray Ratsnake (Carolinian population) (Middlesex and Kent counties, and Niagara area)
- Hungerford’s Crawling Water Beetle
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Piping Plover (GRS actions under the focus area of management and awareness)
- Showy Goldenrod (Great Lakes Plains population)
- Skinner’s Agalinis
- Small-mouthed Salamander
- Spotted Gar
- Wood-poppy

2. FILLING KNOWLEDGE GAPS

- a. Enhancing knowledge through appropriate surveys, inventory and monitoring for the following species at risk:
 - False Hop Sedge
 - Plant species at risk on the Long Point Peninsula
 - White Wood Aster
- b. Surveying/monitoring, including collection of Traditional Ecological Knowledge to fill knowledge gaps and identify/delineate areas of shared importance to Eastern Migratory and Boreal Caribou populations.

3. STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS THAT ADDRESS THE THREATS AND NEEDS FOR SPECIES AT RISK OUTLINED BELOW:

- a. Appropriate removal/control of invasive plant species for protected plant species at risk in Essex County, Haldimand County or the southwestern portion of Lambton County, if this has been identified in a final or draft GRS, or where not available, recovery strategy, and there is evidence that invasive species are a direct and significant threat to the species at risk at the immediate site.
- b. Mitigating threats of pathogen spillover or use of pesticides (for example neonicotinoids) to species at risk bumble bees, by implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of Best Management Practices in areas surrounding the species.
- c. Identification/characterization of new hibernacula and summer roosts, including new methods of detecting maternity roosts for species at risk bats.
- d. Eastern Flowering Dogwood GRS action under the focus area of monitoring including development of guidance to assist with monitoring tree health and the impact of other threats.

- e. Projects that implement innovative techniques for habitat creation, stewardship or mitigation activities for species at risk and investigate the effectiveness of such techniques. May include developing and testing new or current approaches depending on what is most appropriate. Examples of interest include:
 - Habitat creation or enhancement for endangered snakes (for example, Butler’s Gartersnake, Eastern Foxsnake (Carolinian population), and Massasauga (Carolinian population)), and investigation of the effectiveness of such techniques.
 - Habitat stewardship projects for caribou in the Lake Superior Coast Range.
- f. Investigate the habitat suitability of candidate sites for augmenting and reconnecting populations of Redside Dace.
- g. Implementation and assessment of techniques of propagating Red Mulberry from cuttings.

4. LANDSCAPE/ECOSYSTEM PRIORITIES

Targeted habitat stewardship and threat reduction in the following ecosystems/locations:

- a. River and riparian ecosystems along the Ausable River, Grand River, Saugeen River, Sydenham River or Thames River.
- b. Prairie, grassland, savannah and dune ecosystems that support SAR.

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Successful applicants must be individuals or legal entities. For example:

- Academic institutions
- Businesses
- Conservation Authorities
- Consulting companies
- Indigenous communities/organizations
- Individuals
- Industry organizations
- Landowners and farmers
- Municipal and local governments
- Non-government organizations

NON-ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Provincial government ministries
- Federal government departments and agencies

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

To be eligible for the SARSP, project proposals must target species listed as extirpated, endangered, threatened, or special concern on the Species at Risk in Ontario List.

All project activities must be of benefit to an Ontario species at risk and should fit into at least one of the categories listed below. Examples of eligible activities are included for each category.

Habitat Management/Restoration

- Shoreline restoration, or wetland creation
- Controlled burns to manage tall grass prairie for SAR
- Reconnecting core SAR habitat by planting habitat corridors
- Creation/installation of SAR habitat features such as hibernacula or nesting sites

Survey, Inventory or Monitoring

- Conducting species and/or habitat monitoring
- Conducting species inventories (for example, presence/absence/abundance surveys) for newly listed SAR or within areas that have not been inventoried
- Assessing the effectiveness of stewardship activities through monitoring

Outreach and Education

- Outreach activities that increase awareness and knowledge about SAR, and encourage stewardship actions to targeted audiences or areas
- Developing public and/or industry engagement plans that promote the best actions to benefit SAR
- Promoting best management practices that minimize impacts on SAR and their habitats during land or resource use
- Delivery of information sessions for targeted audiences (for example, landowners, farmers, industries, Indigenous communities, youth) to increase awareness and knowledge of SAR, and stewardship
- Preparation of brochures, fact sheets and publications, and other communications media

Direct Threat Mitigation

- Development and/or implementation of best management practices to minimize impacts on SAR and their habitats during land or resource use
- Implementation of features that reduce, mitigate or eliminate threats to SAR such as exclusion fencing or eco-passages

Research

- Filling biological knowledge gaps to inform species recovery
- Assessing the effectiveness of stewardship activities using scientific rigour

Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- Gathering, sharing, or incorporating local and traditional ecological knowledge of SAR and their habitats

Other

- Development of local or regional plans to conduct stewardship actions to protect and recover SAR and their habitats
- Development of site-specific habitat management plans for targeted SAR

NOTE: All project proposals will require an evaluation component to measure project success and effectiveness. Please refer to the SARSP Application 2020-2021 for more details. Where appropriate, outreach and awareness project proposals must have a targeted plan and a specific evaluation component to measure changes to levels of awareness, values, behaviours and/or actions. Project proposals must avoid duplication of existing products.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Applicants should consult species experts and partners for advice in developing project proposals.
- Projects or studies that are required by law are not eligible, including activities that are being undertaken to fulfill legal requirements or conditions identified in an ESA authorization or regulation.
- Projects focusing on multi-species, ecosystems or single-species will all be considered for funding.
- While provincial and federal governments can support projects through in-kind and financial contributions, they are not able to receive any direct funding from an approved SARSP project.
- Applicants are responsible for obtaining landowner permission to access private property to undertake proposed activities.
- In the context of most projects, successful applicants are strongly encouraged, to submit species and habitat information to the Natural Heritage Information Centre.
- The Crown is not bound to act based on any findings that are produced during a project. Any mapping products that result from a project are for the voluntary use of stewardship organizations only. The methods and results of a project will not necessarily be endorsed by the Ministry or the Government of Ontario for use in future SAR habitat identification or land use decisions.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

- a. **Human Resources:** includes wages and mandatory benefits (as required by law) for human resources that will be directly involved in the implementation of the project.

- Please provide a breakdown by position and wage rate. Project management costs (oversight, planning, accounting) are excluded from eligible Human Resources costs.
- b. **Administrative:** includes office supplies, phone, internet, fax and photocopy costs, etc. Administration costs **cannot exceed 10%** of the total funding requested.
 - c. **Equipment:** includes the lease and/or rental of equipment required for the completion of the project. In some cases, equipment purchase may be considered with proper justification.
 - d. **Materials and Supplies:** includes materials other than equipment (for example, trees for planting).
 - e. **Vehicle Rental, Travel and Fieldwork:** includes accommodations, meals, vehicle leases, operational costs (for example, fuel, insurance) or mileage. Mileage rate cannot exceed \$0.41/km. Costs must be reasonable for activities proposed. Following the formal review and approval of applications, recipients may be required to provide a procurement report including justification for the selected supplier.
 - f. **Publication Design, Printing and Distribution:** includes print material, signs, mailing, and French translation costs.

Note: The amount of MECP's contribution includes non-refundable HST. MECP will not reimburse for HST beyond the approved project amount.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- General
 - Applications must be completed in full and align with the 2020-2021 SARSP Guidelines to be considered
 - Applicants should not assume that reviewers are familiar with their past work. Applicants must ensure that they outline how proposed activities build on past work. Projects can only be evaluated on what is included in the application
- Value of the project to species protection and recovery
 - Proposed activities address identified protection or recovery actions as outlined in Government Response Statements (GRS). If a species does not yet have a GRS, proposed activities need to address actions identified in relevant Recovery Strategies or Management Plans
 - Activities will directly benefit targeted species at risk, their habitat and/or the targeted ecosystem
 - Activities are relevant, fill a demonstrated need, and/or address an impending threat
 - Project is part of, links to, and/or complements a larger species recovery or habitat protection initiative
- Project design and partnerships
 - Project is feasible and work plan is detailed
 - Objectives, design and methods are practical, appropriate and scientifically sound

- Numerous partners are engaged in and support the project (partnerships/collaboration are used to maximize available resources and knowledge)
- Project budget is detailed and appropriate for scope of work
- An appropriate level of matching funds/support from other sources has been identified
- Additional project considerations
 - Performance measures and evaluations are built into the project to assess the effectiveness of the activities
 - Applicant has proven experience, expertise and capacity to complete the project
 - Efficiencies realized through use of existing materials and established best management practices, or an innovative or creative approach
 - Project will contribute to broader biodiversity health and/or landscape-level stewardship
 - Likelihood for long-term benefits and continued work through established partnerships
 - Application is clearly written, easy to understand, and follows all outlined criteria
 - Alignment of the proposed activities with the annual priorities

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS OR FUNDING

Project proposals that include matching contributions (in-kind and financial) from a variety of sources are encouraged. Matching funds can either be matching dollars, in-kind donations, or a combination. The amount of matching funds is a criterion that will be considered when applications are reviewed, whereby project proposals with matching dollars will be evaluated more favourably than those with in-kind donations. If applicants indicate in-kind contributions, they are required to describe how they are valued. Land values cannot be used as in-kind matching funds.

MULTI-YEAR PROJECTS

For the 2020-2021 funding year, the SARSP may consider multi-year projects for up to three fiscal years of funding. Multi-year requests are evaluated on demonstrated need and how subsequent years build on the previous year. If approved for multi-year funding, the subsequent years will be dependant on availability of funds and/or whether the necessary appropriation is provided from the Ontario Legislature. Please refer to the 2020-2021 SARSP Application form for further details.

Payments are subject to the terms and conditions of the agreements and will require interim and final reporting for payment.

NOTIFICATION

All applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their proposal. Applicants should not proceed with a project on the expectation that it will be sponsored through the SARSP. Successful applicants should expect to receive approval for their projects in the late spring and are advised to plan accordingly. Following project approval, all recipients are required to enter into a standard legal agreement with the Province to be eligible to receive funds.

AGREEMENT AND PAYMENT

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a standard legal agreement which includes the terms and conditions of acceptance, expenditure and reporting requirements.

The terms and conditions of the funding will be set out in detail in the agreement. Generally, those terms and conditions will be consistent with the following:

- Payments will be made following the completion of milestones, and the submission of all documentation required as part of the interim/final reporting packages and incurred expenditures as outlined in the schedules to the agreement. An initial payment may be available upon signing of the agreement.
- Activities receiving funding must be completed and reports submitted within the funding year.
- For single-year projects, or multi-year projects in their final year, the final date to submit all final reporting and financial documentation is **March 1, 2021**. For multi-year projects not in their final year, an interim report with financial documentation is due March 1 of each year of the project.
- Recipients approved for funding will be required to submit certificates of insurance to confirm insurance coverage in accordance with the terms of the Transfer Payment Agreement.

LEGAL AUTHORIZATIONS

All applicants must review this section before applying.

If your project involves a species listed as extirpated, endangered or threatened under the ESA, please contact us at SAOntario@ontario.ca for advice on whether an authorization or registration under the ESA is required. It is important to contact us early during your project planning process, as you may be able to avoid the need for an authorization or registration under the ESA by amending your project plan. We can help provide advice on which of the following applies to your project:

- (i) Your project activities qualify under Regulation 242/08 s.23.17;
- (ii) An ESA 17(2)(b) permit is required and will be obtained before undertaking the funded activity; or,
- (iii) The proposed activity does not require an authorization under the ESA.

All funded projects must avoid and/or minimize adverse effects to species at risk and their habitat. An ESA authorization is not required for activities that do not kill, harm or harass a species at risk, damage or destroy their habitat or otherwise require authorization under section 9 or section 10 of the Act. For greater detail, please refer to section 9 (species protection) and section 10 (habitat protection) of the [ESA](#).

Due to section 23.17 of Ontario Regulation 242/08 under the ESA, many activities supported by the SARSP may not require an ESA 17(2)(b) permit but rather require the recipients to register and follow the requirements set out in the Regulation. For information on the regulatory requirements please refer to the [MECP Registry website](#) under “Help protect or recover a species at risk” and consult O. Reg. 242/08 (s. 23.17) on [e-laws](#).

Most projects that involve activities prescribed in Government Response Statements, recommended in Recovery Strategies, or that address priorities outlined in these Guidelines are eligible under s. 23.17 of O. Reg. 242/08 provided all the regulatory requirements can be met. However, projects involving any of the following activities are not eligible for under O. Reg. 242/08 s. 23.17:

- Possession of a living species at risk for longer than necessary (in no case longer than seven days);
- Release or introduction of a species at risk outside of the area from which it was taken; or,
- Lethal sampling as described in subsection (3) of O. Reg. 242/08 s 23.17.

If your project involves any of the above activities or fails to meet all eligibility criteria outlined in O. Reg. 242/08 s. 23.17, you require an ESA 17(2)(b) permit and you must contact SARontario@ontario.ca.

Please refer to s. 23.17 of O. Reg. 242/08 for more detail regarding eligibility under that section.

Applicants are responsible for identifying and obtaining any permits, licences or other approvals required for the project. **Projects cannot proceed until the required authorizations are obtained.**

If your project will be occurring in a provincial park or conservation reserve, you may require additional authorization. You can apply for an authorization online at [Ontario Parks research](#) or if you have any questions about working in provincial parks and conservation reserves please email PAScience@ontario.ca.

Under section 23.17 of O. Reg. 242/08 an **Animal Care Protocol** approved by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry’s Wildlife Animal Care Committee or a university is required for projects involving amphibians, birds, reptiles or mammals. Protocols for the detection and handling of fish and mussels that include animal care considerations have been published by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada: [detection of fish protocol](#) and the [detection and relocation of freshwater mussel protocol](#).

RECOGNITION

If applicable, the successful applicant may be required to acknowledge the receipt of financial assistance from the Government of Ontario.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Personal information collected on the application form will be used for the proper administration of the SARSP. Personal information will only be used or disclosed in accordance with *the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

AUDITING

To ensure integrity in the use of public funds, the Province of Ontario reserves the right to require independent verification of reported information as required in the terms of the funding agreement. Payment claim forms and reports must be submitted to receive payments. The successful applicant shall provide, if requested by the Province, any necessary permissions to access the property and make available any records, documents and/or information that may be required for this purpose.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- This call for applications is not intended to be a formal legally-binding procurement process.
- MECP reserves the right to seek clarification and supplementary information from any applicant.
- MECP may elect not to consider an application containing misrepresentations or any inaccurate, misleading or incomplete information.
- Once a project proposal has been submitted, it cannot be substantially modified or changed.

For general information on SAR and the ESA please refer to the [program website](#).